

Reforming Pastors

A Study on Reforms and Attempted Reforms in the ELCI with a Focus on the Role of the Pastors

Steinunn Arnþrúður Björnsdóttir

Dissertation towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND
RELIGIOUS STUDIES



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Summary

This is an empirical study on changes and reform attempts in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland (ELCI), focusing on the role of pastors in the processes. The aim is to understand the role pastors played, how and why they contributed to or resisted changes or reforms. The emphasis is both on the role of pastors locally, in the parish, and at national level, looking at the interaction between the pastoral office and the organisation that constitutes the work environment. The approach is thus bifocal, on the pastors and on the church as an organisation. The main research question is: *How did changes and attempted reforms in the ELCI affect the role of pastors, and which role did pastors play?*

The research is based on three separate case studies which all study changes in the wake of reforms or attempted reforms. The first one looks at changes in the church following tax reforms which boosted church funding significantly and led to numerous changes in church work, especially in the capital and in larger towns. The study shows that pastors were active participants in the changes that followed in the parishes and that these changes were locally instigated. The second study analyses the reception of a strategic planning process in the ELCI and the third evaluates the success of a centrally instigated attempt to establish cooperation areas in the ELCI. In both cases the results show limited participation on behalf of the pastors. All three studies have been published in peer reviewed journals.

The case studies employ qualitative methodology, two sets of interviews, two short questionnaires which included open ended questions and study of related documents, including parish reports and official documents from the General Assembly of ELCI, the Parliament and other institutions.

The theoretical framework is taken from organisational studies and sociological analysis on change and reform, authority and legitimacy focusing on the pastoral agency in the church structure, locally and nationwide and on the meeting of organisational models and ecclesiology. A theoretical focus was on the relationship between the structural and individual dimension, framed as a sub-question to the research question: *What are the relationships between individual and structural dimensions in the changes and attempted reforms in the ELCI?*

The main conclusion is that the different organisational approach of the Church's Central Authorities and the pastors is an important factor in explaining the results of the different projects. The organisational approach of the CCA is structural, whereas the pastors approached changes and reform mostly from a subjective perspective. This difference in how

these actors viewed proposed reforms is part of the explanation as to why they did not work. Viewing the changing role of the pastor in light of authority, the authority of the pastor can be understood in objective terms when linked to the institution of the pastoral office, and in subjective terms when its legitimacy is based on the authenticity of the pastor as an individual. Both are exercised and apparent in the studies. When the authority is linked to the pastoral office objectively, as an institution, it facilitates legitimacy for the pastor in areas that are not formally part of his/her domain. As the pastor also interprets the office subjectively, notably in response to the objective aims of the CCA, we can see the pastoral agency as interacting and reinterpreting the structures surrounding the office and in doing so, affecting them.

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1 Introduction

1.1 The background to the study

The three decades that this research covers were a time of change for the Lutheran majority churches in the Nordic countries.¹ This included a fall in membership as a percentage of populations; changes in relations between church and state in three of five countries, including new church legislation; and organisational change and reform projects. The social environment of the churches changed as well. Increased pluralism generated debates on positive and negative religious freedom and the role of religion in the public sphere. Other topics that were prominent in the debates were issues of gender equality and human sexuality.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland (the ELCI)² shares many similarities with the other Nordic Lutheran majority churches, both historically and structurally. They have all been majority churches with strong ties to the state, including financial ties, demonstrated by either direct financial support to religious organisations or collection of church tax or membership fees. Changes in Iceland during the research period include financial changes and new church legislation, as well as organisational change in connection with the legislative changes. The ELCI reacted to the changed environment with reform projects aimed at strengthening the church and serving parishioners better. The reform projects came in the wake of a stronger economy and increased independence of the church, and were influenced by business and management theories.

Nordic research networks and institutions have studied the effect of changed relations between church and state, mapping the development across the Nordic countries, encompassing increased religious complexity and human rights as well as organisational and management issues. There is a gap in studies in Iceland on the effect of some of these changes and/or reforms and on the respective roles of the ELCI's central authorities and pastors.³ In spite of many similarities between the Nordic churches, the development is not always the same. The case studies show the development in Iceland and thus add to the comprehensive picture of the Nordic majority churches. This research contributes towards filling this gap in studies of the ELCI and thus in studies of current development in Nordic research.

¹ In the research I speak of three decades, as the case studies cover events from 1985 to the present time. In chapter 2 I list other events that took place earlier, but these are presented as background material and are not the object of the study.

² The terminology is further discussed in chapter 1.5, including a discussion on the translation of Þjóðkirkjan, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland.

³ See discussion on terminology, chapter 1.5.

1.2 The aim and design of the study

The aim of the study is to contribute to the understanding of the role pastors played in reforms and attempted reforms in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland and thus contributed to or resisted changes. In this chapter I first discuss briefly the reason for focusing on the role of the pastor, the changes in the ecclesiological context, and the meeting of organisational theories with the institution of the office of the pastor. I then describe my choice of research projects and research question(s).

1.2.1 The importance of the pastor in the ELCI

The ELCI can be described as pastor-centric. The pastor⁴ was traditionally the only full-time employee in the parish and in many cases, still is.⁵ Given the many changes in the church's environment during the last three decades,⁶ we can assume that the role of pastors in those changes is important, considering their central role in the church. In order to find out, several questions must be asked, such as: Were they proactive or reactive? If so, when and why? What does their reaction reveal about their understanding of their office? Was the work environment of pastors affected? And what role did the Church's Central Authorities⁷ play?

Viewing the church as an institution, Norwegian theologian Harald Hegstad discusses the prevalence of the pastoral office in the Nordic folk churches to which the ELCI belongs. "Lutheran institutionalism has been focused on the pastor and the pastor's administration of Word and sacrament. This focus has led to an understanding of the office of the pastor as being the main institutional element of the church" (Hegstad, 2013, p. 133). Looking at this prevalence in the light of other ministries in the church, Hegstad points out that the traditional Lutheran theological view has seen the pastoral ministry as the only ministry of the church (Hegstad, 2013, p. 149). Even the office of the bishop (where that office exists in Lutheran churches) is not understood as a separate ministry but as a "particular form of pastoral ministry" (Hegstad, 2013, p. 150).

The prevalence of the pastor was challenged in some churches by the Pietistic renewal movement in the 18th and 19th Century, including in Norway (Hegstad, 2013, p. 150) and in Denmark with both the Inner Mission and the influence of N. F. S. Grundtvig (Lausten, 2004, pp. 206-243). The movement resulted in the greater involvement of lay church members in

⁴ Discussion on using the word "Pastor" is in chapter 1.5.

⁵ See chapter 2 on statistics of the church.

⁶ See chapter 2 for further discussion on changes.

⁷ See chapter 1.5 for definitions on terms.

the life of the church. This did not happen to the same extent in Iceland (Hugason, 2018; Pétur Pétursson, 1983), resulting in a weaker lay movement and a more clerically dominated church.

As stated above, the ELCI can be described as pastor-centric with the clergy often seen as the main representative of the church. This status is reflected in this study and is the reason for the focus on the role of the pastor. My emphasis has been on the role of the pastor both locally and on a national level, and the interaction between the pastoral office and the organisation that is the work environment. This has led to an approach that can be seen as bifocal: on the pastors and on the church as an organisation – the structure and environment that the pastors are part of, form and are formed by. Due to the central role that pastors play in the ELCI, I have found this bifocal approach suitable to understanding the process of change and interaction that enables or hinders it. This is evident in all three case studies. The first is concerned with the interaction between pastors in the parish and the parish authorities, while the second two discuss the interaction between pastors and the governing organs of the ELCI. This is further discussed in chapter 3.1.2 in the framework of structure and agency.

1.2.2 The use of organisational theories in church reform

The church is dependent on state legislation. The period that the research covers saw the legal status of the ELCI change with legislation that gave it increased independence (Lög um stöðu stjórn og starfshætti 78/1997). In the 1980s, changes in tax legislation dramatically improved the finances of the ELCI, especially in large parishes, which changed the work of many parishes as organisational units, with increased staff and improved premises (Björnsdóttir, 2017). The legal and financial changes raised the issue of the church as an organisation and highlighted the need for professional management, opening up for the organisational theories and models that influenced the ELCI as well as many other churches in Northern Europe (Björnsdóttir, 2016). This puts the focus on the organisational theories that influenced the churches, and to what extent the ELCI adapted them to the needs of the church as an organisation.

Organisational theories and business models have influenced the public sector in the Nordic countries, and the churches have been influenced as well. When using those models in the churches, it is important to consider the ideology behind them and how it fits the work of the church (Askeland, 2012; Schmidt, 2016). It is therefore relevant to evaluate programs and changes in light of those theories, but at the same time to evaluate how the theories have been adapted to the reality of the church. The influence of such models can, for example, be seen

in the proposal on strategic planning for the ELCI in the General Assembly 2002, to “define the vision of the ELCI, based for example on internal and external analysis of the work of the church, aiming at making it more focused, better and stronger” (*Pingsályktun um stefnumótun fyrir Þjóðkirkjuna*, 2002). Among the reasons given for this decision were that such processes had helped both businesses and institutions obtain better results in their work and had resulted in a better use of labour and money to reach their aims. This raises the question of whether the aims are fitting for the institution – the ELCI – given both the structure of the organisation and the aim. It is furthermore interesting to see how ecclesiology, which has roots in an undifferentiated society, meets modern organisational theories, and how or if the ELCI was aware of, or prepared for, such an encounter.

