

Power dynamics and (intergenerational) values: What influences the forest ownership of young translocal forest owners in Finland?

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ABSTRACT

Forests and trees have diverse meanings in Finland that are claimed for many different purposes. Urbanisation has and will continue to increase the number of translocal forest owners, leading to the diversification of forest ownership, values, utilisation, and human-forest relationships. It is important for translocal forest owners, the generation of future forest owners, to gauge the values and meaningfulness of translocal forest ownership and to understand the possible future changes in forest management and ownership structures. In-depth interviews were gathered from ten forest owners aged 18–30 living in the greater Helsinki area, six of whom later participated in a World Café workshop, to understand their values and ability to conduct values-based decision making. Value conflicts were identified in both the interviews and the group discussion, and going against the prevailing norms of commercial forest ownership was viewed as difficult and requiring courage. Deviation from these norms was made difficult not only by disciplinary and neoliberal governance structures but also by intergenerational ties and social pressure from older family members. These factors reduced the autonomous decision making of young forest owners, leading them to internalise the Finnish forestry sector's prevailing norms. Thus, young forest owners could end up shaping their forests according to the values of those who wielded more power rather than their own. Nevertheless, there was little intention to transfer the legal ownership outside of the owners' family, because the forests, and their intergenerational and social ties often provided sentimental value, leading to the intention to retain ownership control.

1. Introduction

Non-industrial private forest (NIPF) owners or private forest owners who are not forest industry companies own the majority of forests in Finland (Karppinen et al., 2020); as a result, they are naturally important to both Finland's environmental goals and Finland's forestry sector. According to Karppinen et al. (2020), the average size of owned forest land in Finland is 48 ha, and the average age of a Finnish forest owner is 62; over half of all Finnish forest owners are over age 65. Therefore, it might be reasonable to expect a generational shift among the Finnish forest owners in the future when forest ownership will be transferred to younger generations (Rämö, 2009; Erkkilä et al., 2021), potentially leading to the diversification of forest ownership goals and human-forest relationships (Rämö, 2009; Häyrynen et al., 2015; Pynnönen et al., 2024).

Forest ownership transfers in Finland often happen through

inheritance, purchase, or by receiving a forest as a gift, and nearly four fifths of these are made between family members and other relatives (Karppinen et al., 2020), making intergenerational ties important in forest ownership within the Finnish context (Lähdesmäki and Matilainen, 2014; Lähdesmäki et al., 2023). Finnish forest owners are already gradually becoming more translocal through urbanisation, with the number of so-called remote forest-owners, or forest owners living outside the municipalities where their forests are located, growing in recent years (Rämö, 2009; Hänninen et al., 2011; Karppinen et al., 2020). This forest owner cohort has been identified to be less active in making independent, forest management related decisions (Koho et al., 2004; Hänninen et al., 2011).

Forest owner research categorises forest owners as those emphasising either material or non-material aspects or goals in forestry, such as timber production or the recreational aspects of forests, or considers them as multi-objective forest owners who have a combination of

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material and non-material goals (e.g., Karppinen, 1998; Pynnönen et al., 2018; Ficko et al., 2019; Karppinen et al., 2020). Timber production is considered important to most Finnish forest owners (Lähdesmäki and Matilainen, 2014), although Finnish forest owners hold diverse values, goals, and motivations (Karppinen, 1998; Takala et al., 2019, 2021; Kangas and Ollikainen, 2025). However, Takala et al. (2017) have identified “real” multi-objective forest ownership to be rare, even though it is often reported as the most common type in multiple forest-owner typologies.

It is important to mention, when considering multi-objective forest ownership, that before the amendment to the Finnish Forest Act (1085/2013) forest owners needed a special permit to practice continuous cover forestry. That is a forest management method that permanently keeps forest stands in an unevenly aged state through harvesting trees by selected thinning and avoiding rotational forest management through clear-cutting, whereby all or nearly all of the trees are harvested. Rotational forest management is used in the prevailing forest management method of clear-cut forestry whereby forest stands are grown in evenly aged cycles. Clear-cutting, especially in government forests, has become more controversial in recent years due to its intensive nature and negative effects on biodiversity (Halla and Laine, 2022). Previous studies on these controversial ecological aspects as well as on the value aspects of forest ownership in Finnish contexts have been conducted through human-forest relationships (Halla et al., 2023; Pynnönen et al., 2024), psychological ownership (Lähdesmäki and Matilainen, 2014; Matilainen et al., 2017), forest owner discourses (Takala et al., 2017, 2019, 2022) and power dynamics within Finnish forestry (Vainio and Paloniemi, 2012; Erkkilä et al., 2021).

Apart from the debates regarding forest management methods, the changing values and social factors in Finnish forestry affecting general value trends among forest owners have also included structural changes. These include urbanisation, the transition away from farm ownership, and an increase in translocality (Karppinen, 1998; Rämö, 2009; Karppinen et al., 2020). We add to this previous discussion by using the term ‘translocal forest owners’ instead of ‘remote forest owners’ to describe the forest owners’ interconnectedness to the regions where their forests are located and the dynamics between the two localities. Translocality is a growing global phenomenon not only because of urbanisation but also due to socio-economic, political and cultural factors (Datta and Brickell, 2011; Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013; Steinbrink and Niedenführ, 2020). Translocality in the Finnish context can present itself in owning, for example, a forest or a summer cabin outside one’s permanent place of residence. Observing translocality among forest owners, especially among the generation of future forest owners, informs the forestry sector and society in general on the potential changes within the Finnish forest ownership structure.

This article focuses on young forest owners, who admittedly are currently a fairly small forest-owner demographic in Finland (Rämö, 2009; Erkkilä et al., 2021). Studying their values-based decision making is important from multiple perspectives in terms of political forests, because it provides data on the social participation and the state of facilitated agency among young people in Finland to show powerful (and less powerful) interests at play. It also shows policies related to forestry that are shaped by the outcomes of intergenerational negotiations and the impositions of generational interests. Young forest owners can have limited possibilities in the decision making over their own forest (Erkkilä et al., 2021). We aim to answer the following research questions in our article: 1) Are young translocal forest owners able to conduct forest-related decision making according to their own personal values? 2) If not, according to whose values are their forest-related decisions being made? 3) If they feel they are unable to make forest management-related decisions according to their own values, does this reduce the meaningfulness of forest ownership to the point of relinquishing it? We will introduce the conceptual framework on which this study will build in the following sections and to what it aims to contribute, followed by presenting the research material and methods.

The second half of the article will showcase our finding in the ‘Results’ section, categorised according to the most important elements as they are self-reported by the participating young forest owners. We will end the paper with the ‘Discussion’ and ‘Conclusion’ sections, where we will discuss our findings and their greater implications within the scope of political ecology.

2. Conceptual framework

Our approach to studying the visible and invisible values and power dynamics within Finnish forestry draws on political ecology, especially scholars such as Fletcher (2010), Vandergeest and Peluso (2015) and Devine and Baca (2020). We also draw on the work of Ribot and Peluso (2003) on power in natural resources management to argue that forests are ever evolving political-ecological sites of contested regimes of the forest owners and, in our case, of young translocal forest owners and their relatives. Political ecology provides also a framework to understand governmental and non-governmental institutions’ and private sector-driven practices that define and shape the relationship between people, natural resources, values and identity (see, e.g., Peluso, 1992; Vaccaro et al., 2013; Vandergeest and Peluso, 2015; Devine and Baca, 2020; Peluso and Vandergeest, 2020). The broader scholarly work on political ecology also details forest governance and subject formation practices (e.g., Agrawal, 2005; Li, 2007; Devine and Baca, 2020; Mustalahti et al., 2020) under the strong sectoral expertise and identity (in case of Finland, see Kotilainen and Rytteri, 2011; Vainio and Paloniemi, 2012). Blending the conceptual framework of political ecology with existing theory on personal and intergenerational values, as well as on decision making, we aim to gain a more in-depth understanding of young translocal forest owners’ ability to conduct forest-related decision making according to their own personal values.

