

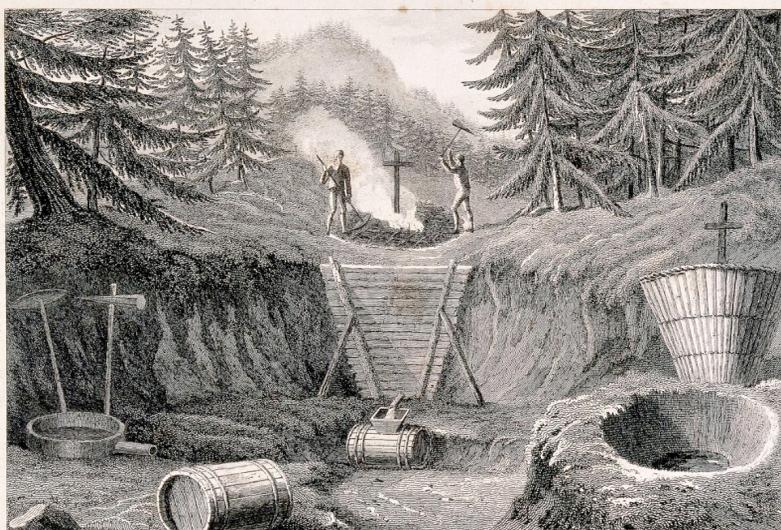


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FACULTY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

Tar and timber

Governing forest commons in seventeenth century Northern Finland

JAKOB STARLANDER



REPRESENTATION of the PROCESS for making TAR in the FORESTS of SWEDEN.

Tar and timber

Governing forest commons in seventeenth century
Northern Finland

Jakob Starlander

Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences
Department of Urban and Rural Development
Uppsala



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Timber and tar – Governing forest commons in seventeenth century Northern Finland

Abstract

This thesis investigates how peasants regulated and shared forest resources in North Ostrobothnia during the seventeenth century where large-scale tar and timber production took place. The forests were owned as commons by peasant communities on village and parish level and became increasingly exploited during the century. The aim of the thesis is to demonstrate how the growing importance of forest resources affected the ability of peasants to govern and share forest resources in a sustainable way. Focus is therefore put on the institutional organisation of peasant communities and emphasises the complexity of how governance within village and parish communities developed. Three interrelated dimensions of sustainability are considered: ecological, institutional, and economic sustainability. The thesis also seeks to explain how burghers and Swedish state officials influenced this development. This is done by qualitatively and quantitatively analysing local district protocols, maps, and Swedish legislation.

The thesis shows how peasant communities achieved balance between the three dimensions of sustainability. This ensured that they did not undermine the ecological underpinnings on which they depended, that their institutional organisation remained robust, and that they could make a living. This was possible through the prioritisation of *rules* and *borders* through *collective action*. The thesis also shows an increasing level of *nestedness* within peasant communities. This development was both enabled and inhibited by the peasants' relation to burghers and Swedish state officials who became involved in the nestedness of peasant institutions.

Keywords: Forests, commons, governance, seventeenth century, tar, timber, Finland, Sweden, institutions, sustainability.

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Timber and tar – Governing forest commons in seventeenth century Northern Finland

Abstract

Denna avhandling undersöker hur bönder reglerade och delade på skogsresurser i Norra Österbotten under 1600-talet där storskalig tjär- och timmerproduktion ägde rum. Skogarna ägdes av bönderna som allmänningar på by- och sockennivå och exploaterades alltmer under århundradet. Syftet med avhandlingen är att visa hur skogsresursernas växande betydelse påverkade böndernas förmåga att reglera och dela skogsresurser på ett hållbart sätt. Fokus läggs därför på böndernas institutionella organisation och betonar komplexiteten i hur reglering inom byar och socknar utvecklades. Tre inbördes relaterade dimensioner av hållbarhet beaktas: ekologisk, institutionell och ekonomisk hållbarhet. Avhandlingen syftar även till att förklara hur borgare och svenska statstjänstemän påverkade denna utveckling. Detta görs genom att kvalitativt och kvantitativt analysera häradsrättsprotokoll, kartor och svensk lagstiftning.

Avhandlingen visar hur bondesamfälligheter uppnådde balans mellan de tre dimensionerna av hållbarhet. Detta säkerställde att de inte undergrävde den ekologiska grund som de var beroende av, att deras institutionella organisation förblev robust och att de kunde försörja sig. Detta var möjligt genom att prioritera etablerandet av *regler* och *gränser* genom *kollektiva åtgärder*. Avhandlingen visar också på en ökande nivå av *nestedness* inom bondesamfälligheterna. Denna utveckling både möjliggjordes och försvårades av böndernas relation till borgare och svenska statstjänstemän som blev involverade i bondesamfälligheternas *nestedness*.

Keywords: Forests, commons, governance, seventeenth century, tar, timber, Finland, Sweden, institutions, sustainability.

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Preface

When I started studying history at Uppsala University in 2012, I had no idea where it would lead me. I only knew that history fascinated me immensely and that I thought ‘imagine if one could do this for a living someday’. It was not until I started studying for my master’s degree in Early Modern Studies at the Department of History in Uppsala in 2015 that I began to see how my wish could potentially become a reality. I was not naïve, quite the opposite. I knew that the road to securing a PhD position was very difficult and that the competition would be fierce, especially considering the absolutely brilliant fellow students and friends I was fortunate enough to surround myself with. The many, many hours and days we have spent reading, writing, discussing, and laughing together in the corridors of the department and in Carolina Rediviva has been invaluable and something I will forever treasure. It was in these settings that my interests for early modern peasants and peasant society began.

During my time as a master student, I had the great privilege of having Mikael Alm as my supervisor, to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude. I know that I speak for myself and many of your former students when I say that the encouragement, opportunities, constant assistance, motivating challenges, and guidance that you and Gudrun Andersson have given us have been instrumental and exceedingly valuable to our education. You prepared me for what was to come and gave me the self-confidence to go for it.

It has been a truly great privilege to have been working with this thesis under the guidance of my main supervisor Jesper Larsson and assistant supervisor Cristina Prytz. Writing a doctoral thesis can be daunting and there are plenty of times when one feels a sense of hopelessness. However, I could not have wished for better supervisors. You have constantly had my back, encouraged me, challenged me to think in new ways, and you have never

been more than a phone call, e-mail, or a couple of doors away. A special thanks also goes out to my PhD colleague Martin Skoglund who began his studies a few months after myself. Since then, every step we have taken has occurred almost at the same time, including start-, halfway-, and end-seminars. Throughout the past years, you have been a great support and I have always enjoyed and taken courage from our discussions and shared experiences. I also want to thank everyone at the Division of Agrarian History, including Patrick Svensson, Clas Tollin, Kristofer Jupiter, Martin Andersson, Sofia Carlford, Karin Holmgren, Isabelle Lundholm, Eva-Lotta Päiviö Sjaunja, William Renström, and Matthew Jacobson. Thank you for having read my texts, given me insightful comments, and for having made our workplace feel like a home through all the conversations and laughter that we have shared in seminars, meetings, and over coffee and lunches.

I want to thank The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities and the Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences at SLU for the financial support which have made this thesis possible. I also want to thank The Royal Swedish Agricultural Academy, Ellen and Tage Westin Foundation for Agricultural Research, Carl-Göran Adelswärd's Stiftelse, and Jernkontoret for the stipends that have made it possible for me to visit and present at conferences and financed my research visit at Bern University. A special thank you also goes out to Nils Erik Villstrand whose inspiring research, support, and guidance put me on the tar-trail. Thank you Jonas Lindström for being my opponent at the end-seminar and for the important comments that have made this thesis better than it would otherwise be. I want to thank my father, mother, and siblings who have always supported and believed in me.

Kristina. I love you and our children Oskar, Gustav, and Birger more than I can put into words. You have always been by my side and picked me up when I have faltered. You have never complained, and you have always believed and supported me when I needed it the most. I have you to thank for everything, absolutely everything.

Lindsta January 31, 2023

Dedication

Isoäidilleni Airille.

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1. Introduction

This is a thesis about one of the most essential materials in the pre-modern world. More precisely, it is concerned with how peasants in the Swedish Kingdom managed the utilisation of this material during the seventeenth century. It was a period when great and far-reaching economic, political, and social transformations occurred, which significantly affected people's everyday lives. It was a time of great movements, both of borders separating states from each other, and of people marching to war in their service. The European wars, increasing taxes, and conscriptions imposed on rural populations changed the conditions of finding a livelihood sufficient enough to sustain the families of peasant households. In Sweden, the central government's expanding and intensified resource mobilisation pushed people to the outskirts of the empire. They went in search for resources that European states needed to advance the expansion of their dominions and hegemony over both new and already subdued territories on the European continent, as well as overseas. This development, and the achievement of these great ambitions, would not have been possible without the utilisation of one natural resource: wood.

Wood had almost countless areas of application during the early modern period. From the carriage pulled by the peasant's oxen to the handle of the peasant's axe, or the furnishings of a noblewoman's parlour to the body of the king's flagship; wood was everywhere. It not only occupied much of the physical space around people, but it was also included in much of the daily conversation between people. It was everywhere tangible and discussed, and as such, the study of its application and distribution provides an opportunity to better understand the problems, challenges, opportunities, and needs of a bygone era.¹

¹ Warde (2006), p. 6.

Not only did wood constitute the basis of everyday life as it provided a heat source during cold winters, walls to shelter people from nature's elements, and refined items such as tools and furnishings. Wood also formed the basis for the three main industries in the Swedish Kingdom during the seventeenth century. The woodlands of northern Sweden, together with Finland, were vast. They had ever since the reign of Gustav I (1523–1560) been subject to the state's attempts of regulation and control, which increased considerably during the seventeenth century. The main industries that saw an upswing during this period were that of iron, copper, and tar. The export of these products became an indispensable source of income for the Swedish Crown. The mining industries in and around Bergslagen produced up to 20 000 tons of wrought iron at the middle of the seventeenth century and supplied, for example, Britain with three quarters of all its imported iron during the first half of the following century.² Copper was mainly struck in the mines of Falun in the province of Dalarna, the largest copper mine in Europe at the time. The third commodity was mainly produced in Finland, then a part of the Swedish Kingdom. Up to 16 100 tons of tar was produced on a yearly basis at the middle of the century, and as much as three quarters of this amount were produced and exported from seaports along the coast of Finland.³

As the industries grew, and their need of fuel increased, the domicile of the natural resources was naturally subjected to increased attention and intensified exploitation. However, even though the Swedish kings claimed possession and authority over much of the, by that time, not yet exploited forest landscapes in the north, the forests were at large in the hands of the peasants who lived there. In this process of increasing attention, the forest industries also came to involve a growing number of burghers and tradesmen who sought to utilise the commercial and financial opportunities that were presented because of increased forest exploitation.

During the early modern period, peasant communities both shared property and kept them in the hands of individual households. Whereas the infields (Swe. *inägomark*) of a village were privately owned in different constellations by the village members, the forest on the outlying lands (Swe. *utmark*) was communal. This meant that everyone in the village had the right to appropriate resources therefrom, but it also meant that no one could extract

² Ågren (1998), p. 5.

³ Karlsson (1990); J. Larsson (2009); Villstrand (2011).

resources without it having consequences for other community members. As a result, the system of sharing forest resources was put under pressure.

Considering the indispensability of wood during this period, it is noteworthy how the impact of these developments on peasant communities' ability to govern their forests have not yielded more attention among Swedish or Finnish scholars. We know from earlier research that a great wave of land reforms swept across the European continent during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, brought on by the conviction that private property regimes were more productive and cost-efficient than communal ones.⁴ Dividing the forests between community members would turn out to be a long-drawn-out process and was not finalised until the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. One could argue that the intensified utilisation of communal forests during the seventeenth century was a first step towards what would ultimately become privately owned forests three hundred years later. However, that would undermine and reduce the value of communal ownership and the functions such property arrangements served in peasant communities that based much of their household income from work carried out in communal forests.

This thesis is therefore a comprehensive and important piece of historical research dealing with how peasant communities were organised and changed during a time of immense economic transformation. It also seeks knowledge that will help us better understand how the changing importance of forests forced peasant communities to address matters related to sustainability. Furthermore, it considers how the organisation of peasant communities developed into a complex structure of interconnected institutions that were dependent on each other in order to achieve common goals. In an international research context, it will provide a deeper understanding of how communal property regimes and peasant institutions were affected and changed as market integration and state intervention grew.

1.1 Purpose and Research Questions

Considering the intensity at which wooden resources were utilised during the seventeenth century, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate and provide new knowledge on how the growing importance of forests affected ways in which peasants governed, regulated, and shared forest resources during the

⁴ See for example McCloskey (1975); Fenoaltea (1976); Allen (1992); Overton (1996); Allen (2009).

seventeenth century. The geographical area under investigation is North Ostrobothnia in northern Finland where large-scale tar production and widespread timber cutting took place during the seventeenth century.⁵



Figure 1. Finland Base map. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Finland_Base_map.png. Note: This is a modern map of Finland and does not represent Finland in the seventeenth century.

The main question that will be addressed and answered is as follows:

- Were peasant communities involved with the exploitation of forest commons able to achieve ecological, institutional, and economic sustainability, and if so, what prioritisations made this possible?

⁵ See Figure 1.

Considering the growing importance of forest resources for peasant households, they had to make active choices and prioritisations between different strategies in order to achieve a sustainable resource governance system. In this context, efforts targeted at maintaining the durability of the forests were important (ecological sustainability). Efforts relating to this were discussed and decided upon within the village and parish communities that collectively owned the forests. Moreover, to achieve and maintain ecological sustainability, peasant institutions needed to have rules that everyone followed, and a sufficiently high level of social robustness in order to be successful (institutional sustainability). Furthermore, the ability to make a living from forest related industry was a requirement as it created incentives to improve the conditions of the resource governance system (economic sustainability). These three dimensions of sustainability, and more detailed definitions of them in the context of seventeenth century North Ostrobothnia, will be discussed later in this introductory chapter. To answer the main question of this thesis, three sub-questions are posed. They take into consideration the socio-economic context of the period, as well as different interest groups who in one way or another were tied to the growing tar and timber industry of the region.

The first sub-question focusses on how peasant communities were governed and reads as follows:

1. What rules concerning access, management, and utilisation of forest resources existed within peasant communities in North Ostrobothnia, and how were they affected by the changing economic climate of the seventeenth century?

Property owned in common involves challenges for the owners in terms of who are entitled to use the communal resources and how much everyone is allowed to exploit. In order to avoid overexploitation, rules have to be in place that aid users in terms of resource management. This question is therefore aimed at unveiling how peasants managed to uphold a fair and sustainable distribution of resources between community members, and how such collective efforts were affected by the changing socio-economic context of the period.

The second sub-question is:

2. What role did the burgher class have in the growing tar and timber industry, and how did it affect the peasantry's ability to govern their forest commons in a sustainable way?

The peasantry's increasing engagement in forest related production presupposed that they had someone who was ready to buy their products. This role was filled by burghers and tradesmen who came to populate the coastal towns of North Ostrobothnia during the seventeenth century, effectively acting as middlemen between the peasantry and the international market. In this capacity, they exerted considerable influence on how trade relations between different groups evolved. The question is therefore important since it reveals how the relationship between peasant communities and burghers affected the peasantry's ability to govern their forest commons, as well as how tar and timber production was either facilitated or constrained by such relations.

The third sub-question is:

3. What measures of regulation were taken by Swedish authorities in order to control the peasantry's exploitation of forest resources, and how did it affect the peasantry's ability to govern their forest commons in a sustainable way?

The Swedish state had great ambitions to control how woodlands were exploited within the Swedish Kingdom during the seventeenth century. However, how this affected the peasants' ability to govern their forest commons has not been thoroughly investigated in North Ostrobothnia. Answering the question above is therefore important in order for us to gain more clarity concerning the Swedish state's intensified legislative efforts during the century, and what consequences this had for the peasantry in terms of self-management and control over resource appropriation.

The answers to the questions above will provide comprehensive knowledge concerning peasant self-governance, management, and regulation of commonly owned forests within the Swedish Kingdom during the seventeenth century. Moreover, the investigation will lead to a better understanding of how peasant communities reacted to changing economic and social conditions. By analysing the problems, possibilities, and challenges that the peasantry

encountered, and by exploring the solutions that were chosen, more knowledge will be gained about how collectively owned resources could motivate cooperation and reciprocity within peasant communities. It will also be possible to determine how outside actors and groups influenced these developments, as well as how the structure of peasant institutions developed and changed in relation to each other. Lastly, it will be an addition to the growing research field of historical commons, which pays particular attention to how people have struggled with issues of sustainability. To achieve this, it is important to consider different theoretical tools that can be used to explain such processes.

1.2 Theoretical Considerations

1.2.1 Institutions and Moral Economy

Peasant household economy was based on agriculture. However, as demand for forest resources increased, the need to uphold a stable and continuous production of such resources changed the rhythm of daily and yearly work.⁶ The products that peasants made represented a complex set of social and cultural practices. To grasp this, one needs to emphasise the importance of institutions. Douglas North has demonstrated how institutions and institutional change shapes ways in which societies evolve through time, and thus their importance for understanding historical change. Furthermore, he has given emphasis to how the behaviour of human beings is set to develop regularised patterns of interaction through institutions. The definition of ‘institution’ that he provides can be summed up as the rules, norms, constraints, and privileges through which people organise their economic, social, political, and cultural activities and interactions: they are ‘the rules of the game in a society’.⁷

Rules are created and imposed to provide structure. In the context of forest resource exploitation, they inform users on what is allowed and prohibited, for example the number of trees that each household is allowed to harvest during a given period. However, there are both formal and informal rules. These may serve the same function, but with the difference that informal rules are harder to specify and define. Such rules are usually

⁶ Karlsson (1990); Villstrand (1992a), pp. 234–235; Eliasson (1997).

⁷ North (1990), p. 3.

not consciously designed, but rather the ‘rules of the road’, and arise through human interaction and cultural practices. Formal rules are more absolute, for example written laws and contracts. They similarly structure society and may complement informal ones, but they can also modify and ultimately replace them. Therefore, only inquiring about how formal rules influence human behaviour and relationships (and consequently historical change) would generate an incomplete image of how a society is organised and operates. It is rather the interaction of formal and informal rules that create the assembly of rules, constraints, opportunities, difficulties, and choices that shape our lives.⁸ In practice, therefore, the ways in which peasants organised the withdrawal of forest resources, and how they managed to regulate access and use-rights, depended on, and was a consequence of, the design of the institution created by the community members.

The ability of institutions to function and endure is very much determined by the purpose they serve. It could for example be to generate high levels of efficiency. The reason institutions survive could also be that there is no other feasible alternative institution that would ensure this in a better way. In other words, as Sheilagh Ogilvie puts it, ‘their aggregate economic benefits outweighed their costs.’ However, Ogilvie has argued that institutions may endure due to the ‘aggregate size of the economic pie’ they serve to ensure, but it also depends on how the pie is distributed among the members. However, one reason for their endurance can sometimes be because of how they favour particular groups over others. Regardless, ‘no institution exists in isolation’, meaning that it is impossible to draw evaluative conclusions concerning its efficiency, utility, or equity without also investigating how it interacted with other surrounding institutions.⁹

The institution thus shapes the conditions under which members are supposed to act, as well as their relationship to other institutions within the society they exist. Insofar as formal and informal rules are meant to control these activities, there are also other mechanisms at play that shape the socio-economic relationships between people, one of which is the *moral economy* of a community. According to James C. Scott, what peasants consider to be tolerable and just, and what is intolerable and unjust, lies at the core of moral economy. Hence, for Scott’s intentions, it becomes possible to determine what makes them frustrated, angry, and how violent ‘explosive situations’

⁸ North (1990), pp. 36–53, 83.

⁹ Ogilvie (2011), pp. 2–6.

ultimately may occur. Moral economy thus rests on a fundamental economic predicament within peasant communities, outlined by the struggle to survive on subsistence level. As such, they also have to make efforts of minimising risks related to their economic activities, taking into account that challenges might occur from outside claims and infringements. The social arrangements within a village were thus aimed at assuring that each household was guaranteed a minimum number of resources, which would safeguard its future survival. Scott further emphasises the redistributive mechanism within such arrangements, where more wealthy peasants were expected to practice a certain level of charity and generosity towards their less fortunate relatives and neighbours.¹⁰

Within village communities, these moral considerations are tightly linked to the notion of reciprocity. Simply put, when a service or gift is given, the recipient feels an obligation to return the favour comparable to what was given. Reciprocity is thus the ‘central moral formula for interpersonal conduct’, applicable between those who can be considered equals as well as unequals. The patterns of reciprocity, and informal social assurances within peasant communities, thus represents ‘a living normative model of equity and justice.’¹¹ The study of this moral economy, how it was expressed and what role it played in seventeenth century peasant institutions, will bring greater insights into how the forests of North Ostrobothnia were used and shared.

1.2.2 Common-Pool Resources

Forests were divided at different levels in the early modern Swedish Kingdom. The village forest was shared by the village members, whilst the parish forest can be said to have served as a resource reserve for all community members, regardless of what village he or she came from within the parish.¹² These forests were shared between community members as commons (Swe. *allmänningar*). Scholarly interest in commons, their influence, and impact over resource extraction and distribution, took off with Garrett Hardin’s article ‘The Tragedy of the Commons’, published in 1968.¹³ In it, Hardin gave a parable. He pictured a pastureland open to all and saw

¹⁰ Scott (1976), pp. 3–5, 167.

¹¹ Scott (1976), pp. 40–41, 176.

¹² Karlsson (1990), p. 27.

¹³ Hardin (1968).

before him how herdsmen introduced their sheep onto that land at an escalating rate. According to him, when the level of social stability reached a sufficiently high level, tragedy would inevitably strike. The reason why emanated from his belief that '[e]ach man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit – in a world that is limited.' Thus, only overexploitation and universal ruin could follow from keeping resources in a communal ownership system since people's rationality of constantly seeking to maximise the gain one can accumulate will triumph. Hardin's metaphor gained huge influence in many scientific disciplines and was frequently used by policymakers as it related to the 'population problem' widely discussed at the time of the article's publication. It seemingly also provided solutions to the pollution of the planet and the resource scarcity that would follow from increased population density. The solutions he proposed were either to privatise that which was commonly owned, or to keep it as public property, that is, to have the state govern access to and the exploitation of the resources in question.¹⁴

Hardin's views on the inevitable failure of communal property regimes have prompted scholars to ask questions about the origins and historical management of commons. It has caught the eyes of both sociological and historical scholars, the most influential of which is Elinor Ostrom with her book *Governing the Commons*. In it, she challenged Hardin and established a third position to the matter of managing common property. In contrast to the aforementioned two-part solution, she demonstrated how proprietors have been able to uphold a long-term and sustainable use of commons by self-regulation and self-management within local communities all around the globe. Ostrom was also able to show that people usually do not behave in the way Hardin claimed, that is, that they would be solely and naturally driven by greed, self-fulfilment, and selfishness. Rather, people in common property regimes are in many cases driven by common incentives to stabilise output in order to sustain the common-pool resource (CPR), and to create a framework where access to the common is regulated by collective decision-making and flexible control mechanisms in order to avoid free-riding.¹⁵

Whether one studies why certain property regimes of CPRs fail or succeed, it is important to consider the circumstances that constitute the framework of the collective use of resources (be it grazing, arable land, or

¹⁴ Hardin (1968), pp. 1244–1245.

¹⁵ Ostrom (1990).

forests). Different resource systems can be of varying structure. One party can provide financial resources or working methods for its organisation, whilst another is working to ensure long-term resource utilisation. In the case of the Finnish forests, both roles were chiefly performed by peasants. The withdrawal of forest resources could be done by several peasants simultaneously, but these could not be used in common. Ostrom offers a parable, explaining that the ‘fish harvested by one boat are not there for anyone else. The water spread on one farmer’s fields cannot be spread onto someone else’s fields. Thus, the resource units are not jointly used, but the resource system is subject to joint use’.¹⁶ However, maintenance and improvements within the resource system benefit all. Such incentives were therefore important at the same time as just, orderly, and efficient methods for the distribution of the resource-units were available. Nevertheless, a collectively owned forest always meant a risk that someone did not participate in the maintenance of the CPR, or that it was excessively exploited by someone. Also, because prevailing ownership conditions made it difficult and costly to exclude members, a situation of under-investment could arise.¹⁷ To secure a sustainable use of the common, the institution interlinking user and resource is important.

Ostrom explained how common-pool resources are controlled and governed by the common-pool institution (CPI), which in this context is well explained by North’s definition. For a CPI to achieve longevity and maintain robustness under long-term exploitation, Ostrom has established eight design principles that characterise such institutions.¹⁸ She means for each of them to operate as an ‘essential element in sustaining the CPRs and gaining the compliance of generation after generation of appropriators to the rules in use.’¹⁹ However, it is not essential that all of Ostrom’s design principles are fulfilled. Some can be more important than others depending on the social, economic, cultural, and ecological environment in question.

1.2.3 Nested Enterprises and Polycentric Systems

One element of common-pool resource regimes often cited as especially important is *collective-choice arrangements*, meaning that in order to

¹⁶ Ostrom (1990), p. 31.

¹⁷ Ostrom (1990), pp. 30–33; see also Ostrom (2005).

¹⁸ Ostrom (1990), pp. 90–102. A shorter summary is found on p. 90, Table 3.1. ‘Design principles illustrated by long-enduring CPR institutions’.

¹⁹ Ostrom (1990), pp. 89–90.

achieve a robust and long-term management, users must have the opportunity to influence and change the rules under which they are subjected.²⁰ Here, it is possible to distinguish between the three different levels where rules are practiced and have impact. This is something Ostrom calls ‘nesting of rules’. This implies that ‘[w]hat can be done at a higher level will depend on the capabilities and limits of the rules at that level and at a deeper level.’²¹ At first level is the arena where *operational rules* are practiced, which affect and regulate everyday decisions made concerning resource extraction, maintenance, and monitoring. *Collective-choice rules* are found at the second level and are practiced by users to establish policies concerning how the CPR is to be managed (thus ultimately affecting the operational ones). At third level are *constitutional-choice rules*, which determine who are eligible to participate in the decision-making process of the former two levels.²² In relation to these levels, Ostrom also discusses the matter of ‘level shifting’. This is whenever a user ‘begins to contemplate how to change any of the constraints on an operational situation (or, on a collective-choice situation) that are potentially under the control of the participants in that situation.’ In a practical setting, this would for example mean that a peasant takes notice of an escalating rate of forest cutting (operational situation), to which he or she reacts by thinking of an alternative way of ordering the system of withdrawal (shifting levels of action), which is then put forth for the village community to vote on (collective-choice situation).²³

The level of influence that users have over policymaking linked to the management of the commons is very important as it motivates participation and promotes compliance with the rules that are established, whether they are formal or informal. By way of relating this to North’s discussion on formality, decisions taken at the second and third levels often have a more formal character considering their impact on other rules, whereas first level rules are practiced more informally in day-to-day activities. However, the arena where these rules are decided upon does not necessarily imply or require a formal setting,²⁴ although decisions regarding collective- and

²⁰ This has been emphasised by for example de Moor (2010) and De Keyser (2018).

²¹ Ostrom (2005), p. 58. Ostrom also writes about a fourth level which she calls ‘metaconstitutional’, which underlies all of the other levels, pp. 58–59.

²² Ostrom (1990), pp. 90, 93–94; Ostrom (2005), p. 58.

²³ Ostrom (2005), pp. 62–64.

²⁴ See for example Basurto et al. (2020).

constitutional-choice rules often take place in more formal contexts than operational ones.

The nesting of rules and level shifting are useful conceptions when dealing with questions of how rules are created or change within peasant institutions. However, as pointed out by Ogilvie, institutions do not exist in complete isolation and disassociation from other institutions.²⁵ They interact and exert influence over the institutional arrangement by the relations they share. As put by Ostrom, they are nested within a larger structure that she calls ‘nested enterprises’ (design principle 8). With this she means how ‘[a]ppropriation, provision, monitoring, enforcement, conflict resolution, and governance activities are organized in multiple layers’.²⁶ She has also put it in another way, stating that ‘among long-enduring self-governed regimes, smaller-scale organizations tend to be nested in ever larger organizations’.²⁷ Such a system is characterised by its polycentricism (thus, a polycentric system), that is, a system where users organise at multiple levels of governance.²⁸

The organisational structure of peasant society in North Ostrobothnia consisted of several main entities: the individual peasant household, the village, and the parish. Following Ostrom’s understanding of nested enterprises and polycentric systems, the actions and claims of individual households affected what transpired within the village institution. The decisions and rules implemented had further consequences for the relationship between villages, that is, on parish level. However, since no institution existed in complete isolation, decisions might then have to be taken at an even higher level, that is, between parishes. In order for such governance systems to endure and remain robust, knowledge sharing and a capacity to ‘learn from others who are also engaged in a similar trial-and-error learning process in parallel systems’ is important.²⁹

Within polycentric systems, the role of the state is also important. By taking a closer look at the cases presented in *Governing the commons*, Jane Mansbridge has emphasised that Ostrom’s work and results should not be simplified as meaning ‘that higher-level state action is always ham-handed and insensitive’. Instead, she argues that one has to consider more deeply ‘the

²⁵ Ogilvie (2011), pp. 2–6.

²⁶ Design principle 8, Ostrom (1990), pp. 101–102.

²⁷ Ostrom (2005), p. 58, 269–271.

²⁸ Ostrom (2005), p. 283.

²⁹ Ostrom (2005), p. 283.

polycentric lesson that higher levels of state action are often necessary to make the lower levels work well.’ Mansbridge thus points out four important roles and capabilities that a state organisation posits. These are (1) threatening to impose solutions if parties cannot reach an agreement, (2) providing neutral information to mitigate problem-solving, (3) providing an arena where problems can be resolved, and (4) assist in monitoring and sanction non-compliance.³⁰ As with Ostrom’s design principles, not all of these roles must be practiced in order for a polycentric system to work. Nevertheless, the organisational structure of rural society in North Ostrobothnia, and the Swedish state’s exercise of authority, can be better understood by applying this theoretical understanding of how nested enterprises function and develop in relation to each other, as well as to external actors.

1.2.4 A Three-Dimensional Approach

In order to analyse how a governance regime manages to endure long-term, Tine de Moor has provided a framework and model that specifies three different dimensions that should be considered.³¹ These are ‘the natural resource (the CPR), its users (the CPRR), and the institution (the CPI) they created.’ Taken together, these three dimensions make up the foundation for the everyday problems, challenges, and opportunities that commoners face and act upon with regard to their common. The analytical challenge lies in uncovering the complex interaction between them. Where two different dimensions or components of de Moor’s model interact, different evaluation criteria are asserted. These are *utility*, *efficiency*, and *equity*.

³⁰ Mansbridge (2013).

³¹ See Figure 2.

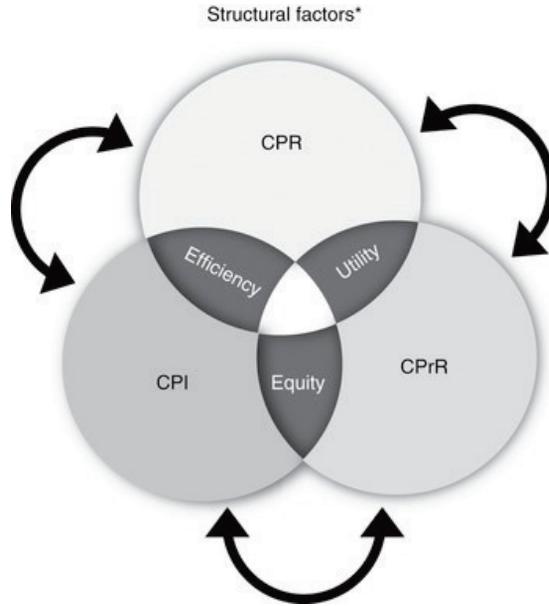


Figure 2. Tine de Moor's three-dimensional approach to commons: commons as common-pool resources, common-pool institutions, and common-property regimes. *External factors can include: population growth, economic change, political processes, etc. de Moor (2015), Figure 6, p. 118.

Examining these interactions makes it possible to determine what could cause the governance regime to either fail or endure. Should it succeed, meaning that the usefulness of the collective resources to the members have been established and is adequate (*utility*), that rules of access and distribution of resources are efficiently arranged by the institution to avoid overexploitation (*efficiency*), and that the level of participation of members in management and decision-making processes is adequate (*equity*), then the governance regime can be deemed sustainable, which is at the very centre of the model.³² However, one has to keep in mind that changes in one dimension might lead to changes in another. For example, if rules concerning the permissible level of extraction change (CPI), the level of *efficiency* might be affected, which will affect the ecological sustainability of the forest (CPR). If the forest (CPR) is exploited too rapidly by the users (CPrR), *utility* will be affected and a need to change regulations (CPI) might be needed.

³² de Moor (2015), p. 118.

The success or failure in these endeavours are determined by the balance of the three dimensions, which ought to be in constant interaction with each other. Furthermore, contextual factors such as population growth, economic pressure, or state intervention could similarly affect the ability of peasant institutions to achieve a desirable balance. Thus, as specified by de Moor, a well-functioning common should be sufficiently balanced in this regard ‘to ensure the [sustainability] of the common as a resource for its users, as an institution, and as an ecological system in itself.’³³

By methodologically applying this model in the analysis of the historical sources that are used in this thesis, it will be possible to study the relationship between the forest resources, the peasants, and their institutions. It will be possible to identify how different events serve as examples of *utility*, *efficiency*, and *equity*. It will also be possible to evaluate the level of sustainability within peasant communities. However, being able to achieve a sustainable use of natural resources is not the only thing to consider when dealing with resource management systems such as forest commons. The peasant institution must also prevail, as well as the economic viability of peasant households. As such, it is important to clarify and explore the multidimensionality of the concept sustainability.

1.2.5 Sustainability: A Multidimensional Concept

Providing a clear-cut definition of sustainability is not an easy task. When it comes to ecological sustainability, most definitions have been, and remain, vague, even though it is possible to define a general ‘sense’ of its historical meaning. In a similar way, Maïka De Keyzer has aptly pointed out how sustainability has suffered from ‘conceptual vagueness’.³⁴ Nevertheless, Paul Warde has defined ecological sustainability as ‘the idea that to endure, a society must not undermine the ecological underpinnings on which it is dependent. It must not degrade, to use a more archaic word, “the Earth”’.³⁵ Another way of phrasing the definition is ‘the ability to maintain the quality and reproducibility of the natural resources.’³⁶ I believe that these definitions are well formulated. Nevertheless, these conceptions were not pioneered or

³³ In de Moor (2015, pp. 116–119), she uses the word resilience instead of sustainability. However, given the purpose of this study and the definition of sustainability that I am using, I argue that resilience can be replaced with sustainability.

³⁴ De Keyzer (2018), p. 109.

³⁵ Warde (2011), p. 153; Warde (2018), p. 5

³⁶ Barile et al. (2018), p. 2.

discovered by some ingenious individual. Rather, examples of people being aware of the finitude of the earth's resources, and efforts to make them last for as long as possible, can be traced back many centuries, long before the term 'sustainability' was coined, or its German equivalent 'Nachhaltigkeit', during the eighteenth century.³⁷

Sustainability did not become a 'general developmental problem' until the discourse on sustainable resource management reached a broader societal and political level, primarily during the eighteenth century.³⁸ However, it was not discovered like an ancient artefact found in an archaeological excavation. Rather, sustainability as a political issue and discourse was invented, and as such, the use of the concept can be problematic considering its intrinsically political nature. As an historian, one is also running the risk of being anachronistic when applying it in the analysis of an earlier historical period. However, this does not mean that people living during the seventeenth century did not struggle with issues related to sustainable management of natural resources, or that local communities failed in maintaining sustainable levels of resource exploitation. It was an invention long in the making, worked out and informed by 'many micro-innovations and technologies' through a long process of dealing with dilemmas connected to resource management.³⁹ Joachim Radkau has further argued that whilst sustainable forestry was ultimately taken over by state administrations all over the European continent, it was historically speaking 'an invention of the forest communities'.⁴⁰ In one way, therefore, this study is a demonstration of how early modern communities struggled with these issues, without direct assistance or directives later provided by the modern science of forestry. It is a demonstration of how local communities collectively made decisions, established rules, and organised resource extraction within the framework of communal property regimes.

Even though the word sustainability did not exist in the seventeenth century, the idea or 'sense' that natural resources are limited did. And whilst 'people came to find themselves debating in this domain without giving it a name', it did influence how people organised resource appropriation within local communities, as well as how central states sought to control said

³⁷ Warde (2018), p. 5.

³⁸ Warde (2018), pp. 6–7.

³⁹ Warde (2011); Warde (2018), pp. 5–6, 333–334.

⁴⁰ Radkau (2012), p. 60.

exploitation.⁴¹ It is therefore an ambition of this thesis to investigate how people in seventeenth century North Ostrobothnia struggled to not undermine the ecological underpinnings on which that society was dependent. This will be done by analysing their experiences of such problems. Another important aspect that will be addressed is the actual words and concepts that were used in order to express these challenges. It is not expected, naturally, that the word ‘sustainability’ (Fi. *kestävyyys*, Swe. *hållbarhet*) was ever used. Nevertheless, people used other words and terms to communicate anxieties and problems that they faced. This will be important as the aim of this thesis partly is to better understand how they perceived and spoke about problems related to the management of forest resources.

Closely connected to ecological sustainability is of course the physical effort of exploiting natural resources. It is important to make clear that individuals and groups that were in some way tied to the exploitation of forest resources had vested interests that varied depending on a number of issues. The either conflicting or coinciding interests of the Swedish state, town dwelling burghers, and the Finnish peasantry were based upon what they each believed should be sustained or exploited. Hence, the mode of exploitation propagated by, for example, the state could easily lead to the disadvantage of other possible uses, and to the misfortune of, for example, the peasantry.⁴²

Putting this into a simulated example, a perhaps illuminating question would be to ask whether a sustainable use of forest resources meant the same thing to a member of the state organisation (say a county governor, Swe. *landshövding*) as it did to the peasant? An immediate follow-up question is what *kind* of sustainability one is talking about? If one assumes that the county governor believed that the ecological sustainability of the forests was important, what then did he think of the sustainability of peasant institutions? Did he and his administration care as much for that? If not, how did this affect the peasants’ ability to govern their forest commons?

It was mentioned earlier that the influence of users (or peasants) on management and policymaking motivates participation and compliance with rules (promoting *equity*). This in turn makes the longevity of the CPI more probable. However, what it does not is to promise high levels of *efficiency*. Nevertheless, would an external force intervene (the state) and impose rules

⁴¹ Warde (2018), p. 333.

⁴² See de Moor et al. (2002), pp. 15–31.

aimed at such motives, the CPI may suffer as a consequence. Before one tries to answer what sustainability means in the context of the expanding tar and timber industry in North Ostrobothnia, it must therefore be clarified what kind of sustainability one is exploring. Is it how the exploitation of forest landscapes affected the physical biomass of the environment? Is it the way peasants strived to maintain a robust and successful organisation where rules were obeyed and the woodlands were protected, despite increased market integration and pressures from the state? Or is it how peasants managed to make a living from forest related activities? These three questions exhibit pathways to different answers as they correspondingly deal with matters of *ecological*, *institutional*, and *economic sustainability*.⁴³ Clear definitions of the different dimensions of sustainability are therefore needed.

In this thesis, *ecological sustainability* is defined as the ability to not undermine the ecological underpinnings on which a society it is dependent, which is based on the awareness that the natural resources belonging to a community are not infinite.⁴⁴ The second dimension of *institutional sustainability* is defined as the ability to maintain a robust and successful organisation where rules are followed, and where users participate in monitoring and decision-making. The third dimension is *economic sustainability*, and it is defined as the ability to fairly distribute the benefits derived from the resource management system so that all users are able to make a living.

These *sustainabilities* are closely related and unified by one common denominator, in this case, the forest. It is also important to emphasise that since they are linked, there is a balance of prioritisation between them, just like in de Moor's three-dimensional model. Should an individual peasant wish to fully maximise profits acquired from making tar, the eventual consequence would of course be that the individual would be paid a large sum of money. However, the ecological consequence is that there would be less forest resources left for that peasant to exploit. Similarly, the community where the peasant lived would suffer since other users would have less resources to appropriate, which would negatively affect the level of reciprocity and unity in the community. Such prioritisations would therefore

⁴³ Myllyntaus, Hares & Kunnas (2002) examine the same categories of sustainability in relation to slash-and-burn agriculture in nineteenth century Finland.

⁴⁴ The ecological aspects and properties of a forest are many. However, I limit myself within the definition of ecological sustainability to only include wood used in the production of for example tar, shipbuilding material, materials for household construction, and firewood. Other potential uses of forest resources such as grazing and fodder are not included.

demonstrate a lack of *efficiency* and *equity*. It would also show how the prioritisations that were made overbalanced in the direction of achieving economic sustainability, whilst institutional and ecological sustainability suffered as a consequence. In other words, what was required was to make well-balanced prioritisations that enabled peasant communities to reach a state of equilibrium between *ecological*, *institutional*, and *economic sustainability* – or *sustainable balance*.

Apart from Ostrom's design principles, and de Moor's three-dimensional approach, other ways of estimating successful commons have been proposed. Maïka De Keyzer has written a case study on the sustainability of commons in the Campine in modern Belgium. In it, she defines three requirements for what can be deemed as a successful and sustainable common, which falls well in line with the *sustainabilities* outlined above. Firstly, it must maintain ecological resilience (or flexibility), in other words, be able to withstand planned or unforeseen changes and still retain the same essential structure (ecological sustainability). Secondly, users must be able to protect the common and collectively fend off infringements and alternative modes of appropriation that can be deemed harmful (institutional sustainability). Thirdly, the benefits derived from the system must accrue to all users (economic sustainability). These components, or requirements, makes it possible to assess the potential success or failure of a common, and it is possible, as she argues, 'to move beyond an ad hoc evaluation of every common pool institution in its own terms.'⁴⁵

The prioritisations made by peasants to achieve sustainable balance could have many implications for the community in which they lived. But it did not only affect them as prime users of the forest resources. It also had consequences for other groups who in other ways were involved in the growing tar and timber industry of North Ostrobothnia. It is therefore important to make clear whether it is, for example, the peasantry or the Swedish state's interests one is concerned with. The importance is derived from several reasons, but perhaps most notably because the Swedish state probably was not too concerned with the sustainability of peasant institutions. Moreover, it is possible to assume that they knew even less about the social and economic value of these institutions. In such a case, it is more likely that

⁴⁵ De Keyzer (2018), p. 109. For further reading on different ways of dividing and defining sustainability, Elkington (1994, 2004) has provided a tripartite division of the concept which he calls the triple bottom line, dividing it into environmental, social and economic dimensions, correspondingly representing the people, the planet, and the profits made.

the state's priorities were predominantly oriented towards something else. Perhaps towards achieving ecological sustainability so as to guarantee that the forests were exploitable for as long as possible, which ensured stable tax revenues. The peasants, on the other hand, needed a sustainable and robust CPI in order to achieve ecological sustainability.

This power struggle and exercise of authority has not yet been elucidated in the context of the Finnish forests, and the different interest groups' inclination to make different prioritisations in relation to sustainability has not yet been investigated. One aim of this thesis is therefore to examine these matters. The consequences of the prioritisations made by peasant communities, and how these were affected by other interest groups actions and prioritisations, will thus be possible to determine. However, before moving on to the source materials that will be investigated in this thesis, a thorough review of previous research is important.

1.3 Management of Common Lands in Early Modern Europe

As mentioned earlier, commons have been much researched by historians during the last decades. However, prior to this development, enclosures and the privatisation of common lands have similarly received ample attention.⁴⁶ Examining motivations and benefits of enclosure have often been a matter of estimating levels of agricultural productivity and cost-efficiency in relation to economic growth. When it comes to periods of rapid population growth, land scarcity, and commercialisation, questions concerning the efficiency of private property regimes vis-à-vis communal property have been raised where the former has often been deemed most effective in terms of reaching high levels of productivity in the exploitation of natural resources.⁴⁷ Common-property regimes were ultimately dismantled during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, largely motivated by economic growth and increased productivity.⁴⁸

However, in light of research produced from the 1980s onwards, much can now be said about what motivated common-pool regimes and kept driving forces relevant, as well as about the longevity and robustness of

⁴⁶ See for example McCloskey (1975); Fenoaltea (1976); Allen (1992); Overton (1996); Allen (2009).

⁴⁷ Baland, J.-M. and J.-P. Platteau (1998); Beltrán Tapia (2016).

⁴⁸ Chambers & Mingay (1966) ('The Agricultural Revolution, 1750–1880'); McCloskey (1975).

CPRs and local institutions during earlier centuries all across the European continent.⁴⁹ Whereas privatisation of common lands could result in lower transaction costs since less negotiation between users was needed, and because systems of monitoring and decision-making could be carried out privately, achieving these tasks collectively also had benefits. One such benefit was how collective action concerning management of common lands provided advantages of scale. This meant that matters of maintenance, risk, and monitoring were shared within the community, which was important when outside market forces grew.⁵⁰ Moreover, it has been demonstrated how private property did not automatically lead to lower transaction costs, but rather the opposite since the cost of enforcing and maintaining such property rights could be higher when compared to communal ones.⁵¹

The development of communal property regimes in Europe has been defined as a ‘silent revolution’ that began during the Middle Ages, albeit a slow one. This has been motivated and demonstrated by Tine de Moor as she refers to the fundamental importance of commons in European history and because they evolved through a movement from below. It was silent because only tacit and informal agreements first structured the arrangements between people and only later reached written form. This development, de Moor argues, created the ‘institutional infrastructure for socio-political change’ and it gradually became a cornerstone and essential characteristic of many countries in Western Europe. However, this was only possible provided that favourable conditions existed, such as freedom to organise, responsive rulers, favourable economic incentives, and motivations of working together in a reciprocal manner.⁵²

Lands kept as commons could be used for different purposes and thus provided different kinds of resources such as grazing for livestock, wood for fuel consumption, construction materials, or pine trees for tar production. Although there are both similarities and differences to be noticed in the organisation of CPIs across Western Europe, they largely served a similar purpose, namely, to provide local inhabitants with resources to sustain their households and families. Further similarities have been found concerning use-rights and customary regulations on the level of permissible consumption.

⁴⁹ See for example de Moor et al. (2002); de Moor (2009); Hersperger & Bürgi, (2009); Szabó, 2010; Beltrán Tapia (2015); de Moor 2015; Ongaro (2016).

⁵⁰ Warde (2006), pp. 17–18; de Moor (2009); de Moor (2015).

⁵¹ Runge (1986), pp. 624–625; de Moor (2009); Beltrán Tapia (2015).

⁵² de Moor (2008), pp. 179–180, 211.

This was achieved in many places by not allowing commoners to consume more than was necessary to sustain one's household.⁵³ Angus Winchester has pointed out several other similarities, for example concerning pasture, turbary, and estovers in England, which can be compared to Italian commons where cattle grazing, digging sods, picking herbs, and the organisation of collecting firewood followed similar arrangements of use rights.⁵⁴ Whereas the legal framework in for example England, Sweden, France, and Germany differed in many ways (with differing levels of influence exerted by local and central authorities), similar management systems can be observed where village communities and councils established rules of regulation that largely served the same purposes.⁵⁵

The development of enclosure and privatisation in Europe from the eighteenth century onwards followed similar processes, which naturally affected commoners' ability to provide for their families. Where custom and tradition had once been the guiding principle for establishing rules of access and use-rights, private property reigned. What had once been regarded as crucial for the economic stability of the community was now considered as hampering economic development. The fluctuating economic and political circumstances leading up to this were different across the continent. Nevertheless, prior to the wave of land reforms, it is possible to detect a trend of adaptation to such fluctuations in different countries, which did not lead to privatisation. Switzerland is a prime example of communal property regimes that have endured since the Middle Ages to present-day. For example, concerning the village of Törbel, Robert McC. Netting published a sequence of articles in the 1970s demonstrating how peasants kept communal property for many centuries and that they knew very well what benefits and drawbacks there were to be had from owning land in common.⁵⁶

Netting's findings have since inspired, for example, Elinor Ostrom in her ground-breaking study on the governing of the commons, but also more recent studies with the Swiss alpine commons in mind. Whilst Netting's examinations could show how communal management structures and traditions of sixteenth century Törbel could still be found in the twentieth century, what happened between those two points in time was not considered in his investigation. Therefore, Tobias Haller et al. have studied this intermediate

⁵³ Birrell (1987); Winchester (2015). Winchester (2022).

⁵⁴ Winchester (2015), p. 269.

⁵⁵ Winchester (2015), pp. 269–270.

⁵⁶ Netting (1972); Netting (1976); Netting (1981).

period in order to discover how mountain commons were able to endure and be managed successfully despite push-factors such as increasing urbanisation, diminished bargaining power, and reduced value of products throughout the centuries.⁵⁷ They argue that one decisive factor in this context was the commoners' ability to balance declines in value and increasing maintenance expenses with state interaction. They have also been able to demonstrate how the communal organisation could function as an intermediary between the local users and the state concerning the implementation of the new laws – in other words, that the CPI was able to aid the process of transferring new legal policies enforced by central authorities into the management practice of the commoners.⁵⁸

Different factors affected the intensity and pace of how communal property regimes changed and how enclosure processes evolved. For example, commoners in Spain during the late eighteenth century dealt with growing population pressures and increasing market integration on the one hand, and an increasingly interfering state on the other, which was aimed at accelerating the speed of privatisation as well as to control the management of common lands. In this context, social and environmental conditions played an important role in offsetting privatisation and thus for the pace of enclosure.⁵⁹ In the south-eastern Czech Republic and southern Moravia from the fourteenth century to the present, matters of stability and change in the management of woodlands have shown to be highly dependent on the socioeconomic driving forces of local communities. This set a trend where economic pressures and changing ideologies became two major forces of change in management and organisation.⁶⁰ Another example of adaptation can be found in south-western Germany during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Niels Grüne has shown how village communities found solutions to modernise (not dismantle) the commons regime in order to strengthen the economic and socio-political management in local communities, which had consequences for the sense of belonging and collective identities.⁶¹ In this context, it was important that the users were involved in the decision-making

⁵⁷ Haller et al (2021).

⁵⁸ Viallon & Nahrath (2021), pp. 37–38.

⁵⁹ Beltrán Tapia (2015), p. 241.

⁶⁰ Szabó (2010); Szabó et al. (2013).

⁶¹ Grüne (2011), pp. 47, 58.

process, which has been emphasised by several scholars as crucial in both present day communities who share resources and in historical ones.⁶²

It is often the case that with changing political and economic conditions follows changes in the organisational structure of institutions, be they formal or informal.⁶³ Rules and management strategies must sometimes change to better apply to the new circumstances that people find themselves in. As population pressure, level of urbanisation, and market forces grew, earlier research has pointed to how communities imposed harsher rules concerning access, which limited the number of users and led to higher levels of exclusivity. The ‘moral community’ of commoners thus created increasing degrees of articulating ‘outsiders’ and ‘insiders’ in order to create stability of expectation.⁶⁴ However, in De Keyzer’s study on the Campine during the late medieval period, she demonstrates how exclusivity was not a prerequisite for achieving a long-term sustainable use of resources, but rather how informality and inclusiveness functioned to avoid ‘tragedy’.⁶⁵ Consequently, whereas the example from south-western Germany demonstrated how local village communities modernised the management of commons, modernisation was not always required. Rather, formalisation in varying degrees could be enough to ensure a sustainable CPI.⁶⁶ A key component here is the institution’s ability to establish both formal and informal practices, as well as rules for how access and use-rights were administered. This allowed commoners in the Campine to react to new circumstances in effective ways. Although conflicts between different interest groups were common, they should be regarded as an integral part of the management structure and community building process rather than representing ill will and hostility within society.⁶⁷

Many woodlands in Western Europe were heavily exploited during the early modern period, to a degree that wood scarcity did occur from the sixteenth century onwards. The main factors of this shortage were attributed to the effects of industry and commerce. It was largely considered to be a

⁶² Haller et al. (2021), Prologue; See also Ostrom (1990); de Moor (2009); de Moor (2010); Haller et al. (2016), p. 69 on ‘constitutionality’, referring to the ‘pro-active and strategic participation in the design of local institutions negotiated in settings with heterogeneous stakeholders focused upon the use of natural resources’.

⁶³ North (1990).

⁶⁴ Warde (2006), pp. 36–37.

⁶⁵ De Keyzer explains how this led to subgroups of village communities were excluded along with already external groups, thus leading to a highly restrictive and exclusive CPIs. De Keyzer (2018), pp. 108–109.

⁶⁶ De Keyzer (2018); Starlander (2021).

⁶⁷ De Keyzer (2018), pp. 99–100, 110.

consequence of wastefulness and greediness of a few, and it was bad neighbourliness to consume more than was regarded as necessary – a notion prevalent not only on local but on national scales as well.⁶⁸ However, a change in this discourse was noticed towards the end of the seventeenth century when the two factors recounted above were instead regarded as the solution to inhibit the rapidly depleting forest landscapes. Instead, they provided incentives to create a more effective management structure and thus to preserve what still existed; profit thus became an incentive to ‘good husbandry’.⁶⁹

The Swedish Crown, as well as many rulers in other European countries, took legislative action to control the consumption of wood by enforcing laws and forest ordinances, the implementation of which soon made impressions in the bylaws of local communities all over the continent.⁷⁰ However, the scare of wood scarcity expressed in countries like Germany, France, England, Denmark, and Sweden has to be taken with a grain of salt. The reason is that it is doubtful that the shortage of wooden resources actually measured the comprehensive response and doomsday-like prophecies declared and communicated by many state administrations. Paul Warde therefore argues, I think reasonably, that it is more likely that the increasing fear of wood scarcity grew in a much quicker pace than woodlands were exploited, in other words, that fear outran reality. One possible explanation for such a disproportionate response could be, as Warde explains, that ‘powerful interest groups used the fear of [wood scarcity] to seize control of valuable assets [to] obtain them at subsidised rates.’ However, as pointed out by Bernd-Stefan Grewe and Richard Hölzl, declaring universal shortage of wood would not have been possible if there was not some degree of truth behind it, in other words, that local communities in fact did experience shortage to some extent. Regardless, the solution among many early modern states was to write and enforce a long line of forest ordinances and laws with the intention of safeguarding what still existed. Even though it was not possible to make sure that the new legislation was enforced in all corners of every state, it served as a clear signal of intent from authorities, often motivated by them ensuring the preservation of the common good. For example, it was ‘the founding concept of a discourse about forest regulation

⁶⁸ Warde (2018), pp. 79–80.

⁶⁹ Warde (2018), p. 78.

⁷⁰ Grewe & Hölzl (2018), p. 20.

and provided the founding myth for forestry in Germany' – much like it did in Sweden.⁷¹

Nevertheless, difficulties to preserve woodlands endured, for example, in countries like Denmark. Here, forests were intensively exploited during the period 1500–1650, leading Danish historian Bo Fritzbøger to coin it as an age of deforestation.⁷² Notwithstanding many state-led attempts and comprehensive efforts to sustain the forests that still existed, serious difficulties of generating resources of fuel and timber persisted throughout the eighteenth century.⁷³ Although state attempts to control the exploitation of woodlands were made, management and regulation was principally carried out by the local users. Moreover, in order for state regulations to have any effect, collaboration with members of the local population was necessary.⁷⁴ For example, forest rangers and guardians of woodlands who were given regulatory and monitoring tasks were often members of the local communities.⁷⁵

Sharing a common perception of how to achieve a long-term utilisation of forest resources was in other words crucial, and even though many woodlands were ultimately cut down, much still remained in areas where common-pool regimes lasted well into the nineteenth century.⁷⁶ In Spain, bookkeeping and different accounting techniques were used in small irrigation communities as well as in larger intercommon forests in order to ensure economic and social stability and to reinforce intergenerational reciprocity.⁷⁷ In the Republic of Venice and Spanish Lombardy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the robustness of the internal structure in local communities was essential to attain a sustainable management of the commons, and different kinds of cooperation aimed at preserving social capital were decisive.⁷⁸ Further north in mountainous alpine areas and north-eastern France, bylaws were used to successfully regulate commoners' utilisation of forest resources. During the revolutionary era in the region of Franche-Comté, common property regimes were preserved and created rich

⁷¹ Grewe & Hölzl (2021), p. 20; Warde (2018), pp. 72, 78–79.

⁷² Fritzbøger (2004), p. 110.

⁷³ Kjærgaard (1994).

⁷⁴ Radkau (2012), p. 59.

⁷⁵ In Denmark, for example, guardians of woodlands belonging to the crown were themselves local tenants, which can be compared to the office of chief constable in the Swedish Kingdom who was paid by the state but lived and worked in the local community (although often coming from the wealthier strata of the community). Warde (2018), p. 86. See also Fritzbøger (2018).

⁷⁶ Beltrán Tapia (2015).

⁷⁷ Lana-Berasain (2017).

⁷⁸ Ongaro (2016).

biodiversity, which has challenged the traditional notion that such ownership structures were the cause of the ultimate depletion of much of France's woodlands.⁷⁹ In north-western Germany and in the Westphalian region, forests were preserved from the late Middle Ages to the late nineteenth century by parcelling woodlands into different 'fields' that were used in rotation. This created a system capable of providing the growing iron industries and agricultural sector with resources whilst at the same time avoiding overexploitation.⁸⁰

The interests in European commons, how they have been exploited, shared, and sustained is still a very pertinent topic. This thesis is a contribution to this growing research field. It focusses on a period when international demand for forest products skyrocketed, which greatly affected the peasantry's ability to govern their forest commons. Not only will the investigation add to the historiography of the management of forests within the Swedish Kingdom, to which we shall now turn, but it will also provide an additional reference point concerning how common forests were managed in a European context.

1.4 Forests in the Swedish Kingdom

To understand how forests within the Swedish Kingdom were governed and how management and use-rights were administered, it is important to explain their relation to the village community and peasant economy. Apart from the buildings and houses that the peasants owned, villages consisted of infields and outlying lands that were used for different purposes and in different intensities. Closest to the village centre were the infields, consisting of fields and hay meadows used for agricultural purposes. This was a relatively unilateral and intensive exploitation, and most of the food supply was produced here. The outlying lands were located further away from the village centre and was characterised by versatile utilisation. Not only was it a storehouse of firewood which none could do without in the cold winters of the seventeenth century. It was also the place where peasants let their cattle graze in the summer periods. It was here they hunted wild game, fished in rivers and streams, practiced slash-and-burn agriculture, cut wood to build

⁷⁹ Matteson (2015).

⁸⁰ Brakensiek (2002), p. 239.

houses, and it was here they found the pine trees (Lat. *Pinus sylvestris*) used in the process of making tar.⁸¹

Large areas of land under Swedish rule during the seventeenth century were woodlands, although they dominated in the northern parts of the kingdom.⁸² Already during the sixteenth century, demand for forest resources increased, which had consequences for the structure of peasant households. The otherwise agriculturally driven household economy changed as they had to uphold a continuous and stable production of forest products, which affected the organisation of work and how resources and use-rights were managed. Contrary to the infields, which were owned by individual households, the forest was owned as a common. It is important here to emphasise the distinction between outlying land and common. A common was defined in terms of *ownership*, in other words, it was owned collectively by the village members by virtue of them being landholders in the village. In contrast, the outlying land was not defined by virtue of how it was owned (privately or collectively), but instead by its *function*. It was, similar to hay meadows and fields, a land category of its own (Swe. *markslag*) with the difference that it was located further away from the village centre. However, more than often, the two coincided in the sense that the outlying land was where the forest was located, which was owned in common.

Another important distinction to make is that of *peasant* (or *peasantry*) and *peasant community*. The definition I use of a *peasant* during the seventeenth century is someone who ‘worked a farm that had been officially assessed for a specific rate of tax or rent.’⁸³ Outside this landholding group of people were the landless and semi-landless population, such as crofters, lodgers, and day labourers, thus defined by their non-possession of land that was taxed by the state. In general terms, anyone who owned property within a village was granted access to the common. They were furthermore the ones who participated in the regulation and management of the forest. The use of the term *peasant community*, therefore, is based on this distinction, that is, the landholding part of the rural population who, through their land ownership, had legal right to partake in and decide the outcome of matters related to the management of the forest commons.

⁸¹ Myrdal (1999); L.-O. Larsson (1996); Österblom (1996); Svensson (1998); Gadd (2000).

⁸² Approximately 80 percent of Swedish farms were located in well-forested areas around the turn of the sixteenth century. L.-O. Larsson (1996), p. 8; Svensson (1998), pp. 10–11; Gadd (2000), pp. 39–40.

⁸³ Gadd (2011), p. 122.

In early modern Sweden, there were different categories of land and different kinds of ownership. One distinction that became increasingly important during the sixteenth century and onwards was that of *dominium directum* and *dominium utile*. These referred to the different ways in which land was owned and used. Possession of the former meant owning the right to extract taxes or rent from the person who inhabited the land, whereas the latter meant use-rights (or usufruct) to the land. In the case of the Swedish forests, the state possessed *dominium directum* and the peasantry *dominium utile*. During the latter part of the seventeenth century, it became increasingly common for the state to make efforts of transferring the right of *dominium utile* to groups that it believed were in more pressing need of forest resources, for example owners of mines and metalworks. In this way, many forest areas located close to such industries became *rekognitionsskogar*, meaning that owners of mines and ironworks were allowed to pay a fee (Swe. *rekognition*) in order to acquire the use-rights of a certain forest (Swe. *skog*). However, this process of transference was mostly concentrated to Bergslagen and central Sweden and was not practiced in the northern parts of the kingdom, including Finland, where the state had less reason to question it.⁸⁴

The sixteenth century saw an agricultural expansion and intensified exploitation of the forest bearing outlying lands. One example of this was the establishment of summer farms (Swe. *fäbod*) in the vast forests of the north, to which peasants moved and grazed their cattle. By utilising resources on the outlying lands in this way, the number of animals kept by individual peasants could increase and the division of labour in peasant households changed, allowing more people to engage in farm-related work. Furthermore, it facilitated social and economic cooperation between peasants.⁸⁵

Apart from intensified exploitation for domestic consumption, exports also grew. As mentioned earlier, the three main exports from the Swedish Kingdom during the seventeenth century were iron, copper, and tar. Together, they accounted for approximately 90 percent of Sweden's total exports in the middle of the century⁸⁶. The first two were mainly produced in and around the region of Bergslagen (stretching over Gästrikland, Västmanland, Närke, and parts of Dalarna and Värmland).⁸⁷ Exports grew nearly six-fold over a period of twenty years during the first half of the seventeenth century and continued

⁸⁴ Molander (1982), pp. 220–221.

⁸⁵ J. Larsson (2009), p. 12; J. Larsson (2017).

⁸⁶ Villstrand (2011), p. 434.

⁸⁷ See Figure 3.

to increase as the century progressed.⁸⁸ The firewood and charcoal that the peasantry produced was the fuel that kept the industries working; they were ‘the blood vessels through which the ironworks were kept alive’.⁸⁹

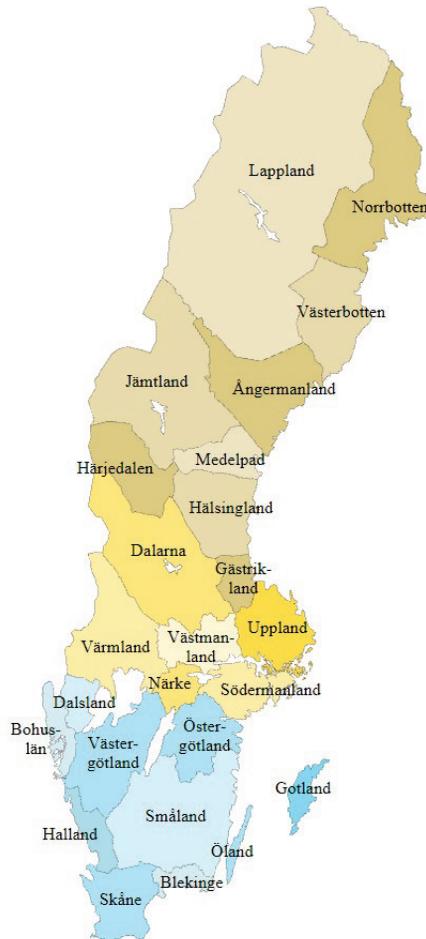


Figure 3. Provinces of Sweden, with the names of the provinces. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sverigekarta-Landskap_Text.svg

The exploitation of forest landscapes pushed westward, moving the resource frontier deeper into the woodlands of southern Värmland and later moving

⁸⁸ J. Larsson (2009), p. 40.

⁸⁹ Ågren et al. (1998), p. 141.

north through the province of Dalarna.⁹⁰ The level of production and the mines' need of forest resources was of such proportions that many metal works suffered from a shortage of charcoal and wood.⁹¹

Similar to the Danish case, the Swedish Crown appointed forest rangers to police woodlands. The state institution of *Riksjägmästarämbet* was founded in 1634 and was tasked with monitoring woodlands owned by the Swedish Crown. In a study on Mark hundred (Swe. *härad*) during the period 1601–1750, Ulf Nýren has been able to show how legal cases of unlawful forest exploitation gradually came to receive a higher level of importance than that of hunting and fishing, which were also a part of the foresters' responsibilities to oversee.⁹²

The peasantry's right to common lands and ability to administer matters of management and utilisation, which had been largely free for many centuries, began to move in the direction of the central authorities during the seventeenth century.⁹³ This led, among other things, to an increasing number of conflicts within peasant communities over forest resources and common lands. In Fryksdal hundred in Värmland County, collective and social rights were gradually redefined under these conditions, which ultimately led peasants to make requests of enclosure during the late seventeenth century, although mainly during the first half of the eighteenth century. This was first carried out between villages and later between individual households. In the particular context of the region, privatisation of the outlying lands was beneficial. The reason was that it gave peasants more clearly defined ownership rights and a stronger position against mine owners who profited greatly from ambiguity in the common-property regime in combination with the legal advantages found through the state ordinances.⁹⁴

The establishment of mines and ironworks resulted in much doubt and worry among peasant communities. For example, as Iggesund ironwork in Gävleborg County was in the process of being established in 1686, the local peasantry feared that their fishing rights would be encroached and that the forest would be completely cut down. Even though the county governor ensured that such would not be the case, the peasants persisted in their

⁹⁰ For more information on resource and commodity frontier, see Moore (2010a); Moore (2010b).

⁹¹ Approximately 20 to 24 barrels of charcoal (one barrel contained approximately 125 litres) were needed to produce 150 kilograms of wrought iron. Karlsson (1990), pp. 24–26; Sjöberg (1996), pp. 43–44.

⁹² Nýren (2012), pp. 134–135.

⁹³ Karlsson (1990), p. 37; Eliasson (1997), pp. 54–55.

⁹⁴ Granér (2002), pp. 291–292, 326–327.

disapproval. This infuriated the county governor who made direct threats of stripping them of their ancient rights if they did not cease all opposition towards the establishment of the ironwork. The ironwork was ultimately in operation in 1688.⁹⁵ Another example can be found in Örebro County and Viby parish where the ability of local communities to manage their own common lands and forests was gradually limited by authorities and ultimately lost completely. In its place to manage the utilisation came the county governor and other crown officials. However, it is interesting to point out that the depletion and overexploitation of the forests in this area accelerated and reached levels which can be compared to Hardin's tragedy only after the peasants lost their power of influence.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, matters were naturally not identical wherever you happened to find large landscapes of forests under exploitation. However, the development in and around Bergslagen resounded elsewhere. In being the third largest forest-related industry after iron and copper, the production of tar was also affected by the Swedish state's resource mobilisation during the seventeenth century.

Tar production provided additional incomes for peasant families in many places around the Swedish Kingdom and complemented seasonal tasks of agricultural production throughout the year. It could also bring potentially life-saving opportunities. One such prospect was to avoid being conscripted as a soldier in the king's army by using the extra income gained from tar production to pay someone else to take one's place, or by bribing the county police commissioner or bailiff (Swe. *fogde*). Although this required a considerable amount of money, it was usually worthwhile if the household's welfare was at stake. As such, tar production was a successful method of adaptation as increased pressure from the state was imposed on the peasantry.⁹⁷

In certain parts of the kingdom, the peasants' engagement in tar production could take such proportions that it constituted the majority of the household income, particularly in Finland. However, this was met with criticism by officials within the central government who believed it to be a wasteful enterprise. In a letter issued by the Crown in 1662 to its county governors, it was stated that tar production consumed wood that was necessary for the survival of peasant households, thus making tar production

⁹⁵ Montelius (1985), pp. 27–29.

⁹⁶ Jansson (2003), pp. 226–228. See also Pettersson (1995).

⁹⁷ Villstrand (1992a), p. 242; Villstrand (1992b), pp. 65–66.

a recipe for the peasants' own ruin. In 1668, the privy councillor (Swe. *kammarråd*) Schüttheilm argued that when profits increased, people would abandon all other duties and chores that were vital to keep the household production running, adding that only overexploitation and consequent negative effects were to be expected for peasant families, as well as for society at large, if it was allowed to continue.⁹⁸

The expansion of the tar industry and the exploitation of forest landscapes gradually spread throughout the kingdom. In North Ostrobothnia, it spread from the coast inland towards the border with Russia.⁹⁹ However, tar had not always been the principal aim when it came to using forest resources in this region. Rather, forests were used for different purposes at different points in time. Sven-Erik Åström has explained how forest use in Ostrobothnia followed different phases of exploitation. Up until the early seventeenth century, slash-and-burn agriculture had been the dominant forest-related occupation among peasants. Chronologically, the period of intense tar production came to overlap with the previously more intense practice of slash-and-burn agriculture, ultimately replacing it as the most common form of forest exploitation. This development was heavily influenced by demands from the international commercial metropolises on the European continent.¹⁰⁰

The cultivation of new lands spread, but occupation of already settled and common lands also increased. It was in other words possible for common lands to pass into private hands long before the land reforms and enclosures of the eighteenth century. However, this would only happen if a settler was permitted to clear parts of a village or parish's outlying lands or forest to make fields and meadows which he then would farm. If the village saw this as a threat to their current business ventures, for example tar production, the request would be denied.¹⁰¹

Whilst the physical division of forest commons during the eighteenth century is beyond the scope of this thesis, the development during the seventeenth century, and the changing social and economic conditions that it would bring about, set the tone and foundation for future management of common forests in North Ostrobothnia. As such, by analysing how forest commons were shared and how use-rights were regulated during the seventeenth century, it will be possible to better explain the development of

⁹⁸ Runefelt (2001), pp. 54–57.

⁹⁹ Villstrand (1992b).

¹⁰⁰ Åström (1978), pp. 87–91.

¹⁰¹ Jutikkala (1963), p. 269.

later periods and understand why the wave of privatisation in Finland transpired as it did.

1.5 North Ostrobothnia

Much research has already been written on how and for what purposes the Finnish forests were used during the seventeenth century. In order to position this thesis in relation to what is already known, a summary of the current state of research and historic contextualisation of the region will therefore be outlined below.