1.2.3 The three case studies

In light of the central role that pastors play in the ELCI, they can be expected to be significant actors in any changes in the church, in addition to being affected by external influences that alter the church’s environment. I have thus chosen to look at how external or internal reforms in the ELCI influence the role of pastor and which role pastors play in the reforms, especially in their interaction with the church organisation, both locally and on a national level.

As I have briefly discussed above, there were significant external factors – such as legislation and societal changes – that affected the church. To limit my research, I needed to define the areas that I would study.⁸ The focus on the pastoral role brought up the situation in the parish. The changes in tax legislation in 1985 and the tax reform of 1987 significantly boosted parish funding. Very little had been written about this change and its impact on parishes, and no research had been carried out on the effect on the pastoral role. Case Study I, *The Making of a City Church*, is on these changes.

Looking at internal factors, reform projects in the church can be seen as attempted change from within, adapting to new methods of work in the church as an organisation. In this study I focus on two processes. The first is the Strategic Planning Process, which was carried out in 2003, and the subsequent focus projects from 2004–10, which is the subject of Case Study II, *The Gatekeepers of Change*. The second is the project on Cooperation Areas adopted by the General Assembly in 2010, the subject of Case Study III, *Pastors Without Borders*. These two initiatives, the Strategic Planning and the Cooperation Areas, are first and

⁸ At the beginning of my studies I looked at various external factors, such as the relations between church and state and the church in public opinion according to surveys from the 1980s to the first decade of the 21st Century. Some of those studies formed part of the chapter “How Lutheran?” published in the book *Exploring a Heritage, in the Church of Sweden Research Series* (Eriksson, Gunner, & Blåder, 2012).

foremost aimed at the parishes, at parish work, its focus, and how that work is carried out. In all three cases studied, the changes or reforms happened or were aimed at the parish work. The latter two are both part of a centrally instigated attempt at reform. In both cases the results of the case studies show limited participation on behalf of the pastors. The study on the effect of the tax reform, however, shows that numerous changes happened in the parishes and the pastors were active participants, but that the reforms in the parishes were locally instigated.

I selected these three cases – the tax legislation, the Strategic Planning and the Cooperation Areas – in an attempt to include both centrally instigated and locally grown reforms. In each case other factors are considered as well, either directly or indirectly. Discussion on tax legislation touches on the relations between the ELCI and the state and on societal development that affects the role and support of the church in the public sphere. The two studies on the internal attempts at change also acknowledge the change in the church with the legislation in 1997.

1.2.4 Research question

Based on the discussion above, my research question is the following: *How did changes and attempted reforms in the ELCI affect the role of pastors, and which role did pastors play?*

By speaking of changes, I am focusing on changes caused by external and internal factors. Firstly, the external change to the church environment that was brought about by the new tax legislation, its effect on the parishes and, thus, the role of the pastor. Secondly, the internal changes, or attempted changes in the reform programmes initiated by the General Assembly. The research question could thus be reiterated for clarification in the following way:

How did the tax legislation that affected church tax, the Strategic Planning and the Cooperation Areas influence the role of pastors and which role pastors play in these changes/reforms, especially in their interaction with the church organisation?

As the question is concerned both with changes/reforms that seem to come from “outside” or “above” the pastor, and the subsequent response or action of the pastor, it could also be reframed from the point of view of organisational theory by focusing on whether the changes or reforms start with the actors as critical thinkers who are shaping their environment, or with organisations that are shaping the people’s lives. A basic theoretical perspective to understand change is the subjective-objective (or the people vs. institution) dichotomy. To put it simply: Is change a result of individuals or their initiatives, or are they a

result of structural processes? This dichotomy will be an important theoretical lens in the project. How I understand this dichotomy will be elaborated on in chapter 3. On this basis, a sub-question to the research question is the following:

What are the relationships between individual and structural dimensions in the changes and attempted reforms in the ELCI?

In the three case studies I focus on these three questions:

- 1. How did legislation that affected church tax impact the role of clergy in the ELCI?*
- 2. How did the ELCI's response to changes and planning impact the role of the clergy?*
- 3. How did the pastor's ecclesiological understanding of his/her office and work identity contribute to or hinder change?⁹*

To answer the first question, I look especially at the effect of changes in tax legislation in the 1980s that increased and stabilised parish incomes. By looking at changes in parish incomes and reports on parish activities from that period in addition to other documentation on the church, I show that these changes in tax legislation had an immediate effect on the parishes and on the working environment of pastors. This is the subject of Case Study I.

To answer question two and three, I look especially at the Strategic Planning Process in the ELCI in 2004 and the program of Cooperation Areas. The ELCI is, in these questions, a reference to the central authorities, such as the General Assembly, the Executive Council and the Bishop's office. Ten qualitative interviews with pastors conducted at the beginning of this research (see chapter 5.2) showed limited participation in the Strategic Planning Process, but exploring the reasons the pastors gave for their lack of interest brought up new issues regarding church structure, authority, conflicts and work identity. The same issues are apparent in the study on the Cooperation Areas. This is the subject of Case Studies II and III.

1.3 Previous research

As a research situated within practical theology, it borrows methods and theories from other disciplines as well – both social sciences and organisational studies. The chapter reflects this interdisciplinary approach, approaching the previous research broadly from the point of view of social changes, moving to organisational and leadership studies and then to ecclesiology and practical theology. The focus will be mostly on Nordic developments and research on

⁹ Each case study has its own research questions, and these are introduced with each case in chapter 5.

church and social and organisational change. From there we move to research on pastors and leadership, and finally there is a chapter on ecclesiological discussion, especially on the concept of a national church and the role of pastor within it.

1.3.1 Secularisation and Scandinavia

The concept of differentiation has been used and developed by many sociologists to describe the changes in society that include the division of systems into subsystems, individualisation and professionalisation (Kääriäinen, Niemelä, & Ketola, 2005; Stichweh, 2012/13). The secularisation theory (Berger, 1967) predicts that, as societies progress, religion loses its authority in all aspects of social life and governance.¹⁰ Discussing the secularisation theory, José Casanova points out that it is made up of “three very different, uneven and unintegrated propositions: secularization as differentiation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms, secularization as decline of religious beliefs and practices, and secularization as marginalization of religion to a privatized sphere” (José Casanova, 1994, p. 211) All three concern the subjects of church and change, but from the point of view of this particular research, the focus should be on the first – the differentiation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms, which directly affected the role of the pastor in society.

Sociologists have pointed out that the Scandinavian model of secularisation is different from e.g. countries where Calvinist Protestantism is influential, or from traditionally Roman Catholic countries (Swatos 1984; Davie 2000, 2007; Casanova et al. 2014). The Lutheran framework was formative for the shaping of the early modern Scandinavian states and their legal systems. The links between state and church – including financial ties – remain, despite secularisation and increasingly multicultural societies, even if they are changing (Bäckström, Edgardh Beckman, & Pettersson, 2004; Christoffersen, 2015; Christoffersen, Modéer, & Andersen, 2010; Hugason, 2010, 2014a, 2014b, 2015; Kääriäinen, 2011; Nielsen & Kühle, 2011; Pétur Pétursson, 2011; Schmidt, 2011). British sociologist Grace Davie argues that the ties say something about the role of the national churches in Scandinavian societies. “No population would support to such an extent institutions of which they fundamentally disapproved” (Davie, 2000, p. 40). It is, however, clear that this support is slowly diminishing as is evident by declining membership numbers.¹¹

¹⁰ The theory of secularisation has been debated among sociologists. A summary of the debate can be found in the book *Sociology of Religion* by British sociologist Grace Davie (Davie, 2007).

¹¹ A discussion on declining numbers is in chapter 2.3.1

Challenged by the changing religious landscape and the debate on the role of religion in the public sphere, the churches and states have responded in various ways. This is, for example, mapped in the NOREL research project, which compared religion in the public sphere in five Nordic countries from 1988–2008 (Furseth, 2017), and in a research project on religion in human rights, law and public space in Scandinavia (José Casanova, Van den Breemer, & Wyller, 2014) as well as in the network on Nordic Law and Religion in the 21st century (Christoffersen et al., 2010). A Nordic research project also looked at the special Lutheran heritage and identity in the Nordic churches (Eriksson et al., 2012).

1.3.2 Churches and organisational reform

The response of the churches to the changed environment resulted in both organisational change and reform projects that have also been studied in a Northern and European perspective (Askeland & Hansson, 2005; Askeland & Schmidt, 2016; Niemelä, 2012). During the period under discussion, three of the large Nordic majority churches experienced both changes in their relations to the state and various degrees of increased independence.