Understanding power is central in political ecology research (Khan, 2013; Svarstad et al., 2018): Power imbalances are central to creating politicised environments (Bryant, 1998; Khan, 2013), so identifying them can help us study the production of political forests in Finland, where forests are now mostly owned by aging non-industrial private forest owners (NIPF) owners. Therefore, studying the values and decision making of the generation of future forest owners is important in estimating the potential changes (or lack thereof) in Finnish forests and forest management. Families can have unique power dynamics (Chan and Lo, 2016), and scholars such as Scabini and Marta (2006), Macionis (2014) and Carrigan et al. (2023) have identified family members as influential agents in transmitting information, values, and norms in everyday life. Their roles as conveyers of forest-related information have been reported by Bieling (2004) and Erkkilä et al. (2021). However, only a few studies have been conducted on their influence in forest management, especially in the global north context. We will be paying special attention to the effects of intergenerational value differences and power dynamics within families. The concept of *power* is understood in this article according to the definitions of Ribot and Peluso (2003) as “the capacity of some actors to affect the practices and ideas of others” and that power is “...emergent from, though not always attached to, people” arising from “both the intended and unintended consequences or effects of social relationships”.

We understand family relationships as one of the most important social relationships in the Finnish forestry context due to its prevalence within Finnish forest ownership, because the ownership of Finnish forests tends to be transferred within families (Karppinen et al., 2020). Some such transfers may lead to a situation in which the (new) forest owner is still in active contact with the previous owner or with a family member who was or feels that they were passed over. The potential social conflicts hiding in such cases are better understood when looking at ownership as both legal and psychological (Morewedge, 2021; Pierce et al., 2001, 2003). Psychological ownership is used to describe the experience of a person feeling that something is “theirs” with or without legal ownership (Pierce et al., 2003) and can manifest itself in implicit

and explicit forms in which ownership arises from self-object associations or from simply categorising the object as “mine” (Ye and Gawronski, 2016; Morewedge, 2021). The origins of psychological ownership lie in organisational research (Pierce et al., 2001), although it has been used to understand different aspects of landowner-land relationships ranging from forestry (e.g., Andabaka et al., 2021; Lähdesmäki and Matilainen, 2014; Matilainen et al., 2017, 2019) to agriculture (e.g., Spears et al., 2021; Sun and Jin, 2024) and nature conservation (e.g., Preston and Gelman, 2020).

Experiencing psychological ownership is not necessarily always positive, because it can be a source of burden caused by increased feelings of responsibility (Pierce et al., 2003), which Lähdesmäki and Matilainen (2014) have previously identified among new Finnish forest owners who have gained their forests through inheritance. A forest owner might also inherit the legal ownership of the forest without the psychological ownership experienced by the previous owner. Wells et al. (2023) noted that sudden acquisitions of legal ownership, such as inheritances, can be viewed as transitory spaces in which individuals balance their own wants and intergenerational ties, contemplating whether to continue or release them, which may lead to feelings of anxiety, guilt and increased responsibility. These are common in situations in which the transfer is made between two separate generations, and a conflict might exist between preserving or respecting the practices, norms, or values of a previous generation and replacing them with one's own (Scabini and Marta, 2006; Gong et al., 2022).

The term *values* is often considered an abstract concept (von Wright, 1989), although in this article the term is understood according to Rokeach's (Rokeach, 1973: 7) definition, as human thought that guides people to act in a desired way or towards a desired end result. Values should not be mistaken for attitudes: Values are unaffected by singular people or objects (Katz and Stotland, 1959; Reich and Adcock, 1976: 20–21). Values can be classified under multiple categories, such as basic values (e.g., Rokeach, 1973) or forest values (Bengston, 1994; Niiniluoto, 2000; Bjärstig and Kvastegård, 2016), anthropocentric, biocentric or ecocentric (Rolston, 1982, 1994), instrumental or intrinsic, or a combination of the latter two (Niiniluoto, 2000). Differentiating intrinsic and instrumental values can help us understand why nature or natural resources are valued, because the former values them for their own sake, and the latter values them as a means to an end (Bengston, 1994). We need to also consider sentimental value when discussing themes with expected intergenerational aspects. Sentimental value results from a bond between the person and the object, arising from relationships and experiences, which is considered to be positive regardless of the object's functionality (Hatzimoysis, 2003; Fletcher, 2009; DuFord, 2017). We consider understanding personal value preferences and the reasons behind them important for understanding natural resources governance, because they help us identify according to whose values and interests nature is shaped and managed. Forest values are dependent on country-specific environments regarding cultural, social and economic aspects (Karppinen, 1998), so it should be noted that this article is most suited for reflecting upon forest ownership and values within the Finnish context. Following the definitions of Bengston, this article considers forest value(s) “as the relative importance or worth of objects related to forests or forest ecosystems” (1994).

Value systems and hierarchies are developed through one's experiences, education, worldviews, and the prevailing norms of the surrounding society and culture (Inglehart, 1977; Tallman and Gray, 1990; McLeod et al., 1998). These do not remain static throughout a person's life, and they tend to develop and go through priority changes through life experience (Rokeach, 1973; Inglehart, 1977; Verplanken and Holland, 2002). When making a decision, people only consider the values that have an immediate relation to the decision and decide which values they view as the most important and worthy of prioritising (Rokeach, 1973; Wiberg, 1989). Decision makers may also face conflicts between their own values and the surrounding norms (Tallman and Gray, 1990) or the values held by earlier generations (Scabini and

Marta, 2006; Gong et al., 2022; Carrigan et al., 2023).

Moreover, although values are key to decision making (Verplanken and Holland, 2002), other factors such as structural and cultural conditions (Tallman et al., 1983) and power asymmetries (Foucault, 1991; Ribot and Peluso, 2003; Fletcher, 2010) influence decisions, thus the shaping of forests as political-ecological sites. Young forest owners may also experience pressure to make decisions according to other actors' values, so we will use the three assumptions for identifying autonomous decision making according to Tallman and Gray (1990) to better identify values-based decision making that is based on the decision maker's personal values. First, the decision maker must have an opportunity to have the option to either make or not to make the decision. Second, decision makers will choose the value they believe will be the most beneficial to them if the decision has an effect on or affects their well-being or values. Third, although the end results of decisions can be uncertain, a decision is based on an assumption that the chosen action or nonaction will lead to the desired result.

3. Material and methods

The material for this study was gathered as a part of the ALL-YOUTH research project that aimed to study young people's societal and political participation in society in Finland. One of this research project's sub-projects was specifically interested in young Finnish forest owners' experiences, those who represent the generation of future forest owners in Finland. It also produced another article on the interview material from young forest owners living in the eastern part of Finland (see Erkkilä et al., 2021). Other interview material was collected among some of the young forest owners currently living in the greater Helsinki area, located in the Uusimaa region in Southern Finland. These young translocal forest owners were the informants of our current article.