The Republic of Finland was an integral part of the Swedish Kingdom since the medieval period but was surrendered to Russia after the Finnish War of 1808–1809. Already from the fourteenth century onwards, Swedish kings had an interest in the outlying lands of Finland but struggled to gain influence over the peasantry's commons. After the king Gustav I broke off from the Catholic Church during the Protestant Reformation in 1527, revenues previously raised by the church now accrued to the Crown. The king began an ambitious enterprise to increase control over all his dominions with the principal aim of further increasing tax revenues, which included Finland. A process of colonisation began where peasants were called upon to settle on the vast outlying lands of Finland.¹⁰² The state furthermore guaranteed new settlers fishing privileges, which would prompt new cultivation and thus generate stable incomes for the state.¹⁰³

The name Ostrobothnia originates from its location in the Gulf of Bothnia, divided into Westrobothnia (West Bothnia) on the Swedish side and Ostrobothnia (East Bothnia) on the Finnish side. Today, Ostrobothnia is further divided into four regions in longitudinal order from south to north.¹⁰⁴ The region was divided into seven parishes at the beginning of the seventeenth century but developed into twelve by the end of the century as changes were made in the administrative and ecclesiastical composition of the parishes.¹⁰⁵ The region stretched from the parish of Kokkola (today in Central Ostrobothnia) to the northernmost parish of Kemi (today in Lapland).¹⁰⁶ It

¹⁰² Jutikkala (1963), pp. 95–99; *Svenska Österbottens Historia 1* (1977), pp. 68–73.

¹⁰³ *Svenska Österbottens Historia 3* (1980), p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ The four different regions are South Ostrobothnia, Ostrobothnia, Central Ostrobothnia, and North Ostrobothnia. See Figures 1 & 4.

¹⁰⁵ Virrankoski (1973), pp. 523–524.

¹⁰⁶ See Figure 4.

extended from the Gulf of Bothnia north of Oulujärvi (Swe: *Ule träsk*) to the eastern border with Russia, thus included what is today Kainuu. The region, together with the rest of Finland, played an important role for the Swedish kings, not only because of the shared borders with Russia, but also because of what could be extracted from the vast forests in the north.



Figure 4. Historical province of Ostrobothnia in Finland coloured in light grey and modern regions outlined in dark grey. The historical province of North Ostrobothnia and the region that is investigated encircled in red. Changes made: names of towns and the regions of modern Ostrobothnia added, the colour scheme changed. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Historical_province_of_Ostrobothnia,_Finland.svg.

Earlier research conducted by Pentti Virrankoski has been able to show how the population of North Ostrobothnia was already increasing during the sixteenth century. The population more than doubled between the years 1548 and 1592, although with a temporary cessation during the Russo-Swedish

War (1590–1595). After the smoke had settled and turmoil subsided, the people that had immigrated to the region mainly came from southwest Finland and Satakunta, inhabiting the coastal regions, as well as from Savo, who settled in the hinterlands. The livelihood of the population was mainly based on slash-and-burn agriculture and fishing. The settlements were often more or less isolated with one or two homesteads, sometimes clustering into smaller villages.¹⁰⁷

Throughout the seventeenth century, the population of North Ostrobothnia saw mainly two periods of rapid increase, during 1607–1633 and 1680–1690. Within another timeframe, Virrankoski has estimated the total increase of the population from approximately 9 000 to 14 000 between the years 1654 and 1695.¹⁰⁸ From Helmer Tegengren's research, we learn that the settlement structure of villages was defined by its size and function. It usually constituted of two or more units (homesteads)¹⁰⁹ with a defined area of ownership in which the inhabitants owned property individually, in common, or in a mixture of the two. Given the nature of the ownership structure, and since property was both owned privately and jointly, the village members thus perceived themselves as a village by virtue of their common interests. However, it was not uncommon that single homesteads were built farther away from village communities in the still uncultivated areas of the region.¹¹⁰

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the structure of peasant households in North Ostrobothnia followed a model that had been abandoned in many other places in the Swedish Kingdom: the extended family system (Swe. *storfamiljsystemet*). Earlier research has explained how this structure developed at this time as the expansion of the tar industry intensified.¹¹¹ It meant that whilst the owner of a homestead (the father) had reached a certain age where it in other places was customary to transfer the ownership to a son or other relative, he often remained as the head of the household until his death. This resulted in his children and extended family members similarly remaining at the homestead, creating a household structure consisting of several families, all under the father's leadership. And even when a new

¹⁰⁷ Virrankoski (1973), pp. 13–15, 31–32.

¹⁰⁸ Virrankoski (1973), pp. 13–15, 31–32, 757 Table III.

¹⁰⁹ Note difference between 'homestead' (the property and land of the farm) and 'household' (the family or group of people living together on the homestead).

¹¹⁰ Tegengren (1941), pp. 73–75; Jutikkala (1963), pp. 49–52; Villstrand (1992a), p. 151.

¹¹¹ Jutikkala (1963), pp. 62–63; Villstrand (1992a), p. 243.

patriarch was chosen, siblings and relatives remained.¹¹² Furthermore, Martin Andersson's research on migration patterns in the early seventeenth century Swedish Kingdom has shown how peasants in the northern parts (including Norrland and most of Finland) migrated much less than peasants in central Sweden (for example Östergötland).¹¹³

As mentioned previously, the forests in North Ostrobothnia were divided on village and parish level. As such, it followed a similar logic as the division of *almindinger* (En. commons) in Denmark during the medieval and early modern period. Whilst access to the *alminding* was open to everyone regardless to what village a person belonged, it was further divided into *overdrev* and *fællesskov*, where the former was shared by a certain number of villages (inter-village) and the latter between the members of one village (intra-village).¹¹⁴ However, there were no commons that were completely open in North Ostrobothnia. They were instead prescribed to the members of parish (cf. *overdrev*) and village (cf. *fællesskov*) communities. Nevertheless, there were regional differences. For example, in the parish of Kalajoki (briefly the Barony of Ikalaborg, 1652–1674), pasture and farmable lands were privately owned and each village had their own forest, which was complemented by the parish forest from which all landholding peasants in the parish were entitled to appropriate resources.¹¹⁵ By contrast, in Sääminki parish in southern Savo in southeast Finland, arable and forest lands could be independently and collectively owned in different constellations, which often resulted in conflicts.¹¹⁶

Up until the seventeenth century, the boundaries of village forests in Finland laid unmarked and had been for centuries. They were not specified unless there was a particular need for it. They were instead kept in the collective memory of the community and passed on through generations.¹¹⁷ This was not unique to Ostrobothnia since, for example, Danish commons similarly lacked formal borders.¹¹⁸ However, if they needed to be reaffirmed,

¹¹² Tegengren (1943), pp. 62–63.

¹¹³ Andersson (2018), p. 240.

¹¹⁴ Fritzbøger (2004), pp. 56–57, Figure 9.

¹¹⁵ Jutikkala (1963), pp. 46–55; Virrankoski (1973), p. 179; *Svenska Österbottens Historia* 3 (1980), pp. 69–70; Per-Arne Karlsson defines the parish forest as a general resource reserve for the peasantry, P-A Karlsson (1990), p. 27; Villstrand (1992a), pp. 153, 168.

¹¹⁶ Villstrand (1992a), p. 161. See also Jutikkala (1963).

¹¹⁷ Tegengren (1941, p. 100) argues that the forests importance grew at the expense of fishing, something which Virrankoski (1973, pp. 183–184) similarly points out.

¹¹⁸ Fritzbøger (2004), p. 140.

young people of the community could accompany inspections in order to preserve the memory of their location for posterity. In contrast to South Ostrobothnia and areas in Western Finland, the ownership structure in the north had not been consolidated to the same degree. This was mainly due to the relatively late inhabitation of the region and because the importance of agriculture developed later here than in the south.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, as explained by Eino Jutikkala, borders had a sacrosanct character. If they were marked, carvings on trees or stones placed in an upright position testified to the outer limits of the forest. The crooks and bends of the forest borders could even be marked, earlier research argues, with human bones, which points to the superstitious notions linked to the inviolability of borders, both within the village as on the outlying lands.¹²⁰

Jutikkala explains how the village forest was in many places shared by way of allotting each household an ancient harvest area (Swe. *hävdivunnen hyggeplats*) from which members of each respective household were entitled to appropriate resources.¹²¹ This meant that one household claimed a part of the forest as ‘their forest’ since tradition dictated that it was here the members of that household harvested the resources they needed. This was also the case concerning burn-beating of coniferous forests, or slash-and-burn agriculture, where the person who first marked an area had the right to burn and later cultivate it.¹²² Nevertheless, as mentioned above, these areas were not always physically marked. It is therefore not surprising if disputes over such harvest areas occurred when general cutting activities increased throughout the seventeenth century. A necessity to revisit the matter of who was allowed to harvest where could thus easily occur, which is a process important to examine as one seeks to understand how forests were governed by peasant communities.

The village itself could consist of several homesteads, but single homesteads (Swe. *avgärda hemman*) also existed and were located farther away on the outlying lands of a village. The emergence of such homesteads is difficult to pinpoint, although earlier research has found such colonialisation activities during the medieval period. In *Medieval Scandinavian Law* and in the *Construction Law* (Swe. *Byggingabalken*), it is stated that on the outlying lands of the old village (Swe. *bolby*), a new village (Swe. *avgärda by*) or

¹¹⁹ Virrankoski (1973), p. 179.

¹²⁰ Jutikkala (1963), pp. 47–48. See also Virrankoski (1973), p. 179.

¹²¹ Jutikkala, (1963), p. 53. *Hävdivunnen* can also be translated as customary, Ågren (1997), p. 290.

¹²² Ahvenainen (1996), p. 6.

homestead could be established, and the cultivated land had to be fenced and taxed. However, rights to utilise the forest common were restricted. Nevertheless, from the medieval period onwards, these restrictions were gradually forgotten and many homesteads that were built long before the seventeenth century were ultimately incorporated into the community.¹²³

The forest surrounding the village could be used for various purposes and different sections were used at different times during the year. Sakari Kuusi has explained that during the middle of the eighteenth century, forests could be used *krångelvis* (En. in rotation). This meant that when members of one household were harvesting in, for example, the western part of the forest, another harvested in the east.¹²⁴ This would ensure that members of each household were free to do as they pleased with their current part of the forest and without infraction. However, the biomass of the forest could grow differently in different areas. For instance, if one section was rich in pine, it would most likely be used for tar production, whilst other species were more suitable for firewood or shipbuilding. Using different sections of the forest in rotation thus meant that every household got their fair share if the resources of the forest varied.

The general location of a household's harvest area was probably well-known to the members of the village. However, claiming an area by referring to the ancient utilisation of the place did come with preconditions. The validity of the claim was founded upon the argument of *urminnes hävd* (En. ancient claim or usage), which was commonly referred to in legal disputes. It meant that a certain circumstance could be confirmed as true or false depending on who had been harvesting in the particular area and on what the local community had to say, or what they remembered.¹²⁵ It was in other words not enough that someone 'remembered' where his own harvest area was located. It also had to be confirmed by the other village members. The community's memory was thus supposed to regulate the distribution of forest areas to certain households and could provide considerable legal strength in cases when *urminnes hävd* was disputed. However, this was not a tradition unique to the Swedish Kingdom. In Denmark, the equivalent term of '*af Arilds tid*' (En. since old times) was often used to resolve disputes over use-rights.¹²⁶ Moreover, such arguments were not only used to

¹²³ Jutikkala (1963), pp. 49–52; Tollin (1999), pp. 66–68.

¹²⁴ Kuusi (1914), p. 23.

¹²⁵ Ågren (1997), pp. 221–226.

¹²⁶ Fritzboøger (2004), pp. 156–157.

establish ownership within the peasant community. Maria Ågren has for example demonstrated how Major Johan Appelborn lost a legal case against the peasants of Tierp in Uppland, Sweden, in the Royal Court of Appeal in Stockholm (Swe. *Svea hovrätt*) concerning a meadow located in the Blackmyran common on the grounds that the peasants claimed to have used it since time immemorial.¹²⁷

The regulation arrangement in villages could thus be such that peasants claimed areas of the common forest as theirs through ancient claim. However, this was not practiced everywhere. It was also common that the forest was open to free use for anyone who held property in the village. This could lead to a situation where the ecological sustainability of the forest was more seriously threatened as otherwise would have been the case had other regulations, such as harvest areas, been practiced. In South Ostrobothnia, for example, certain villages had to ration each household's consumption of firewood as over-exploitation eventually became a growing problem.¹²⁸

As mentioned earlier, a peasant was someone who 'worked a farm that had been officially assessed for a specific rate of tax or rent.'¹²⁹ This meant that the larger farm a peasant owned, and the more land he had in the village, the more tax he was obliged to pay. This was important since it had direct consequences for the extent of resources the members of each household were allowed to appropriate from the common. The higher the taxable capacity (Swe. *mantal*)¹³⁰ of the homestead, the more resources the people living on that homestead was permitted to appropriate, which was a longstanding tradition in North Ostrobothnia as well as in the Swedish side of the kingdom.¹³¹ Property was thus the key that granted access, which served to regulate the extent of resources extracted. This was also the guiding principle in other places in Europe, for instance in Denmark, England, Belgium, northern France, Flanders, and in much of Germany.¹³²

In the legal code of King Christopher from 1442 (Swe. *Kristofers landslag*), it was decreed that no landholder was allowed to transfer use-rights of the forest to an outsider without the consent of the village community.¹³³

¹²⁷ Ågren (1997), p. 283.

¹²⁸ Jutikkala (1963), p. 53.

¹²⁹ Gadd (2011), p. 122.

¹³⁰ In 1608, one *mantal* equaled an arable area of approximately 2.4 hectares, Huhtamaa & Helamac (2017), p. 45.

¹³¹ Virrankoski (1973), p. 184–185; Granér (2002).

¹³² Fritzboeger (2004), p. 159; Winchester (2015).

¹³³ Jutikkala (1963), p. 53.

This applied both transference to peasants from other villages and parishes as it did to burghers in the coastal towns. Virrankoski has explained that such illegal activities primarily occurred in the parish of Oulu where the burghers in the coastal town considered the inland forests to be part of their inheritance since many of them were, after all, the sons of the peasants living there.¹³⁴ The importance of the Ostrobothnian forest commons has been emphasised by Virrankoski considering that they were the storehouse from which peasants' extracted resources for both commercial and personal purposes. Consequently, therefore, conflict between parishes concerning the whereabouts of borders was a natural consequence of increased exploitation.¹³⁵ Borders of any sort were a sign of power and ownership for the inhabitants of the village or parish in question. As such, they shaped the identity of the people living there and created communal symbolism among them. Maintaining borders was 'an act of categorization and an attempt to distinguish oneself from others'. However, as pointed out by Marko Lamberg, Minna Mäkinen, and Merja Uotila, they were simultaneously characterised by changeability: 'borders move and resemble processes; borders are created, barriers brought down, but also reinforced.'¹³⁶

Many of the borders that came to be discussed and disputed during the seventeenth century had earlier been what Jutikkala terms as *sämjoråar*: borders of amity.¹³⁷ This essentially meant that they were orally defined and maintained as long as amity was preserved. Calling for an inspection of such a border was not an attempt made by peasants to reorganise the system of ownership as later enclosure movements would, but rather an effort of gaining more clarity and structure. A similar trend can be noticed elsewhere in the Swedish Kingdom, for example, in the forest rich county of Värmland.¹³⁸ When inspections were carried out, the community's collective memory was no longer the only place where knowledge of the border's location was stored. A legal document was produced and given to the community members, which gave the villagers a legal point of reference if the border was ever questioned again. The legal documents could thus strengthen the legitimacy of the border

¹³⁴ Virrankoski (1973), p. 261–265.

¹³⁵ Virrankoski (1973), pp. 179–185.

¹³⁶ Lamberg et al. (2011), p. 295, 299, 309.

¹³⁷ Jutikkala (1963), p. 276.

¹³⁸ Granér (2002), pp. 236–239.

and cement its location more firmly.¹³⁹ An inevitable consequence was that borders thus became less movable.

In another context, the immovability of borders as a result of inspections have been emphasised by Heather Falvey in her investigation of Duffield Firth in Derbyshire, England, in the 1630s. She addresses the nature of borders' fluidity as they were kept in living memory of the local inhabitants. She also explains that as long as no legal document existed and no fences or markers delineated the forest landscape, the borders were essentially movable to the will of the local users. As surveyors were to carry out the disafforestation and later enclosure of Duffield Firth, locals wilfully 'forgot' where the borders were located and sometimes responded with physical violence as they were asked to assist in pointing them out. The essentially unlimited use of forest resources they had enjoyed up until that point risked being drastically limited if the borders were to be defined and the 'the fluidity of their customs would be prescribed forever by such inscription.'¹⁴⁰

Virrankoski has suggested that the emergence of parish borders was most likely not a result of peasants quarrelling over forest areas or resources. It is more probable, he explains, that these documents were produced due to disagreements over pasturelands and fishing rights.¹⁴¹ However, the need to establish the location of borders went hand in hand with peasant society experiencing an increasing level of market integration. Similar developments can be noticed in, for example, Denmark during the medieval and early modern period where, according to Bo Fritzbøger, open and freely accessible commons ultimately had to be demarcated by 'fixed borderlines and boundary marks'.¹⁴² Nevertheless, Kuusi has argued that those falling victim to border violations often abandoned their efforts of seeking justice and that they were even urged to do so.¹⁴³

The forest commons of North Ostrobothnia remained throughout the seventeenth century. It was not until 1736 that County Governor Karl Frölich submitted an official proposal to the Swedish government, arguing that the forests should be properly divided between all villages, which was mostly motivated by making the taxation system more effective. This proposal was followed by several attempts to make the ownership structure of both infields

¹³⁹ Ågren (1997), pp. 183–187; Granér (2002), p. 237

¹⁴⁰ Falvey (2013), pp. 7–8.

¹⁴¹ Virrankoski (1973), p. 183.

¹⁴² Fritzbøger (2004), p. 140.

¹⁴³ Kuusi (1914).

and outlying lands more coherent. By the time of the Diet (Swe. *Riksdag*) of 1760–1762, a deputation reported that 53 borders had been established to exist between the parishes and villages in North Ostrobothnia. However, many of them were still unclear and their location were still questioned by the local peasantry. A final division of the forests would not be established until the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁴

1.5.1 Tar Production

Small-scale tar production in Sweden is known to have been practiced since the late Iron Age, but does not appear in historical sources until the fourteenth century.¹⁴⁵ Most of the tar produced for the European market came from Prussian forests at the turn of the seventeenth century; however, these forests had been in decline for some time. As a result, tar produced in the forests of Ostrobothnia came to dominate on the European market throughout the seventeenth century.¹⁴⁶ Here, tar forests (or pine forests) were extensive and the process of producing tar was an industry solely managed by peasant communities, from the harvesting of trees and distillation to the final transportation of the finished product to the coastal town ports. Before the tar boom of the seventeenth century, tar was generally produced to meet household needs and it was used as an impregnating agent for boats, barrels, roofs, and other belongings or utensils that needed to be waterproof.

Around the year 1600, as much as 76 percent of the total amount of tar produced within the Swedish Kingdom came from Finland, and 55–60 percent of that was produced in Ostrobothnia in the 1630s.¹⁴⁷ Roughly 18 700 barrels were exported annually from Swedish sea ports at the beginning of the century, which grew to approximately 130 000 barrels during the 1680s, finally reaching its high watermark in the nineteenth century. The tar was mainly exported to the Netherlands and England and was thereafter introduced to the European market.¹⁴⁸ Producing tar became something that occupied large parts of the population in Finland, especially in Ostrobothnia. This was partly because of the large amount of pine forests that grew there, but also due to the many rivers and streams, which provided well-functioning

¹⁴⁴ Tegengren (1941), pp. 100–110.

¹⁴⁵ Hennius (2018).

¹⁴⁶ *Svenska Österbottens Historia* 3 (1980), pp. 69–70; Tikka (2020), p. 97.

¹⁴⁷ Alho, 1968, p. 200; Villstrand, 1992; Villstrand, 1996.

¹⁴⁸ Villstrand (1996), pp. 62–63.

transport routes.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, since 1608, peasants were allowed to pay their taxes with tar instead of ready money, which was highly scarce in northern Finland at this time.¹⁵⁰ As production of tar for sale overseas spread from the parishes of Vaasa and Kokkola northward, earlier research has tried to estimate its importance for the peasant population in the region and concluded that it differed between the parishes in stages. For example, the dominance of the more northern town of Oulu as the main port for overseas export did not come about until later in the eighteenth century.¹⁵¹

The production of tar included several stages that were similar to the production of charcoal, albeit longer in temporal aspect. As mentioned earlier, the utilised tree species was pine, which needed to be barked. Approximately two and a half meters of bark were removed from the ground and up so that the trunks could sweat resin, only leaving a thin strip of bark on the north side so that the tree would not die. After two to four years, in the autumn or winter, the last strip of bark was removed, the tree was cut down, and the debarked part was transported to the tar pit (Fi. *tervahauta*; Swe. *tjärdal*, *tjörgrop*, or *tjärgrav*).¹⁵² This process could take place both close to and relatively far away from the coast, but preferably at a shorter distance from navigable lake and water systems. The wood was stacked in the pit, covered with peat and soil, and distilled for approximately one week during the following spring. The pit was lit at the upper end when the wind was favourable, which forced the heat into the stacked pile of wood and, as the wood was charred, the tar ran out into a vessel at the lower end of the pit.¹⁵³ Judging from previous research, the enterprise of making a tar pit and producing tar was often carried out in common where several households cooperated in a gathered effort.¹⁵⁴ It was mainly men who worked with tar distilling. However, in some parts of the work process, both men and women participated, for example when the wood was stacked in the tar pit.¹⁵⁵

Profits gained from tar production could be considerable for the peasant household, but to ensure a continuous flow of income, the peasants needed firm ties to the burghers in the coastal towns. Thus, a trade and credit system

¹⁴⁹ Alho (1968); Villstrand (1992b); Villstrand (1996). See also Bonan (2019), pp. 22–24 on the importance of navigable waterways for transportation of forest resources.

¹⁵⁰ Villstrand (1992b), p. 37.

¹⁵¹ Virrankoski (1973), pp. 250–251.

¹⁵² Alho (1968), pp. 46–51; *Svenska Österbottens Historia 3* (1980), p. 70; Villstrand (1992b), p. 46.

¹⁵³ *Svenska Österbottens Historia 3* (1980), pp. 69–70; Villstrand (1992b), pp. 52–58.

¹⁵⁴ Virrankoski (1973), p. 257.

¹⁵⁵ Villstrand (1992b), pp. 58–59.

started to evolve called *majmiseriet* (Swe. *bondematning*).¹⁵⁶ This was a long-term business agreement between peasants and burghers where the former sold tar to the burgher who granted the peasants credits. When the peasants delivered their goods to the burgher, they were also offered lodgings, food, and drink for the duration of the stay.¹⁵⁷ This form of interpersonal relationship of dependence was not limited to Ostrobothnia. Similar agreements existed across the Baltic Sea on the Swedish side. Both in Bergslagen and in the town of Falun, in the province of Dalarna, peasants entered into agreements of delivering charcoal to mine owners who in turn granted credits to the peasants.¹⁵⁸ The trade relations between a specific peasant and burgher could last for generations, but *majmiseriet* created much dismay among the authorities. Regulations on commerce stated that the peasant was to bring his goods to the town square and sell them to the highest bidder, which meant that *majmiseriet* effectively violated the rules of trade. Authorities were nonetheless powerless against the growth and development of the system, because even if a peasant brought his tar to the market square, no one would buy it at the demanded price. This meant that he could, without much delay, go to the burgher with whom he already had a deal.¹⁵⁹

Approximations of how much wood was needed to produce one barrel of tar is difficult to determine, but estimations have come down to us both from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, a complicating circumstance is that the individuals who provided the estimates did so in relation to different sizes of trees. For example, one source from the seventeenth century states that it took 15 large and fully grown trees to make one barrel of tar, whereas the average number of two other sources from the 1740s estimated that it took 50 medium sized trees. Regardless, Nils Erik Villstrand has estimated that the total number of harvested trees in the Bothnian region was more than 3 million by the middle of the 1680s, which required almost 4 000 hectares of pine forest.¹⁶⁰

Earlier research has tackled the issue of estimating whether the exploitation of the forests reached such proportions that general shortage occurred. What can be concluded is that local shortages of pine did occur,

¹⁵⁶ The name comes from the Finnish word '*majamies*', which translates into 'the one who provides housing' (Swe: 'den som består husrum'). *Svenska Österbottens Historia 3* (1980), p. 93.

¹⁵⁷ Tegengren (1941), p. 87. Jutikkala (1963), pp. 181–183; Villstrand (2011).

¹⁵⁸ Karlsson (1990); Bladh (1997); Ågren (1998).

¹⁵⁹ *Svenska Österbottens Historia 3* (1980), pp. 93–95. A survey that was done in 1679 showed that eight out of ten peasants had long-term deals with burghers in northern Finland (Villstrand, 2011).

¹⁶⁰ Villstrand (1992b), pp. 42–46.

that the resource frontier was pushed from the coast farther inland, and that the biomass of the region changed, which made it possible for spruce (Lat. *Picea abies*) to spread.¹⁶¹ The role played by the growing tar industry is a significant causal factor to this development. Nevertheless, much pine forests remained, which the culminating peak of the tar industry during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is evidence of. As mentioned earlier in this introduction, the forests across the Swedish Kingdom were used for different purposes, so too in North Ostrobothnia. However, it was not only for the production of tar that they were harvested; the vast woodlands were also exploited to make boats and ships.

1.5.2 Sawmills and Shipbuilding

Water-powered sawmills were introduced in the Nordic countries in the early stages of the fourteenth century and replaced the old manufacturing process of hewing. The production of construction timber increased during the 1520s when Gustav I had several sawmills built at his royal demesnes. The international demand for sawn timber increased markedly during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century and it gained great economic significance for rural as well as urban populations in many places in Finland. According to Jorma Ahvenainen, peasants rarely operated sawmills of their own since it was a costly enterprise.¹⁶² In southern Finland, for example around the towns of Helsinki (Swe. *Helsingfors*) and Hamina (Swe. *Fredrikshamn*), the expansion of the sawmilling industry was chiefly driven by burgher classes. It was nevertheless an economic business venture that involved peasants as they were able to increase their household income by supplying sawmill owners with wooden materials.¹⁶³ However, Ostrobothnia was a rare exception as the rivers and streams of the region saw an increasing number of sawmills being constructed and operated by peasants during the seventeenth century.

Sawmills that were owned and operated by peasants are also known to have been established on the western side of the Gulf of Bothnia during the sixteenth century; however, it was not until the seventeenth century that they became more common in North Ostrobothnia as well.¹⁶⁴ The increasing

¹⁶¹ Villstrand (1992b), pp. 48–50.

¹⁶² Ahvenainen (1996), pp. 11–12.

¹⁶³ Kuisma (1980), pp. 225–228.

¹⁶⁴ Tegengren (1941), p. 205; Ahvenainen (1996), pp. 11–13.

levels of tar that was transported on ships to Stockholm were further sold to principally the Netherlands and England. This meant that the production of shipbuilding materials also increased and consequently the number of sawmills. The timber and planks that were produced were not only used to build the ships but were also themselves transported overseas as the need of wood ran scarce elsewhere.

Both the number of sawmills and the level of shipbuilding intensified during the 1670s and 1680s. A circumstance that influenced this development was the introduction of the Dutch fine-blade around the turn of the seventeenth century, which was more efficient than the traditional one-blade.¹⁶⁵ Even though tar production clearly dominated in Ostrobothnia at this time, earlier research states that the production of planks and shipbuilding in certain areas reached such proportions that it surpassed the profits made possible by the tar trade. Similarly, therefore, restrictions on how much timber and planks one was allowed to produce were enforced. However, much like the restrictions concerning tar production, earlier research suggests that such regulations were rarely followed.¹⁶⁶

Shipbuilding had been a common trade in Ostrobothnia ever since the sixteenth century, and it was a particularly important source of income in South Ostrobothnia. As the production of tar increased during the seventeenth century, and as the need of larger transport capacities grew, the shipbuilding industry expanded significantly.¹⁶⁷ The enterprise of building ships for sale was most notable in and around the towns of Raahe and Oulu, and the burghers in the coastal towns were the main buyers of the peasantry's vessels.¹⁶⁸ The Swedish Admiralty (Swe. *Amiralitetskollegium*) was the governmental institution charged with supervising the construction of ships that would ultimately come into the service of the Crown, as well as to manage accounting and oversee the men employed by the Swedish Navy.¹⁶⁹ In the 1670s, the admiralty established a shipyard in Kruunupyy where men from all over Ostrobothnia came to seek work, amounting to approximately 270 employees in 1674. However, conditions on the shipyard were not particularly favourable for the peasantry since the pay was low and because

¹⁶⁵ Åström (1988), pp. 44–45.

¹⁶⁶ *Svenska Österbottens Historia* 3 (1980), p. 86; Åström (1988), p. 34.

¹⁶⁷ Alho (1968), p. 204.

¹⁶⁸ Tegengren (1941), pp. 254–255; Virrankoski (1973), pp. 361–364.

¹⁶⁹ Glete (2010), p. 297.

contracts were at times forced upon the peasants.¹⁷⁰ Nevertheless, entering into a shipbuilding contract was strategically positive in the sense that military service could be avoided, and contemplating that the life expectancy of a soldier was significantly shorter than that of a timber cutter, it was an easy choice for some.¹⁷¹

The legal code of King Christopher stipulated that trade between burghers and the peasantry was only allowed in the towns and it prohibited commerce between these two groups to occur on the countryside. However, as was shown with the trade system *majmiseriet*, this became increasingly difficult for the central authorities to control.¹⁷² Furthermore, they feared that the forests were being devastated because of the high levels of production. In 1645, therefore, burghers were forbidden to buy new ships before they had proven to the magistrate of the town that their current one was inoperable or that it had been shipwrecked. However, since potential buyers could be found around every corner, both from the region itself and from Stockholm, the levels of production continued to grow.¹⁷³

1.5.3 The Origins of the Burgher Class

Before the seventeenth century, there were no towns in North Ostrobothnia. Apart from seafaring peasants who travelled over the Gulf of Bothnia or south to Stockholm and Turku during the sixteenth century to sell goods (which at this stage were rather limited in extent), trade as occupation was mainly practiced by rural merchants (Swe. *landsköpmen*).¹⁷⁴ Because of these factors, the origins and growth of the burgher class, and the interlinking position burghers ultimately came to have between the peasantry and the international market, is favourably observable in Ostrobothnia compared to other regions in the Swedish Kingdom. With the foundation of towns, such as Oulu in 1605 and Kokkola in 1620, followed the birth of the burgher class.¹⁷⁵ Considering the wide range of legal and official sources that has survived from this period, and the state's interest in overseeing matters of

¹⁷⁰ *Svenska Österbottens Historia* 3 (1980), p. 81.

¹⁷¹ Rantatupa (1987), p. 369.

¹⁷² Jutikkala (1963).

¹⁷³ *Svenska Österbottens Historia* 3 (1980), pp. 81–83.

¹⁷⁴ In 1591, 94 rural merchants (*landsköpmän*) were registered to have been active in Ostrobothnia. Sandström (1990), p. 244.

¹⁷⁵ Luukko (1964), p. 106; Sandström (1990), p. 245. See also Lilja (2000).

commerce, it has been possible to follow this development rather closely in previous historical research.

The expansion of shipbuilding for commercial and naval war purposes was yet in the future, but the origins of the burgher class in Ostrobothnia went hand in hand with the tar trade in the early stages of the seventeenth century. Being a burgher meant someone who possessed *burskap* (from the Middle Low German *bürschap*, En. burghership) and thus enjoyed civil rights within a town. A burgher who was granted *burskap* had to meet three criteria: honourable conduct, a personal capital of at least three marks, and intentions to engage in trade. He was allowed to practice different sorts of economic activities within the town, such as craftsmanship and to engage in trade. He was also allowed to participate in the proceedings of the town court and was obliged to pay taxes to the town.¹⁷⁶

The foundation of the towns and their commercial organisation resembled that of its sister landscape on the other side of the gulf. In Westrobothnia, plans to establish the towns of Umeå and Torneå had already begun in the late sixteenth century. However, they did not have the same degree of success in getting people to populate them.¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the Bothnian Bay formed a maritime region of the Swedish Empire with regular contacts in terms of trade, but trade contacts with Stockholm were also frequent. Peasants and early traders operated mostly with salmon, fish oil, butter, skins, and to some degree in tar. The successful establishment of towns in Ostrobothnia and the emerging burger class resulted in larger ships being constructed with greater loading capacity than the peasantry's much smaller boats. The competition from town burghers thus marginalised the peasantry's engagement with overseas trade, which was ultimately forbidden through the Bothnian Trade Restriction (Swe. *Bottniska handelstvånget*) in 1617, and further constrained in 1640 when they were only permitted to trade at sea ports in the Ostrobothnian towns.¹⁷⁸ As for the burghers, the Bothnian Trade Restriction and the Trade Ordinance of 1617 decreed that they were only allowed to sell their goods in Stockholm. Trading districts were established which meant

¹⁷⁶ Mickwitz & Möller (1951), p. 80; Gardberg (1987), pp. 20–21.

¹⁷⁷ Sandström (1990), p. 235; Lilja (2000), p. 158.

¹⁷⁸ Tegengren (1941), p. 234–235; Tegengren (1943), pp. 293–295; *Svenska Österbottens Historia 3* (1980), p. 91; Lilja (2000), pp. 266–267.

that all exports and imports were concentrated in one node town to which the nearby parishes were tied.¹⁷⁹

Most people who initially populated the new towns came from Savo and southern Finland and had been engaged with trade in the region since the second half of the sixteenth century, mostly trading in fish. As the tar trade increased, more and more Swedes moved to Ostrobothnia. However, the majority of the Ostrobothnian burghers were of foreign descent, particularly Germans and Scots, and had come as representatives of wealthy and successful burgher families in Stockholm and Turku. This was explicitly encouraged by King Gustav II Adolf seeing as their knowledge in commerce and mercantile expertise would help develop trade relations in the region.¹⁸⁰

The new towns in northern Finland not only gave people possibilities of seeking new means of making a living, but they also became mercantile nodes of control for the Swedish state. Vast territories that had previously only been marginally exploited were now reachable and resources stored within the forests could be transported to the European market. Sven Lilja has argued that the most important factor behind the foundation of new towns in areas such as Ostrobothnia was the effort of increasing the state's control and exploitable capacity of the urban industries. But rural and sparsely populated areas were also economically and politically connected with the central nodes of the kingdom, primarily Stockholm.¹⁸¹

1.5.4 The Norrland Tar Trading Companies

Tar was produced by peasants, sold to burghers, and transported on ships to Stockholm. The vessels used to ship the tar were often built by the peasantry, making the burghers' dependency on them even more significant. Previous estimations suggest that approximately half of the transports to Stockholm were made by people living in Ostrobothnia by the middle of the century.¹⁸² The revenues from all this naturally benefitted the Finnish population, but as the number of foreign merchants increased, the Swedish government feared that most of the profit ended up in foreign hands. Thus, the Norrland Tar Trading Company (Swe. *Norrländska tjärhandelskompaniet*) was formed in March 1643 and was given the exclusive right to sell abroad the tar that was

¹⁷⁹ Kokkola constituted one of these trading nodes, to which Pyhäjoki, Kalajoki, Lohtaja, Kokkola, and Kruunupyy was added. *Svenska Österbottens Historia 3* (1980), p. 91. See also Virrankoski (1973), pp. 372–377.

¹⁸⁰ Luukko (1964), pp. 110–113. *Svenska Österbottens Historia 3* (1980), pp. 93–94.

¹⁸¹ Lilja (2000), pp. 158, 218–219.

¹⁸² Sandström (1990), pp. 252–255.

produced north of Stockholm and the river Neva, located at today's St. Petersburg.¹⁸³

The tar trade was consequently constrained in many ways. The company was not only given authority to decide the price on tar, which in the beginning was set at 22,5 silver thalers per *läst* (12 barrels), or approximately five and a half copper thalers per barrel, it also regulated the limit on how much could be sold at that price, and the size of the barrels in which the tar was stored. Burghers were forced to trade with the company, and towns without a permit of trade were forbidden from bringing tar within the town limits.¹⁸⁴ As touched upon earlier, the tar had to be transported through the port of Stockholm before being sold on the international market as decreed by the Trade Ordinance of 1617. As such, it was a staple town (Swe. *stapelstad*) of this trade.¹⁸⁵ With the new trade regulations, towns in Ostrobothnia got the status of *uppstäder*. One example of an *uppstad* was Kokkola, which was supposed to trade with the surrounding countryside and supply the staple towns with tar that had been produced within the trading district of the *uppstad*.¹⁸⁶ When the tar had reached the staple town, a customs fee (Swe. *tolag*) was levied on the shipment before it was shipped to Amsterdam, Hamburg, Lübeck, or London where commissioners of the company received, stored, and sold the goods on the market.¹⁸⁷

The company made great profits during the first years, although much at the expense of the Finnish peasants and burghers. Katja Tikka has explained how the tar trade completely changed character and paralyzed trade relations between individual burghers and foreign buyers after the foundation of the company.¹⁸⁸ Given the dominance of Swedish-Finnish tar on the international market, advocates of the company held the opinion that by controlling and limiting supply, prices could be kept at a high level, whilst at the same time yielding increased revenues for the state treasury. The intention was also that the exploitation of forest resources could be regulated as an effect of the company's instructions on how much tar and pitch that each *uppstad* was supposed to export. However, it was impossible for the

¹⁸³ Luukko (1972), p. 195; Tikka (2020), p. 92.

¹⁸⁴ Hallberg (1960), p. 100; Luukko (1972), p. 195; Tikka (2020), p. 102.

¹⁸⁵ The Swedish word *stapelstad* (plural *stapelstäder*) can be translated thus: *stapel* = to stack, *stad* = town. See for example Enflo & Missiaia (2020), p. 436.

¹⁸⁶ Sandström (1990), p. 39; Lilja (2000), pp. 266–267.

¹⁸⁷ Hallberg (1960), pp. 102–104.

¹⁸⁸ Tikka (2020), p. 103.

company to control the level of production. The volume of tar that was produced and delivered to the company were at times far greater than the company's ability of buying and storing, which affected its ability to sell it at the desired price. The opposition argued that the initial motivation of the company's creation was flawed. Whilst revenues were kept within the borders of the kingdom, as the mercantilist principle prescribed, the main benefactors were privileged company members in Stockholm, whilst much less accrued to the producers and transporters of the product.¹⁸⁹

The profits that the company had made were substantial. This encouraged the king, Karl X Gustav (1654-1660), to have the company give back some of the profits to the tar-exporting towns, in total a sum of 144 000 copper thalers. This turned out to be more than the company could muster and the Norrland Tar Trading Company ultimately dissolved in 1661. However, it was replaced the same year by a new company with an innovative name: the New Norrland Tar Trading Company (Swe. *Nya norrländska tjärhandelskompaniet*). It promised to regulate production more effectively and resolve the issue of the increasing stocks in the warehouses in Stockholm that it was unwilling to sell at a lower price. The result was declining prices on the part of the burghers and peasants, which naturally created great frustration. Consequently, before the company had been able to make any effects on the level of production, the company went bankrupt in 1671.¹⁹⁰ The continuous pushing of prices resulted in an increase of tar production in England and in the North American colonies by the second part of the seventeenth century. Ultimately, Sweden's indisputable monopoly on tar was threatened. Nevertheless, the era of the state-initiated tar companies did not end in 1671. The government under Karl XI founded the Renovated Tar Trading Company (Swe. *Renoverade tjärhandelskompaniet*) in 1672, which was replaced with the Tar Trading Society (Swe. *Tjärhandelssocieteten*) in 1682.¹⁹¹

The continuous establishment of tar companies demonstrates that even though economic hardship occurred as a consequence of war and foreign relations throughout the period, which resulted in their recurrent dissolution, keeping the tar trade under a state-led monopoly was highly profitable for some. However, as put by Tikka, 'Sweden's mercantilist commercial policy

¹⁸⁹ Hallberg (1960), pp. 101, 156–157.

¹⁹⁰ Luukko (1972), pp. 199–202.

¹⁹¹ Luukko (1972), pp. 202–205.

ultimately proved unsustainable.¹⁹² Furthermore, the policies under these enterprises did not greatly benefit the population of Ostrobothnia. Nevertheless, it has been cautiously estimated that the company to a greater extent functioned as a shock absorber in the event of declining sales conditions overseas for the peasantry than it did for the burghers.¹⁹³

1.6 Sources and Method

There are different ways in which one can approach how forests were supposed to be and in effect were used and managed by people during the early modern period. It largely depends on whether a bottom-up or top-down perspective is employed, or a combination of the two. Since the main focus of this thesis is aimed towards how local users (peasants) managed and regulated the use of their commonly owned forests (thus a bottom-up approach), the source material must reflect their point of view in these matters and contain information regarding their everyday lives. For this purpose, the main source material that is analysed are court records from local district courts (Swe. *häradsrätt*) in North Ostrobothnia. This will be complemented by two other kinds of sources, namely seventeenth century maps and the Swedish forest legislation. These different sources will be discussed below, starting with the local district courts and how the Swedish judicial system was organised and changed during the seventeenth century.

1.6.1 The Local District Court

By contrasting the Swedish court system with those in other European countries, it is evident that the former was characterised by a larger degree of structure than in for example France, England, or Scotland. Whilst a large number of courts did exist in these countries, which exercised judicial authority at different levels in society, legal cases could often be treated in different courts at the same time. This makes it difficult to discern a total number of court cases belonging to a particular area. Furthermore, much material has been lost, which raises questions concerning representativeness.¹⁹⁴ The judicial homogeneity that can be observed in the Swedish example is lacking in many other European countries and the influence of

¹⁹² Tikka (2020), p. 120.

¹⁹³ Hallberg (1960), pp. 158–159; Villstrand (1992b), p. 41.

¹⁹⁴ Sundin (1992), p. 15.

peasants in the legal proceedings was profound in Sweden-Finland since medieval times and onwards, whereas the nobility dominated in countries like England.¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, Scandinavian law (comprising of Sweden-Finland, Denmark, Norway, and Iceland) is distinct in three aspects as it lacks modern codifications, is limited in the importance of legal formalities, and is absent of Roman law.¹⁹⁶ It is therefore a comparatively rewarding task to navigate through the sources that has survived.

The Swedish court system was divided into different layers with different geographical affiliations. At the bottom was the local district court whose jurisdiction covered the rural countryside, whereas the town courts (Swe. *rådstuvurätt*) administered the practice of law in the urban space. Above was the Royal Court of Appeal (Swe. *hovrätt*), which in the Finnish part of the kingdom was located in Turku. The rural courts were assigned different judicial areas. On the Swedish mainland, courts could comprise of several parish communities, whereas each parish usually assembled in one court in North Ostrobothnia.¹⁹⁷ The place of assembly was the *ting*, which is known to have been an important place of conflict resolution for local communities since the Viking Age.¹⁹⁸ The local courts became increasingly professionalised during the first half of the seventeenth century, which is, for example, demonstrated by the increasing level of detail in the court records that describe court proceedings as the century progressed.¹⁹⁹ The legal posts of the local courts were largely occupied by people from the local community. The person leading the proceedings was the gentry chairman of the court (Swe. *härads hövding*) who in turn was assisted by twelve laymen (Swe. *nämnd, tolvmän*). Unlike these twelve men, the judge was schooled and had undergone legal training. The laymen were nominated and picked from and by the local community to represent their interest and to investigate and decide upon the matters that were presented to the court. As such, their influence over the court's verdicts was indeed great. Their influence, as explained by Jonas Lindström, was of both formal and informal nature. Formal in the sense that they held considerable judicial power, and informal in their capacity as a 'source of information.' They knew what happened in

¹⁹⁵ This judicial homogeneity and influence of peasants can be observed across the Scandinavian countries since at least the seventeenth century, whereas for example France did not achieve similar levels until the nineteenth century. Österberg (1994), p. 30.

¹⁹⁶ J. Larsson (2016), p. 1102.

¹⁹⁷ There are however examples in the court records of two or three parishes meeting to have a common *ting*.

¹⁹⁸ J. Larsson (2016), p. 1103.

¹⁹⁹ Sundin (1992), p. 17.

the local community, seeing as they were themselves members of the same. They were furthermore very well aware of their power since they could be told not to participate in certain proceedings if the case in question concerned a member of their own family.²⁰⁰

The courts thus had a profound and close affiliation with the local community, which can in part be explained by the influence and authority wielded by the office of the laymen.²⁰¹ This was particularly profound in North Ostrobothnia considering how the office of court judge was assigned and exercised. Many were military commanders or influential aristocrats who were regarded as particularly deserving of the office although did not live in the region. Instead, they often resided in and around the towns where you would find the Royal Court of Appeals. In their place, temporary deputies of law (Swe. *lagläsare*, lit. law readers), who also had some kind of education in legal matters, were employed, which gave the laymen increased influence over the legal proceedings.²⁰²

Another important office held by a representative of the local community was that of the chief constable (Swe. *länsman*). He was often one of the wealthier peasants and received a stipend from the Crown for his commitment. He could also be additionally paid by the community in which he served. However, he could and did face difficult decisions since his duty was to police and report on potentially illegal activities within the community where he himself lived. Nevertheless, he played an important role in legal proceedings between peasants when interrogations and inspections of, for example, borders were carried out. To assist in these matters, *synemän* (En. inspection men) were appointed, most often from the twelve laymen of the court or people otherwise considered especially knowledgeable in the matter at hand.²⁰³

Eino Jutikkala has summarised and divided the main tasks of the court judge, laymen, chief constable, and other people of importance to the administration of the court into three different categories. The first covered municipal concerns, such as the election of people for the different offices and maintenance of official and communal buildings, such as the church. The second covered matters such as taxes and debts to the Swedish Crown,

²⁰⁰ Lindström (2008), pp. 198–199.

²⁰¹ Jutikkala (1963); Sundin (1992); Österberg (1994); J. Larsson (2009); J. Larsson (2016).

²⁰² Jutikkala (1963, pp. 193–194) demonstrates how there were court judges who had never even seen the district over which he had the power to judge and administer justice. See also Ågren & Johansson (1994), p. 148.

²⁰³ Jutikkala (1963), p. 195; Sundin (1992), p. 69; Larsson (2009), pp. 210–211.

possible exemption of land dues during the first years of colonialisation (Swe. *frihetsår*), and proclamations of new charges and laws instituted by the Crown. The third category concerned maintenance and regulation of communal and economic affairs, trade, and industry. It included the regulation of fishing-rights in the regions many rivers and streams, the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, and mills, where and when slash-and-burn agriculture was allowed to be practiced, division of land between parish and village communities, and the organisation of forest-related activities and how forest commons were supposed to be regulated.²⁰⁴

Considering the wide range of matters that were discussed and resolved at the local court, it can be defined as a social arena upon which local inhabitants and authorities exercised social control.²⁰⁵ It was here people went to resolve problems and reach settlements that could not be resolved elsewhere, or by other means. The courts usually convened two times per year and were frequented by large parts of the community. Attendance figures from northern Sweden has shown that as much as one third of local populations went to court meetings when they convened.²⁰⁶

Not only was the local court a place for people to resolve disputes, establish rules, and prosecute offenders. It was also a place where people received information about what was going on in their community. Apart from the priest's pulpits, it was an effective broadcasting instrument through which regulations could be established and functioned as the state's public-address system. Even though the court certainly represented the power and authority of the Swedish state, it still had a profound bearing on local traditions. It was a low-cost instrument and strategy that peasants could use to organise and bring stability to their daily lives. Moreover, the court records provide the historian with an excellent opportunity to study how formal and informal institutions and rules were established. Jesper Larsson has pointed out that whilst other source categories, such as bylaws, contain much information concerning how local users ought to act and behave in relation to how a certain resource was exploited, they remain normative and only allow for an investigation of the formal institution.²⁰⁷ Regardless, such sources are not available from seventeenth century North Ostrobothnia. Court records, on the other hand, makes it possible to come very close to the

²⁰⁴ Jutikkala (1963), pp. 195–196.

²⁰⁵ Österberg (1994), p. 27; Österberg et al. (2000), p. 252; J. Larsson (2016).

²⁰⁶ Taussi Sjöberg (1996).

²⁰⁷ J. Larsson (2016), p. 1106.

circumstances that shaped people's everyday lives; to the people who adhered to the formal rules, but also modified them in informal settings, which created situations where solutions needed to be reached within the conflict-solving area of the local courts.

Even though the local courts were used as a conflict solving arena, it was not the only place where conflicts could be resolved. This could also happen within the local community. However, it is very difficult to get any information about these occurrences since peasants from this period did not produce any written sources of such disputes or solutions. Nevertheless, through a qualitative examination of the court records, it is sometimes possible to find information that testifies to extrajudicial disputes being resolved without the court's involvement.

As mentioned above, the level of detail and the extent of court records available gradually increased as the seventeenth century progressed, which (at least in regard to the first point) was an effect of the professionalisation of the court system during the period. This makes the process of finding legal cases that in some way concerned forest commons quite difficult and time-consuming. However, during the 1960s and 1970s, a group of Finnish historians, ethnologists, and folklorists began a project to catalogue all court records from local district courts in Western and Eastern Finland, as well as in North Ostrobothnia. This catalogue (the TUOKKO-card-index) cover the period 1626–1700 and the sources have been thematically organised. It covers a wide range of subjects and compiles a total of 51 categories for the region of North Ostrobothnia. The one that has been used in this study is labelled 'Forestry' (Fi. *Metsänkäyttö*). The category is furthermore divided into 32 subcategories, which together make up almost 860 cards. Each card refers to a location in the court records where a particular matter has been subject of the local court's attention. They also include the keyword of the subcategory (for example *yhteismetsän nautinta*, En: usage of the common forest), an abbreviation of the district court, the year, the old archival signature of the court, and the page or pages in the court records. In some cases, there is a brief description of what is to be found on the page or pages, sometimes written in Finnish and sometimes as quotes taken directly from the records, which were written in Swedish (for example 'att fåå hugga skuutbrädher i bysens oskifto skogh' = be allowed to cut boat planks in the village's common forest).²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ NAF, Tuomiokirjakortisto, Pohjois-Pohjanmaa, Metsänkäyttö, Yhteismetsän nautinta, 23.44., nr. 40.

The TUOKKO-index provides a phenomenal possibility of navigating through an otherwise extensive material. A total of 436 court cases constitutes the basis for the analysis. However, there are important questions concerning the index and the court records that need to be addressed. First of all, the surviving records are engrossed (Swe. *reoverade*) local court records. This means that the original texts written by the court scribe were later transcribed before they were sent to the Royal Court of Appeal in Turku where they were archived. Therefore, there are no guarantees that all that was said in the courtroom made it onto the pages of the finalised version. Nor are there any assurances that the court scribe did not refrain from writing something he did not find of particular importance, which the historian could find important. Nevertheless, they represent expressions of contemporary conceptions and norms that influenced people's actions and strategies in different ways.²⁰⁹ The records should therefore be seen as a window into a past where problems were met, decisions were made, and strategies developed, which the court records explain. Another issue to be considered when dealing with a legal material of this kind are so called *enforcement waves*, which refer to a sudden upsurge of legal cases due to a more meticulous response to a certain type of crime, rather than to the actual frequency of its occurrence.²¹⁰ Moreover, an increase of conflicts over forest related issues could partly be a result of changing attitudes and practices of bringing issues and conflicts to the court instead of using extrajudicial methods of solving them. However, were that to be the reason behind a quantitative increase, questions about why attitudes and solution strategies change would arise, which can be explained by a qualitative analysis of the material.

The subcategories of the forestry-category have not been used to structure the analysis in this thesis. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, they have been created with other motives than those that drive this investigation. It is therefore important to establish new categories that align with the purpose and questions that will be answered in this thesis. Secondly, duplicates of the same legal case have been found in several different subcategories of the index. Instead, drawing on previous research and on the theoretical foundation of the thesis, the research questions have structured the way in

²⁰⁹ In Gudrun Andersson's work on district court protocols, she considers the court records as 'a text' that is deeply influenced by the legal context which creates a framework where different tools and symbols are provided and applied, but which at the same time reflect events outside the court. Andersson (1998), pp. 47–49. See also H. Ågren (1998), pp. 78–83.

²¹⁰ Ågren (1992), p. 144; Larsson (2009), p. 209.

which the sources have been categorised and analysed. In doing so, new subcategories have been established. As the court cases have been classified within these categories, a quantitative and qualitative analysis has been carried out. In relation to the former, it is possible to both identify and draw conclusions from increases and decreases of different kinds of legal cases throughout the seventeenth century. The qualitative analysis makes it possible to discuss and reach conclusions concerning the way in which peasant communities managed and regulated forest commons during the period.

Before moving on to the other kinds of sources that are used in this thesis, something should be said concerning language. The court records were written in Swedish, meaning that the court scribe often had to translate what was uttered in the courtroom. Furthermore, the names of villages, lakes, and other places were most often written in Swedish (such as Åbo instead of Turku). Furthermore, it was most likely a difficult task for the court scribe to spell every name in a correct way.²¹¹ Nevertheless, the spelling of names, including the names of the people that are referenced in the court records, have been transcribed into modern Finnish, and Swedish when such is the case. However, there are some names that seems to have been lost to history, and whenever that is the case, the spelling used by the court scribe has been used.

1.6.2 Forest Legislation

The financial wealth stored in the forests was known to the Swedish kings before the seventeenth century. Legislation on how forests were allowed to be exploited exists from as early as the fourteenth century, although no comprehensive and consistent forest policy existed until the sixteenth century.²¹² During the reign of Gustav I, the king proclaimed that all land and all forests that could not be proven to belong to any individual person thereby belonged to the Crown.²¹³ It was not until 1647 that Sweden got its first forest ordinance (Swe. *skogsordning*). Whilst the state had previously encouraged colonisation of yet unexploited woodlands in order to increase agricultural output, the forest legislation of the seventeenth century was principally introduced to secure a sufficiently high level of resources for the forest consuming industries in Bergslagen. Through the mandate of these

²¹¹ See Villstrand (1992a), p. 184; Larsson & Päiviö Sjaunja (2022), p. 65.

²¹² Nylund (2009), p. 5.

²¹³ L-O Larsson (1996), pp. 9–10; Gadd 2000, p. 116.

regulations, the peasantry's legal position vis-à-vis the state and the mine owners were consequently undermined, and several constraints were introduced. One such example was that peasants were not allowed to trade their charcoal freely but had to deliver and sell it to a predetermined mine within a ten-kilometre radius, and at a fixed price set by the mine owners.²¹⁴

The first forest ordinance would later be followed by a second in 1664. Like the first, it was mainly aimed at regulating forest exploitation in Bergslagen and to ensure stable deliveries of charcoal and firewood for the metal industries. Nevertheless, they were implemented in the Finnish part of the kingdom as well, although earlier research has determined that it was an altogether unsuccessful effort.²¹⁵ However, even though they were written with other regions than North Ostrobothnia in mind, they were used by local authorities in efforts to regulate the production of tar and timber. The content of these ordinances, how they were implemented, and what level of impact this had on peasant communities' ability to govern their forest commons is therefore important issues to address.

1.6.3 Seventeenth Century Maps

The first systematic and scientifically based maps over Ostrobothnia were made during the seventeenth century, even though maps depicting the entire Scandinavian region existed earlier. Borders (Swe. *rågångar*) separating villages and parishes from each other were based on *urminnes hävd*, that is, certain areas belonged to certain villages and parishes by virtue of each community's usage of the area. As explained by Heikki Rantatupa, a need to define these borders more properly arose as the production of tar increased. However, both during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, maps were not made in order to determine their location. Instead, inspections (Swe. *rannsakingar*) were carried out, at which time written documents were produced that meant to contain such information that the borders could be identified. However, it would not be until the early eighteenth century when the parishes of Ostrobothnia received a sufficiently reliable and established location with correlated maps. Nevertheless, the first geographical maps were made in the 1640s, at which time Claes Claesson was appointed as the official land surveyor in Ostrobothnia.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Karlsson (1990), pp. 28–29.

²¹⁵ Roiko-Jokela (2018).

²¹⁶ Rantatupa et al. (2006), pp. 11–21, 38–39.

The maps of Claesson and later land surveyors were based on rough estimations and did not contain exact measurements. This was mainly due to the vastness of the region, which made precision difficult. However, as the region was continuously mapped throughout the century, also including maps over individual villages, detailed and high-quality maps depicting larger areas, such as parishes, were made possible by combining the large number of maps that had been made since the middle of the century.²¹⁷

The seventeenth century maps contain important pieces of information when studying historical land use.²¹⁸ The maps made by Claes Claesson and other land surveyors will be used to provide a spatial understanding of the region under investigation. They will also be used to demonstrate where and how peasant communities were located, and their relation to the forest commons. The information they contain will also be used to contrast and problematise the content of the court records.

1.7 Positioning

To briefly summarise: even though much research concerning forests in terms of ownership, exploitation, and trade was written more than half a century ago, it is possible to gain an understanding of how vital forest commons and forest resources were in seventeenth century Northern Finland. The importance of internal regulation (for example in terms of ancient harvest areas, emerging borders, and trade relations) becomes clear and they are important pieces of historical knowledge that describe peasant life in North Ostrobothnia. However, by adopting a different approach, it is possible to examine complexities and aspects of the growing tar and timber trade that has not been fully investigated and extrapolated in relation to a broader international research context. As such, seventeenth century North Ostrobothnia still offers a unique opportunity for historical research in relation to the use and management of forest resources.

As outlined above, seventeenth century North Ostrobothnia underwent a gradual replacement of a previously dominant form of forest related production to another: from slash-and-burn agriculture to tar and timber. In comparison to other densely forested areas in the Swedish Kingdom, such as Bergslagen, North Ostrobothnia was a region that did not experience a

²¹⁷ Rantatupa (2003), p. 459–463.

²¹⁸ See Jupiter (2020).

growing presence of metalworks and mine owners who, through assistance from the Swedish state, laid claim to the peasants' ancient use-rights. As such, *rekognitionsskogar* never became an element that the peasantry needed to take into consideration. Moreover, as the influence of ironwork and mine owners grew in Bergslagen, so did the presence and level of control by Swedish authorities. Whilst Northern Finland was not without state officials, the level of state presence was much lower throughout the century, which had consequences for how the peasantry governed their forest commons. As such, the study of this region and the results of this thesis will provide new knowledge well fitted to contrast that of other regions within the Swedish Kingdom.

This investigation considers the changing importance of forests in North Ostrobothnia that is different and novel in several interlinking ways from that of earlier research. By considering how the institutional organisation of peasant communities changed during a time of great economic transformation, focus is put on the complexity of how regulation within and between village and parish communities was organised and changed throughout the seventeenth century; a process that actualised issues of how to achieve sustainability through an evolving structure of nested enterprises, where governance activities were organised at multiple levels. It furthermore seeks to clarify how external actors, such as the growing class of burghers and the Swedish state, influenced and became a part of this development throughout the century. It is an example of how not only peasant communities became increasingly 'nested' within each other because of rapidly expanding forest related industries, but also how this development was dependent on relations shared with external actors; actors that became involved in the nestedness of peasant institutions. Moreover, it will show how this both enabled the peasants' efforts of achieving a sustainable governance regime, as well as how it provided hinderances. This comprehensive approach will therefore offer new knowledge concerning how intensified forest exploitation and commodity specialisation affected and changed the internal structure of peasant institutions, how external forces became essential for their 'nestedness', and it offers a unique historically contrastable example, both within the Swedish Kingdom as well as in a European context. Hence, it will contribute to the wider international research context of historical commons, demonstrating how nested enterprises of peasant institutions progressively developed simultaneous to increasing market and state integration.

1.8 Outline of the Thesis

In the chapters that follows, forest exploitation, regulation, and management of forest resources are all matters that are analysed and discussed. However, they all approach these subjects from different perspectives. The three sub-questions are addressed in respective order. This means that in Chapter 2, matters of access, management, and utilisation of forest resources within peasant communities are addressed, as well as how the changing economic climate of the seventeenth century affected these circumstances. The source material predominantly analysed is the court records, but the seventeenth century maps are also used in this part of the investigation. In Chapter 3, the court records are the main source category, although it is the peasantry's relation to the growing number of burghers that came to occupy the towns along the Bothnian coast that is in focus. It thus addresses sub-question number 2, that is, what role burghers played in the growing forest industries of the region and how it affected the peasantry's ability to govern their forest commons. Sub-question number 3 is addressed in Chapter 4 where the efforts of Swedish authorities to control the peasantry's forest exploitation is in focus. Unlike the two first analytical chapters, the court records are here complemented with the Swedish forest ordinances.

Whilst the three analytical chapters address one question each, the main research question deals with the prioritisations made by the peasantry in order to achieve ecological, institutional, and economic sustainability and how this was affected by the involvement of the burghers and Swedish authorities. For that reason, this question follows each of the analytical chapters, ultimately giving each chapter two questions. In the subsequent and last chapter of the thesis, the final results will be discussed.

2. Rural Relations

Much happened in North Ostrobothnia during the seventeenth century as new towns were established along its coast and people moved to the region from other parts of the Swedish Kingdom to seek a new home and a livelihood from which they could make a living. As such, the frequency of legal cases grew seeing as with an increasing population followed the potential of disputes arising over any kind of subject. Nevertheless, the increase of forest related conflicts over matters such as access, management, and borders indicate that the work of a large majority of North Ostrobothnia's population was closely linked to the forests.

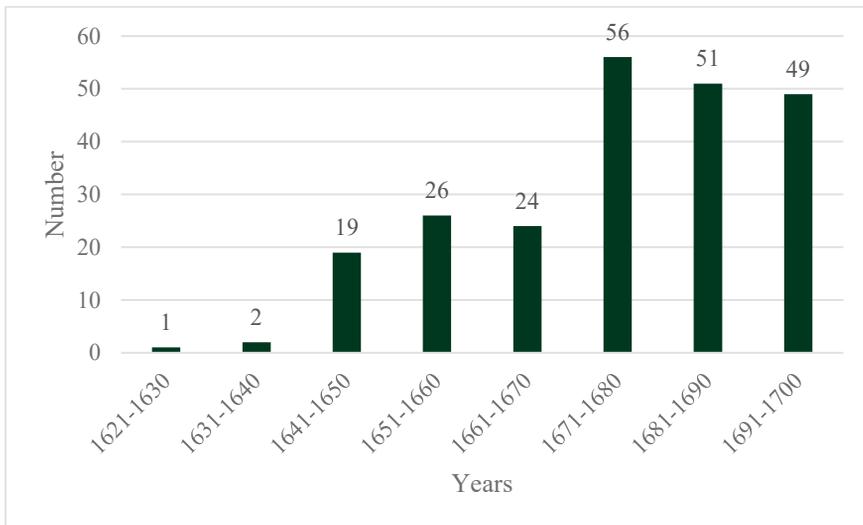


Figure 5. Number of court cases concerning rural relations in North Ostrobothnia in ten-year increments, 1621–1700. Source: NAF, Court Records.

In this chapter, many different subjects and kinds of disputes are analysed. What unites them are that they all involve conflicts that occurred within peasant communities. From the 1620s to the year 1700, a total of 228 legal cases have been found and the development of their occurrence can be seen in Figure 5. A relatively stable peak can be noticed during the three last decades of the seventeenth century, at which time the production of tar and timber reached an all-time high during the seventeenth century. The chapter begins with an analysis of intra-village relations, that is, court cases between peasants that lived in the same village. As will be demonstrated below, these villages could be of varying size and homesteads could sometimes be separated by quite large distances. Nevertheless, the forest from which they all appropriated resources was owned by the village members as a common. This will be followed by cases concerning inter-village relations, meaning peasants that lived in different villages, but in the same parish. Next, conflicts that involved peasants that lived in different parishes are analysed, that is, parish relations. The chapter is thereafter summarised.

2.1 Intra-Village Relations

A total of 55 court cases have been used in this part of the investigation. In Figure 6, a slight rise in cases can be noticed during the 1640s and 1650s, followed by a decline during the ensuing decade. Another rise can then be noticed during the 1670s, ultimately reaching a highpoint during the last decade of the century. A possible explanation for this later increase is that the amount of tar that was exported from the port towns of Kokkola, Raahe, and Oulu similarly increased towards the end of the century. This would only have been possible provided that an intensified utilisation of the forests took place, which thus led to increased competition over forest resources.

The legal cases are spread over ten different parishes, from Kruunupyy in the south to Kemi in the north. It is a rather low statistic over the course of more than 70 years, especially given the rate at which tar exports and timber production increased in the region. The average number of barrels that were exported from the towns recounted above grew from 17 503 during the period 1648–1658 to 31 535 barrels in the year 1686 alone.²¹⁹ Considering these numbers, this suggests that attitudes towards cooperative behaviour in tar and timber production, as well as the system of collectively owned village

²¹⁹ Villstrand (1992), p. 38.

forests, were probably good. However, illicit appropriation of forest resources did occur, which reveals different ways in which the forests were used and contested.

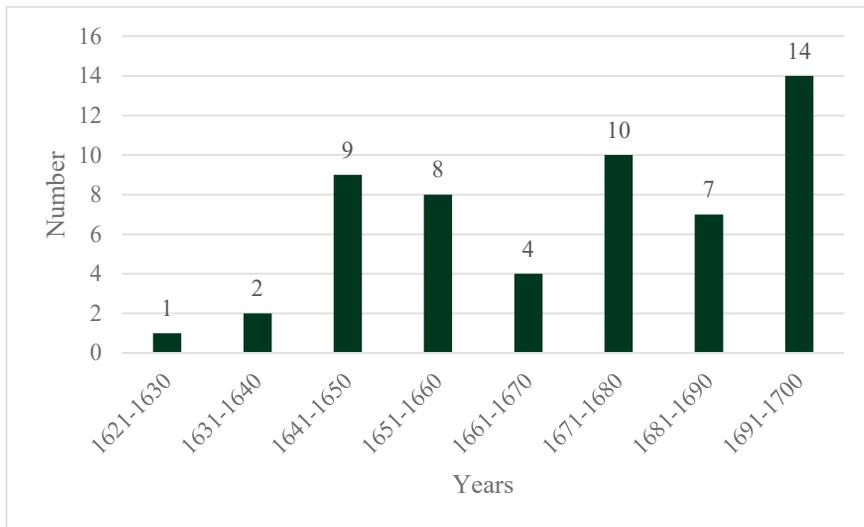


Figure 6. Number of court cases between peasants from the same village in North Ostrobothnia in ten-year increments, 1621–1700. Source: NAF, Court Records.

2.1.1 Ancient Harvest Areas

Ancient harvest areas were common in North Ostrobothnia. The first example of such an area being contested is found in the court records of Ii. It took place on the 2nd of March 1643 and concerned an area of a village forest where Eric Jönsson had intended to cut trees. However, his neighbour Simon Thomasson claimed it to be his ‘by age’. Nevertheless, the court was able to establish that the forest had always been, and still was, the village’s common. Therefore, it was up to them to decide whether they wanted to divide it or leave the matter as it was.²²⁰ Another similar case occurred in Kruunupyy parish on the 4th of August 1654. In his absence, Salomon Danielsson was accused by his neighbour Jöns Jönsson to have cut 20 loads of firewood. It was described how he had ‘violently’ removed it from Jöns’ part of the forest, for which he was sentenced to pay a fine, as well as to pay

²²⁰ Vinterting, Ii parish, 2nd of March 1643, NAF, Court Records, KO a:5, 1640–1644, act 214, p. 210v. Original text: ‘af ålder’.

Jöns for the firewood he had taken.²²¹ Even though Salomon was not present to contest the allegations put against him, it is obvious that the transgression on Jöns' harvest area was a serious offence that threatened to diminish the level of reciprocity within the community. The allegedly violent manner in which he had carried out his actions could either suggest that the 20 loads of firewood were considered to be a substantial amount, or that the manner in which he had done it was believed to be particularly spiteful as Jöns probably knew that he was cutting on his neighbour's harvest area. Nevertheless, the matter was resolved in an expedient manner by using the local court as a collective-choice arena.

The logic of harvest areas was not altogether dissimilar from that of the *Hauberge* in north-western Germany where forest regions were parcelled into fields that were used in rotation.²²² As explained by Sakari Kuusi, a similar rotation system (where members of different households took turns in harvesting different parts of the forests) did exist in Ostrobothnia during the middle of the eighteenth century.²²³ However, a system of rotating harvest areas does not seem to have been practiced in North Ostrobothnia during the seventeenth century. Regardless, using the system of harvest areas could mean that a certain area did not contain the kind of tree that the owner was interested in at a particular point in time, but instead grew on a neighbour's harvest area. One example illustrating this is from 1675. Mats Jönsson from Knivsund in Kruunupy parish accused Erich Hindersson of having taken a boat keel that Mats had prepared in his part of the forest. Erich had nothing to say in his defence, only that he had noticed this particular tree earlier and had hoped to use it himself. Nevertheless, he had no right to remove it and was ordered by the court to give it back to Mats.²²⁴

The location of individual homesteads could be an important factor determining the reasonableness of a person's claim to a particular harvest area. However, the way resources were utilised was also important. For example, in the process of making tar, one had to remove the bark from the trees to let it produce resin. Choosing suitable trees to debark therefore meant making sure to pick trees that were of appropriate size to maximise the

²²¹ Sommarting, Kruunupy parish, 4th of August 1654, NAF, Court Records, KO a:8, 1653–1654, act 270, p. 266. Original text: 'medh wäldh'.

²²² Brakensiek (2002), p. 239.

²²³ Kuusi (1914), p. 23.

²²⁴ Häradsting, Ikalaborg parish, 16th and 17th of March 1675, NAF, Court Records, KO a:17, 1675–1675, act 139, p. 134v.

amount of tar that could later be extracted, but also for the sake of safeguarding the regeneration of the forest. Not doing so was considered wasteful and an ecologically unsustainable way of utilising the resources of the forest. This is demonstrated by a case from 1664 in Kruunupyö parish when Johan Mattsson Lybeck accused his village neighbours of having debarked and cut pine trees that he considered to be too young.²²⁵ Yet, it has been explained in earlier research that only 60 percent of the felled pine trees were actually used in the final distilling process.²²⁶ The remaining 40 percent was considered as waste product and was often left in the forest. Since all parts of the tree could not be debarked whilst it still stood upright, it is understandable that the residues were not used in the distillation. They could nonetheless be used to serve other purposes. Regardless, the distilling of resin-rich tar wood seems to have been prioritised, that is, practicality over ecological sustainability.

In relation to the question concerning what rules and regulations existed regarding access and utilisation of forest resources within the village, it is evident that tradition played a crucial role in how harvest areas were allotted. As production of tar and widespread forest cutting increased, the location of these harvest areas, as well as tar pits and certain tree species, similarly grew in importance. This resulted in situations where peasants had to revisit the matter of what rules actually applied and that the *efficiency* of these rules were adequate. The location of harvest areas was knowledge that was stored within the collective memory of the village, and the local courts played an important role in mediating when conflicting views ultimately led to dispute. The local courts thus functioned as collective-choice arenas upon which village members could effectively voice their concerns concerning violations, make sure that wrongdoers were reprimanded, and re-establish what rules everyone needed to adhere by. As such, the system of harvest areas facilitated the peasant's self-governance of the commonly owned forests since *equity* was attained through the open discussions held at the local courts. *Efficiency* was achieved by the establishment of rules concerning access and distribution of resources, which together promoted the *utility* of the system. However, harvest areas were not used in all villages. Nevertheless, one rule that had been assumed by all village communities

²²⁵ Sommarting, Kruunupyö parish, 3rd and 4th of August 1664, NAF, Court Records, KO a:11, 1661–1666, act 554, pp. 558v–559.