Ulla Schmidt points out that the many reforms undertaken by the Church of Norway in the past two decades also coincide with increased independence of the church, with the establishment of a Church Synod in 1984, and a new Church Act in 1996. This increased independence coincided with declining membership and demographic changes in society (Schmidt, 2016, p. 39). These demographic changes were also felt by the majority churches in other Nordic countries. In Iceland, the relations between state and church changed with the National Church Act in 1998, making the General Assembly the church's highest decision-making body within the constraints of the law. Following these changes, it became the task of the newly empowered General Assembly to set Rules of Procedure for many areas of church work. The strategic planning process (Case Study II, chapter 5.2) was carried out at the request of the General Assembly in the wake of this new legislation at the beginning of the new century.

Norwegian theologians Kjetil Haga (Haga, 2016) and Ulla Schmidt (Schmidt, 2016) and German theologian Isolde Karle (Karle, 2016) have argued that the recent reforms in the Church of Norway and in the EKD in Germany are influenced by institutional reforms in the public sector of society, often labelled as “New Public Management” (NPM), which stresses that the public sector should be governed and operated along the same lines and principles as the private sector and businesses (Schmidt, 2016, p. 44). These administrative doctrines have influenced the public sector in many countries since the 1980s. NPM sees the private sector as a

role model for public administration and defines public administration as a provider of services to citizens, who are redefined as clients and consumers (Christensen & Lægreid, 2002, p. 17). The model is adapted differently in different countries (Christensen & Lægreid, 2002, p. 34). One of the characteristics of NPM is strategic planning and management (Gruening, 2001, p. 2).

These institutional reforms in the public sector have been influential in Iceland as well as in other Nordic countries (Hlynsdóttir, 2012; Kristmundsson, 2003). The influence of administration theories such as NPM can be seen in the emphasis of the General Assembly on its aim to make the church “better and stronger” (Þingsályktun um stefnumótun fyrir Þjóðkirkjuna 2002). The models used were those known in the business world; advisors came from the Department of Economics at the University of Iceland (Björnsdóttir, 2016).

I would therefore agree with Schmidt in the estimation that the structural change in the church with increased independence was an impetus for the reforms. I have also argued that the church was under the influence of theories of institutional reform in the public sector. Ulla Schmidt, however, states that even if the changes are influenced by external factors such as NPM, they are adapted to church settings to reduce conflict with church identity and history (Schmidt 2016:53). Looking at the processes observed in this research, especially the Strategic Planning Process, I question to what extent participants were aware of that need and whether and to what extent that adaption took place.

A large organisational reform within the Church of Norway during this period was the deanery reform of 2004, an administrative change where pastorates (pastoral service districts, consisting of one or more parishes) were abandoned and the deaneries became the service districts for the pastors. The aim was inter alia to distribute tasks in the district more evenly and to create better working conditions for clergy. The reform had had a long preparation period with trial areas and evaluations of both leadership roles and the trial areas (Huse, 1998; Huse & Hansen, 2002, 2003) and several years of implementation. A national evaluation of the reform was done by KIFO/Institute for Church, Religion and Worldview Research and Diankonhjemmet University College (Stifoss-Hanssen et al., 2013). Analysing the results of this report, Harald Askeland points out while the managerial and administrative role of the dean has been strengthened, the pastoral leadership has been weakened. In addition, some parish clergy feel that their own position is “weakened and to some extent overrun” (Askeland, 2016, p. 114). While Askeland’s conclusions are more extensive, I would like to focus on these two issues – the expectations of pastoral leadership from the dean, and how the pastors feel that their own pastoral position, which I understand as authority and independence, is weakened. I see the former as relating to the normative

expectations of oversight from the dean as a team leader of the pastors – a pastor among the pastors, a pastor for the pastors. It also shows that in interpreting the role of the dean, the pastors, and sometimes the deans as well, view it from a subjective position, preferring the role of the caring human resource person, even someone who can be spokesperson for the pastors against the church authorities (Stifoss-Hanssen et al., 2013, p. 55) to the more objective functional role of administrator. The second theme relates to the position of the clergy and the feeling expressed by some of the clergy (a minority) in the survey that the position of the dean was too strong and their position as pastors was thus weakened. The office of the pastor in Norway has developed differently from Denmark and Iceland and the independence of the pastor in his work has gradually diminished. This is further discussed in 1.3.5.

1.3.3 Pastors and leadership

Interest in viewing the church as an organisation turns the attention to its leadership. Leadership studies have formed part of the organisational studies of the Nordic research Networks (Askeland & Hansson, 2005; Askeland & Schmidt, 2016; Per Hansson, 1997; Niemelä, 2012) and formed separate studies in relations to special reform programs (Askeland, 1998, 2000a; Huse, 1999, 2000).

There is an inbuilt tension in the structure of the parish leadership in the Nordic Lutheran churches (Askeland, 2000b; Eyjólfsson, 2013; Hansson, 1990; Hansson & Andersen, 2008; Heinsen, 2007). A good description of the cause can be seen in the book *Kirke i forandring* (Changing Church) (Hegstad, 1999). In it, Harald Hegstad discusses the development in Norway towards a “staff-church” where the staff took over roles in the congregations that pastors and active nucleus previously held. He pointed out that prior to this development, the staff tended to be part-time and to be in positions of support to the pastor. This was traditionally the role of the organist, the verger, and the sexton. The parish council increasingly started to define its role as independent, working alongside the pastor. The parish council hired staff, including catechists, youth workers, and deacons. Tension can arise from the fact that the pastor is under the oversight of the bishop, while the other staff are under the parish council (Hegstad 1999, 119–131).

Swedish theologian Per Hansson has pointed towards the same difficulties in his discussion of Church of Sweden in 1997. He concluded that both the senior pastor and the parish council have the same area of responsibility, but neither can give instructions to the other (Hansson 1997, 78). In his dissertation from 1990 on changes in Swedish

congregations, Hansson found that while the approval of the pastor was necessary for changes to happen in the parish, it was not always enough (Hansson, 1990). Indeed, in later research with economist Jon Aarum Andersen exploring the role of the clergy as managers in the Church of Sweden, Hansson found that the clergy have a low capacity for initiating and implementing organizational change in their parishes (Hansson and Andersen 2008, 91). By comparing the role of vicars as managers to other managers in public administration, they found that vicars stand out as a special group. Their dominant profile is relational in all aspects, rather than goal-oriented, something that is more dominant among other managers in public administration (Hansson and Andersen 2008, 105). Hansson and Andersen note that there has been increased demand for leadership training in the Church of Sweden (2008, 106). Organizational changes in the Church of Sweden after 2008 have led to the merging of parishes, and there is now a demand for the senior pastors to have either managerial training or experience (SvKB 2008, 3).

One of the issues that emerged relating to the financial changes in the ELCI in the 1980s was the possibility of hiring staff in larger parishes, where the clergy had previously been the only full-time employees. This meant that the leadership role of the senior pastor changed to include more managerial work. Pastoral training in Iceland usually focuses on the spiritual aspect of the pastor's work, and there is no demand for managerial experience, but an awareness of the need can be seen in a survey from 2009 among graduates from the theological department (Pétur Pétursson, Sigurvinsson, & Valdimarsdóttir, 2009).¹²

There are not many studies on leadership in congregations in Iceland. Ásdís E. Petersen's dissertation in theology studied the connection between the leadership qualities of the pastor and congregational growth. Her findings showed lack of a knowledge in management in the ELCI as well as a lack of clear organisational charts and guidelines on the division of tasks (Petersen, 2012). Approaching the particular issues of task division and managerial authority from above from the perspective of administration, in her master's thesis Margrét Guðjónsdóttir explored how the interaction between pastors and chairmen of parish councils affects the culture of congregations in the ELCI, finding that the two groups have different perceptions of their respective roles and responsibilities. She concludes that misleading wording in legislation and Rules of Procedure make cooperation and the division of management complicated (Guðjónsdóttir 2014).

¹² The survey was conducted among graduates from the department of theology at University of Iceland between 2004 and 2009 and found that graduates who replied (N=47) wished for more leadership training (5/47) It should be noted that not all the respondents aimed at pastoral work; some were studying as deacons. It is, however, an indication that leadership training has appeared to be an issue in pastoral training.

Icelandic theologian Sigurjón Árni Eyjólfsson looked at the same issue from a theological point of view. He argues that the tension is augmented by a lack of knowledge of the Lutheran understanding of the ministerial office, as Lutheran theology sees the pastor as neither set above nor subjected to the congregation, but rather constituted by Christ to serve the congregation, as a part of the congregation. The clergy's role is understood as functional. There is therefore, according to Eyjólfsson, an unavoidable tension in the relationship between the parish council and the clergy that the pastor has to live with (Eyjólfsson 2013, 153–58).

1.3.4 The Lutheran organisational heritage

Interpreting the information gathered in the case studies calls for a deeper look at the ecclesiology that is part of the Lutheran heritage, the theology linked to the concept of the “National Church” (Ekstrand, 2002; S. A. Eyjólfsson, 2006; Hegstad, 1999, 2013; Vikström, 2008) and the understanding of the role of the pastor within the church that emerges in the qualitative research. The concept of a national or territorial church in Lutheran Protestantism can be traced to Martin Luther and overlaps with a concept of a state church. Martin Luther related the structure of the church to kings and princes, to the Christian head of state, the benevolent father of the nation. Three centuries later, Schleiermacher adapts the concept to the democratic developments of his own time (S. A. Eyjólfsson, 2006, p. 21).