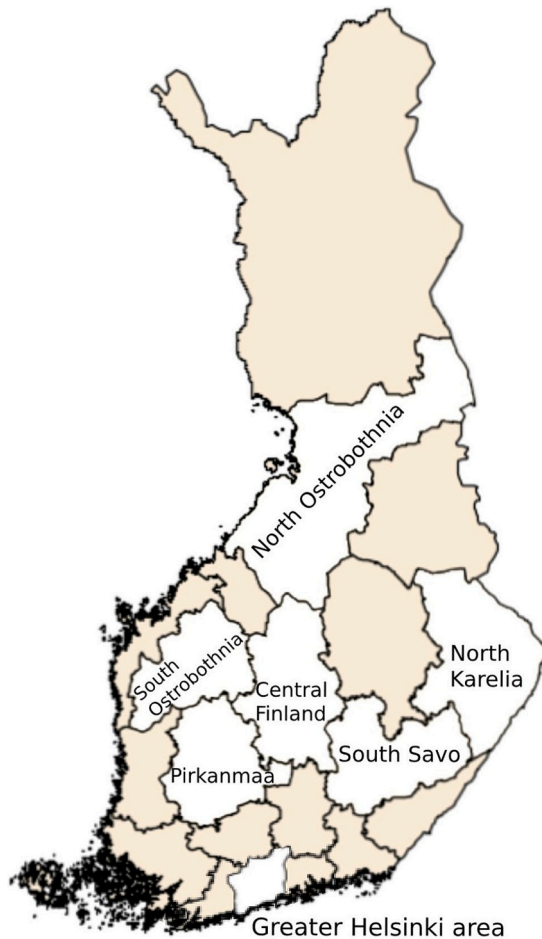
We chose a qualitative method because the aim was to gain insight on topics with personal context (values and experiences) with the expectation of encountering unanticipated phenomena (Maxwell, 1996). The data collection was performed in two phases: first, with a set of one-on-one semi-structured interviews organised both face-to-face and via telephone in 2019, and second, later group discussions at an in-person World-Café workshop in 2023. The interview topics for the first cycle of interviews comprised forest-related topics including forest practices, forest knowledge (a topic that includes both existing knowledge and new information on forests and forest management, because these share the same word in Finnish), and youth interest in forests. For this, we searched for potential participants among 16–30-year-old young forest owners living in the greater Helsinki area.

The search was conducted in 2018 with the assistance of the Finnish Forest Centre's database, which provided a list of 993 possible candidates (48% female, 51% male), of whom 483 had provided their phone number. From those, 37 candidates were chosen through random sampling, 18 of whom were contacted. Seven candidates politely declined the interview, citing scheduling issues or feeling that they didn't know enough or had nothing to say about the subject. Additionally, the contact information for one candidate did not match that received from the Finnish Forest Centre. The ten participants were aged 19 to 30 years old (See Table 1), of whom five were women and five men. Their forest ownership ranged from 2,2 ha to 251,4 ha, with a median forest land size of 19,9 ha. The interviewees were living within the greater Helsinki area at the time of the interviews and workshop, although their forest lands were located in other regions (see Fig. 1). Six of the ten interviews were conducted on the phone based on the participants' request, three were in person within the spaces of the University of Helsinki, and one was in the group working spaces of Aalto University.

These semi-structured interviews ranged from approximately 30-to-60 min in length and revealed that many interviewees found values-based decision making to be challenging in practical forestry and sometimes had delegated the decision making to their family members. The authors decided on a second data-collection phase (a World-Café

Table 1
Coded identifiers and general information on the participating young forest owners.

Coded identifier	Year of Birth	Education	2019 Interview	2023 Workshop	Location of forest (Region)	Origin of forest ownership
H1	1993	Bachelor's degree	YES	YES	North Karelia	Inheritance (father)
H2	1991	No information	YES	YES	South Savo	Pre-inheritance (grandparents)
H3	1993	Master's degree	YES	YES	Central Finland	Market
H4	1988	Bachelor's degree	YES	NO	North Ostrobothnia	Market (relatives)
H5	1993	Master's degree	YES	NO	North Ostrobothnia	Inheritance (father)
H6	1991	Bachelor's degree	YES	NO	South Savo	Deed of gift (grandfather)
H7	1999	High school	YES	YES	Pirkanmaa	Inheritance (father)
H8	1992	Bachelor's degree	YES	NO	North Karelia	Inheritance (grandparents), market (relatives)
H9	1999	High school	YES	YES	South Ostrobothnia	Deed of gift (grandmother)
H10	1993	Master's degree	YES	YES	North Karelia	Inheritance (grandfather)



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Fig. 1. A map of Finland illustrating the geographical locations of the greater Helsinki area and the regions where the participating young Forest owners' forests are located. The template for the map was sourced from National Land Survey of Finland (Maanmittauslaitos).

workshop) to gain more in-depth answers regarding the possible reasons for these findings after reflecting on the results of the interviews and learning from findings in Erkkilä et al. (2021).

This workshop was conducted in June 2023 at a Helsinki hotel, organised according to the World Café method. We chose a semi-structured, group discussion-style workshop as a method to allow the forest owners to simultaneously talk about their values, experiences, and ideas in their own words while also reflecting on and relating to others (de Vos et al., 2021). This proved helpful in allowing the forest owners to reflect on their journeys and progress as forest owners since the previous

interviews. Between the interviews and the workshop, the young forest owners had gained more experience with forest management-related decisions, increased their forest-related knowledge or had otherwise become more familiar with forest ownership. The World Café method allowed the forest owners to be the main drivers of the conversation and co-create knowledge. The person who otherwise would be the interviewer acts as a facilitator, focusing on providing topics for the discussion while ensuring that everyone has an opportunity and is encouraged to partake in the discussion (Valtonen, 2005; Brown and Isaacs, 2005).

The method was chosen due to its flexible and participatory nature, enabling cumulative knowledge and group dialogue in an accepting and equal space, meeting a variety of needs in complex settings (Brown and Isaacs, 2005; Honkatukia and Lähde, 2021; Monforte et al., 2023). These qualities made it preferable, considering the context of Finnish forest discourse in which the highly polarised atmosphere (e.g., Halla and Laine, 2022) may otherwise make the idea of participating in forest use-related discussions highly undesirable.

We invited nine of the ten previously interviewed forest owners, because one had moved outside the greater Helsinki area and was therefore unqualified to participate. Six of the nine forest owners invited participated in the workshop, and the other three either declined or could not attend due to time restrictions. The participants were now aged between 24 and 32 at the time of the workshop with an average age of 28 (See Table 1). The research questions for the group discussion were the following, asked to complement the data gathered in the earlier interviews: 1) What values were considered important by the young forest owners? 2) Are their personal values present in forest-related decision making? and 3) Do value conflicts (personal or inter-generational) and inability to make decisions autonomously or according to one's own values negatively affect the experienced meaningfulness of forest ownership? The six workshop participants were divided into three pairs that were formed according to how their conversation dynamics could be expected to work based on their brief interactions before the workshop. Each of the three pairs rotated between three tables that each held their own conversational topic: *forest knowledge*, *values-based decision making*, and *meaningfulness of forest ownership*.