²²⁶ Alho (1968), pp. 46–51; *Svenska Österbottens Historia* 3 (1980), p. 70; Villstrand (1992b), p. 46.

since long before the seventeenth century was to not appropriate more forest resources than what stood in proportion to the taxable capacity of each peasant's homestead. This is a subject to which we shall now turn.

2.1.2 Taxable Capacity

A peasant was someone who 'worked a farm that had been officially assessed for a specific rate of tax or rent',²²⁷ which in turn regulated how much of the forest common members of that farm were allowed to appropriate. As the members of two villages in Kruunupyy parish were subjected to an inspection in 1673 concerning how many timber logs they had cut during the preceding year, the size of their homesteads is indicated in *mantal*. They vary in size from 0.25 to 1.5, meaning that the members of the largest homestead were allowed to appropriate six times as many resources as the smallest.²²⁸ Keeping the level of appropriation to the taxable capacity of the homestead allowed people to carry on the everyday process of cutting firewood, producing tar, and cutting timber at a level that the community deemed justifiable and sustainable, which simultaneously contributed to the household income. The routine of harvesting wooden resources, and not doing so excessively, was an informal rule that created stability in the village. Furthermore, keeping to those rules was to promote reciprocity and maintain the moral economy of the community, which also guaranteed that everyone was allowed to appropriate enough resources so as to ensure the future existence of one's household.²²⁹ However, informal rules could easily be violated if no one made sure that they were followed. It is relevant here to speak of operational situations, that is, when people acted in relation to internal and external incentives generating actions that either preserved and strengthened the legitimacy of the rules in place, or challenged their validity by violating them – in other words, the *efficiency* of the rules set up by the CPI.²³⁰

The reason why members of a certain household appropriated forest resources from the forest was a private matter. Unlike in Fryksdal hundred on the Swedish mainland, there were no rules in place that regulated whether

²²⁷ Gadd (2011), p. 122.

²²⁸ Vintering, Kruunupyy parish, the 18th and 20th of January 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 369, pp. 361v–363. See also Table 1, pp. 215–216.

²²⁹ Scott (1976); Grewe & Hölzl (2018), p. 19.

²³⁰ Ostrom (2005), p. 60; de Moor (2015), p. 118.

they were used for household consumption or for sale.²³¹ Nevertheless, the court records contain several cases when rules concerning the permissible level of resources extraction had been exceeded. For example, in Lohtaja parish in 1679, Michel Ericksson was accused of *utödning* (En. devastation, emptying) by his neighbours as he had been cutting tar wood in the village forest.²³² He had done so to a degree that was ‘more than what his homestead’s share justifies’. This meant that the neighbours ran the risk of not being able to appropriate the extent of resources they desired and were entitled to. This furthermore put the welfare of their households at risk as it could negatively affect the ecological sustainability of the forest, but also the robustness of the CPI, that is, the level of reciprocity and *equity* within the community. No one questioned that Michel was entitled to cut tar wood on the common seeing as he held property in the village. However, the court decided to examine how much he had exceeded the permissible amount justified by the size of his homestead. In the meantime, Michel was not allowed to distil the tar wood he had cut, but since the inspection could not be conducted straight away, the verdict had to wait until the next court meeting.²³³

The magnitude of accounts such as the one used to describe Michel’s crime (*utödning*) must be problematised since the meaning of the word is somewhat complicated to translate. It is not reasonable to assume that he had emptied (or devastated) the entire village forest. The fact that his neighbours explained that he had appropriated more than his homestead’s share justified would in such a case have been meaningless. It is more reasonable to assume that he had emptied a certain area of trees fit for tar production, and that his neighbours perceived this as worrying. Another interpretation is that the manner of his forest cutting was perceived as exhausting and tearing on the ecological sustainability of the forest. Nevertheless, the fact that his neighbours had brought the matter to the court demonstrates the *efficiency* of the CPI seeing as they could identify his actions as not compliant to the rules in place. As such, his forest cutting activities were of such proportion that had he been allowed to continue, the ecological sustainability of the village forest would certainly have been threatened.

²³¹ Granér (2002), pp. 235–236.

²³² The word *utöda* can be defined in several ways, but the most fitting translation is that something was devastated or emptied of what once existed.

²³³ Höstting, Lohtaja parish, 9th and 10th of October 1679, NAF, Court Records, 1679–1679, KO a:22, act 130, p. 858. Original text: ‘mehra än hans hemmans andhel fordrar’.

Regardless of the size of one's homestead, each landholding person was allowed to obtain the essential necessities to sustain one's household in terms of firewood, fodder for the animals, materials for equipment, tools, and fences. It was previously explained how the collective memory of a community was vital when disagreements over harvest areas arose, or when someone claimed a certain area even though the village forest was open to free use. However, the collective memory could be volatile and changeable depending on sometimes varying levels of bargaining power among different members of the village institution. This could for example be expressed by denying someone their fundamental right to obtain the essential necessities needed to survive.

This was to violate against the moral economy of the village institution; an expression of selective treatment that would decrease the level of reciprocity and generate a growing distance between community members. If left unresolved, this could lead to devastating effects for the CPI, as it for example did in seventeenth century England in the district of Breckland where socioeconomic polarisation ultimately became too much for the institution to manage.²³⁴ Nevertheless, such instances are rare to find in the court records from North Ostrobothnia. However, one example from 1698 demonstrates how polarisation could occur. It concerned the people of Oulunsalo who had denied a member of their community to cut firewood in the forest. Her name was Anna Roselia, and she presented a letter of complaint to the court in local Oulu where she had gone to seek justice. The letter stated that the other peasants had stubbornly prevented her from obtaining the most essential necessities from the forest and that she was entitled to as much of the forest's resources as the other peasants. She could prove that she had been paying her taxes, but added that she would soon be unable to do so if this was allowed to continue. The accused peasants were unable to provide the court with any reason for the victimisation of Anna and was accordingly warned to no longer deny her access to the common forest.²³⁵

It is possible that similar instances of exclusion never reached the court's table, or that they were resolved by other means. However, the legal authority of the local courts was an effective conflict-solving mechanism that could be

²³⁴ De Keyzer (2018), p. 97.

²³⁵ Vinterting, Oulu and Hailuoto parishes, 21st and 22nd of February 1698, NAF, Court Records, KO a:19, 1698–1698, act 183, pp. 307–308.

used if extrajudicial solutions and agreements were not possible to reach, as was the case with Anna Roselia. Whilst the fundamental right of being allowed to appropriate enough resources to ensure the future existence of one's household was custom, transgressions against this fundamental right did occur, as well as exceeding the permissible amount of resources appropriation through overexploitation. Such violations demonstrate that the *efficiency* of informal rules within the community was tested, with the potential of calling them into question. The function of local courts as collective-choice arenas where village members could discuss these issues and initiate a reinvigoration of disregarded and broken rules was therefore crucial. Case in point, in 1694, Anders Michelsson took legal action against Jöran Josephsson, whom Anders believed had cut too much from the forest common that they shared. Jöran denied the accusation by saying that he was entitled as large a part of the forest as his homestead represented. Since none of the concerned peasants had any witnesses to call upon, the court was unable to determine how much of the forest Jöran's homestead actually represented. The two peasants therefore requested to have their forest formally inspected in order to determine the size of each homestead and the forest, which was to be carried out by one of the laymen of the court.²³⁶

By requesting an inspection and standing up for one's right to subsistence, informal rules inherent within the community could be re-established within the formal setting of the local court. In case of the former, the size of the peasant's homesteads, and how much they represented in actual forest resources, could be estimated, which gave them a reinvigorated understanding of 'the rules of the game'.²³⁷ The case of Anders Michelsson against Jöran Josephsson is furthermore a good example of level shifting in the sense that the two peasants identified a problem in an operational situation and brought the matter to a collective-choice arena where they could collectively decide how the issue should be resolved.²³⁸ As such, a balance between *utility*, *efficiency*, and *equity* could be achieved, making it possible for them to maintain an ecologically, institutionally, and economically sustainable resource management system.

²³⁶ Vintering, Kokkola and Kälviä parishes, 8th and 9th of January 1694, NAF, Court Records, KO a:15, 1694–1694, act 20, p. 30.

²³⁷ North (1990), p. 3.

²³⁸ Ostrom (2005), pp. 62–64.

2.1.3 Communication and Collaboration

Court cases seldom reveal the actual procedure of how peasants cut the wood they used for tar or timber production. Given the nature and purpose of keeping records over court proceedings, it is understandable that they mostly reveal information about the nature of alleged crimes and transgressions, how much resources that had been illegally or excessively extracted, and how settlements were reached. Nevertheless, in some instances, we are given an indication of how peasants communicated where they planned to appropriate resources. To better understand how a community regulated forest exploitation and made choices that ultimately had consequences for how peasants achieved a sustainable governance system, it is important to investigate how communication and collaboration among community members functioned.

In June 1694, in Paltamo parish, Isach Pickkarainen explained how his neighbour Lars Persson Mukonen had walked in the village forest during the autumn and marked a certain area which he then had begun to cut and prepare for slash-and-burn agriculture. This was a way of increasing *efficiency* since he had effectively indicated to the other peasants in the village that the area had been selected and prepared for felling. Would any village member disagree with the location of the markers or the size of the area, they would have opportunity to voice their concerns, either directly to Lars, or before the local court. This, Isach explained, had been done in accordance with tradition. Lars had then returned during the following spring with two unknown men and had resumed cutting in the area. By this time, other village members were also cutting in the forest, and it was reported that no transgressions had been made up until that point. However, when they left, Lars and the two unknown men continued to cut beyond the markers he had previously put up. Since Lars had nothing to say in his defence, the matter was resolved by allowing Lars to keep the yields from the area that he had marked, but the yields from the extended area would be divided between him and Isach.²³⁹

Although it is not certain whether the area Lars had initially marked stood in proportion to the size of his homestead, it is likely that it did. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the yields from the unmarked area was only divided between Lars and Isach, excluding the other members of the village.

²³⁹ Höstting, Paltamo parish, 23rd and 25th of June 1694, NAF, Court Records, KO a:15, 1694–1694, act 227–228, pp. 47–48.

This suggests that the part of the forest in which Lars was cutting was the designated area for those two to acquire forest resources.

It is difficult to say with any empirical certainty whether marking of forest areas before felling was practiced in the early stages of the seventeenth century, or perhaps even further back. However, since it was emphasised as tradition, it seems probable that it was. Although concerning a dispute between different villages, Virrankoski has a later example of how this was referred to in 1712 when peasants from Tanhuala and Rautio had marked an area in the forest where they had later produced tar wood. However, the members of another village had taken the wood, for which the peasants of Tanhuala and Rautio demanded compensation, which they also received since the court considered the system of marking an area to be a legitimate way of claiming a forest area for cutting.²⁴⁰

Even though the taxable capacity of each homestead was a guiding principle that regulated forest exploitation, creating additional transparency by marking an area in preparation of harvesting created even better conditions for achieving a robust and sustainable CPI. In this way, community members knew each other's intentions and could thus act accordingly. However, there are examples of how cutting activities first needed to be accepted by the village before any marking or cutting was allowed. Such cases demonstrate the existence of symmetric aggregation rules within peasant institutions.²⁴¹ For example, in the village of Rautio in Kalajoki parish in 1692, Jacob Ericsson brought his neighbour to court because he had cleared parts of the forest without asking the community for permission, for which he was fined three silver marks.²⁴² Another example from the same parish took place seven years later when the peasant Anders Pehrsson was fined six silver marks for having cut tar wood without permission.²⁴³ In a legal case from the parish of Sotkamo, in the village Hyrynsalmi in 1679, three peasants had collectively been clearing parts of the common forest for slash-and-burn agriculture. They had cut the area during the previous year, although one of them had later burnt his swidden

²⁴⁰ Virrankoski (1973), pp. 249–261.

²⁴¹ Ostrom (2005, pp. 203–204) explains symmetric aggregation rules as rules that ‘assign control over an action to multiple participants so that all are treated alike. One symmetric aggregation rule is that of unanimity – everyone must agree prior to action.’

²⁴² Vinterting, Kalajoki parish, 14th, 15th, and 16th of January 1692, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1692–1692, act 30, p. 47.

²⁴³ Vinterting, Kalajoki parish, 16th, 17th, and 18th of January 1699, NAF, Court Records, KO a:20, 1699–1699, act 57, p. 109.

without giving notice. This would seem like a harmless affair had it not been for the fire then spreading onto his neighbours' swidden as well. One could suppose that the accused peasant had in fact done the others a favour seeing as they now did not have to burn the swidden themselves. However, it was explained that only one of them stood ready to sow his swidden, whilst the other two were not. The court's judgement was nevertheless that each man should manage his own swidden as best he can, but since the forest was a common, notice should first be given to the others so that nothing would be unnecessarily lost.²⁴⁴

It can thus far be determined that communication was a facilitating aspect in the effort of achieving a sustainable governance regime on village level. Another was collaboration. Cutting wood, practicing slash-and-burn agriculture, and preparing tar wood together with other members of the village community had benefits. One advantage was that the transportation of tar wood to the tar pit was eased by a larger workforce, something which also applied in transporting timber logs or preparing an area for swidden. It did not only boost cooperativeness and reciprocity, but it also made the protection of the forest easier when it was carried out in common.

Conflicts arising from such joint efforts are rare in the court records. A possible explanation for this is that such communal initiatives were carried by a high level of *equity*, meaning that those involved had effective ways of resolving problems if or when they occurred. But it could also be that the distribution of extracted resources was characterised by *efficiency*. A well-functioning village community where members helped each other and worked together was also useful in the sense that it promoted *utility* since people could identify the benefits of participating in the work effort and so that the resources were distributed fairly. However, there are a few examples when this did not work efficiently enough. They nevertheless demonstrate how someone's work effort and contribution to a joint enterprise was the deciding factor that granted those involved a fair share of the extracted resources.

In June 1679, the two peasants Per Persson Toloinen and Henrik Hindersson Säckinen stood in front of the local court in Paltamo. They had previously been preparing swidden together and it seems like they had decided to cut down two equally large areas, the yields of which would

²⁴⁴ Vintering, Kajaani borg stad, 27th and 28th of February and 1st of March 1679, NAF, Court Records, KO a:2, 1674–1680, act 378, p. 65.

accrue each of them. However, Henrik had cut down a slightly larger area than Per. The court decided that because the ‘forest is undivided and belongs equally to both’, Per should be given half of the exceeded area that Henrik had cut and that they should thereafter work together to finish what they had started.²⁴⁵ In another case from 1680, the chaplain of Muhos, Anders Salander, had been cutting timber in the common forest together with Brusius Porhainen. Their plan was to sell them as ship masts. They had cut 28 masts in total, out of which Brusius had taken the ones he considered to be of best quality. Considering that they had put an equal amount of work into their business venture, the chaplain reasoned that he should be given a third of the masts that Brusius had taken. The accused was not present at the hearing, but the layman Anders Pyykkö informed the court that he had previously talked to Brusius and tried to act as judge in the matter, which seemed to have been going on for quite some time. As he did, Brusius had violently refused to pay the chaplain for the masts and had threatened the layman with an axe. The court considered the matter and concluded that since Brusius was nowhere to be found, he should be fined six marks for not appearing at the court proceedings. The chaplain protested against the verdict since it did not include any compensation for the masts that he felt he was owed, which was estimated to approximately 200 thalers. However, it was revealed that after having taken the masts, Brusius had apparently transported them down a river, during which time they had all been lost.²⁴⁶

If someone has the opportunity to attain more resources than prearranged and without the threat of repercussions, there is always a risk that someone else might experience an unforeseen loss of resources. Therefore, ‘fairness is a crucial attribute of the rules of robust systems’.²⁴⁷ What can be deemed fair is furthermore a matter closely related to the moral judgement sustained by local opinion.²⁴⁸ The importance of fairness is demonstrated by a court case from 1697 when resources had been appropriated collectively by several peasants. It is moreover an example of how users could act in an opportunistic manner, indicating a lack of *equity* within a community. Anders Kyllmänen stood to answer Karin Hansdotter concerning a certain

²⁴⁵ Sommarting, Paltamo and Sotkamo parishes, 21st and 22nd of June 1679, NAF, Court Records, KO a:2, 1674–1680, act 399, p. 107. Original text: ‘skogen är oskiffit och bäggie lyka tillhörigh’.

²⁴⁶ Sommarting, Oulu and Hailuoto parishes, 21st, 22nd, and 23rd of June 1680, NAF, Court Records, KO a:24, 1680–1680, act 157–158, pp. 154–154v. The estimation of 200 thalers is made by Virrankoski (1973), p. 261–265.

²⁴⁷ Ostrom (2005), p. 263.

²⁴⁸ Scott (1976), p. 41.

amount of tar wood that her husband Olof Andersson and his father had made together with Anders and Thomas. They had all worked together in debarking, cutting, and transporting tar wood to a tar pit. The only thing that remained was to begin the distilling process. However, Karin's husband had unfortunately passed away before this last stage of the production process had started, and she now feared being excluded from her husband's share in the enterprise. What had given rise to her ominous foreboding is not clear. Nevertheless, since the wood had been cut on the common forest, the court decided that she was entitled to her husband's share, also taking into consideration that she had been partaking in the stacking of the tar pit.²⁴⁹ Whilst this demonstrates how risk of exclusion and selective treatment could be prevalent within peasant communities, it also shows how a member of a CPI, both male and female, could appeal to the court and invoke a rule that everyone had previously agreed to and accordingly had to respect.

As presented thus far, there were different ways to establish what a fair distribution of forest resources actually meant. In cases when individual households appropriated forest resources, the taxable capacity or size of the homestead was the guiding principle. Practicing transparency through well-functioning methods of communication provided stability, accountability, and promoted *equity* and *efficiency* as village members knew each other's intentions, thus increasing the level of *utility* within the governance system. When communal efforts were made, the rules that applied was that each involved party, regardless of their gender, was entitled as large a share of the profits as their estimated contribution to the enterprise. These rules had a long history, and even though market forces grew, and forests came to be more heavily exploited, they did not change during the seventeenth century. But even though these rules remained unchanged, they were sometimes challenged, which most certainly was a consequence of the new economic climate of the period.

2.1.4 An Open Forest

The regulatory arrangement in villages could vary. The forest could either be regulated through ancient harvest areas, or it could be open to free use for anyone who held property in the village. Regardless, an important difference to establish here is the distinction between access-rights and location-of-

²⁴⁹ Sommarting, Oulu and Hailuoto parishes, 23rd and 25th of August 1697, NAF, Court Records, KO a:18, 1697–1697, act 306–307, pp. 113–114.

appropriation. In a system of ancient harvest areas, both could be regulated since only those who held property in the village were granted such areas. Furthermore, it simultaneously set a limit on how much resources that could be exploited. If someone in the village either bought or inherited a larger part of the village's holdings, an understanding was reached granting that peasant a larger harvest area so as to match the size of the property. However, if there were no designated harvest areas, it could be more difficult to estimate how much every landholding peasant was entitled to appropriate, and perhaps more crucially, it became more difficult to monitor where these activities took place. Having fewer rules and keeping the village forest more open to its members thus entailed a greater risk of not achieving enough *efficiency* in the relationship between the CPI and the CPR.²⁵⁰

Considering that the population in North Ostrobothnia grew from approximately 9 000 to 14 000 during the period 1654–1695,²⁵¹ new places of settlement were established, which meant that the tradition of age-old harvest areas was not applicable. They had not been around long enough for such areas to be considered ancient in terms of forest use. The location of forest cutting activities could thus be more easily criticised since the usage of this customary and legal argument simply did not apply. One such example is found in the court records of Kokkola in the year 1700. It concerned Johan Hindersson Joupri who accused his neighbour Per Persson Junttus of unlawful cutting. The accusation was based on his belief that it should not be permitted to appropriate forest resources wherever one pleased. However, the laymen of the court attested that the forest belonged to the village and was therefore open to free use by everyone in the community. Whilst there was a limit on how much everyone could harvest, each landholding peasant had the right to cut tar wood 'without addressing anyone'.²⁵²

Even though regulations generally provide stability, the inviolability of open village forests was deemed very important where such existed. This sometimes had to be emphasised when village members questioned its logic and reasonableness. Yet, a different attitude concerning location-of-appropriation can be found in the records of Ii from 1667. Joseph Tomasson accused Christer Jacobsson and his brothers to have cut wood where he had

²⁵⁰ de Moor (2015), p. 118.

²⁵¹ Virrankoski (1973), p. 757, Table III.

²⁵² Sommaring, Kokkola and Kälviä parishes, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th of October 1700, NAF, Court Records, KO a:21, 1700–1700, act 518, pp. 1030–1031. Original text: 'uthan någons tilltahl'.

placed bird traps, thus rendering them useless. Nevertheless, since it could be established that it was between 24 and 30 kilometres between the two homesteads, and because the forest common was large enough for Joseph to go somewhere else, the matter was dismissed.²⁵³ In other words, whilst some cases show that the free use of village forests was non-negotiable, other commons were similarly open for villagers to use freely, but with a certain degree of reasonableness in regards to the location-of-appropriation. After all, bird traps could be moved, trees could not.

Another example is found in the court records of Kokkola in 1678. Per Clementsson accused Mats Olsson to have cut wood and practiced slash-and-burn agriculture on his ancient forest (Swe. *urminnes skog*) and demanded that he should be given the harvest from the area. However, the laymen of the court testified and affirmed that the contested area was not Per's ancient forest. Furthermore, considering that Per lived ten kilometres from the village in a particularly dense part of the forest, it was emphasised that it was in no danger of being deforested, which made his claim even more surprising to the other peasants. It was moreover pointed out that Per was known to be a troublesome person, indicating that his motives were tainted by greed and selfishness, rather than by a sincere worry about the sustainability of the forest. The gathered peasantry came to a vote and decided that the forest should continue to be the property of the village without any delineations, as it had always been.²⁵⁴

The way in which peasants made sure that forest resources were distributed fairly between the landholders of the village was not altogether generalised throughout North Ostrobothnia. Nevertheless, the taxable capacity of each homestead was a dominating principle that determined the extent of resources everyone was allowed to appropriate. Even so, the manner in which forest related work was carried out differed in terms of the location-of-appropriation. In other words, each village community was able to decide for themselves how they wanted to organise forest exploitation – if they wanted to employ a system of harvest areas or leave the forest open to free use. Regardless of the chosen arrangement, an important element in the peasantry's management strategies was transparency, something that was

²⁵³ Vinterting, Ii parish, 18th and 19th of February 1667, NAF, Court Records, KO a:12, 1667–1671, act 44, p. 40.

²⁵⁴ Häradsting, Kokkola parish, 23rd, 26th, and 27th of August 1678, NAF, Court Records, KO a:20, 1678–1678, act 116, p. 112v.

facilitated by the availability of the local courts that mediated and passed judgement when conflicts occurred.

2.1.5 A Matter of Proximity

The distance between village members' cutting activities to someone's homestead could sometimes bother individuals of the community. In such cases, it was often claimed that the activities were intrusive as they had been carried out too close to someone's homestead and private infields. Unlike harvest areas located farther away from the village centre, the forest that bordered to a peasant's infields could sometimes follow another logic. Here, it was a matter of proximity and availability.

The farms in the villages were generally located in a sparse row along the river valleys. The infields laid in a continuous, often elongated cropland in the direction of the river with the forest surrounding the village facing away from the river. An example of this can be seen in Figure 7. The map was made in 1649 and the village was located in the parish of Ii. It consisted of four homesteads, although only three are visible on this map sheet since the fourth was located approximately one kilometre north. In the *Notarium Explicatio*, it says that the taxable capacity of the three homesteads was one sixth each and that 'forest and pasture to this village is plentiful'.²⁵⁵ This meant that the members of each household were entitled to an equally large area of the village forest. However, if the members of household 1 would cut wood along or close to the infields and fences of household 2, whilst leaving its own infield-bordering forest area untouched, it would seem understandable that the members of household 2 saw this as intrusive, even though it was common forest. It would mean that the members of household 2 would have to go farther into the forest in order to acquire the resources they needed, which would be more time consuming and physically demanding.

²⁵⁵ NAF, MHA F 1 14-15, Uhlaborgz Lähn Öffwer Iiâ Sochn [Livo]. Original text: 'Skogh och Mulbeet till denna byen öfwerflödigt'.

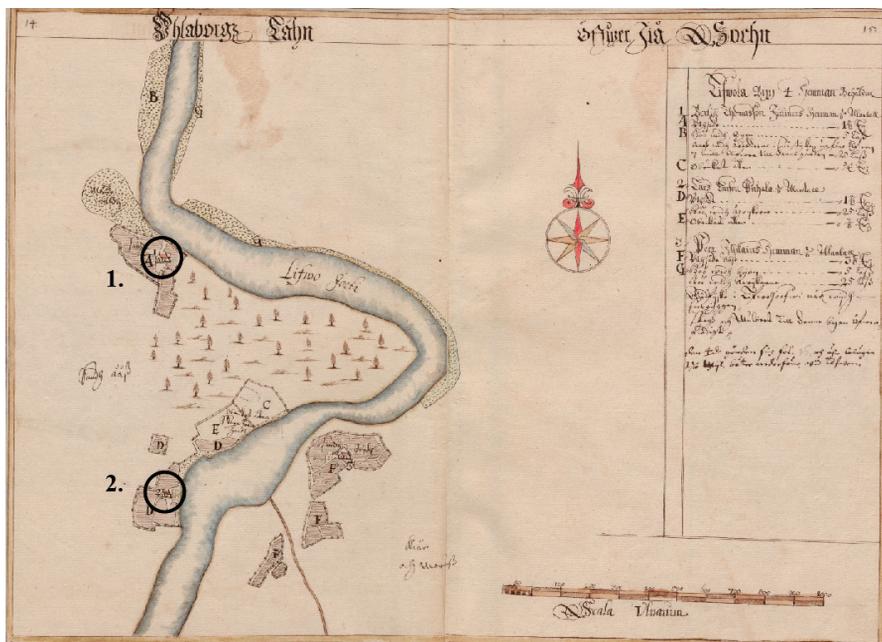


Figure 7. The village Livo in Ii parish, section of map made by Claes Claesson in 1648. Two of the three visible homesteads are encircled in black to visualise their location in relation to the forest. Source: NAF, MHA F 1 14-15, Uhlaborz Lähn Öffwer Iiâ Sochn [Livo].

It was therefore not uncommon that the forest area bordering to a certain homestead was considered to be for the inhabitants of that household to use. Nevertheless, in the first court cases of this kind, the argument of proximity was not taken into consideration. On the 20th of January 1642, Erich Hindersson from Mieluskoski in Pyhäjoki parish accused his neighbour Henrik Jönsson of having removed tar wood that he had prepared in the village forest. Henrik answered that he had done so because he felt that Erich had cut the wood too close to his homestead and private fields. However, since it had been cut on the village common, Erich was allowed to keep the tar wood.²⁵⁶ Three years later, in Kemi parish, Lars Larsson confiscated his neighbour Mats Pajari's firewood because he had cut it too close to Lars' private infields. Nevertheless, the court ruled in favour of Mats since the

²⁵⁶ Häradsting, Pyhäjoki parish, 20th of January 1642, NAF, Court Records, KO a:5, 1640–1644, act 106–107, pp. 101–101v.

wood had been cut on the forest common, notwithstanding the proximity to Lars' homestead.²⁵⁷

That each household had legal right to appropriate resources from the forest common was fundamental in many ways. Not only was it economically important for the peasant household, but also to maintain a sufficiently high level of *utility* within the village. Every member had to see the usefulness of belonging to the community in question and that the resources available to them were adequate enough to make a living. As explained by Tegengren, they perceived themselves as a village community by virtue of their common interests.²⁵⁸ Nevertheless, where they acquired these resources was still important, and determining factors of whether the argument of proximity was adhered to or not could be several. First and foremost, it was a matter that the village members controlled themselves since they collectively owned the use-rights to the forest. The size of the village forest was of course important, but it also depended on whether such regulations had been introduced earlier or not. Similar to the praxis of keeping boundaries in the collective memory of the community, no formal specification of a proximity rule was deemed necessary, provided that the community got their wood from elsewhere or did not find such close-by-activities disturbing or harmful.

Since the infields were surrounded by fences, a physical border delineating the outlying lands from the village's infields existed, which made the two easy to recognise. However, this was not always clear to everyone. The court protocols reveal how peasants could claim forest areas as their own private lands despite it being the village's property. This is demonstrated by an earlier case already discussed in this thesis (p. 91), the one where Chief Constable Johan Mattsson Lybeck drew his neighbours Anders Nilsson, Jacob Andersson, and Lars Andersson before the court in Kruunupyy in 1664. As we know, Johan argued that they had debarked and cut young trees in preparation of making tar wood where Johan traditionally got his firewood. Later, he also claimed that these trees in fact stood on his own arable lands and was not even a part of the common to begin with. Lars responded to the accusations by contending that the area was a part of the village's common forest and that neither the chief constable, nor anyone else in the village, had the right to hinder their efforts of preparing tar wood there.

²⁵⁷ Vinterting, Kemi parish, 13th of March 1645, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1645–1649, act 11, p. 5v.

²⁵⁸ Tegengren (1941), pp. 73–75.

The court could easily determine that Lars spoke the truth and thus ruled in favour of him and his fellow peasants. The court also emphasised that it was the right of every property holder in the village to cut timber and tar wood on the common forest, also adding that people from other villages were not allowed to do so. It was therefore decided that a fine of 40 marks would befall anyone who violated this judgement.²⁵⁹

The argument of proximity was not unique to Ostrobothnia. In late fifteenth century Denmark, cutting activities carried out close to a peasant's or crown tenant's land was deemed illegal and warranted the offender to pay a substantial fine. However, in a court ruling from 1484, Bo Fritzboøger points out how the court suggested another solution, namely that the contending parties could, if they so wished, 'commit themselves to a voluntary arrangement, according to which they utilised the wood in common as "good neighbours"'.²⁶⁰

Good neighbourliness is not absent from the court records, but the Ostrobothnian peasants' argument of proximity, and the experienced intrusion, was generally not accepted as enough motivation to make any changes in the rules-in-use. This seemed to have remained common practice throughout most of the seventeenth century. However, a change in this attitude can be noticed towards the end of the century. In the village Piipsjärvi in 1680, not far from the village Mieluskoski where Henrik Jönsson lived, a peasant named Sigfred Mårtensson voiced concerns over his neighbours Jacob Jacobsson and Tomas Hindersson. Sigfred lived on a small island in the lake of Piipsjärvi where the two other peasants had recently been cutting. Jacob responded to the allegations saying that they had indeed been cutting, but not too close to Sigfred's homestead. Furthermore, even though Sigfred lived alone on the island, the forest was the village's common. Nevertheless, the court declared that everyone had the right to use the forest in relation to the taxable capacity of each homestead, including the small forest area on the island. Sigfred acknowledged this, but reiterated the argument of proximity, which the court ultimately found reasonable. As a result, two laymen were selected and given instructions to head out to the island and inspect the area. They would then make certain to point out the

²⁵⁹ Sommarting, Kruunupyö parish, 3rd and 4th of August 1664, NAF, Court Records, KO a:11, 1661–1666, act 553–554, pp. 558v–559.

²⁶⁰ Fritzboøger (2004), p. 114.

trees that could be considered to be ‘in his yard’ and which were not.²⁶¹ In Liminka parish in 1699, another example is found when Henrik Jöransson Nalkki stood accused of having taken ten loads of tar wood from his neighbours. He motivated his actions by saying that his neighbours were cutting at the boundaries of his homestead. The court ordered an inspection to be carried out and decided that Henrik’s neighbours were no longer allowed to cut so close to his homestead ‘because he through the power of the law should have space for forest’, even though it was a common.²⁶²

A changing attitude towards the proximity of other village members’ cutting activities, and every landholder’s right to ‘have space for forest’, indicates several things. First, the importance of having access to a forest, and that the resources appropriated therefrom, were of equally high importance to the peasant household. Second, it indicates a changing economic climate where the intensity of forest exploitation led to more attention being directed towards determining how much forest resources each household had access to and that everyone had its fair share at a reasonable distance – a matter of *utility*. It is very difficult to determine the extent and effects of forest consuming activities that happened more than three centuries ago. It is nonetheless relevant to argue that the changing attitude towards the rule of proximity displays a new set of economic and ecological circumstances where forest landscapes were perhaps of less scale than before, or at least that more caution was taken when close-by cutting activities were detected. Finally, Ostrom states that ‘individuals may be embedded in communities where unobserved norms of fairness and conservation may change the structure of a situation dramatically.’²⁶³ This means that users have the potential to change their behaviour based on past actions, seeing as the result of those actions turned out to be less desirable in the current state of things. Such realisations, and changing behaviours, are not free from conflict. In fact, it is conflict that often alter rules and thus change behaviour. The rule of proximity is an example of this, but also of what was considered to be ‘general morality’, or good form, within peasant communities, and of how it could change.²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ Häradsting, Pyhäjoki parish, February 1680, NAF, Court Records, KO a:24, 1680–1680, act 11–12, pp. 8–8v. Original text: ‘under hans gårdh’.

²⁶² Vinterting, Liminka parish, 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th of September 1699, NAF, Court Records, KO a:20, 1699–1699, act 195, p. 382. Original text: ‘emedan han i förmågo af lag bör hafwa uthrymme till skoog.’

²⁶³ See Ostrom (2005) on predicting and evaluating outcomes, pp. 64–66.

²⁶⁴ Ostrom (2005), p. 67. See also Scott (1976).

2.1.6 Leasing Out the Forest Without Permission

As mentioned earlier, no landholder was allowed to transfer use-rights to the forest to an outsider. In order to avoid that such transgressions occurred, the rules-in-use often had an ‘OR ELSE’ that specified what kind of punishment was prescribed for the violation committed, which could be of varying degree depending on the nature of the violation.²⁶⁵ However, the temptation of leasing out parts of a village forest to an outsider could be overpowering as there are examples of peasants giving external individuals permission to cut in the village forest without prior communal consent. In order to better understand how this affected peasant communities, it is important to consider the consequences in relation to ecological, institutional, and economic sustainability.

Giving an outsider access to the common often meant that a single payment was made to the peasant with whom the deal was struck, or that the yields of the harvested area would be divided between the two. Would the transaction and actual procedure of cutting go unnoticed, none would have been the wiser. However, such bargains were not taken lightly if exposed. For example, in the village of Hopsala in Kruunupyö parish in 1643, Lars Andersson drew his village neighbours before the court. The case he had put forth did not initially concern unlawful permission giving, but rather that they had removed wood that Lars had cut in the village forest, which he now was unable to use. Then something happened that Lars did not intend. The accused responded by telling the court that Lars had previously given several individuals from other villages permission to cut in the forest without their permission. The matter thus backfired on Lars as he was sentenced to pay a fine of three marks and had to abstain the wood he had cut.²⁶⁶ Similar instances of the same character are found in the 1650s, 1670s, and 1690s. For example, it was emphasised in 1692 that ‘unauthorised buying and selling’ of resources and transference of use-rights was unlawful.²⁶⁷

Naturally, the blame was primarily put on the peasant who had entered into an agreement with someone from outside the community. The accused and later convicted peasant was sometimes sentenced to pay a fine estimated to match the value of the number of trees that had been cut. But the accused

²⁶⁵ Ostrom (2005), pp. 149–152.

²⁶⁶ Vinterting, Kokkola, Kruunupyö, and Kälviä parishes, 9th of February 1643, NAF, Court Records, KO a:5, 1640–1644, act 200, p. 196v.

²⁶⁷ See for example Vinterting, Oulu and Hailuoto parishes, 11th, 12th, and 13th of February 1692, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1692–1692, act 103, p. 188. Original text: ‘otilböhrlig köpande och sieliande’.

could also be forced to reinstate the person with whom he had struck a deal. Since the wood that had been illegally cut often accrued to the village community (if it had not already been sold or otherwise consumed), the external party was left with nothing, which sometimes required compensation. Such was the case in 1675 in Oulu parish. The case included the burgher Daniel Camron and the two brothers Hans and Erik Pikkarainen. Daniel had entered into an agreement with Erik and had ‘rented out’ parts of the forest common to Daniel where he had begun to cut. Hans had later seized the wood since it had happened without his knowledge or permission. It could easily be established that the forest was the village’s property and because Erik could not prove *hemul* (En. single ownership). Nevertheless, instead of fining Erik for this violation, the court decided that he was free to seek to reclaim the wood that Hans had confiscated if he so wished. However, he was required to reimburse Daniel for the penalty fee that he had previously been forced to pay.²⁶⁸

The consequences of leasing out a part of the common like Erik had done could be severe for his brother. Erik had rented out one of the most important resources that he and his brother had to sustain their households. It not only meant that there were less resources available to use in, for example, tar production, thus negatively affecting the ecological sustainability of their forest. It also meant that the value of the Hans’ homestead was effectively reduced. As forest dependent industries expanded throughout North Ostrobothnia, scarce availability of forest resources would make a certain homestead less attractive if ever put up for sale. Furthermore, this would result in less inherited property for Hans’ children. Moreover, if the area that had been promised to Daniel Camron was a considerable part of their common forest, the financial capacity of Hans’ homestead would have been radically affected. Finally, the level of trust between Hans and Erik was most certainly affected, thus weakening the bond between them. Even though examples like this are relatively rare to find in the court records, it demonstrates how important it was to respect the agreement that only landholding peasants in the village had the right to either preserve or consume the resources of their common forest. The prioritisations made by peasants in different situations could thus put the scale of sustainability out

²⁶⁸ Sommarting, Oulu parish, 6th, 7th, and 8th of September 1675, NAF, Court Records, KO a:17, 1675–1675, act 194, p. 189. Original text: ‘hyrdt’.

of balance by one party making self-serving decisions without considering the impact they had on everyone else in the village.

2.1.7 New Settlers in the Forest

As tar production became more and more important for the peasant household economy, the location of one's homestead in relation to forests that were rich in tar wood similarly grew in importance. The town of Vaasa had the largest export of tar by the mid-seventeenth century, although the production had already started to spread northward, which led to the ensuing dominance of Kokkola in exports of tar towards the end of the century.²⁶⁹ As the population grew, colonisation spread eastward towards the landscape of Kainuu, resulting in new settlements along the rivers and streams of the region where pine rich forests were yet to be put under axe. This development can be noticed in the court records from Kajaani, located at Oulujärvi in the eastern end of Oulujoki (Swe. *Ule älv*), which flows westward and out into the Bay of Bothnia at the town Oulu.

The establishment of a new homestead was not free from restrictions. Even though earlier research has argued for the particular ease with which new settlers could settle wherever they wished,²⁷⁰ the Crown demanded their share of the homestead's income, which meant that it had to be properly estimated for taxation. New settlements naturally posed a risk for village communities already existing in the area. The regulatory arrangement of these communities, whether it was organised through harvest areas or not, was vulnerable if people from elsewhere suddenly began to appropriate forest resources. It therefore had to be ensured that the new homestead would not cause the community any damage in the process of being assigned both arable land and forest resources. The ability of peasant communities to make certain that this was done properly presupposed that they were well informed of the size of their forest, how much resources they themselves needed, and how much could be granted to the new settler. In other words, it compelled the members of the village to consider what ecological, institutional, and economic impact the new settler would have on their governance regime.

One example of such an event took place in late June 1642 when a man called Olof approached the court in Kajaani and made it known that he had settled down in the forest. This new settlement had been sanctioned by the

²⁶⁹ Villstrand (1992).

²⁷⁰ Kuusi (1914), pp. 14–15.

court at an earlier time and it was now estimated that he occupied one acre (Swe. *tunnland*) of arable land. The court also decided to allow him to cut himself a meadow in the forest as long as it would not affect the nearby freeholding peasants in a negative way, which they all agreed to.²⁷¹ The precautionary measure of making sure that the members of the old village were not burdened by the new settler was important and can be found in other areas within the Swedish Kingdom as well. For example, in Granér's microstudy of Västra Ämtervik parish in Värmland, measures were taken to separate and distinguish certain areas from which a number of crofts were allowed to appropriate resources. This was done to prevent the crofters from causing damage to or appropriating resources that belonged to the old village.²⁷²

The court records from North Ostrobothnia contain several cases of newly established settlements and re-establishment of homesteads that had been deserted (Swe. *ödehemman*). However, only a handful of cases have been found from the 1640's until the end of the century where the state of the forests was brought up for discussion or estimation. One reason for this might be that the extent of available forest was considerable, and that the need of such considerations was less important, which would be consistent with the observations made by Kuusi.²⁷³ However, it could sometimes be deemed important enough to take special notice. In 1652, at the court meeting in Kajaani, a peasant named Per asked the court if he could be allowed to resume the cultivation of a homestead in the village Muokiby. It had laid deserted for the last ten years, but the current resident Per Kilpoinen had remained in the homestead although not been cultivating its lands during that time. Nevertheless, an investigation still had to be carried out, which showed that the area was now overgrown and had become well forested, even to such a degree that it was described as wilderness (Swe. *vildmark*).²⁷⁴

When a peasant resumed the use of a farm, the Crown would often facilitate the process of getting started by granting the user a certain number of free-years, which meant that the settler did not have to pay taxes during the first years. However, this quite generous legislation could be exploited by the new occupant as there are examples of how peasants cultivated the new

²⁷¹ Sommarting, Kajaani parish, 25th of June 1642, NAF, Court Records, KO a:5, 1640–1644, act 128–129, pp. 123–123v.

²⁷² Granér (2002), p. 255.

²⁷³ Kuusi (1914), pp. 14–15.

²⁷⁴ Sommarting, Kajaani Friherreskap, 28th and 29th of June 1652, NAF, Court Records, KO a:1, 1651–1659, act 85–86, pp. 86–86v.

homestead for the duration of the tax-free years and then moved on to a new deserted homestead. From the 1610s, therefore, local courts began to request creditors who could vouch for the person in question.²⁷⁵ One such example was Per in Muokiby who was able to provide two other peasants, Olof Lutonen and Erich Kenpanen, as surety for the tax-free years, which led to a successful and granted application.²⁷⁶ However, whilst new settlers such as Per became an increasingly common matter for old villages to address, another category of land users also existed; a group with considerably less rights in terms of forest use than long-established landholders of an old village.

2.1.8 Crofters

North Ostrobothnia was a rather homogeneous region dominated by freeholding peasants. Nevertheless, parts of a village's land could be inhabited by members of the landless population, for example by crofters (Swe. *torpare*). These were people who did not own the land they were cultivating, but instead rented it from a landholding peasant in the village or from the community at large. They were therefore in a position of dependence and paid rent either by working on the peasants' farms or in kind.²⁷⁷

The extent to which crofters were allowed to take resources from the village forest was individually decided between the landholding peasants and the crofter. However, the essential household needs were often a given. It was in either case important that the community of users was defined.²⁷⁸ This was not only important in the sense that each landholding peasant knew what he and everyone else were entitled to appropriate, but also as a measure of self-protection. For example, Martin Stuber and Rahel Wunderli have argued that delimitation and exclusion of outsiders had been the *raison d'être* of communal corporations in Switzerland since the Middle Ages. However, variations did exist. The access to social networks and workforce was a circular need, which resulted in users not always being defined.²⁷⁹

Nevertheless, if a crofter family exceeded the amount they were allowed to appropriate, eviction was usually the direct consequence. Having the

²⁷⁵ Jutikkala (1963), pp. 127–128.

²⁷⁶ Sommarting, Kajaani Friherreskap, 28th and 29th of June 1652, NAF, Court Records, KO a:1, 1651–1659, act 85–86, pp. 86–86v.

²⁷⁷ Larsson (2009), p. 139.

²⁷⁸ See Ostrom, design principle number 1, p. 90.

²⁷⁹ Stuber & Wunderli (2021), p. 20.

ability to do this was an important feature of a robust village community and the level of self-governance they were able to practice. Case in point, Jacob Nilsson from Kyrkby drew the crofter Jöns Jönsson before the court in 1673 because he had caused great damage to the village's property. Apart from having excessively fished in the village's fishing waters, he had cut tar wood and timber just outside Jacob's fences, which he had then stored in the village. Jöns told the court that his croft was located on Captain Christopher Byleu's lands and that he had been given permission to use his meadow for the purposes mentioned. However, since he had been cutting and fishing without permission by the village, and since the village believed him and his activities to be a burden, Jöns was evicted from his croft and forced to move.²⁸⁰ Another example from 1679 reveals how Henrik Thomasson, a crofter living on the common of Kaustby, was warned to not burden the landholding peasants with either fishing, grazing, or wood cutting if he wanted to avoid being evicted.²⁸¹ In other words, whilst it was important to examine the potential consequences of granting space for a new or old settlement to be established, it was considered equally important to continuously examine the activities carried out by crofters, and that the 'OR ELSE' consequences were adequately severe if deemed burdensome.²⁸²

A lot of people often attended the court meetings. Both men and women were present, although it was mostly men who spoke as they were the ones who represented the household. This was often the case even when a woman was the accused or accusing party. However, one example of a woman speaking for herself can be found in the court records from Oulu parish in the year 1700. The case stood between crofter Barbro Matsdotter, her husband Mats Kaakise, and the peasants from which they rented land. Barbro's husband had for some time suffered from a severe illness and could not attend the meeting, which left it up for Barbro to speak for herself and her family. The matter concerned two things. First, Barbro and Mats had put up a fence around a meadow, which the village members believed to be theirs. Second, they had excessively been cutting in the village forest to the discontent of the village members. In her defence, Barbro explained that they had recently suffered from crop failures and that they should therefore

²⁸⁰ Sommarting, Kemi parish, 27th and 28th of June 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 423, p. 415.

²⁸¹ Höstting, Kokkola parish, 3rd and 4th of October 1679, NAF, Court Records, KOo a:22, 1679–1679, act 125, p. 849.

²⁸² Ostrom (2005), pp. 149–152.

be allowed to use more than they otherwise were entitled to. However, rulings from earlier court meetings were made available to the court, which clearly specified that the married couple had repeatedly burdened the village with their tree felling and grazing activities. In accordance with these verdicts, the croft should be demolished. Nevertheless, it was admitted that Mats had been seriously ill and that his and Barbro's children were similarly struck with an infectious disease. The family was also very poor and without means of support. The village's spokesperson, Bertil Kuifvala, and the other peasants therefore suggested to make room for a small house farther away on the village's lands. If that was not possible, they would make sure that the family was given place in the workhouse or, for the time being, in the hospital in Oulu.²⁸³

The court records plainly demonstrate that the will and mind of the village community were of outmost importance when new settlers (peasants or crofters) came to populate the region of North Ostrobothnia. Even though the state was responsible to make sure that everyone was properly taxed, it was the peasant community who had the last word. Weighing the pros and cons of including a new member into the community had to be carried out in relation to the potential consequences it could have for the ecological, institutional, and economic sustainability of the community. This decision could not be made by the state for the simple reason that it was the peasants who best knew the circumstances of their institution, their livelihood, and their forest. However, whilst individual villages exerted considerable influence over these matters and were able to establish rules of access and distribution within the village, peasants who lived in nearby villages could also pose a risk that was not as easily controlled. This is a subject to which we shall now turn.

2.2 Inter-Village Relations

In this part of the thesis, court cases concerning village relations are analysed. This means conflicts and agreements between villages within the same parish. The number of legal cases that have been found is 31, and their

²⁸³ Sommarting, Oulu parish, 22nd, 23rd, and 25th of August 1700, NAF, Court Records, KO a:21, 1700–1700, act 396–397, pp. 788–789.

occurrence grows from three cases in the 1640s ultimately reaching a peak in the 1680s with 10 cases.²⁸⁴

This development is explained by the intensification of forest related industry and by increasing competition over forest resources. Cases from the 1670s and 1680s constitutes almost exclusively matters of either illicit cutting or breaching of borders. Considering the nature of these conflicts in particular, the suggestion that forest resources became increasingly important in the peasant economy is further substantiated. The court material further shows that parish communities and villages took collective action to limit people's forest cutting when it was considered to be excessive. This transpired as the local, but also state and international demand of forest resources increased.

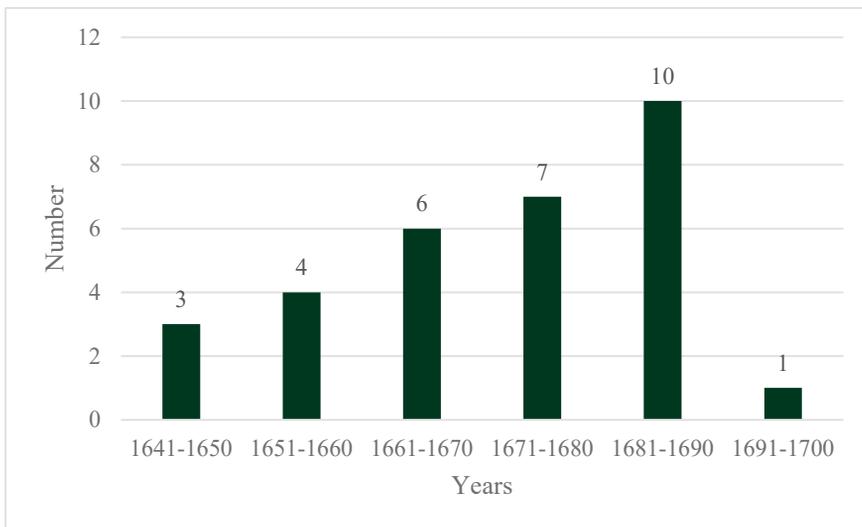


Figure 8. Number of court cases between peasants from different villages in North Ostrobothnia in ten-year increments, 1641–1700. Source: NAF, Court Records.

Whilst conflicts that occurred between peasants from the same village demonstrates the internal village structure of governing and sharing resources appropriated from the village forest, infringements and illicit cutting could of course be committed by outsiders. It was in one way more time consuming to establish if someone was guilty of illicit and particularly excessive cutting if the perpetrator lived in the village. One reason for this

²⁸⁴ See Figure 8.

was that restrictions on the level of permissible appropriation from the village forest was estimated in relation to the size of one's holdings, which could take time to establish and often warranted an inspection. If the deed was committed by someone living in a neighbouring village, it could more quickly be established as illicit. Whilst inspections often had to be carried out in order to confirm the validity of the accusation, no estimation of property in relation to the size of the forest was required since the outsider had no right to the forest to begin with.

In either case, inspections were an important tool that peasants used to establish whether intrusions had in fact been committed, but also as a first step towards reaching possible settlements. Such methods of regulation and maintaining the inviolability of the village forest were crucial. However, circumstances were different on the parish forest. Here, every landholding peasant in the parish was entitled to appropriate resources, regardless of what village the peasant lived in. To better understand how the governance regime of peasant communities was affected by increasing numbers of infringements, it is important to examine how this development affected the rules-in-use and regulatory system in place. It will subsequently be possible to evaluate whether a sufficiently high level of *utility*, *efficiency*, and *equity* was achieved in these communities and how this affected their ability to achieve a sustainable resource management system.

Out of the two kinds of infringements mentioned above, I will begin with those committed by outsiders on village forests and thereafter move to the parish forest. The latter one includes an investigation on the transference of pre-existing rules between village and parish communities as an expression of evolving nestedness, and one concerning the particularly polarised parish of Kruunupyy. Lastly, an unusually informative example will be discussed showing how peasants were able to choose different conflict solving strategies when illicit forest cutting was committed, which further illuminates the level of self-governance in North Ostrobothnian peasant society.

2.2.1 The Village Forest

From the 1640s onwards, 12 matters of illicit cutting and infringements on village forests by outsiders were subject to investigation by the local courts, which is on average one case every fifth year. The infringements were a recurrent, although quite infrequent event. Even though it is not surprising that conflicts over illicit cutting would occur in a region rich in forest

resources and with a population heavily engaged in producing wood dependent commodities, the number of cases is still low. It is nonetheless understandable how peasants were able to keep their village forest under relatively close supervision considering the amount of time they spent in their forests.

Violations occurred in almost all parishes, from Kruunupyö parish in the south to Ii parish in the north. The only parish in which no cases have been found is Kemi in the northernmost part of the region. The cases include both the questioning of where forest borders were located as well as the breaching of said borders. These two matters are naturally similar in content since both often included a physical violation of crossing someone's village forest border. However, the physical activity of cutting had not always been committed before legal action was taken, which led to the local court becoming an arena where people could establish what forest region belonged to whom. One such case can be found in the court records of Kruunupyö in 1662. It stood between Daniel Matsson and Jöns Olsson who both claimed that a certain forest area laid within the boundaries of their village forest and had gone to court to request an inspection.²⁸⁵

Requesting to have the border inspected was usually the first course of action when a violation had occurred as it was important to determine whether there was any truth to be found in the allegations that were made. Even though earlier research has suggested that efforts of seeking justice were often abandoned,²⁸⁶ the court records nonetheless reveal that the local courts proved very effective when such transgressions were committed and that many cases did lead to a final verdict. Furthermore, the North Ostrobothnian villages that were involved in disputes over borders generally encouraged inspections to be carried out.²⁸⁷

It was previously mentioned how antagonistic attitudes were held by commoners in England in regard to the disafforestation of Duffield Firth.²⁸⁸ Such attitudes are not as present in the court records from North Ostrobothnia.

²⁸⁵ Härädsting, Kruunupyö parish, 28th of January 1662, NAF, Court Records, KO a:11, 1661–1666, act 154, p. 156v.

²⁸⁶ Kuusi (1914).

²⁸⁷ Only one court case has been found when two contending parties disagreed to an inspection. This concerned the parish border conflict between Pyhäjoki and Saloinen parishes in 1684 when the people of Saloinen opposed inspection, instead preferring to keep the borders within memory. Vinterting, Saloinen parish, 24th, 26th and 28th of January 1684, NAF, Court Records, KO a:4, 1684–1684, act 47, pp. 88–89. See also Virrankoski (1973), p. 181. This conflict will be analysed further in Chapter 2.3.4.

²⁸⁸ Falvey (2013), pp. 7–8.

However, one crucial difference must be pointed out. The attitude adopted very much had to do with who initiated the effort of inspecting the border, but naturally also on its consequences. Whilst the English surveyors were commissioned by the state and as such did not promote the interests of the local inhabitants, inspections in North Ostrobothnia were carried out by and for the members of the local population. It was an effort that affected everyone in the community and thus motivated participation. That being said, the outcome of an inspection was not always to everyone's liking, even when generous settlements were sometimes offered.

Case in point, on the 28th of July 1664 in Kälviä parish, the preacher Olaus Marci drew the peasant Jöns Hypä before the court. Jöns had been cutting wood and prepared swidden in his village forest. What he stood accused of was to have also appropriated parts of what Olaus had cut in his adjacent forest area. The matter had already been subject for investigation the year before, but the court had not been able to reach a verdict. However, the court scribe, the chief constable, and several laymen had gone to the contested area to examine the matter and could report that the accusations were true. Whilst Jöns claimed that the forest area was within the borders of his village, he was unable to prove that such was the case. This was substantiated, as the court scribe emphasised, because *urminnes hävd* could not be established. In other words, no community member could confirm or remembered that what Jöns said was true. However, he was offered a 'friendly settlement' by Olaus, the specifications of which are unfortunately not noted in the court records. Regardless, Jöns refused to accept the settlement and maintained that he had done nothing wrong. Following his refusal, new evidence also came to light. Jöns had not only appropriated resources from where the preacher had been cutting, but from several other individuals in the parish as well. Considering the new evidence, the court found Jöns guilty and had to pay a fine of 40 silver marks for illicit cutting and the vegetation he had appropriated would accrue to the preacher Olaus Marci.²⁸⁹

As forest borders were not always physically marked, inspections could sometimes be a recurring event. Even when a border had been marked with stones or carvings on trees – and when legal documents existed that specified where they were located – new inspections could be required as the markers could have disappeared. Such an example is found in Lohtaja parish in 1651

²⁸⁹ Sommarting, Kälviä parish, 28th of February 1664, NAF, Court Records, KO a:11, 1661–1666, act 550, pp. 554v–555. Original text: 'wänlig förljknigh'.

when Jöns Larsson from the village Packahauta quarrelled with Lars Henriksson from a neighbouring village over a forest area prepared for swidden. To ensure that the inspection would be carried out fairly, the court appointed two laymen from a third village to inspect the border. They were given an old inspection letter (Swe. *synebrev*) signed by Chief Judge Jöran Jöransson in 1621, which contained such information that they would be able to again establish where the border was located.²⁹⁰

A similar although later case concerned the forest on the island of Manamansalo, the largest island in Oulujärvi, covering approximately 75 square kilometres.²⁹¹ Stephan Karppinen who lived on the island had given the two peasants Isac Sorsa and Henrik Suutari permission to cut trees for tar production. However, Karppinen was not entitled to give anyone permission to appropriate resources without consent by the village, which was why the court decided that Isac and Henrik should give the Manamansalo peasants one of every tenth barrel of tar they had made, ‘according to the custom in Savo’.²⁹²

²⁹⁰ Härädsting, Lohtaja parish, 4th and 5th of August 1651, NAF, Court Records, KO a:7, 1649–1652, act 336, p. 330.

²⁹¹ See Figure 9. The uncropped map is visible in Figure 12, p. 136.

²⁹² Vinterting, Kajaaniborgsstad, 22nd, 23rd and 24th of March 1680, NAF, Court Records, KO a:2, 1674–1680, act 476, p. 93. Original text: ‘efter dhen plägsedh som uthi Savolandh brukas.’ See also Virrankoski (1973), p. 257.

consequently were forced to do as well as to give every household on the island of Manamansalo three barrels of tar.²⁹³

Considering the different problems and disputes that could occur on the village forest, and the way peasants dealt with them, keeping the forest free from outside infringements was undoubtedly important as it helped to ensure an operational management structure within the village community. As the example of Manamansalo demonstrates, one way of ensuring this, and that further violations did not occur, was to institute graduated sanctions. This strategy has been emphasised by Ostrom as being an important feature of robust governance arrangements, basically meaning that if users repeatedly break the rules-in-use, the severity of the punishment increases.²⁹⁴ Thus, the rules and regulations that existed concerning access and utilisation were at large aimed at upholding the intended inviolability of the borders and to ensure that if violations occurred, the consequences should be severe enough so that further violations did not ensue.

Ostrom has pointed out that communities sharing very large forest areas are less likely to self-organise due to the often-high costs associated with monitoring, defining borders, and attaining knowledge of the ecological circumstances.²⁹⁵ This has been explained to have been the case in Fryksdal hundred in Värmland County on the Swedish mainland by Staffan Granér,²⁹⁶ and it was the case in North Ostrobothnia as well. Village forests were easier to keep under surveillance since they were generally located in close proximity to where the peasants lived, but also because village members knew well who was allowed to appropriate resources from the forest common and who was not. Monitoring duties was also more easily distributed between the villagers than it was on the parish forest, to which several villages had legal access. Furthermore, as demonstrated by Martin Andersson, peasant society in Northern Finland was characterised by less mobility than in central Sweden. Furthermore, as Helmer Tegengren has pointed out, the extended family system remained during the seventeenth century, which resulted in households consisting of several generations of family members. As such, the number of individuals being able to either confirm or refute the argument of ancient claim must have been high,

²⁹³ Vinterting, Paltamo parish, 5th, 6th, and 7th of February 1683, NAF, Court Records, KO a:3, 1683–1683, act 60–61, pp. 109–110.

²⁹⁴ Ostrom (2005), pp. 266–267.

²⁹⁵ Ostrom (2009), p. 420.

²⁹⁶ Granér (2002), p. 235.

perhaps even higher than in other areas in the Swedish Kingdom where people migrated at a higher frequency.²⁹⁷ Nevertheless, as we now move on to consider the parish forest, illicit and excessive cutting proved to be a more complicated matter.

2.2.2 The Parish Forest

Whilst village forests were located closer to the village centre, the parish forest was usually located farther away and constituted parts of the region not marked or otherwise claimed as property of any village. They were nonetheless open to free use by any landholding peasant in the parish by the early seventeenth century. This occasionally incited some to travel to remote locations in order to find forests sufficiently rich in tar wood that served the ambition of their enterprise. Regardless, with scale followed conditions that affected the management of the forest. Many cutting activities most certainly went unnoticed and were only discovered after the resources had already been sold. To ensure that this did not reach potentially disastrous consequences, regulations and sanctions against excessive cutting were needed, which necessitated balanced decisions and prioritisations to achieve a sustainable governance regime; a balancing act that required *utility*, *efficiency*, and *equity*.

To achieve this, a high level of social control was needed, often based on the practice of customary rights. Customary rights, and the repeated reference of them, can be noticed in the court records. One example was the prevailing tradition in Savo, which dictated that one out of every ten barrels distilled on a neighbouring village's forest should be given to each landholder. Another is found in the court records of Kruunupyy. Court proceedings began in late January 1661 and concerned Erik Hindersson who found himself in a conflict with Anders Hansson. The issue was that Erik wanted to claim the area surrounding his tar pit as private land. This was contested by Anders since it had been built on the parish common and as such stood free to be used by any parish member. The court was quick to dismiss the case on the grounds that it had always been, and still was, the parish's common forest, which entitled everyone to cut wherever they pleased.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ Tegengren (1943), pp. 62–63; Andersson (2018).

²⁹⁸ Vinterting, Kruunupyy parish, 26th of January 1661, NAF, Court Records, KO a:11, 1661–1666, act 62, p. 64.

One of the design principles that Ostrom presents concerns collective-choice arrangements. It instructs that to maintain long-term management of a CPR, users must be able to question and alter the rules in place.²⁹⁹ This is also a part of de Moor's three-dimensional approach to commons in that a high level of *equity* makes it possible for all members to participate in decision-making processes, which makes it possible to achieve a sustainable resource management system. However, the number of legal cases concerning parish members appropriating too much on their own parish forest are few, only 11. Nevertheless, the content of these cases is rich. Through a qualitative examination of the sources, it becomes evident that a much larger number of such events took place, which did not reach the court's table.

Parish members shared a responsibility to report any detection of unlawful and excessive appropriation so that those responsible could be reprimanded, but also to develop strategies of how to prevent such transgressions from occurring and to establish structure and predictability. Beginning in the late 1670s, several individual events led to the first examples of large-scale collective action to prevent what peasant communities believed to be an escalating trend of forest cutting. These are examples of 'level shifting', which signifies situations when someone or several individuals – on the basis of an operational situation and its outcome – started to contemplate ways in which existing rules or constraints could be changed so as to better suit new conditions and circumstances.³⁰⁰ In order to relate to the main question of this thesis, they are examples of re-prioritisations being made by peasant communities. These collective actions were taken in the southern parishes of the region, namely Kruunupyy, Kokkola, and Lohtaja.

The problem that the peasantry faced was that they had no effective or functional way of establishing how much each peasant household was allowed to appropriate from the parish forest since the only rule they could refer to was that everyone had access. In other words, it had up until that point been a highly informal system of regulation. Whilst village communities had since long adhered to the tradition of cutting in proportion to one's taxable capacity, the parish common did not fall under such restrictions. One possible reason for this can be given in relation to Jutikkala's argument that parish commons were generally unsettled and thus less frequented than common property on village

²⁹⁹ Ostrom (1990), p. 90.

³⁰⁰ Ostrom (2005), p. 62.

level. Also, whereas legislation concerning use rights on parish commons was more developed on the Swedish mainland, the Finnish commons lacked a framework for systematic use and were thus more underdeveloped.³⁰¹

There are primarily two things that supports this. First is the fact that such rules are essentially absent in the court records before the 1670s. Only one case has been found in Liminka parish from 1653 where a dispute over arable land led the local court to also establish that the forest should be ‘cut as far as is reasonable’.³⁰² Second, it is explicitly stated in the court records that more pervasive and general rules did not exist earlier, but that there was a need of it. What would happen was an important process where pre-existing rules that regulated the exploitation on village forests were implemented on parish forests, and as will be shown below, discussions relating to the issue of achieving a sustainable governance system was initiated.

Transference of Pre-Existing Rules

One of the first examples of transferences of pre-existing rules can be found in the court records of Lohtaja parish in 1679. In the last days of March, the peasantry gathered to address the court concerning the current state of their parish forest. They explained that it had always been used in common by the parish members and had mainly served as a source from which they made planks. However, considering what they were about to explain, the rate at which the forest was exploited was not deemed ecologically sustainable. They explained that ‘people from other parishes are running around’ in the forest and depriving them of their resources ‘over which [they] complained loudly as they were now more than overburdened’. Having regular inspections of the borders to ensure that further violations were not committed was paramount. The peasantry therefore requested that the chief constable should thereafter keep the borders under close supervision and thus liberate the parish forest from intruders.³⁰³

Ostrom explains how polycentric systems consists of several overlapping institutions that organise on different levels. In such constellations, knowledge sharing is important, such as information of what has worked well in other

³⁰¹ Jutikkala (1963), pp. 52–53.

³⁰² Häradsting, Liminka parish, 15th and 16th of February 1653, NAF, Court Records, KO a:8, 1653–1654, act 28–29, p. 24v–25. Original text: ‘och skogen att hugga så widt skäligt ähr’.

³⁰³ Häradsting, Lohtaja parish, 26th, 27th, and 28th of March 1679, NAF, Court Records, KO a:22, 1679–1679, act 63, pp. 58v–59, nr. 383. Original text: ‘dhet kringhlöpanhe ifrån andre sochnar’; ‘hwaröfwer allmogen sigh högst nu besweradhe mehr än mycket öfwerlupna blifwa.’

places or within other institutions, so that it can be applied in other settings as well.³⁰⁴ This is precisely what had happened prior to the court meeting in Lohtaja in March 1679. The peasantry stated that they had heard of other parishes in the region introducing a system of regulating how many resources each landholding peasant was allowed to appropriate from the parish forest, and that this was something they saw as strategically suitable and also wanted to adopt. They therefore requested to formally establish a level of maximum appropriation. This would be done by using the same logic for how village forests were shared, namely, to define the degree-of-usage in relation to the taxable capacity of each landholding peasant's homestead.³⁰⁵

It was mentioned earlier how 'level shifting' indicates how users re-prioritise as they detect a need of changing existing rules due to newly developed circumstances. It was also mentioned how large organisations often experience more difficulty in self-organising due to high costs associated with regulation and distribution. However, the example above serves as a representation of how peasant institutions were able to accommodate for such difficulties by collectively working in a direction of becoming nested enterprises.³⁰⁶ What happened in regard to the transference of pre-existing formal rules of appropriation explains how a large organisation (the parish) was based and built on smaller units (the villages). The costs and challenges associated with organising and convincing all villages to adopt a rule that limited resource appropriation on parish level would have been much greater had there not already existed a functioning system at village level. As such, given that the already organised resource extraction structure among villages was working and existed as a base from which they could build, the transference of the taxable-capacity rule was easier than it otherwise would have been – 'The equilibria achieved at one level are thus supported by equilibria that have been achieved at deeper levels.'³⁰⁷

In order for a parish community to establish universal rules of maximum appropriation, the relationship between the CPI and the CPtR has to be sufficiently close to achieve *equity* within the governance regime.³⁰⁸ Even though this was the case in Lohtaja, before any measures could be taken in

³⁰⁴ Ostrom (2005), p. 283.

³⁰⁵ Håradsting, Lohtaja parish, 26th, 27th, and 28th of March 1679, NAF, Court Records, KO a:22, 1679–1679, act 63, pp. 58v–59, nr. 383.

³⁰⁶ Design principle 8, Ostrom (1990), pp. 101–102; Ostrom (2005), pp. 58, 269–271.

³⁰⁷ Ostrom (1990), 61, 189.

³⁰⁸ de Moor (2015), p. 118.

order to self-organise, some form of scarcity (or at least fear thereof) must have preceded that commitment.³⁰⁹ However, the extent of scarcity in Lohtaja is almost impossible to determine. Nevertheless, the collective-choice rule of establishing how much each community member was allowed to appropriate seems to have been successful and proves a high level of *equity*. No legal cases have been found where matters of internal controversy over these matters were taken to the court after the establishment of the taxable-capacity rule, which also indicates that the *utility* and *efficiency* of this system was high. However, the matter of external forces and preventing outsiders from illegally appropriating resources from their parish forest would turn out to be more complicated, resulting in one of the largest parish-related disputes during the century.³¹⁰ Nevertheless, a precondition for the success of internal regulation was that the community had a shared perception of the problem that they faced. The joint effort of introducing a formal rule of limiting the appropriation of resources would not have been possible had the community been polarised. The community needed to be united, and all interest groups had to see the collective benefit of organising the withdrawal of resources in this manner. In other words, it was something that added to the institutional sustainability of the community and also served to ensure that ecological and economic sustainability was similarly achieved.

Collective action by communal organisations to regulate the use of forest resources was a prerequisite if the longevity of the CPR was to be ensured. Regulation schemes such as the one introduced on the parish common of Lohtaja was proposed and adopted through the peasantry's own will. The development in this parish thus deviates somewhat from other examples of communal organisations. In Switzerland, for example, some communal organisations were more prone to act as intermediaries between state-initiated regulations and the local users. In other words, they modified 'the local hierarchy of norms by translating national policy objectives into local norms: into the beliefs and practices of local actors.'³¹¹ Nevertheless, the collective-choice arrangement of Lohtaja parish was introduced in other parishes as well. The court records show that the neighbouring parishes of Kruunupyy and Kokkola did so as well around the same time.

³⁰⁹ Ostrom (2009), pp. 420–421.

³¹⁰ The border dispute between the peasantry of Lohtaja and Kalajoki would continue well into the 1690s. This is discussed and analysed in subchapter 2.3.1.

³¹¹ Viallon & Nahrath (2021), pp. 37–38.

In case of Kokkola, the same principle was in fact decided upon one week earlier than in Lohtaja.³¹² The ensuing ten years of court records do not contain any cases of further internal conflicts. However, in January 1689, it becomes evident that controversies had arisen when the peasants of Kaustby village had been ‘wronged in the forest concerning harvesting of timber logs’ by peasants living closer to the coast. Whilst the court records do not specify for how long the dispute had transpired, it is stated that the chairman of the court had conducted protracted deliberations with the concerned peasantry. Both sides had thereafter taken the matter into close consideration, which finally yielded results. The coastal peasants would willingly give the peasants of Kaustby 60 copper thalers and 150 of the timber logs. They furthermore decided and assured that ‘all the work that they had devoted at their own expense in the forest is their legal property to use and keep’. As a sign of good faith, the coastal peasants would also renounce their right to a certain stream, which the peasants of Kaustby would be free to use without infringements. In the presence of witnesses, they all promised to uphold what they had agreed to in the spirit of ‘one for all and all for one’, and they signed a legal document authenticating their settlement.³¹³

It is here fitting to consider these circumstances in relation to historical progression. The economic climate of seventeenth century North Ostrobothnia had gradually developed in such a manner that communal resources of parish communities grew in importance for the peasant household. Whilst parish forests had once been open to free use by any landholding peasant, the dependency on forest resources had grown to such proportions that forests could no longer be left completely open. The need of formality had exceeded informality. It is also telling of a widening of the peasants’ field of vision. Their area of concern gradually extended to include woodlands not only in close proximity to one’s holdings and village, but also those located farther away. The need to implement formal regulation on these remote areas is also indicative of how a deepened understanding of the finitude of forest resources must have crystallised in their perception of and relation to their forests, that is, the importance of ecological sustainability.