Swedish theologians Anders Bäckström, Ninna Edgardh Beckman and Per Pettersson studied forms of Nordic religiosity, including membership in churches and how members identified with the Lutheran majority churches in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.¹³ Their research showed that belonging to the church and participating in church services had nothing to do with identifying first and foremost with the institutional faith of the churches. It showed just as much a national and cultural belonging and, thus, the function of the contemporary national churches in Nordic societies. Belonging to the church can be part of being Swedish, Danish, and so on. The church buildings provide a space for the divine and are part of the cultural heritage; rites at the crossroads of life mediate tradition, and the diaconal services are, in their minds, connected to the welfare and care of society (Bäckström et al., 2004, pp. 68-71). Iceland was not included in the Nordic study, but looking at the numbers of those attending regularly on the one hand, and participating in rites at the crossroads of life or cultural activities on the other hand, there is resonance with the Nordic

¹³ The study was based on a survey from these four countries, conducted in 1997 (Bäckström et al., 2004, p. 55).

countries (Björnsdóttir, 2012). The question is, however, whether the two decades since the survey was conducted have changed the national character, or whether the identificational and cultural belonging remain similar. Given declining membership rates and declining participation in events at crossroads of life (Kirsten Donskov Felter, Edgardh, & Fagermoen, 2018), I suspect that we would see changes there.

In his book on *Ríki og kirkja, uppruni og þróun þjóðkirkjuhugtaksins* (State and Church, The Origin and Development of the Concept of National Church) (2006), Icelandic theologian Sigurjón Árni Eyjólfsson defines three main features of a national church. Firstly, it seeks to adapt its organisation, structure and inner activities to the national character of its country. “Its structure and organisation are grounded in the priesthood of all believers (Martin Luther) and the democratic structure which forms society (Friedrich Schleiermacher)” (S. A. Eyjólfsson, 2006, p. 155). Secondly, he links the church’s obligation to preach the Gospel to the entire nation to the national church, even if only part of the population belongs to that church. It forms part of the country’s cultural heritage. Thirdly, it is a church for all, a church to which most of the population can belong if they want to. Everyone should have access to the church, which seeks to connect with people on the crossroads of life, beginning with infant baptism.

Swedish theologian Thomas Ekstrand discusses different issues in folk church ecclesiology in his theological analyses of the transition of the Church of Sweden in 2000 from state church to an independent national church, *Folkkyrkans gränser: en teologisk analys av övergången från statskyrka till fri folkkyrka* (The Folk Church’s Borders: theological analysis of the transition from a state church to a free Folk Church). Firstly, he focuses on the fact that folk church ecclesiologies tend to emphasise the openness of the church instead of demanding a saintly life of its members and he asks whether it is important for the Church’s identity as a folk church that a majority of the population feels a strong affiliation with the Church. He then focuses on the state’s expectations on the church, which can be summarized as follows: It shall be an Evangelical Lutheran folk church; it shall be a church open to all; it shall be democratically governed, and engage actively in welfare work. Ekstrand then reflects on how “folk church ecclesiology” can be understood today by formulating six criteria to consider: Awareness of multicultural society; that the state’s legislation has to be considered theologically; the implications and limits of membership; that the term “folk church” is an emotionally loaded concept within the Swedish theological context; and the importance of the people’s affiliation to the church has to be discussed (Ekstrand, 2002, p. 149).

Writing about the Church of Sweden in his book *Folkkyrka i en postmodern tid – Tjänsteproducent i välfärdssamhället eller engagerande gemenskap?* (National Church in a Postmodern Era – Service Producer in the Welfare Society or Engaging Community?), Finnish theologian Björn Vikström argues that under the influence of modernity the national church has responded in two ways – from the perspective of a service-oriented church, or as a community-oriented church. The first has the “normal” everyday secularised citizen as a focus and tries to make the church relevant for that person, while the latter wants to preserve a church where members of the congregation can grow as Christians within the framework of an identifiable community. The “service-oriented” church corresponds with the idea of an open national church that has a low threshold (Eyjólfsson, 2006). Vikström points out that this enhances certain aspects of modernity, such as an emphasis on the individual’s needs and free choice. It can, however, be criticised for uncritically absorbing the values and norms of society. Those who advocate the community-oriented perspective are more critical of the adaption of theology to these ideas and values, but could in turn be exposed to the danger a kind of contextual exclusivity (Vikström, 2008, pp. 129-130).

Harald Hegstad has, in his book *The Real Church, An Ecclesiology of the Visible*, given a proposal for a Lutheran theology in a folk church context. Discussing the concept of national church as a fellowship, Harald Hegstad concludes that in Norway a certain two-fold social formation can be seen when looking at the church as such. It is a majority church with a high degree of integration between church and society, but low church attendance; a place people go to for certain services, though they are not regular worshippers. Yet within that church there exists a core group of active worshippers. The church can thus simultaneously be viewed as a majority and minority church. Hegstad approaches the issue differently from Vikström. Looking at the members’ relationships to the church, Hegstad suggests that instead of viewing the fellowship as a bounded set, defining the borders of the fellowship, we could define it from the perspective of a centred set. A centred set defines a centre and where different objects are related to the centre, moving towards it. It is a more dynamic way of viewing the fellowship – people’s types of relationships to the centre, which can change as they move within the set. (Hegstad, 2013, pp. 109–116).

Hjalti Hugason claims that in response to religious organisations increasing pluralism, individualism and secularisation can be defined by three categories: sharpening, introversion and adaption. By responding with “sharpening”, a religious institution tries to safeguard its traditional position and rights. This can also mean sharpening the lines between the religious institution and society as a whole. This reaction is close to Vikström’s definition of

community-oriented church, that is, a church that sees itself as separate from society and, in Hugason's case, as being pushed aside. Responding by "introversion", the religious institution looks inward, at the spiritual side of faith. It can lead to increased isolation from society and diminished social conscience. The third option, "adaption" responds by entering into dialogue with society, stressing the social and diaconal responsibility that religious institutions have. Here we are closer to Vikstöm's definition of a service-oriented church.

Hugason argues that all these responses can be found in the ELCI's reaction to increased pluralism and individualism in the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century. During the first half of the 20th century, the ELCI reacted to changes in society with adaption as church leaders, with their theological emphasis, tried to engage with the new cultural and social circumstances. Increased individualism was met with less emphasis on the confessional creeds of the church; increased emphasis on the sciences was met with literary criticism of the bible and experiments to "prove" spiritual claims such as life after death (spiritualism). During the second half of the century the church turned increasingly inwards, for example with an emphasis on liturgy, sacraments, and retreats. The participation in this is always limited to an enthusiastic inner group and can therefore isolate the church further from its larger member group. At the turn of the century, according to Hugason, the ELCI has shown more signs of sharpening, sometimes manifesting itself in the role of a martyr, as it is challenged by changes following increased secularisation. This turn is increasingly found after the new church legislation no 78/1997 (Hugason, 2012, pp. 78-83).

Looking at the ELCI as a majority church, service-oriented and inclusive, as Eyjólfsson describes it, the centred set (Hegstad, 2013) offers a way to describe the various relations the members and non-members have to the church. There is always a nucleus of churchgoers and active members within each parish: the parish council, the church choir and those who are active in other areas of church work. There are also other factors that connect people to the church, such as location, link through family history or place of origin, and important life events. But the debate about the role of the church in a changing society is visible, including the question of whether defining the ELCI as an independent religious association with Act 78/1997 has changed the way the church identified, possibly increasing the "sharpening" response (Hugason, 2012b).

The role of the pastor is understood as serving everyone, whether they belong to the ELCI or not.¹⁴ That understanding of the role can be interpreted as supporting the idea of a broad, open majority church, even if there simultaneously exists a group of devoted churchgoers within the congregation. In this sense, it is both a majority and a minority church and the task of the pastor is to see both groups as belonging, and to serve both.

1.3.5 Vocation, office or a job?

The discussion of the church as an organisation and the role of pastors within that organisation draws attention to the ecclesiology that shapes the pastoral role, including the pastoral identity in relation to the ELCI as an organisation. This ecclesiology of the pastoral office has its roots in pre-modern Europe, in a hierarchical, undifferentiated society. In a highly differentiated, late modern society the office of the pastor is also related to a profession, here defined in the classical understanding of a knowledge-based occupation, formed by education at an approved university and endorsed by state authorities (Kirsten D. Felter, 2010, p. 85).¹⁵ German theologian Isolde Karle discusses the development of the pastoral office and profession in light of functional differentiation and individualism. She argues that the effect of differentiation is to emphasise what a person *does*, instead of what one *is* according to the profession, and that individualism places emphasis on the person of the pastor, not the office, the result being that the pastor carries the office and not vice versa (Karle, 2001, p. 13).¹⁶ The emphasis on the work or deeds of the pastor instead of the presence of the office lead to a re-evaluation of the office and a comparison with other professions and their working conditions, such as working hours and boundaries between the private and the professional (Björnsdóttir, 2013). As discussed in chapter 2.3.2, the traditional view of the pastoral office in Iceland is that while it gives the holder the freedom to organise and prioritise his or her work, s/he should also be available at all times. It is a vocation, not merely a profession; a lifestyle, not a job. Nordic research shows that this view is changing amongst pastors (Felter, 2016; Stangeland Kaufman, 2016) and these changing views can also be seen in Iceland (Björnsdóttir, 2013; Hörpudóttir, 2015; Petersen, 2012). This change

¹⁴ This view is apparent in the definition of salaries for pastors, where the salaries differ between large and small parishes, based on the number of inhabitants, but not members of the ELCI, living in the parish (Kjararáð, 2017). The reality is that many people who do not belong to the church seek service from the church.