The interviews recorded from the ten semi-structured interviews amounted to 404 min, and the material recorded at the workshop amounted to 314 min. All of this was manually transcribed verbatim in Finnish, because it was the language in which the interviews and workshop were conducted. Coding was chosen, due to the nature of the themes of this research, to allow the analysis to be data driven while still remaining open to alternative readings (Willig et al., 2017). Still, it is important to note that although this research heavily relies on self-reported data from the participants, we have complemented the deductive approach with an inductive approach due to the study's qualitative nature and sample size (Shackleton et al., 2021). The coding was performed manually with Microsoft Word; following Saldaña (2013), it was performed in multiple cycles while reorganising the resulting pieces of texts accordingly. Firstly, the initial themes of interest affecting decision making were marked and extracted from the first sets of interviews, based on which the workshop group discussion topics

were designed. Secondly, we conducted preliminary coding on the group discussion data while manually transcribing the recordings after completing the data collection. We returned to both sets of data for another (manual) coding cycle after transcriptions were finished, reorganising and strengthening the categorisations (Lähdesmäki and Matilainen, 2014) and extracting quotes reflective of the findings. Finally, we returned to the material for the third time during this paper's writing, ensuring we did not miss any findings that are relevant to the paper's theme and that the materials were not misinterpreted, removed from their original context, or that the findings were not otherwise inconsistent with the interview data.

We used the main themes providing answers to our research questions that we extracted from the data through coding to form the following sub-chapters under the Results section. Excerpts of the transcribed texts that were then used as examples within this article were translated into English and edited for clarity when needed while still retaining the meanings and figures of speech to be as close to the original as possible. The text will refer to interviews held in 2019 as *interviews* and to the 2023 World Café workshop as *discussions*.

4. Results

The results showcase three important categories that were found to affect the values-based decision making in forest management among the participating young forest owners and, thus, their ability to shape forests as political and ecological spaces. These categories are not isolated but build on top of each other, aiming to provide a comprehensive bundle of some of the interconnected factors within the Finnish forest ownership context. The young translocal forest owners' decisions were affected by their own personal value systems on a surface level and by those of their older relatives and family members. Young forest owners who had values differing from the prevailing Finnish forestry norms were pulled into discursive struggles with their older relatives and with forestry sector-affiliated actors. These forest owners tended to avoid challenging the prevailing norms and discourses due to different governmental and social structures built around Finnish forestry. We identified that young translocal forest owners who did not subscribe to the prevailing norms of Finnish forestry also lacked access to information, preventing them from managing forests according to their values. Additionally, economic disincentives and fears of negative social consequences discouraged them from challenging the prevailing norms of Finnish forestry or applying differing values. Lastly, we will showcase how intergenerational ties and psychological ownership play a part in the decisions and struggles related to forest management and are key to retaining legal control over forests.

4.1. Personal value hierarchies and value conflicts

The three values most often involved in the interviewed young forest owners' decision making were economic, environmental, and sentimental. The categorisation was not only made according to the participants' self-reporting but also by looking at whether their forest values were instrumental or intrinsic and what the values' sources were. The main values for forests that were instrumental often directed young forest owners to seek economic benefit or increased economic security from their forests; however, the main values for forests that were intrinsic could be divided into what we categorised as environmental values and sentimental values. The environmental intrinsic value of forests arose from the forests themselves, their ecosystem, or other forms of environmental worth. In our findings the sentimental value of forests arose from the forests acting as a link between generations, to one's own family, as a memento, or as an identity through shared practices. This led to the nature of the sentimental value for forests to be, in some cases, a hybrid between intrinsic and instrumental. The main difference in the participants' value hierarchies was whether they favoured economic over environmental values or vice versa, but when the sentimental value

was involved, it was always atop the forest owners' value hierarchy, safe from value compromises. This was somewhat unexpected, because the sentimental value in Finnish forest ownership is rarely acknowledged within the wider Finnish forest discourse. The idea of selling the forest became highly undesirable and often pointed to the idea of selling the forest land as an absolute last resort when the sentimental value was involved in someone's forest ownership:

"It's very much a fact, that if I have to give up something, the forest will be one of the last things on that list". H10, 2023 Workshop.

The sentimental value rarely affected forest management decisions directly, but it encouraged owners to continue as forest owners even if forest ownership would otherwise be considered a burden or lead to unpleasant value conflicts. This value was prevalent regarding forests that acted as heirlooms or mementos and, in some cases, was the only significant value the forest provided to the forest owner. The importance of sentimental value should therefore be considered more often in forest-ownership research and forest-related discourse. The following extract reflects this:

"I don't really think about the economic or nature aspects of the forest, the most important thing about that forest to me is that it's my father's forest". H1, 2023 Workshop.

The other values within the value systems of the young forest owners were also influenced, as expected, not only by family background but also by education and previous experiences such as activity in forest-related decision making or spending time in forests with one's family members. Shifts towards post-materialist values compared to earlier generations were also reported by the young forest owners, regardless of their forest ownership goals. The workshop discussions revealed that these intergenerational value differences negatively affected them seeking information on forest knowledge and forest-related conversations within their families due to previously experiencing or expecting these to lead to negative social consequences through intergenerational value conflicts. The young translocal forest owners therefore were unable to transfer their forest information and knowledge to older generations due to fearing potential conflict (e.g., Erkkilä et al., 2021). The following extract illustrates this view:

"What limits my ability to discuss forestry with my father is that I inherited it over him, so if I become a 'radical green', it won't be what my father would have done, if he were the forest owner between my grandfather and me". H10, 2023 Workshop.

Regarding their forest management-related decisions, most of the young forest owners who participated in this study often deliberated between economic and environmental values, previously identified as two polarised positions among Finnish forest owners (see Takala et al., 2017, 2019). Economic values were often prioritised according to either personal value hierarchies or to so-called "practical reasons". These practical reasons were often explained in terms of the ease of following established forestry methods developed for economic forestry. Some of the participants who valued their forests from an environmental perspective had also set economic goals for their forests or saw them as investments. Thus, although they might consider themselves multi-objective forest owners emphasising both environmental and economic values, the environmental or recreational values were secondary in their day-to-day forest management decisions in practice. Forest owners are incentivised to conduct commercial forestry in their forests, because forests in Finland have been largely valued through their resources and economic potential (see Kotilainen and Rytteri, 2011; Lähdesmäki and Matilainen, 2014). The young forest owners who inherited forests might have had to cut their forests to pay off an inheritance tax. This was reported to be uncomfortable to those who would have otherwise preferred to prioritise environmental values in their forest management-related decision making. The following extract from the data illustrates this sentiment:

"I have had to compromise (on my values). I had to cut trees down to pay the inheritance tax, so that was one unpleasant thing where I had to compromise". H7, 2023 Workshop.

Young (and new) forest owners within the Finnish context who have yet to gain economic security in their lives might need income from forest ownership to pay for living costs or forest-related fees, leading to value conflicts. Both the facilitation and financial incentives for conservation and alternative forest management were considered insufficient, so commercial clear cutting was reported as the only forest management method that was used to gain additional income during a time of need. Indeed, one young forest owner clearly expressed frustration over the lack of financial incentives for forest management options that are not focused on timber production, which would help them conduct values-based decision making as a forest owner.

“If I think that I will now lose money because I want to be a good person. But then next to me is someone who does not do these things, and gets larger profits... So, it's just that I would not want to pay for my own values”. H9, 2023 Workshop.