³¹² Vinterting, Kokkola parish, 20th, 22nd, and 24th of March 1679, NAF, Court Records, KO a:22, 1679–1679, act 54, p. 50v.

³¹³ Vinterting, Kokkola, Kälviä and Kruunupyöy parishes, 3rd, 4th and 5th of January 1689, NAF, Court Records, KO a:9, 1689–1689, act 25–26, pp. 19–21. Original text: ‘all det werck som dhe medh egen bekästnad i skogen sigh tillegnad haf:r till deras laga egendom att bruka och behålla’; ‘een för alla och alla för een’.

However, whilst this realisation took hold among several parish communities, not all remained united.

A Polarised Parish Community

Whilst the measures taken in Lohtaja and Kokkola can be deemed successful, the court records reveal that several and quite serious internal violations were committed in Kruunupyy parish after the introduction of the new regulation. The taxable-capacity rule had been adopted even earlier here than in the other two parishes. The peasantry had in August 1678 discussed an examination conducted by the chief constable who had estimated the level of exploitation and determined that they had not exceeded what would be considered as ‘excessive’.³¹⁴ However, notwithstanding this initial success, the last years of the seventeenth century would prove particularly problematic.

Difficulties commenced in 1686 when Lars Andersson and his village neighbours accused Johan Thomasson and Erik Michelsson to have ‘outrageously appropriated’ timber logs from the common. They had done so to such an extent that the entire peasantry of Kruunupyy and the assembly of laymen feared ‘the demise of the entire parish’ if it was allowed to continue, and an inspection was commissioned to examine the extent of the misdeeds committed by Johan and Erik.³¹⁵ A similar forewarning was expressed a few days later in the neighbouring parish of Kokkola. Whilst the case concerned an illegal border crossing committed by peasants living in the northern part of Kruunupyy, peasants from the southern part of the parish were also attending and added to the accusations put against their fellow parish members. Not only had they illegally appropriated wood in the forest of Kokkola, but they had also ‘against all reason and fairness cut down their own parish forest, causing great damage and ultimate ruin to their fellow parishioners’, thus contributing to their ‘downfall’.³¹⁶

There is reason to stop here for a moment and consider the descriptions given by the peasantry of Kruunupyy. If forest cutting activities were so intense and widespread that members of the parish community felt the need to prophesise the ultimate ruin of the entire parish, it must be determined that

³¹⁴ Höstting, Kruunupyy parish, 29th, 30th, and 31st of August 1678, NAF, Court Records, KO a:20, 1678–1678, act 131, pp. 127v–128. Original text: ‘öfwerflödigt’.

³¹⁵ Vinterting, Kruunupyy parish, 12th and 13th of March 1686, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1686–1686, act 128, pp. 186–187. Original text: ‘oehrhörligen tillgripitt’; ‘heela sochnens undergångh’.

³¹⁶ Vinterting, Kokkola parish, 15th, 16th and 17th of March 1686, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1686–1686, act 139, pp. 207–208. Original text: ‘att dhe emoth all skähl och billigheet i sin egen Sochn skogen nederfälla, sine medhsochne Män till största skadha och ytterst ruin’; ‘Undergångh’.

the prioritisations made by community members had put the scale of sustainability out of balance. As such, the rules of access and distribution of resources were evidently not set up in a way that can be deemed *efficient* enough to avoid overexploitation. Even so, is it reasonable to assume that the exploitation of Kruunupyö's parish forest was of such proportion that the parish stood at the brink of being emptied of woodlands altogether?

The answer is no. In fact, far from it. This can be demonstrated by examining a map over the parish of Kruunupyö made by land surveyor Thomas Lohm in 1687. In Figure 10, the entire parish of Kruunupyö is visible to the left. To the right in section 1, a river is marked with blue, to the left of which Lohm has estimated the state and condition of the forest, which continues all the way to the coast. Lohm wrote that this very large area contained 'thick pine, spruce and birch'. In section 2, the area encircled in blue has the description 'pine, spruce, birch and other timber forest'. However, the green area in section 2 is estimated as containing 'small forest'. These descriptions given to us by Lohm is important if we are to understand the fear expressed by the Kruunupyö peasants.

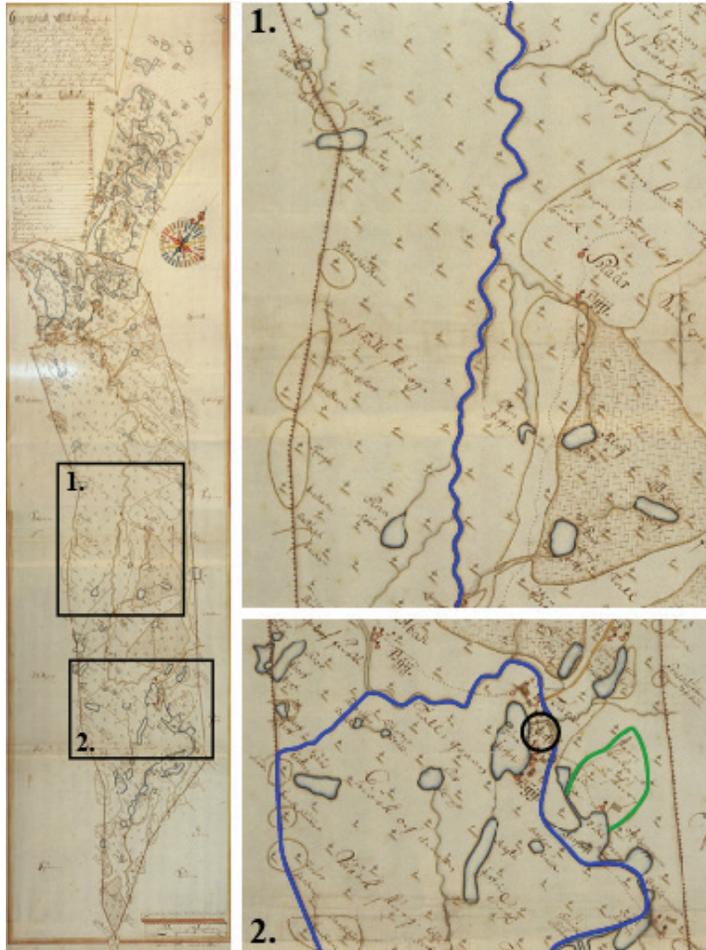


Figure 10. Geographical map over Kruunupyy parish with sections and colorations, measured 1687 and renovated 1697 by Thomas Lohm. To the left of the blue line in section 1 is large forest area with the description 'thick pine, spruce, and birch'. In section 2, the area encircled in blue contain the description 'Pine, spruce, birch and other timber forest'. The green area in section 2 reads 'small forest'. The black circle in section 2 is the village Teerijärvi. Source: KrA, FRV, B, Pf 59, nr. 4a and 4b, *Geographisk Affattningh öfwer hela Cronoby Sochnen belägen I Österbotns Höfdingedööm och Uhloborgs Södra Fögderij*.

It is quite obvious that the forests of Kruunupyy were plentiful and wide-ranging. By the time Lohm had completed his evaluation (which was one year after the conflict), enough forest resources existed that would sustain the parish members for a very long time. Whilst the exploitation carried out by the northern parish members was sustainably unsound and detrimental, it

can perhaps be cynically interpreted that the forewarning of the parish's ultimate downfall was rhetorically effective. Another example of this is found in the court records of Paltamo in 1688 when Per Karu had at several instances 'cut down the forest for swidden on an islet, which is killed like those further up in the parish are buried, so that this place suffers so greatly that its soul and condition is cut away'.³¹⁷ Expressions like these are indicative of the peasants' symbolic and emotional relationship to their forest as their descriptions include creature-like nuances and characteristics. They provide an image of the forest as a living and breathing space that must be appreciated and respectfully looked after if it is not to perish under ill-conceived and thoughtless overexploitation. As such, the fear they expressed was genuine. Some local areas, such as the area marked in green in section 2, probably had suffered from overexploitation. Therefore, what can be established is that they had begun to see warning signs signalling that they, as a parish community, were heading down a path that could ultimately lead to woodlands becoming wastelands.

That community members appealed to each other and to the local court was an expression of resolve to change current circumstances and move towards an arrangement where everyone kept to the rules that they all had previously agreed upon. However, it is also an example of how the moral economy of the parish community was tested, or perhaps disregarded. The current development could not be tolerated as it threatened to negatively affect the ability of some to make a living. Nevertheless, further problems occurred again in September 1686. This time, it was the peasants in the northern part of the parish that complained over the profuse and ignorant manner in which peasants from the southern village of Teerijärvi (encircled in black in section 2 of Figure 10) were cutting timber and making tar in the forest.³¹⁸ The Teerijärvi peasants answered that they had been compelled to excessive cutting by necessity. Not only did they need the forest's resources for construction and household consumption, but the parish members of Kruunupyy also had to deliver a yearly amount of 12 000 (or 1 000 dozen) planks to the shipyard on Jouxholmen in Kruunupyy, not counting the 3 000 (250 dozen) planks they already had to deliver that year. This amounted to approximately 180 (15 dozen) planks per homestead that had to be delivered

³¹⁷ Vinterting, Paltamo parish, 30th and 31st of January 1688, NAF, Court Records, KO a:8, 1688–1688, act 52, p. 77. Original text: 'huggit bort skogen till Swed af een hálme, som dödas lijk uppe i Sochnen blifwe begrafne, så att detta stellet her igenom lijder temligh meen att dess skiähl och meen borthuggen blef'.

³¹⁸ The old name of the village was *Tervajärvi* (Fi. *terva* and *järvi*, En. *tar* and *lake*).

if they wanted to avoid being punished with heavy fines. To emphasise the stressful situation they were in, they continued to explain that they had been forced to hire men from the northern part of the parish in order to meet the quota. Those who had helped them in this endeavour confessed that it was so, but that did not escape the fact that they had ‘cut more than they should’.³¹⁹

The investigation called for by the parish members included four villages. These were Teerijärvi in the south and Pâras, Bråtö, and Hopsala located closer to the coast. Together, they had cut 7 008 timber logs during the previous year (of which 1 106 were *skatstockar*)³²⁰ and distilled 441,5 barrels of tar. The peasants of Teerijärvi had cut more than half of the timber logs (53 percent) and produced almost all the tar (95 percent). Considering that the village of Teerijärvi consisted of 19 homesteads, each unit had thus produced approximately 195 timber logs and 22 barrels of tar.³²¹

Seeing as this was a highly uneven distribution of resources, the peasantry made a common effort to reach a solution. They decided that they should level out the wood cutting in such a manner that those who had cut more during 1686 would cut less the following year. Adding to that, if anyone would be unable to meet their quota, those who had the ability to do so would procure the remaining planks.³²² This was a solution solely arranged by the parish members themselves and was not administered or challenged by any external governmental authority.³²³ Nevertheless, the parish members of Kruunupyy had found themselves in a particularly precarious situation. On the one hand, they were not allowed to default from delivering 15 000 planks to the shipyard. This meant that even if the production of this amount had negative consequences on the ecological sustainability of the forest, they had no choice but to comply. On the other hand, they were not allowed to cut too much. Nevertheless, they developed a strategy that would ensure that the planks were delivered in time, something that would not have been possible if the governance regime lacked robustness altogether.

Following the inspection of 1686, further internal conflicts of this magnitude did not occur in the remaining years of the seventeenth century.

³¹⁹ Sommarting, Kruunupyy, Kokkola, and Kälviä parishes, 7th, 8th, and 9th of September 1686, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1686–1686, act 315–320, pp. 559–568. Original text: ‘hugga mehra än dhen borde’.

³²⁰ *Skatstock* is a tree with a dry top that had been prepared for tar production.

³²¹ Pohjanmaan läänin tilejä, Asiakirjat 9189 Maakirja (1685–1685), act 74–75, pp. 140–141.

³²² Sommarting, Kruunupyy, Kokkola, and Kälviä parishes, 7th, 8th, and 9th of September 1686, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1686–1686, act 315–320, pp. 559–568.

³²³ See Ostrom’s seventh principle on the right to establish an independent institution, Ostrom (1990), p. 101.

Nevertheless, minor disagreements did. One example is found in the court records from 1688. At that time, the controversy did not concern how much resources parish members were allowed to appropriate. Instead, it was about making sure that everyone appropriated forest resources in a sustainable manner, which can say something about the peasantry's ability to identify and condemn wasteful and ecologically unsustainable behaviour. In January, Johan Hansson told the court that Mats Josephsson had improperly debarked trees on the parish common, for which he should be punished. Exactly how he had debarked the trees is not specified. Nevertheless, Johan added that it was the responsibility of the parish to make sure that things like this did not happen. Making certain that the trees of the parish forest were used correctly and efficiently was important and it was, as Johan emphasised, in the community's interest that nothing was unnecessarily wasted due to the lacking skills or care of one individual. To determine whether Mats had debarked the trees incorrectly, the court called upon the expertise of the professional timber cutter (Swe. *huggare*) Hans Hansson to inspect the trees, as well as representatives of both Kruunupyy and the neighbouring parish Kokkola. They would thereafter be able to determine whether they had been rendered useless for tar production or not. If they would turn out to be useless, they were to be distributed among the poor in the parish.³²⁴ This goes to show that even if certain resources were rendered useless for one purpose, the peasants knew and appreciated that they could very well be used for some other cause.

The balance between the different kinds of *sustainabilities*, the prioritisations made to achieve it, and struggles felt by peasant communities are particularly observable by studying the internal conflicts and negotiations in Kruunupyy parish. They are important as the conflicts reveal how seriously peasant communities believed that proper management of commonly owned resources was. Furthermore, we also gain information about how consequences of overexploitation and improper management could be devastating if disregarded. The example of the incorrectly debarked trees demonstrates particularly well how such practices were considered as ecologically unsustainable considering how those trees could not be used as otherwise intended. It is also evident that the parish of Kruunupyy had a system in place aimed at providing stability and accountability. However, polarisation did

³²⁴ Vinterting, Kruunupyy and Kokkola parishes, 11th, 12th, 13th, and 14th of January 1688, NAF, Court Records, KO a:8, 1688–1688, act 14–15, pp. 5–6.

exist, which left the governance regime vulnerable and dysfunctional as market forces grew and when large deliveries had to be made.

2.2.3 A Semi-Formal Agreement

The court records clearly demonstrate how the formal conflict solving strategy of drawing someone before the court was important and useful for the peasantry. This is not altogether surprising since it has been demonstrated how the local courts were an effective collective-choice arena upon which peasants could resolve issues that could not be resolved elsewhere or by other means. Thwarting infringements on the forest common, and thus reducing the risk of unwanted deforestation, was consequently facilitated; an important element if a sustainable governance regime was to be achieved.³²⁵ However, there were other ways in which such disputes could be resolved. As increased pressure was put on the peasantry by the Swedish state in form of taxes and conscriptions to the army, the exploitation of the forests increased.³²⁶ This also resulted in exports culminating and a growing number of forest related conflicts between peasants. It is also likely that the number of disputes that took place outside the courtroom and privately between peasants also increased. In Norwegian courts, for instance, conflicts of lesser magnitude were even urged to be settled before the court was in session, eventually resulting in state ordinances declaring the importance of not overburdening the courts.³²⁷

Scholars have emphasised the importance of such informal ways of solving conflicts.³²⁸ However, they can be difficult to illustrate, and reliable statistics of their occurrence is often lacking. This is simply because peasants did not produce any records of extrajudicial agreements. Nevertheless, the legal context of the court did have certain benefits. It was an effective way of expressing the troubles one had with how other individuals appropriated forest resources. The character of court meetings as a social event in the community also grew, which meant that allegations and the court's rulings were made public and quickly spread. This provided for a combination of formal and informal conflict solving strategies to be practiced, which the case below will demonstrate. It furthermore shows how moral considerations

³²⁵ Ostrom (1990).

³²⁶ Villstrand (1992b), p. 65.

³²⁷ Næss & Österberg (2000), pp. 144–146.

³²⁸ Muldrew (1996); De Keyzer (2018).

of reciprocity could play a central role when disputes over forest areas occurred.

In the court records from Kalajoki parish, we learn about the freeholding peasants Per Brusiusson and Erik Simonsson from Pitkä. They were called upon to appear in front of the local court on the 23rd of January 1668 and stood accused of illicit cutting in the village forest of Palus. The claimant, another freeholding peasant named Mats Markusson, said that they had cut tar wood and constructed a tar pit on the outlying lands of his village. The court decided to have the matter investigated and to provide a verdict at a later court meeting. The judicial apparatus that Mats had utilised was consequently set in motion. If the court would find that his accusations were true, neither Per or Erik would be able to escape justice and would most likely receive large fines. It is highly possible that it was this realisation that made the two parties talk, because the following day, they all returned and approached the court to announce that they had reached a settlement. Mats would ‘out of goodwill’ allow Per and Erik to keep the tar wood they had cut, to cut the trees that they had already barked but not yet felled, and to distil it all in the tar pit they had made. They were allowed to do so as long as they would demolish the tar pit, fill it up, and leave the area when they were done. Per, Erik, and the other peasants of Pitkä were told to thereafter keep to their own forest and never again cause any damage or appropriate resources from the forest of Palus. If they did, they would have to pay a fine of 50 silver thalers to the church in Kalajoki.³²⁹

There are several things to be drawn from this rather unusual case. However, a central issue must first be discussed. The records do not provide any information on the nature of how the forest of Palus was organised, that is, how the village members shared it. Mats was a freeholding peasant, meaning that he had equal right to the forest’s resources as the other peasants in his village. However, since he was the only acting voice in this case, it must be assumed that the concerned area belonged to him by virtue of being a harvest area, protected by ancient claim.

Assuming that this particular part of the forest belonged to Mats, it is noteworthy that he did not consider Per and Erik’s intrusion as necessitating any restitution of resources, in this case tar wood. This is highly unusual as most cases resulted in the offended party claiming some form of compen-

³²⁹ Vinterting, Friherreskapet Ikalaborg, 23rd and 24th of January 1668, NAF, Court Records, KO a:12, 1667–1671, act 96–99, pp. 92–92v, 94–94v. Original text: ‘af een godh willia’.

sation, usually to be compensated in full. Even rarer is the fact that the intruding peasants were allowed to keep everything that they had cut, and that they were allowed to keep cutting the trees they had only begun to debark. Although the records do not provide an estimation of the extent of cutting and barking, the impact of their activities was perhaps deemed negligible in relation to the size of the forest area, or at least to the level of utilisation that it was currently under. Regardless, exactly what had happened outside the courtroom is impossible to know, but it is clear that they discussed how to best resolve the situation without having the court resolve it for them. However, a revealing factor in this case is the goodwill and generous attitude that Mats had towards Per and Erik. Instead of reclaiming the tar wood, or at least having them pay him for the damage they had caused, it was more important to keep a friendly relationship between them. However, this did not mean that such illicit cutting activities were allowed to continue seeing as they would have been forced to pay a hefty fine if they did. But even in such a case, the money would accrue to the church and not to Mats. This implies that he was perhaps not financially dependent on forest related industry and the income that was possible to derive from it, but instead more concerned with the welfare of the community. Mats Markusson and the agreement he had with Per Brusiusson and Erik Simonsson is a good example of how peasants in a very effective way dealt with problems that could occur in a community where neighbourliness ultimately superseded conflict.

The three peasants never found themselves in a dispute over the forest again. However, it would turn out that the goodwill expressed by Mats, and the generous settlement that he had entered into with Per and Erik, was not to everyone's liking, or by all respected. In March three years later, Mats found himself once again standing in the courtroom in Kalajoki. This time, Jacob Bertilsson, a neighbour of Per and Erik, accused Mats of withholding 80 loads of tar wood that Jacob had cut in what he meant was their forest common. In response of the allegations, Mats presented the court with the settlement from 1668, outlining the nature of the agreement between him and the village of Pitkä. It clearly stated how Per and Erik had been allowed to cut tar wood and make tar in the area once again contested. They, together with the other peasants of Pitkä, were thereafter not to violate the border markers that had been erected to avoid further transgressions. Mats further added that Jacob had crossed the border to cut tar wood, which was supported by layman Simon Eskilsson Hakoinen's testimony. He explained to the court

how he had inspected the damage during the last autumn and found that Mats' accusations were indeed true. Jacob's claim that Mats was withholding 80 loads of tar wood was at the same time refuted as they could assure the court that it was closer to 60.³³⁰

Mats' desire to avoid conflict between the two villages is at this point given even more substance. At the time of layman Simon's inspection, Mats had been present and was ready to ignore the settlement of 1668, which would have given him the right to all the tar wood that Jacob had cut. He had instead suggested that they should share it equally, giving him as landowner 30 loads and Jacob 30 for his effort in cutting the wood. However, as they now stood in front of the court, Jacob refused his offer, which left Mats with no alternative than to stand by the previous settlement and claim possession of it all. The court deliberated and decided that Mats could keep the tar wood. Jacob was spared from being fined, but was strictly forbidden from continuing to cross the border between the village forests.³³¹

The case of Mats and the peasants of Pitkä shows how the interpersonal relationship and settlements between peasants and villages could be very flexible. Whilst the formal agreement of 1668 stipulated that no peasant from Pitkä was allowed to cut in the forest of Palus, Mats could, by virtue of being landholder, choose to respond to the infringements in whatever way he felt suitable and enact the terms of the settlement if he deemed it necessary. He evidently believed that compromise was more important than the resources in question. As such, the actions of Mats were in both cases characterised by reciprocity, functioning as a demonstration of how he believed that interpersonal conduct between different communities should operate. It was an expression of Mats' moral economy and an effort of establishing, as put by James C. Scott, 'a living normative model of equity and justice.'³³² However, as we have seen throughout this chapter, not everyone acted in this manner. Moreover, even though the forest borders between villages were supposed to be inviolable, reality was more complex.

³³⁰ Vinterting, Friherreskapet Ikalaborg, 21st and 22nd of March 1671, NAF, Court Records, KO a:12, 1667–1671, act 694–695, pp. 690–691.

³³¹ Vinterting, Friherreskapet Ikalaborg, 21st and 22nd of March 1671, NAF, Court Records, KO a:12, 1667–1671, act 694–695, pp. 690–691.

³³² Scott (1976), pp. 40–41, 176.

2.3 Parish Relations

In this part of the thesis, court cases concerning parish relations are analysed. They include all kinds of disputes, negotiations, and consequent agreements that occurred between peasants that lived in different parishes. The number of court cases that have been found is 44, from the year 1646 to 1699. The research task of the analysis below is to demonstrate how parish communities sought to protect their forests against external intrusion and exclude outside groups by establishing the location of borders. It will at the same time be possible to evaluate how sustainable the governance regime of the different parishes was. This will be done by determining the extent to which parish members were able to partake in decision-making processes (*equity*), whether the rules in place were adequate enough so that overexploitation and infringements were avoided (*efficiency*), and whether the forests resources were adequately distributed between the members of the community (*utility*).

The conflicts that occurred almost exclusively concerned unlawful cutting and border disputes, which are two matters that resembles one another. Appropriating resources from a forest that belonged to another parish naturally presupposed that someone had crossed a border before being able to harvest whatever resource the person in question was looking for. In almost every case that have been found, the question of where the border was located arose when someone was accused of illicit cutting. Throughout the 53 years when these conflicts occurred, a development is noticeable that demonstrates where woodlands were most intensely disputed in North Ostrobothnia. By looking at the statistical spread of the conflicts, most transpired between the southern part of Oulu's trading district to Kruunupy in the south where it is known that cutting activities were particularly intense.³³³ However, the relative seriousness of the conflicts, in the sense that the outcome of them would have long-lasting effects for the relationship between the parishes, was concentrated to the southern parishes.

³³³ See Figure 11.

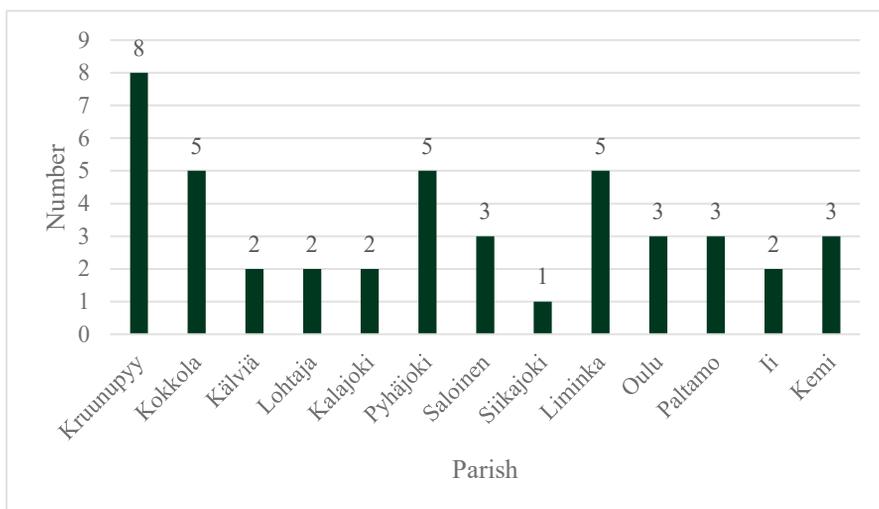


Figure 11. Number of court cases concerning border disputes and illicit cutting in North Ostrobothnia divided by parish from south to north, 1641–1699. Source: NAF, Court Records.

As the analysis has already shown, borders between villages became increasingly important in North Ostrobothnia during the seventeenth century as they helped define the extent of exploitable resources for peasant households and villages. The parish forest was for the inhabitants of each parish to use and govern, but they also had to care for it in terms of thwarting overexploitation and outsiders from crossing parish borders with forest cutting. By analysing the border disputes in detail – investigating why and where they occurred, and what outcome they had – it is possible to gain more knowledge about a number of issues. First, the preconditions of parishes organising, and the nature of divisions between peasant communities concerning forest exploitation, can be better understood. Second, the consequences of these collective efforts of organising can be scrutinised. Thirdly, where court cases contain such information, the ability of parish members to counteract overexploitation, and the strategies adopted, can also be determined. Fourthly, it will be possible to better understand how the nestedness of peasant communities functioned on a rather high level where large parish communities were set to come to terms with how to govern and protect vast areas of forest landscapes.

2.3.1 The Emergence of Parish Borders

Knowing the boundaries of an area from which one is allowed to appropriate resources was vital if conflicts between peasant communities were to be avoided. Studying parish boundaries as a social phenomenon in England, David Fletcher has argued that the establishment of parish borders ‘could enhance a sense of coherence within the parish community. [...] Adversity, in the form of external threat to the territorial integrity of a parish, was perhaps the most socially-binding process.’ As such, making collective efforts to establish and protect a common border could bind the members closer to each other than otherwise would have been the case.³³⁴ Ostrom has similarly emphasised the importance of borders. Her first design principle instructs that those who have the rights to appropriate resources from the CPR ‘must be clearly defined, as must the boundaries of the CPR itself.’ Without such definitions, the matter of who are legitimate appropriators and who the outsiders are remains unclear; ‘no one knows what is being managed or for whom.’³³⁵ In order to make sense of why and how conflicts over such matters occurred between different parishes in North Ostrobothnia, it is important to know something about their origins.

Parish borders existed in North Ostrobothnia before the seventeenth century. Similar to forest commons in Denmark, their location was often orally defined and the importance of ‘*af Arilds tid*’ was often used to resolve conflicts,³³⁶ in the same sense as ‘*urminnes hävd*’ was common within the Swedish Kingdom – or as in a case from Kemi parish in 1658 when the similar concept ‘*hedenhös*’ was used.³³⁷ However, legal documents sometimes existed, often from the sixteenth century, signed by the chairman of the court.³³⁸ During the pre-cartographic period of the sixteenth century and earlier, written documents could prove important when disagreements over borders occurred, leading to descriptions being made of the landscape and how it divided different communities.³³⁹ As exemplified by Bo Fritzböger, more than 30 letters were written in 1598 detailing a border

³³⁴ Fletcher (2003).

³³⁵ Ostrom (1990), pp. 91–92.

³³⁶ Fritzböger (2004), pp. 156–157.

³³⁷ Hedenhös translates to ‘since heathen times’. Vinterting, Kemi parish, 5th and 6th of February 1658, NAF, Court Records, KO a:10, 1657–1658, act 391, p. 378v.

³³⁸ See for example Vinterting, Pyhäjoki parish, 24th of February 1648, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1645–1649, act 317, pp. 306v–307.

³³⁹ Tollin (1999), pp. 54–59.

between the Danish communities of Vrå and Vibtorp Skov.³⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the development in North Ostrobothnia was such that up until the middle of the seventeenth century, even though previous legal documents in some cases existed, parish borders did not serve the same purpose as later inspections would have them do. The physical border of a parish had a much more fluid character and was loosely defined, whereas the group of users (the peasants) had to be defined more carefully.³⁴¹ However, as forest related activities intensified, the matter of borders ultimately became an issue that had to be addressed. Whilst informality had previously been norm, the need of formality increased.

To get a visual of how parish borders were located and drawn, maps are a good source of information. In Figure 12 is a map made by land surveyor Claes Claesson. It shows how the parishes of North Ostrobothnia were laid out from Kruunupyy in the south, to Kemi in the north, and Kainuu in the east. Even though the borders on this map are only rough estimations, it does provide a general image of the landscape and makes clear how the division of parishes followed a certain logic. For example, each parish had at least one main river along which most peasant homesteads were located. These were the blood vessels of each parish that peasants used to transport tar and other forest products from the deep forests to the port towns along the coast. As is visible in Figure 13, which is a map over Liminka and Saloinen parishes from 1653, also made by Claes Claesson, the layout of villages followed these rivers inland towards yet unexploited woodlands.

The progression of moving further inland was facilitated by the access of navigable waterways, but this did not mean that forests closer to the coast were left untouched. One must therefore envision how the ongoing colonialisation and eastward expansion of peasant settlements along the rivers was followed by a gradual and increasing exploitation of forests extending northward and southward from the place of settlement. It is only natural therefore that the first conflicts concerning forest use and the location of parish borders occurred in communities closer to the coast.

³⁴⁰ Fritzboeger (2004), p. 157.

³⁴¹ Critics of Ostrom emphasising the importance of clearly defined boundaries have pointed out how overlapping and jointly managed areas could also function well within communities that share resources, see Cox et al. (2010), *Principle 1: Well-defined boundaries*.



Figure 12. Geographical map from north to south over Kemi, Ii, Oulu, Liminka, Saloinen, Pyhäjoki, Kalajoki, Lohtaja, Kokkola, Kälviä, and Kruunupy parishes in Ostrobothnia, made by Claes Claesson. Source: NAF, MH MH 106/- -, *Geographisk Charta på Kiemi, Iiå, Uhlå, Limingo, Salo, Peheiocki, Kalaiocki, Lochto, Gamble Carleij, Kelwiå, Kroneby Sochnar belägne i Österbotn.*

Apart from one of Virrankoski's main conclusions that borders were regularly disputed, he gives special emphasis to the protracted conflict between Kalajoki and Lohtaja in the 1660s.³⁴² However, problems between these parishes had already begun in the late 1640s when infringements had allegedly been made by the peasants of Lohtaja on the forest common of Kalajoki. An inspection was carried out in 1649, at which time the border was specified. It turned out that it was actually the peasants of Kalajoki that had committed unlawful cutting on the wrong side of the border, and they had been able to find the location of the border by using an inspection letter that the peasants of Lohtaja presented to the court.³⁴³

³⁴² Virrankoski (1973), pp. 180–181.

³⁴³ Vinterting, Lohtaja parish, 6th of February 1649, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1645–1649, act 416, pp. 402v–403.

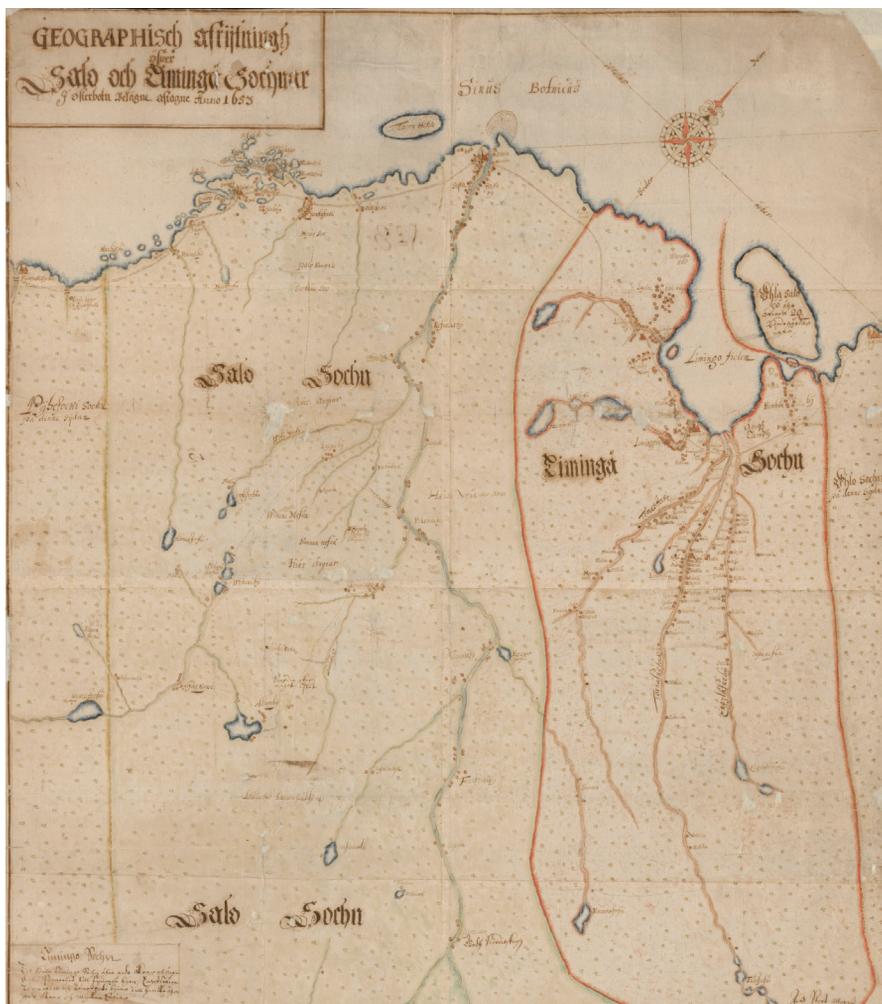


Figure 13. Map over Saloien and Liminka parishes, 1653, made by Claes Claesson. Note: the map is not made in a north-south direction. Source: NAF, MH MH 121/- -, *Geographisch affrijningh öfwer Saloien och Limingä Sochnar i Österbotn belägnä*.

As mentioned earlier, it was not entirely uncommon that older legal documents were used since they often contained the terms of agreements being made between contending parties, and the whereabouts of borders were sometimes described.³⁴⁴ The letter provided in 1649 was written in 1549 by the chairman of the district court Anders Westgöthe, in other words,

³⁴⁴ This was also the case on the Swedish side of the Baltic Sea. Granér (2002), pp. 236–239.

a century before the time of the border dispute. It is unclear whether or not there were any border markers still to be found in the forest landscape. Nevertheless, members from both parishes attended the inspection and could establish that the accusation of unlawful cutting was true.³⁴⁵

Inspection letters, or border letters (Swe. *råbrev*), from the sixteenth century points to an earlier development where there had been a similar need to establish borders between peasant communities. This was not only the case in Northern Finland. In Denmark, there is evidence suggesting that the location of borders and resource areas of different peasant communities in fact originated from a much earlier period, as far back as the late Iron Age.³⁴⁶ Although not as old, a border letter was used in a conflict between the eastern parish of Iisalmi (later incorporated with Kajaani) and Pyhäjoki parish in 1648, written by Chief Judge Henrik Larsson Riddare on the 25th of July 1583.³⁴⁷ Another inspection letter from 1564 was used in Kälviä parish in 1673, and a legal document from 1570 concerning the location of the parish border between Kokkola and Kruunupyy was revisited the same year.³⁴⁸ The content of these documents is unfortunately poorly reproduced in the court records. For that reason, we do not know why they were written. However, it was mentioned earlier how Virrankoski has argued that parish borders most likely emerged as a consequence of conflicts over pasturelands and fishing rights rather than forest resources.³⁴⁹ Even though information about such circumstances are difficult to obtain, it is likely that this suggestion is correct considering the fact that forest dependent industries were not as prominent during the sixteenth century as they ultimately became during the seventeenth century.

The inspection letter written by Anders Westgöthe proved vital in Lohtaja in 1649, and it would prove useful once more as another dispute arose in 1665 between the same parishes. This time, it concerned a crofter named Per Knutsson from Kalajoki. He had resumed the use of a deserted homestead on the Lohtaja-side of the border where he had begun to cut trees in the forest.

³⁴⁵ Vinterting, Lohtaja parish, 6th of February 1649, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1645–1649, act 416, pp. 402v–403.

³⁴⁶ Fitzbøger (2004), p. 141.

³⁴⁷ Vinterting, Pyhäjoki parish, 24th of February 1648, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1645–1649, act 317, pp. 306v–307.

³⁴⁸ Vinterting, Kälviä parish, 21st of January 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 373–374, pp. 365–365v; Vinterting, Kokkola parish, 15th and 16th of December 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 514–516, pp. 506–507v.

³⁴⁹ Virrankoski (1973), p. 183.

As he did, another peasant named Mats Kuru had noticed his cutting activities and brought the matter to court. The old inspection letter was reviewed, and the following could be clarified. The inspection of 1549 had concerned the border between the parishes of Kokkola and Saloinen, meaning that the parishes that laid between them in 1665 (Kälviä, Lohtaja, Kalajoki, and Pyhäjoki) were not yet independent parishes by that time. However, as they were established during the first half of the seventeenth century, the same border that separated the older parishes of Kokkola and Saloinen was used to divide Lohtaja and Kalajoki. Regardless, even though the border was specified in 1549 and 1649, the peasantry of both parishes explained how they, for as long as anyone could remember, ‘together roamed the forest’ and were ‘cutting tar wood and other things’ in common. It was also added by the laymen of the court and the gathered peasantry that there had never been any quarrels between the two parishes concerning these issues until the crofter Per Knutsson had arrived on the scene, which resulted in the decision to evict Per and his wife Margareta.³⁵⁰

This last statement is of course debatable seeing as they did quarrel and use the same inspection letter 16 years earlier. Regardless, what is of interest here is that even though they had legal documents specifying where the parish border was located, the peasantry of the two parishes retained a relationship where informal agreements persisted. In other words, even though borders had been formally established on paper – defining between which villages it ran, along what rivers and streams it flowed, and declaring whom it affected – reality was such that the peasants were not forced to adhere to any of it, as long as they all got along. Informality was prioritised.

The time had nonetheless come when the matter of borders grew in importance, and the relationship between these two parishes would continue to be highly problematic throughout the rest of the century. The conflict concerning Per Knutsson and Mats Kuru was further investigated by the local court in 1666. However, the case at hand concerned allegations put forth by Mats against the vicar in Kalajoki who had allegedly been cutting wood and made planks on the wrong side of the border. The case was dismissed due to Mats’ incapacity of providing the court with any reliable evidence. However, the matter of where the border was located was revisited, as well as the eviction of Per and Margareta, which seemed to have been made on false

³⁵⁰ Vinterting, Ikalaborg Friherreskap, 21st and 23rd of January 1665, NAF, Court Records, KO a:11, 1661–1666, act 665–666, pp. 670–671. Original text: ‘samfällt med huar andre faridt i skog’; ‘medh törffhuggande och annat’.

grounds.³⁵¹ In 1684, the two parish communities had finally reached a settlement, which they presented to the court in Lohtaja. However, perhaps frustratingly, the court was not able to approve the new border since the county administrative office (Swe. *landskansliet*) in Vaasa believed that the border inspection had been too one-sided. The peasants of Kalajoki had been stubborn in their opposition against the inspection, which had led the chief constable of Kalajoki to depart from the group who had been chosen to inspect the border. Instead, the Kalajoki peasants requested to have laymen from Kokkola and Pyhäjoki attend the additional inspection round. The court agreed, but also added that the county administration office in Vaasa wanted the bailiff to attend, which the concerned peasants agreed to.³⁵²

2.3.2 The Church, the State, the Forest

Previous to the seventeenth century, the borders that separated villages and parishes of North Ostrobothnia had taken a loose form through the way land was used. As the level of state presence increased during the sixteenth century, state administrative and ecclesiastical divisions gradually gained importance. This meant that the peasantry was taxed according to parish affiliation and that each parish had their own church, usually located at the mouth of the main river that ran out into the Gulf of Bothnia. However, the location of these borders changed during the seventeenth century, increasingly due to the interest of exploitable forest resources. For example, in the court case between Kalajoki and Lohtaja from 1665, it was decided that a few villages from Kalajoki should be incorporated into Lohtaja. The reason for this was that Kalajoki had a larger number of homesteads, meaning that Lohtaja had more exploitable woodlands per homestead. The two parishes would in this way have a more equal division of forest resources.³⁵³

Changes in the location of borders could still be met with protests. One such example is found in relation to the woodlands around a village called Hopsala. Helmer Tegengren has explained that Hopsala originally belonged to Pedersöre parish, but that it was incorporated into Kruunupyö in 1608.³⁵⁴

³⁵¹ Vinterting, Ikalaborg Friherreskap, 3rd, 5th and 6th of February 1666, NAF, Court Records, KO a:11, 1661–1665, act 799–801, pp. 849–851.

³⁵² Vinterting, Lohtaja parish, 14th and 15th of January 1684, NAF, Court Records, KO a:4, 1684–1684, act 22–23, pp. 38–40.

³⁵³ Vinterting, Ikalaborg Friherreskap, 21st and 23rd of January 1665, NAF, Court Records, KO a:11, 1661–1666, act 665–666, pp. 670–671.

³⁵⁴ Pedersöre parish consisted of 260 *mantal* in 1652, Prytz (2013), p. 38, footnote 20.

It was a village of considerable size during the mid-sixteenth century, although the number of homesteads had reduced to more than half of its original size by the 1640s.³⁵⁵ In 1665, a conflict arose between Kruunupyy and Pedersöre as the peasants of Kruunupyy were accused of having cut timber and collected bark from the forest of Hopsala village. This was met with vigorous protest by the Kruunupyy peasants. They claimed that the border they were referring to was old and was no longer used as a proper parish border. It had in fact, similar to the case between Kalajoki and Lohtaja, been the border between Pedersöre and Kokkola at the time when Kruunupyy did not exist as an independent parish. However, a copy of a previous border inspection signed by the chief constable and a former layman from Pedersöre was provided to the court. This document confirmed that the border that the Hopsala peasants referred to indeed was valid. The court records do not reveal the date of this inspection; however, since it contained the signature of Pedersöre's current chief constable, it must have been made after the time of the parish division in 1608. Nevertheless, the peasants of Kruunupyy insisted on its illegitimacy seeing as they had used the conflicted forest together with the peasants of Hopsala for as long as anyone could remember.³⁵⁶

The maintenance of consensus between parish communities was not always a straightforward matter in terms of regulating forest cutting activities and establishing borders. It is possible to determine that even though monitoring of parish borders was carried out in the sense that illicit cutting was detected, a continuous and successful protection thereof was not achieved in all places. In such cases, assistance from above was sometimes required. By referring back to Mansbridge emphasis on the role of the state in polycentric systems, the involvement of the state is not necessarily a sign of weakness, but rather an enabling factor for large organisations to succeed.³⁵⁷ Earlier research has furthermore emphasised the importance of legislators and state representatives recognising common-pool resource institutions in order for them to be more firmly established in society.³⁵⁸ Case in point, the county governor Gustav Grass appeared in the local court of

³⁵⁵ The term '*rök*' was often used during the seventeenth century, meaning a landed property owned by a peasant. The number of '*rökar*' had declined from 30 to 14 between the years 1553 to 1645. Tegengren (1941), pp. 27–28 and 33.

³⁵⁶ Vinterting, Kruunupyy parish, 1st of January 1665, NAF, Court Records, KO a:11, 1661–1666, act 600–601, pp. 605–605v.

³⁵⁷ Mansbridge (2013).

³⁵⁸ Blomkvist & Larsson (2013), p. 136.

Liminka in January 1690 where he ordered the peasantry to attend the upcoming court meeting in the neighbouring parish of Saloinen. The reason why was because they had to discuss the location of the parish border, which they apparently had been avoiding. If they would not heed his warning, he would impose penalty fees on them for not turning up.³⁵⁹ Such admonitions are rare to find, but it demonstrates how the matter of where parish borders were located was considered to be something that the peasants had to discuss among themselves. The reason for this was simply that any decisions and potential changes of the location of borders would affect them as users of the forest resources, as well as their ability to establish rules of enough *efficiency* to organise forest use in a sustainable way.

There are further examples of how representatives of the central authorities intervened regarding forest exploitation. In matters of ownership and access, the purpose of their involvement was mainly to mediate and assist. However, in cases concerning degree-of-usage, it was usually an attempt to control and limit the peasantry's forest cutting activities. Such court cases will be more thoroughly examined later in this thesis. However, for the sake of demonstrating the peasantry's discussions on ecclesiastical and state administrative divisions, as well as the state's facilitating role in such circumstances, one particular case concerning the involvement of a representative of the central authorities is of interest.

The case concerned the parish border between Kruunupyy and Pedersöre, and again, the village of Hopsala that was located near the contested border. The peasantry had not been able to resolve the previous conflict of 1665 and continuous infringements ultimately led to the involvement of Bailiff Erik Tawast in 1671.³⁶⁰ Tawast has been portrayed by previous historians as a singularly energetic and ruthless man who did not hesitate to deny peasants fair payment for their produce. According to the registry of the Swedish Admiralty in 1675, he used to discount deliveries of timber as retroactive payment for supposedly unpaid expenses from the time before he was appointed inspector at the shipyard in Kruunupyy. He furthermore caused great discontent among the burgher population since he frequently engaged in unlawful trade with the peasantry, contrary to regulations issued by the

³⁵⁹ Vintering, Liminka parish, 20th and 21st of January 1690, NAF, Court Records, KO a:10, 1690–1690, act 47–48, pp. 83–84.

³⁶⁰ Erik Tawast was *befallningsman* (or *hauptman*, a person appointed to manage a certain area on behalf of a superior central official, in this case the county governor of Ostrobothnia) in Kruunupyy until 1675, after which he was given the responsibility of overseeing the shipyard in Kruunupyy and thus given the title Inspector.

county governor.³⁶¹ Nevertheless, he attended the court meetings in Kruunupyy in 1671 and 1673 where the enabling role of the state in large polycentric systems becomes evident.³⁶² His main objective was to call upon the peasantry to abandon enmity and urged them to request a new inspection. He explained that he had a document in his possession that could aid the examination, although it is not specified what it contained. He had furthermore forgotten to bring it with him, so the proposed inspection had to wait until a later time.³⁶³

Tawast returned to the court in Kruunupyy in 1673 when the negotiations resumed. At this time, he had brought a resolution from the Royal Court of Appeal in Turku, proclaiming that the recent border inspection of 1672 could be approved and wanted the peasantry to confirm it. The court records do not reveal whether or not the outcome of the new inspection deviated from the old border between Pedersöre and Kokkola. Nevertheless, the peasants of Kruunupyy reiterated their former claim that the border should be disregarded. The court asked them if the people of Hopsala were cutting on the forest of Kruunupyy, to which they said yes, but when they were asked where the border was, they fell silent. The people from Hopsala and Pedersöre on the other hand said that they had not been cutting in their neighbour's forest. Eventually, the Kruunupyy peasants made a comment on the proposition made by Tawast. They argued that if the border was to be established, the church in Kruunupyy would fall within the borders of Pedersöre and thus leave them without a parish church. Even though this would break from the traditional structure of how parishes were arranged in the region, Tawast provided them with an enlightening example. He explained that the villages of Kovjoki, Karby, and Strömmen, which were located farther to the south, ecclesiastically belonged to the parish of Uusikaarlepyy, but that they paid taxes in Pedersöre. Furthermore, he explained that the border ran between these three villages and the village of Socklot, yet there had never been any discord between them over forest use. This provision of information is very well demonstrative of the important role that the state could have when disputes between large organisations seemed to have reached an impasse, because the information Tawast

³⁶¹ Tegengren (1941), pp. 261–262; Michwitz & Möller (1951), p. 27.

³⁶² Mansbridge (2013).

³⁶³ Vinterting, Kruunupyy parish, 20th and 21st of February 1671, NAF, Court Records, KO a:12, 1667–1671, act 562, pp. 558v.

provided ultimately convinced the peasants of Kruunupyy to agree to the suggested parish border of 1672.³⁶⁴

2.3.3 Formalising Borders of Amity

In order for the boundaries of a CPR to be effective (that they define the extent of appropriable resources for those who are alleageable to use them) the matter of monitoring is important.³⁶⁵ As mentioned earlier, many disputed borders were so-called borders of amity and continued to be so during much of the seventeenth century.³⁶⁶ However, as will be shown below, their location was dependent on the preservation of consensus between members of different parishes, but also on the prevailing need of exploitable resources.

The success of regulating exploitation of forest commons differed between village and parish communities. As mentioned before, regulation and monitoring on the village forest was in many ways easier to carry out due to the comparatively smaller user group than that of a whole parish. Nevertheless, internal parish regulations were ultimately facilitated by the establishment of extraction limits in relation to each homestead's taxable capacity. Having a functional internal system with high *efficiency*, in other words, that formal rules of access and distribution were respected by the members of the parish, was a precondition if external infringements were to be thwarted, but also for the members' ability to change these rules if such a need emerged. Even so, monitoring the parish border was difficult considering the size of each parish. This led to increasing numbers of disputes despite persistent attempts to resolve the conflicts. This is, for example, proven by the recurrent border violations committed by the peasantry of Kruunupyy, Kälviä, and Kokkola parishes, all neighbouring parishes in the southern part of North Ostrobothnia.

³⁶⁴ Vinterting, Kruunupyy parish, 18th and 20th of January 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 356–358, pp. 349–350v.

³⁶⁵ Ostrom (1990), p. 94.

³⁶⁶ Jutikkala (1963), p. 276; Granér (2002), p. 237.

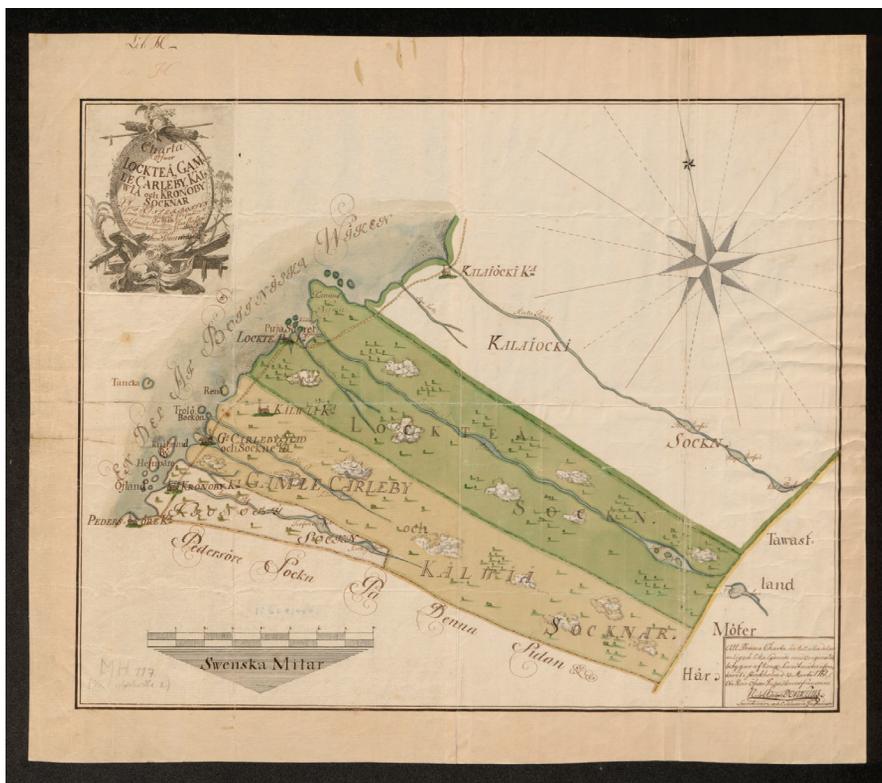


Figure 14. Map over Lohtaja, Kokkola, Kälviä, and Kruunupyö parishes in Ostrobothnia, 1761. Source: MH MH 117/- -, *Charta öfwer Läckteå, Gamla Carleby, Kälviä och Kronoby socknar uti Österbotten*.

In Figure 14 is a map from 1761 where the parishes of Lohtaja (green), Kokkola and Kälviä (yellow), and Kruunupyö (white) are visible, as well as the parish borders. It is a recreation and cut-out from Claes Claesson's map from 1648. At the time of Claesson, these borders had no physical imprint in the geographical landscape. Furthermore, whilst the parish of Kälviä became an individual parish in 1639, there are no borders on the map indicating or delineating it from Kokkola. However, it is possible to discern the parish church of Kokkola to the south and Kälviä's church in the north, separated by the Perho river. So, in other words, parish borders were highly informal and imprecise at the time of Claesson writing his map, and therefore also highly contestable. Below follows the conflicts and negotiations between Kokkola and its northern and southern parish

neighbours, a process that demonstrates how formalisation of the borders they shared ultimately had to happen.

The Border with Kälviä

The first conflict, and subsequent court proceedings, that initiated the formalisation of the parish borders that Kokkola shared with Kälviä and Kruunupyy took place in January 1673. As was explained in relation to Figure 14, land surveyor Claesson did not draw any delineation on his map between the parishes of Kokkola and Kälviä. Whilst all parish borders were informal during most of the seventeenth century, this suggests that the borders Kokkola shared with Kälviä were even more ambiguous. It was brought up for debate as the peasants of Kokkola had committed unlawful cutting in Kälviä. They had ‘excessively’ cut timber logs over the border during the previous autumn, for which the Kälviä peasants wanted justice. Bringing the matter to the local court was a cohesive effort behind which the entire peasantry stood united. A man named Jacob Bengtsson spoke on behalf of Kokkola and provided the court with an inspection letter written by Clement Hindersson, dated January 31st, 1564. Jacob explained that the border ran from the coast inland and between the villages of Korplax to the south and Ruotsalo in the north. However, seeing as it was almost ten kilometres between the two villages, the old inspection letter did not bring much clarity in the matter. A man from Kälviä spoke out and said that even if the border was located somewhere between the two villages, the illegal activities had been committed so close to Kälviä that there was no question that it had been carried out on their side of the border. This was further substantiated by Johan Bockmöller, layman Mats Sigfredsson, and chief constable Gustaf Gabrielsson who had visited the area and explained that the situation was even worse than the peasants from Kälviä had described.³⁶⁷

The local officials explained that after the peasants of Kokkola had cut the amount of forest resources they needed, they had transported it all back over the border and had there initiated their plans to build a sawmill. The chief constable estimated that 300 logs were harvested, whilst layman Sigfredsson’s estimation was 350. Whilst this was a large number, the Kälviä peasants further criticised their neighbours over the ‘large number which still lay unbranched in the forest’ and complained that their ‘forest thus is

³⁶⁷ Vinterting, Kälviä parish, 21st of January 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 373–374, pp. 365–365v. Original text: ‘öfwerflödigt’.

noticeably ruined'. The court found the peasants of Kokkola guilty, for which they were forced to pay a fine. A penalty of 40 marks was also issued if future infringements were ever committed.³⁶⁸

It has previously been pointed out how wasteful and selfish appropriation of forest resources was condemned by local users. This speaks in favour of the argument that peasant communities knew that their forests were not infinite and that there was a limit to how much wooden resources they could extract. Arguing that the forest was 'ruined' sounds daunting. However, it is not reasonable to assume that this was even close to constituting the entire parish forest of Kälviä. According to calculations done by previous research, 1 hectare (10 000 m²) contained approximately 788 trees in Ostrobothnia,³⁶⁹ meaning that the 350 trees covered an area of approximately 0.45 hectares. Considering that Kälviä parish was, according to a rough and restrained estimation, about 72 000 hectares, a deforested area of this number of trees would have been insignificant. It is more likely, therefore, that the forest area in question had indeed suffered from deforestation, but that the parish of Kälviä was no way near being emptied of woodlands.

The events leading up to the court session in January 1673, and the transgressions made by the peasantry of Kokkola, were nonetheless of such proportions that the Royal Court of Appeal in Turku decided on the 3rd of April 1673 that the borders Kokkola shared with Kruunupyy and Kälviä had to be properly defined and established. Twelve *synemän* (En. inspection men) were chosen to carefully review all legal documents mentioning the borders and they went into the physical landscape to trace their location.³⁷⁰ They were done before the year was over and presented the results at two separate extraordinary court meetings.

The first border that was addressed was the northern border with Kälviä. The court assembled in November 1673. This was a matter of high importance as the decisions made at this point would affect every parish member in one way or another, not least in terms of their ability to partake in the decision-making process (*equity*). Members from both parishes attended and most of the larger villages in the area were represented. The old inspection letter from

³⁶⁸ Vinterting, Kälviä parish, 21st of January 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 373–374, pp. 365–365v. Original text: 'öfwerflödigt'. Original text: 'stoor myckenhet som ännu i Skogen oquistat war liggjande'; 'Skogh således märckeligen är worden ruinerad'.

³⁶⁹ In terms of tar, the available estimations suggests that one hectare of forest gave between 10 and 16 barrels of tar. Villstrand (1992b), p. 45. See also Åström (1988), p. 25.

³⁷⁰ Vinterting, Kokkola parish, 15th and 16th of November 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 512–514, pp. 503v–505v.

1564 signed by Clement Hindersson had been examined but declared invalid by the inspection men. The new parish border they proposed consisted of 23 connected lines in the landscape and ‘both parties mostly agreed to each border’ as they expressed that it was ‘impossible to make a more correct difference between them.’ The court was in session for two days, but despite the initial positive response, discontent voices were soon raised. Peasants from Kälviä wanted to have parts of the border moved, claiming that it cut through their outlying lands in a way that could not be accepted. They therefore filed a formal notice of appeal (Swe. *vadeanmälan*). This allowed them to delay the court’s verdict of approving the border by putting the matter in front of a higher court, in this case the Royal Court of Appeal in Turku. This was allowed if they also paid an appellation fee (Swe. *vadpenning*). The peasants of Kokkola were thus forced to wait for a final judgement, but until such time, the court decided that the proposed border should be temporarily acknowledged and respected in order to avoid further conflicts, and a penalty fee of 40 marks was set if violated.³⁷¹

The size of the appellation fee is not stated in the court records. Nevertheless, the fact that they were ready to pay money to have their grievances concerning the border reviewed shows a genuine commitment from the Kälviä peasants and that issues such as this was not taken lightly. The matter between Kokkola and Kälviä was not resolved until 1694 when a final border delineation was agreed upon. However, the court records reveal that since 1673, the Kälviä peasants had not carried through with their notice of appeal. Instead, both sides had decided to ignore the Royal Court of Appeal’s commandment to establish a parish border. They wanted to use ‘each other’s forests collectively’. Nevertheless, in light of recent events, this agreement had been ‘violently’ dishonoured.³⁷²

³⁷¹ Vintering, Kokkola parish, 15th and 16th of November 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 512–514, pp. 503v–505v. Original text: ‘begge parterne till huar råå mestedehts samtyecte’; ‘säyandes sigh omöyeligen rättare skildnadh dem emellan göra kunnat’.

³⁷² Vintering, Kokkola and Kälviä parishes, 8th and 9th of January, NAF, Court Records, KO a:15, 1694–1694, act 16, pp. 22–24. Original text: ‘hwarh annans skoogh samfällt’; ‘wålldsambt’.



Figure 15. Geographical map over Kälviä parish in Ostrobothnia, 1772. Source: NAF, MH MH 119/- -, *Geographisk Charta öfwer Kielwiä Sochn uti Österbotn och Uhleborgs län belägen*.

The peasants of Kälviä did not deny the accusations, although they explained their actions by arguing that their neighbours had been cutting wood too close to their villages, even though the peasants of Kälviä had up until that point ‘cut much more on the forest of Kokkola than on the side of Kälviä’. The court asked both parties if they had any legal document that could verify their previous agreement, but no document had been written. Regardless, even though they had decided to use the forest in common, a perception persisted whereby the woodlands located closer to the villages in Kokkola was their forest to use and vice versa. They had in other words resumed the old tradition where the borders were orally and informally defined, thus functioning as borders of amity. Their ambition had nonetheless failed. Therefore, in 1694, the laymen of the court reasoned that whilst the current conflict could be resolved, this arrangement would ‘probably give rise to many disagreements and harmful consequences’ in the long run. Instead, they decided that the border that had been suggested earlier should be recognised, as well as the Kälviä peasants’ appeal, in order to avoid further

disarray.³⁷³ The final border delineation that was eventually established can be seen on a map from 1772.³⁷⁴

The border dispute between Kälviä and Kokkola is an example that clearly shows how vital parish communities had come to consider well-defined and formal borders. Even though it was a long-drawn-out process, in which attempts were even made to ignore previous disputes and remain by oral tradition, the importance of forest resources had reached a level where such customary agreements were no longer sufficient. In De Keyzer's study on the Campine commons, she has argued that one of the characteristics making them successful was the informality by which commoners were given 'more breathing space and allowed communities to change their practices and strategies more quickly and without conflicts that could arise from changing formal documents.'³⁷⁵ Even though informality can certainly have this effect, the usefulness of such informal borders is contextually specific. Whilst borders in the Campine were considered as 'a symbol of the jurisdiction of a lord', the process by which borders were formalised in North Ostrobothnia was one where the commoners themselves opted to have them formalised, rather than to remain by customs characterised by informality. Another important difference is that whilst the largest community studied in the Campine covered a surface area of approximately 11 600 hectares,³⁷⁶ the parish of Kälviä (the smallest parish in North Ostrobothnia) covered an area more than six times as large. Furthermore, the North Ostrobothnian commons were divided into both village and parish commons, which greatly complicated the effort of remaining by informal borders as forest exploitation increased. For these reasons, it is thus understandable that the need of formality similarly increased.

Throughout this development, the communal effort of working towards a common goal gives basis to argue that in matters of establishing parish borders, the internal parish organisation was united. It provides an example of peasant institutions (CPIs) where the peasants (CPrR) collectively worked towards establishing a sustainable governance regime that would keep their forest commons (CPR) free from infringements. However, even though such

³⁷³ Vinterting, Kokkola and Kälviä parishes, 8th and 9th of January, NAF, Court Records, KO a:15, 1694–1694, act 16, pp. 22–24. Original text: 'hwarh annans skooogh samfällt'; 'wålldsambl'; 'mycket meer huggit på Gamble Carleby Skogen än som dhe på Kellfwio sijdhan'; 'torde ändå i längden föda af sigh många oenigheeter och skadeliga Consequentier'.

³⁷⁴ See Figure 15.

³⁷⁵ De Keyzer (2018), p. 95.

³⁷⁶ De Keyzer (2018), p. 24, Table 2.1.

efforts were made, conflicting views resulted in external infringements being committed by both sides. Although the decision-making process was inclusive, it was not enough to ensure a sustainable governance regime until the border had been definitively established in 1694. Still, it is perhaps understandable that it took time. In fact, it is mentioned within earlier research that border conflicts could continue for centuries, even though most were resolved relatively quickly.³⁷⁷ Nevertheless, abandoning a practice that had been custom for many generations was no small thing, and following the deliberations of 1673, they had tried to remain by such informal traditions. Furthermore, considering that the size of the parishes was indeed vast, it is not surprising that conflicting views and interests arose and persisted. Ultimately, the borders had to be formalised and the process reveals how the relationship and social cohesion between peasants from the same parish was stronger than that between different parishes.

The Border with Kruunupy

The peasants of Kokkola not only struggled to come to terms with their northern neighbours. An equally troublesome affair was that of the border with Kruunupy to the south. It all began in January 1662 when the peasants of Kruunupy stood accused of having cut wood in the forest common of Kokkola. However, no one was able to determine the location of the border, so the wood was instead temporarily seized by the court until the exact location could be established.³⁷⁸ However, this would take time. The matter was not revisited until the 15th and 16th of December 1673, one month after the peasant of Kokkola had debated the issue of their northern border to Kälviä. The proceedings began by establishing that since there was ‘no parish delineation between them’, an inspection had been carried out, the result of which was read aloud. It specified 13 connected lines in the landscape along which the border was set to run.³⁷⁹

As mentioned earlier, using old inspection letters could be helpful when a century old border was to be re-erected, but their usefulness could also have expired and physical remnants of their existence disappeared. Fitzbøger provides a similar example from Denmark where he cites a statement being made concerning a border between three villages in Central Jutland,

³⁷⁷ De Keyzer (2018), p. 101.

³⁷⁸ Vintering, Kruunupy parish, 28th of January 1662, NAF, Court Records, KO a:11, 1661–1666, act 154, p. 157.

³⁷⁹ Vintering, Kokkola parish, 15th and 16th of December 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 514–516, pp. 506–507v. Original text: ‘ingen sochne skildnadh dem emellan’.

explaining how the borders were ‘so inadequate and dubious that [...] it is totally impossible to determine any firm borderline’.³⁸⁰ Similarly, in the case concerning Kälviä’s borders, the inspection men had an old inspection letter at their disposal, written and signed by Chief Judge Clement Gröpp on the 3rd of February 1570. It contained specifications of a village border between the villages Brätö and Kvikant, but there was no information of a parish border since Kruunupyy did not become a parish until 1607. It was therefore declared invalid, and the result of the new inspection was accepted by the gathered peasantry. The village members whose property met with the new border were to mark a nearby pine tree with the sign of their homestead (Swe. *bomärke*) so that the new borders could be considered ‘steady and set, and to be unwaveringly and unconditionally kept’.³⁸¹

It was not uncommon that peasants had accrued property, either through purchase or inheritance, that was located in one parish whilst they lived in a village located in another. Such property, for example hay meadows, belonged to that peasant by virtue of ancient claim. However, such disjointed ownership, in geographical terms, could create uncertainties, for example whether the ownership of a meadow also implied being allowed to appropriate resources from the adjacent forest. This was a matter discussed in 1699 when the peasants of Piehinki village in Saloinen parish had cut almost 300 loads of tar wood and made planks for shipbuilding on the parish forest of Pyhäjoki. Whilst the peasants of Piehinki admitted to the allegations, they argued that they ‘also have the right to produce manufactures on their forest’ since they owned several hay meadows in the parish. However, seeing as the importance of forest resources for the peasant economy had grown to such proportions that it accounted for most of the household income, this could no longer be allowed.³⁸² The same rationale was adopted in Kokkola concerning the border with Kruunupyy. Nevertheless, it was added that such possessions ‘shall for one and all be enjoyed and retained unhinderedly and indisputably’.³⁸³

The borders visible on Claesson’s map from 1648, and the general idea of dividing the landscape into parishes, was up until this point largely a result

³⁸⁰ Fitzbøger (2004), pp. 140–141.

³⁸¹ Vinterting, Kokkola parish, 15th and 16th of December 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 514–516, pp. 506–507v. Original text: ‘stadige och satte, oryggeligen och obråtsligen att hållas’.

³⁸² Vinterting, Pyhäjoki parish, 21st, 23rd and 24th of January 1699, NAF, Court Records, KO a:20, 1699–1699, act 77–78, pp. 149–150. Original text: ‘skulle äfwen hafwa macht, att bruka tillwäreckningar på deras Skoog’.

³⁸³ Vinterting, Kokkola parish, 15th and 16th of December 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 514–516, pp. 506–507v. Original text: ‘skall för huarom och enom wara obehindrat och oqweldh, att niutha och behålla.’

of state administration and ecclesiastic organisation. Such matters had always been of importance, as the case between Kruunupyy and Pedersöre demonstrated. However, forest resources had become so crucial for the peasant household economy that access to woodlands ultimately came to supersede other prioritisations. Nevertheless, despite the agreement of 1673, the border was violated at least two more times. The first violation was committed by the peasants of Kokkola in 1685, after which they had to reimburse their neighbours with a total of 130 copper thalers.³⁸⁴ Even though they signed an additional legal document, in which they promised to never again cross the border with forest cutting, it happened again the following year. The peasants of Kruunupyy had ‘notwithstanding prohibition and imposed fines’ been cutting ‘this year again over the border into Kokkola parish’, causing the ‘poor’ villages of Sâka and Nedervetil particular damage. These peasants also emphasised they were ‘no longer able to take action against the rich peasants of Kruunupyy’.³⁸⁵

Unequal distribution of resources and income inequality was not uncommon in peasant communities during the seventeenth century, and communal property regimes did not guarantee that solidarity always persisted.³⁸⁶ Jonas Lindström has demonstrated how differences in wealth affected the ability of peasants to engage in tasks relating to the maintenance of peasant institutions.³⁸⁷ Recent research has also shown how varying levels of inequality could develop depending on the kind of common land it concerned, either arable or woodland. In the Ardennes region in the Duchy of Luxembourg, for example, grazing rights were to a large degree monopolised by the more wealthy and influential part of the population, whereas forests and the appropriation of firewood largely remained accessible to a broad stratum of rural society.³⁸⁸

What constituted a wealthy peasant in seventeenth century North Ostrobothnia can be difficult to determine. Nevertheless, Ilkka Nummela has been able to determine that the distribution of personal wealth was noticeably

³⁸⁴ Sommarting, Kruunupyy parish, 31st of August 1685, NAF, Court Records, KO a:5, 1685–1685, act 142, p. 273.

³⁸⁵ Vinterting, Kokkola parish, 15th, 16th and 17th of March 1686, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1686–1686, act 139, pp. 207–208. Original text: ‘lijka fult emoth förbodh och föresatte laga wyte’; ‘oachtat huggitt i åhr igen Öfver Råån in på dhem och G. Carleby Sochn’; ‘fattige’; ‘eij meera mechta föra action medh dhe rijka Cronobyboor’.

³⁸⁶ De Keyzer (2018), p. 97.

³⁸⁷ Lindström (2008), pp. 198–199.

³⁸⁸ Beeckaert (2020).

more uneven at the beginning of the seventeenth century in the southern parts of Ostrobothnia than just a few decades earlier.³⁸⁹ Since this development was largely brought on by the intensification of forest exploitation and production of forest products for the international market, it is probable that wealth inequality in North Ostrobothnia increased as well, or at least remained stagnant, throughout the remainder of the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, considering that the peasants of northern Kruunupyö were labelled as rich and their neighbours as poor, this development points to an inter-parish relationship of increasing inequality. The cause of this inequality and the relative differences in wealth must therefore have been a consequence of increased forest exploitation, propelled by increased market integration. Furthermore, whilst Scott has emphasised the redistributive mechanisms often identified within the context of peasant's moral economy (that is, an expectation on those with wealth to be generous and charitable towards less fortunate neighbours)³⁹⁰, such attitudes were not prevalent between the parish communities of Kruunupyö and Kokkola during the latter part of the century.