¹⁵ The definition of professionalism has been defined and redefined in scholarly discussion. For an overview, see Felter, 2010.

¹⁶ Karle has been criticised for lacking a historical perspective when discussing the role and image of the pastor after the reformation. For a discussion on this, see Kirsten Donskov Felter's dissertation, p. 129–137 (Kirsten D. Felter, 2010). I include this part of Karle's arguments as I find them relevant to discussing pastoral identity and ecclesiology.

is most clear in the changed working environment for pastors in the Church of Norway, where new legislation requires planning and counting the hours that pastors work, and payment for overtime. It also means that instead of having an independent office where they can organise and prioritise their own work and working hours, they now have more limited freedom.

In this research, the limits to the ELCI's Central Authority in its parishes in Iceland is linked partly to an ecclesiological understanding of the independence of the pastoral office from the interference of the church authorities. Icelandic theologian Gunnar Kristjánsson has contributed to that discussion, arguing that the pastor is not like a branch manager, taking orders from a central authority. He is his own master and stands and falls with his actions (Kristjánsson, 2012). This same view can be found with Isolde Karle in her criticism of attempted church reform in the Evangelical Church in Germany, EKD (Karle, 2009, 2010, 2016).

This understanding seems to be in opposition to any the attempts to look at the church as an organisation, where it is possible reorganise the work across established boundaries of parishes and pastorates and tell the pastor what to do. Whether the reform is called deanery reform, strategic planning or Cooperation Areas, to name three, which feature in this research. In Norway, research showed that some pastors felt that the deanery reform involved limitations to their own positions with increased authority of the dean (Askeland, 2016; Stifoss-Hanssen et al., 2013). The development since seems to have been towards less autonomy for the pastor, with new legislation on working hours, distancing them from the colleagues in Iceland, who still exercise much more independence. The stated independence of the office is rarely found in writing, but was recognized by the clergy participating in the Icelandic case studies, sometimes expressed verbally, but more often expressed indirectly in words or action/inaction.

1.4 Place and limitations of the research

This research is placed within practical theology. In this chapter I attempt to place it ecclesologically and then move on to discuss some of the problems that arise when we use interdisciplinary methods for qualitative studies in practical theology. One of the burning issues is the role of theology, and awareness of the different kinds of theology that form or affect the research.

1.4.1 The four tasks of practical theology

Discussing the link between ecclesiology and practical theology, Harald Hegstad explains how practical theology is an integrated part of ecclesiology and theory building, needed both early in the formulation and towards the end; first, in the process of describing and analysing the issue at hand – an empirical ecclesiology – and second, in formulating a critical and constructive function – a strategic ecclesiology (Hegstad, 2002). American theologian Richard R. Osmer identifies the four tasks of practical theology as: Descriptive, Interpretive, Normative and Strategic. He proposes the following model for practical theological interpretation, each key task of theology characterised by a key question:

1. The descriptive-empirical task asks, “What is going on?”
2. The interpretive task asks, “Why is it going on?”
3. The normative task asks, “What ought to be going on?”
4. The pragmatic task asks, “How might we respond?” (Osmer, 2008, p. 4)

Linking Osmer’s questions with Hegstad’s analysis and theory building, the first two tasks form part of the empirical ecclesiology and the second two the strategic ecclesiology. Osmer’s writing is aimed at equipping congregational leaders with the tools of practical theology to assess situations and respond. The different tasks are linked to clerical roles; of “priestly listening” in the descriptive empirical task, “sagely wisdom” for the interpretative task, “prophetic discernment” for the normative task and “servant leadership” in the pragmatic task of responding. The methodology is adapted from social sciences and takes into consideration the design of the study and the methods used to carry out that design. While Osmer is focused on the congregation, his approach is here used in the field of practical theology that is concerned with the church as an organisation, with church growth and administration. It focuses on the first two tasks, in identifying and analysing what is going on – using empirical ecclesiology – and applies qualitative methods of social sciences in order to empirically study elements of the concrete and visible church, the real church (Hegstad, 2013). The study then reflects on the findings to understand the theology that is enacted in those practices and how that theology shapes actions – a first step towards strategic ecclesiology. It relates to social sciences, not only in methodology, but also in subject, as a part of the field of sociology of religion, studying among other things how changes in society affect religious practice, taking into consideration the relations between church and state and changes in the religious landscape. On the metatheoretical level, this study is grounded in interpretivism, interpreting and trying to understand the meaning of

social actions, the motives and beliefs behind peoples' actions (Osmer, 2008, p. 76; Sarantakos, 2005, pp. 39-41; Taylor & Bogdan, 1997, p. 4). Osmer emphasises the fact that all theoretical knowledge is fallible and is grounded in a particular perspective, and must be used with a full understanding of these limitations (Osmer, 2008, p. 83). In that respect, the position of the researcher is important. I discuss this further in chapter 4.2.

1.4.2 Normativity and reflexivity

Using methodology from the social sciences has become common in practical theology but it is not without complications, especially when negotiating the role of theology in the research process (Ideström & Kaufman, 2018b; Miller-McLemore & Mercer, 2016; Ward, 2012). What role does theology play in the interpretations, and which theology? What is the weight of the doctrinal theology, the ecclesiological tradition or the messier theology that appears in the lived reality of the study subject? Normativity and reflexivity are keywords in this discussion (Kirsten D. Felter, 2018; Kaufman, 2015, 2016, 2018). Norwegian theologian Tone Stangeland Kaufman has analysed some of the different approaches in practical theology in recent research studies regarding the normative and descriptive role of theology in qualitative or ethnographic studies. Some of them give primacy to theological tradition or a privileged position to the voice of the normative theology, from church or scripture. Others opt for a more hermeneutical and correlational or practice-oriented approach, where theory and practice are interwoven and more authority is given to the lived experience (Kaufman, 2016, pp. 136-145). One of these approaches is called a Theological Action Research (TAR), developed by the British research group Action Research – Church and Society (the ARCS). Their emphasis is on an action research that is “theological all the way”; that is, not just in reflection on the data, but in the entire process. To facilitate this they have developed a tool called The Four Voices of Theology model. This model identifies four theological voices in action research. The researchers distinguish between two theological “voices” in the empirical field: the *espoused* voice, i.e. the theology “embedded within a group’s articulation of its beliefs” that is expressed verbally, and the *operant* voice, i.e. the theology “embedded within the actual practices of the group” that is implicit in what is enacted in the field. On the part of the researcher the ARCS distinguish between the *normative* voice of scripture and ecclesial traditions such as the creeds, liturgies and official church teaching, and the *formal* voice of academic and theological reflections, that is the formal theology of theologians, in

dialogue with other disciplines (Cameron, Watkins, Bhatti, Duce, & Sweeney, 2010, p. 54; Watkins, Bhatti, Cameron, Duce, & Sweeney, 2012).¹⁷

One of the strengths of this model is that it recognizes the tension between the expressed theology and the enacted theology in the field, as well as the normative theology of the church tradition and the theology of the practitioners. The problem that the researcher faces in using it in theological action research is, however, how to negotiate the different theologies in representing the material (Ideström & Kaufman, 2018a). The ARCS model has been criticized for giving too much primacy to normative theology, from church or scripture and for unclear relations between the empirical and the normative voices. (Kirsten D. Felter, 2018; Kaufman, 2016). I agree with Felter and Kaufman in that respect. Furthermore, I am critical of the extent to which TAR sees the methods “contribute to the theological/spiritual formation of those involved, especially enabling practitioners to grow in theological fluency with regard to understanding and sharing their embodied theologies. TAR is a form of learning in faith...” (Cameron et. al., 2010, p. 58–59) I find this problematic. Action research is “a collaborative process between participants and researchers” (p. 36) but the primacy of theology and/or faith in the process and the fuzzy border between the “researcher” and “the person of faith” needs to be acknowledged, not wiped out as seems to be the case with this approach. Bearing that in mind, I still find the basic idea of the Four Voices a useful tool to describe and to some extent place the different voices present in the research, both theological and other ideas – organisational, for example. Its clear imagery is one of its strengths as a tool. My research was not action research but I see this tool as applicable nevertheless and will use it to some extent in the analysis in this very basic way, realizing that I am applying it only in the last reflective phase of the research.