Decision making based on their value systems was uncomplicated when the value systems of young forest owners matched those of their older relatives and the Finnish forestry norms. However, when notable differences were present, those could lead to value conflicts that often ended in a compromise in which personal values were set aside due to the expected negative consequences or the perceived difficulty. The difficulty of conducting values-based decision making was caused by the lack of available information on how to do so and by the external pressure from neoliberal governance structures and policies pushing to practice commercial clear-cut forestry, explained in the following section.

4.2. One-sided information and social pressure

This section considers how young forest owners' values-based decision making was affected or even restricted by the lack of information about alternative forest management methods and by the pressure placed on them through assumptions and expectations on conducting forest management by state and non-state actors.

Erkkilä et al. (2021) found that many of the young forest owners viewed their forest knowledge as “insufficient” and struggled with forest-related information, negatively affecting their decision-making activity regarding forest ownership. In our study, the young forest owners' values were often clear to them when making forest-related, values-based decisions, but they felt that they did not receive sufficient support or information to act on those values unless they matched the prevailing forestry norms, leading to reduced agency (see also Häyrynen et al., 2015). The following extract illustrates this point:

“I kind of know what my values are, but I don't necessarily know how to implement them. What should I even do to carry out my own values in that forest”. H1, 2023 Workshop.

Most of the available information and advice received was seen to focus on economic-orientated forest management with little attention paid to alternatives. This was the case with information coming from forestry professionals, family members and relatives or from various online resources ranging from news sites to online forestry services. A perceived lack of forest knowledge or inability to conduct values-based decision making sometimes led the young forest owners to delegate the practical decision-making powers to an older relative, but this was often viewed, interestingly, as somewhat positive. The next extract expresses this sentiment:

“I enjoy the fact that I don't have that great of a responsibility, that I don't need to study about how I should do these things”. H2, 2023 Workshop.

This delegation of decision making led to the forest being managed according to the relative's economic goals. Therefore, the young forest owner only controlled the legal property rights of the forest while losing the ability to control access. Even though most participants ended up conducting the prevalent method of clear-cut forestry, they also expressed interest in alternative forest management methods such as continuous cover forestry or partial conservation. This interest was present regardless of their forest management goals, presenting the

potential for diversification and increased multi-objectivity of forest management, matching Pynnönen et al. (2018). The lack of information about the non-economic aspects of forests and the emphasis on using them as resource banks had also led to some misconceptions of the forests' natural cycles that may have direct ecological consequences within the forest. For example, one forest owner expressed the following concern in one interview regarding the needs and potential well-being of their forest.

“I would want my forest to be well, and that nothing would for example rot in there...” H5, 2019 interview.

This reflects the misconception that trees and other biological material in the forest would go to waste if they were not exploited as a resource. Instances such as these may also lead to some unnecessary value conflicts or to actions that are counterproductive to the values and goals of the forest owner. Similar confusion was found on how forest-related information was reported in the news and used in public forest discourse, the state of which was considered unpleasant. Similarities to previous findings on Finnish forestry discourse by Takala et al. (2017, 2022) were identified, because the discourse was perceived to blame either the NIPF owners or the forest sector and the state. The following extract illustrates how the current state of forest discourse hinders (values-based) forest-related decision making:

“When there are these economic interests ... Then it's not easy to interpret the expert information either, when I was listening to the (parliamentary) election debates, the same information was twisted in different ways, are the forests in Finland a source of emissions or a carbon sink, same with land-use”. H9, 2023 Workshop.

Different agendas and political or economic interests behind forest-related information, especially from the side of the forestry companies or politicians, were a source of mistrust and caused scepticism towards some of the publicly available information. Actors who were seen to grasp the “local and national contexts” of forests and forest management were trusted (see also Bjärstig and Kvastegård, 2016: 22), such as the Forest Centre or national research institutes providing forest-related data, research and information. Forest ownership could become a catalyst for reflection or evolution of their value hierarchy when young forest owners have the chance to increase their forest knowledge through experiences, access to information, and increased awareness. For example, one participant had become more interested in the Finnish forestry discourse after becoming a forest owner. This led to them increasing their forest knowledge and widened the perspective through which they viewed forests, which in turn led them to question the compatibility of their values and possible future career within the forestry sector. The following extract from the data illustrates this view:

“I am a student in a field related to forestry, and I don't feel like I have gotten any forestry knowledge that isn't about forests as a resource. But now I have started to become more interested in the forestry discourse, and it is because I became a forest owner. So now I have started to reflect my field from an ethical point of view, do I want to be a part of something like this, because I don't know what to think about this forest use”. H9, 2023 Workshop.

Another young forest owner reflected the change in their value system between the interview held in 2019 and the workshop held in 2023. They were hesitant at the time of the first interview to bring up their differing values to the forestry professionals, but later, in the 2023 group discussion, the person reflected on how they had started to bring these values to the forefront of their forest management decisions. Nevertheless, they pointed out that challenging the prevailing norms of forest management may require courage:

“Later, after I had been a forest owner for a while, after I had read more, I felt like I would like to do things differently. But then there are these ‘practical reasons’ because the default is to go by traditional methods. Then I gathered courage and brought up that I don't want to do clear-cutting and drain mounding, because I don't think it's good for nature... So, it might require courage to do so”. H10, 2023 Workshop.

Commercial forest management conducted through clear-cutting is

the prevalent form of forest management in Finland, so some of the young forest owners whose interests or values were somewhere else feared the reaction they would receive if they were to bring these up to forestry professionals, extending conflict-avoiding behaviour outside of their families. Feeling the need to constantly compromise one's own values for those of their family or the forest industry will eventually become emotionally tiring, increasing the risk of a situation in which the young forest owner ends up selling parts or their entire forest due to feelings of frustration and discomfort, as was the case with the following young forest owner:

"I have sold off large parts of my forests during the past couple of years, and the atmosphere around forestry discourse didn't really make that choice difficult. Now that there is a lot of talk about how clear-cuttings are bad for nature, it would require a lot more effort from me, so it was a relief to get rid of it. Otherwise, I would have to suffer from my own inadequate forest management". H7, 2023 Workshop.

The latter quote of a young forest owner who started to (at least partially) move away from forest ownership between the interviews and the workshop showcases that making forest owners more aware of environmental issues related to clear-cut forestry might not lead to conservation actions if they are not properly facilitated. This is especially true when the forests' primary value is still widely seen as instrumental, a view also shared by governmental agencies and state institutions. For example, in addition to the issues related to the inheritance tax previously mentioned, multiple young forest owners reported that they had difficulties seeking or were unable to seek benefits from the state or affordable housing from the city of Helsinki as university students because they owned forests.

"I didn't receive any housing benefits as a student. It was calculated (as income)"

"Yeah, and my income is actually not that high... I would like to apply for city housing (but I wouldn't qualify for them). You just appear as if you were very rich" H1 & H7, 2023 Workshop.

This is because forests are considered assets providing passive income by *Kansaneläkelaitos* (a Finnish social insurance institution), regardless of the forest's age or the management goals for it. That means that even young commercial forests that require the forest owner to spend money to pay for seedling-stand tending are officially considered to provide income for the forest owner. These neoliberal structures (matching the descriptions by [Fletcher, 2010: 175](#)) pushed the young forest owners to shape their forests according to the state's interests and norms. Unless the young forest owners agree with the idea of selling their forests and ending the intergenerational forest ownership continuum within their family, even those who would not be interested in any form of economically focused forest management may end up in a situation in which they are forced to emphasise economic values from the start. Conducting clear cuttings when acquiring the forest is likely to make the switch towards alternative forest management take more time and, due to the impact on forest biodiversity, will reduce the likelihood of the forest reaching the criteria set for conservation programmes offering financial compensation.