The border establishments between Kokkola, Kälviä, and Kruunupyö resulted in the most protracted border conflicts in North Ostrobothnia during the seventeenth century. It similarly entailed the most comprehensive efforts made by any of the other parish communities in the region where people respecting each other's undisputed right to their own parish forests was the chief goal. Furthermore, these developments were a time consuming and costly enterprise as it affected more households than in any other border establishment at the time. However, the role played by the state should also be emphasised at this point. Even though it was a matter of parish communities coming to terms with each other, the state and the local courts were fundamental in enabling the conversation to take place and ensuring that legal agreements could be reached. But even though borders were formalised in the sense that legal documents were written, it was a goal not easily achieved and one that took time. Notwithstanding recurrent agreements concerning their location and consequent reprimands for the violations committed, peasants continued to disregard the agreements and were at times unable to maintain a sufficiently high level of consensus. The borders of amity were effectively no more. Nevertheless, it simultaneously had the effect of parish communities becoming more socially coherent and

³⁸⁹ Nummela (2011), p. 357.

³⁹⁰ Scott (1976), pp. 3–5, 167.

defined in relation to what and who were not included. A society of nested enterprises thus became even more pronounced as a consequence.

2.3.4 Keeping to Oral Agreements

In the northern parts of North Ostrobothnia, parish borders were not scrutinised as intensively as in the south. However, as forest related activities increased and tar exports grew, so did the number of border violations that warranted inspections. Still, the tradition of keeping them informal had a long history and was to a larger degree emphasised here than in the south.

Legal documents strengthened the legitimacy of a border and cemented its location. This was a major departure from how borders and common lands had been managed and even thought of in the past. As such, calling for an inspection was not allowed without proper reason, even if there was a prevailing will among peasants to do so. One case that exemplifies this took place in 1684 and stood between the parishes of Saloinen and Pyhäjoki. The court records explicitly stated that there had not been a recognised border between them before. However, when the peasants of Saloinen were caught harvesting hay and tar wood close to some villages in Pyhäjoki, ‘they finally had cause to demand a proper border delineation between the parishes through an inspection’. However, the inspection was opposed by the peasants of Saloinen as they ‘would rather now, as before, live with each other in evenness and reconciliation’ since Pyhäjoki ‘had been divorced from Saloinen like a daughter’. They therefore urged their neighbours to remain by their customary relations where the border was orally defined.³⁹¹

The northern border of Saloinen, which it shared with Liminka, had been subjected to inspection quite some time earlier. The court records reveal that both sides provided legal documents of the borders’ whereabouts in 1665, at which time the peasants of Liminka had been cutting on the parish forest of their neighbour. Nevertheless, the peasantry requested to have the matter investigated again. The court, on the other hand, believed that a new inspection would only take time and be costly for everyone involved. They were therefore ‘urged to amity and unity with one another’.³⁹²

³⁹¹ Vinterting, Saloinen parish, 24th, 26th and 28th of January 1684, NAF, Court Records, KO a:4, 1684–1684, act 47–48, pp. 88–90. Original text: ‘dhe endteligen wore förorsakadhe, att begära een rätt Rååskildnad igenom Laga Syn emellan Sochnarne’; ‘heller nu som för medh hwar andra ijämnd och wällförlikeligheet lefwa wille’; ‘som een dätter ifrån Sahlo sochen skilder wore’.

³⁹² Vinterting, Liminka parish, 16th, 17th and 18th of January 1665, NAF, Court Records, KO a:11, 1661–1666, act 656, pp. 660v–661. Original text: ‘förmante till sämio och eenigheet emodt hwar andre’.

Given the frequency of violations of parish borders in the south, borders of amity were no longer functional and did not hold enough legitimacy by the second half of the seventeenth century as they once did. The northern parishes saw a somewhat delayed development compared to the south in terms of moving away from the tradition of keeping the borders of amity solely within the memory of the community members. This can be contrasted to the findings of De Keyzer as she has pointed out differences in the strategies adopted by commoners where some chose to formalise rules within their CPI, whilst others remained by informal rules.³⁹³ This resonates with the development in the northern part of North Ostrobothnia. Even though some wanted to formally establish the location of parish borders, there were those who thought it unnecessary.

2.4 Summary

Peasants in North Ostrobothnia were deeply engaged with forest related work throughout as well as before the seventeenth century. However, the increasing demand of forest products by domestic and international markets changed the peasant population's relation to and usage of their forest commons. The sub-question addressed in this chapter has dealt with if and how peasants managed to uphold a fair and sustainable distribution of forest resources within peasant communities on village and parish level, and how collective efforts were made to establish a functional governance regime. The question read as follows:

- What rules concerning access, management, and utilisation of forest resources existed within peasant communities in North Ostrobothnia, and how were they affected by the changing economic climate of the seventeenth century?

Whilst forest resources had always been vital in terms of firewood, building materials for household construction and tools, and for agricultural purposes such as grazing and for the practice of slash-and-burn agriculture, peasant household economy gradually came to be more dependent on the production of tar and timber. Access to and management of communal forests became a matter more intensely discussed within peasant communities and at the local

³⁹³ De Keyzer (2018), pp. 94–95.

courts of the region. Peasants in North Ostrobothnia retained a firm hold over their commons, and their ability to establish who had access to which forest, and where borders were located, continued to be a matter for them to decide. Similar developments can be noticed in other parts of the Swedish Kingdom as well. One example can be found in central Sweden where privatisation of outlying lands ultimately became a necessity to gain a stronger position vis-à-vis the growing influence of mine and ironwork owners.³⁹⁴

The changing economic climate nevertheless brought on increasing pressures that affected the peasantry's ability to govern their forest commons. Peasant communities shared them on two levels: the village forest and the parish forest. Both were commons to which different rules of access and utilisation applied. The landholding peasants of a village governed their own village forest to which no outside individual had access, whilst the parish forest stood open to free use by any landholding peasant in the parish at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Three different contact spheres between peasants have been established: intra-village relations (peasants from the same village), inter-village relations (peasants from different villages), and parish relations (peasants from different parishes). The nature of these relations is explained below.

Intra-village relations: A common system of sharing the village forest in North Ostrobothnia was that each household had an ancient harvest area. The legitimacy of a peasant's right to such an area was founded upon the argument of ancient claim.³⁹⁵ This meant that someone's claim could only be confirmed if the entire community verified and remembered that the members of that certain household had always appropriated forest resources from that place. The community's memory thus served as a regulatory mechanism when harvesting areas were contested. Through this practice, and by returning to de Moor's three-dimensional model, the peasant institution (CPI) and its members (CPrR) were sufficiently integrated, which created *equity* within the governance regime since all members were able to partake in the decision-making process. However, the importance of the community's memory in disputes over different kinds of property was not unique to North Ostrobothnia. It was also commonly used and referred to in legal proceedings throughout the Finnish part of the kingdom, as well as on

³⁹⁴ Granér (2002), pp. 291–292, 326–327.

³⁹⁵ Jutikkala, (1963), p. 53.

the Swedish mainland.³⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the collective memory could be volatile depending on the balance of power and influence within the village institution. A few cases have shown how particularly women could sometimes be excluded and denied the fundamental right of obtaining the essential forest resources needed to survive. However, this violation against the moral economy of the village institution could be corrected by utilising the legal authority of the local courts.

Harvest areas were sometimes contested and the proximity of cutting activities to villagers' private property began to be considered as intrusive due to everyone's increasing need of forest resources. In this context, the local courts provided an arena where collective action could be practiced and where such, and other kinds of conflicts, could be resolved. Furthermore, they assisted in establishing the extent of permissible appropriation of each household, whenever such uncertainties existed. The distribution of forest resources was based on a scheme widely used in Europe at the time. It specified that each household was allowed to appropriate as many resources as was needed to ensure the future existence of each household. However, peasants were allowed to appropriate more than was needed to survive. The extent of this usage was estimated in relation to the taxable capacity of every landholding peasant, a system that, by all things considered, was effective and would endure throughout the seventeenth century. This system of appropriation was arranged in such a manner that overexploitation of the forest common (CPR) could be avoided due to the rules instituted by the village institution (CPI), thus creating *efficiency* within the governance regime.

Yet, ancient harvest areas were not used everywhere. In cases where the forest stood open to free use by the village members, communication and collaboration was important in order to achieve a functional relationship between villagers. Furthermore, it facilitated the effort of making sure that the forest resources (CPR) were adequate and that the rules were useful for the village members (CPrR), thus generating *utility*. This could, for example, be achieved by communicating one's harvesting activities by marking a certain area of the forest. In this way, everyone in the village knew each other's intentions and could let the members of a certain household practice whatever forest related activity they had planned. In other circumstances, collaboration in tar production was also a facilitating aspect as efforts of

³⁹⁶ Ågren (1997), pp. 221–226, 283.

harvesting, transportation, and stacking were shared, but also since it promoted cooperativeness and communality between village members.

Whilst collaboration could yield positive results, problems could occur when private initiatives were taken. One such example was when peasants leased out parts of the forest common to an outsider. This had been outlawed since the thirteenth century through the legal code of King Christopher. It stipulated that the use-rights that every landholding peasant possessed could not be transferred or given to anyone without the consent of the entire village community. The consequences of such actions could be many. It not only had negative effects for the robustness of and reciprocity within the CPI. It was also a crime that left the rest of the village institution with less forest resources than it otherwise would have had, only for the benefit of one or a few free-riding individuals. Although only a few examples of this kind have been found in the court records, such free-riding actions were important to prevent as new settlers came to populate the region. The population of North Ostrobothnia grew from approximately 9 000 to 14 000 during the second half of the seventeenth century. As new villages formed, and people settled down as crofters on already existing village's lands, use-rights had to be clearly defined. Crofters were generally allowed to use the forest for the sustenance of their households, but only to such degrees that it did not burden the old village and its members' ability to use the forest.

The results of the analysis of intra-village relations provides strong evidence that the governance regime of peasant villages, and the prioritisations made by its members, were balanced enough so that an equilibrium between ecological, institutional, and economic sustainability was achieved, that is, *sustainable balance*. This was made possible due to the level of *equity*, *efficiency*, and *utility* that the governance regime provided through well-functioning rules, ultimately creating high enough levels of reciprocity, solidarity, and sufficiency within village communities.

Inter-village relations: Whilst internal regulation and sanctioning of forest use within village communities was successful, protecting the village common from outside infringements was an effort not as easily achieved. In order to uphold an operational management structure, the inviolability of the village forest borders was important. Whenever infringements occurred, inspections of the alleged crime, and the extent of the damage caused, were frequently called for by the villages involved. Inspections were carried out

by and for the members of the local population, supervised by appointed inspection men picked from the twelve laymen of the court. This can be contrasted to border inspections in England where the main goal of such procedures was to promote the interests of the state, not the local inhabitants. Nevertheless, even though inspections were carried out, violations could still occur. However, the holder of a certain forest area could respond to the infringements in different ways and ignore previous settlements if other goals were deemed more important. Goodwill towards one's neighbours, and efforts to preserve a friendly relationship, was important and demonstrates how both formal and informal ways of solving disputes could be practiced.

During the 1670s and onwards, several events of collective action was taken by parish communities in order to regulate the parish members' cutting activities on parish forests. This occurred in the parishes of Kruunupyy, Kokkola, and Lohtaja. These cases are good examples of level shifting and peasant communities making re-prioritisations as they noticed an escalating trend of forest exploitation, thus realising that new regulatory measures had to be taken. Arrangements concerning forest exploitation and schemes of appropriation were by this time more developed on the Swedish mainland and in southern Finland. In North Ostrobothnia, no previous regulation existed that specified the degree-of-usage on the parish forest. To accommodate for this lack of *efficiency* and formal rules, a process of formalisation was initiated, whereby the taxable-capacity-rule already implemented on village level was transferred and applied on parish level as well. This process is a demonstration of how peasant institutions became progressively nested within each other because of increased forest exploitation and market integration. It shows how members of different villages interacted and exerted influence over the institutional arrangement they shared. It reveals how the structure of peasant communities became organised at different levels where village institutions informed and shaped the governance strategy adopted on parish level.

This transference was successful in Kokkola and Lohtaja, whilst Kruunupyy parish experienced continued internal violations on the parish forest. This was influenced by the growing market forces brought on by the presence of the Swedish Admiralty and the shipyard in Kruunupyy, which demanded increasing deliveries of timber, tar, and other shipbuilding materials. Since peasants in the northern and southern parts of the parish stood at odds with each other as excessive forest exploitation continued

throughout the last part of the century, Kruunupyy thus became a polarised CPI. It serves as an example of how balanced prioritisations regarding sustainability could be difficult when external forces increased and when the CPR was of a larger size.

Parish relations: Borders delineating one village common from another was important. If they were continuously monitored and maintenance efforts were evenly distributed among villagers, external violations and loss of property could be avoided. This was also the case concerning parish borders. Parish borders in North Ostrobothnia had been informally defined before the seventeenth century. However, legal documents and inspection letters from the sixteenth century did exist. Nevertheless, the analysis has shown that their content and the location of border markers were either outdated or lacking in the sense that borders were only specified between certain villages, whereas the remainder of the parish border was undetermined. As exploitation of the region's woodlands spread and intensified, borders needed to be redefined and formalised to assure *utility* and *efficiency*.

With size followed challenges. Not only were peasants preoccupied with protecting the village forest, which included being on good terms with one's village neighbours, they were also obliged to monitor and report any wrongdoing that happened on the parish forest. This was a task not as easily achieved considering the vastness of the region's parishes. Furthermore, keeping parish borders under surveillance became even more challenging when no border markers existed. As such, the different levels of ownership resulted in challenges that had to be addressed by the parish communities.

Up until the middle of the seventeenth century, delineations between parishes were kept within the memory of the parish members as borders of amity. This essentially meant that they were orally defined and maintained as long as amity was preserved. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the region was divided so that each household was taxed according to its parish affiliation and each parish had their own church. Whilst the administrative and ecclesiastical divisions still mattered, disagreements over forest use ultimately became of such proportions that the location of parish borders was decided in relation to each parish's need of forest resources.

Several protracted conflicts and negotiations occurred over these issues, especially between the southern parish of Kokkola and the parishes of Kruunupyy and Kälviä. Beginning in the early 1670s, they struggled to come

to terms concerning where the borders between their parishes were located, despite several inspections being carried out and agreements being reached. The difficulties in reaching a lasting solution were at times mitigated by the involvement of state officials who sometimes provided information that benefitted the negotiations. Moreover, they sometimes admonished the peasantry to abandon enmity and urged for cooperation. Nevertheless, the peasants of Kokkola and Kälviä made efforts to remain by the old custom of orally defined borders. No such attempts were made between Kokkola and Kruunupyy where escalating exploitation over the parish border had caused an unequal distribution of wealth between peasants. In both cases, the borders of amity were no longer a functional way of making sure that forest resources were fairly distributed, and as such, formalisation was needed. However, a similarly detrimental development was not detected in the northern parishes, which did not experience the same degree of border violations as in the south. Even though some wished to remain by informal borders, the parish borders were ultimately inspected, formalised, and confirmed by the legal authority of the local courts.

Borders enhanced the sense of unity within peasant communities, on village as well on parish level, and the process of defining the location of borders could bind them closer together. However, the larger the community, the more difficult it was to achieve social cohesion. Whilst it was up to the peasantry to decide where the borders separating parishes from each other were located, the sheer scale of the project proved difficult due to increasing market integration and emerging wealth inequality. In the case of the southern parishes, it is thus evident that there was a point at which peasant communities struggled to become more nested.

3. Burghers and Trade

Thus far in this thesis, matters of management, organisation, resource utilisation in peasant communities have been examined. However, throughout the seventeenth century, the peasantry became increasingly involved in trade with the burghers in the coastal towns of North Ostrobothnia. As such, this chapter deals with what role the burghers had in the tar and timber trade, as well as how this affected the peasantry's ability to govern their forest commons in a sustainable way.

The court records contain cases where the peasantry found themselves in conflict with the burgher population. Whilst the local district court dealt with matters concerning the rural countryside and its inhabitants, the town had its own court where legal cases and matters of management within the town were discussed, as well as announcements, decrees, letters, and petitions from central authorities that had to be addressed by the town leadership.³⁹⁷ However, legal disputes that involved both burghers and peasants were treated by the local courts, and a total of 70 cases have been found that concern financial issues and trade relations, transport of wooden products, and infringements committed by burghers on peasant owned forests. These matters are important to examine to achieve a better understanding of how peasant communities were able to govern their forest commons in a sustainable way, whilst at the same time being able to make a living in a time of increasing market integration. This is not only substantiated by the level of influence that burghers had in terms of commerce, but also by their role as intermediaries between the peasantry and the international market.

³⁹⁷ Ranta (1987), pp. 85–86.

3.1 Credit and Debt

Trade between the rural population and burghers essentially started as soon as the towns received their privileges from the Swedish king. Almost as quickly, the trade system *majmiseriet* took hold and deeply influenced commerce in the region of Ostrobothnia throughout and after the seventeenth century. One central feature of these trade relations was that peasants and burghers formed long-lasting trade agreements. This ensured that peasants had a buyer, from which they also received lodgings, food, and drink when they arrived in town. Often, the trade agreement also included credit that, if received, the peasant could do with whatever he pleased. However, the time spent in town could be costly and much of the money that was earned were used to cover the peasants' taxes.³⁹⁸

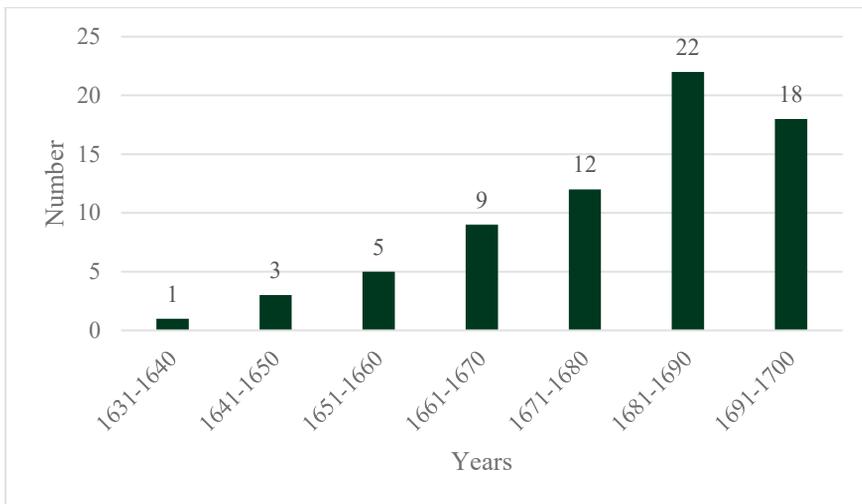


Figure 16. Number of court cases between peasants and burghers in North Ostrobothnia in ten-year increments, 1631–1700. Source: NAF, Court Records.

As seen in Figure 16, the frequency of legal cases began to increase from the 1630s, ultimately culminating in the 1680s. This increase in conflicts is hardly surprising seeing as *majmiseriet* dominated the development of trade in the region as the century progressed. And as commerce increased, so did the potential disagreements over the utilisation of forest resources and proper payment for the products that peasants delivered.

³⁹⁸ Luukko (1972), pp. 247–249.

Approximately one quarter of these cases concerned disputes where debts and credit were the cause of the conflict. One such example is found in the court records from Kalajoki and contains information about how substantial some debts could be. In 1667, the peasant Joseph Thomasson went to the local court to register a partial payment for a debt he had to the burgher Erik Marlander. The payment was ten barrels of tar, which were priced at 35 copper thalers, or three and a quarter thalers per barrel.³⁹⁹ The price on tar had been fluctuating since the beginning of the century and set prices were rarely established. In fact, regulations in 1654 only expressed that the peasantry was allowed to sell their tar at a price that suited them best. However, a minimum price was set in 1668 at three copper thalers per barrel.⁴⁰⁰ Nevertheless, Joseph's payment of 35 thalers was but a dent in the remaining 180 he owed Marlander, meaning that if he was to pay it all *in natura*, he had yet to deliver 55 or 60 barrels depending on the price.⁴⁰¹

Another case worth mentioning took place in Kruunupyy in 1662 when peasants from the village Bråtö had borrowed money from burghers in the neighbouring parish of Kokkola, which they had used to pay their taxes and to cover other rudimentary necessities. What was unusual in this case was that they had used the village's fields as collateral for the loan. This not only implies that the loan was sizable, but it also demonstrates the lengths to which they had to go if they were to cover their expenses, and that there simply was no other way of obtaining the money owed to the Crown. Nevertheless, the court decided that the loan had to be repaid immediately and instituted a penalty of 40 marks on anyone who gave the burghers permission to appropriate resources from the parish forest.⁴⁰² Since the case had considered the village's fields and not the forest, it is not altogether clear why this regulation was enforced. However, it can easily be reasoned that if one was ready to use the village fields as collateral, why not the forest as well?

Even though many peasants ended up in considerable debt to burghers, credits could serve as the only lifeline at their disposal. The tax burden levied

³⁹⁹ Vinterting, Kalajoki parish, 31st of January and 1st of February 1667, NAF, Court Records, KO a:12, 1667–1671, act 13, p. 9.

⁴⁰⁰ Luukko (1972), p. 215.

⁴⁰¹ Vinterting, Kalajoki parish, 31st of January and 1st of February 1667, NAF, Court Records, KO a:12, 1667–1671, act 13, p. 9.

⁴⁰² Ting, Kruunupyy parish, 23rd of September 1662, NAF, Court Records, KO a:11, 1661–1666, act 210, pp. 214–214v.

on the peasantry increased during the seventeenth century.⁴⁰³ This meant that peasants risked losing the tenure of their homestead and land to the Crown if payments became excessively overdue. Increasingly often, therefore, credits given by the burghers were used to pay the king's taxes. It also happened that burghers stepped in as guarantors and provided the money or resources that the peasant owed the state. In 1693, for example, the peasant Michel Persson was summoned to court by Bailiff Lars Brun who claimed that he should have delivered some dozen planks to him as payment for outstanding taxes. Instead of paying his taxes, Michel had given the planks to the burgher Christopher Wikare in Kruunupyy. However, Michel presented the court with a promissory note. It stated that Wikare assumed the responsibility of paying Michel's debt in full, which amounted to 72 copper thalers.⁴⁰⁴

Peasants being indebted became more and more common as the tar and timber industry grew in North Ostrobothnia. Even though it is difficult to establish with any certainty how widespread the level of indebtedness was, it should be said that credit and debt was generally of vital importance and widespread in early modern society.⁴⁰⁵ However, not everyone had outstanding deliveries or debts in wait of being completed. This can be noted in several cases where peasants accused their benefactor or trading partner of not paying them for the products that had been ordered or already delivered. The earliest example is from Kajaani in 1636 and concerned 50 timber logs that Thomas Haikainen had cut for a burgher in Oulu, which were still unpaid. The logs were stored at Thomas' homestead, but they still had to be paid for since the order placed by the burgher, and the time spent making the logs, could not simply be disregarded.⁴⁰⁶ This not only demonstrates that not all peasants were in debt, but it also shows how trade relations between the coastal towns and eastern rural areas occurred at a relatively early stage, and that the cost of transport was deemed affordable notwithstanding the long distance between Kajaani and the coast (approximately 150–200 kilometres).

A later example of outstanding payment on the part of the burghers can be found in the court records from Pyhäjoki in September 1699. The peasant Lars Persson from Haapajärvi accused the burgher Johan Simonsson Riska

⁴⁰³ Villstrand (1992b), p. 65.

⁴⁰⁴ Sommar and höstting, Kruunupyy parish, 8th and 9th of September 1693, NAF, Court Records, KO a:14, 1693–1693, act 204, p. 399.

⁴⁰⁵ It has for example been estimated that as much as 90 percent of all transactions were carried out on credit in early modern England. Muldrew (1998).

⁴⁰⁶ Sommarting, Kajaani parish, 1636, NAF, Court Records, KO a:4, 1636–1639, act 13, p. 8.

of not having paid him for the four barrels of tar that Lars had delivered. In this case, the burgher had already been reprimanded by the county governor Johan Nilsson Ehrenskiöld at a court meeting in January the same year, cautioning him to pay Lars what he was owed. Therefore, since the payment had not been made, the court was compelled to reiterate the county governor's verdict.⁴⁰⁷

Cases of credits and debts demonstrates that whilst some were closely tied to and depended on the burghers' financial capacity of lending money, some were not. Nevertheless, whether a peasant had debts to pay or could more freely trade with whomever he liked, being paid could be a problem that went both ways. Having a guarantor who could provide economic assistance in times when money ran scarce could be decisive. However, if that was not the case, peasants were at the mercy of the authorities who seldom took unpaid taxes lightly.

Central authorities always regarded business and trade relationships between peasants and burghers as subordinate to securing tax revenues. This is of course understandable considering that the continued existence of the state depended on its subjects' continued payment of taxes. For this reason, entering into what perhaps seemed like a promising trade agreement could prove detrimental at a time when the level of taxes increased. In October 1675, the merchant Daniel Boehmöller from Kokkola drew the peasant Hans Larsson before the court in Kruunupyy and explained that he had entered into an agreement with Hans and his companion Pär Mårtensson to construct a small cargo ship. However, the two peasants had not been able to deliver the ship at the time specified in the contract. Hans appealed to the court and Daniel Böchmöller, explaining that the reason for the delay was that the planks they had intended to use in this endeavour had been taken by the Swedish Admiralty. In face of this, they had been completely powerless. Their story was confirmed by those who were present at the court meeting, but that did not sway the court or Bailiff Albrecht Gerden who ruled in Daniel Boehmöller's favour. Hans and Pär were therefore required to deliver all the building materials needed to complete the ship, amounting to a substantial net worth of 264 copper thalers and three and a half marks.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁷ Sommar and hösting, Pyhäjoki parish, 11th, 12th and 13th of September 1699, NAF, Court Records, KO a:20, 1699–1699, act 479–480, pp. 949–950.

⁴⁰⁸ Sommaring, Kruunupyy parish, 15th, 16th and 18th of October 1675, NAF, Court Records, KO a:17, 1675–1675, act 310, p. 309.

What role, then, did credit and debt have in terms of the peasantry's ability to govern their forests? The money involved in trade agreements between peasants and burghers could be sizable. From the burgher's point of view, credit was a strategic method of establishing long-lasting relationships that could ensure steady levels of deliveries from which the burgher profited greatly. However, delayed payments and deliveries could be equally costly, which required caution in the matter of whom should be granted credit and whom to reject. From the peasant's perspective, credits could be lifesaving, whilst at the same time risky if debts amounted beyond what was possible to pay back.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the increasing exploitation of the parish forests enabled peasants to produce large quantities of tar and timber for shipbuilding. From the beginning of the century, this development gradually compelled peasant communities into communication and discussion with each other since the loosely defined borders provided a problem when forest exploitation moved closer to another community's common lands. This was a process by which villages and parishes became increasingly nested within each other, where the acts of one community had consequences for another. Nevertheless, this nestedness was dependent on the burghers' role as business partners. The growing levels of exploitation on parish forests, the recurrent conflicts and discussions concerning the location of borders, and the sharing of knowledge between peasant communities, would not have developed as it did had not burghers enabled them to make a living on forest related work, which they did by ensuring that there was someone who could buy their products. Whilst they were not always driven by the same purposes as the peasants, they were nonetheless an essential actor in the tar and timber trade, without which the growing industry would not have been the same, or perhaps even possible.

3.2 Illegal Trade

As tar and wooden products were brought to the coastal towns, they entered a realm where scrutiny and control by the authorities was possible. As the effects of *majmiseriet* grew and commerce came to be concentrated within already established trade relations, competition between burghers increased at a similar pace. Even though the growing credit market incited County Governor Per Brahe's determination to dismantle the trading system in the

1640s and 1650s, such efforts had little effect. One state institution meant to ensure that taxes were paid for the goods brought into the towns was the town customs (Swe. *lilla tullen*, lit. the small customs) located at the entrance of each town with trading privileges. After a percentage on the merchandise had been levied, the peasant could continue to the market square, or more commonly, to the burgher with whom he was in business.⁴⁰⁹

The court records contain an example of how these and other circumstances ultimately provoked the peasantry to submit a petition to County Governor Gustav Grass in 1694, explaining the unmanageable conditions they had to deal with. The issue was publicised at the court meeting in Kokkola. Even though County Governor Grass was present at the meeting and was the one who had received the petition, it was a merchant named Erasmus Björkman who spoke. The relationship between these two men, and for what reason Erasmus was the one who addressed the issues expressed in the petition, is unknown. Nevertheless, he explained that some of the peasants in the parish, although no names were mentioned, felt that they were treated unfairly in several respects when it came to trade with the town's burghers. The first issue concerned the price of tar, which the county governor had increased to four copper thalers per barrel since the 1660s. The petition read that the burghers 'with self-interest proceed as they please', disregarding the fixed price.⁴¹⁰ They were instead setting their own prices. During the last decades of the century, court records concerning unpaid debts and deliveries show that peasants most often received between two and three copper thalers per barrel.⁴¹¹

The second issue was connected to the first. It concerned the manner in which peasants were paid for their products. Towards the end of the century, it had become increasingly common that peasants were not paid for the tar that they delivered until it had been sold in Stockholm, so called 'open purchase' (Swe. *öppet köp*). This ensured that the burgher always received a profit since they could later decide to pay the peasants less than what had previously been agreed upon. This was possible since they could simply refer to changing market conditions in the capital, which sometimes left the

⁴⁰⁹ Luukko (1972), pp. 251–253; *Svenska Österbottens Historia* 3 (1980), p. 94.

⁴¹⁰ Vinterting, Kokkola and Kälviä parishes, 8th and 9th of January 1694, NAF, Court Records, KO a:15, 1694–1694, act 18, pp. 26–27. Original text: 'med sin egennyttigheet lijka fullt framfara'.

⁴¹¹ See for example Vinterting, Kruunupy parish, 17th and 18th of March 1679, NAF, Court Records, KO a:22, 1679–1679, act 49, p. 49v; Sommarting, Pyhäjoki parish, 22nd and 23rd of August 1693, NAF, Court Records, KO a:14, 1692–1692, act 143, pp. 287–288; Vinterting, Saloinen parish, 26th, 27th, 28th and 30th of January 1699, NAF, Court Records, KO a:20, 1699–1699, act 103, pp. 201–202.

peasants with no profit at all. This kind of trade arrangement was first noticed by authorities in the town of Vaasa in 1690 and was thereafter declared illegal.⁴¹² However, it spread to the northern towns as well, and it was expressed in the 1694 petition that the goods that ‘particularly indebted peasants are bringing to the burghers can never be accurately priced before it is sold in Stockholm’, which leads to situations where ‘such a long period of time passes that the burgher takes the opportunity to trade with the peasant at his own discretion.’⁴¹³

The third and last issue concerned the price on salt, a commodity that the peasants sorely needed to preserve food for longer periods of time. Seeing as peasants often bought salt with the money received from selling tar, and since the burghers were able to manipulate the price at which they were willing to buy it (sometimes as low as one and a half copper thalers per barrel), the peasants were in an even more vulnerable position if the price on salt increased. During the 1660s, the price of one barrel was 13 copper thalers, or 14 if bought on credit. By the early 1690s, the price had tripled. The burghers’ explanation for the sharp price development was the tense situation on the international market brought on by recurring wars, such as the Nine Years’ war (1688–1697), which affected the price at which they were able to buy salt in Stockholm. Furthermore, it was not uncommon that the merchants in the capital immediately raised the salt price as soon as ships from Ostrobothnia were sighted over the horizon. However, since they could not afford to leave Stockholm emptyhanded and were compelled to make a profit, it was often the Ostrobothnian peasants who took the blow.⁴¹⁴

Another enlightening example of how the burghers controlled the salt trade is found in the court records of Oulu, twelve years prior to the confrontation concerning the petition in Kokkola. At a court meeting in 1682, the county governor announced that the Crown had salt for sale. The salt had been acquired by the Crown by means of tax payments, but had no particular need of it, which was why it was up for sale. However, the gathered peasantry replied that they could not buy the salt even if they wanted to. The explanation they provided was that the only way in which they could acquire

⁴¹² Luukko (1972), pp. 217, 262–263.

⁴¹³ Vinterting, Kokkola and Kälviä parishes, 8th and 9th of January 1694, NAF, Court Records, KO a:15, 1694–1694, act 18, pp. 26–27. Original text: ‘i synnerheet dhe gjälldbundne Bönder på sitt till Borgaren tillförde gods alldrigh kan fåå någon richtigheet, innan som han det i Stockhollm förtrytat’; ‘hwaraf skeer att förmedelst een så långh tjids förlopp Borgaren taget tillfälle att handla medh Bonden efter sitt egitt behagh.’

⁴¹⁴ Luukko (1972), pp. 231–232.

money to pay for it was through credits from the burghers, and if the peasants ‘do not buy salt where money is obtained, then they do not get any credit from the burgher’.⁴¹⁵ They were, in effect, forced to buy the burghers’ salt, even if the price was high and preferable alternatives existed. The burghers could therefore set whatever price they wanted on salt as well as on tar since they were the only source of ready money that the peasantry had.

Now, back to the petition of 1694. The petition stated that the price of salt had been pushed well beyond the fixed price stipulated by the county governor. The burghers that were present at the court meeting were of the most distinguished tradesmen in the region, counting merchants Erasmus Björkman, Gabriel Brenner, Carl Mattson, Johan Larsson, Johan Simonsson, and Christopher Wikare. All of them were apparently chocked at hearing these seemingly unfounded accusations, claiming that no proof of such illegal transactions existed. They demanded that those responsible for authoring the petition should come forth and explain whom the accusations were directed at. Björkman also emphasised that if someone had been trading in this reprehensible manner, that person alone must be held accountable and not the entire group of burghers. He also added that if no satisfying evidence was presented, those making the accusations had to be severely reprimanded.⁴¹⁶

It is not known if the persons who had written the petition were present at the court meeting. However, since it was written on behalf of the peasantry in the parish, it is highly probable that some were, or at least someone who had experienced or knew about the burghers’ credit-giving strategies. In any case, it must have been an ominous and discouraging confrontation on the part of the peasantry that took place on the courtroom floor. Whilst the petition was a clear expression of the peasantry’s moral economy, that is, how they believed that several burghers had broken the norm of moral behaviour and failed to live up to the moral expectations they had of the burghers, it is understandable that no one spoke up. If any person had been singled out as the author of the petition, the potential repercussions could have been dire. Although we can only speculate, it is reasonable to suppose that any trade agreement that was once active could be called into question

⁴¹⁵ Vintering, Oulu parish, 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th of February 1682, NAF, Court Records, KO a:2, 1682–1682, act 144, p. 274. Original text: ‘at der bonden icke tager salt, der han tager penningar, så få dhe ingen credit hoos Borgaren’.

⁴¹⁶ Vintering, Kokkola and Kälviä parishes, 8th and 9th of January 1694, NAF, Court Records, KO a:15, 1694–1694, act 18, pp. 26–27.

and debts possibly called in for immediate payment. The long-lasting effects of stepping forward and claiming authorship could potentially lead to one being blacklisted, possibly leading to economic ruin. Understandably, therefore, the peasants that were present denied any knowledge of wrongdoings on the part of the burghers. The only thing anyone actually said was a member of the jury who admitted that the price of salt had indeed spiked, although that it was by no means the fault of the burghers. Consequently, since the peasantry seemed altogether content, nothing was done in the matter. The court rejected the petition as groundless and added that in the unlikely event that anyone would ‘inconsiderately hereof take the opportunity to make any insult towards the merchants, then it shall be legally possible for them to do so.’⁴¹⁷ However, that it would remain legally possible for the peasants to make their potential grievances public was most certainly a minor consolation in this context.

That illegal trade occurred in the trading towns in North Ostrobothnia is undisputable. As a reaction to the evolving dominance of certain burgher families in the region, previous research has shown how an increasing number of small-scale trading burghers ventured outside the town gates to meet peasants who were on their way to the market (or their patron burgher) to strike a deal before the merchandise fell into the hands of the rich burgher families. However, this was not only practiced by the less wealthy burghers, but by rich and poor alike. Given the influence of certain families, those trading on a smaller scale were even reported by their wealthier counterparts to have traded on the countryside and were subsequently fined. The deals struck between peasants and burghers could even result in quite violent brawls between burghers in their competition to acquire the peasantry’s products, which indeed shows that there was no universal unity to speak of between the Ostrobothnian burghers in these matters.⁴¹⁸

This exercise of influence and corruption was also a feature among members of the local authorities and the clergy as there are numerous accounts of how such persons were trading on the countryside against regulations stipulated by the governor.⁴¹⁹ The unwieldy and slow-working tax system often made it possible for bailiffs to even engage in private

⁴¹⁷ Vinterting, Kokkola and Kälviä parishes, 8th and 9th of January 1694, NAF, Court Records, KO a:15, 1694–1694, act 18, pp. 26–27. Original text: ‘obetänkt häraf taga tillfälle medh något skympfeligit att angriipa meerbem:t handelsmän, dåå skall detta ståå dem öppet medh honom lagl. att uthföra.’

⁴¹⁸ Mickwitz & Möller (1951), p. 86; Virrankoski (1973), p. 391.

⁴¹⁹ Virrankoski (1973), p. 394.

business with state funds. Unlike the opposition felt among the burghers in matters of trade outside the town gates, they stood firmly united against the trade practiced by these state officials and clergymen as it infringed on the burghers' privileges.⁴²⁰ In May 1674, the regulations stipulated by County Governor Johan Graan in April in 1672 was read aloud at the court meeting in Kokkola, forbidding priests and burghers alike to trade outside the town gates. At the same time, Bailiff Christian Willingshusen was charged with unlawful trade in tar, timber, and other wooden produce on the countryside. The outcome of the case was that the merchandise was confiscated, and he was verbally reprimanded for his behaviour.⁴²¹ In other words, what defined illegal trade was determined in relation to the person who was trading and his group affiliation.

What becomes increasingly evident is that even though large parts of the peasantry could make a living based on the burghers' credits and utilisation of their trading contacts and networks, some were also at the mercy of the burghers' influential position in matters of commerce. However, one reason for the peasantry's ability to still make a living from tar production was because of the seasonality of the production process. As explained by Villstrand, the sometimes 'impossible prices' at which peasants had to sell their tar was made possible due to the peasants' relation to the rhythm of nature. The winter was a time of inactivity compared to the summer. As such, eight out of ten day's work in tar production could be carried out during the winter season when there were less tasks related to cattle-raising and agriculture that had to be carried out.⁴²² That is not to say that central authorities approved of everything that the burghers did, nor that all peasants were indebted. Nevertheless, given the authorities incapacity of fully regulating trade according to their wishes, burghers were able to influence the terms of trade in a way that was not always beneficial to the peasants. As such, burghers both had an enabling and sometimes aggravating impact on the peasantry's ability to achieve economic sustainability, that is, to ensure the future existence of their households.

⁴²⁰ Mickwitz & Möller (1951), pp. 87–88.

⁴²¹ Vinterting, Kokkola parish, 4th and 5th of May 1674, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 562, pp. 554–554v, act 606, 597v–598.

⁴²² Villstrand (1992a), pp. 234–235.

3.3 Supplying Towns with Firewood

Towns were dependent on their surroundings. The flow of resources to the towns determined how many people could live in them, as did the extent of commerce that could be exercised. The wooden products that burghers bought was not only tar or timber for shipbuilding. Neither were the deliveries purely commercial. A substantial part of what the peasantry delivered was firewood, a resource that none could do without. Not much is known about how the growing towns of the seventeenth century were supplied with firewood. Whilst the Swedish capital Stockholm surpassed the Ostrobothnian towns manyfold in terms of population size, the towns of Kokkola, Oulu, and Raahe consisted of 400–500 households each at the middle of the century.⁴²³ The towns grew in size throughout the century, and as such, so did the number of burgher households, which meant that the amount of firewood needed for heating also increased. Furthermore, it was not only the burghers who required regular deliveries of firewood. The castle in Kaajani (Fi. *Kajaanin linna*) and Oulu castle (Fi. *Oulun linna*), which both began construction in the 1590s and early 1600s, had to be kept warm and functioning throughout the whole year.

It has already been explained that burghers often went outside the custom gates to make illegal deals with peasants, thus ensuring some level of economic stability by avoiding competition within the town. To escape the customs duty, it was not uncommon that burghers stored the merchandise they had bought outside the town and later brought it in by sea through the harbour.⁴²⁴ These trade arrangements and strategies were of course strictly forbidden, although there was not much authorities could do to counteract it all. However, far from all trade that transpired between peasants and burghers was illegal. When trade operated as intended, deliveries and transport from the countryside to the town was important. In the case of firewood, the responsibility of transport could be negotiated between the trading parties. This was also the custom in other regions farther to the south. For example, In the parish of Mustasaari, burghers in the town of Vaasa had entered into an agreement with the peasantry in 1586 that lasted until 1671 where the peasantry felled and cut the firewood for the wealthy burghers, whilst the less wealthy did the cutting themselves. The transport of the

⁴²³ Mickwitz & Möller (1951), pp. 20–23; Ranta (1987), pp. 50–52.

⁴²⁴ Luukko (1972), pp. 270–271.

firewood to the town was then carried out by rich and poor alike.⁴²⁵ Similarly, as is illustrated by an example from the northern parish of Saloinen in 1687, it was announced that the peasants should cut the firewood at the behest of the burghers, for which they should be fairly paid. The peasants could then choose whether they wanted to transport the firewood to the town or if the burghers had to retrieve it themselves, as it was expressed in the court records: ‘and if the peasant does not comply with bringing firewood and timber to the town square, then the burgher is compelled to travel out into the country himself and seek his needs and firewood.’⁴²⁶

A further example illustrating this is a complaint expressed by laymen Johan Kainu and Erik Kongsila in 1674. They claimed that Bailiff Christian Willingshusen had prevented the peasants of Kruunupyy to transport their firewood to the town square. The reason why he had done so is not explicit in the court records other than that he wanted to carry out some form of examination concerning these matters. The peasantry nevertheless replied that they knew nothing about such hindrances and that the burghers ‘most often pay to have the wood brought to the [town] square’.⁴²⁷ In 1682, Magistrate (Swe. *Rådman*) Christian Kröger expressed a concern that when burghers from Kokkola went ‘to a forest on a peasant’s property where he acquires firewood for his needs, peasants are preventing them from retrieving as much firewood as they need’. He therefore suggested that the peasants should transport the firewood to Kokkola so that they no longer would find themselves in this situation.⁴²⁸ However, even when deliveries were made at an interval that suited the burghers, the deliveries were sometimes considered too small, and the peasants could demand a much higher price for the firewood than was otherwise custom. For instance, burghers in Oulu presented the court with a complaint in 1682, claiming that they had ‘not been able to get as much firewood as they needed’. Furthermore, he explained that when the peasants reached the town square, they charged 16 silver coins for one fathom of birch wood and five marks for pine. Considering that the estimated

⁴²⁵ Luukko (1972), p. 360.

⁴²⁶ Vintering, Saloinen parish, 5th of March 1687, NAF, Court Records, KO a:7, 1687–1687, act 107–108, pp. 199–200. Original text: ‘och will bonden ej sådant efterkomma, och föra wedh och timber till stadh, och Torg, ähr Bårgaren nödhtwungen sielf reesa uth på bygden och söckia sitt Tarf och brandhwedh.’

⁴²⁷ Hösting, Kokkola Barony, 26th and 27th of August 1674, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 609, pp. 600v–601. Original text: ‘esomoftast betalt föra wedh till Torgs’.

⁴²⁸ Vintering, Kokkola and Kälviä parishes, 11th, 12th and 13th of January 1682, NAF, Court Records, KO a:2, 1682–1682, act 24–25, pp. 35–36. Original text: ‘till skog på någons bondes ägor hwarest han sigh betingat wedh till sina behoof, blifwa dhe aff andre bönder förhindrade, at dhe inte fåå så myckie wedh hempta, som dhe till sin nödtorfligheet bruka kunna’.

price on one fathom of firewood in 1695 was four silver coins, the price that the peasants demanded was indeed high.⁴²⁹

In short, there was no compulsion on the part of the peasants to transport the firewood they sold to the burghers. Since it was the peasantry who decided whether they wanted to transport the wood or not, they could utilise this position and exercise influence over their trade relations with the burghers. As demonstrated above, they could choose not to transport it at all and prevent the burghers from doing it themselves, but also reduce the frequency of deliveries or simply request an unseemly high price for the wood. This became a serious concern for the burghers at time when they were ordered to deliver firewood to Stockholm, which happened at regular intervals.⁴³⁰

The relationship between the peasantry and burghers was double-sided. On the one hand, burghers were at times able to dictate the terms of trade as they pleased, which included coercing peasants into buying their products at a price much higher than that set by the county governor. On the other hand, whilst the burghers could manipulate the price on tar and salt through open purchases and credit-giving strategies, the peasantry's deliveries of firewood were nonetheless crucial to them, so much that it gave the peasants a countermove. By slowing down deliveries and increasing the price at which they were willing to sell firewood, peasants were given a hold on the burghers. When observed through the lens of moral economy, it can be seen as an act of protest and an expression of what the peasants believed was morally justifiable and tolerable, and consequently what was not. The burghers' methods of maximising economic profit through credit lending and market manipulation, which could put the peasants' economic security at risk, generated a response by the peasants that reflected their perception of morally justifiable behaviour. Perhaps naturally, therefore, peasants used the methods they had at their disposal in order to balance the scale of power between them. However, this hold pushed burghers to take matters into their own hands by venturing out into the forests and acquiring the resources they needed but did not want to pay for or could not acquire by other means. Such matters and consequential conflicts will be analysed below.

⁴²⁹ Vintering, Oulu parish, 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th of February 1682, NAF, Court Records, KO a:2, 1682–1682, act 144, p. 274. Original text: 'icke Kunna bekomma så myckin wedh, som dhe behöfwä'.

⁴³⁰ In 1698, for example, 14 000 fathoms of firewood were to be delivered to the capital, which was complicated by the fact that the peasantry hindered the burghers from exporting it by keeping it to themselves, Mickwitz & Möller (1951), p. 95.

3.4 Burghers in the Forest

The complex network of relationships between peasant households in Northern Ostrobothnia, and the responsibilities they had towards the Crown, burghers, and neighbours was important in order to promote reciprocity and maintain respect within the community. These relations were also important in the effort of making well-founded prioritisations that enabled peasant communities to achieve sustainable balance. However, at each step of the process, from harvesting pine trees and distilling at the tar pit, to the selling of the merchandise to the burghers and finally paying the king's taxes, there were rules to adhere to and operational situations where the peasants' actions affected the outcome of the entire enterprise. That said, it is not suggested that peasants lived and altogether fragile existence since it would only promote a perception of the peasantry as weak and degrade their ability to shape their own lives. Nevertheless, it could at time be a challenging one to the extent that obstacles did exist in the form of a socially and economically superior counterpart in matters of commerce. Adding to that the recurrent infringements on the parish forests of for example Kruunupyy and Kokkola, there were many aspects of a peasant's life that had to be weighed and balanced to preserve a stable governance regime, which was facilitated if done collectively. However, this whole process of deciding the extent of resources each peasant was allowed to appropriate from the forest common, who to sell to, and how taxes were to be paid, was not eased when burghers began to appropriate forest resources from the peasantry's forests.

3.4.1 A Peasant Domain

Ideas passed down from feudal society, which were still very prominent in seventeenth century Europe, dictated that there were those who prayed, those who fought, and those who produced. In the Swedish Kingdom, the latter of these responsibilities was bestowed upon the peasantry, whilst the burghers traded that which the peasantry produced. Early modern society was in this way a society of orders and estates where everyone had different responsibilities and socioeconomic functions to perform. Deviations from this arrangement caused disorder.⁴³¹ These functions also created physical divisions in that burghers were supposed to live and work in towns and peasants on the countryside. Burghers were of course allowed to physically

⁴³¹ DUBY (1980); STADIN (2004), pp. 21–23; ALM (2016), pp. 45–46.

visit and travel in rural areas, but they were not supposed to engage in any form of trade there, nor were they allowed to arbitrarily appropriate resources from the forest themselves. The forest was a domain set aside for the peasants to roam and care for.

The towns in North Ostrobothnia had their own outlying lands from which burghers were intended to appropriate the resources they needed. Nevertheless, as more people came to populate the towns and as commerce intensified, the peasantry's forest commons soon fell into view. Deals between peasants and burghers were sometimes made. As explained by Pehr Kalm in 1754 (perhaps primarily known as one of Carl von Linnæus' apostles), the town of Kokkola entered into an agreement with the peasants of the parish in 1662, giving them permission to cut firewood in the forest in exchange of letting the peasants use the town's fishing waters.⁴³² Yet, not all towns had such deals with the peasantry, and even though agreements were made, they could be and were sometimes violated.

Between the years 1647 and 1699, a total of 24 court cases concerning burgher infringements are found in the court records, which is approximately one every other year. Most infringements were committed around the towns of Kokkola and Oulu. As have been pointed out earlier in this thesis, the right to use that which the peasantry owned in common could not be transferred to any outside person without the village or parish community's permission. It is no surprise, therefore, that the peasantry and local courts were quick to cite legal codes that made such transgressions illegal whenever burghers trespassed on the forest commons.

All conflicts of forest cutting committed by burghers were carried by the view that burghers were simply not supposed to engage in any form of industry that disturbed that of the peasantry. They were supposed to keep to the towns so that the peasants 'may enjoy their forest undisturbed and in peace'.⁴³³ Any activity that opposed this was a disturbance that affected the peasantry's daily work by, for example, having to physically prevent burghers from appropriating forest resources and by the legal proceedings that often ensued. Furthermore, it also threatened to diminish the ecological sustainability of the forests. These disturbances could be very frequent in particular areas, as is exemplified by a conflict from 1658 in Kokkola when

⁴³² Kalm (1754), p. 7. See also Tegengren (1941), pp. 198–199.

⁴³³ Vinterting, Kokkola and Kälviä parishes, 11th, 12th and 13th of January 1682, NAF, Court Records, KO a:2, 1682–1682, act 24–25, pp. 35–36. Original text: 'dhe sin skogh må orubbat och i fredh niuta'.

a nearby village made a complaint claiming that ‘the burghers of Kokkola with woodcutting daily inflict on them great intrusion’.⁴³⁴ The extent of the burghers’ forest cutting could be so severe that members of the local community feared that their forest would soon be completely cut down. Located at the outlet of the town Oulu, the peasantry on the island Hailuoto complained to the court stating that the burghers were:

annually causing great intrusion and detriment to their taxed property by timber cutting and other things, whereby the forest becomes completely extinct, and should any unforeseen event occur, [for example] by wildfire, they would henceforth not have any timber forest left, but instead have to seek forest in other parishes against compensation.⁴³⁵

Such continuous infringements occurred in Kokkola parish as well. Burghers were not only violating sanctions put in place to protect the forests of their own parish, but they were also appropriating resources from the forests of their neighbouring parish Kruunupyy to the south. This was acknowledged on the 9th of July 1661 when the peasantry of Kruunupyy explained to the court how the burghers had been cutting wood over the parish border, despite several previous rulings outlawing such activities.⁴³⁶ However, by 1671, the burghers had submitted an official complaint to King Karl XI in September the year before. It concerned their ability to appropriate wood on the peasants’ forest, which had been forwarded to the office of County Governor Johan Graan. Nevertheless, repeated bans and fines for illegal forest cutting had been issued by the local court since 1658, although burghers had continuously disregarded them. They had furthermore refrained from paying the fines, which warranted the involvement of the county governor at the court meeting in March 1671. Graan did not hold any sentiment for the complaints presented to the king. Instead, he strictly

⁴³⁴ Vinterting, Kokkola parish, 20th of February 1658, NAF, Court Records, KO a:10, 1657–1658, act 425–426, pp. 414–414v. Original text: ‘Borgerskapet uti G: Carleby dhet dhe medh wedhygge dageligen dem tillfogor stort intrångh’.

⁴³⁵ Sommarting, Hailuoto parish, 22nd of July 1658, NAF, Court Records, KO a:10, 1657–1658, act 439, p. 428. Original text: ‘åhrlighen tillfoga dhem stoort inpass och förfångh, på dheras skatte ägor medh Timberhuggande och annat, hwarigiönöm skogen bliffr uthöddh, och deer någon oförmodeligen hendelse kunde infalla; igiönöm wädheldh, skulle dhe framdeeles inet weta sigh någon Timberskogh, att tillgå, uthan omhålla hoos andra sochnar om skogh för legha’.

⁴³⁶ Sommarting, Kruunupyy parish, 9th of July 1661, NAF, Court Records, KO a:11, 1661–1666, act 98–99, pp. 100–100v.

outlawed all attempts of town dwelling people to acquire resources on the peasants' forests and ratified the local court's previously enacted fine of 40 marks if not obeyed.⁴³⁷

Burghers disobeying the local court's prohibitions was not unusual, but the fact that they were able to default on paying the fines is somewhat surprising. For one thing, it demonstrates the subordinate position that the peasantry, and to some degree the position of the local court, in relation to the burghers in these matters. But it also shows how important the assistance of the county governor could be as the verdicts of the court were not always taken seriously until it had been reinforced by his judgement.⁴³⁸ Another case from Ii parish in 1686 similarly demonstrates how the peasantry's right to their forests was supported by the county governor. The peasant Hans Jacobsson complained to the court that the burghers of Oulu had committed 'great infringements and excess upon their forest with cutting of timber and ship planks, without anyone's permission'. The burghers could not deny that they had indeed been cutting wood in the forest but claimed that they did not know of any prohibitions being issued. However, this was easily disproved since County Governor Didrik Wrangel af Adinal had gone to the town court in Oulu and there strictly reprimanded all burghers 'to not wrong the peasantry in their forests'.⁴³⁹

Many of the burghers who came to populate the towns of North Ostrobothnia had come from overseas, but they also came from other parts of Finland. Pentti Virrankoski has argued that one reason that could possibly explain the high frequency of infringements on the peasantry's commons was that many of the smaller burgher families were in fact descendants of the Finnish peasantry. In that capacity, therefore, they claimed to have access by virtue of inherited right.⁴⁴⁰ Nevertheless, even though their ancestors might once have been peasants themselves, this was not recognised by the peasantry as a legitimate claim, nor by the county governor's administration.

Another approach of motivating their intrusions was to refer to the town privileges given to them by the king. This strategy was used by the burgher Lars Gallenius of Oulu in 1692 when he accused the peasant Henrik Koskela

⁴³⁷ Vintering, Kokkola parish, 27th and 28th of March 1671, NAF, Court Records, KO a:12, 1667–1671, act 718–719, pp. 714–714v.

⁴³⁸ See Mansbridge (2013).

⁴³⁹ Vintering, Ii parish, 15th, 16th and 17th of February 1686, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1686–1686, act 71, p. 77. Original text: 'stoor intrång och öfwerträtt på deras skogh medh timber wedh och skuts werks huggande, utan någons låf'; 'ejj skolla oförretta allmogen uti deras'.

⁴⁴⁰ Virrankoski (1973), p. 263.

of having confiscated eight fathoms of firewood that Lars had cut in the forest. His accusations concurrently gave the peasantry an opportunity to complain over the burghers' profuse cutting activities in their forests. Gallenius provided the court with a copy of a resolution written by King Gustav II Adolf in 1620 in which the town and its dwellers' privileges were specified. He claimed that it gave him and all burghers the right to cut firewood in the forests outside of the town. However, the document only stated that the privileges they enjoyed were not to be diminished, but nothing was stipulated that could be translated into giving them the right to encroach on the peasants' forests. The burghers were therefore forbidden from continuing to appropriate firewood and any other kind of forest resource with serious penalties if it ever happened again. However, Gallenius was free to try his case again if he could provide any legal document supporting his claim, which he was not able to do.⁴⁴¹

Burgher infringements on the peasantry's forests must be regarded as an inhibitory element in the effort of achieving sustainable balance. The production chain of peasants producing and burghers buying and selling was set out of balance by such occurrences. Inevitably, therefore, the process of making prioritisations aimed at achieving ecological, institutional, and economic sustainability was made more difficult. However, this development also demonstrates how the county governor could be essential in this effort. The peasantry's fundamental right to their forest commons was protected by the highest authority in the region. In relation to Mansbridge's discussion on polycentric systems, it is here evident how the nestedness of peasant communities was at times reliant on the presence of an external authority who respected and defended their rights and was prepared to punish those who violated against them. However, to further facilitate this, cooperative efforts between community members were paramount.

3.4.2 Collective Protection Efforts

Collective actions of protecting the commonly owned forest were of a very high priority. The benefits of working together and keeping the forest free from infringements committed by other peasants has been outlined in the previous chapter. However, disputes over the location of village and parish borders, establishing rules, and estimating the physical area and extent of

⁴⁴¹ Vinterting, Oulu and Hailuoto parishes, 11th, 12th and 13th of February 1692, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1692–1692, act 111–112, pp. 205–206.

each landholder's part in a certain forest were of a more complex and problematic nature than establishing that burghers were excluded from this altogether. Burgher infringements were met with total resistance since it was an issue without ambiguities. It was nevertheless a source of irritation that complicated the peasants' existence. The issue at hand thus became the physical protection of the forest. Every landholder in the community was expected to do his or her utmost in making sure that the burghers did not, as it was perceived, rob them of their livelihood. If someone chose not to do so by, for example, privately leasing out parts of the forest without the community's consent, penalties of some sort were a matter of course.

Other ways of protecting the forest could also be done by making sure that wrongdoers were properly prosecuted. Legal proceedings did not entail any fees in the sense that the involved parties were eligible to pay to have their grievances heard. The local courts were instituted to serve and help people in their daily lives. However, when a matter had to be brought to another court, such as the town court, certain expenses sometimes had to be made. If expenses of any kind had to be made in the effort of protecting the forest common from intruders, it was only natural that all members of the community should contribute. In a well-functioning peasant governance regime, therefore, there should be pre-existing incentives not to shirk from the common goal of making sure that the benefits derived from the system accrued to all members, that is, *utility*.⁴⁴² A particularly suitable example that demonstrates how peasants actively discussed such issues is found in the court records of Ii parish. In 1689, the peasant Jöran Jöransson Similä accused four burghers of illegal forest cutting on the forest common of Kello. Whilst the court recognised the act as illegal, Jöran was referred to the town court because they 'as burghers should be prosecuted by the legal remedy of the town court'. That the matter was referred to the town court is unusual as most cases of this nature was dealt with and resolved by the local court. Exactly what expenses this required is similarly unclear. Nevertheless, Jöran was ready to cover the legal fees, which 'the entire village had to repay' and 'the peasant who does not want to be unanimous in protecting the forest from illegal forest cutting shall be given a fine of 40 silver marks', to which all

⁴⁴² de Moor (2015).

agreed.⁴⁴³ As such, whilst collective action was important, so was collective responsibility.

3.4.3 Taking of the Axe

Whilst state officials such as the county governor was important in the sense that he and his office had legal authority to punish and issue fines for burghers who illegally trespassed on the peasantry's commons, preventing burghers from appropriating resources from the forests was a task peasants had to carry out themselves. As such, it was important that they had legal means through which they were able to prosecute wrongdoers, for example by emphasising the legal authority of the local courts and peasants' right to voice their concerns freely and without restraint. As demonstrated above, there is at least one example of burghers being able to avoid fines that had been issued by the local court. However, since it was impossible for the county governor to always attend court sessions and protect the peasants' inviolable right to their forests, they had to be able to act fast and resolutely when violations were detected. This was fundamental in order to diminish negative external influence on the peasantry's ability to achieve sustainable balance.

The first case of burghers infringing on a forest common is found in the court records of Oulu in 1647. The conflict stood between the town's burghers and the peasantry of the parish who claimed that the townspeople were causing 'damage to their forest and outlying lands with timber and woodcutting, without the permission or memory of the village and landowners'.⁴⁴⁴ However, these activities had been going on for some time and Virrankoski has shown how a formal complaint had been written and presented to Queen Kristina at the Diet of 1646. The queen had later called upon County Governor Erik Åkesson Soop to prosecute any town dwelling person who engaged in these illegal activities.⁴⁴⁵ If the county governor took any immediate measures to prevent the burghers from infringing on the peasantry's forests is unknown, but he nonetheless acted as the peasantry

⁴⁴³ Vintering, Ii parish, 15th, 16th, 18th and 19th of February 1689, NAF, Court Records, KO a:9, 1689–1689, act 109, pp. 186–187. Original text: 'som Borgare bör vara stembde af stadsretts medell'; 'böör hehla byn wedergella'; 'den bonden som ey will vara herutinnan ehnhellig till att förswara otilbörlige skog hugga skall vara fallen till 40 marker Smt'.

⁴⁴⁴ Sommaring, Oulu parish, 20th and 21st of July 1647, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1645–1649, act 261, p. 251v. Original text: 'dee tillfoga dem någon skadha på deras Skogh och Utmarck medh Timber och wedhahuggande, uthan byssens och Jordhägnaandernas loff och minne'.

⁴⁴⁵ Virrankoski (1973), p. 264.

voiced their concerns in 1647. Being present at the court meeting, County Governor Soop proclaimed that a penalty would be put on any burgher who decided to cut wood in the peasantry's forests notwithstanding the queen's directives. He also added that if the peasants ever caught a burgher red-handed, 'then they have the right to take from him his axe and clothes for identification'.⁴⁴⁶

Having permission by the county governor to take the burgher's axe certainly prevented him from continuing to cut wood illegally in the forest. Furthermore, it can be argued that it had a symbolic meaning in that the means of acquiring forest resources was effectively stripped from the burgher. In this way, it was a demonstration of power by which the peasantry was able to establish authority, but also on the part of the state who sanctioned the confiscation of the burgher's axe. Adding to that the right to physically take or rip loose a piece of clothing off the perpetrator's body was likewise an act of demonstrating authority through ownership.

The court records contain several cases where this kind of manhandling is described. In Saloinen parish in 1690, the merchant Anders Thomasson approached the court and accused four peasants of having attacked his farmhands on the common road and taken from them the wood that they were transporting. The peasants met the accusations by claiming that the firewood had been cut on their land, and in doing so, they had also caused damage to their meadows. Anders Thomasson did not say whether his employees had cut the wood themselves, which would have been illegal, or if they had bought it from someone. Therefore, and because none of the contending parties could provide any witnesses, the court issued an inspection to be carried out in hope of resolving the matter.⁴⁴⁷ The end result of the inspection is not found in the court records, but the court case does make it clear that if the wood had been cut on the peasants' forest, the violent treatment that befell Anders Thomasson's farmhands was by all things considered endorsed by the court.

The taking of the axe could be a sufficient act that hindered burghers from illegally appropriating forest resources since continued forest cutting became impossible, at least for the moment. This legal right instituted by the county governor thus facilitated the peasantry in their efforts of

⁴⁴⁶ Sommarting, Oulu parish, 20th and 21st of July 1647, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1645–1649, act 261, p. 251v. Original text: 'då hafwa dee macht att tagha af honom yxa och klädhe till warteckn'.

⁴⁴⁷ Sommarting, Saloinen parish, 1st, 2nd and 3rd of September 1690, NAF, Court Records, KO a:10, 1690–1690, act 71, p. 130.

achieving sustainable balance. However, in some cases, more violent measures of protecting the forest from burgher infringements occurred; cases where violence and physical assault were deemed necessary.

3.4.4 Let Violence Rule Violence

The need to formalise and establish the location of borders separating village and parish communities, and consequently who had access to what forest common, became increasingly important for peasant communities. It facilitated the exclusion of outside groups from exploiting and potentially exhausting the forests of resources, a process in which state officials sometimes played an important role. Yet, the court records hardly contain any cases where violence and physical injuries became the result of peasants protecting their forest commons from each other. It was an entirely different matter when burghers were committing illegal forest exploitation. The forest was not only a domain where peasants roamed. Their relationship to their woodlands was deeply symbolic and represented a complex set of social structures and traditions to which burghers were categorically excluded.

The sanctioned use of violence to fend off burgher infringements was an important statement that solidified the peasantry's claim and exclusive right to extract resources from their forest commons. Violent means of protecting one's lands can be noticed in local communities in other parts of the world as well. In Qing China during the early modern period, armed conflicts occurred as border infringements were made on forested 'public mountains' (*gong shan*).⁴⁴⁸ Another example is found in the northern part of the canton of Uri in Switzerland where conflicts between local users and the monastery of Engelberg resulted in theft of cattle and subsequent animal slaughter. According to Rahel Wunderli, such violent responses must be understood as acts of political symbolism that 'could improve the reputation and increase the influence of a group.' Furthermore, such events could also have impact on future legal proceedings and thus influence the judicial response of the local court.⁴⁴⁹ The fact that local authorities rigorously supported the peasants in their right to use the forests without being troubled by burgher infringements points to modes of interaction that have been pointed out as important in earlier research as well. For example, in the Campine area in the medieval low countries, using violence to protect common lands were acts

⁴⁴⁸ Aihara (2019).

⁴⁴⁹ Wunderli (2021), pp. 71–72.

that carried symbolic meaning and were sanctioned by local courts.⁴⁵⁰ In Switzerland, François-Xavier Viallon and Stéphane Nahrath have emphasised that commons that are still around today would not have existed without assistance from the state. Whilst the number of present-day commons in Sweden and Finland are not nearly as numerous as in Switzerland, their argument that the state was crucial when rivalries with external groups occurred reflects that of North Ostrobothnia during the seventeenth century. In that sense, ‘the conflict resolution mechanisms defined by the state and the rule of law to resolve them’ is an important subject to analyse if one is to understand the complexities of how communal property was governed and protected against outside infringements.⁴⁵¹

It has thus far been demonstrated how the peasantry’s efforts of protecting their forests could take such proportions that a burgher, or his employees, could be attacked if caught appropriating forest resources illegally. The taking of the axe was an effective way of preventing further unlawful forest exploitation to be committed. However, peasants were legally permitted to resort to far more severe methods of protection, which most likely also had the intent of deterring other burghers from doing the same thing. This becomes evident from the outcome of a legal case from 1673 in Kruunupyy parish. It transpired at the same court meeting as when the parish border between Kruunupyy and Kokkola was discussed. After having concluded that the suggested border should be accepted, Bailiff Christian Willingshusen made an appearance. He approached the court and explained how the burghers of Kokkola had been present at the border inspection, but that they had without cause left the inspection party. Since the examination not only concerned the delineation between the parishes but between the town and the peasants’ property as well, this was construed as an attempt by the townspeople to intentionally avoid being present when the different parts of the border were drafted. In this way, if the burghers would thereafter venture out into the forest for the purpose of appropriating forest resources, they would be able to plea innocence since they did not know where the border was located. Willingshusen found this to be completely unacceptable, which had prompted the townspeople of Kokkola to provide the court with an official letter of apology. Nevertheless, Willingshusen insisted that they should be given a copy of the document specifying the border to prevent

⁴⁵⁰ De Keyzer (2018), p. 101.

⁴⁵¹ Viallon & Nahrath (2021), pp. 40–41.

them from employing their deceitful strategy. Furthermore, he proclaimed that a penalty of 40 marks should be put on any townsperson who thereafter inflicted any damage on the peasantry's forest. The verdict was supported by a previous ruling by County Governor Johan Graan on the 20th of June 1671 sanctioning the practice that 'when a burgher enters the peasant's forest and fishing waters, then let violence rule violence.'⁴⁵²

The last section of Willingshusen's speech is indicative of the length to which peasants were allowed to go in order to protect their forests, but also the way in which forest resources were supposed to be extracted and forests governed. The means by which they were permitted to counteract unlawful forest cutting were extraordinarily comprehensive, even to the extent of seriously wounding the perpetrator. A particularly violent case is found in the court records of Oulu in 1699 when a group of peasants went to such extreme lengths in protecting their forest. The matter stood between the merchant Johan Sigfredsson Bonelius and Lars Muikus' wife Barbro Carlsdotter. Bonelius explained to the court how Barbro, together with the people of her household, had come 'from the forest and attacked them with cuts and blows, taking from them an axe and two loads of wood, as well as their riding gear and torn apart their clothes'. Barbro had then taken her counting knife and 'stabbed the horse through its snout so that he has become completely ruined', for which Bonelius wanted her to stand accountable, seeing as it was, according to him, a gross and excessive use of violence.⁴⁵³

A man who stood beside the horse as it was stabbed spoke on Barbro's behalf, claiming that Bonelius and his men had been cutting wood in their forest without permission, which consequently warranted the punishment that was given. Bonelius replied that he had every right to cut wood in the forest since he had been given permission to do so by the regimental scribe (Swe. *regementsskrivare*) Count Brenner. In his capacity as a military official, he had assigned a military homestead to Bonelius. Therefore, Bonelius believed himself to be entitled to 'use the forest with the others in the village community'. To gain more clarity in the matter, the court called on two farmhands in the employ of the chaplain Hans Forbus. They had been

⁴⁵² Vinterting, Kokkola parish, 15th and 16th of December 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 516–517, pp. 508–508v. Original text: 'enär borgarne trädha in på bondens skogh, och fiskewathn, då till låthes wäldh medh wäldh styra.'

⁴⁵³ Vinterting, Oulu and Hailuoto parishes, 20th, 21st, 22nd and 23rd of February 1699, NAF, Court Records, KO a:20, 1699–1699, act 236, p. 464. Original text: 'ifrån skogen öfwerfallit dem med hugg och slag, afhändande ifrån dem een yxa och 2 lass weed, samt sönderlagit dess äketygh och sönderyfwit deras kläder': 'genom nääsborn stungit, så att han alldeles ähr blefwen fördärfwad'.

nearby when the attack took place and said that it was Barbro who had caused the wagon of wood to fall over. She had apparently also used the axe to cut the riding gear into pieces, although they were unable to say whether it was Barbro who stabbed the horse. Nevertheless, they claimed to have heard one of the women, 'who in droves came from the homestead', calling out 'God bless the vicar's farmhand who lent me this knife'. The evidence against Barbro Carlsdotter was deemed overwhelming and the court issued a fine of 40 silver marks for the damage she had caused. However, the court made the ruling with a reservation, namely, that her actions were only unjustified 'so far as he also owns a homestead'.⁴⁵⁴ Consequently, therefore, if Bonelius did not own the homestead as he claimed, Barbro's actions would have been compliant with County Governor Graan's instruction that violence should rule violence.

The court records do not provide an answer to whether Bonelius actually owned the homestead or not. Nevertheless, there are several points to be made in regard to this quite violent case. First, it is evident how vital it was that any person who engaged in forest cutting, or appropriated forest resources of any kind, had to be a member of the village community and have use-rights by virtue of being a landowner. A second point can be made regarding gender and the responsibility of protecting the property of the peasant household and that of the village. Even though the peasant household was led by the married couple who assisted each other in performing different tasks and responsibilities, it was the husband who was the head of the family. It was usually the husband who represented the household at court, and even though women could attend themselves, they were usually represented by a male. Barbro's husband Lars was not present at the court proceedings and had not (as far as the court records specifies) participated in the assault on Bonelius and his people. Instead, the man who had stood beside the horse as it was stabbed spoke on her behalf. Lars had therefore played a remarkably absent role in this whole course of events.⁴⁵⁵ Notwithstanding the reason why he did not appear, it can be determined that the protection of the household's property, and that of the village, was a duty

⁴⁵⁴ Vinterting, Oulu and Hailuoto parishes, 20th, 21st, 22nd and 23rd of February 1699, NAF, Court Records, KO a:20, 1699–1699, act 236–237, pp. 464–465. Original text: 'samfält borde nyttia skogen med dhe andra af Byalaget'; 'som hoopetals uhr gården kommit'; 'Gud signe Prästegårdsdrängen som låhnte mig Knijfwen'; 'så wjijda han äfwen besittia ett hemman'.