Kaufman and Felter both stress the importance of reflexivity for the researcher regarding both theological preconceptions and position vis-à-vis the subject. Discussing normativity and theology in relation to a research among clergy in Denmark, Felter concludes: “...the complex and messy nature of the pastors’ statements indicated that the path from the empirical findings to theological normativity is not a straight one. [...] The complex material of the interviews reminds us that reality does not come pre-packed, nor does it fit into the neat categories of the classic academically trained theologian.” Felter instead proposes a more reflexive method, aware of the fact that doing theology is always socially and culturally situated. She suggests “that we see doing theology as a hybrid process

¹⁷ The description of the Four Voices is taken from Cameron and Watkins, but in describing them I owe much to Ideström and Kaufman (Ideström & Kaufman, 2018a, p. 174) and Felter (Kirsten D. Felter, 2018, p. 118).

of meaning-making across different fields, as elements from different traditions are negotiated in order to make theological sense of concrete, and sometimes painful forms of lived experience.” (Kirsten D. Felter, 2018, p. 110) As stated earlier, the issues of reflexivity and normativity as a possible danger or a benefit for the researcher is further discussed in chapter 4.2 regarding the role of the researcher.

1.4.3 Limitations

The study is placed within organisational studies on the Nordic majority churches. In spite of similarities between the Nordic countries and the Nordic majority churches, the development is not always the same. This can be said about the cases discussed in this research. The development in Iceland differs from the cases to which it is compared. This research attempts to show how this difference is manifested and to look for explanations.

Evaluating the findings, it is important to note that quantitative assumptions cannot be drawn from qualitative interviews or questionnaires. That does not exclude all generalizability regarding qualitative research methods (Bryman, 2004, pp. 284-285; Silverman, 2006, pp. 303-311; 2010, pp. 139-149) In this research, certain generalizations will be made both from the qualitative research and the theoretical discussion of the findings. This is further discussed in chapter 4.1.

Selecting three case studies to study the role of pastors in reforms in the church will always run the risk of excluding other factors that would emerge by taking, for example, other staff, volunteers, and projects into the picture.

1.5 Terminology

This study has two main focus points, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland, and the role of the clergy. Translating terminology is always difficult as the words can have different meanings or connotations in different countries. The first question is which word to use for the ordained pastoral ministry. The Icelandic generic word is *prestur* and could be translated as a priest, vicar, minister or pastor – and in some cases as rector. Influenced by the American Lutheran Theologian, Gordon Lathrop (Lathrop, 2006), I choose to use the term pastor. I realise that in some contexts this word is used for Pentecostal clergy or in a free church context, but it is also used for Lutheran clergy in the USA and Canada. In Iceland, a pastor can have different roles, and these roles have different names. The pastor who is either the only pastor in a parish or the leading pastor is called “parish-pastor” in literal translation. The word in Icelandic is *sóknarprestur*; a corresponding position exists in Norwegian, *sokneprest*;

in Danish, *sognepræst*; in Swedish, *kyrkoherde*. A corresponding position in the Anglican churches in the British Isles would be rector or vicar. I have chosen to use the term “senior pastor” for the leading pastor in the parish as the term “parish pastor” can be confusing, since other pastors can also be employed in the parish.

Other pastors serving in the same parish in Iceland are simply called by the generic term pastors (*prestar*). In Norway, a similar position would be called *kapellan*, in Sweden *komminister*. In Denmark, pastors serving in this position are called “parish pastors” (*sognepræster*) and the leading pastor is called *kirkebogsførende sognepræst og begravelsesmyndighed* i.e. parish pastor in charge of church register and funerals.

I use the word “clergy” differently when speaking of pastors in Iceland. By “clergy” I am only referring to those ordained to a ministerial position, pastors, senior pastors and deans.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland is the context of my research. A more direct translation of the Icelandic name – *Þjóðkirkjan* – is the National Church or the Nation’s Church (Danish: *Folkekirken*). Approximately 61.9 % of the population still belongs to that church (Hagstofa - Statistics Iceland). *Þjóðkirkjan* uses the title The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland in its English publications and international relations. I will use that and the abbreviation ELCI for this church. Occasionally I refer to the ELCI as “the church” when the context is clear.

The ELCI is one diocese divided into nine deaneries, with each deanery divided into pastorates. A pastorate can consist of one or more parishes. Each parish has a parish council. When talking about the ELCI’s or the Church’s Central Authorities (CCA), I am referring to the General Assembly (and with it the Executive Council) and the Diocesan office. (For further discussion on the church and its institutions, see chapter 2).

Translating the term *embætti* (Norwegian: *embete*, German: *Amt*) is not without complications. It is a translation of the Latin word *ministerium* and could therefore be translated as “ministry” or, more concisely in my context, as “pastoral ministry”. It can, however, also be translated with the word “office”, and both words have been used in translations of the Augsburg Confession. I find that the word “ministry” denotes a more active meaning of service, whereas “office” is more static and to my mind better captures the ecclesiological understanding of the pastoral office in Iceland. The choice of “office” is also influenced by writings of American theologians Gordon W. Lathrop and Timothy J. Wengert, who often use this term (Lathrop & Wengert, 2004; Wengert, 2006).

1.6 An outline of this document

In chapter 2 I will focus on the context for this study – the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland. I look at its history and development in relations between church and state, including financial relations between the two, and give some comparison with other Nordic majority churches. The focus then shifts to the role of the clergy in the ELCI, traditional expectations and challenges. Finally, I discuss the working environment and the tension between being the holder of the pastoral office and an employee of the church. I then discuss some of challenges in the ELCI the last three decades, which is the period covered by this research.

In chapter 3 I will discuss the theories relating to the themes that emerge in the case studies. These include the theories on change and on organisational reform, Weber's definitions of authority, discussion on legality, legitimacy, authenticity and leadership in pastoral studies.

Chapter 4 explains the research design, data collection and analytical methods, as well as explaining my role as a researcher and an insider.

Chapter 5 has a summary of the three case studies.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings of the research case studies in light of the research questions and the discussion in previous chapters, especially in chapters 1 and 3.

2 The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland

In this chapter I will describe the Evangelical Lutheran church of Iceland and the office of the pastor within that church, which is the context and subject of my research. I will list the main statistics of the church, its development in the last century, including relations with the state and its financial development. The position of the pastor and the pastoral office is an important part of the study and I discuss various aspects of the pastor's work environment. Finally, I introduce three initiatives aimed at bringing change to the church.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland is among the Lutheran majority churches in the Nordic countries that all share some common history, challenges and privileges (Hugason, 2010, p. 107). The development in the Nordic countries is in some ways similar, but there are dissimilarities and the pace is different. I will give a very brief overview of some aspects of the organisational development, especially regarding relations between state and church, status of the pastors, women's ordination and membership statistics.

The ELCI defines itself not as a state church but as an independent religious association that enjoys special relations to the state and the nation. According to Article 62 of the constitution of Iceland "the Evangelical Lutheran Church shall be the State Church of Iceland and as such, it shall be supported and protected by the state."¹⁸ Article 1 of the *Legislation on status, governance and operation of the church* states that the church is an "independent religious association on evangelical Lutheran foundation." The second article, however, defines the independence of the church "within the constraints of the law" (*Lög um stöðu stjórn og starfshætti 78/1997*). Icelandic theologian Hjalti Hugason has discussed the limits of the ELCI's independence given the constraints of law and the fact that the relations are constitutionally based. He questions whether the ELCI can be called independent given the limits to the church's autonomy in the legislation (Hugason, 2014a, 2014b). This church model is further discussed in chapter 2.1.

The ELCI is one diocese. Two suffragan bishops work with the Bishop of Iceland. The diocese is divided into nine deaneries, 88 pastorates and 233 parishes. Many of the rural

¹⁸ This article has been in the constitution since Iceland received its first constitution in 1874. It is a translation from the Danish Constitution, Article 4, which states "Den evangelisk-lutherske kirke er den danske folkekirke og understøttes som sådan af staten." The word *folkekirke* (Danish) or *þjóðkirkja* (Icelandic) can both be translated as "church of the nation/people". The official English translation of the Icelandic constitution renders *þjóðkirkja* as "State Church" but the official Danish translation uses the equivalent of "established church". I prefer that translation, with the understanding that this word is used for a church that is recognised by law, and sometimes financially supported, and in some sense – at least historically – the church of a nation. *Þjóðkirkjan* has, however, more often been referred to in unofficial translations as the "National Church", a more direct translation than "state" or "established".

parishes are very small: 73 parishes have less than 50 members; 128 parishes have less than 100 members. The parishes are served by 114 pastors in parish ministry and six deanery pastors. In addition, seventeen pastors serve in specialised ministry or as hospital chaplains, hired either by the church or by institutions. Three pastors serve Icelanders abroad, in Norway, Sweden and Denmark (Biskupsstofa, 2016, statistics from Dec. 1st 2015).

Some 76 % of the population of Iceland still belongs to Lutheran churches, either the ELCI or one of the four Lutheran free churches. Of those, the ELCI is the largest, with approximately 69.9 % of the population as members (Hagstofa - Statistics Iceland 2018), down from 90% in 1996.

The General Assembly (Icelandic: *Kirkjuþing*) is the highest decision-making body in the ELCI within the constraints of the law. The Assembly meets annually. It elects the Executive Council, which is the executive arm of the General Assembly.

The Bishop of Iceland convenes the Pastoral Synod (Icelandic: *Prestastefna*) once a year. Any matter concerning the teaching of the church, worship, liturgy, baptism, confirmation and Holy Communion must be discussed at the Pastoral Synod before a conclusion by the General Assembly.