4.3. Intergenerational ties and psychological ownership

Intergenerational ties and psychological ownership played a larger role than expected in young forest owners' decision making when we took a deeper dive to analyse the interview and workshop material. This was due not only to the forest owners themselves acknowledging the intergenerational ties or experiencing psychological ownership but also to them acknowledging or assuming their family members or relatives are doing so. Here it is also important to emphasise the difference between psychological ownership and the previously introduced sentimental value. They share common characteristics, but psychological ownership should not be confused with sentimental value. As explained previously, sentimental value requires a special bond between the person and the subject (see, e.g., [Fletcher, 2009](#); [DuFord, 2017](#)). This bond

can then either alone or combined with other factors build psychological ownership experienced towards the forest, acting as the self-object association of implicit psychological ownership (see also [Morewedge, 2021](#)).

Some previously mentioned forest owners had relinquished their decision-making powers to an older relative while still retaining the legal ownership of the forest land, although those who found sentimental value in their forests continued to experience strong feelings of psychological ownership towards them. It is worth noting that this delegation should not be difficult to reverse, such as retaining the legal ownership of the forest, although the young forest owners theoretically have the option to reclaim the practical decision-making powers with relative ease. The importance of forests as a link to one's family (see also [Lähdesmäki et al., 2023](#)) was common for the participants, and intergenerational ties seemed to influence the development of forest ownership identities and feelings of psychological ownership. The following data extract illustrates this aspect:

"Preferably the forest would move on in our family, we have farmed on that hill first as tenant farmers and then as owners since the 1600s, so the continuum is a question of honour as well". H3, 2023 Workshop.

None of the participants were living in the same area, municipality or region where their forest lands were located ([Fig. 1](#)), but neither were they socially disconnected from them. The owned forest land, with every forest owner except one (who was still expecting to inherit or purchase family forest in the future), came from family members or relatives, with most participants having relatives living within the vicinity of the forest and having even spent time in the forests or their vicinity since they were children, often with the previous owner. Forest ownership identities were therefore built from experiences in which information was gained not only from forest management and forestry as a form of livelihood but also from the forest's greater cultural and intergenerational meaning to one's family.

These intergenerational ties seemed to greatly inflate the psychological ownership the owners experienced of their forest, regardless of their activity levels as forest owners. Young forest owners often wanted to emphasise the respect they have towards the previous generations of forest owners, although this was not always positive. Young forest owners in Finland have been identified as feeling obliged to take advice, often without criticism, from their older relatives concerning forest management questions ([Erkkilä et al., 2021](#)). This was also the case among this study's participants and was one factor that hindered the implementation of values-based decision making, explained in the next extract:

"In our jointly owned forest, there are so many owners. I probably could influence the decision making, but it would be limited, and there is this pressure that those who manage the forest take all the responsibility, so it would feel wrong if I were to question them". H1, 2023 Workshop.

Young forest owners also recognised (or assumed) that their family members and relatives may also experience psychological ownership over the forest land that has moved within the family for generations. This often led them to restrict their own decision making and to submit to older family members and relatives. Such conflicts between personal values and those of social surroundings caused by shared intergenerational ties and clashing feelings of psychological ownership are not uncommon in Finnish forest contexts (see also [Lähdesmäki and Matilainen, 2014](#)).

The perceived feelings of responsibility from psychological ownership are, of course, not always negative from the viewpoint of forest ownership, and it has also been connected to protective behaviour ([Matilainen et al., 2017](#); [Preston and Gelman, 2020](#)). Our study did not identify this increased protective behaviour as extending into conservation activities. Instead, protective behaviour manifested among the younger translocal forest owners as a need to restrict the access to land ownership within and near their own forests, which they considered "theirs", although their place of residence was located elsewhere, explained in the following excerpt:

“Our relatives own some forests near where our summer cabin is, so if they were to sell it, I wouldn't want anyone else to buy it because they might build their own cabin next to ours. I want to keep that place as ours”. H2, 2023 Workshop.

5. Discussion

The following sub-sections discuss the results through the conceptual framework of political ecology. We structured our four sub-sections relative to the identified power relations and to both governmental and social structures to discuss how visible and invisible values and power dynamics shaped the participating young forest owners' ability to conduct values-based decision making in forest management.

5.1. The influence of the forestry sector on the prevailing norms of Finnish forestry

After the amendment to the Forest Act came into effect in 2014, Finnish forest owners theoretically have more freedom to shape forests as both political and ecological spaces than previously during the era of modern forest management. Based on the results of our interviews and workshop, this has been a welcome change, and most of our young informants were open, interested and would like to try at least some forest management methods other than clear-cut forestry in their forests. However, we identified elements of disciplinary and neoliberal governance previously identified in natural resources management by Fletcher (2010). These were practiced by both state-related and non-state-related forest actors, and more importantly, by both forestry sector-related and non-forestry sector-related actors. They incentivised and pushed for the internalisation of prevailing forest management norms. Thus, even though the forest owners had (at least in theory) the possibility to shape forests according to their values, some values are more compatible with Finnish forestry norms than others. This limited the individual forest owners' agency, leading to the forests often being produced largely according to the norms of forestry sector-related actors through discursive power, control over information access, and economic disincentives as this and the following sections explain.

We identified these factors as leading to young forest owners losing access and therefore losing the ability to benefit from managing natural resources and nature. Other scholars such as Ribot and Peluso (2003), based on their understanding of access, explore abilities to derive benefits from the resources. In our case we use their concepts of access to understand how young translocal forest owners can lose not only their access to (material and non-material) benefits but also their ability to make decisions based on their own values. Peluso and Vandergeest (2020) argue that the legitimisations of political forests are heavily influenced by the production of knowledge and forestry expertise in the sector. The production of knowledge and forestry expertise in the Finnish context has focused on commercial clear-cut forestry. Khan (2013: 466) noted that understanding politicised environments requires understanding the histories of interactions within it. This production of knowledge and expertise in the case of the Finnish forestry sector is due to the major role commercial forestry has played in the post-war development (Kotilainen and Rytteri, 2011), leading it to gain social and political power as a source of economic growth and employment in Finland. This power has led to the role of forests within the Finnish forest governance to transform into sources of exploitable resources and producers of economic growth. Its result is that the current forestry norms revolve around commercial forestry being managed mainly through clear-cuttings. Our finding can also be connected to the creation and enforcement of political forestry – and a conceptual understanding by, e. g., Devine and Baca (2020) and Peluso and Vandergeest (2020) – that when forest management decisions were made by translocal young forest owners whose values did not align with the prevailing norm of Finnish forestry, these decisions were not made to reach end results desirable to young forest owners but instead to avoid an undesired social

consequence or conflict.