⁴⁵⁵ It could of course be that Barbro's husband was dead at the time, which would have made her the sole head of the household. However, this was almost always specified in the court records, which it is not in this case.

shared by all male and female members of the household and village, even if bloodshed was needed.

The third point again concerns land ownership. If taken for granted that Bonelius did in fact own a homestead, which was either given to him or bought from Count Brenner, the right to appropriate resources from the forest common should still have been a legally disputed matter. This becomes evident by examining a court case that took place in Oulu 18 years before Barbro and her people's effort to protect the forest from Bonelius occurred. It concerned a violation that the burgher Erik Matsson had committed by cutting 42 dozen planks in the parish forest. Erik claimed that he had been given permission to do so by a man named Erik Grelsson who was not present at the court proceedings. This was of less concern for the members of the court who replied that such permission could not be given by any single person, but only by the consent of the whole parish community. He thus faced certain conviction for his illegal forest cutting, but the court chose to show compassion considering the hard times that had recently befallen the burgher. It was also recognised that he owned a homestead in the parish and that his taxes had been properly paid. Furthermore, he had rendered the parish certain services in recent times by aiding and housing the king's soldiers, for which 'he should not so carefully be liable to pay'. For these reasons, he was allowed to keep the 42 dozen planks. However, they also issued a warning, stipulating that if 'any burgher would henceforth cut on the peasants' forest or common, regardless by whose name it is allowed, and even though he owns a homestead, he shall not be allowed to cut and produce more than the taxable capacity nor without consent and permission from the entire community'.⁴⁵⁶

If we again return to the case against Barbro Carlsdotter, the court should not have ruled in favour of the burgher Bonelius since the peasant community did not allow him to appropriate resources from the forest common, even if he owned a homestead. The only explanation as to why the court in 1699 (with reservation) ruled in favour of Bonelius is that these rules had changed, or that the power and influence of Brenner's office outdid that of the peasant community. However, given the firmly grounded practice and legal tradition

⁴⁵⁶ Vintering, Oulu parish, 21st, 22nd and 23rd of February 1681, NAF, Court Records, KO a:1, 1681–1681, act 81–82, pp. 152–153. Original text: 'han icke så noga kan betalt wara'; 'någon borgare här efter och bondens allmänna skogh eller allmänningar skulle något hugga giöra, aff hwart namn det då hälst woro, och fast än någon borgare Skattehemman ägde skall han ey mehra få hugga och tillwärccka, än på deh Skatt och med samfälte bysens bewillningh kan tillåteliget wara'.

of not allowing any outsiders to cut wood in the forest without permission, and that communal consent was always needed, the latter is more probable in this case.

The violence employed by peasant communities in relation to burgher infringements is a clear indication of what could follow from transgressions being made against the moral economy of the peasantry. These acts of disrespect threatened the peasants' ability to make a living and the violence it prompted was therefore morally justifiable. This view was furthermore shared and supported by state officials. The Ostrobothnian burghers knew very well that appropriating resources in the peasants' forests was illegal if it happened without the consent of the entire community. Yet, they still did it despite the dangers it entailed. This does not only demonstrate how the peasantry was not the only group who felt a growing need of forest resources. It also says something about the tense relationship and disregard that sometimes existed between burghers and peasants, and the importance of state assistance and the rule of law when transgressions occurred.

3.5 Summary

The second sub-question of this thesis was aimed to provide more knowledge about the relationship between the peasantry and the burgher population in North Ostrobothnia. Its focus was also directed to demonstrate how the peasantry's ability to govern their forest commons and engage in tar and timber production was facilitated or constrained by such relations. The question posed is as follows:

- What role did the burgher class have in the growing tar and timber industry, and how did it affect the peasantry's ability to govern their forest commons in a sustainable way?

The peasantry's increasing engagement in forest related production presupposed that they had someone who were ready to buy their products. This role was filled by burghers and tradesmen who came to populate the coastal towns of North Ostrobothnia, effectively acting as middlemen between the peasantry and the international market. In this capacity, they exerted influence on how trade evolved throughout the century and thus played a major part in the growing tar and timber industry. As such, the nature of the relationship they shared with the peasantry was of great

importance. Not only in terms of how the forest were exploited, but also for how peasants managed to protect what was theirs and make a living from their industry.

People making a living on trade existed in North Ostrobothnia before the seventeenth century. However, as new towns such as Oulu and Kokkola were established in 1605 and 1620, these rural merchants were replaced by town dwelling burghers who made a living from buying what the peasantry produced. Through the Bothnian Tar Restriction and the Trade Ordinance of 1617, trade was only allowed to be conducted within the town limits. The creation of the first Swedish tar trading company in March 1643 further circumscribed trading opportunities. Burghers were no longer allowed to utilise contacts with trading partners overseas. They were instead forced to sell their tar to the tar companies. Before reaching the international market, the tar had to pass through the staple town of Stockholm and should only be bought from the peasants on the town squares within the towns in Ostrobothnia.

Notwithstanding the restrictions imposed by the Swedish Crown, trade between peasants and burghers developed in a direction that ultimately saw the birth of the trading system *majmiseriet*. Whilst local authorities demanded that trade should be conducted at the town square, peasants and burghers developed long-lasting trade relationships where the peasant went directly to the burgher to whom he had agreed to sell his produce. In return, the burgher provided the peasant with accommodation and food during his stay, as well as credits. The latter of these pleasantries soon became problematic for many peasants as well as for local authorities since the level of dependency on the burgher's credits gradually increased. Even though efforts were made by local authorities to dissolve the trade system, they were not successful. The court records reveal how peasants could owe a burgher as much as 180 copper thalers (approximate net worth of 52 barrels of tar) or even 264 copper thalers for an outstanding delivery of a ship. However, their relationship did not only yield negative outcomes. Burghers could, and did, act as guarantors when funds were running low and when state officials demanded that taxes had to be paid.

The establishment of trading companies had several intentions motivated by the mercantilist doctrine prevalent at the time. The main goal was to ensure high demand overseas, which could be achieved by limiting supply. In this way, the companies were essentially able to set whatever price they wanted, which included the price at which burghers were supposed to buy

the peasantry's tar. However, fixed prices were routinely disregarded by the burghers, often through open purchases. This ensured the burgher a healthy profit as he would acquire and export the peasant's tar but did not pay him until it had been sold overseas. He could later claim that additional expenses had been incurred and that it had been sold at a price that resulted in a much lower profit for the peasant. Another commodity that further affected their trade relation was salt. As the price on tar decreased, the price on salt increased, which similarly increased the peasantry's need of credits. However, the burghers would only lend money to those who also bought salt from them, meaning that even when cheaper alternatives existed, the peasantry had no other choice but to buy the burghers' expensive salt if they wanted to keep borrowing money.

Whilst burghers could dictate the terms of trade, the peasantry had a countermove. As the towns and the burgher population grew, so did the need of firewood. Seeing as this was a resource procured from the peasant's forests, the scale of dependence was equalised as firewood was something that burghers could not do without. Deliveries of firewood to the coastal towns could be negotiated and carried out in different ways. The burgher either had to travel to the peasant living on the countryside and retrieve it himself, or by having the peasant bring it to the town square, which usually included additional payment. However, peasants were never forced to supply the burghers with firewood. They could, and did, limit the size and frequency of deliveries, and thus prevented the burghers from acquiring the amount of firewood they needed. Another strategy was to demand an unreasonably high price for the firewood, as much as four times more than what was usual.

It is uncertain as to what extent irregular and declining deliveries of firewood affected the burghers' strategies of acquiring the resources they needed. It is nevertheless a fact that burghers began to appropriate resources from the peasantry's forest commons at an increasing rate. Most infringements occurred in the parishes of Oulu and Kokkola. Considering how vital the forests were to the peasant population, these infringements posed a threat to the very basis of the peasant household economy. Fortuitously, this was a circumstance well known among and denounced by local officials. As such, the peasantry was given extensive rights to protect their forests and prevent burghers from robbing them of their livelihood. This was sanctioned through the dictum: let violence rule violence.

This was an important statement that solidified the peasantry's exclusive right to their forests. It included, among other things, the taking of the axe. Such pre-emptive actions made continued illegal forest exploitation impossible, at least for the moment. To identify and prosecute the perpetrator, a piece of cloth was torn from the clothing of the person in question. This was not only a practical solution to a serious and growing problem, but it was also an act that had symbolic implications. The ability to appropriate resources was physically stripped from the person, and the garments torn from the individual was a powerful exercise of authority. It was nevertheless lawful and regarded as necessary in order to stop such infringements from happening again. As such, the ability of peasants to protect their property was facilitated by the support given by the highest authority in the region. The evolving nestedness of peasant institutions discussed in the previous chapter would have been much more exposed if state officials did not defend their rights and punished burghers found guilty of trespassing.

In a well-functioning governance regime, pre-existing incentives to protect the forest from outside infringements had to be felt by everyone. This was for example demonstrated by the peasant Jöran Jöransson Similä's announcement in 1689 as he stipulated that everyone had to stand together and pay for any expenses needed to protect the forest commons. Whether or not burghers were supposed to enjoy the same liberties as peasants concerning forest exploitation was generally a matter without ambiguities. In the minds of the peasants, they were categorically excluded, which sometimes led peasants to inflict serious damage to burghers and their property with cuts and blows. Such acts can be interpreted as political symbolism with the effort of deterring others from doing the same. However, in the quite violent case of Barbro Carlsdotter and the burgher Johan Sigfredsson Bonelius in 1699, she was sentenced to pay a fine for her and her entourage's attack on Bonelius and his servants. Nevertheless, the court's verdict specified that it was only an excessive use of violence if Bonelius' claim of owning a homestead in the area was true. However, even if such was the case, burghers always had to ask the peasant community for permission before engaging in forest cutting activities. In other words, there was a clear difference in the attitude towards peasants infringing on neighbouring forest commons and burghers doing the same.

The relationship between peasants and burghers was sometimes tense, but nonetheless close and vital for both parties. None of them could do without the other. The burghers' credits could be lifesaving, whereas the peasants' firewood was crucial to heat the homes of the growing burgher class. Whilst much of the trade between these groups was considered illegal by local authorities, they nevertheless developed a relationship through which peasants were able to pay their taxes and simultaneously provide for their families. It was a balancing act of trying to envision and achieve mutual goals whilst at the same time not forcing each other into an unbearable existence. The burghers thus played a double role. Even though they, to some extent, destabilised the peasantry's ability to govern the forests through acts of illegal forest cutting, they simultaneously played an enabling role in the process of peasant institutions developing a polycentric system that ultimately came to characterise village and parish communities in North Ostrobothnia.

4. The Swedish State

The relative success of an early modern state could be measured in different ways, be it on the battlefield, how large the state treasury was, or how much land or many peoples it had under its rule. Nevertheless, one essential economic mind-set that dominated in Europe, and did for several hundred years, was the mercantilist doctrine of a balanced trade economy where the accumulation of economic assets was founded upon keeping exports high and imports low. In other words, dependency on other powers and states was economically disagreeable. To avoid this, natural resources were essential, especially the durability of wood supplies since it was often linked with the fortunes of the state.⁴⁵⁷ The Swedish state was in this respect fortunate. In the early seventeenth century, the Swedish Kingdom together with Norway covered an area of approximately 1.1 million square kilometres, out of which almost three quarters (0.7–0.8 million) were woodlands. The approximate area of woodland per person was around 35 to 40 hectares considering that the total population did not exceed 2.1 million.⁴⁵⁸ However, the Swedish Kingdom was sparsely populated, and the northern regions were even more so, which made the efforts of extracting the wealth of the forests somewhat challenging.

Compared with Central European states, the wealth in woodland was great in the Swedish Kingdom. Even though this gave the Swedish state a clear advantage in terms of achieving high levels of export of forest products, the general and rapidly increasing fear of wood shortages in Central Europe reached the north as well. However, since the 1980s, scholars have questioned whether this fear of depleting forests actually had any foundation in reality. Some scholars have suggested that it might have been more of a

⁴⁵⁷ Warde (2018), p. 59.

⁴⁵⁸ Ahvenainen (1996), p. 3.

problem for certain groups of consumers. Paul Warde maintains that ‘there was scarcely a shortage to speak of at all, but rather powerful interest groups used the fear of such to seize control of valuable assets obtain them at subsidised rates.’⁴⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the fear that was communicated led to policymakers taking legislative action to safeguard the forests that existed, whether they actually were in any danger of being completely cut down or not. It also prompted writers and enthusiasts to compose instructions on how to best utilise the different qualities of different wood species. The most influential of these writers was the British gentleman, gardener, and diarist John Evelyn who wrote the *Sylva, or A Discourse of Forest-Trees and the Propagation of Timber*, in 1664. In his writings, as explained by Warde, he suggested ‘draconian powers of purveyance and limits to oak use that were enacted in various European states’. His work would later encourage Hans Carl von Carlowitz to write *Sylvicultura oeconomica* in 1713, perhaps the first comprehensive treatise on the science of forestry ever written.⁴⁶⁰

Laws that regulated the use of forests ‘were not newly invented responses to whatever challenges perceived, but had their own genealogy, lifting measures from neighbouring states, or following the careers of the men who made them.’⁴⁶¹ Forests in the Swedish Kingdom had not been completely unregulated prior to the seventeenth century scare of shortage. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the legal code of King Christopher declared that use-rights were not to be transferred or given to anyone who was not a part of the landholding community.⁴⁶² Later, in 1542, King Gustav I decreed that all land and forest that could not be proved to belong to any particular person belonged to the Crown.⁴⁶³ This was primarily done to fulfil the state’s ambition of freely assigning ‘wilderness’ to new settlers in regions that at the time was sparsely populated. Converting yet unexploited land into taxable land had positive effects for the state treasury in that new taxpayers came to utilise these rich forest areas and the resources derived therefrom.⁴⁶⁴

Parish and village communities were forbidden from denying new settlements on their outlying lands, although they retained the right to their infields. This directive reappeared in several royal letters and mandates

⁴⁵⁹ Warde (2018), p. 72.

⁴⁶⁰ Warde (2018), pp. 61–75.

⁴⁶¹ Warde (2018), p. 83.

⁴⁶² Jutikkala (1963), p. 53.

⁴⁶³ Larsson (1996), s. 9–10; Gadd (2000), s. 116.

⁴⁶⁴ Ahvenainen (1996), pp. 3–4

throughout the century.⁴⁶⁵ However, the expansionistic legislation shifted as the discourse of scarcity ultimately reached the Nordic countries by the early seventeenth century. By that time, extensive legislative measures had already been implemented in several European states more than a century earlier. Jorma Ahvenainen provides two explanations for this comparatively late response to the developments on the continent. First, the high availability of wood relative to the size of the population in the Swedish Kingdom meant that a situation had not yet been reached where wood scarcity was a major problem, or at least perceived as one. Second, in the wake of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), Sweden found itself extended by territories in northern Germany; territories that suffered from wood shortage and where attempts had been made to counter this negative trend. This made the government consider the longevity of its forests farther to the north, which had already begun to be used as fuel in the growing mining and metal industries.⁴⁶⁶

Legislation that regulated forest related activities have already been analysed in previous chapters in the sense that when conflicts arose between parishes, villages, or between individual peasant households, laws were referred to and used to resolve disputes that stemmed from such relations. However, the cases analysed in this chapter are from situations when local state officials imposed restrictions on the peasant population and when the peasantry had issues with said laws. They are therefore categorised differently due to content and intent. In other words, whilst previous chapters have focused on conflicts and transgressions within peasant communities, and conflicts between peasants and burghers, the court cases below are representations of the Swedish state's efforts in trying to control the extent of forest exploitation and how forest resources were supposed to be used according to the state. The laws and regulations used by the local authorities were the forest ordinances and several decrees issued by, among others, the county governors of North Ostrobothnia. The main purpose of this chapter is to show how these were implemented and how they affected the peasantry's ability to govern their forest commons.

A total of 81 court cases constitutes the foundation for this part of the analysis. It begins with a presentation of the forest ordinances from the seventeenth century. These are the forest ordinances of 1647 and 1664. Other

⁴⁶⁵ Granér (2002), p. 79.

⁴⁶⁶ Ahvenainen (1996), p. 13.

proclamations and decrees concerning the use of forests were also issued. However, the area of application that they concerned did not include Northern Finland, such as the Royal Majesty's Proclamation and Prohibition Regarding Illegal Deforestation in the Forests Next to Stockholm (Swe. *Kongl. Maj:ts Placat och Förbud Angående Olåfligit Skogs=Hygge uti de näst wid Stockholm angränsande skogar*) issued in 1693. This is followed by regulations issued by local officials in North Ostrobothnia in order to deal with developments in the region, as well as what role the Swedish Admiralty played in this context. Finally, court cases concerning peasant deliveries of wooden products to the castles in the region as well as regulation on tar production are analysed before the chapter summarised.

4.1 The Royal Forest Ordinances

The historiography on the seventeenth century forest ordinances, their establishment, and effects throughout the entirety of the Swedish Kingdom have gained less attention than later ones. The ones issued during the eighteenth century have been given more focus, partly due to the severe effects they had on forest related activities (wood cutting, slash-and-burn agriculture, fishing, and hunting) for landowning peasants. In Kalle Bäck's work on forest policy and peasant opposition, for example, emphasis is put on the legislative measures taken during the first half of the eighteenth century. According to Bäck, the first and subsequent ordinances during the seventeenth century did not have the desired effect.⁴⁶⁷ The Swedish Diet (Swe. *Riksdagen*) therefore requested to enforce a new forest ordinance in 1723 (enacted in 1734) that more thoroughly restricted the peasantry's tar production in that only roots and stumps were allowed to be used in the distillation process.⁴⁶⁸

Whilst the seventeenth century forest ordinances have been judged as more unsuccessful than later ones, they were nonetheless a clear signal of intent by the government to control one of the most precious resources that existed within the borders of the Swedish Kingdom. And it was not an altogether futile attempt. As have been mentioned earlier, even though the chief purpose of the ordinances was to prolong the durability of forests in the

⁴⁶⁷ Bäck (1984), p. 182. Similar to many other European states, the preparation of such legislation took time. Discussions on these matters began in Sweden in 1642, thus suggesting that there were many contingencies influencing its establishment. Ahvenainen (1996), p. 14; Warde (2018), p. 83.

⁴⁶⁸ Bäck (1984), p. 182; Kuisma (1984), p. 250.

mining region of Bergslagen, they did prompt forest policies being implemented elsewhere. The forest ordinances of the seventeenth century, as will be presented below, were used in legal circumstances in Finland as well. So, notwithstanding the primary intent, the long arm of Swedish forest policy was felt even in the deep forests of North Ostrobothnia.

4.1.1 Sweden's First Forest Ordinance

These regulations are for the preservation and continuous conservation of the forests, as well as for their reasonable and rightful use, and to dispel all abuse known to us and established, and we want our chief judges and district court judges, with their laymen, and some more modest men deputised in every jurisdictional district, to examine the commons, and rightly view and distinguish them from other individual estates, and in equal measure that our seven county governors and inspectors, carefully and diligently observe all these articles, and not allow anyone to do here against, and duly punish as the ordinance exhibits: we also want all those who rent from us and the property of the Crown, and are endowed with, and all noblemen, clergymen, the people of war, the burghers, and the peasantry, to diligently consider and comply according to each one's right as he indulges and allows, and this ordinance further describe and express: that whoever violates this, our vengeance and wrath better avoid.⁴⁶⁹

This passage is the ending statement of Sweden's first forest ordinance, signed and issued by Queen Kristina on the 22nd of March 1647. As is clearly stated, its chief goal was to provide judges and public officials with legal remedies to safeguard the kingdom's forests, but at the same time to hold them accountable for their implementation. Furthermore, it also specified the

⁴⁶⁹ Kongl. May:tz Ordning och Stadga om Skogarne i Rijket 1647. Author's translation. Original text: 'Thetta föreskrefne är så til Skogarnes förwahrung och idkelige erhållande / så wäl som skälige och rättmätige nyttjande / och at förtaga alt missbruk / af Oss belefwat och stadgat wordet / och wele Wij at wåre Lagmän och Häradzhöfdingarne med sine Nämde-Män / så ock någre flere beskedelige Män ther til deputerade i hwarie Lagsagu / ransaka efter Allmänningarne / och them rätteligen skåda och äthskilia ifrån andre enskylte ägor / så ock eliest gifwa acht på / at thenne wår ordinance må blifwa i alla sine Artiklar efterkommen. Wele ock i lijka måtto / at wåre Landzhöfdingar 7 och flere wåre Befallningzmän / alla thessa Articklar noga och flitigt taga i acht / och icke tilstådia / at någon gör här emot / weder straff som ordinancen uthwijser: thet samma wele wij ock at alla the som Låhn af Oss och Cronan innehafwa / och äro belänte medh / så ock alle af Ridderskapet och Adelen / af Prästerskapet / Krijgzfolcket / Borgerskapet och meninge Allmoge fliteligen blifwer betrachtat och efterkommet / efter som hwars och ens hafwande Rätt och Rättighet thet honom unnar och tillåter / och thenne wår ordinance [258] wijdare beskrifwer och uttrycker: Så kårt hwariom och enom / som ther emot bryter är / Wår hämbd och wrede at undwijka.'

responsibility of all the queen's subjects to uphold the articles of the ordinance, of which there were a total of 26. However, it not only provided judges and officials with legal tools to correct wrongdoers and counteract overexploitation. It was also a way for the government to convey the seriousness of the experienced situation. In doing so, it was attentively explained in the opening section how God had bestowed the Swedish Kingdom with a multitude of useful resources:

Thus, his grace has provided, cared for, and graced this kingdom, not only with fertile soils for grain, meadows, and cattle pastures, but also with glorious and abundant forests, all kinds of good, solid, and useful species of wood, suitable for several kinds of building, sailing, mining, labour, peat, trade and bargaining, and other necessities, he also blessed the mountains with all sorts of species such as ore, iron, steel, copper, silver, sulphur, weight trill, alum, red paint, etc. So also with many streams, comfortable lakes, and waterways, so that all that is required for the country's culture, improvement, and adornment, which elsewhere is seldom found together, here with us is gathered.⁴⁷⁰

Thus, whilst many precious resources existed, the proper use of which could render great fortunes for everyone, they had to be used with care so that God's gifts were not taken for granted. Overexploiting and misusing these resources were therefore not only a crime against king and country, but also a crime against God. Reluctantly, therefore, it was additionally stated that the forests were being overexploited to such a degree that the 'flourishing mines soon will suffer hardship and partly be ruined', and that which remained therefore had to 'be left untouched'. The current situation in which the towns were consuming 'building materials, wood, coal, and the like', would result in a situation where the countryside and towns 'would suffer hardship and want, as can already be seen in many places.'⁴⁷¹

⁴⁷⁰ Kongl. May:tz Ordning och Stadga om Skogarne i Rijket 1647. Author's translation. Original text: 'Altså hafwer Hans godhet ther emot försedt / försordt och beprydt thetta Rijke / icke allenast medh fruchtbar Jord til Sädeswäxt / Ängiewall och Boskapsbeet / vthan medh härlige och öfwerflödige Skogar / allehanda godh / fast och nyttig art af Trää / tienlig til ättskillige slags Bygning / Seglatz / Bärgezbruk / Arbete / Tarffäld / Handel och wandel / och annan nödtorfft; Sedan wälsignat Bärge medh allahanda art aff Malm / Järn / Ståål / Koppar / Silfwer / Swafwel / Vietril / Alun / Rödhfärga / etc. Så ock medh kostelige Strömmar / beqwäma Siögar och Fahrter / så at alt thet som i så måtto kräfwes til Landzens cultur, förbättring och prydnat / och annorstädes sällan finnes tilsamman / här hoos Oss hafwer sigh samblat tilhopa'.

⁴⁷¹ Kongl. May:tz Ordning och Stadga om Skogarne i Rijket 1647. Author's translation. Original text: 'florerande Bergsbruk / dels innan kort / lijda nöd / dels ödeläggias'; blifwa liggjande orörde'; 'bygning-wärcke / så ock

The 26 articles of the ordinance were thus the remedy with which the government thought they could solve the troublesome situation. However, as is noticeable from the passages above, they were chiefly directed towards the development in the mining districts. Nevertheless, they did include regulations on activities that were practiced in other parts of the kingdom as well. One such example was slash-and-burn agriculture. Whilst this had been energetically encouraged during the sixteenth century, many activities related to forest use were forbidden or heavily restricted in the first forest ordinance.⁴⁷²

Eleven out of the 26 articles were aimed at reducing the extent of slash-and-burn agriculture or to forbid it altogether, as well as to counteract and regulate new settlements being built on the outlying lands.⁴⁷³ The migration of Finns to the Swedish part of the kingdom that had occurred during the previous century was felt as a particularly worrisome issue as their practice of slash-and-burn agriculture (together with sawmills and forest fires) was now considered to be a chief cause for the diminishing durability of the forests, and was subsequently completely forbidden in such areas. Use-rights on common forests and forests belonging to the Crown were regulated, and forest cutting beyond the extent of what was considered to be the essential needs of each household was forbidden. At the same time, noble families were given unlimited rights to do whatever they saw fit with their forests. In all, the first forest ordinance was in many ways incoherent as it was implemented and thus had effect on all forests in the kingdom, even where the availability of forests was plentiful.⁴⁷⁴

When new ordinances and proclamations were issued by the Crown, they were communicated to the population at times and in places where they naturally congregated. The church pulpit was often used for this purpose. However, the chief responsibility of making sure that the new legislation concerning the kingdom's forests, and activities related to its use, was communicated and carried out in a correct way belonged to the county governors. Therefore, local courts were often used to in this endeavour, seeing as the county governors every now and then participated in the proceedings.

Kast- och Staffrums-Wed / Kohl och annat slijkt'; 'skulle lijda nöd och affsaknad / såsom det sig allerede mångestädes see låter.'

⁴⁷² In a decree from 1546, it was even stated that 'after this day, everywhere here in the kingdom [...] one should exert and strive to occupy and clear fields and meadows, practice slash-and-burn agriculture, cultivate the land and build new homes', Eliasson & Hamilton (1999), p. 53.

⁴⁷³ §2, §3, §6, §8, §9, §12, §17, §18, §19, §21, §22. Kongl. May:tz Ordning och Stadga om Skogarne i Rijket 1647.

⁴⁷⁴ Ahvenainen (1996), pp. 13–14.

The first case in which the forest ordinance of 1647 is mentioned in the court records from North Ostrobothnia is from February 1648, in the northern parish of Kemi. The content of the new laws was communicated and explained to the gathered peasantry, and particular emphasis was given to three topics, namely the articles concerning the forests, *bärande träd* (En. carrying trees), and hunting. They were accentuated by the county governor because ‘these points in particular correspond with this county’, which would indicate that these topics concerned activities that were commonly practiced or otherwise important in Kemi.⁴⁷⁵

The accentuation gives reason to halt. *Bärande träd* were at this time oak (Lat. *Quercus robur*) and beech (Lat. *Fagus sylvatica*). These tree species were highly valuable for the Swedish state, especially oak which the Royal Navy needed to build warships.⁴⁷⁶ They were therefore protected by law and were only to be used as the state saw fit. That the forest ordinance regulated the use of oak and beech is therefore understandable. However, the reason why the county governor pointed out this fact in the parish of Kemi is not. Oak and beech grew in many places in Europe, including Sweden, but they were not native in Finland except for in the southernmost parts. This either suggests that the county governor was very ill-informed about the nature and biomass of the region he was in or, which is more probable, that all county governors had been given instructions to emphasise these articles regardless of what county they served in. It is nonetheless perplexing that he claimed that regulation on *bärande träd* would be particularly important in Kemi, since it simply was not true. Nevertheless, the county governor continued his way south, for example stopping in Ii parish to announce the ordinance and present its content ‘here as in all other parishes, so that each and every one will obey accordingly.’⁴⁷⁷

Previous research states that the ordinances were often referred to, especially concerning the amount of tar that each household was allowed to produce.⁴⁷⁸ Yet, apart from the county governor’s presentations of the new law at the local court meetings, examples of the forest ordinance of 1647 being referenced are few. It is not until 1664 when the second forest

⁴⁷⁵ Vinterting, Kemi parish, 5th and 6th of February 1648, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1645–1649, act 298, p. 288. Original text: ‘de punckter som wedh denna Landsort öfwer stämpna’.

⁴⁷⁶ Granér (2002), p. 12, footnote 25.

⁴⁷⁷ Vinterting, Ii parish, 8th of February 1648, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1645–1649, act 302, p. 291v. Original text: ‘så här som i alla andra sochnar, at hwar och een mhå ohwat sigh der efter rätta.’

⁴⁷⁸ Villstrand (1992b), p. 46.

ordinance was decreed that such references became more common. Now, this did not mean that transgressions were not made and that conflicts did not occur during this period. Nevertheless, it was more common that the Medieval Scandinavian Provincial Law and the Construction Law was cited. The reason for this may be that state officials and members of the local courts simply knew the old laws better and were more comfortable using them. As such, they chose to follow a long since established legal tradition that also corresponded well with customary law and local traditions of how to resolve disputes among the peasant population. In that sense, the ordinance eventually became a building block that was added to already existing laws, an addition to a growing body of legal texts.

In the case of North Ostrobothnia, the period between the first and the second forest ordinance can be termed as a time of legal customisation, or a time of familiarisation to a new body of legal texts. It took time to work out a way in which these new laws, which were not established with this region and its industries in mind, could be moulded to fit the reality of what was going on in the region. In some respects, legislators had created a new ordinance that was supposed to regulate something which older laws and local customs to some extent already did.⁴⁷⁹ However, as will be shown later in this chapter, after the second forest ordinance had been decreed, more regulations and obligations on the part of the peasantry would be issued by the local authorities. This occurred as county governors and their deputies formulated locally applicable regulations that had legal validity through the Crown's forest ordinances.

There is room here to demonstrate how a court case could be handled by local authorities (in this case the county governor) who acted within the framework of the new law, whilst simultaneously making additions to legal practice. Such a case is found in the court records of Kruunupyy in 1664, just six months before the second forest ordinance would be published.

At this time, County Governor Johan Graan was present at the court proceedings. Part of the reason for his attendance was a petition that the peasantry had put together and submitted to the Swedish Diet. The sum of matters and inquires representatives of each political Estate (Swe. *stånd*) received from their constituency often totalled several thousands, and only a

⁴⁷⁹ Warde (2018, p. 85) points out that this was not uncommon throughout Western Europe, thus adding to what Appuhn (2009, p. 112) has argued in regard to fifteenth century Venetian law: many statutes 'merely formalized what was already a universal practice'.

couple of hundred could actually be selected for debate at the Diet. The county governor thus consulted the peasantry on matters that had been presented to him but had not made the final cut.⁴⁸⁰ Among these issues, most of which concerned supplying food and housing for the king's soldiers, was the matter of cutting planks. The previous investigation on village and parish relations informs us that the extent of forest cutting in the region was felt as a growing problem, which explains the peasantry's grievances. By expressing their struggles, the concerned part of the peasantry could provoke a legal remedy on a scale that they themselves were unable to do. By the power of his governorship, Johan Graan proclaimed that a fine of 40 marks was to be given to anyone who cut 'more than was prevalent in the village'.⁴⁸¹

By reading the legal text, the ruling was sanctioned by the second and fourth articles of the forest ordinance, although the sum of the fine is not explicitly stated.⁴⁸² What constituted 'more than was prevalent' in this context was not stated either since it was up to each village to decide what this extent was. In this way, the village community was given extended possibilities of exercising the law given that the risk of being fined was now greater and depended on the village's own judgement. Moreover, the county governor had determined what could be deemed as a reasonable amount to pay for such transgressions.

As have been shown in Chapter 2, many conflicts concerning the use of the region's forests resulted from village and parish relations, as well as from the burghers' need of forest resources as detailed in Chapter 3. Whilst such conflicts and disputes were most commonly handled by the local courts, certain issues sometimes needed to be superintended by the county governor. This would suggest that CPIs lacked robustness. Although it can also mean that the organisation was effective and transparent enough for the peasantry to react to certain developments that was first noticed on an operational level (day-to-day situation) and then escalated further (level shifting) to be discussed on the level of collective-choice rules. The point made here is therefore that

⁴⁸⁰ According to Nordlander (1939), this was unusual for someone like County Governor Graan to do, especially considering that he was county governor over both Ostrobothnia and Westrobothnia and in that capacity had a lot on his plate, as it were.

⁴⁸¹ Vinterting, Kruunupyy parish, 18th and 19th of January 1664, NAF, Court Records, KO a:11, 1661–1666, act 481, pp. 485v–486. Author's translation. Original text: 'mehra hugga än som hwar är rådande i by'.

⁴⁸² Especially the 4th article of the ordinance emphasised this in stating that the common was to be 'utilised and used for household needs, but not to ruin and spoil for others or their descendants.' Kongl. May:tz Ordning och Stadga om Skogarne i Rijket 1647, §4. Author's translation. Original text: 'at nyttia och niuta til Huustarfwen / men icke at föröda och förderfwa för androm eller efterkommanderne.'

having an external force intervene (the state) was not necessarily only a sign of vulnerability.⁴⁸³ It was largely determined by the purpose of the involvement.

The first forest ordinance of 1647 was legally valid throughout the Swedish Kingdom. However, its implementation was not the same in all corners of the kingdom. That is not to say that it was not possible to violate the articles of the ordinance. Nevertheless, the new ordinance did not immediately replace already existing laws, or as Ostrom would put it, the ‘rules-in-use’. Instead, they served the function of ‘rules-in-form’, meaning that they were written statements that did not affect their behaviour,⁴⁸⁴ at least not as much as the second forest ordinance would.

4.1.2 An Updated Forest Ordinance

Compared with the first forest ordinance, the changes made in the second from 1664 were mainly in the form of additions. Throughout the early modern period, it was not uncommon that legislators made additional laws to regulate forests after having made a comprehensive first attempt. This was for example recurrently done by Venetian authorities during the second half of the fifteenth century.⁴⁸⁵ In the Palatinate region and south-west Germany, experts on woodland matters were employed to prepare a forest ordinance in 1572, which referred to laws issued in the 1540s and 1550s. A similar development can be noticed in Scotland where such legislation was updated seven times between 1503 and 1661, and four times in Württemberg between 1540 and 1614.⁴⁸⁶ Swedish legislators followed a similar line of reasoning as the second forest ordinance stated that ‘the precious and highly scarce forests are not properly cultivated, but abused, and just as deliberately exterminated’.⁴⁸⁷ However, one should consider the purpose for which the new legislation was written and whose interest they were primarily intended to serve.

⁴⁸³ See Mansbridge (2013).

⁴⁸⁴ Ostrom (2005), p. 138.

⁴⁸⁵ Bonan (2019), pp. 26–27.

⁴⁸⁶ Warde (2018), p. 83, citation from Allmann (1989), p. 43.

⁴⁸⁷ RA, Kongl. May:tz Ordning och Stadga om Skogarne i Rijket 1664. Original text: ‘at dhe kostelige / och högt nödtorfflige Skogar / blifwa icke rätt brukade / utan missbrukade / och lijka som försäteligen uthödde’.

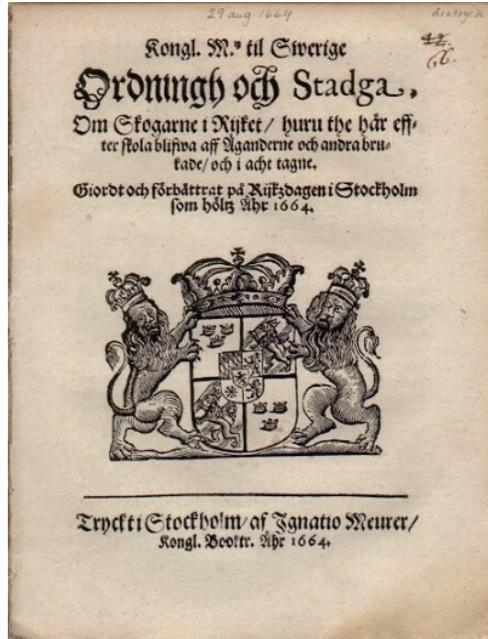


Figure 17. The second Royal Forest Ordinance of 1664. Source: RA, Kongl. May:tz Ordning och Stadga / om Skogarne i Rijket / huru the här efter skola blifwa af äganderne och andra brukade / och i acht tagne. Giordt och förbättrad på Rijkzdagen i Stockholm, den 29 Augusti Anno 1664. Publisher: Ignatio Meurer, Stockholm, 1664.

Additions or alterations were made in 19 of the original 26 articles.⁴⁸⁸ On the whole, this was an attempt by central authorities to achieve greater insights concerning the state of the kingdom's forests, but also to expand the local authorities' ability to regulate and control forest exploitation. However, just like the first ordinance, its main focus was on the mining districts of central Sweden and Bergslagen. Nevertheless, some alterations show how a broader and more general perspective had been adopted. One such example is article eight, which originally stated that new crofts and cottages were not allowed to be constructed on the parish forest common, unless the common was large enough and that the new settlement would not affect those already living there in a negative way. In the second ordinance, it was added that 'because the country is wide-ranging, and since this investigation falls somewhat difficult, those who live adjacent to such places shall be obliged to assist, so

⁴⁸⁸ The ones that were not altered were articles 11, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, and 23, which in short concerned the manner in which landowners were allowed to use their forests, matters of enclosure, and the construction sawmills and new settlements.

long as they do not wish to experience the same punishment as the others and be regarded as criminals and offenders against our mandate.’⁴⁸⁹

It is also evident that legislators wanted the county governors and representatives of the local community to be more involved with the maintenance of the forest commons and how they were monitored. For example, in articles 1, 17, and 21, it was correspondingly added that the county governor now held the chief responsibility to ensure that borders between parishes and commons were correctly established, that the county governor, instead of the chairman of the court, should supervise and sanction the construction of new settlements, and that crown officials together with the laymen of the court should supervise and approve areas that could be deemed fit for slash-and-burn agriculture.⁴⁹⁰

Previous research has argued that the forest ordinances of 1647 and 1664 were not implemented in the Finnish part of the kingdom, and consequently, ‘destructive felling and use of forests without permission were recurrent worries of the authorities.’⁴⁹¹ The second part of this argument is most certainly true. It is also clear that they had less impact in Finland than they had on the Swedish side of the kingdom. However, they were most certainly implemented in Finland and had consequences for people’s everyday life. For example, article number 17 was exercised in Kokkola when two crofts were the subject of the court in 1681. It first concerned Jöran Simonsson who had been allotted a croft of one fourth *mantal*. However, his homestead had not yet been entered into the tax records, which the county governor now saw fit to do. The second crofter was Henrik Parvinen who had settled down close to a swamp in the village of Nedervetil. It became known to the court that he had been cutting trees in the forest to such a degree that it was detrimental for the parish and village members. He was therefore ‘according to the 18th article of the forest ordinance evicted and since his income and

⁴⁸⁹ RA, Kongl. May:tz Ordning och Stadga om Skogarne i Rijket 1664, §8. Original text: ‘Doch såsom Landet är widlyfftigt / och således dhenne undersökning faller något swår / altså skole dhe / som näst in til sådane boo / wara förplichtade at gifwa dem an / så framt dhe icke willia undergå samma Straff / som dhe andra / och räknas för Wårt Mandatz brytare och öfwerträdare.’

⁴⁹⁰ RA, Kongl. May:tz Ordning och Stadga om Skogarne i Rijket 1664, §1, §17, and §21. In the latter case, the sanctioning of areas had previously been the responsibility of the church’s *sexmän* (Eng: six men) who were appointed by the parish to oversee the payment of tithe to the church, maintenance of the church buildings, and to assist the priest in various matters.

⁴⁹¹ Roiko-Jokela (2018), pp. 292–293.

produce on the parish forest was against law and anyone's permission, confiscated and lost'.⁴⁹²

Another case, concurrently exemplifying the growing importance of the county governor, can be found in the court records of Oulu parish from 1683. Erik Olofsson Hiltunen and Lars Räisänen accused the peasants of Laitasaari village to have 'come up through the parish and there cut timber and ship-building materials for the burghers in Oulu', thus '*utödade*' (En. devastated, ruined, wasted) the outlying lands belonging to the peasants living in the northern part of the parish. This was particularly troublesome for them since they were not allowed to fish in the burghers' fishing waters and thus only relied on forest resources in order to pay their taxes. This contradicted the regulations stipulated in the forest ordinance of 1664 and article 18 of the Construction Law. It was therefore decided that the peasants of Laitasaari, as well as other peasants from the south, were forbidden from continuing to cut in the forest until such time that County Governor Didrik Wrangel af Adinal could establish whether the forest area in question was the parish common forest or not.⁴⁹³

Getting more people involved in the management and administration of forest related activities was an intent by legislators to hold local authorities and the local population directly accountable when the articles of the ordinance were broken, but also to spur their motivation. But it would also have other consequences for the peasantry. A closer relationship with local authorities could lead to the CPI being more exposed to externally imposed rules. This could lead to a reduced level of *equity* seeing as the ability of members to partake in decision-making could diminish. However, as emphasised by Mansbridge, it could also strengthen the organisation's ability to enforce rules that it needed.⁴⁹⁴

Apart from issuing legal edicts that presented greater responsibilities, the penalties for violating the forest ordinance increased. For example, whilst the fourth article had previously only forbidden overexploitation of the forest commons, it was now explicitly stated that fines were going to be issued in case someone did. Furthermore, if products produced on the forest common

⁴⁹² Höstting, Kokkola and Kälviä parishes, 21st, 22nd and 23rd of March 1681, NAF, Court Records, KO a:1, 1681–1681, act 213, pp. 412–413. Original text: 'efter 18 punct i Skogsordningen bortdömbdes och hans arfvode och tillverkande på Sochnens allmenninge emot Lagh och någons tillstånd, Confiscabelt och förlustig'.

⁴⁹³ Vinterting, Oulu parish, 26th, 27th and 28th of January 1683, NAF, Court Records, KO a:3, 1683–1683, act 47, pp. 82–83. Original text: 'komma op i Sochnen och der hugga Timber och Skuthwercke åt Borgarne i Uhlå'.

⁴⁹⁴ Mansbridge (2013).

were illegally sold, such as timber logs, the fine was no longer to be estimated in relation to their length and width, but instead set at two marks per log.⁴⁹⁵ The latter of these restrictions was particularly stressed at a court meeting in Kälviä, which the county governor attended in August 1665. Peasants living in common forests were forbidden from selling timber that they had cut and would have to pay the fine that the ordinance specified. Furthermore, they were only permitted to appropriate that which was needed for the sustenance of their households. Since this had not been heeded by all, Chief Constable Gustav Gabrielsson was ordered to examine how many sawmills there were in the main river that ran through the parish.⁴⁹⁶ He was then to estimate how many had broken the 20th article of the ordinance, which stated that ‘no one has the right to build sawmills on the common, or other buildings in streams and rivers’ without permission.⁴⁹⁷

Unlike the ordinance of 1647, the second was more often referred to when rulings and verdicts were made at the local courts. The new (or updated) law was given clear distinction. As was demonstrated earlier, the sources sometimes reveal how certain messages or decrees were communicated and emphasised in the court room. From Kälviä, County Governor Johan Graan travelled further south and appeared four days later at the court meeting in Kruunupyy. At this point, the court records reveal that the purpose of his visit was not only to announce that a new forest ordinance had been decreed. Other ordinances had also been issued, which included instructions on the procedures of feasts, christenings, and sartorial regulations. These were only briefly mentioned and, as he declared, should be considered ‘by some’. The forest ordinance, and especially the ‘needed’ articles concerning ‘the sawing of boards, timber cutting, and slash-and-burn agriculture’, were more seriously stressed. Following their publication, the entire peasantry was forbidden to resume their excessive exploitation of the forest commons and only take that which was most necessary.⁴⁹⁸

The changes and additions that had been made in the second forest ordinance resulted in a legal text that could be more easily conformed to the development in North Ostrobothnia. Most importantly, as will be shown

⁴⁹⁵ RA, Kongl. May:tz Ordning och Stadga om Skogarne i Rijket 1664, §4 & §10.

⁴⁹⁶ Sommarting, Kälviä parish, 8th of August 1665, NAF, Court Records, KO a:11, 1661–1666, act 758, p. 766v.

⁴⁹⁷ RA, Kongl. May:tz Ordning och Stadga om Skogarne i Rijket 1664, §20. Original text: ‘Ingen hafwe macht at byggia Sågeqwarn på Allmenningarne / eller andre Byggningar / i Strömmar och åher’.

⁴⁹⁸ Sommarting, Kruunupyy parish, 12th of August 1665, NAF, Court Records, KO a:11, 1661–1666, act 759, p. 767v–768. Original text: ‘een eller annan’; ‘nödigē’; ‘brädhsågandet och timber huggande samt swediande’.

later, it gave local authorities extended possibilities to issue regulations with North Ostrobothnia in mind. Whilst the period up until the second ordinance was a time of legal customisation, the period after 1664 would become a time of adaptation.

4.2 The Ostrobothnian Officials and Regulations

From the year 1667 until the end of the century, representatives of the Swedish state made several efforts to gain more control over the situation in North Ostrobothnia. This included inspections, regulations, and setting production quotas. Many of them transpired in the 1670s, especially in the years 1673 and 1674. Possible explanations as to why this period, and these years in particular, saw an increase of state implemented regulations can easily be found. Available figures on the quantity of exported tar from the region of Ostrobothnia shows that tar exports reached its first peak during the latter half of the seventeenth century. Similarly, the production of shipbuilding materials also intensified.⁴⁹⁹ Furthermore, as have been determined in Chapter 2.2.2, this was also the period when the first comprehensive and large-scale efforts to offset the escalating trend of forest cutting were taken by peasants in several parishes. This development was without doubt noticed by local officials, but also by central authorities. For example, in 1665, a royal decree was sent to the county governors of the northern regions to take measures to decelerate the rapidly increasing levels of tar production. The harmful nature of tar production was emphasised since it consumed wood that was necessary for the sustenance of peasant household.⁵⁰⁰ Another convincing indication why the Ostrobothnian regulations were so forcefully introduced during the early 1670s can be detected in the following segment from the court records of Kruunupyy where County Governor Johan Graan participated in 1673:

As the excessive deforestation that has increased for some years in this parish through the cutting of timber, beams, sawing of planks, tar wood and slash-and-burn agriculture, and in regards to the incurable damage which seems to follow from it in the long run, so long as such is not remedied in time, a written ordinance

⁴⁹⁹ Åström (1988), pp. 44–45; Villstrand (1996), pp. 62–63.

⁵⁰⁰ RA, 'Bref til Landshöfdingarne i Nord- och Finland om Tiäruilwerckningen' (1177 1662), Stiernman, *Samling*, III, p. 91; *RAP* 27/6 1668.

has been made by the honourable gentleman and county governor on the 29 January of last year.⁵⁰¹

What came of this ordinance and how it was implemented will soon follow. First, however, it is important to contextualise and expand on the role of the county governor and the duties the Crown expected him to perform.

4.2.1 The County Governor and his Responsibilities

The county governorship was introduced in the Swedish Kingdom through the Instrument of Government of 1634. Before this, the office of royal governor (Swe. *ståthållare*) had been introduced in the sixteenth century, which followed from Gustav I's efforts to increase state control over local administration, but also from the conviction that local bailiffs (Swe. *fogde* or *befallningsman*) had too strong a position of power vis-à-vis the peasantry. Thus, a new form of governorship was established. County governors were to act as an intermediate between the bailiffs and the Crown and would in this capacity safeguard the interests of the Crown and that of the rural population. The new charter was a step in a formalisation of regional administration in Sweden, for the most part shaped by the chancellor Axel Oxenstierna. Apart from gaining greater insight concerning developments in rural areas, it also aimed to mobilise resources that were required to conduct warfare on the European continent. Each county (Swe. *län*) in the kingdom was assigned a county governor and his role was at large to oversee the administration of justice, control subordinate officials, execute the judgments of the king, oversee conscriptions, and to improve and safeguard the interest of the towns and industries.⁵⁰² To his aid, he was given a county governor instruction (Swe. *landshövdingeinstruktion*), the first of which was issued in 1635. It contained a detailed description of the duties that each county governor had to perform. However, out of the 45 paragraphs, only one mentions the management of forests in that they were held responsible

⁵⁰¹ Vinterting, Kruunuppy parish, 18th and 20th of January 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 360, p. 352v. Author's translation. Original text: 'Såssom för det öfwerflödiga Skogshuggande som denna Sochnen några åhr för detta tiltagit hafwer med Timber, Bielkar, bränders Sägande, Tieru weds och Swediehuggande, och i betraktande den obotelige skada som der af i längden föllia synes, så framt icke sådant blefwo i tijdh rättat, åhr nästleden d: 29 Januarij af Wälborne Herren Landshöfdingen giort een skrifteligh förordningh'.

⁵⁰² Jonsson (2005), pp. 14–15, 48–53.

to make sure that all revenue derived from crown land was to be managed responsibly and correctly.

A second county governor instruction was issued in 1687, according to Alexander Jonsson, mainly because the first instruction was not adapted to function under the rule of an absolute king, in this case King Karl XI (1660–1697). At this time, an addition had interestingly been made wherein the county governors were held responsible to prevent all illegal forest felling, slash-and-burn agriculture, sawing, and the establishment of crofts on forest commons.⁵⁰³ The rapid development of forest industries, and subsequent endeavours of preserving the forests through the forest ordinances, seems to have made an imprint on the county governor instruction as well.

Regional administrative structures such as the Swedish counties had resemblances in other parts of Europe as well, most notably in Denmark (including Iceland), but also in Austria. France also had a system of provincial governors, although the position of the monarchy was much weaker than in Sweden, which meant that other ways of achieving control over provincial matters was needed.⁵⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the Swedish system was problematic in the sense that the obligations of the county governor were very comprehensive and the geographical area of responsibility was often very large, especially in the northern parts of the kingdom. County Governor Johan Graan, whose name has been mentioned several times in this thesis so far, complained over this fact in letter to Seneschal of the Realm (Swe. *Riksdrots*) Per Brahe in 1659. Even though he had several subordinate officials to aid him in his deed, situations often occurred when communication between them failed, or even when local officials acted without or against the county governor's consent and direct orders. In the case of Graan, a long-lasting feud developed between him and the mayor of Oulu, Daniel Kröger, between 1657–1662. Kröger was often absent for long periods of time and did not fulfil the duties of his office as instructed.⁵⁰⁵ However, as will be demonstrated next, it was not only members of the town administration that did not live up to Graan's expectations. Officials chosen from the peasant community also failed in this endeavour.

⁵⁰³ Jonsson (2005), pp. 58, 60, 66.

⁵⁰⁴ Jonsson (2005), pp. 76–77.

⁵⁰⁵ Jonsson (2005), pp. 106, 140.

4.2.2 The Ordinance of Johan Graan

As mentioned earlier, County Governor Johan Graan attended the court meeting in Kruunupyy in January 1673. This was one year after he had issued a regulation following what he had experienced as a highly troublesome development regarding the state of the forests in the parish. He had therefore decided that each household was not allowed to produce more than 15 dozen planks per homestead.⁵⁰⁶ It is worth stopping for a moment and consider the measures taken here. The regulation only included the production of planks, even though his commentary leading up to the nature of regulation also included the production of tar wood and slash-and-burn agriculture, meaning that these activities indeed were regarded as equally worrisome. Yet, no regulation on these activities was issued at this time. A possible explanation for this was the difficulty of carrying out inspections of this kind. Unlike the production of planks (in extension also timber logs), tar wood production and slash-and-burn agriculture could be practiced far away in the deep forests of North Ostrobothnia, in places where government officials simply could not exercise any form of control and thus did not have access. Where the peasants cut their timber could of course also be located far away, but the timber sooner or later had to be brought to a sawmill, to which local officials more easily had access.

In compliance with the new ordinance, Graan ordered the chief constable Erik Matsson and the layman Nils Matsson to present a written account on how many planks each peasant in the parish of Kruunupyy had produced during 1672. A list was also requested where those who had exceeded the permissible amount of 15 dozen should be specified, seeing as it was their responsibility to keep records on these matters. However, to the county governor's dismay, Erik and Nils responded that they were unable to provide him with such a document. Being somewhat understanding in this, Graan ordered them to at least provide a document specifying who had been sawing planks and present this before the end of the winter court session, which they ultimately did.⁵⁰⁷

The information they provided was deemed to be 'completely imperfect and suspicious'. Instead, the incomplete document was given to Customs Officer Tawast who was told to compare it with his books over exported

⁵⁰⁶ Vinterting, Kruunupyy parish, the 18th and 20th of January 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 359–360, pp. 352v–353.

⁵⁰⁷ Vinterting, Kruunupyy parish, the 18th and 20th of January 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 359–360, pp. 352v–353.

timber logs in order to gain more clarity. Seeing as Erik and Nils had neglected their duties of keeping close records on who had produced planks at the local sawmills, as well as the number of planks that had been sawn, County Governor Graan had them pay a fine of 40 marks each. They were furthermore threatened with paying the same amount again if they failed to carry out the examination he had requested. They were given until the next court meeting to present it, at which time Tawast would also present the result of his examination.⁵⁰⁸

Four months later, on the 12th of May, the court assembled in Chief Constable Erik Matsson's home to review the examinations that had been carried out by him and Customs Officer Tawast. The information given by the chief constable corresponded well with the accounts of exported timber. From the compiled examination, it can be gathered that two villages were subjected to the investigation, the villages Påras and Bråtö, both situated along the main river of Kruunupyy. They compiled of 38 homesteads. Instead of making an account over how many dozen planks each homestead had produced, it was presented in timber logs.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁸ Vinterting, Kruunupyy parish, the 18th and 20th of January 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 359–360, pp. 352v–353. Original text: 'heel ofulkomblig och Suspect war'.

⁵⁰⁹ See Table 1.

| <i>Size of homestead (Sw. mantal)</i> | <i>Village and peasant</i> | <i>Nr. of felled timber logs</i> | <i>Permitted according to the ordinance</i> | <i>Nr. of exceeded timber logs</i> | <i>Size of fine</i> |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | | | | | <i>Silver thaler Öre</i> |
| | Påras village | | | | |
| 1 ¼ | Lars Olofsson | 100 | Permitted 60 for sale, 38 for household consumption | 2 | - 16 |
| 1 | Mårten Mattson | 100 | Permitted 48 for sale, 30 for household consumption | 22 | 5 16 |
| 1 | Mats Matsson | 120 | Permitted 48 for sale, 30 for household consumption | 42 | 10 16 |
| 1 | Anders Hansson | 160 | Permitted 48 for sale, 30 for household consumption, although he has suffered from fire damage this year | - | - |
| 1 | Jacob Andersson | 120 | Permitted 48 for sale, 30 for household consumption | 42 | 10 16 |
| 1 ¼ | Anders Olsson | 120 | Permitted 60 for sale, 38 for household consumption | 22 | 5 16 |
| 1 | Olof Hansson | 110 | Permitted 48 for sale, 30 for household consumption | 32 | 8 - |
| 1 | Anders Andersson | 100 | Permitted 48 for sale, 30 for household consumption | 22 | 5 16 |
| 1 ½ | Lars Larsson | 190 | Cannot be permitted more than <i>in alles</i> 50 since he is building a ship 13 fathoms in one year | 140 | - 35 - |
| ¾ | Thomas Clementson | 60 | Permitted 36 for sale, 24 for household consumption | - | - - |
| ¾ | Carl Salmundsson | 130 | Permitted 48 for sale, 30 for household consumption | - | - - |
| 1 | Hans Larsson | 50 | - | - | - - |
| 1 ½ | Lars Andersson | 50 | - | - | - - |
| 1 | Johan Hansson | 110 | Permitted 48 for sale, 30 for household consumption | 32 | 8 - |
| | Bråtö village | | | | |
| 1 ½ | Michell Olofsson | 130 | Permitted 72 for sale, 46 for household consumption | 12 | 3 - |
| 1 ¼ | Lars Hansson | 40 | - | - | - - |
| 1 ½ | Markus Eriksson | 50 | - | - | - - |
| 1 ¼ | Zacharias Eriksson | 30 | - | - | - - |
| 1 ¼ | Per Jönsson | 80 | - | - | - - |
| 1 | Erik Bagge | 50 | - | - | - - |
| 1 | Anders Jönsson | 200 | Permitted 48 for sale, 30 for household consumption | 122 | 30 16 |
| ½ | Carl Persson | 180 | Permitted 24 for sale, 16 for household consumption | 140 | 35 - |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|--------------------|-------------|---|-------------|------------|--------------|
| 1 | Lars Olofsson | 120 | Permitted 48 for sale, 30 for household consumption | 42 | 10 | 16 |
| 1 | Thomas Hindersson | 280 | Permitted 48 for sale, 30 for household consumption | 202 | 50 | 16 |
| ½ | Per Matsson | 170 | Permitted 24 for sale, 15 for household consumption | 140 | 35 | - |
| ½ | Per Danielsson | 160 | Permitted 24 for sale, 15 for household consumption | 121 | 30 | 8 |
| 1 | Per Jönsson | 200 | Permitted 48 for sale, 30 for household consumption | 122 | 30 | 16 |
| 7/8 | Mats Olofsson | 190 | Permitted 42 for sale, 27 for household consumption | 121 | 30 | 8 |
| | Bränöb | | | | | |
| ¼ | Jonas Persson | 80 | Permitted 60 for sale, 38 for household consumption | - | - | - |
| 1 | Jöns Hansson | - | Together with the preceding | - | - | - |
| | Kivijärvi | | | | | |
| ¾ | Anders Persson | 100 | Permitted 36 for sale, 22 for household consumption | 42 | 10 | 16 |
| ¾ | Per Persson | 100 | Permitted 36 for sale, 22 for household consumption | 42 | 10 | 16 |
| 1 | Carl Matsson | 140 | Permitted 48 for sale, 30 for household consumption | 62 | 15 | 16 |
| 1 | Mats Larsson | 180 | Cannot be permitted according to the ordinance since he is building a ¼ ship 13 fathoms in one year, otherwise is of good fortune | 180 | 45 | - |
| 1 ½ | Anders Olofsson | 300 | Permitted 72 for sale, 45 for household consumption | 183 | 45 | 24 |
| 1 | Erik Jönsson Snåre | 140 | Permitted 48 for sale, 30 for household consumption | 62 | 15 | 16 |
| 1 | Daniel Danielsson | 170 | Permitted 175 for sale and household consumption | - | - | - |
| 1 ¼ | Emil Olofsson | - | Together with the preceding | - | - | - |
| | Total: | 4610 | | 1949 | 479 | 264 |
| | | | | | * | (487) |
| | | | | | | (8) |

* 32 öre equals 1 silver thaler, which equates to 487 silver thalers and 8 öre.

Table 1. Table over felled timber in Kruunupyö parish during 1672. Source: *Vintering, Kruunupyö parish, the 18th and 20th of January 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a.13, 1672–1674, act 369, pp. 361v–363. Note: The records provide incorrect numbers for Per Matsson, 140 whilst it should be 131.*

Taken together, it was estimated that they had cut 4 610 timber logs during the previous year. The permissible amount of timber logs per *mantal* had been set at 78.⁵¹⁰ The size of the homesteads varied from one fourth *mantal* to one and a half, and 26 of them had *in alles* exceeded the permissible amount by 1 766 logs. Dispensations were however made, such as with Anders Hansson whose homestead was one *mantal*. Whilst he was allowed to cut 78 timber logs, the grand total amounted to 160. But since his homestead had suffered a fire, he was not given a fine for the excessive 82. Quite the opposite stance was taken in other circumstances, such as with Lars Larsson whose homestead was one and a half *mantal* and had cut 190 logs, 73 more than allowed. But since he was engaged with building a ship the size of 13 fathoms, his quota was set at 50, and thus had to pay a fine for the other 140 timber logs. In total, the fines levied on the 26 homesteads amounted to 479 silver thalers and 264 öre, or 487 silver thalers and 8 öre.⁵¹¹ Levelled out, this was approximately 19 silver thalers per homestead, which was equivalent to the net worth of approximately 16 barrels of tar and within the range of an annual salary of a shipbuilder at the time.⁵¹²

It has earlier been explained that it is questionable whether there was a widespread shortage of wood in Europe at this time. However, the implementation of forest ordinances was real and had real consequences for how people appropriated forest resources. The breaking of these laws has been interpreted by some historians as a display of social protest and resistance by local users. However, in many areas, most people saw forest regulations as something positive and helpful, as long as customary use-rights were not discriminated.⁵¹³

In Kruunupyy, the county governor's regulation was not met with protest or general discontent. It is at least not expressed that way in the court records. Although the nature of the sources and what the court scribe chose to write down certainly plays a part here, previous court cases have shown that the peasants did not hold back when they believed that injustices had been committed. One such example is the border conflict between Kruunupyy and Pedersöre parishes in 1665–1673. The continued infringements on the forest

⁵¹⁰ Considering that the permissible amount of dozen planks was previously set at 15 (i.e., 180 planks), the estimated number of finished planks per timber log would be 2,3.

⁵¹¹ Vinterting, Kruunupyy parish, the 12th of May 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 369–370, pp. 361v–363.

⁵¹² *Svenska Österbottens Historia* 3 (1980), p. 82.

⁵¹³ Grewe & Hölzl (2018), p. 21

common incited a heated debate between the parish members and Bailiff Tawast over its proper location.⁵¹⁴ Another example is when Bailiff Henrik Corte demanded to have the border between Saloinen and Liminka parishes inspected in 1667, which he was denied following the peasantry's reply that he was creating a conflict out of thin air.⁵¹⁵ The point made here is that the investigation led by County Governor Graan was perhaps welcomed, or possibly even encouraged by parts of the peasantry.⁵¹⁶ It has previously been stressed that the importance of the state in matters that concerned the governance of communally owned resources should not be underestimated. Especially considering the difficulties that happened in the parish of Kruunupyy, all issues arising within communal governance systems could not be resolved independently by the members themselves. In this case, the role played out by the state was to provide an arena upon which these problems could be resolved (the local court) and it assisted in making efforts to correct those who had committed wrongful acts of overexploitation.⁵¹⁷

That the peasantry encouraged inspections to be carried out in order to expose members who overexploited that which was commonly owned can be substantiated by a later development in 1686. It occurred as the peasantry of Kruunupyy predicted 'the demise of the entire parish', following the excessive forest cutting committed by the peasants of Teerijärvi. The gathered peasantry and the laymen of the court decided to investigate the matter, the outcome of which would come in September the same year.⁵¹⁸ It is important to emphasise that the investigation, like many others, had not been commissioned by the bailiff or the county governor, but instead by the peasantry themselves. This demonstrates very well that even though the peasantry was experiencing difficulties with the 'free-riding' peasants of Teerijärvi, they were able to request and successively carry out a comprehensive investigation that gave detailed information about how much each village had cut during the previous year.

⁵¹⁴ Vinterting, Kruunupyy parish, 1st of January 1665, NAF, Court Records, KO a:11, 1661–1666, act 600–601, pp. 605–605v.

⁵¹⁵ Vinterting, Liminka parish, 7th, 8th and 9th of February 1667, NAF, Court Records, KO a:12, 1667–1671, act 22–23, pp. 18–18v.

⁵¹⁶ Another possible explanation could be that the ultimate fines that the transgressors had to pay were insubstantial, although that is less probable.

⁵¹⁷ See Mansbridge (2013).

⁵¹⁸ Vinterting, Kruunupyy parish, 12th and 13th of March 1686, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1686–1686, act 128, pp. 186–187. Original text: 'heela sochnens undergångh'; Sommarting, Kruunupyy, Kokkola, and Kälviä parishes, 7th, 8th, and 9th of September 1686, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1686–1686, act 315–320, pp. 559–568.

However, the question remains whether efforts such as those taken by Johan Graan had the desired effect. His involvement was motivated by the ‘excessive deforestation’ that he had noticed, or at least heard of, which caused ‘incurable damage’ to the forests in the region.⁵¹⁹ But what did this mean? Similar arguments to that of Graan have been found among local officials in other places within the Swedish Kingdom. In the county of Småland in southern Sweden during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, similar alarming reports of the forests becoming worthless due to the peasantry’s forest cutting activities have been found. However, earlier research has determined that the risk of total deforestation that local officials expressed was ‘greatly exaggerated’. As such, reality deviated significantly from the flagrantly generalising claims about forest scarcity expressed by local officials; claims that has been uncritically accepted as truth through an over-interpretation of their concern about increasing forest shortage.⁵²⁰

It is highly likely that the development in North Ostrobothnia mirrored that of other regions within the Swedish Kingdom where forest exploitation increased during the seventeenth and ensuing centuries. Regardless, inspections and regulations did have consequences for the peasantry. It is therefore fitting to ask what consequences followed from Graan’s inspections and regulations? How was the peasantry’s ability to govern their forest commons affected? As have been demonstrated in Chapter 2, the Kruunupyy peasants were among those who experienced the most serious difficulties in regard to keeping forest cutting at a sustainable level. After the regulations of the county governor, there is evidence of how the peasants of Kruunupyy at times were able to stay within the limit of forest cutting that corresponded to each homestead’s taxable capacity, that is, a somewhat functional governance regime within the parish.⁵²¹ Nevertheless, it was still a parish community where internal controversies and polarisation persisted until the very end of the century. Therefore, the answer to the question above is that Graan’s involvement was an effort of establishing a reasonable level of forest exploitation that the peasantry struggled to accomplish on their own, although with limited success.

⁵¹⁹ Vinterting, Kruunupyy parish, 18th and 20th of January 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 360, p. 352v. Original text: ‘öfwerflödiga Skogshuggande’; ‘obotelige skada’.

⁵²⁰ Larsson, L-O (1989), pp. 120–127, 146.

⁵²¹ Höstting, Kruunupyy parish, 29th, 30th, and 31st of August 1679, NAF, Court Records, KO a:20, 1678–1678, act 131, pp. 127v–128; Vinterting, Kokkola parish, 15th, 16th and 17th of March 1686, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1686–1686, act 139, pp. 207–208.

4.2.3 The County Governor's Officials

It was mentioned earlier that local officials sometimes failed in their responsibility to comply with the county governor's instructions, such as the mayor of Oulu, but also the locally appointed chief constable. However, they did enjoy quite extensive liberties in issuing regulations and requesting inspections. This is evident from the fact that several officials in different parishes made such efforts in the absence of the county governor. Now, considering that some counties (including Ostrobothnia) was quite large in geographical terms, it is understandable that the county governor could not be present everywhere at all times. Although, it is unclear to what degree regulations were enforced without his knowledge, either before or after the fact. Nevertheless, inspections and regulations imposed on the peasantry had consequences and affected the conditions under which they were able to make a living. Furthermore, as will be demonstrated below, these actions sparked reactions that fit well into the discussion on moral economy.⁵²²

A crown official who quite often issued inspections and enforced regulations was Bailiff Christian Willingshusen. He was of German descent and served as bailiff and *hauptman* in the 1660s and early 1670s. During his term of office, he was subjected to a thorough investigation by central authorities, facing charges of embezzlement and to have neglected the duties of his office. He was even summoned to the Chamber of Deputies (Swe. *Kammarkollegium*) to answer for the allegations put against him after representatives of the chamber visited the region in 1668. Whilst the peasantry apparently suffered under his spiteful behaviour and held him for a particularly dishonest man, County Governor Johan Graan made efforts to aid his subordinate, although with little result.⁵²³ Graan, on the other hand, was in all things considered popular among the peasantry. Even though the county administration under him has been labelled as more bureaucratic and stricter than under other county governors, he retained his popularity throughout his service. According to Alexander Jonsson, Graan practiced a peasant-friendly rhetoric in all his endeavours, which was well received by the peasant community, but less so by the central government.⁵²⁴

Despite the disputed personal character of Christian Willingshusen, his actions had consequences for the local population. The court records reveal

⁵²² Scott (1976).

⁵²³ Virrankoski (1973) pp. 517–518; Jonsson (2005), pp. 143–144.

⁵²⁴ Jonsson (2005), pp. 147–148.

that he at least was a diligent man seeing as he issued several inspections on forest-related activities in the year 1673. The result of one of them was announced in May and concerned the number of sawmills that had been built without permission during the last two to three years. The investigation revealed that a total of 17 sawmills had been illegally built, concluding that the amount of exported timber was ‘far too much’. Even though the concerned peasantry of Kokkola replied that they did not know that such regulations had ever been issued, Willingshusen issued a fine of 40 marks and the immediate confiscation of the goods.⁵²⁵

Six months later, the regulation issued by Willingshusen was again subject for the local court.⁵²⁶ Since the last court assembly, the bailiff had set a quota of permissible production of planks to 192 per *mantal*, and a comprehensive investigation of the produce of 19 sawmills had been made. The number of persons using one sawmill varied between two and seven, amounting to 88 individuals in total including one *hauptman*, with homesteads the size of one fourth to one and a fourth *mantal*. The number of planks produced amounted to more than 28 000 and 706 timber logs, approximately 320 planks and 8 timber logs per person. This is a total of almost 1 500 planks being produced at one sawmill over the course of 11 months. In other words, Willingshusen’s regulation six months earlier did not have the desired effect, and the fine of 40 marks was thus looming. None of the accused had much to say in their defence other than to refer to ‘their poverty’ and that ‘if the law and your grace hereafter do not observe this, then they would be totally ruined’. This swayed Willingshusen since he understood that the peasantry needed planks. He therefore decided to spare them having to pay the fines. Instead, he told the sawmill owners to produce a total of 6 000 planks that were to be stacked on the shoreline of Hakalax in Kokkola, from which the parish members could take what they needed. Instead of each man paying the fine of 40 marks, this would serve as a reasonable alternative considering that the total worth of the 6 000 planks was estimated to 4 000 marks (1 000 copper thalers), approximately 45 marks (11 copper thalers) for each of the 88 individuals.⁵²⁷

⁵²⁵ Ting, Kokkola parish, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 6th and 7th of May 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 498–499, pp. 490–490v, nr. 8. Original text: ‘alt för myckit’.

⁵²⁶ See Figure 18.

⁵²⁷ Höstting, Kokkola parish, 11th, 12th and 13th of November 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 297–299, pp. 290–292. Original text: ‘deras fattigdom’; ‘att i fall lagen och eij Näder häruthinnan observera des så worde dhe totaliteter ruinerade’. This issue was later returned to in August 1674 when Willingshusen’s

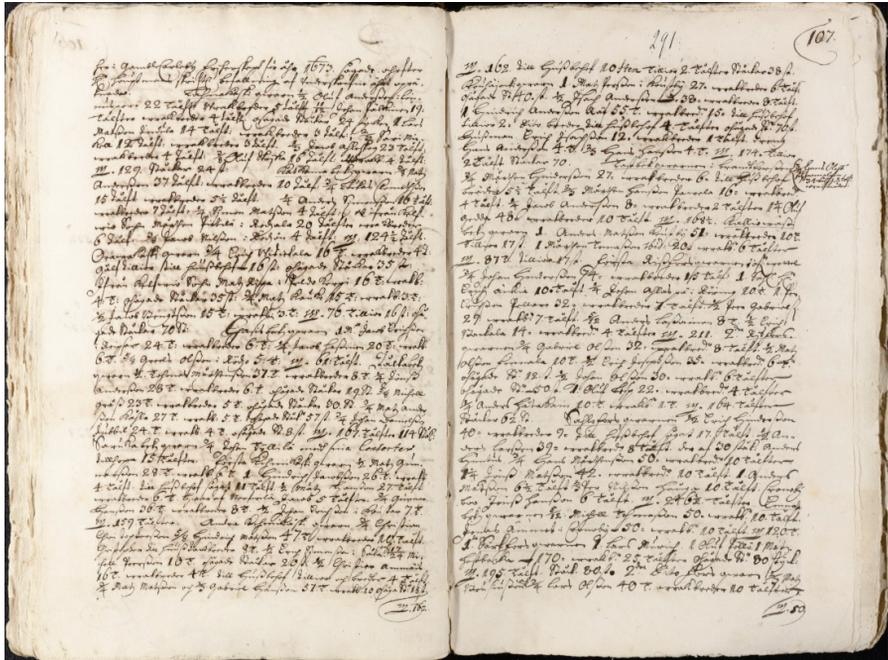


Figure 18. Court record over Willingshusen's investigation in 1673. Source: Kokkola parish, 11th, 12th and 13th of November 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 298, pp. 290v–291.