Legislation in 1911 on gender equality regarding public officials included the office of the pastor, as they were public officials. (Guðmundsdóttir & Ástgeirsdóttir, 2009; M. Jónsson, 1952). According to that legislation, women could join the ranks of ordained clergy already in 1911. The first woman finished a pastoral degree at the University in 1945, but she did not seek ordination. The second woman finished her Cand. Theol. exam in 1962. She was ordained in 1974. Women's ordination was not openly disputed within the church at the time of the ordination (Pétur Pétursson, 2000, p. 358) and, in 1981, four more women were ordained. Some 17 women were ordained from 1981–89, and around 70 had been ordained by 2010.

In 2016 there were 53 women in ordained priestly ministry (2 bishops, 4 deans, 41 clergy in parish and deanery ministry and 6 specialised ministry) in the church, 36% of the clergy (Hörpudóttir, 2017, p. 52).

By comparison, legislation for women's ordination was passed in Denmark in 1947 and the first female pastors were ordained as early as 1948. As of 2018, 57 per cent of the clergy in Denmark are women. In Sweden the first female pastors were ordained in 1960 and by 2014, 46% of the clergy were women. In Norway, the first female pastors were ordained in 1961 and by 2014, 30% of the clergy were women (Kirsten Donskov Felter et al., 2018). In Finland the General Synod finally adopted a proposal allowing the ordination of women in

1986 and the first female pastor was ordained in 1988 (Kääriäinen, 2011, p. 166; Kääriäinen et al., 2005, p. 61). By 2015, 45.5% of women in parish ministry were women (<https://evl.fi/fakta-om-kyrkan/statistik/personal>, visited Nov. 2nd 2018).

The effect of the arrival of women into the ordained ministry does not form part of my study. It would be a worthy subject of any research to look at the effect that women have had on the pastoral office and on the church. That would, however, require a special study and the methodology would need to take that into consideration. In this study, gender as a factor has been removed in case studies to ensure that respondents cannot be identified. This, I felt, was necessary since the number of pastors are few and combinations where location, number of pastors and gender is given can put confidentiality at serious risk.

2.1 From a State church to a National Church

The ELCI developed in step with the Church of Denmark¹⁹ into the 20th century (Hugason, 2010). The Executive Council of the ELCI (*kirkjuráð*) was founded by law in 1931, giving the ELCI a venue for decisions on internal matters. It had five members: The Bishop, two ordained and two lay members, and gave the parish councils the opportunity to participate in selecting the laypersons. In that respect, it opened up the possibility for wider participation in decision making in the ELCI.²⁰ The General Assembly was founded in 1957, turning the Executive Council into the executive arm of the Assembly (Pétur Pétursson, 2000, p. 369).

In one part of church life, the parishioners had direct influence: in selecting the parish pastor. Church legislation in 1907 gave the parish members the right to elect the pastor by secret ballot (M. Jónsson, 1952, pp. 76-77; Sigurðsson, 1986, pp. 296-297).²¹ Parish elections were a regular feature until 1987, when new legislation made them the exception instead of the rule (Pétur Pétursson, 2000, pp. 364-365). Elections often mobilised the parishioners but the fight could be fierce and was often between the different factions in the church – pietistic,

¹⁹ Iceland was part of the Danish kingdom up until 1918 and a sovereign state in a union with Denmark until 1944. The country had received a constitution in 1874, which introduced freedom of religion, following the Danish constitution of 1848. A significant step towards increased independence of the country came when a minister for Icelandic affairs was appointed to the Danish cabinet in 1904, residing in Iceland. This in turn led to the Danish king becoming the head of the church in Iceland, but the ELCI was not part of the Danish Church as such.

²⁰ In light of previous discussion on the influence of pietism on the prevalence of the pastoral role, it is interesting to note that Bishop Jón Helgason did not support the proposal for an executive council when it was debated in Parliament. In his response to the Parliament he stated that he felt that the tasks of the proposed council could be executed by others (M. Jónsson, 1952, p. 113).

²¹ The right to elect a pastor had been in legislation since 1886, but with more limitations. For example, the governor and Bishop first selected two or three candidates to choose from, and the election was not in secret (M. Jónsson, 1952, pp. 38-40).

liberal and spiritualist – and political factions to the left and right. This sometimes left scars in the congregation that took a long time to heal.

The development from state churches to churches with a more independent status has happened at different times in Nordic churches.

In Finland, a degree of separation between church and state took place as early as in 1869, when the church got its own legislative body. This was when Finland was a Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire. At the time, every Finn had to belong to either the Lutheran Church or the Orthodox Church. In 1923 the Freedom of Religion Act came into force and the state no longer “affirmed the Lutheran faith [...] These changes implied a formal separation of church and state.” (Kääriäinen, 2011, p. 157).

In Denmark, the church still has the closest links to the state, with the clergy being employed by the state and the church being governed by the Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs (Kirsten Donskov Felter et al., 2018, p. 7). The ELCI took a step away from that model in 1997, as will be detailed below, but that step did not go as far as the changes adopted by the Church of Sweden in 2000 and the Church of Norway in 2017. Both churches now employ their own clergy and have leading organs with General Assemblies and Executive Councils. All the Nordic churches have financial relations with the state, in form of church tax and/or other support.

The development of the ELCI from a state church akin to the Danish church model to a more independent national church took place towards the end of the 20th century. A major change came with new legislation on the National Church, *Legislation on status, governance and operation of the church, No. 78/1997 (Lög um stöðu stjórn og starfshætti 78/1997)*, often referred to as the *National Church Act*. As mentioned in chapter 2, this legislation states in the first article that the church is an “independent religious association on evangelical Lutheran foundation.” The second article defines the independence of the church “within the constraints of the law”. This model of church-state relations has been described as a “Collaboration Model” and not a typical State Church model after the changes of 1997 (Hugason, 2010, p. 112). This model is summarised thus:

- *The Church System is not an* integrated part of the fundamental laws of the republic, as it can be changed by law, without conventional constitutional amendment.
- The legislation defines the church as “independent religious organisation”.
- The legislation grants the ELCI the status of a legal person, represented as an independent body with independent property rights.

- Administrative links between church and state are insubstantial.²²
- A collaboration model was established in Finland in 1863 and in Sweden in 2000 (Hugason 2010, p. 112).

Writing about the changes in church-state relations, including how a National Church fits within the concept of freedom of religion, Hugason asks if the drawing of battle lines regarding the role of religion in the public sphere can be related to the change in the status of the church with new legislation, 98/1997, as the church defines itself now more as a religious association than a public institution, and takes its role as such seriously. Hugason argues that the changes in 1997, while moving the ELCI away from the model of State Church, did not make it autonomous, in spite of Article 1 in the Act 98/1997, which states that the ELCI is an independent religious association. He claims that the constraint of the law is too restrictive for the ELCI to be autonomous, especially in terms of organisational restrictions. There is, however, considerable autonomy in internal matters (Hugason, 2012, 2014a, 2014b).

As the legislation 98/1997 gave the ELCI increased autonomy in inner matters, it enhanced the importance of the General Assembly for adopting Rules of Procedure for the church and the power of the Executive Council as the executive arm of the General Assembly, acting on financial decisions and distributing the funds for the work of the church in various areas. It can be argued that this increased the influence of laypersons, as the majority of the synod is lay. At present, there are 17 lay and 12 ordained members who can vote at the assembly. There is, however, an added presence of ordained members and theologians, with three bishops and a member from the faculty of theology who participate without the right to vote, and the argument could therefore also be made that the presence of ordained members is at least as strong.

Icelandic theologian Gunnar Kristjánsson criticises the 1997 legislation and the its development for not going far enough towards democratic change. This applies to the role of the Church Assembly, the president of the Assembly and its committees on the one hand, and the role of the Executive Council and Bishop on the other hand. (Kristjánsson 2000, 2009). He argues that the ecclesial model prevalent in these changes is closer to clerical power than the priesthood of all believers, and defines it as the polar opposites in Lutheran ecclesiology (Kristjánsson 2009). This has been contested by other theologians, who say that the General

²² Describing a collaboration model, Hugason quotes the Norwegian report *Religionsfrihet og Religionspolitikk 2001*.

Assembly is too weak, the regulations, adoptions and strategies do not yield intended results, and who question the actual power of the Executive Council (Ólafsson, 2009).

Apart from changes in State-Church relations, several organisational changes have taken place in other Nordic churches. Although not an exhaustive list, relevant in this context are the changes in parish leadership with new church legislation in Norway in 1996; the merging of parishes in Sweden after 2000, where, for example, the number of parishes in the Church of Sweden dropped by approximately 700 between 2000–07 (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2007, p. 104); and the deanery reform in Norway (Huse et al. 2002; Hans Stifoss-Hanssen et al., 2013). In Finland, changes in parish borders and the merging of parishes followed changes in municipal structures where changes in parish structures affected more than half the parishes in the first decade of this century (Palmu, 2012). The development in the Church of Denmark has been slower, but a significant structural change was the establishment of Diocesan councils in 2009, giving dioceses a formalised structure with operational power (Kirkeministeriet, 2014, pp. 91–94).