5.2. The influence of disciplinary governance

Scholars such as Vaccaro et al. (2013), Peluso and Vandergeest (2020), and Takala et al. (2021) highlight that forests and other politicised environments are shaped by actors such as governments, communities and individuals. The young translocal forest owners in our study who had values differing from the prevailing norms found themselves having to compromise on their values. These value compromises and barriers in values-based decision making in forestry led to feelings of frustration and exhaustion, reducing the meaningfulness of forest ownership. Our findings align with those of Takala et al. (2021) in that the state of Finnish forestry norms and the governance, policies, and social structures built around them are such that unless the forest owners' values align with the prevailing norms of Finnish forestry, shaping forests according to their own values requires effort, resources, and/or knowledge. These findings demonstrate major power asymmetries between not only state and non-state actors in Finnish forestry but also between those with aligning and differing interests, norms and values of the Finnish forestry sector. We identified actors affiliating and aligning with the forestry sector who wield and use a power advantage over those who hold differing values and norms. They exercised this advantage through discursive power (Vainio and Paloniemi, 2012; Svarstad et al., 2018) and power over access to information and knowledge (Ribot and Peluso, 2003; Peluso and Vandergeest, 2020: 1092–1095). Forestry sector-related actors could then use these advantages during discursive struggles shaping forests as political spaces to promote their interests either directly or through non-forestry sector actors who acted either with or without intention as proxies. These discursive struggles were used to make forest owners internalise prevailing norms and values in forestry, examples of which included the lack of information for alternative forest management methods and muddying the waters on topics inconvenient for their interests, such as the state of Finnish forests as carbon sinks. This had led to concrete effects on both social and practical levels, because the forestry discourse was perceived to be highly polarised and unpleasant, a space where presenting differing views was sometimes expected to lead to negative social consequences and to one's decision making in the forest sector leading to results not aligning with their actual values due to misunderstandings related to forest ecologies.

Indeed, promotion of the interests of Finnish forestry sector and encouraging the internalisation of prevailing forestry norms happened not only by forestry sector-related actors but also by (older) family members and relatives. Bieling (2004) and Erkkilä et al. (2021) have identified family members as having major influence on young forest owners. Our results match these findings, because our findings also show that family members have influence over the young forest owners' decision making either through direct input or through intergenerational value conflicts when the young forest owners sometimes prioritised the values of their older relatives or family members due to fear of negative social consequences. This happened regardless of whether the family members or relatives had any (legal) ownership of the forest or forest area with the young translocal forest owner. The emphasis on forests as sources for resources and income were reflected on the values of the older family members. The same aspects as those promoted by the forestry sector in Finland (Kotilainen and Rytteri, 2011). Using power by influencing young forest owner's forest management practices through intergenerational and family ties, they effectively acted as secondary channels for disciplinary governance (see the theoretical discussion by Foucault, 1991; Fletcher, 2010) to promote the forestry sector's interests and norms, thus amplifying the sector's discursive power whether it was their intention or not.

5.3. Neoliberal governance structures

Gaining increased access to information by exploring and evolving one's own (forest) value hierarchy by accumulating it through practical forest management or forestry-related studies was found to be a valuable way to for young translocal forest owners to learn about alternative forest management methods. Indeed, this proved to be an effective way to circumvent some of the barriers caused by disciplinary governance structures, but it was not necessarily enough to practice values-based decision making. Neoliberal governance structures were another barrier faced by the young translocal forest owners who wished to reduce commercial activities in their forests.

We identified examples of neoliberal governance policies within the environmental context as previously discussed by scholars such as Fletcher (2010: 173-178). In short, these could be categorised as economic incentives for commercial forestry by the forestry sector and disincentives due to lack of facilitation or compensation for practicing alternative forest management or conservation by both state and non-state actors. Scholars such as Devine and Baca (2020) and Peluso and Vandergeest (2020) have previously discussed the ongoing neoliberalisation of forests and its influence in shaping political forests, although these were within the context of the global south.

In Finland, forests are mainly viewed as commodities and sources of income by most government agencies, for example, those in charge of social security programs such as those described in the Results section. This meant that owning a forest could potentially affect either the amount of housing benefits a student could receive or the possibility of receiving state subsidised housing. Either way, the student's housing expense would then need to be covered by practicing commercial forestry. Additionally, forests have value as properties, so new forest owners are expected to pay tax after receiving them as gifts or through inheritance. Fletcher (2010: 176) and Khan (2013: 467) noted that neoliberal governance structures can rely on disciplinary techniques to aid their effectiveness. Indeed, we identified such interplays in our findings. Just as forest owners were influenced by neoliberal policies and governance structures by forestry sector related actors and the state, they also experienced disciplinary governance mostly through discursive means by both state and non-state actors, including the forestry sector and their own social circles. This has pushed the young translocal forest owners towards shaping their forests as commercial clear-cut forests through these structures and social norms. This combination proved very effective, because all the participants at the time of the interviews and the workshop were still either students or had just relatively recently entered work life. Scholars such as Ribot and Peluso (2003) and Svarstad et al. (2018: 353-356) have previously discussed how economic factors and disparities can influence the ability to enjoy access or benefit from natural resources. We identified an interesting example of this: The built-in structures and economic conditions of the young forest owners that were pushing them towards commodifying and exploiting their forests were also deterring them from conservation and alternative forest management methods. However, this led to the forest owners being unable to enjoy some of the non-material values that their forests had the potential to provide. The young translocal forest owners, due to not yet achieving enough economic security to ignore the economic aspects of forest ownership, struggled to find other financially (or socially) viable forest management methods besides commercial clear-cut forestry. Even those young forest owners who would have preferred to manage their forests according to other means were directed towards practicing forest management methods benefitting the interests of the Finnish forestry sector rather than their own.

Transforming a Finnish commercial clear-cut forest into a (recognised) conservation forest faces barriers at both ecological and political levels. A forest must reach certain biodiversity-related goals (Kangas and Ollikainen, 2025: 2-3; Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2026) that are rarely achieved by a commercial clear-cut forest for that forest to be accepted into a conservation program that involves financial

compensation, such as the METSO programme in Southern Finland. (For more on Finnish forest conservation and programmes such as METSO, see, e.g., Kangas and Ollikainen, 2025). Similarly, converting a clear-cut forest into a continuous growth forest is not always simple and is likely to require the forest owner to invest time and money into the process. Due to the governance structures and policies directing forest owners towards clear-cut commercial forestry (discussed both here and in the Results section) through financial incentives, restricting commercial activities or practicing alternative forest management or conservation might not be economically feasible for all forest owners. Combined with the polarised state of Finnish forestry discourse (see also Vainio and Paloniemi, 2012; Halla and Laine, 2022; Takala et al., 2017, 2022), these power disadvantages and the social environments around Finnish forestry can make challenging the current structures and norms through discursive struggles even more difficult.

5.4. The role of intergenerational ties in controlling and managing forests

Regardless of the barriers for values-based decision making for those young forest owners who did not subscribe to the prevailing norms of Finnish forestry, they rarely found the idea of selling their forests appealing or even entertainable. Forests were often a source of sentimental value, which we identified as usually being the strongest value within the participants' forest value hierarchies. This sentimental value was often due to associating forests with previous generations, such as a family member or relative who had passed away and from whom the forest had been inherited or simply to the act of owning a forest allowing the young forest owners to feel connected to previous generations of forest owners within their family through their newly acquired forest owner identities. These associations were important for building implicit forms psychological ownership towards forests. Our findings back the findings of Lähdesmäki and Matilainen (2014) in that psychological ownership can also be a burden for new forest owners. For example, even if the young forest owner felt that forest ownership was not meaningful due to a constant need to compromise on their values, the sentimental value or intergenerational ties towards their forests may make the idea of selling them at least equally distressing. The forests might have passed through the forest owner's family, in some cases for centuries, and being the person to end this intergenerational continuum could carry negative social consequences within their families and other social circles. Young forest owners also acknowledged that their family members and relatives might also be attached to their forests or experience psychological ownership towards them, and it was not uncommon for this to lead young forest owners to compromise on their own values in favor of their family members.