Whilst investigations often resulted in fines being distributed among the peasantry, the control mechanisms of the local authorities were lacking in the sense that they were only able to investigate how much forest resources that had been exploited in retrospect. The actual harvesting of standing trees, transports to the sawmills, and even the sawing of planks was not a process that officials such as Willingshusen could easily oversee. This further demonstrates how the peasant community stood free to use their forests as they saw fit, even though it was considered to be excessive by the authorities, or even by members of the peasantry themselves. It is unclear whether the 6 000 planks meant for public consumption was a meagre compensation and for how long it was intended to last. After all, it was only one fifth of the total amount of planks produced that year. It nevertheless shows that the peasantry's needs were not entirely ignored.

ruling and said number of planks was confirmed, see Hötting, Kokkola parish, 26th and 27th of August 1674, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 610, p. 601v.

The restrictions that Willingshusen introduced on how many planks everyone was allowed to produce most certainly affected the peasantry's household economy. Considering how widespread the sawmill industry in fact was in the southern parishes, it most certainly constituted a significant part of the peasants' income. It is therefore not surprising that they continued as they did. In fact, at the same court session, Willingshusen admonished those who were unable to pay their taxes to provide other goods such as 'tar, planks, and other things that the peasant can produce' and that these products would equate to little more than two copper thalers for one dozen planks and three copper thalers for a barrel of tar. It was furthermore proclaimed as strictly forbidden to produce and sell these kinds of goods to anyone before the taxes had been paid in full.⁵²⁸ So, even though Willingshusen's order to produce 6 000 planks for public consumption sounded comforting, the heavy tax burden and pervasive restrictions provided little relief in terms of providing for one's family.

High taxes and impending penalties for excessive forest cutting was some-thing that the peasantry had to live with. The intentional outcome of the investigation carried out by Willingshusen, and the exploitation limit imposed, promoted a paradoxical arrangement where peasants were supposed to extract enough resources to cover expenditures owed to the Crown, but not so much that they were also able to make any significant profits from their work. It was a design where the forests can be imagined as the peasantry's bank from which money (or resources) could be withdrawn provided that the state approved, both in terms of size and interval. As such, it was a serious attempt to limit the peasantry's self-governance and ability to decide how to regulate forest appropriation themselves. This would result in a more fragile and exposed CPI since regulatory decisions were effectively displaced and put in the hands of someone else, in this case the state. As such, the peasantry's ability to make prioritisations aimed towards achieving *sustainable balance* was most certainly negatively affected.

Even though the peasantry emphasised their lack of means, they respected the bailiff's decision and obeyed his demand of providing 6 000 planks for public consumption. However, the peasantry was not docile to all forms of unjust treatment as would be apparent several years later. In a joint court meeting between Kokkola, Kruunuppy, and Kälviä in September 1687, the

⁵²⁸ Höstting, Kokkola parish, 11th, 12th and 13th of November 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 302, p. 294v. Original text: 'Tiera, breder och annat som bonden kan åstadhkomma'.

peasantry of the first approached the local court again. They complained that whilst Bailiff Gabriel Wahl had received and noted the delivery of the 6 000 planks in the tax records, Deputy Tax Collector Jöran Hansson claimed that they should make the same delivery again. They explained how they were unable to understand on what grounds they were expected to double their delivery and asked to be given a full explanation. Furthermore, they demanded that the court should hold these crown officials responsible and ‘hereby seek the court’s ban’ of these men. However, the court was unable to meet the peasants’ wishes, but nevertheless submitted the complaint to County Governor Gustav Grass for deliberation and judgement.⁵²⁹

According to Virrankoski, regulations and burdens imposed by local authorities significantly reduced the freedom of action for peasants, and he has emphasised that the peasantry had no say in the creation of regulations. He has furthermore argued that the peasantry calmly adapted to this development and that resistance remained at the level of individual outbursts.⁵³⁰ If this is correct, it can be compared to developments on the Swedish side of the kingdom where peasants had no say in the establishment of ironworks and where crown officials even threatened to strip the peasantry of their ancient rights if they did not comply to the plans set in motion.⁵³¹

However, in North Ostrobothnia, inspections and regulations did spark reactions from the peasantry that can be understood in relation to moral economy. The relation between peasants and authorities was indeed such that local officials had legal right to impose restrictions and fines upon those who they believed had overexploited forest resources. Whilst this negatively affected the peasant economy, it was to a certain degree tolerated. It was tolerated since they only after having been subjected to scrutiny realised that they had in fact committed the crime of overexploitation. An alternative explanation is that whilst Willingshusen’s propagated arrangement minimised their potential of making a profit, local authorities had a limited ability of making sure that further exploitation did not occur. Nevertheless, the peasantry had a firm perception of what was just and unjust behaviour. When told to double the delivery of planks, tolerance was no longer an option. It was a clear break against the agreement previously struck between them and Bailiff Willingshusen. In terms of how it would affect the

⁵²⁹ Sommarting, Kokkola, Kruunupyy and Kälviä parishes, 17th, 19th and 20th of September 1687, NAF, Court Records, KO a:7, 1687–1687, act 281, pp. 547–548. Original text: ‘söckiandes härutinnan Rättens förbodh’.

⁵³⁰ Virrankoski (1973), p. 747.

⁵³¹ Montelius (1985), pp. 27–29.

peasantry's ability to achieve a governance regime where ecological, institutional, and economic sustainability existed in balance, the first and the last would most certainly have taken a blow. However, the institution would have been strengthened by the shared and unifying belief of having been wronged. It is unfortunately not known what happened after the complaint had been presented to County Governor Grass, but the example is nonetheless demonstrative of what the peasantry believed that morally correct and justifiable behaviour was.

4.2.4 Corruption

The implementation of new forest laws and regulations was generally not a process of introducing new ways of managing forest resources. They did not include schemes of reforestation or silviculture. It was rather an attempt to limit the extent of forest exploitation. In Germany, for example, early forest legislation was aimed at providing state officials with more possibilities of monitoring forest exploitation, to inspect stocks, and to counteract different forms of corruption on the part of those in charge of such supervision. However, they were employed by the state and received a share of the fines put on those convicted of unlawful deforestation. In this way, as Bernd-Stefan Grewe and Richard Hölzl has argued, it was 'an invitation for corruption, and forest guards did not have a good reputation.'⁵³²

The potential risk of corruption among the county governor's officials was high. As mentioned previously, earlier research has been able to demonstrate how local officials engaged in illegal trade in rural areas and embezzled merchandise despite the county governor's direct orders.⁵³³ A somewhat different example, yet a legal case that points to the questionable conduct of a crown official, is found in the court records of Kruunupyy parish from 1673. It involved Bailiff Erik Tawast who accused the peasant Lars Larsson from the village of Pâras to have cut ship planks on some islets in Pedersöre parish. Lars said that he had been given permission to do so by the peasants living in the area. The bailiff responded by referencing the fifth article of the 1664 forest ordinance, which stipulated that such allowances could not be given unless 'it is allowed by the country itself, the hundred, or

⁵³² Grewe & Hölzl (2021), p. 21.

⁵³³ Virrankoski (1973), pp. 394, 517–518; Jonsson (2005), pp. 143–144.

the parishes, and that it is lawfully done with the local court's permission.'⁵³⁴ Lars explained that this matter had already been discussed at the local court in Pedersöre and that the court had told him to prove who had given him permission, but that he had been unable to attend due to illness. He had instead asked a fellow parish member named Erik Andersson to go in his stead, which he had done, but nonetheless failed to provide the court with any proof. Tawast therefore asked Erik why that was so, to which he simply replied that no one at the meeting had brought the matter up for discussion. Nevertheless, he explained that Lars had supposedly cut 70 ship planks on the islets, which Lars also confirmed. Lars had furthermore moved the planks from where they were stored, even though Tawast had told him to leave them be until the matter had been resolved. Lars then explained that he had cut the planks at the request of the Crown and had been forced to move them in order to avoid them being seized by the crown officials. Nevertheless, Tawast still believed that this had been done out of conceit, for which Lars was fined twelve copper öre for each plank, which would accrue to Tawast himself.⁵³⁵

Neither the size of the fine that Lars Larsson had to pay, nor its recipient, was correct or in accordance with the law. The forest ordinance of 1664 stipulated that should anyone violate article five, the sum of the fine was two silver marks per plank. It should furthermore be divided *treskiftes*, that is, between the king, the plaintiff, and the hundred or town.⁵³⁶ It is impossible to know what Bailiff Tawast did with the fine when he had received it. However, considering the quite frequent occurrences of embezzlement that took place in the region, it is likely, as the court records specifies, that he simply kept it for himself.

There are several examples of the county governor's local officials taking action to regulate forest cutting, and at times, seemingly for their own benefit. Whilst the office of forest ranger existed in the Swedish Kingdom and were men employed by *Riksjägmästarämbet* (En. Royal Forester Ministry), such offices were not in place in North Ostrobothnia. Nevertheless, one case in particular demonstrates how local officials sometimes arbitrarily demanded regulation activities to be carried out. This

⁵³⁴ RA, Kongl. May:tz Ordning och Stadga om Skogarne i Rijket 1664. Original text: 'sådant honom tillåtes aff silfwa Landet/ Häradet eller socknerne/ och dhet laghigen å Tinget/ och at Lander/ Härader eller Sochname skeer derföre nöye.'

⁵³⁵ Vintering, Kruunupyy parish, 18th and 20th of January 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 358, pp. 350v–351.

⁵³⁶ RA, Kongl. May:tz Ordning och Stadga om Skogarne i Rijket 1664, §5.

happened in February 1667 when Bailiff Henrik Corte called for an immediate inspection to be carried out concerning the cutting of tar wood and planks on the forest commons in Siikajoki in Saloinen parish and Lumijoki in Liminka parish. Both were situated on separate sides of the parish border that they shared. It is not stated in the records why this was of importance to the bailiff. In fact, it was not clear to the attending peasants either since the chief constable in Liminka, Carl Josephsson, said that whatever had happened in this regard 'has been done in good conscience'. Moreover, no one from Siikajoki or Lumijoki had complained over any irregularities. The chief constable therefore asked Bailiff Corte what he was insinuating, although no answer was recorded. It was further added by another attendant that no one was allowed to discriminate against the peasantry by simply claiming that something had been wrongfully done without having any proof to support it. Therefore, the members of the court decided to disregard Corte's request of an immediate inspection on the grounds that no actual dispute seemed to exist. The entire matter seemed to be, as the court records specifies, an expression of quarrels between gentlemen, in this case, between the bailiff and the chief constable.⁵³⁷

It is impossible to know exactly what motives Bailiff Corte had to demand an inspection when no apparent conflict seemed to precede. It is likely, as is suggested in the court records, that it was due to personal reasons rather than the will to enforce the law. It also goes to show that the county governor's officials could not do whatever they wanted without proper reason. Their behaviour was, by all things considered, scrutinised and judged in relation to the peasantry's perception of what was decent and just, thus an expression of their moral economy. Furthermore, it demonstrates how the local court and its rural representatives retained legal authority in the governor's absence.

Theft and embezzlement of goods occurred with regular intervals within peasant society and between peasants and burghers. The latter can in this context be seen as an expression of defiance of laws enforced by local authorities, or as a desire to trade freely with whomever one wanted. The man holding the office of chief constable had a unique role in this regard since he was elected from the peasant community whilst at the same time acted as public prosecutor. This dual position in representing the local

⁵³⁷ The court did however decide to gather more information from both sides of the parish border during the upcoming summer so as to determine whether any wrongdoing had actually transpired. Vintering, Liminka parish, 7th, 8th and 9th of February 1667, NAF, Court Records, KO a:12, 1667–1671, act 22–23, pp. 18–18v. Original text: 'ähr i sådant skedt medh sändh'.

community and simultaneously being duty-bound to report any wrongdoings that came to his attention has led scholars to argue that he probably did not trouble the local courts with matters that could be deemed trivial, but rather issues that were too commonly known to be neglected. Therefore, that which upset the local community enough for it to be impossible to avoid was a highly relative matter.⁵³⁸

Unlike the North Ostrobothnian bailiffs, there is hardly any evidence of chief constables being involved in unlawful trade or embezzlement, at least not to such a degree that it stirred discontent among peasant communities. There is only one case of such accusations being directed towards a chief constable. It took place in 1680 in Kruunupyy parish, and his name was Christer Mattsson. The matter concerned the displacement of 46,5 dozen planks that the burgher Christian Kröger had bought from the peasants Lars Andersson and Mats Matsson from Kortjärvi village. The peasants had delivered and stacked the planks by the loading dock on Kronholmen. They had thereafter nailed them together and marked them with the seals of their homesteads. The chief constable had later gone to the loading dock and replaced the two peasants' seals with the Crown Seal and at his own discretion sold the planks to some burghers. On behalf of the peasants and himself, Kröger thus accused the chief constable of 'illegal trade under the privileges and abuse of the Crown Seal'. A peasant named Mats Mattsson approached the court as a witness. He explained that he previously wanted to buy 14 dozen planks from Christer, but that he told him to not touch the planks marked with the peasants' seals, especially since Christer had planks back at his homestead. Christer had nonetheless disassembled the planks and had Mats buy the planks he needed. The chief constable did not deny that he had indeed put the Crown Seal on the planks. However, he explained that he had done so because Court Scribe Clas Wikman had provided him with a directive written by County Governor Didrik Wrangel af Adinal. According to this instruction, he was to receive a delivery of 100 dozen planks that was to be used for 'the need of the parish', and since the two Kortjärvi peasants had made a delivery, he believed that he was doing the right thing when he marked them with the Crown Seal. However, it came to light that the chief constable had previously indebted himself to a couple of burghers and had promised to repay them with planks. Seeing as he only had himself to blame for not acknowledging that this had been a private transaction, and since he

⁵³⁸ Sundin (1992), p. 68–69; Larsson (2009), p. 210. See also Scott (1976).

had used the planks as repayment of a loan, he was forced to reinstate the planks and to pay a fine of 40 marks.⁵³⁹

It is not known to what degree corruption occurred that involved crown officials and peasants collaborating. It is possible that this was as common a thing as crown officials taking advantage of the peasants and making personal profits on their expense. However, when the latter happened, peasants were most often quick to question the conduct of the officials, expressing their discontent and moral justification in doing so. Even so, as the case with Bailiff Tawast showed, keeping fines paid by a peasant to oneself happened. However, it is to some degree understandable that Lars Larsson did not question this since he, after all, stood in an exposed position of being accused and ultimately found guilty of having committed a crime.

4.2.5 The Swedish Admiralty and Shipyard in Kruunupyy

The Swedish Navy grew significantly during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the presence of battleships and merchant vessels similarly increased throughout the period. A key component in establishing control over trading routes and to expand the kingdom's dominions was therefore to have a strong and capable navy with which these goals could be achieved. The Swedish Navy was not only tasked with transporting troops and engaging in naval warfare. It also transported large amounts of resources from all corners of the kingdom to the large commercial centres in Stockholm and the northern coast of Germany and the Netherlands, effectively serving different purposes in peacetime and wartime.⁵⁴⁰

After the reign of Gustav II Adolf, the navy's administration and organisation changed with the Instrument of Government of 1634. Whilst it had previously been governed directly by the king, it was now to be administered by the Swedish Admiralty. This new institution was, among other things, tasked with overseeing the building of ships that would serve in the Swedish Navy.⁵⁴¹ A consequence of Sweden's expansionistic policies was to construct shipyards all around the kingdom, the largest of which was located on Blasieholmen in Stockholm where the famous Vasa ship was built and later sank just moments after its maiden voyage. A smaller, although not

⁵³⁹ Höstting, Kruunupyy parish, 7th and 8th of September 1680, NAF, Court Records, KO a:25, 1680–1680, act 88, pp. 171–172. Original text: 'olaga handell efter privilegieerne och Cronones Merkes missbruuk'; 'till Sochnens behooff'.

⁵⁴⁰ Hammar (2014), pp. 41–42.

⁵⁴¹ Hammar (2014), pp. 46–47.

insignificant, shipyard was constructed on Jouxholmen in Kruunupyy parish. The presence of the Swedish Admiralty would have great consequences for the peasantry's forest related activities from the establishment of the shipyard and throughout the remainder of the seventeenth century.

Construction started in 1673 as the dean (Swe. *prost*) Jacobus Brennerus was given the opportunity to build a ship that later sailed to Stockholm and got official approval by the Swedish Admiralty. Technical and practical expertise in shipbuilding was high in Ostrobothnia, and as many as 260 men worked at the shipyard in 1674. Up until 1704, 67 ships were built, the largest measuring up to 30 meters.⁵⁴² The shipyard in Kruunupyy not only meant that peasants could enter the service of the Swedish Admiralty, but deals were also struck with the peasants. The peasantry of Kruunupyy was, for example, set to deliver 1 000 dozen planks to the shipyard on a yearly interval, for which they were to be paid fairly. It is possible to gain more information about these deliveries from a court case that took place in 1679. In September, the secretary of construction (Swe. *byggningskrivare*)⁵⁴³ in Kruunupyy, Per Aspe, stood accused of having failed to pay the peasant Michel Olsson for the planks that he had delivered. Aspe countered by showing a register over all the planks that Michel had delivered and concluded that he had an outstanding debt of 12 dozen planks. Michel thus found himself in a position where the court ordered him to complete the delivery of the planks, something he had probably not planned for. However, luckily enough, it turned out that Michel had a debt of five and a half dozen planks to collect from another peasant named Anders Olsson, which would help him in completing the payment to Aspe.⁵⁴⁴

The peasantry had not only promised to deliver planks to the shipyard, but also other wooden products and materials that were required when constructing ships. One such product was tar, two barrels of which had, for example, been delivered by the peasant Nils Matsson in 1675, as well as 28 dozen planks.⁵⁴⁵ However, it was common that the peasantry struggled to deliver the promised number of planks, which is well demonstrated by a court case from Kruunupyy taking place in August 1674. At this time, Per

⁵⁴² Tegengren (1943), pp. 318–337; *Svenska Österbottens Historia* 3 (1980), p. 81.

⁵⁴³ *Byggningskrivare* was an official who supervised all construction enterprises in the town, such as public buildings, repairs, and other constructions, as well as related materials and instruments.

⁵⁴⁴ Häradsting, Kruunupyy parish, 30th of September and 1st of October 1679, NAF, Court Records, Ko a:22, 1679–1679, act 117, pp. 833–834.

⁵⁴⁵ Häradsting, Kruunupyy parish, 30th of September and 1st of October 1679, NAF, Court Records, KO a:22, 1679–1679, act 119–120, pp. 837–838.

Aspe complained over the fact that the peasantry had not fulfilled the deliveries as they should. Furthermore, the townspeople of Kokkola had engaged in trade with the peasantry, thus depriving the admiralty of its resources. This contradicted the regulation made six months earlier when Bailiff Gabriel Wahl had forbidden the peasantry to deliver or sell 'even the smallest number of planks to Kokkola or elsewhere before the admiralty has received its full quantity'.⁵⁴⁶ The town dwelling merchants who had engaged in this illegal trade were several, but only a few were present at the court meeting. One of them, Christian Kröger, took it upon himself to answer for the allegations. He admitted that they had indeed been trading with the peasants and thus acquired a few hundred dozen planks. However, he added that a certain amount had been acquired as payment for expenses that the burghers had made for the peasantry, which the peasants confirmed. However, that did not explain the fact that a large number of planks marked with the Crown Seal had disappeared.⁵⁴⁷

The proclamation made by Bailiff Wahl, that is, that no trade between peasants and burghers was allowed before the admiralty had received its share, could not have escaped anyone since it had been proclaimed at the church pulpit. Moreover, there were witnesses who could testify to the fact that both the burghers and the peasantry had been present to hear it. The peasant Hans Matsson even explained how he had previously reminded Kröger that it was forbidden to deliver planks to him, to which he had allegedly answered 'I take and answer for myself'. Wahl's regulations had, in other words, been outright disregarded. The laymen of the court deliberated and came to the following conclusion. The burghers had contrary to the restriction engaged in trade with the peasantry before the admiralty had received its share, even though it had on several occasions been proclaimed as forbidden and a fine of 40 marks had been stipulated. They had furthermore done so even though the planks were marked with the Crown Seal, for which they were forced to pay the fines that had been established. However, the peasantry was not convicted of any offence since they had been compelled to deliver planks to the burghers as payment for their expenses. The burghers were told to restore the planks to the admiralty

⁵⁴⁶ Vinterting, Kruunupy parish, 16th, 17th and 18th of February 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 676–677, pp. 668–668v. Original text: 'der ringaste brädher till G. Carleby el. annorstädhes förrän Ammiralitetet sitt fulla quantam bekommit hafver'.

⁵⁴⁷ Sommaring, Kruunupy parish, 26th of August 1674, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 821–823, pp. 376–380.

at their earliest convenience and stood free to seek repayment from the peasants in whatever legal way they saw fit.⁵⁴⁸

This was certainly a financial blow to Christian Kröger and his fellow burghers. Kröger was not satisfied with how the matter ended, and he therefore insistently posed some questions to Per Aspe, demanding that they should be satisfactorily answered. He wanted to know how much resources the shipyard needed to complete the two ships that was currently under construction, as well as how many planks the peasantry was obliged to deliver. He furthermore asked if Aspe could prove by what right he could establish these rules, which undoubtedly affected trade in the town of Kokkola. Finally, he stated that Aspe was not to undermine the trading privileges that the burghers enjoyed. Regarding the first question, Bailiff Aspe replied that he by no means was obliged to provide Kröger with any information concerning the construction of ships at the shipyard. However, he did divulge that the peasantry was tasked with delivering 1 000 planks, tar, and other requirements, and that he would provide onto them the instructions and duties he had as secretary of construction. Lastly, he stated that he had no intention of circumcising the burghers' trading privileges, only that the need of the admiralty stood above other needs, and as such, he had to make sure that the peasantry's deliveries continued as planned.⁵⁴⁹

Making planks for shipbuilding not only kept the peasants of Kruunupyy busy, but also those living in the neighbouring parish of Kokkola to the north. The court records do not supply much information regarding what relations the peasants of Kokkola had with the shipyard. However, Helmer Tegengren has explained that the admiralty made a contract with the peasants of Kokkola and Kälviä in 1682, in which they were to deliver materials to construct a ship by Midsummer Eve the same year. However, unlike the peasants in Kruunupyy, they did not agree to deliver a predetermined number of resources over the course of a year, but rather to supply materials when a new ship was under construction.⁵⁵⁰ Nevertheless, when the parish members of Kokkola summoned at the court meeting in April 1675, Per Aspe attended and demanded that the peasants should provide the shipyard with materials. The laymen of the court respectfully acknowledged that the admiralty needed

⁵⁴⁸ Sommarting, Kruunupyy parish, 26th of August 1674, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 821–823, pp. 376–380.

⁵⁴⁹ Sommarting, Kruunupyy parish, 26th of August 1674, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 821–823, pp. 376–380.

⁵⁵⁰ Tegengren (1943), p. 328.

these resources and admitted that it was indeed the duty of the peasantry to supply the shipyard with the necessary materials, so long as they were paid for their goods. They thus agreed to transport as much timber as they could using the waterways leading down to the islet where the shipyard was located. However, it was impossible to do so immediately due to the dwindling strength of their draft animals,⁵⁵¹ seeing as they had recently fallen upon particularly hard times. Nevertheless, each layman would let no moment pass in vain in the attempts to resolve the situation, or as it is stated: ‘thereon each layman should seriously consider at their bedside table.’⁵⁵²

The fear of depleting forest resources that was so deeply rooted in the rhetoric of the central government and county governor’s administration was not shared by the admiralty’s officials. As secretary of construction, Per Aspe was solely concerned with acquiring the materials needed to finish the ships within the timeframe set by the admiralty. Still, the charges he put on the peasantry undoubtedly affected the extent of exploitable forests in the region. How the forests were to be exploited was left up to the peasantry to decide for themselves. Paying little or no attention to these issues, whilst at the same time demanding high levels of deliveries, could naturally have negative consequences for the ecological sustainability of the forests since the peasantry had no alternative than to heed the admiralty’s demands. Nevertheless, the demands stood directly opposed to the county governor’s regulations on how forests were supposed to be exploited. This becomes evident when contrasted with a case from 1681. County Governor Didrik Wrangel af Adinal informed the peasantry of Kokkola and Kälviä that it was forbidden to cut trees from the forest commons with the purpose of making deliveries to the shipyard in Kruunupyy unless they wanted to avoid ‘the highest disgrace and punishment’.⁵⁵³

The representatives of the two governmental branches thus had different views on how the forests were supposed to be managed, and communication between them was definitely lacking. Ultimately, the chief supervision of the shipyard was transferred from Per Aspe to previous Customs Officer Erik Tawast in April 1675. According to Tegengren, the reason for his

⁵⁵¹ The word used to refer to those transporting the wood materials is ‘dragare’, which could both mean animals and people.

⁵⁵² Vintering, Kokkola parish, 8th and 9th of April 1675, NAF, Court Records, KO a:17, 1675–1675, act 130–131, pp. 127–127v. Original text: ‘der på Nembdemänneme hwar i sijn Nattbordh medh alfwar drijfwa skulle.’

⁵⁵³ Hösting, Kokkola and Kälviä parishes, 21st, 22nd and 23rd of March 1681, NAF, Court Records, KO a:1, 1681–1681, act 217, pp. 420–421. Original text: ‘wed högsta Onåde och straff’.

degradation was because the admiralty had lost all confidence for Aspe's ability to carry out the duties of his office. Nevertheless, he was allowed to remain in the service of the Crown.⁵⁵⁴

The development outlined above sets the North Ostrobothnian example aside from how other maritime powers in Europe perceived the impending depletion of forests as a consequence of the growing shipbuilding industry. The Spanish Navy and King Felipe II (1527–1598), for example, expressed serious concerns over these issues in the late sixteenth century. Instead of issuing fines and running the risk of being indebted to the Crown for not supplying the navy with forest resources, the Spanish case shows how people risked being fined if they did not make efforts to plant a set quota of new trees at the same rate as trees were being cut down.⁵⁵⁵ Other reforestation strategies were decreed in Denmark during the late seventeenth century whereby peasants who cut oak or beech were told to replant three trees for every one they cut.⁵⁵⁶ Such reforestation efforts were not an aspect of the Swedish Admiralty's strategy, nor was it the case with the county governor's administration. However, both the Swedish and the Spanish Crown had limited ability to control the behaviour of local forest users. Nevertheless, Spanish authorities utilised and depended on local cooperation and conservation methods to a degree which cannot be said to parallel the case in North Ostrobothnia.

4.2.6 A Mandatory Duty

The peasantry was able to produce large quantities of timber logs and planks. From the court records from 1673, it is possible to determine how peasants from two villages in Kruunupyy had cut 4 610 timber logs in one year, and the peasantry in Kokkola had produced more than 28 000 planks during the same time. In 1686, the profuse cutting by the village members of Teerijärvi and three other villages amounted to 7 008 timber logs and 441,5 barrels of tar. At first glance, therefore, it is perhaps surprising that the peasantry was unable to deliver the agreed upon 1 000 dozen planks to the admiralty during the following year.⁵⁵⁷ Seeing as they were in fact more than capable to

⁵⁵⁴ Tegengren (1943), p. 323.

⁵⁵⁵ Wing (2012), pp. 137–139; Wing (2015).

⁵⁵⁶ Fritzboeger (2004), p. 122.

⁵⁵⁷ Vinterting, Kruunupyy parish, the 12th of May 1673, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 369–370, pp. 361v–363; Sommarting, Kruunupyy, Kokkola, and Kälviä parishes, 7th, 8th, and 9th of September 1686, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1686–1686, act 315–320, pp. 559–568.

produce more than the admiralty needed, one can therefore wonder why they did not fulfil their deliveries, especially since they after all were paid. One explanation is that the burghers were able to pay more for the planks than the admiralty. However, a more convincing explanation is that the peasants were forced to trade with the burghers because of their longstanding trade agreements – in other words due to *majmiseriet* and the burghers' credit-giving strategies. It has already been demonstrated that peasants refrained from buying goods from the state even when the price of said goods was set at a favourable level. The reason for this was that if they did not trade with the burghers, the credits given would cease and loans could be called in.⁵⁵⁸ Furthermore, the burgher Christian Kröger had indeed explained that the reason why he and his fellow burghers had taken the peasants' planks was because they had previously made expenses for the peasantry.⁵⁵⁹ It thus stands clear that the peasantry found themselves in a precarious situation where they had made promises they could not fulfil and took credits they were unable to repay.

Problems concerning excessive forest cutting for shipbuilding continued until the very end of the seventeenth century. Even though many ships were constructed at the shipyard in Kruunupyy, the procurement of wooden materials was a recurring issue that local authorities struggled to obtain. The main cause was the competing shipbuilding enterprises of the burghers who similarly depended on the peasantry's deliveries of ship planks. As have been demonstrated in Chapter 3, deals and contracts between peasants and burghers did not only include deliveries of tar. Peasants also built ships at the behest of the burghers, upon which the tar could be exported to Stockholm. Seeing as the tar trade was heavily regulated by the tar trading companies, the shipbuilding industry thus presented an alternative business venture over which no state-owned company had a monopoly. Whilst the Kruunupyy peasants' deliveries to the shipyard had been set at 1 000 dozen planks each year, the court records indicate that the peasantry of both Kruunupyy and Kokkola were expected to deliver that which the shipyard needed, whenever it was needed. And whilst they were paid for the effort of supplying it, the deliveries were a mandatory duty, making the 1 000 dozen a minimum for the continued operation of the shipyard.

⁵⁵⁸ See Chapter 3.4; Vinterting, Oulu parish, 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th of February 1682, NAF, Court Records, KO a:2, 1682–1682, act 143, p. 272.

⁵⁵⁹ Sommarting, Kruunupyy parish, 26th of August 1674, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 821–823, pp. 376–380.

In other places in Europe where shipbuilding was particularly prominent, institutions comparable to the Swedish Admiralty often had considerable influence in shaping regulations and perceptions concerning the use of forest resources, or more precisely the supply of timber.⁵⁶⁰ This was most certainly the case in North Ostrobothnia as well. The peasantry's mandatory duty is well demonstrated by a court case that took place in Kruunupyy parish in January 1692. A royal decree was announced by the county governor stating that the Royal Navy needed 100 dozen planks, 20 dozen pine planks five fathoms in length, 24 barrels of tar, and five barrels of thin-flowing tar. This was to be delivered as soon as possible and be available for admission in the parishes of Kokkola and Pedersöre. It is not clear for what particular purpose these resources were needed. However, the court records specify that it was to be shipped overseas, possibly to the shipyard on Blasieholmen in Stockholm. Regardless, the peasants of Kruunupyy, who already supplied the shipyard with materials, were asked what they could do to ensure that these deliveries were made. They replied that they could supply half of the resources requested, simultaneously supposing that the peasantry of Kokkola would supply the other half and 'do their obedient duty in this case'. The county governor promised that they would be paid fairly, which was 13 copper thalers for each barrel of tar, 11 copper thalers per dozen planks, and two copper thalers for the 'simple planks as was usual'. Understanding that the transportation of these products was very difficult during the summer, the county governor encouraged the peasantry to make haste before road conditions worsened. However, the set price came with a condition, namely that it would be delivered at a location known as Svinöra since it was the place 'where it could be best loaded' and later transported.⁵⁶¹

A question that arises is how this mandatory duty on the part of the peasantry affected their ability to govern their forest commons in a sustainable way? In terms of ecological and economic sustainability, it is very difficult to draw any definite conclusions. It is of course possible that in the case of the former, the forests were more rapidly exploited seeing as peasants delivered resources to the shipyard as well as to the burghers to whom they were in debt. Conversely, it is possible that they were able to make economic profits from these deliveries, whilst at the same time paying

⁵⁶⁰ Warde (2018), p. 60.

⁵⁶¹ Vinter ting, Kruunupyy parish, 4th and 5th of January 1692, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1692–1692, act 7–8, pp. 3–4. Original text: 'giöra sin Underdånigaste skulligheet i detta måhl'; 'Enkla bräder efter wanliggheeten'; 'der dhe bäst inlastas kunna'.

off their debts. However, what is certain, at least in relation to the example of 1692, is that under the circumstances of being given this mandated duty, the southern parishes were each united in their ambition to meet the admiralty's demands, which says something about social and institutional cohesion.

4.2.7 Asking for Permission

The admiralty's need of wooden materials was great. In order to acquire the resources needed, peasants were not supposed to sell their planks and other products to anyone else before this need was satisfied. As such, Bailiff Willinghusen issued a command in August 1674 whereby the peasants of Kokkola were forbidden to make any planks intended for shipbuilding from the parish forest, unless official permission had been given by the court. Failing to do so would result in a fine of 40 marks and the immediate confiscation of the planks.⁵⁶² A similar restriction was introduced in 1686, as previous research explains, when the county governor proclaimed that no one was allowed to start a shipbuilding enterprise unless it had first been sanctioned by the magistrate and county governor.⁵⁶³ Regardless, through the restriction of 1674, Willinghusen wished to achieve greater insights into how much the peasants were cutting, and perhaps also to gain a premonition that planks would soon be available. However, there are no examples of such fines ever being distributed or materials being confiscated as a result of his command in 1674. It is therefore unclear whether the peasantry complied with his instructions, if they disregarded them and were never caught, or that they were never systematically enforced.

Forcing the peasantry to ask for permission before felling trees and making planks on their forest commons was perhaps naïve. As mentioned earlier, local officials had no effective way of monitoring the peasantry's forest related activities other than to inspect how much had been sawn at a local sawmill or by reviewing the customs book over exported goods. However, a more successful strategy was to regulate the activity of building ships. Case in point, in January 1692, County Governor Gustav Grass demanded that the peasantry of Kokkola ceased all shipbuilding activities that happened without the local authorities' knowledge and to seek permission to engage in shipbuilding. This

⁵⁶² Hösting, Kokkola parish, 26th and 27th of August 1674, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1672–1674, act 610, pp. 601v–602.

⁵⁶³ Mickwitz & Möller (1951), pp. 103–104.

was decreed in the effort of preventing the ‘harmful deforestation’ of the parish forests, but also to ensure that the Crown received the resources it currently needed.⁵⁶⁴

At the same court meeting, just a few moments later, the peasant Mårten Simonsson and eight other peasants ‘most humbly applied for permission to build a ship’ for the burgher Jakob Reinholdsson. This they hoped to be permitted considering that the court ‘found them to be poor, and much needed to be allowed such construction in order to earn money to pay their taxes’. The court thus considered their circumstances as sufficiently bad to have their petition granted. However, the county governor claimed that it was ‘utterly unreasonable and unfair’ that Jakob Reinholdsson should be allowed to build a new ship, considering that he was already involved in the construction of other ships in the town of Pietarsaari. Their request was therefore denied.⁵⁶⁵ In other words, it was considered more important to ensure that burghers did not enrich themselves than to help the peasants in their financially vulnerable situation.

Shipbuilding in the parishes of Kruunupyy and Kokkola was undoubtedly an industry that occupied much of the peasantry’s time. Even though tar production was widely practiced in the whole of North Ostrobothnia, making planks for shipbuilding came to form the basis for many peasants’ household economy in these parishes. Even though local authorities demanded that they sought permission to build ships that would not enter the service of the Crown, it is evident from the case above that it was not always given. This was primarily because the needs of the Swedish Navy were considered more important than those of the burghers. Had circumstances concerning Jakob Reinholdsson been different, Mårten and his fellow peasants may very well have been allowed to build the ship they requested seeing as they were of particularly low means. Nevertheless, the reality of the case was such that it could not be allowed due to the many struggles of acquiring materials for building ships that the admiralty faced and continued to experience at the end of the seventeenth century.

⁵⁶⁴ Vinterting, Kruunupyy parish, 4th and 5th of January 1692, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1692–1692, act 7–8, pp. 3–4. Original text: ‘skadelige Skogshuggande’.

⁵⁶⁵ Vinterting, Kruunupyy parish, 4th and 5th of January 1692, NAF, Court Records, KO a:13, 1692–1692, act 8, pp. 4–5. Original text: ‘ödmükeligaste sökia få byggia ett skepp’; ‘befunnes wara fattige, och wähl behöfwia loff att få medh något byggerij förtiena sigh penningar, till att bethala sina utlagor medh’; ‘heelt oskiälligt och obilligt’.

4.2.8 Deliveries to the Castles

It has previously been explained how the peasantry could utilise the burgher population's growing need of firewood in a favourable way. However, another matter entirely was that of the peasantry's deliveries of firewood and other resources to the castles in the region. The earliest case concerning such deliveries took place in Oulu in 1646 when the peasantry was ordered by the chief constable to fulfil their deliveries before the county governor returned from his travels to the south in Kokkola, with warning of being fined for reluctance if ignored.⁵⁶⁶

Deliveries to the castles were recurring events throughout the whole year and consisted most importantly of firewood, but also of lime and birch bark, the former being an important component in making mortar and the latter for roofing. An example of a delivery is recorded in the court records from 1658. Upon the arrival of the county governor, it was decided that the peasantry had to deliver one fathom of firewood per every third tax unit (Swe. *mantal* or *rök*).⁵⁶⁷ The castles also needed timber for construction, which the peasantry of Sotkamo parish was commissioned to deliver to the castle in Kajaani. In 1682, when County Governor Didrik Wrangel of Adinal attended the parish's court meeting, he complained about their idleness in fulfilling this duty as the castle was in great need of repair. He therefore commanded the peasants to deliver 'good and strong logs, and other necessary materials', issuing a penalty of 40 silver marks for anyone who did not follow his instructions. However, he also added that if 'the village members should stand together at this time, they would better comply with this by helping each other'.⁵⁶⁸

It is evident from the court records that it was particularly important that the peasantry supplied the castle with firewood when the governor was there. When he was not, the size of deliveries was allowed to be smaller. Nevertheless, the administration at the castle could also impose different kinds of delivery duties on different parishes, depending on the needs of those working there. In 1657, for example, a decree issued by County Governor Johan Graan was read aloud in which the peasantry of Liminka was ordered to resume the deliveries of firewood to the castle as it had for

⁵⁶⁶ Vinterting, Oulu parish, 3rd of February 1646, NAF, Court Records, KO a:6, 1645–1649, act 86, p. 78v.

⁵⁶⁷ Vinterting, Muhos parish, 2nd of February 1658, NAF, Court Records, KO a:10, 1657–1658, act 388, p. 375v.

⁵⁶⁸ Vinterting, Sotkamo parish, 3rd and 4th of February 1682, NAF, Court Records, KO a:2, 1682–1682, act 99, pp. 184–185. Original text: 'gode och dugelige stockar, samt annat nöwendigt werke'; 'byiataalet stella sigh tillsammans på en tidh att dhe detta desto better efterkomma kunna och hielpa hwar andra'.

some time ceased. The peasantry replied with a complaint, saying that Bailiff Henrik Corte had instructed them to deliver four barrels of butter per taxed unit instead of firewood, which they had done during the last two years. Henrik Mattson, who had served as Corte's *fjärdingsman*⁵⁶⁹, confirmed that Corte had indeed been taking the peasantry's butter, and in doing so, the deliveries of firewood had stagnated. Upon hearing the county governor's orders, therefore, the peasantry reluctantly explained that they 'had to bother the honourable county governor, since they had been used to deliver a fair load of firewood to the castle, but as the trustees or servants of the castle had begun to enjoy the butter, they also want a whole fathom [of firewood] from each peasant, which they said was a burden to them'.⁵⁷⁰

These obligations on the part of the peasantry are further outlined by a conflict in 1682 between the peasantry of Liminka and the *vaktmästare* (head constable/superintendent) at the castle in Oulu, Simon Månsson. Månsson explained that the promised deliveries of firewood were long since overdue and that deliveries had been highly irregular since as far back as 1675. He therefore charged the laymen of the court to oversee these issues and to make sure that it did not continue along this path any longer. The laymen responded by pointing out that whilst they were obliged to make deliveries to the castle, the amount Månsson suggested should be delivered throughout the year was on par with deliveries made when the governor was visiting. Since he did not spend all his time at the castle, why should the deliveries continue to be equally high as when he was actually there? However, the matter was not put to rest by the laymen's, it would seem, reasonable argument. Instead, the chief constable and court scribe were ordered to inspect how much resources had been delivered to the castle from all the parishes in the region and return with a full report within four weeks.⁵⁷¹

It is understandable that deliveries of wood and other materials to the castles were less prioritised by the peasantry since no immediate gain came of it. It was simply a duty that peasants had to perform as a way of paying their taxes. However, carrying out these deliveries did consume a fair bit of

⁵⁶⁹ A *fjärdingsman* was a deputy who acted upon the directives given by the chief constable.

⁵⁷⁰ Sommaring, Liminka Barony, 23rd and 24th of July 1657, NAF, Court Records, KO a:10, 1657–1658, act 132, pp. 125v–126. Original text: 'beswära sig för wällb: H Landshöfdingen att efter såsom dhec tillförende hafwa waridt waane att giöra ett lagom lass weedh till slättet, men sedhen haffwa slättes ombetrodde eller betiänte begyndt niuta medh smör williandeh Haffwa af hwar Bonde een heel fampn, dett dee sadhe falla dhem bewährligidt'.

⁵⁷¹ Vintering, Liminka parish, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th of March 1682, NAF, Court Records, KO a:2, 1682–1682, act 225–226, pp. 437–438.

time from the peasantry's schedule, which led to dismay in the northernmost parish of Kemi in 1678. Whilst the southern parishes provided the castle in Oulu with timber logs, planks, birch bark, and manual labour, the peasantry of Kemi principally supplied it with lime. Nevertheless, the king and the Council of the Realm (Swe. *Riksrådet*) had made a special exception and spared them of this duty through a decree in 1668, which left Commandant Johan Forsman in Oulu in a troublesome situation when the castle was in need of repair in 1678. In February, he demanded that all parish members should resume the deliveries of lime to Oulu. The peasantry remembered well and pointed out that they were relieved of this duty and therefore cited the king's decree of 1668, saying that they would instead serve the commandant by partaking in the reparation process. Nevertheless, Forsman explained that they were in no position of demanding to be relieved of the duties that all peasants had to fulfil, and so their opposition was overruled.⁵⁷²

That the peasantry should make deliveries of firewood was a given, even for the peasants in Kemi. After all, they were the ones working in the forests and had the capability of doing so. Nevertheless, further grievances were heard in 1695 when the size of the delivery duty had increased to one fathom of firewood per one tax unit, instead of one per third as in 1658. However, since it was such a long distance between their parish and the town of Oulu, they made an inquiry concerning the possibility of paying for the expenses of acquiring said fathoms instead of having to go through the trouble of delivering it themselves. The county governor agreed to their proposal and set the price of each fathom of firewood at four silver coins.⁵⁷³ Such solutions were not unheard of. In Saloinen parish in 1682, the peasantry wished to pay the authorities with ready money instead of having to cut it and deliver it themselves. At this time, the price of one fathom of firewood was estimated to three times as high, amounting to 12 silver coins. Nevertheless, it was still worthwhile considering the time it would otherwise consume.⁵⁷⁴

Some interesting differences can be noticed regarding the prevailing attitudes towards the peasantry's deliveries to the towns and castles. When it came to deliveries of firewood to the towns, local authorities did not hold as

⁵⁷² Vinterting, Kemi parish, 18th, 19th and 20th of February 1678, NAF, Court Records, KO a:19, 1678–1678, act 100, p. 97.

⁵⁷³ Vinterting, Kemi parish, 2nd and 3rd of January 1695, NAF, Court Records, KO a:16, 1695–1695, act 10–11, pp. 15–16.

⁵⁷⁴ Vinterting, Saloinen parish, 26th, 27th and 28th of January 1682, NAF, Court Records, KO a:2, 1682–1682, act 78, pp. 142–143.

much sentiment for the burghers' needs as they probably would have liked. This is well demonstrated by a court case already touched upon in this thesis. It took place at the same court meeting as when County Governor Didrik Wrangel af Adinal offered to sell salt to the peasantry of Oulu in 1682. Shortly after, the burgher complaint over insufficient deliveries of firewood to the town square had been presented. Nevertheless, the county governor did not spend much time on the matter other than making sure that the burghers' grievances were heard. Instead, he moved on issuing a fine of 40 marks on any peasant who did not fulfil his delivery of firewood to the castle on time.⁵⁷⁵ A similarly enlightening example is found in the court records of Lohtaja in 1691 when County Governor Gustav Grass declared that the peasantry 'should not keep their charcoal for purchase of any private individual or burgher' and that they should instead deliver it to 'the Crown's shipyard in Kruunupyy, where they will be fairly paid'. This was important and 'sternly [...] told onto them, so that the Crown's important work is not put behind by private interests'.⁵⁷⁶

For local authorities, the supply of firewood was a matter of whose needs were considered most urgent and important, surpassing other inferior wishes and needs. However, the examples above demonstrate that whilst such deliveries were mandatory, the time it took to fulfil these obligations was highly valued by the peasantry as it could not be dedicated to other ends, primarily that of making a living. As the case of Kemi and Saloinen demonstrated, when peasants had money, they were more willing to give it up than to spend time travelling. Furthermore, any time spent away from home could potentially jeopardise the ability to achieve sustainable balance and thus negatively affect the governance regime since less people would be able to carry out duties such as monitoring of the forest common.

4.2.9 Regulation on Tar Production

Tar production intensified drastically in North Ostrobothnia during the seventeenth century. A movement of the resource frontier occurred where peasants sought exploitable pine forests farther to the north of the region and

⁵⁷⁵ Vintering, Oulu parish, 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th of February 1682, NAF, Court Records, KO a:2, 1682–1682, act 144, p. 274.

⁵⁷⁶ Vintering, Lohtaja parish, 16th and 17th of January 1691, NAF, Court Records, KO a:11, 1691–1691, act 32, p. 30. Original text: 'det dhe skogla beholla Kåhl icke till någon privat Persohns eller Borgares opkiöningh'; 'Cronans Skepp byggerij som uti Cronoby påstår och för händer hafwes, dijt dhe emot skåhligg betahlningh warde'; 'alfwarligen [...] tillsagt, så det angelegnaste Cronans Arbete eij må fram för annat privat baaksättias.'

farther inland from the coast. A central factor in this development was the extent at which tar was produced, and previous research has suggested that the exploitation of woodlands, in all likelihood, may have exceeded the speed of regeneration in local areas.⁵⁷⁷ It is therefore not surprising that efforts were made by local authorities to decelerate the intensity of tar production, but also the production of planks and timber for the shipbuilding industry. In fact, such determinations were prevalent among central authorities as well. A growing number of influential legislators saw the growing tar industry as deeply worrisome, and a royal letter was therefore issued to the county governors in northern Sweden and Finland on the 11th of July 1662. It stated that the increasing tar production will lead to ‘rapid deforestation and devastation of the forests’ and that ‘the peasantry and others, who from these forests reap the benefits, may in time suffer from a remarkable absence and shortage.’ The county governors were therefore to urge the peasantry ‘to not cut down such great numbers of large trees for tar burning, but to be content with using tree roots and burn them into tar, [...] however, it must be done with good aptness and moderation, so that the peasantry will not rise to untimely reluctance’. They were therefore to practice ‘good caution, appropriateness, and moderation’ in these charges.⁵⁷⁸

Proceed with caution. That was the general message local authorities received from Stockholm concerning the ambition to decelerate the intensity of tar production. Earlier research has similarly been able to point out that there was a limit to what the peasants were willing to accept in other matters as well. One example was conscriptions, in relation to which central authorities had to make sure not to overburden the peasantry.⁵⁷⁹ Nonetheless, the instructions concerning tar production are indicative of two things. First, the discussion that has been held so far concerning the moral economy of the peasantry can here be further emphasised. Considering the disagreements that have been outlined between the peasantry and officials such as Christian Willingshusen and Henrik Corte – and the peasants’ opposition in many cases when the moral conduct of such officials was called into question – demonstrates that local officials knew that there was a limit to what the peasantry tolerated. This is not surprising given the relatively frequent interactions they shared at the local courts and in other settings. Second, it is

⁵⁷⁷ Villstrand (1992b).

⁵⁷⁸ RA, “Bref til Landshöfdingarne i Nord- och Finland om Tiäruilwerckningen” (1177 1662), Stiernman, *Samling*, III, pp. 91–92; *RAP* 27/6, 11th of July 1668.

⁵⁷⁹ Villstrand (1992a), p. 284.

also revealing that this understanding was similarly prevalent among legislators in the capital, to such a degree that they expressively urged local officials to not misuse their authority by imposing regulations that could be regarded as too oppressive. In effect, a total ban on tar production could not be issued. Nevertheless, what had to be done was to establish how much tar each peasant needed to produce in order to secure the continued existence of their household, but simultaneously to counteract unnecessary forest exploitation, that is, a balancing act between economic and ecological sustainability.

The first court case that hints at this is from 1669 when the forest ordinance of 1664 was presented to the peasantry of Pyhäjoki. At this time, Bailiff Christian Willingshusen publicised how large each barrel of tar should be and how much it should contain, as well as how much forest resources they were permitted to exploit. However, no exact figures are stated in the court records at this point.⁵⁸⁰ Nevertheless, previous research provides information where a limit on tar production was set at 24 barrels per homestead and year. The success of this regulation has been deemed inconsequential seeing as some peasants were able to produce as much as five times that amount in one year.⁵⁸¹ However, these regulations were not inconsiderately established without some form of discussion with the peasants who produced the tar. In 1682, the county governor attended the court meeting in Saloinen parish where he discussed several issues that concerned the peasantry in different ways. Among these issues was the forest ordinance of 1664, which was in part commented on. More importantly, the county governor charged the parish clerk (Swe. *sockenskrivare*) Hans Forbus and the laymen of the court to ask the peasants of each village how much tar they needed to produce in order to sustain the needs of their households. This was to be done so that ‘the forest must not be damaged through unnecessary felling.’ Furthermore, he emphasised that since it was forbidden to excessively exploit the forest, they may at least make sure to properly cultivate the harvested areas, seeing as it would also yield incomes and simultaneously spare the forests.⁵⁸²

The norms of moral economy and the relationship between peasants and crown officials was one based on balance, very much like the peasantry’s

⁵⁸⁰ Vintering, Pyhäjoki parish, 3rd, 4th and 5th of February 1669, NAF, Court Records, KO a:12, 1667–1671, act 238, p. 232v.

⁵⁸¹ Villstrand (1992b), p. 46.

⁵⁸² Vintering, Saloinen parish, 26th, 27th and 28th of January 1682, NAF, Court Records, KO a:2, 1682–1682, act 76–77, pp. 139–141. Original text: ‘skogen igenom onödigt hugnade icke måtte förderfvas.’

struggle to achieve sustainability. Whilst the scales, from a peasant point of view, could at time be weighed more heavily on the side of the officials, it could nonetheless be accepted so long as their basic needs were ensured. As such, peasants were less prone to focus on what was taken (in the sense of taxes), and more likely to focus on that which was left.⁵⁸³ However, when that was not the case, resistant voices were often uttered. Case in point, before the court meeting in 1682, the county governor had proposed that each homestead should not be allowed to produce more than 48 barrels of tar. However, following the instruction given to the laymen and the parish clerk, the peasantry made a remark on this limit, claiming that it was set too low. They argued that they had to be allowed to produce more in order to be able to pay their taxes, as well as to make other expenses to the church and for the upkeep of the king's soldiers.⁵⁸⁴ To them, it was unreasonable that their main economic occupation was strangled and diminished to such levels that a living was virtually impossible. It is not clear to what extent the county governor heeded their appeal, or if he did at all. Nevertheless, it still demonstrates that regulations of this kind were not imposed without reluctant voices being heard from the peasantry, but also that their interests were in fact taken into consideration.

The production of tar ultimately reached such proportions that storerooms in the coastal towns were soon full. Only so much could be loaded on the ships headed for Stockholm and further onto the international market. Furthermore, since 1648, the Norrland Tar Trading Company held the exclusive right to sell tar outside of the Swedish Kingdom. Whilst many burghers transported tar to the commercial centre of Stockholm, the company regulated the trade by limiting the available supply to keep the price on tar at a high level. Therefore, given the massive amount of tar that was produced, bottlenecks eventually occurred. This troublesome situation was discussed at a court meeting in Pyhäjoki in 1690, where the peasantry of Saloinen and Pyhäjoki together presented the court with an official complaint. It stated that the tar trade had come into such conditions that 'the burgher barely wants to receive that which the peasant produces'. Still, the peasantry knew no other way and had no other choice but to practice 'customary tar production' in order to acquire money with which to pay their taxes. Furthermore, unlike

⁵⁸³ Henningsen (2001), p. 279.

⁵⁸⁴ Vinterting, Saloinen parish, 26th, 27th and 28th of January 1682, NAF, Court Records, KO a:2, 1682–1682, act 86, p. 159.

the peasantry in Savo and Tavastland farther inland and to the south, they had no fishing waters and were not allowed to practice slash-and-burn agriculture, but simply relied on tar production for their sustenance. Their arable lands were moreover of such poor quality that ‘as soon as the slightest night frost would set in, the entire annual growth is completely lost’. Nor were they able to produce timber and planks for shipbuilding since their parishes were located too far from the shipyard in Kruunupyö.⁵⁸⁵

Not only is it evident that the peasantry of Saloinen and Pyhäjoki were well informed with what kinds of forest-related activities other peasants in other parishes were engaged with and how they provided for their families. It is also clear that they had good reason to criticise how the tar trade was regulated and knew well who was responsible for the situation they were in. The burghers in the coastal towns were not to blame since their ability to trade in foreign ports had been circumscribed by the Trade Ordinance of 1617 and had later been forced to trade with the tar companies. It was therefore the peasantry’s wish that the court heard their complaint and that it was taken into consideration. They insisted that the limit of 48 barrels per homestead should be increased. This had to be done so that they could pay their taxes since, as they emphasised, they had ‘since time immemorial been accustomed to paying their taxes through ~~or with~~ [sic] tar, and that this is thus in truth confirmed’.⁵⁸⁶

It has been mentioned earlier in this thesis that peasants were often paid less than the fixed price of four copper thalers decreed by the county governor in the 1660s. Estimations done by Villstrand reveals that during the 1670s, the peasantry of Saloinen parish accumulated approximately 85 copper thalers in one year, more than half of which were made from selling tar and the rest from selling other goods that the peasantry produced. Half of this amount (42 thalers) was spent on taxes and 15 thalers was required to pay for the king’s soldiers. Most of the remaining 28 thalers were used to buy certain necessities such as salt and as salary for the workforce at the homestead. All in all, not much remained when the year of work drew to a

⁵⁸⁵ Sommaring, Pyhäjoki parish, 5th and 6th of September 1690, NAF, Court Records, KO a:10, 1690–1690, act 228, pp. 164–165. Original text: ‘Borgaren dhen beswerligen wilia emottaga som Bonden tillwerckar’; ‘wahnliche bruk wedh Tiärans tillweckande’; ‘så att der någon den ringaste Natfråst skulle tillstötta, så ähr deras ährs wext alldeles förloora’.

⁵⁸⁶ Sommaring, Pyhäjoki parish, 5th and 6th of September 1690, NAF, Court Records, KO a:10, 1690–1690, act 228, pp. 164–165. Original text: ‘uhrminnes tijder warit want sine uthskijlder betahla igenom ~~eller medh~~ Tiähra, att detta således är i sanning bekrefter’.

close.⁵⁸⁷ Assuming that the complaining peasantry of Saloinen and Pyhäjoki were paid at least 2,5 copper thalers for one barrel of tar, the limit of 48 barrels would a total income of 120 copper thalers in one year. Considering that the peasantry only, or at least almost exclusively, relied on tar production for their sustenance, the 35 thalers that differs from Villstrand's calculations were most likely used to buy grain or other foodstuffs that the peasant household did not produce on their own. Bearing in mind that the tar trade had stagnated since the burghers were not willing or had the capacity to buy their tar, this amount would have been much lower. If these calculations are accurate, it is therefore not surprising that the peasantry wanted to increase the limit of 48 barrels per year.

The court records unfortunately do not reveal whether the peasantry's wishes were met. If they were, it most likely would have been liberating, at least for a while. Only a few years later, the fear expressed by the peasantry of Saloinen and Pyhäjoki came true. Their harvests were destroyed by the particularly cold and rainy summers between 1695–1697, resulting in the worst famine ever recorded in Finnish history. Approximately one third of the population perished from starvation and subsequent epidemic diseases, resulting in even higher mortality rates in the north where as much as 40 percent of the population died.⁵⁸⁸ It is unclear what role tar production played in terms of improving the chances of families to survive the years of famine. Even though such disasters were impossible to predict, the ability to accrue money and food through tar production would at least have been more reliable when faced with frostbitten and failed harvests.

4.3 Summary

Efforts to regulate forest exploitation on village and parish forests were made by the peasantry and strategies were negotiated and employed in order to protect the forests from both internal and external infringements. Having the users of a forest defined and being able to establish and keep borders inviolable was a vital part of the system where all landholding peasants shared the forest's resources in common. However, the peasants were not the only ones equipped with authority to regulate what happened in this regard. As the Swedish state's desire of being a great power on the European

⁵⁸⁷ Villstrand (1992a), p. 239.

⁵⁸⁸ Lappalainen (2014).

political arena increased, intensified exploitation of the kingdom's natural resources was a necessary requirement. These expansionistic inclinations affected many regions in the Swedish Kingdom, including North Ostrobothnia.

This chapter has focused on these developments and on how peasants engaged in the rapidly growing tar and timber industries were affected by the Swedish state's involvement. The sub-question addressed read as follows:

- What measures of regulation were taken by Swedish authorities in order to control the peasantry's exploitation of forest resources, and how did it affect the peasantry's ability to govern their forest commons in a sustainable way?

As soon as new towns were established in North Ostrobothnia during the early seventeenth century, the presence of local authorities increased. Legislation on how woodlands were supposed to be utilised and shared by the peasant population already existed from several centuries earlier. However, given the general fear of wood shortage that prevailed in many European countries from the sixteenth century and onwards, new legislation in the form of a forest ordinance were introduced in 1647, followed by a second in 1664. These were not formulated with North Ostrobothnia in mind, but mainly with the mining region of Bergslagen on the Swedish mainland. Nevertheless, the articles of the first and second ordinance did contain instructions that local authorities could use to further their goals of regulating the utilisation of forest resources in northern Finland. One central motivation of the new laws was to provide state officials with legal remedies with which they could prosecute anyone who overexploited the forests, but also to hold local officials, as well as the peasantry, directly accountable for making sure that the articles of the ordinances were implemented and obeyed. Nevertheless, the period between the first and second ordinance can be termed as a time of legal customisation and familiarisation as the new legal text was seldom used. It was not until after the second ordinance that references to the new body of legal text appear in the court records and started to be used more frequently. Considering the additions and changes made in the second ordinance, it became more easily translatable to places outside the mining region.

The first two forest ordinances both gave local authorities, especially the county governor, and the peasantry greater responsibility in caring for the

forests in the county. Local officials received directives on how to supervise the exploitation of the region's forests through the forest ordinances. Furthermore, in 1635 and 1687, the renewed office of the county governor received instructions on what responsibilities and charges the county governor was supposed have. Among these was the matter of illegal forest exploitation, slash-and-burn agriculture, sawing, and the establishment of new crofts on the forest commons. He was also to make sure that his subordinate officials (such as the bailiffs) carried out the duties of their office and followed the commandments decreed by the county governor. Nevertheless, these subordinates were often accused of questionable conduct. Among such misbehaviours was the embezzlement of goods, using state funds in private trade, and to insinuate that conflicts had occurred which required their involvement even though none existed.

The legal authority and influence of local officials had consequences for how the peasantry governed their forests. This impact was felt through both the establishment of exploitation quotas and through inspections on produced goods. In Kruunupy parish in 1672, for instance, County Governor Johan Graan issued an ordinance that stipulated that each household was not allowed to produce more than 15 dozen planks in one year. This was much less than the peasantry had already been making. The consequent fines distributed for this overexploitation amounted to a net worth of 16 barrels of tar per household, equal to the yearly salary of a shipbuilder. Another inspection carried out by Bailiff Christian Willingshusen would later show how the peasantry in Kruunupy had cut 706 timber logs and more than 28 000 planks in 11 months. Divided between the number of peasants under investigation, this amounted to 320 planks and 8 timber logs per person, even though they at this point had only been allowed to make 192 planks.

Regulations were also introduced on tar production. However, unlike the production of planks, the tar industry was deemed to be more harmful by central authorities. Nevertheless, regulatory measures suggested by legislators were conveyed with a certain degree of caution. After all, the Swedish government basically had a monopoly on tar through its tar trading companies, and to restrict tar production completely was therefore out of the question. As such, certain limits and quotas were introduced, which fluctuated throughout the century. The court records show how the caution propagated through a royal letter in 1662 was heeded by the county governor as he in 1682 made efforts to discuss the level of permissible tar production

with the peasantry. The negotiation stemmed from a previous quota set at 24 barrels of tar per peasant and year, which was much less than some had and were able to produce. Nevertheless, seeing as tar production had become the chief source of income for large parts of the peasantry, the proposed quota was widely criticised. Paying one's taxes through tar production had become custom. Any changes in this regard warranted negotiation and interests being weighed for and against quotas either being harshened or eased.

To what extent, then, can these inspections and regulations be said to have been effective? Did they have the desired effect in the sense that the peasantry decreased their level of forest exploitation in, for example, Kruunupyy? First, it has been argued in this thesis that these regulatory activities were both welcomed and considered to jeopardise the economic sustainability of peasant households. To again use Kruunupyy as an example, parish members experienced serious difficulties with how the parish forest was governed. Those who suffered the most under these circumstances most surely welcomed the inspections carried out by the authorities, whilst those overexploiting did not. In one way, it was supposed to promote fairness and reasonableness considering that the county governor made dispensations for some whilst those exploiting at an unsustainable level were given extensive fines. Furthermore, it was an instruction on how to keep forest exploitation at a proper and sustainable level. On the other hand, the involvement of, for example, Christian Willingshusen was more generally received with discontent as the peasantry emphasised how their poverty would only be exacerbated by his regulations. The peasantry furthermore opposed unjust treatment at the hands of the county governor's officials. The most convincing answer to the questions above is therefore that regulations and fines certainly affected the peasantry's ability to make a living, but that this forced them to appropriate and sell more tar and timber as the century progressed.

In general terms, regulations carried out by local authorities were less successful in the southern parishes as they were in the north. This development was deeply influenced by the presence of the Swedish Admiralty whose need of wooden materials grew after the establishment of a shipyard in Kruunupyy in 1673. Many peasants in the area ultimately came to work at the shipyard, whilst others made contracts of supplying it with planks, tar, and other shipbuilding materials. Whilst deals were made, such deliveries were ultimately considered to be a mandated duty that the peasantry simply had to fulfil. As such, the needs of the admiralty were considered to surpass

that of other groups, principally the burghers who were also engaged in shipbuilding. Regulations were therefore introduced where peasants were forbidden to trade their goods with burghers before the shipyard had received the resources it needed. However, even though the peasantry sometimes struggled to satisfy the admiralty in fulfilling their deliveries, the court records and inspections made by local officials clearly demonstrate how the peasantry was more than capable to produce the resources that was needed. The reason for how this was possible is found in the burgher-peasant relationship, that is, *majmiseriet*. Not only did the burghers pay less than market value for the peasants' tar, but their credit-giving strategies also enabled them to pressure the peasantry to sell their planks and other resources to them, even though it had been produced for the shipyard.

Unlike efforts made by other naval organisations in Europe at the time, reforestation schemes were not a strategy introduced in North Ostrobothnia. The leadership at the shipyard, for example the secretary of construction, cared little about how the peasantry obtained these resources, only that it had to be delivered so that the vessels could be finished within a set timeframe. However, officials tied to the county governor's administration ultimately demanded that peasants had to ask for permission before they made ship planks on the parish common, as well as for being allowed to engage in private shipbuilding enterprises. It is therefore striking how these two governmental branches differed in their worry for how the forests of North Ostrobothnia were exploited. It goes to show how the Swedish government was not a single body united by one common goal, but in fact composed of different entities driven to achieve different goals.

The burghers and the shipyard needed large and frequent deliveries of wooden products. However, they were not alone in this need. Another state institution that demanded regular deliveries were the castles of the region where, among others, the county governor lived whilst in the region. Unlike bringing wood to the towns, the peasantry was forced to supply the castles with firewood, timber, birch bark, lime, and other construction materials. However, given the great distances between certain peasant communities and the castles in Oulu and Kajaani, peasants could be allowed to pay a set sum of money instead of making the long journey, as was the case with the peasantry of Kemi parish to the north.

Notwithstanding regulations being enforced and peasants receiving large fines if found breaking forest laws, the North Ostrobothnian peasantry's

ability to govern their forests was never seriously threatened during the seventeenth century. Production continued and *majmiseriet* remained, even though internal controversies certainly existed within peasant communities. However, being able to have such disputes and to more or less successfully resolve them at the local courts was a fundamental precondition for the peasant governance regimes to remain robust and sustainable.

5. Synthesis

In this concluding chapter, I will summarise and discuss the results of the investigation that has been conducted. I begin by returning to the initial point of departure of the thesis where the purpose, sources, and theoretical considerations are reiterated. This will be followed by a synthetisation of the analysis, highlighting the contributions of the investigation in relation to previous research, as well as placing it within a broader context of international research. After that, the main research question and the concept of sustainability will be discussed in the context of seventeenth century North Ostrobothnia. Finally, some final remarks will be given.

5.1 The Research Task

The purpose of the thesis has been to investigate and provide new knowledge on how the growing importance of forests affected ways in which peasants governed, regulated, and shared forest resources during the seventeenth century. The geographical area that has been investigated is North Ostrobothnia in the northeast part of the Swedish Kingdom, today a part of the Republic of Finland. The region was deeply engaged with large-scale production of tar and timber, resulting in the former ultimately becoming the third largest export industry within the Swedish Kingdom. The Finnish part of the kingdom stood for more than three quarters of the total amount of tar that was produced and as much as two thirds were distilled in Ostrobothnian tar pits during the first half of the century.

The resources that fed these industries came from forests that had for as long as anyone could remember been shared by the peasant population in the form of commons. They thus functioned as common-pool resources (CPRs). Elinor Ostrom's work on such governance regimes has been the theoretical

foundation upon which this thesis stands. Furthermore, the dimensions of such systems summarised by Tine De Moor has similarly guided the investigation, making it possible to identify and investigate the relationship between the forests (CPR), the peasants (CPrR), and the institutions they formed (CPI). As such, these three dimensions are separately distinct, but also closely related in the sense that changes in one dimension causes changes in the other two, making balance and predictability important in order to establish sustainability. The thesis thus provides an example of how peasant communities managed and struggled to uphold such a balance and to fulfil the prerequisites needed to achieve a robust and long-lasting scheme of using forest resources in common. However, as have been argued in this thesis, sustainability is a multidimensional concept, meaning that the level of balance that a certain community is able to achieve is determined by the prioritisations that are made, the outcome of which either enhance or diminish that community's ability to achieve an equilibrium between ecological, institutional, and economic sustainability.

The source materials that have been analysed to achieve the purpose of this thesis are protocols from local district courts, forest ordinances issued by the Swedish state, and seventeenth century maps. The court material has made it possible to employ a grass-root (or bottom-up) perspective through which unique insights have been attained concerning how peasants discussed, disputed, and established rules concerning how to govern their forest commons. The forest ordinances have been used to demonstrate how the Swedish state, and its local officials, attempted to regulate and limit the peasantry's forest cutting activities. It has furthermore been possible to establish how this legal corpus, originally created with the mining districts and Bergslagen in mind, was interpreted and used to fit the conditions of North Ostrobothnia and the industries of tar and timber production. The seventeenth century maps have been used to gain a deeper understanding of the physical landscape of North Ostrobothnia, the location and composition of village and parish communities, as well as where parish borders were established.

5.2 A Nested Society

The developing tar and timber industries in North Ostrobothnia resulted in a moving frontier of forest exploitation.⁵⁸⁹ Some peasant communities regulated cutting activities on village forests by way of allotting harvest areas to each landholding peasant, but some could also be completely open to free use by the same.⁵⁹⁰ The intensified forest exploitation also actualised the importance of borders and matters of who had the right to utilise the resources stored within the forests. As such, rural peasant life in North Ostrobothnia was one where increased forest exploitation led to possibilities and struggles that both strengthened and tested the coherence of peasant communities, ultimately leading to a growing number of disagreements and conflicts that had to be resolved.⁵⁹¹ These are all developments that can be gathered from previous research.

Unlike previous research, this investigation has gone further to provide a deeper understanding of how internal regulation of village and parish forests was affected by increasing forest exploitation and how peasant communities established rules concerning access and degree-of-usage. It has also considered how the institutional organisation of peasant communities changed over the course of the seventeenth century. As such, focus has been put on the complex process by which issues of how to achieve sustainability was actualised and resolved through an evolving structure of nested enterprises, where governance activities were organised at multiple levels. These different levels, and the progress of nestedness is demonstrated in Figure 19. In order to make sense of this, and to synthesise the results of the investigation above, I will contrast the findings in relation to earlier research. I will furthermore explain their implication for our understanding of the changing importance of forest resources, peasant institutions, and how the developing influence of the burgher class and presence of the Swedish state shaped this development during the seventeenth century.

⁵⁸⁹ Villstrand (1992b), pp. 48–50.

⁵⁹⁰ Jutikkala, (1963), p. 53.

⁵⁹¹ Virrankoski (1973), pp. 179–185.