The fact that in our study the psychological ownership towards forests arising from these intergenerational associations and sentimental value, although occasionally a burden, made young forest owners unlikely to relinquish their forest ownership is important when thinking about the future of forest ownership structures in Finland. Most of the participating young forest owners were unwilling to surrender the (legal) control and ownership of their forests, even if they were unable to conduct values-based decision making or had delegated away their decision-making powers. This desire to control extended towards the neighbouring forests owned by their family members or relatives, with intentions to stop potential ownership transfers outside of their family. Instances such as these were interesting examples of scenarios in which a person who did not have much practical control of their forests due to delegating the decision-making powers away still wished to exercise control over who has the right to gain ownership of or access to or near the land that they consider belongs to them or their family (see also Bjärstig and Kvastegård, 2016: 20). Emphasising the importance of understanding the social connections involved in translocality even when physically located elsewhere, the young translocal forest owner still experiences a deep bond with the forest area and its vicinity towards which they experience psychological ownership and to which they find a

positive value. These bonds and ties were built on intergenerational ties and recreational activities such as berry picking or staying at a summer cottage owned by a family member or a relative, fairly common activities within the Finnish context.

Understanding intergenerational ties in Finnish forest ownership contexts also helps us better understand the social relationships and power dynamics involved in forest-related decision making. Scholars such as Ribot and Peluso (2003) and Svarstad et al. (2018) have previously discussed how both state and non-state actors are able to influence natural resources management through restricting access. In our study, we identified that intergenerational ties can negatively affect the young translocal forest owners' ability to control access in their forests. We found that the authority of their older relatives and the resulting significant power asymmetries between young forest owners and their relatives were built on intergenerational ties and social norms. These presented themselves as the felt responsibility by young forest owners to not go against previously established practices or their older relatives' values, resulting in the older relatives having significant control over access to forests that were not legally theirs.

Understanding this intergenerational dynamic also helps us better understand the production of Finnish political forests. We can see how these intergenerational power dynamics enforce the hegemony of prevailing forest management practices and norms when we connect this dynamic to the previously referenced work by Fletcher (2010) and Khan (2013) on how neoliberal governance can harness disciplinary elements as well as to the emphasis on knowledge and expertise as one of the catalysts shaping political forests as discussed by Devine and Baca (2020) and Peluso and Vandergeest (2020). The pressure from their older family members and relatives that the participating young translocal forest owners experienced to implement the established practices and norms of the Finnish forestry sector is better understood when we also analyse their position. These family members and relatives, while considered authority figures on forest management and knowledge, had themselves been influenced by the expertise and knowledge of the Finnish forestry sector through practicing commercial forestry and interacting with forestry professionals.

Scabini and Marta (2006) have previously written how the values of different generations tend to reflect the time when these values were developed. Considering our informants' age, for their relatives this would be during and after the introduction of intensive forestry policies (see also Kotilainen and Rytteri, 2011: 435). Now, as authority figures and sources of forest-related information and values, they are transferring these values to a generation that is seemingly putting less emphasis on material values and thus are likely to have different ideals regarding forest management methods. Young translocal forest owners who did not perceive forest ownership as meaningful or who considered themselves unable to manage their forests, while still finding their forests a source of sentimental value or experiencing psychological ownership towards them, could delegate their decision making powers to their older relatives. This way they did not have to cut the intergenerational continuum of their forests but in exchange had to give their older relatives more power to manage and shape their forests. This power disadvantage would then continue until the young forest owner would resume control of those decision-making powers.

6. Conclusion

Our findings suggest that, although the number of Finnish non-industrial private forest (NIPF) owners emphasising the economic aspects of forest ownership has slowly increased since the turn of the century (see Karppinen et al., 2020: 40–41), this emphasis is sometimes made due to need rather than values. Additionally, the young translocal forest owners expressed an increased interest in conservation and alternative forest management methods. Regardless of this interest, our informants felt they could not act on or explore these interests due to insufficient facilitation and knowledge. The emphasis on forests as

commodities and as sources of exploitable resources to serve the interests of the Finnish forestry sector and drivers of economic growth has led the conservation and alternative management of forests to be largely ignored or to not be viable for those who need forests to provide additional income to support their living costs. According to our findings, we could thus expect the generation of future forest owners to increase the emphasis of the non-material values of their forests, such as environmental or sentimental values, yet it appears that the structures that have been created around Finnish forest ownership and the forestry sectors have not kept up with this change in values. This gap between the prevailing norms of Finnish forestry and the new generation of young Finnish forest owners who hold a more diverse range of values has affected the ability of the translocal young forest owners who did not prioritise the economic and instrumental values of forests to conduct values-based decision making.

The emergence of neoliberal governance of Finnish forests described within this article is problematic not only from the perspective of young translocal forest owners' agency but also from the perspective of the environmental and biodiversity goals set by the EU and the Finnish government. The government programme of the Finnish government (as of the time of writing this article) emphasises the role of individual forest owners and of voluntary conservation as the means to reach these goals (Government Programme, 2023). The result of this system is that only forest management practices that follow the prevailing norms are properly facilitated and incentivised on a national level. The combination of the ongoing neoliberal governance of Finnish political forests through discourses, policies and practices that focus on commodification of forest land and resources without the facilitation of truly multi-objective forest ownership or conservation activities is likely to lead to Finland missing at least some of its targets. They also risk alienating young forest owners holding differing or a more diverse set of values than those of the prevailing Finnish forestry norms, because they curb their ability to shape forests as political-ecological spaces according to their own values.

The young translocal forest owners' sentimental value and psychological ownership might be able to protect the forests from being sold when encountering constant needs for value compromises. However, not all young forest owners experience psychological ownership or find sentimental value in their forests, which, according to our findings, would reduce the threshold to sell one's forest if values-based decision making is not facilitated or otherwise made possible. This study's findings pinpoint not only significant structural barriers for values-based, forest-related decision making for those whose values do not align with the prevailing norms of Finnish forestry but also how the economic situation of individuals and the surrounding social norms play their part. We have identified how the intergenerational ties to forests within the Finnish forest ownership context can be important not only due to the presence of sentimental value and the resulting psychological ownership experienced towards forests but also to how the resulting social norms and power dynamics within families and between relatives can influence values-based decision making for forests.

Translocality can reduce the number of chances forest owners have to spend time in their forests, although time and distance from their forest do not automatically reduce their attachment towards forests or the meaningfulness of forest ownership. Factors arising from intergenerational ties, such as the sentimental value of their forests and sharing an identity of a forest owner with their older family members and relatives, is important for young translocal forest owners. The understanding of sentimental ownership opens new avenues for forest ownership research, and studying the significance of sentimental ownership among other forest owner cohorts or generations could provide important new information on human-forest relationships.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Panu Runko: Resources, Methodology, Funding acquisition, Formal

analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft. **Irmeli Mustalahti**: Supervision, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Funding acquisition, Conceptualization, Writing – original draft.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare no known competing interests, financial or otherwise, that could be seen to have influenced the research and work discussed in this paper.

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Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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