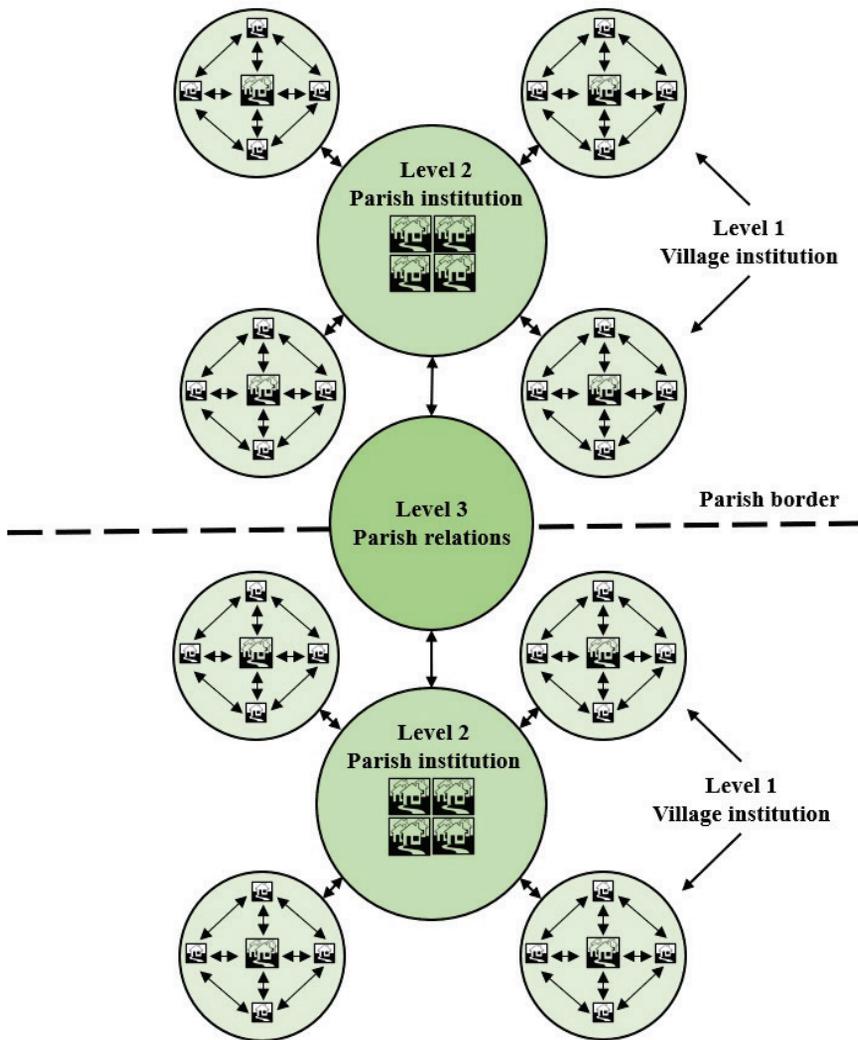


Figure 19. Illustration of peasant institutions, levels 1–3.

Intra-village relations: Seventeenth century peasant society was divided into different layers. At the bottom was the peasant household. Whilst it was not uncommon that single households were established separate to already existing groups of households, the general settlement structure was such that two or more households formed the basis for a village that both shared and owned property independently. As explained by Tegengren, the nature of

how property was owned in common resulted in them perceiving themselves as a village by virtue of their common interests.⁵⁹² Within a village, the forest common could be divided by way of allotting a harvest area to each household, thus providing the ownership system with a certain level of structure. Each member of a household thus knew where to go when cutting firewood or acquiring other resources.⁵⁹³ This arrangement was based on the tradition that each harvest area could be confirmed as belonging to a certain household through *urminnes hävd* and by the memory of the community.⁵⁹⁴ However, since they were seldom physically marked, the analysis has shown that internal disputes over their location occurred as general cutting activities increased during the seventeenth century.

The memory of the community proved effective when revisiting the matter of what rules actually applied. However, the qualitative analysis carried out in this thesis have identified a problematic aspect of this otherwise often successful regulatory system. The argument of ancient claim could at times be volatile, and the right of every landholder to appropriate what was needed in order to survive could be manipulated to serve the interest of those within the village community that had larger bargaining power. In such cases, the moral economy of the village institution had been violated. Depending on the power structures of certain institutions, therefore, it was not always an entirely waterproof system. However, whenever such acts of exclusion and selective treatment was brought to the court, the rights of the victim were always re-established.

The researched material has shown how a smooth implementation of regulating cutting activities on the village common was greatly facilitated when well-functioning methods of communication and transparency existed. This is something that earlier research has also pointed out.⁵⁹⁵ Even though the taxable capacity of each homestead was the guiding principle, additional transparency was created by marking areas that someone intended to use as it gave other members notice of the intentions at hand. Whilst many communities experienced changes, there were also constants. Such were the conditions when communal efforts were made, for example when several households distilled tar together. In these settings, the informal rule dictated

⁵⁹² Tegengren (1941), pp. 73–75.

⁵⁹³ Jutikkala, (1963), p. 53.

⁵⁹⁴ Ågren (1997), pp. 221–226.

⁵⁹⁵ Virrankoski (1973), pp. 249–261

that each involved party was to receive as much as the contribution was deemed worth.

Where harvest areas existed, self-regulation within villages was facilitated by the regulatory structure it provided. As pointed out by earlier research, the village forest could also be without such arrangements and open to free use by any landholding peasant in the village.⁵⁹⁶ When compared to other regions within the Swedish Kingdom, many village communities in North Ostrobothnia thus appear as comparatively permissive and free in terms of regulation. In certain areas on the Swedish mainland, there were regulations that restricted appropriation in different ways depending on whether it was carried out for household consumption or for selling at the market.⁵⁹⁷ Nevertheless, this investigation has been able to show how the openness of the village forest could entail problems that did not occur as easily where harvest areas or other restrictions existed. When a peasant was allowed to carry out cutting activities freely and without a designated location, it could be considered to transpire too close to a neighbour's homestead or infields. This issue of proximity became more and more common as the seventeenth century progressed. Nevertheless, up until the middle of the century, these activities were not considered to be reason enough to restrict the freedom of action of village members. However, this changed as the tar and timber industry expanded, ultimately leading to such close-by cutting activities being prohibited in many places. This bears likeness to the Danish case where this was prohibited and imposed with a fine already during the fifteenth century.⁵⁹⁸ The rationale behind this changing attitude in North Ostrobothnia was that it became increasingly important that each village household should be guaranteed to have close access to a forest area. This furthermore suggests that the availability of forest resources had begun to diminish, at least in the immediate proximity of the village.

The size of each landholding peasant's homestead within a village was the determining factor for how much resources each member or family was allowed to appropriate from the forest common.⁵⁹⁹ Just like in many places across the European continent, property was therefore the key that allowed

⁵⁹⁶ Jutikkala, (1963), p. 53

⁵⁹⁷ Granér (2002), pp. 235–236.

⁵⁹⁸ Fritzboeger (2004), p. 114.

⁵⁹⁹ Virrankoski (1973), pp. 184–185.

peasants access to the common.⁶⁰⁰ This applied in Ostrobothnia as well. However, as certain areas became more densely populated throughout the century, villages in South Ostrobothnia were forced to ration each household's consumption of firewood.⁶⁰¹ The investigation confirms the argument of earlier research that the taxable-capacity rule was indeed an important guiding principle in determining the extent of permissible exploitation. However, it has moreover been possible to establish how this system presented uncertainties and became subject to increased disagreement. As forest resources effectively became more highly valued due to the possibilities gained through the tar and timber trade, it simultaneously became ever more important to establish exactly how many resources one homestead actually represented. As such, inspections had to be carried out, and unlike the English counterexample,⁶⁰² it was a development encouraged by village communities.

Village institutions in North Ostrobothnia experienced significant changes throughout the seventeenth century that renegotiated and challenged age-old traditions of how village forests had been used and managed. The effects of the European wars and the ambitions of early modern states to achieve greatness trickled down and reached even the most remote village communities of Northern Finland. The achievements of previous research have been to notice and describe many circumstances of this development. However, the results of this thesis have contributed to a deeper understanding of how the complexity of these conditions changed and generated outcomes that influenced the peasantry's ability to govern their forest commons.

By looking at Figure 19, what the analysis of the intra-village relations has shown is how the economic, political, and social transformations of the seventeenth century affected the relationship between peasant household at level 1. It has been possible to demonstrate how individual households acted, argued, and cooperated with other village members to achieve a more sustainable CPI. In this process, the conflicts and discussions that occurred generated instances of level shifting and re-prioritisations where previously informal rules of conduct and resource extraction changed. Furthermore, this internal organisational structure of village communities had consequent

⁶⁰⁰ Winchester (2015).

⁶⁰¹ Jutikkala (1963), p. 53.

⁶⁰² Falvey (2013).

effects for the inter-institutional development at higher levels. This progression of nestedness will be further discussed below.

Inter-village relations: The development in North Ostrobothnia can fittingly be compared to that of early modern Denmark. Whilst the Danish *almindinger* had been open to free use by anyone up until the early modern period, a progressive shift occurred where forest commons were divided into *overdrev* and *fællesskov*.⁶⁰³ These resemble the Ostrobothnian structure as they correspondingly refer to inter-village and intra-village relations. From previous research, we learn how forest borders had laid unmarked for centuries, and even when markers bearing testament to their location existed, no general need to thoroughly and cautiously define them preceded. As such, their exact location was often uncertain, but remnants of their existence remained in the collective memory of peasant communities.⁶⁰⁴ As explained by Jutikkala, they were respected by peasant communities as borders of amity.⁶⁰⁵ Prior to the intensified forest exploitation during the seventeenth century, therefore, inter-village conflicts caused by disagreements over forest use seldom occurred. A possible explanation for this is the likely facilitating effects gained through the extended family system and restrained mobility of peasants in North Ostrobothnia.⁶⁰⁶ Because households consisted of several families and since they, unlike peasants in central Sweden, rarely moved and thus lived longer in the same place,⁶⁰⁷ there were more reliable witnesses available to either confirm or refute the argument of ancient claim. However, as the forests of North Ostrobothnia were put under axe with the purpose of making a living on tar and timber production, the lack of thoroughly defined borders proved problematic if stability was to be established at level 2.⁶⁰⁸ Where did one village forest begin and another one end?

It has been argued by previous research how the effort of seeking justice for infringements committed by outsiders were often abandoned by peasant communities in North Ostrobothnia.⁶⁰⁹ The analysis in this thesis points to a different development. As forest exploitation intensified, so did the number

⁶⁰³ Fritzboøger (2004), pp. 56–57.

⁶⁰⁴ Tegengren (1941, p. 100); Virrankoski (1973) pp. 183–184.

⁶⁰⁵ Jutikkala (1963), p. 276.

⁶⁰⁶ Tegengren (1943), pp. 62–63.

⁶⁰⁷ Andersson (2018).

⁶⁰⁸ See Figure 19.

⁶⁰⁹ Kuusi (1914).

of infringements, leading to a development where village communities recurrently sought the assistance of the local courts to prosecute wrongdoers and demand compensation. Protection and restitution became vital, although attitudes of good neighbourliness also persisted as there are examples of efforts being made to remain by old customs and less definitive borders. The inevitable consequence was nonetheless that village borders became less movable than before. Similar to the development in the English county of Derbyshire, fluidity was replaced by cementation, and the process of establishing their location resulted in a higher level of coherence among peasant communities.⁶¹⁰ This also occurred in the parish of Leksand in central Sweden where peasants effectively established borders in order to use common lands for grazing purposes.⁶¹¹ In Denmark, following population increase and growing levels of consumption, a growing need to establish borders was ultimately established as open access *almindinger* were divided into *overdrev* and *fælleskov*.⁶¹²

The essential role played, and assistance given, by the local courts was crucial in the process of carrying out inspections, which is comparable to the development on the Swedish side of the kingdom. However, the nature of the power struggle and the actors involved was different. Peasants in central Sweden sought inspections in order to have the legitimacy of their ownership strengthened because of their need to establish a stronger position vis-à-vis mines and ironwork owners.⁶¹³ Furthermore, local communities had gradually seen their ability to govern their commons greatly reduced in favour of crown officials.⁶¹⁴ In Northern Finland, no comparable entity to that of mine and ironwork owners existed, and whilst crown officials exercised their authority as well as they could, the conditions were no way near the same. This provided for a different development. When members of another village committed acts of illegal forest cutting and village borders were contested, inspections were needed due to the internal power struggle between and within peasant communities. This was a power struggle that ultimately forced them to initiate discussions of how to fairly distribute the resources that they shared, not only concerning the village forest (level 1),

⁶¹⁰ Fletcher (2003); Falvey (2013), pp. 7–8.

⁶¹¹ Larsson (2014).

⁶¹² Fritzboeger (2004), pp. 140.

⁶¹³ Granér (2002), pp. 236–239, 291–292, 326–327.

⁶¹⁴ Jansson (2003), pp. 226–228.

but also that of the parish (level 2).⁶¹⁵ This was a step towards a nested peasant society. However, it is necessary to point out that peasants from other villages were completely excluded from partaking in the decision-making process of establishing what rules applied and how regulatory activities were carried out in a neighbouring village's forests. It was only on parish level (level 2) that all landholding peasants from all villages of the parish were allowed and expected to partake in decision-making processes.

With more proprietors and larger forests followed challenges.⁶¹⁶ The costs and difficulties associated with governing a parish forest were greater and more complicated than that of a village. Previous research has shown how the general importance of forests grew during the seventeenth century considering that they were storehouses from which resources were extracted. Consequently, therefore, conflicts concerning the parish forest increased.⁶¹⁷ It has furthermore been explained that use rights on parish commons was more developed on the Swedish side of the kingdom than in Finland.⁶¹⁸ However, how these conflicts affected inter-institutional development, that is, how parish communities were able to come together and formulate solutions that included an assembly of village institutions forming a greater whole, has not been explained by earlier research. Nevertheless, the results of this thesis have shown how several parish communities during the 1670s went through such a process. Even though it has been correctly asserted that the parish forest was open to free use by all landholding peasants, the experience of intensified forest cutting eventually made them aware that such arrangements were no longer practical – it did not yield *sustainable balance*. It is thus a prime example of level shifting where parish members recognised that a new system of appropriation was required. As such, they transferred the widely applied intra-village rule of appropriation in relation to taxable capacity on the parish forest as well. Furthermore, the investigation showed how strategies employed by one evolving polycentric parish community spread and influenced the development in other parishes. The importance dedicated by Ostrom to knowledge sharing within polycentric systems can therefore be determined to have been prevalent in North Ostrobothnia.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁵ See Figure 19.

⁶¹⁶ Ostrom (2009), p. 420.

⁶¹⁷ Virrankoski (1973), pp. 179–185.

⁶¹⁸ Jutikkala (1963), pp. 52–53.

⁶¹⁹ Ostrom (2005), p. 283.

Even though this comprehensive effort was carried out in several parishes, it was not successful everywhere. The growing pressure of the market and obligations introduced by state officials would ultimately result in the southern parish of Kruunupyö remaining polarised until the end of the century. Nevertheless, what had happened throughout North Ostrobothnia was that the peasants' field of vision and perception of the surroundings relative to them had widened. It was not possible to solely focus on the village institution and the forest it shared. Even though the parish forest was known and used by the peasantry before the seventeenth century, it had become an area of interest that filled a more central place on the peasants' list of prioritisations, despite the physical distance that separated them. The collective actions taken by parish communities was therefore part of a process that bears witness to how a peasant society changed as a consequence of increased production of specialised products for an international market. It demonstrates how the rapidly expanding forest industry created conditions where rules and decisions taken at one level of society ultimately had consequences for how governing strategies were deployed at another, both horizontally and vertically. As such, the level of unity this created within parishes most certainly had significant consequences for how conflicts between parishes were dealt with. The results gained from the examination of such cases will follow below.

Parish relations: As forests became a topic intensively discussed among village institutions, it is possible to notice a trend where parish communities struggled with coming to terms regarding internal regulation, but also concerning where the outer borders of the parish were located. Considering the growing importance of forest resources and the rate at which they were exploited, it is only natural that these communities noticed and eventually contested forest activities carried out at these bordering areas, especially since no properly established delineations existed. Ultimately, reiterating what was stated above, the surroundings relative to the peasants widened as it had become increasingly important to know what forest belonged to what parish. As such, discussions and agreements had to be achieved at level 3 in Figure 19.

The boundaries of the parishes had functioned as borders of amity for centuries. According to earlier research, they had emerged as a consequence of quarrels over pasture and fishing rights, at which time legal documents

were written that described how the borders divided the landscape.⁶²⁰ It was not until the tar and timber boom of the seventeenth century that the matter of the borders' location, and the validity of these documents (often written during the sixteenth century), again became a matter for discussion. The investigation has shown how this became a long-drawn-out process, including large parts of the village institutions comprising the quarrelling parishes.

The first records of border violations being subject for the local courts are from the 1640s. The process resembled that of medieval and early modern Denmark where commons were progressively demarcated and given fixed boundaries.⁶²¹ The sixteenth century legal documents could be useful. However, the information they contained was most often outdated since they originated from a time prior to the current constellation of parish communities. It thus became clear that new inspections had to be carried out and inspection letters had to be written. Whilst prior divisions had been made in relation to pasture and fishing rights, state administrative and ecclesiastical divisions also had great importance. However, as forest exploitation intensified, the availability of forest resources became an increasingly important consideration as inspections could lead to villages changing parish affiliation. As such, the distribution of forest resources ultimately exceeded administrative and ecclesiastical considerations.

The process of parish borders being most intensely disputed and renegotiated occurred roughly at the same time as internal controversies occurred within the parish communities, that is, during the 1670s and 1680s. This coincided with tar exports being at their highest during the seventeenth century. As pointed out by earlier research, it has been possible to demonstrate how knowing one's borders could have powerful impact on a community's self-awareness. It helped shape the identity of the community and distinguished it from others.⁶²² Furthermore, we also know how parish borders in Hanoverian England had a socially-binding effect as external threats were thwarted, which created a more coherent and united community.⁶²³ What transpired in North Ostrobothnia clearly presents a process by which parish communities had to unite in order to overcome problems resulting from the no longer functional borders of amity. It was a development where peasant communities had to deal with several simultaneous problems at different

⁶²⁰ Virrankoski (1973), p. 183.

⁶²¹ Fritzboeger (2004), p. 140.

⁶²² Lamberg et al. (2011), pp. 295, 299, 309.

⁶²³ Fletcher (2003).

levels: that of internal regulation and protection against external infringement (level 1), which points to a development of a progressively nested peasantry society. Nevertheless, to even begin to decisively address the latter, a united position on the former was required. This was facilitated by several parishes introducing a rule that regulated the maximum level of appropriation during the 1670s (level 2). However, whilst such communal efforts had a unifying effect, there was a breaking point at which peasant institutions struggled to become more nested (level 3). This breaking point was most prominent in the south whilst the northern parishes did not experience the same degree of difficulties concerning the borders that had once been solely kept within the memory of the community.

One reason why the southern parishes struggled to reach a lasting agreement over parish borders could be because of the growing levels of income inequality between peasant communities. Having one's forest recurrently invaded by external communities naturally diminished the potential profits made through forest exploitation. We also know how an unequal distribution of resources and wealth influenced the ability of peasants to participate in matters concerning the management of the peasant institution.⁶²⁴ An inter-parish relationship (level 3) characterised by an increasing degree of wealth inequality would therefore help explain why some relations experienced greater difficulties than others as forest exploitation and market integration grew.

When the seventeenth century drew to a close, many peasant communities had experienced a development where the formalisation of parish borders ultimately became inevitable. It was a process in which peasants themselves acted as the main negotiators and it is evident how state authorities furthermore regarded it to be a matter for them to resolve. However, the presence of the state and its ability to assist in this process was important. This is demonstrated by events when state officials provided information that facilitated the negotiation between parish communities, as well as admonishing them to abandon enmity where such prevailed, ultimately leading to agreements being reached. This is furthermore comparable to developments outside the Swedish Kingdom as rivalries between Swiss commoners were facilitated through the conflict solving mechanisms provided by the state.⁶²⁵ It is therefore important to remember how state representatives, as pointed

⁶²⁴ Lindström (2008), pp. 198–199.

⁶²⁵ Viallon & Nahrath (2021), pp. 40–41.

representatives, as pointed out by Mansbridge, not always inhabited a role of being ‘ham-handed and insensitive’.⁶²⁶ Indeed, they could help facilitate the effort of solving problems that the peasantry faced, thus acting as an enabling agent in an evolving polycentric system. However, these services would not only prove helpful in conflicts between peasant institutions. The growing class of burghers presented other areas of conflict where the state would prove equally, if not in certain aspects more, supportive.

Burghers and trade: Peasant institutions were not isolated from each other. They interacted and influenced what happened on a day-to-day basis, enabling communication and knowledge sharing, which ultimately led to an evolving nested peasant society. As such, when an institution went through a process of change, from rules being discussed in an operational situation, eventually leading to level shifting and collective-choice situations where new rules were established, the whole process was underlined and affected by the relationships it shared with the outside world. In that world existed other peasant institutions, but also the burghers with whom the peasants traded.

The maritime region around the Bothnian Bay, including both West- and Ostrobothnia, was a part of the Swedish Kingdom where trade had transpired since long before the seventeenth century. However, as new towns were established and burghers began to populate them, the Swedish state began to establish control and benefit from the trade that occurred. The Bothnian Trade Restriction of 1617 was followed by a series of regulations that restricted trade relations and concentrated these activities to the towns.⁶²⁷ Despite these regulatory efforts, as demonstrated by previous research, the emerging trade system *majmiseriet* attained dominance and developed in a way not desired by the Swedish state. Long-term deals were made between peasants and burghers, which came to have a signifying role for how trade was conducted throughout and long after the seventeenth century.⁶²⁸

Historical records of state administration, export figures, legal, and other official sources have made it possible for earlier research to examine in quite some detail how the Ostrobothnian trade developed. Perhaps naturally, therefore, ample attention has been given to explain the nature of the trade

⁶²⁶ Mansbridge (2013).

⁶²⁷ *Svenska Österbottens Historia* 3 (1980), p. 91. Virrankoski (1973), pp. 372–377.

⁶²⁸ Luukko (1972), pp. 247–249.

system *majmiseriet*, for example how it affected pricing of different products and how credits became an increasingly common aspect of these trade relations.⁶²⁹ As to pricing, it was not until 1668 that a minimum price limit on tar was introduced at three copper thalers per barrel, which later increased to four thalers in the 1690s. However, even though such limits were introduced with the intent of ensuring the peasants a reasonable profit, they were nonetheless frequently disregarded by the burghers as the analysis of this thesis have shown how peasants were often paid as little as half of that amount.

Decreasing prices on tar was not only a consequence of trade strategies. It was also influenced by the tar companies that were tasked to regulate the supply of tar that reached the international market, which furthermore paralyzed trade relations between burghers and foreign buyers. Earlier research has demonstrated how burghers in Vaasa began to practice so called open purchases. Even though agreements over the tar price were reached before it left for Stockholm, burghers were able to change it once it had reached the capital by referring to changing market conditions, resulting in the peasants being paid less than what had been agreed upon.⁶³⁰ The court records analysed in this thesis confirms how such strategies were used by burghers in North Ostrobothnia as well. However, even though tar production came to occupy most of the peasant population during the seventeenth century, the price of tar was not the only thing that was manipulated.

Whilst burghers bought tar from the peasantry, they also supplied the peasants with salt. Due to unstable international market conditions, the price on salt tripled during the second half of the century. Earlier research has demonstrated how the pricing of salt could be temporarily increased as ships from Ostrobothnia were sighted in Stockholm, ultimately and correspondingly leading to the peasants taking the financial blow once the salt reached the harbours of northern Finland.⁶³¹ The findings of this thesis have shown how burghers also utilised their position as credit lenders in order to force peasants to buy the overpriced salt, even when less expensive alternatives existed. Nevertheless, it has been possible to determine how peasants utilised a countermove in decreasing the frequency and size of firewood deliveries to the towns. Since the burghers' practice of market

⁶²⁹ Luukko (1972), pp. 247–249.

⁶³⁰ Luukko (1972), pp. 217, 262–263.

⁶³¹ Luukko (1972), pp. 231–232.

manipulation was an offence against what the peasants believed was morally justifiable, it was an easy and fitting strategy to adopt seeing as the burghers' strategies put the peasant household economy at risk. Although stemming from circumstances of frustration, it nonetheless created a power balance where peasants were given more leverage and extended bargaining power. However, it had an exasperating consequence as it led burghers to trespass on the forest commons to acquire the wooden resources withheld from them by peasant communities.

That burghers infringed on peasant forest commons has been determined by previous research. It has been suggested that the motivation for these occurrences was that many burghers were descendants of the peasantry and as such believed themselves to be entitled to cut whatever they wanted in the forests.⁶³² Whilst this might be true, what consequences their infringements had in terms of institutional coherence within peasant communities is an aspect not explained by previous research. This thesis has shown how the lengths to which peasants went in order to protect their forests sometimes reached the extreme. Nonetheless, violent means of protection was sanctioned and even deemed necessary by crown officials, allowing peasants to let violence rule violence. Viewed in an international context, it was not uncommon that the protection of commons included violence.⁶³³ It has furthermore been demonstrated how the protection of, for example, Swiss commons was dependent on support provided by local authorities.⁶³⁴ The perception of the forest being a domain for the Ostrobothnian peasantry to govern was thus something shared between peasants and local authorities. Any activities that presented a potential break against this arrangement was a violation that threatened the societal structure of how socioeconomic duties and functions were supposed to be carried out. The use of violence thus empowered the peasantry in being able to establish their use-rights more firmly against an external counterpart. Even though burgher infringements presented a threat for the peasantry's ability to govern their forests commons, it nevertheless united peasant institutions. It actualised the understanding that it was the responsibility of all community members to fend off and prevent such infringements from occurring. Whilst such a development could have

⁶³² Virrankoski (1973), pp. 261–265.

⁶³³ Aihara (2019).

⁶³⁴ Viallon & Nahrath (2021), pp. 40–41.

evolved on its own, it was nevertheless a process that was facilitated by the rigorous support given by crown officials.

The success of peasant institutions organising on multiple levels, thus forming a polycentric system of governance, was determined by the conditions constituting the larger socio-economic context in which they existed. It was the experience and outcomes of these conditions that generated incentives for such a system to develop, given that benefits could be identified from its gradual establishment. In this process, the burghers of North Ostrobothnia were vital. The expanded utilisation of forest resources was made possible by burghers inhabiting the role as intermediaries between the peasantry and the international market, but also by virtue of their capacity of acting as credit guarantors when funds ran low. Previous research has demonstrated how peasants being indebted was not uncommon during the early modern period. In Bergslagen and Dalarna, for example, mine and ironwork owners often gave credits to charcoal-delivering peasants.⁶³⁵ Whilst this is reminiscent of the development in North Ostrobothnia, the ability of peasants to govern forests on the Swedish side was more severely threatened as increasing numbers of *rekognitionsskogar* were established in the mining districts.⁶³⁶ As the use-rights to many forests were given to, from the peasants' point of view, a socially and economically superior counterpart, peasant communities made efforts to strengthen their ownership rights by making requests to divide and enclose the forests they once shared.⁶³⁷ This development was different when compared to that of northern Finland. Whilst mine and ironwork owners constituted a fundamental part of the production cycle of iron and copper, the coastal burghers in North Ostrobothnia were not involved in the process of producing tar and timber. As such, the ability of the otherwise socially and economically superior burghers to influence the development of these industries was much lower.

The Ostrobothnian burghers manipulated market conditions and they were to a large extent driven by motives of promoting their own financial position. These circumstances had consequences for the relationship they shared with the peasantry and led to increasing instances of conflict. Nevertheless, similar to the argument that state actors are not always insensitive or detrimental to the development of peasant institutions, the same

⁶³⁵ Karlsson (1990); Bladh (1997); Ågren (1998).

⁶³⁶ Molander (1982), pp. 220–221.

⁶³⁷ Granér (2002), pp. 291–292, 326–327.

can be said for the North Ostrobothnian burghers. Even though they presented obstacles at certain junctures, they were nonetheless instrumental in the efforts of peasant communities to make a living and they were necessary to the process of North Ostrobothnia evolving into a society of nested enterprises.

The Swedish state: There is much written on how early modern states worried over depleting availability of forest resources. The fear of forests being exhausted and efforts to avoid their ultimate extinction were actualised throughout Western Europe.⁶³⁸ In this respect, few states were as fortunate as the Swedish considering the vastness of woodlands existing within its borders. Nevertheless, as wood became one of the most essential resources for early modern state building, the manner in which forests were exploited, and the purposes for which they were used, were questions that had to be addressed. During the sixteenth century, many European rulers had already begun to update previously implemented forest laws and ordinances in order to accommodate for the escalating trend of forest exhaustion that was experienced.⁶³⁹ In Sweden, it was not until the sixteenth century that the state came to involve itself more seriously with how the kingdom's forests were used, although mainly following from the ambition of converting unexploited woodlands into taxable farmlands.⁶⁴⁰

Influenced by legislative efforts and political developments on the continent, the scare of wood shortage eventually reached the Swedish Kingdom. This resulted in Sweden's first forest ordinance being decreed in 1647, followed by a second in 1664. Previous research has been able to explain the establishment of the eighteenth-century forest ordinances,⁶⁴¹ although the seventeenth century ordinances has gained less attention. Nevertheless, the contribution made by Granér does demonstrate how the early ordinances affected local communities in central Sweden.⁶⁴² However, given the principle geographical area of application they were created to regulate (Bergslagen), previous research has suggested that they were not implemented, or at least did not have any effect, in the Finnish part of the

⁶³⁸ For example Bäck (1984).

⁶³⁹ Allmann (1989); Warde (2018), p. 83; Bonan (2019), pp. 26–27.

⁶⁴⁰ Ahvenainen (1996), pp. 3–4; Larsson (1996), s. 9–10; Granér (2002), p. 67.

⁶⁴¹ Bäck (1984); Kuisma (1984); Roiko-Jokela (2018).

⁶⁴² Granér (2002), pp. 81–84.

kingdom.⁶⁴³ From the analysis carried out in this thesis, it can be determined that they contrary to this argument indeed were implemented and had consequences for the Finnish peasantry. However, even though they were publicised at the local courts and church pulpits, the time between the first and the second ordinance was a period of legal customisation. It is therefore correct to state that the ordinances were not introduced in the same way all over the Swedish Kingdom. However, it also meant that local officials had to interpret the ordinances so that it fitted a context not primarily described in the legal texts. Furthermore, the analysis has shown how the forest ordinances replaced already existing laws and traditions that up until that point had regulated the same thing, a development that international research has shown was not uncommon in early modern Europe.⁶⁴⁴ It has also been possible to determine how the additions made in the second ordinance of 1664 made it easier for authorities to formulate new locally applicable regulations that retained legitimacy through the forest ordinances.

In general, the state's intention with the forest ordinances was to provide local authorities with greater power and insight into how forest exploitation was carried out within the kingdom. In this process, the office of the county governor grew in importance. Together with the county governor instructions issued in 1635 and 1687, the forest ordinances gave the county governor extended responsibilities in overseeing that harmful deforestation did not occur. It was also his task to ensure that local communities and authorities worked together in matters of monitoring, establishing borders, and correcting those who committed unlawful deforestation. The protection of the forests was therefore the dominant discourse adopted by crown officials. This was similarly the case on the Swedish side of the kingdom as officials' reports from Småland spoke of forests being exhausted as a result of peasants' forest cutting activities. These statements have nonetheless been interpreted by scholars as being greatly exaggerated and generalising since the scare of wood shortage exceeded reality.⁶⁴⁵

Regardless, recurrent regulations and inspections were carried out in North Ostrobothnia with the main objective to prevent the experienced incurable damage that followed from the peasantry's production of tar and timber. It has been argued in previous research that the peasantry stood

⁶⁴³ Roiko-Jokela (2018).

⁶⁴⁴ Appuhn (2009), p. 112; Warde (2018), p. 85.

⁶⁴⁵ Larsson, L-O (1989), pp. 120–127, 146.

powerless in face of these regulations and simply conformed to the new reality imposed on them.⁶⁴⁶ This is to some degree correct. The investigation carried out in this thesis has shown how inspections and regulations were carried out by crown officials as well as by the peasantry. They were in fact even encouraged by the peasantry. In other words, the need to regulate forest related activities was a growing realisation ingraining itself among the rural population. Whilst many of them clearly believed that regulations had to be enforced, another explanation as to why several were tolerated rather than causing outbursts and protests at every juncture is because these regulatory efforts fell within the lines of what the peasantry believed to be morally justifiable.

The outcome of the regulations decreed by the county governors and other crown officials had immediate consequences for the peasantry in the sense that fines and new rules of conduct were issued. Nevertheless, even though the forest ordinances were intended to give officials greater insight concerning forest exploitation and legal power to correct wrongdoers, they were unable to fully scrutinise and regulate what actually transpired in the often-remote areas where forest cutting activities were carried out. Considering these factors, much was accepted and tolerated by the peasantry. However, there was a limit to what the peasantry tolerated, that is, an outer limit beyond which the actions of crown officials broke against the peasantry's moral economy. Several examples have been found demonstrating how the peasantry did not remain idle when they believed that this threshold have been crossed. It has furthermore been demonstrated how the process of establishing permissible limits of tar production was one where peasants and crown officials engaged in dialogue, taking into consideration both the needs of the former and the wishes of the latter, something that was furthermore encouraged by legislators in the capital.

As mentioned above, the ability of the county governor and his subordinates to oversee and regulate forest exploitation in North Ostrobothnia was limited. A circumstance that further complicated these efforts came with the growing influence of the Swedish Admiralty and the establishment of a shipyard in Kruunupyö in 1673. Whilst this presented employment possibilities for the peasantry, a precondition for the shipyard's operations was that peasants also delivered timber and other forest materials. Even though deals and contracts were struck stipulating the extent of forest resources that

⁶⁴⁶ Virrankoski (1973), p. 747.

resources that would be delivered, deliveries ultimately became a mandatory duty on the part of the peasantry who were obliged to procure whatever the shipyard's administration felt it needed. Given the ties already existing between peasants and burghers, which included long-lasting contracts and increasing levels of debt, peasants were thus torn between fulfilling their duties to the admiralty whilst at the same time honouring the terms of the contracts they had with the burghers. Adding to that the county governor administration's efforts to reduce the intensification of forest related exploitation in the region, the presence and involvement of the Swedish Admiralty entailed obstacles that complicated and impeded the ability of peasant communities to achieve a functioning governance regime. As such, it is striking how different the two governmental administrations of the county governor on the one hand and the admiralty on the other approached the question of forest exploitation. Whilst the former was deeply concerned and made efforts to decrease forest exploitation, the latter had no such considerations. The material analysed in this thesis shows a development where the two governmental branches were driven by different agendas, which left the peasantry in the southern parishes in a position where whatever objective they set out to fulfil was considered wrong by one or the other.

What role, then, did representatives of the Swedish central government play in the growing tar and timber industries in North Ostrobothnia, and how did it affect the peasantry's ability to govern their forest commons? When viewed as one organisation set in place to tackle the issue of forest exploitation, it immediately becomes evident how the early modern Swedish state was not one uniform entity of authority. It consisted of many fractioned parts with different agendas and objectives. Then again, this is true of most, if not all, early modern states. Nevertheless, the outcome of the crown officials' involvement in how peasants carried out cutting activities and governed their forest commons can be summarised as both enabling and impeding. Enabling in the sense that officials, as well as the local courts instituted through state auspice, were instrumental as they provided conflict solving mechanisms and the rule of law that allowed for lasting solutions to be reached. They also served as a guarantor of the peasantry's right to protect the forests against external intruders, especially in the case of burgher infringements. Furthermore, whilst inspections and regulations were sometimes criticised, they were also encouraged and enabled peasant communities to achieve accountability and predictability regarding forest

exploitation.⁶⁴⁷ On the other hand, actions taken by crown officials had an impeding effect in the sense that some regulations were considered as too radical and at times unjustified. The duality embodied by the Swedish Admiralty and county governor's administration further led to confusion as the message received by the peasantry was to both decrease and increase forest exploitation. However, notwithstanding the negative effects emanating from state involvement, the task of governing the forests remained in the hands of the peasantry and was never seriously threatened by the state's involvement.

5.3 Sustainability

A central argument of this thesis is that sustainability is a multidimensional and complex concept. Three definitions have been made, taking into account three different dimensions of the concept. First is *ecological sustainability*, which is defined as the ability to not undermine the ecological underpinnings on which a society it is dependent, which is based on the awareness that the natural resources belonging to a community are not infinite. The second dimension is *institutional sustainability* and is defined as the ability to maintain a robust and successful organisation where rules are followed, and users participate in monitoring and decision-making. The third dimension is *economic sustainability* and is defined as the ability to fairly distribute the benefits derived from the resource management system so that all users are able to make a living.

The three *sustainabilities* are each distinct but also interconnected, meaning that prioritisations made that affected one consequently has effects for another. In this thesis, it has been possible to demonstrate how all three grew in importance as forest exploitation and market integration increased in North Ostrobothnia. To gain more knowledge of how peasant communities dealt with and prioritised these issues, the main research question posed at the beginning of this thesis read as follows:

- Were peasant communities involved with the exploitation of forest commons able to achieve ecological, institutional, and economic sustainability, and if so, what prioritisations made this possible?

⁶⁴⁷ See Mansbridge (2013).

That commons could be deforested, that the organisation and structure of a self-governed community could fail, and that household funds could run low were well known truths that the peasantry of North Ostrobothnia knew. As such, they also knew that making prioritisations that generated outcomes that weighed too much in either one direction created imbalance. From the analysis carried out in this thesis, it is possible to identify three different, yet connected, prioritisations that had particular impact on their ability to govern their forest commons and achieving a state of equilibrium between *ecological*, *institutional*, and *economic sustainability* – or *sustainable balance*. These were the prioritisation of *rules*, *borders*, and *collective action*.

5.3.1 Rules

Rules are created to provide structure and accountability, and the importance of rules within communal property regimes echoed throughout pre-modern Europe.⁶⁴⁸ They furthermore ‘reflect the specific attributes of the particular resource’.⁶⁴⁹ In times of great economic and industrial transformation, therefore, the absence of rules seriously impedes the ability of a CPI to endure since there are no directives instructing users how, where, and when they are allowed to appropriate resources that they own in common. By the end of the seventeenth century, the importance of well-functioning rules that regulated access to and appropriation from forest commons were of outmost importance in North Ostrobothnia. However, the rules-in-use could be both informal and formal, the former of which being the ‘*rules of the road*’ in the sense that they shaped human behaviour and interaction without the need of formally defining them.⁶⁵⁰ As will be explained below, the importance of prioritising the rules-in-use, and whether they remained informal or formal, had consequences for peasant communities’ ability to achieve *sustainable balance*.

As explained by Tine de Moor, the development of communal property regimes initially evolved through informal agreements during the Middle Ages, although ultimately reaching a level where formal rules in the form of written laws and contracts became inevitable.⁶⁵¹ Similar to this development, the rules-in-use in peasant communities in North Ostrobothnia had a

⁶⁴⁸ Birrell (1987); Winchester (2015); Viallon & Nahrath (2021).

⁶⁴⁹ Ostrom (1990), p. 92.

⁶⁵⁰ North (1990), pp. 36–53, 83.

⁶⁵¹ de Moor (2008), pp. 179–180, 211.

distinctly informal character before the seventeenth century. To not excessively exploit wooden resources and being allowed to appropriate enough resources to ensure the future existence of one's household are examples of longstanding informal rules that had generated stability within the peasant institution. The moral economy of a community was furthermore maintained by keeping to such rules as they ensured that all members were able to make a living.⁶⁵² One enabling aspect in this context was that resource exploitation on forest commons was comparatively less intense than during the tar and timber boom of the seventeenth century.

The utility of informal rules can be noticed throughout early modern Europe. For example, in the late medieval and early modern Campine region, communal property regimes were characterised by informality in the sense that use-rights were not only given to landowners, but also to landless families, a strategy adopted in order to reduce the likelihood of them becoming reliant on poor relief. This inclusivity motivated participation in the maintenance of the common. Whilst local communities formalised communal rights of access to commons, custom and informality remained the most important aspect in terms of the regulations that were instituted. It furthermore allowed for the CPIs to change rules quickly when the need presented itself, which facilitated the effort of preventing overexploitation.⁶⁵³ A similar development can be noticed in the English county of Derbyshire where Heather Falvey has demonstrated how commoners abstained from instituting formal rules.⁶⁵⁴

When compared with the development in the Campine and Derbyshire, the findings of this thesis point to another development. The importance that informal rules had once played in North Ostrobothnia was gradually exceeded by a growing need of formalising the rules-in-use. However, this did not mean that peasant institutions were unsuccessful. On the contrary, the formalisation and establishment of well-defined rules was an important prioritisation that had great impact for peasant communities achieving *sustainable balance*. Whilst De Keyzer's example demonstrates how informal rules can allow for changes to be carried out quickly, the North Ostrobothnian case demonstrates how one of the most effective strategies by which balance was achieved in times of changing societal conditions was by

⁶⁵² Scott (1976); Grewe & Hölzl (2018), p. 19.

⁶⁵³ De Keyzer (2018), pp. 49, 95, 110.

⁶⁵⁴ Falvey (2013).

revisiting the rules-in-use and strengthening their legitimacy through formalisation at the local courts. It should furthermore be pointed out that formalised rules do not necessarily remain unchangeable. As explained by de Moor, for example, commoners in the eastern Netherlands kept detailed records on what rules applied and made frequent changes as contextual conditions changed.⁶⁵⁵ Similarly in North Ostrobothnia, the court records reveal how rules could be updated and changed through the use of graduated sanctions when repeated border violations or acts of unlawful forest cutting were committed.⁶⁵⁶ As such, the North Ostrobothnian peasants understood that forest resources would have been used in an undesirable and ecologically unsustainable way had the rules remained completely informal and if there was no room to change them. Further examples of how peasant communities increasingly prioritised the establishment of well-defined rules can be found in explanations given to us through the court records. These include, for example, the importance of not debarking young pine trees, that it was a shared responsibility to care for and protect the forest from illegal infringements, and by the institutionalisation of the argument of proximity in several village communities.

Ostrom has explained that whether a CPI is able to endure over a long period is dependent on its ability to try new strategies when contextual conditions change. A facilitating aspect in this context is if the proposed rules are ‘easy to understand and monitor’.⁶⁵⁷ Similarly, de Moor has emphasised how an effective way of achieving compliance with new regulations was that they should be simple and punitive enough so that they stimulated compliance and reciprocity among commoners.⁶⁵⁸ In an ownership structure where commons were owned at different levels, the North Ostrobothnian case demonstrates that once a rule was formalised at one level, peasant communities were able to effectively transfer and institutionalise the same rule at a different level, that is, an example of nesting of rules and nested enterprises.⁶⁵⁹ Together with the points made earlier, the ability of rule-transference demonstrates how important the prioritisation of formalised rules indeed was.

⁶⁵⁵ de Moor (2015), p. 32.

⁶⁵⁶ See Ostrom (1990, pp. 94–96) on graduated sanctions.

⁶⁵⁷ Ostrom (2005), p. 254.

⁶⁵⁸ de Moor (2015), p. 155.

⁶⁵⁹ Ostrom (1990), pp. 101–102; Ostrom (2005), pp. 58–59.

However, the importance of prioritising formal rules was not the same everywhere. Earlier research has demonstrated how well-defined rules determining how many resources a member is allowed to appropriate are not always a necessary precondition in order for a common-pool resource regime to be sustainable.⁶⁶⁰ Nevertheless, having well-defined and formal rules does not mean that a governance system is less likely to achieve the same. In fact, the North Ostrobothnian example demonstrates how the prioritisation of formal rules was an enabling factor in realising this effort. The different regulatory mechanisms – such as the taxable-capacity rule, ancient harvest areas, and the argument of proximity – were adequately set up and effective enough in order for most peasant communities to achieve *sustainable balance*. The rules ensured that no one appropriated more than justified by one's holdings in the village, members were held accountable when transgressions were detected, and they ensured that everyone was able to make a living from forest related industry. Furthermore, the way in which rules were established allowed each member to influence and change the regulations under which they were subjected. As such, it was a governance system that practiced strategies of coping and adapting to the new socioeconomic conditions.⁶⁶¹ This can furthermore be contrasted with a slightly different strategy opted for by villages in south-western Germany as Nils Grüne as he has demonstrated how they, instead of dismantling the commons regime, modernised it into becoming a parcelled common.⁶⁶² Nevertheless, informality was not completely abandoned in North Ostrobothnia. In communal initiatives of producing tar, the rules that applied for how to share the final product remained informal. In other settings, a combination of formal and informal conflict-solving strategies was used. This is again contrastable to De Keyzer's findings as she explains that whilst informality and inclusivity ruled, formalisation did occur in the sense that a clear distinction was made concerning who was considered to be outsiders and who were not.⁶⁶³

To better understand the prioritisations chosen by peasant communities in order to achieve *sustainable balance*, internal relations and regulations within peasant communities are of vital importance. Their predisposition to engage in discussions to resolve difficult matters, to cooperate, and share

⁶⁶⁰ De Keyzer (2018).

⁶⁶¹ This has been emphasised by for example de Moor (2010).

⁶⁶² Grüne (2011), pp. 47–48.

⁶⁶³ De Keyzer (2018), p. 109.

information are important aspects if a ‘trial-and-error learning process’ is to be realised, which facilitates the likelihood of their governance systems being successful.⁶⁶⁴ However, the relations they shared with external actors similarly played an important role and facilitated the evolving nestedness explained above. The prioritisations made by these actors affected the peasantry in different ways. In case of the burghers, it is perhaps obvious but nonetheless relevant to point out that they populated the coastal towns of the region because of trade. As such, they were principally driven by economic and commercial goals aimed towards increasing their own financial wealth. That is not to say that they were ignorant to the harsh reality of many peasants since they after all shared certain goals. Furthermore, they were also instrumental in providing financial aid when peasants struggled to pay their taxes. The ecological sustainability of forest resources was not something they expressed any anxieties over. Nevertheless, and as earlier research has similarly pointed out, the burghers’ manipulation of market conditions led to increasing levels of debt and high production costs with decreasing profits.⁶⁶⁵ This contributed to the peasantry sometimes making prioritisations that overbalanced in the direction of economic sustainability. As such, particularly the parish of Kruunupyy struggled to maintain a robust and successful organisation where rules were followed, even though peasants participated in monitoring and decision-making. Consequently, therefore, they were not able to achieve a high enough level of *institutional sustainability* which ultimately generated negative effects in terms of *ecological sustainability*.

The second external influence was that of the Swedish state. The double role played by local officials also resulted in a dual approach in terms of the prioritisations they made. On the one hand, the county governor’s administration made efforts to prevent excessive deforestation by issuing regulations, inspections, and fines. The economic hardship sometimes emphasised by the peasantry was a reaction to such efforts. It affected their ability to deliver forest resources to their trading partners and credit lenders, as well as to the shipyard in Kruunupyy. On the other hand, the prioritisations made by the officials of the Swedish Admiralty were focused on construction at the shipyard and that operations proceeded without interruption. This forced peasants to establish new formal rules that enabled them to level out forest

⁶⁶⁴ Ostrom (2005), p. 283.

⁶⁶⁵ See for example Luukko (1972).

cutting activities among the parish members, which ultimately was a prioritisation aimed towards achieving *sustainable balance*.

By again returning to the discussion on nestedness, the Swedish state was crucial in this development since it provided the peasantry with a formal conflict solving arena, i.e., the local courts.⁶⁶⁶ As such, the state was instrumental in facilitating the process by which peasants resolved conflicts and established new rules to resolve new problems, something that has been similarly emphasised by earlier research in other places in Europe as well.⁶⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the level of balance achieved was not the same in the south as it was further north.

With changing societal conditions followed changes in the peasant institutions. Time and effort had to be put on (re-)establishing rules in order to be better equipped when faced with new challenging conditions. However, similar to the point made by Ogilvie, no village or parish institution existed in isolation from other institutions.⁶⁶⁸ Therefore, prioritising formal rules was important, but not enough. In order to achieve *sustainable balance* and to avoid tragedy, the relationship with outside institutions played an important role. This warranted an additional prioritisation that had an equally high impact for the peasantry's ability to govern their forest commons, namely the prioritisation of well-defined and formal *borders*.

5.3.2 Borders

As have been established, having adequate, effective, and formal rules enabled peasants to engage in tar and timber production. This reduced the threat of community members depriving each other of the ability to make a living. However, even when such rules existed, this fundamental economic predicament was always at risk if the common was unsuccessfully protected from outside infringements.

Having well-defined borders is part of Ostrom's first design principle and describe how important such borders are in order for commoners to be able to define what is being managed and for whom. As such, the individuals who have rights to appropriate resources from the CPR must also be defined. She has furthermore emphasised how particularly large commons often result in high monitoring costs as well as difficulties related to the establishment of

⁶⁶⁶ See Mansbridge (2013).

⁶⁶⁷ Viallon & Nahrath (2021), pp. 40–41.

⁶⁶⁸ Ogilvie (2011), pp. 2–6.

borders.⁶⁶⁹ The development presented in this thesis clearly shows how particularly parish communities in North Ostrobothnia struggled with these issues, and how they gradually came to understand how important the prioritisation of *borders* was in order to achieve *sustainable balance*. Again, it was a matter of informality set against formality. The borders of amity, as explained by Eino Jutikkala, was based on an oral tradition where delineations between villages and parishes were highly informal.⁶⁷⁰ Similar to the development in England, as explained by Falvey, they were fluid and movable.⁶⁷¹ However, because the exploitation of forest resources increased at such a rapid pace during the seventeenth century, they had become insufficient and unpractical. The reason why stemmed from the changing societal conditions brought on by the growing tar and timber industry. This renegotiated the conditions of how to achieve and maintain *sustainable balance*, which is comparable with the Danish commons as Fitzbøger has explained that it is ‘an obvious precondition for the internal distribution of natural resources that the external village [and parish] borders were firmly established’.⁶⁷²

By the second half of the seventeenth century, keeping the borders informal meant weakened opportunities of predictability in terms of *ecological sustainability* since the risk of illegal infringements being committed by neighbouring communities had increased. This furthermore resulted in worsened conditions in terms of *economic sustainability* seeing as the resources shared by one community could deplete at a pace that worsened their ability to make a living. The advantages once derived from informal borders were no longer relevant due to new and intensified modes of appropriation. The analysis of the court records also demonstrates how this generated negative economic consequences in terms of a growing income inequality between the southern parishes.⁶⁷³ Ultimately, therefore, the *institutional sustainability* of peasant communities had to be robust enough in order to take pre-emptive actions to counteract such a development.

Contrasted to the case of North Ostrobothnia, peasant communities on the Swedish mainland experienced a similar development where matters related to the inviolability of their forest commons was threatened. However, the

⁶⁶⁹ Ostrom (1990), pp. 90–92; Ostrom (2009), p. 420; Cox et al. (2010).

⁶⁷⁰ Jutikkala (1963), p. 276; Granér (2002), p. 237.

⁶⁷¹ Falvey (2013).

⁶⁷² Fitzbøger (2004), p. 141.

⁶⁷³ Nummela (2011) has pointed to a similar trend during the early seventeenth century.

outcome was in many places that their ability to administer matters of management and resource utilisation was increasingly put in the hands of central authorities.⁶⁷⁴ In Fryksdal hundred in Värmland County, as explained by Granér, the peasantry ultimately made requests of enclosure which redefined the collective and social rights under which they lived, which at large was beneficial.⁶⁷⁵ In North Ostrobothnia, peasants similarly made use of the legal system set in place by the Swedish government in order to avoid evolving ambiguities of who had the right to appropriate forest resources where. However, it was a different development in the sense that when border inspections were carried out in North Ostrobothnia, it was done with other motives than to strengthen ownership rights in relation to mines and ironwork owners. The prioritisation of formalised borders was done by and for the peasantry who shared them since it created stability and transparency within peasant society. However, the role played by external actors could be decisive, although in the sense that local officials sometimes had to exert pressure on peasant communities to resolve the issue of their informal borders or by supporting their methods of protecting their commons against burgher infringements.⁶⁷⁶

What determines, then, whether informality or formality is the better course of action (both in terms of *rules* and *borders*) in the struggle of achieving *sustainable balance* in times of comprehensive socioeconomic transformations? Drawing from the findings of this thesis, at least three factors can be identified as important considerations when answering this question, which also sheds light on different contextual circumstances that influence the prioritisations taken by peasant institutions. These are *size*, *levels of ownership*, and *external pressure*.

Whilst the need of formalised borders became increasingly important throughout North Ostrobothnia during the latter part of the seventeenth century, it was a more serious problem at parish level than it was on village level. Because of the *size* of village commons, village members could more easily self-organise and monitor their common, something that Ostrom and other scholars also have pointed out.⁶⁷⁷ Considering also that North Ostrobothnian society was characterised by an extended family system and

⁶⁷⁴ Karlsson (1990), p. 37; Eliasson (1997), pp. 54–55.

⁶⁷⁵ Granér (2002), pp. 291–292, 326–327.

⁶⁷⁶ See Mansbridge (2013) and the importance of the state in polycentric systems.

⁶⁷⁷ Ostrom (2005), p. 251; Ostrom (2009), p. 420; Granér (2002), p. 235.

a high level of immobility,⁶⁷⁸ the number of people that potentially remembered and could point out the correct location of borders was most likely high and could therefore have functioned as a facilitating factor in the process of formalisation.

In terms of *levels of ownership*, the forest commons of North Ostrobothnia were divided into village and parish level. Compared to village commons, the size of parish commons was of such proportion that borders could no longer remain informal. Furthermore, as peasant society became increasingly nested and more interest groups were able to exert influence over how the forests were exploited, the need of formality increased even more. In this context, the process of enclosure (thus formalisation of ownership) explained by Granér is relatable considering how the influence of mines and ironwork owners grew.⁶⁷⁹ Regardless, the northern parishes in North Ostrobothnia were even larger than those in the south. Yet, they did not experience the same level of difficulty. This leads to the factor of *external pressures*.

Ostrom has argued that ‘we need to recognize that governance is frequently an adaptive process involving multiple actors at diverse levels.’⁶⁸⁰ The forest related activities occupying peasants in the south was heavily influenced by the presence of the Swedish Admiralty and the shipyard in Kruunupyy. The mandated duties put on them to deliver timber, tar, and other shipbuilding materials was not a struggle that the northern parishes experienced. Consequently, the adaptive process and relationship to external actors was not the same throughout North Ostrobothnia. In sum, whilst the three factors of *size*, *levels of ownership*, and *external pressure* influenced whether commoners opted for informality or formality, they also affected their ability to achieve *sustainable balance*.

Through the prioritisation of formally establishing the location of borders, peasants were able to attain better knowledge concerning what forest belonged to what village and parish. As such, the possibility of planning for the future was facilitated and the inspection letters produced gave them a legal point of reference and security if future violations occurred. By contrasting this to De Keyzer’s findings, it is interesting to note the differences gained from either formality or informality. She has demonstrated how

⁶⁷⁸ Tegengren (1943), pp. 62–63; Andersson (2018).

⁶⁷⁹ Granér (2002).

⁶⁸⁰ Ostrom (2005), p. 286.

informality gave commoners breathing space in the sense that practices could be more efficiently changed in times of changing societal conditions, something which formal documents would have prevented.⁶⁸¹ However, the economic development of North Ostrobothnia during the seventeenth century was one where formalisation of previously informal borders became a prioritisation profoundly important in order for peasant communities to achieve *sustainable balance*. Therefore, the utility of formal or informal borders is by all things considered very much contextually specific. Nevertheless, even though the process of establishing formal borders benefitted peasant communities in North Ostrobothnia, this was only possible granted that peasants also prioritised *collective action*.

5.3.3 Collective Action

The importance of *collective action* within communal property regimes is arguably one of Ostrom's more important design principle.⁶⁸² It is furthermore the second characteristic of successful commons emphasised by De Keyzer.⁶⁸³ Its importance has been identified as one of the main reasons behind the formation of communal property regimes all over Europe from the Middle Ages and onwards.⁶⁸⁴ The Campine commoners were able to create management structures through which resources could be utilised sustainably over several centuries.⁶⁸⁵ In the northern parts of early modern Fennoscandia, collective action was fundamental within indigenous Sami communities in order to manage issues related to sustainable land and water use since it promoted reciprocity between users.⁶⁸⁶ Another example can be found in sixteenth and seventeenth century Venice and Spanish Lombardy where sustainable management of common-pool resources was achieved through different strategies of cooperation and efforts promoting social capital.⁶⁸⁷

Collective action was no less significant in North Ostrobothnia. Through collective action, it was possible for peasant communities to achieve high levels of trust and reciprocity, and as such, it strengthened the moral

⁶⁸¹ De Keyzer (2018), p. 95.

⁶⁸² Ostrom (1990), pp. 93–94.

⁶⁸³ De Keyzer (2018), p. 97.

⁶⁸⁴ de Moor (2015).

⁶⁸⁵ De Keyzer (2018), p. 97.

⁶⁸⁶ Larsson & Päiviö Sjaunja (2022), pp. 117, 229.

⁶⁸⁷ Ongaro (2016).

economy of their communities. This facilitated the process of reaching a shared perception that their joint efforts actually led to shared benefits. Moreover, the prioritisation of collective action made the formalisation of rules and borders possible. The structure and accountability that formalised rules provided, and the stability and transparency that followed from formalised borders, would not have been as easily attained had peasant communities not been willing to cooperate.

That peasants prioritised collective action can be identified throughout the court records. One of the most distinctive examples was the collective effort of transferring the taxable-capacity-rule from village level to parish level during the 1670s. To pull this off, village communities had to have a common perception of the problems they faced and of the appropriateness of the proposed solution. Not only were monitoring and maintenance efforts facilitated by this achievement, but the shared inclination of reporting illegal forest cutting activities also increased. Furthermore, the analysis has shown how the entire parish community stood united when one village community was subjected to illegal infringements by outside groups. This generated a response from the entire parish community in the sense that a definitive and formal border had to be established. The socially-binding effect that such efforts had can be compared to the findings of David Fletcher as he has explained how the process of defining parish boundaries enhanced the level of social coherence within communities.⁶⁸⁸

Another important aspect was that of communal efforts in producing tar and timber, which boosted reciprocity.⁶⁸⁹ Such joint enterprises also actualised the question of how to distribute resources fairly, ‘a crucial attribute of the rules of robust systems’.⁶⁹⁰ The social justice crafted in such settings was an important aspect of their ability to establish formal rules and borders, and thus to achieve *sustainable balance*. However, not all problems could be resolved informally. Therefore, they needed an effective conflict-solving arena where formal discussions could be held and where conflicts could be resolved.

The frequency of peasants utilising local courts for these purposes increased throughout the Swedish Kingdom during the early modern

⁶⁸⁸ Fletcher (2003).

⁶⁸⁹ The importance of reciprocity in common-pool resource regimes has emphasised by several scholars, see for example McGinnis & Ostrom (2014); de Moor (2015); Lana-Berasain (2017); Haller et al. (2021); Larsson & Päiviö Sjaunja (2022).

⁶⁹⁰ Ostrom (2005), p. 263.

period.⁶⁹¹ This development can be seen in North Ostrobothnia during the seventeenth century as issues related to the management of forest resources were discussed and resolved at the local courts. In this context, Villstrand's and other scholars' emphasis on adaptation within peasant communities played an important role.⁶⁹² When peasants believed that the future of the parish was in peril, when income inequality increased, or when the tradition of informal borders were no longer deemed practical, the adaptations and prioritisations leading up to that moment had not been effective enough in order to achieve *sustainable balance*. As such, scope for re-prioritisation was a necessary requirement. The processes of engaging in decision-making and conflict-solving at the local courts was a commitment by peasant communities that allowed them to revisit and evaluate the 'rules of the road'.⁶⁹³ As such, they could make new prioritisations and institute new rules that were better attuned with current conditions. If found ineffective, another strategy could be taken until balance was achieved.

When internal regulations were formalised and borders had been established through collective action, peasant communities could enjoy a higher level of predictability in relation to the governance of their forest commons. But collective action was not only an important prioritisation in terms of internal regulation. As have been explained earlier, the evolving nestedness of peasant communities was very much influenced by the relations they shared with the burghers and local officials. Whilst these external actors exerted positive influences in several ways, they also posed hinderances to the peasantry's collective efforts of achieving *sustainable balance*. The burghers used different strategies in order to maximize their financial wealth through open purchases and by manipulating prices on tar and salt. The countermove of limiting deliveries and increasing the price of firewood would have had little to no impact if not enough peasants joined in this collective strategy. Furthermore, the burghers' deforestation on the peasants' forests would have seen no end had peasant communities not taken collective action to prevent them,⁶⁹⁴ sometimes through violent means. As have been pointed out in earlier research, forceful means of protection improved the reputation of those who carried it out and increased their

⁶⁹¹ Taussi Sjöberg (1996); Österberg (1994), p. 27; Österberg et al. (2000), p. 252; J. Larsson (2009); J. Larsson (2016).

⁶⁹² Villstrand (1992a), pp. 236–239; de Moor (2015), p. 155.

⁶⁹³ North (1990), pp. 36–53, 83.

⁶⁹⁴ Ostrom's first design principle, Ostrom (1990), pp. 91–92.

influence in terms of their ownership rights.⁶⁹⁵ In North Ostrobothnia, the use of violence by peasant communities was supported by local officials and local courts, which is similar to the case of the Campine commons.⁶⁹⁶ Another example of collective action was the shared responsibility of contributing to the fees associated with having a legal case tried by the town court. In sum, the pressure and damage caused by an external group such as the burghers could only be thwarted if incentives to act together existed; incentives that the North Ostrobothnian peasants certainly shared.

Whilst local officials were instrumental for the peasantry's ability to protect their commons against burgher infringements, they also created hinderances for the peasantry's ability to achieve *sustainable balance*. Some local officials were frequently accused of unfair treatment by the peasantry, and as explained by Virrankoski, the level of corruption ultimately required the involvement of the Chamber of Deputies.⁶⁹⁷ Nevertheless, the results of this thesis demonstrate how the peasantry made collective efforts of resistance when they believed that the acts of local officials violated their moral economy, that is, what they believed was morally correct and justifiable behaviour. These were successful because of their predisposition of prioritising collective action.

5.4 Final Remarks

Depending on how one defines and use the concept of sustainability, commons may be deemed sustainable even though they were characterised by injustice, inequality, and ecologically detrimental exploitation strategies. As such, there is a need to develop ways of better defining what sustainability actually means. This thesis exists as an example of how to deal with this necessity by investigating historical developments and issues related to the multidimensionality of the concept. To this end, this thesis has provided examples of how peasant communities made different prioritisations motivated by their own perception of such issues; prioritisations that made it possible to achieve sustainable balance.

The peasantry's ability to intensify the exploitation of forest resources and to produce products for the international market was conditional on there

⁶⁹⁵ Wunderli (2021), pp. 71–72.

⁶⁹⁶ De Keyzer (2018), p. 101.

⁶⁹⁷ Virrankoski (1973), pp. 394, 517–518. See also Jonsson (2005).

being a system that regulated the appropriation of said resources. Had there been no functional system regulating forest cutting activities, the development presented in this thesis would have been completely different. It is impossible to predict how things would have unfolded had the forests been privately owned or under complete scrutiny by the Swedish state. Regardless, because of the communal ownership structure that was in place, how the regulatory systems of resource appropriation were arranged, and how peasant society became increasingly nested, peasants were able to make balanced and interrelated prioritisations aimed towards maintaining the sustainability of their forests, their institutions, and their economic welfare. This provided for a development where landholding peasants were given strengthened legal rights and opportunity to make a living by engaging in forest related work. It has also been possible to establish how they were aware of the finitude of the resources stored within their forests and that overexploitation could have devastating long-term effects. This realisation allowed them to make prioritisations and formulate strategies of resources distribution that were based on notions of fairness, reasonableness, and sustainability.

In an international research context, the results of this thesis have thus contributed to a better understanding of how a region characterised by communal ownership was affected and changed in a time of great economic change. It has demonstrated how peasant communities under such conditions evolved into a society where they were more deeply dependent on each other; where the actions and strategies of one group influenced and changed that of another. Moreover, the thesis has demonstrated how this process of evolving polycentrism was enabled not only by the relationship peasants shared with each other, but also through the relations shared with Swedish state officials and trading burghers. Ultimately, instead of moving towards privatisation of common forests, peasant institutions were able to exploit and make a living on forest related industry. As the tar and timber trade transformed the region of North Ostrobothnia, these activities, and the prioritisation of formalised rules, borders, and collective action enabled peasants to govern and regulate their forest commons in a way that increased their ability of making a living that was sustainably balanced.

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Popular science summary

This thesis studies how forests were regulated in North Ostrobothnia in Finland during the seventeenth century (then a part of the Swedish Kingdom). During this time, Sweden was at its largest in terms of size, and partly because of the many wars that were fought, the Swedish government was in great need of money and resources. One way of accumulating great wealth was to export different products that other European states needed. One of these products was tar and was primarily used to waterproof ships. This product, as well as timber for shipbuilding, was produced in very large quantities in North Ostrobothnia and the forests of the region were therefore put under increased exploitation. The forests in which these products were produced were owned as *commons* by peasant villages and parishes. This meant that every peasant who lived and owned land in a village also owned the right to obtain resources from the forest that the village members owned collectively. Further away from the village centre was the parish forest, which was owned collectively by the villages of the parish. The production of tar and timber in these forests increased during the century and many peasant households came to base much of their household income on these activities. However, this also posed problems since with increased exploitation followed growing numbers of conflicts between village and parish members over how much and where forest resources were supposed to be extracted.

The aim of this study is therefore to investigate how the growing importance of forests affected ways in which peasants regulated and shared forest resources during the seventeenth century. Furthermore, it asks if, and in such case how, peasants were able to regulate and share forest resources in a sustainable way. Theoretically, therefore, the concept of *sustainability* is important. In this thesis, three different dimensions of the concept are used:

ecological, institutional, and economic sustainability. These dimensions are interlinked since prioritisations made by peasant communities to achieve one had consequences for how they were able to achieve another. In this context, it is also the aim of this thesis to investigate how the growing burgher class and Swedish state officials influenced and affected the peasantry's ability to govern their forest commons in a sustainable way. The historical source material used to investigate this is protocols from local district courts, seventeenth century maps, and Swedish legislation.

The thesis concludes that most peasant communities were able to achieve balance between the three dimensions of sustainability through the prioritisations that were made. The three most important prioritisations were to establish and formalise *rules* concerning the use of forest resources, to establish and formalise *borders* between villages and parishes, and to work collectively within and between peasant communities in order to achieve these goals. The thesis also argues that peasant communities became increasingly *nested* as a consequence of this, meaning that as forest exploitation increased and prioritisations of rules, borders, and collective action were made, peasant communities came to be more dependent on each other. They had to unite in order to overcome and resolve emerging problems related to this intensified exploitation. In relation to this, the burghers of the coastal towns and state officials both played an inhibiting and enabling role. Whilst the burghers became the peasants' trading partners who assisted them with moneylending, they used this position to manipulate market conditions, and they also trespassed on the peasants' forests and cut wood without permission. In this context, the Swedish state officials were an important ally of the peasants who supported their right to protect and exploit their own forests. However, state officials also imposed regulations and made efforts to decrease the peasants' forest exploitation. Nevertheless, the peasantry's ability to regulate and carry out forest related work was never seriously threatened by such efforts.

Populärvetenskaplig sammanfattning

Denna avhandling undersöker hur skog reglerades i Norra Österbotten i Finland under 1600-talet (då en del av det svenska kungariket). Under denna tid var Sverige storleksmässigt som störst och bland annat på grund av de många krig som utkämpades var den svenska staten i stort behov av pengar och resurser. Ett sätt att förskaffa stora rikedomar var att exportera olika produkter som andra europeiska stater behövde. En av dessa produkter var tjära och användes främst för att vattentäta fartyg. Denna produkt, liksom timmer för skeppsbyggnad, producerades i mycket stora mängder i Norra Österbotten och skogarna i regionen sattes därför under ökad exploatering. Skogarna där dessa produkter producerades ägdes som *allmänningar* av bönderna på by- och sockennivå. Det innebar att varje bonde som bodde och ägde mark i en by också ägde rätten att få nyttja resurser från den skog som byns medlemmar ägde kollektivt. Längre bort från byns centrum låg sockenskoget som ägdes kollektivt av socknens byar. Produktionen av tjära och timmer i dessa skogar ökade under århundradet och många bondehushåll kom att basera mycket av sin hushållsinkomst på denna verksamhet. Dock innebar detta också problem eftersom den ökade exploateringen resulterade i ett växande antal konflikter mellan by- och sockensamfälligheter om hur mycket och var skogsresurserna skulle utvinnas.

Syftet med denna studie är därför att undersöka hur skogarnas växande betydelse påverkade hur bönder reglerade och delade skogsresurser under 1600-talet. Vidare ställs frågan om, och i sådana fall hur, bönder kunde reglera och dela skogsresurser på ett hållbart sätt. Ur teoretisk synpunkt är därför begreppet *hållbarhet* viktigt. I denna avhandling används tre olika dimensioner av begreppet: ekologisk, institutionell och ekonomisk hållbarhet. Dessa dimensioner är sammanlänkade eftersom böndernas prioriteringar för att uppnå en fick konsekvenser för hur de kunde uppnå en

annan. I detta sammanhang är syftet med avhandlingen att även undersöka hur den växande borgarklassen och svenska statstjänstemän påverkade böndernas förmåga att reglera sina skogsallmänningar på ett hållbart sätt. Det historiska källmaterialet som används för att undersöka detta är häradsrättsprotokoll, kartor och svensk lagstiftning.

Avhandlingen drar slutsatsen att de flesta bondesamfälligheter kunde uppnå balans mellan de tre dimensionerna av hållbarhet genom de prioriteringar som gjordes. De tre viktigaste prioriteringarna var att upprätta och formalisera *regler* kring användningen av skogsresurserna, samt att fastställa och formalisera *gränser* mellan byar och socknar genom *kollektiva åtgärder*. Avhandlingen argumenterar också för att byar och socknar blev alltmer *nested* som en konsekvens av detta, vilket innebar att i takt med att skogsexploateringen ökade och att regler, gränser och kollektiva åtgärder prioriterades, blev bondesamfälligheterna mer beroende av varandra. De var tvungna att enas för att övervinna och lösa problem relaterade till den intensifierade exploateringen. I förhållande till detta spelade både borgarna och statstjänstemän en hämmande och möjliggörande roll. Medan borgarna blev böndernas handelspartners som hjälpte dem med penninglåning, använde de också denna position för att manipulera marknadsvillkor och gjorde intrång i böndernas skogar och högg ved utan tillstånd. I detta sammanhang var de svenska statstjänstemännen en viktig allierad till bönderna som stödde deras rätt att skydda och exploatera sina egna skogar. Men statliga tjänstemän införde också regler och gjorde ansträngningar för att minska böndernas skogsexploatering. Trots detta hotades aldrig böndernas förmåga att reglera och utföra skogsrelaterat arbete av sådana ansträngningar.

Appendix

Placenames in Finnish and Swedish.

Finnish:

Hamina
Helsinki
Ii
Iisalmi
Kainuu
Kajaani
Kokkola
Kruunupyy
Kälviä
Liminka
Lohtaja
Oulu
Oulujoki
Oulujärvi
Oulunsalo
Paltamo
Pietarsaari
Raahe
Salo
Savo
Sääminki
Teerijärvi
Uusikaarlepyy

Swedish:

Fredrikshamn
Helsingfors
Ijo
Idensalmi
Kajanaland
Kajana
Karleby (Gamlakarleby)
Kronoby
Kelviå
Limingå
Lochteå
Uleåborg
Ule älv
Ule träsk
Uleåsalö
Paldamo
Jakobstad
Brahestad
Saloinen
Savolax
Säminge
Terjärv
Nykarleby

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This thesis examines the changing importance of forests during the seventeenth century in Northern Finland. The forests were owned as commons by peasant communities and the regulation of forest exploitation was put under pressure because of the growing tar and timber industry in the region. The thesis studies this development from a bottom-up perspective and pays particular attention to the concept of sustainability in early modern peasant communities by analysing court records, maps, and Swedish legislation.

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