2.2 Financial relations between church and state

As one of the case studies focuses on financial changes in the church, I will now outline how financial arrangements between church and state developed in the 20th century. A recent European study on financial ties between religious organizations and states finds that all the countries studied have mechanisms for providing financial support to religious activities (Woehrling, 2015). These ties have remained strong in the Nordic countries, exhibited either as direct financial aid or as some form of church tax (Kääriäinen, 2011; Nielsen & Kühle, 2011; Pettersson, 2011; Pétur Pétursson, 2011; Schmidt, 2011).

Until 1907, pastors' salaries in Iceland were derived directly from the parish, based on the land and landholding. This included the land and livestock belonging to the parish and various provisions that the parish and the pastor were entitled to from the parishioners (work, hay, lamb or other goods) (Hugason, 2017). The pastor collected the provisions himself, which could sometimes prove difficult.²³ Each parish was an independent financial unit and they varied greatly in size and worth. This difference in living conditions was frequently discussed in parliament in the latter half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, as few pastors wanted to serve in the poorer parishes (M. Jónsson, 1952).

²³ See, for example, the autobiography of Reverend Jens V. Hjaltalin (1842–1930), Jens V. Hjaltalin: “Kátlegur guðsmaður” (A Weird Man of God), Reykjavík: Flateyjarútgefán, 2008.

Act 46/1907 established a fund and stipulated set salaries for pastors. It was based on the returns for the land and provisions of the parish, which should be collected mostly by the parish council (the council received a commission for the collection). The pastor received his salary from this income. Additional income was collected into a fund and distributed to parishes that could not provide for their pastor's salary. The estimated contribution from the state to the fund was 8.8% of the total budget (M. Jónsson, 1952, p. 78). More legislation from the same year, Act 50/1907, enabled the government to sell land belonging to the church. Proceedings were to go to a government-controlled fund, which would be used to support pastors' salaries (M. Jónsson, 1952, p. 82).

Act 40/1909 on parish fees introduced a different funding model (Lög um innheimtu og meðferð á kirknafé, 1909). Instead of building on centuries-old rules on contributions to the parish church and pastor, the new legislation introduced a set value membership payment, so-called parish fees, for all adults, to the pastor and to the parish. The parish council would collect the parish fee upon a 6% commission (Hugason, 2017, pp. 44-47; M. Jónsson, 1952, p. 95). This change was made alongside other changes in general taxation. Hugason argues that this changed the old contributions to pastors' salaries and to the parish into a poll tax, which remained the legal understanding of the parish fee (Hugason, 2017, p. 44; Sigurðsson, 1986, pp. 205-208, 355-356).

By Act 71/1919 the pastors' salaries was paid directly by the government (M. Jónsson, 1952, p. 100). The parish fee continued to be collected by the parish but was used for the upkeep and expenses of the parish. The 1919 legislation disconnected pastors' salaries from the land that had for centuries provided the livelihood for pastors and care of the churches and from the parish fee, collected among parishioners. The state kept the fund that it had established by selling land belonging to the church. The land was often sold to the farmers living on the estate.

In 1998 the government of Iceland and ELCI reached an agreement to settle outstanding disputes over the church estates that recognised the rights of ELCI to the land, now largely sold off. In this Landholding Agreement, the state becomes the owner of all land belonging to the church and instead pays the salaries of the Bishop of Iceland and two suffragan bishops, 138 pastors and deans and 18 staff members at the Bishop's office (*Samningur íslenska ríkisins og þjóðkirkjunnar um fjárframlög (Contract between the Icelandic state and the National Church on financial contribution) 1997*).

In addition to salaries, the clergy receives payments for *casualia*. Casualia refers to occasional services that pastors provide. In Iceland, certain services are charged at an extra

fee. These include baptism when it is a special service and not part of Sunday worship, the teaching of confirmands, and weddings and funerals. All save the funeral are paid directly by those who receive the service. Funeral service is paid from official funds to all who provide the service, religious and non-religious.

After 1919, the parish fee was collected by the parish for the building and upkeep of churches, salaries of staff other than pastors, and church activities. From 1948 it became possible to ask the local authorities to collect the membership fees with other fees and taxes, paying a premium for the service. Parishes could decide the amount within certain limits and therefore raise the amount in times of special need, such as church restoration (Lög um sóknargjöld 36/1948 1948). In 1985 the parish fee was changed from a poll tax to a percentage of income, but its collection remained the responsibility of the municipality or local authorities, which were paid a premium for the collection.

This system lasted in some areas until 1987 (Lög um sóknargjöld og fleira 91/1987) when the state took over the collection of parish fees or membership payments for all registered religious associations (and, since 2013, also the secular humanists). The changes in 1985 and 1987 are further discussed in Case Study I: The Making of a City Church.

2.3 Pastors in the ELCI, traditional role and challenges

This study focuses on the clergy. It is therefore important to give an overview of how the role of the pastor in the ELCI developed, look at the pastor's place in the church's structure and consider the main challenges.

The pastor in the ELCI has traditionally had a dual position, being a servant of the church that ministers to her/his congregation but simultaneously acting as a public official with all due obligations and rights.

At the reformation, the King of Denmark became the head of the church and pastors and bishops became public officials. In Iceland, theologians who received a calling to a parish and were ordained went, after the ordination, to receive the office from the king's official and to swear allegiance to the king. There was a marked difference in the living that the pastors received, and thus their financial situation, but all were farmers and officials. (Guttormsson, 2000, pp. 148, 151-159). Their role was inter alia to oversee if parishioners were receiving instruction in reading and Christianity and to keep public records (S. Á. Eyjólfsson & Guðmundsson, 1994; Valdímarsdóttir, 2000, pp. 93-95). The rural model of one pastor serving a geographically defined area worked well for centuries, as Iceland remained a largely rural farming society until the 20th century.

Icelandic theologian Sigríður Guðmarsdóttir analysed the ecclesiological view of the pastoral ministry in the ELCI in the 20th century as it appears in the pastoral letters of the nine Bishops of Iceland serving from 1908–2012. Guðmarsdóttir stresses that the pastoral letters show a varied understanding of the pastoral office and how the ELCI endeavours to adapt and develop the mission of the ordained ministry as a profession with social changes. The first pastoral letter, by Bishop Þórhallur Bjarnason, tackles changes in the work environment of the clergy as new legislation on education in 1907 obligated local authorities to provide education for children who had earlier been taught at home and supervised by the clergy. Bishop Bjarnason argued that this was a chance for the clergy to focus on its main task of bringing the Gospel to the people, as the clergy no longer shared responsibility for children's education. We can find the first ideas about the professionalisation of the clergy in his words (Guðmarsdóttir, 2015).

Defining a new role increasingly became the task of pastors in the latter part of the 20th century. Eyjólfsson argues that in writings of Icelandic theologians in the 1970s and 1980s, changes can be seen in the understanding of the ministerial office as pastors seek new definitions for their calling. Here one finds the argument that the pastor should be the prophetic voice of the church and should be active in social issues. There is also increased emphasis on pastoral care, and a high church liturgical movement gained more prominence. Congregational growth and management become important, with increased staffing and pastors increasingly seek further education in this field (Eyjólfsson 2013). It is not until the most recent pastoral letter, of Bishop Karl Sigurbjörnsson 2012, that we find a systematic discussion on the threefold ministry of deacons, clergy and bishops, as well as increased professionalisation in its emphasis on their need for continuing education, family life and common responsibility (Guðmarsdóttir, 2015).

As the finances improved in the late 1980s and more staff were employed in large congregations, the pastor increasingly delegated tasks in youth work, and sometimes work with the elderly, to youth workers and deacons. In some cases, staff took over tasks that the pastor had performed. In other cases, the variety of church work simply increased. The pastor became the leader, the organiser, the staff manager without a formal mandate, the religious specialist, celebrating mass, preaching and focusing on pastoral care and on services at the crossroads of life. This is further discussed in chapter 5.1.

2.3.1 An official of the word, sacraments – and state

Harald Hegstad has argued that the Nordic folk churches function more as an institution one attends rather than as a community one belongs to. The pastor becomes the main representative of the church as an institution, based upon his/her role as an administrator of rituals, words and sacraments (Hegstad, 2013, pp. 132-133). In spite of diminishing membership, the Church of Norway counted 72% of the population as members as of 1 December 2015; the Church of Sweden 61%; while 76% of the Danish population belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark (ELCD) (Kirsten Donskov Felter et al., 2018, p. 8). In Iceland the number was 74% for the same date (Hagstofa – Statice website).

Comparable statistics for church attendance in the Nordic churches is lacking, but the numbers in different statistical surveys are generally low. On a normal Sunday in 2015, 3% of the Norwegian population attended church. That year, 10% of the Danish population said that they had attended a Sunday service (Kirsten Donskov Felter et al., 2018, p. 8). Numbers from an Icelandic survey can only be found from 2004, when 13.8% said they went to church for a Sunday service 4–11 times per year and 10% said once per month or more often. The number of those who said they never attended Sunday service was 43% (Gallup, 2004, p. 95).²⁴ Numbers for rites of passage show that participation is falling in Norway, Sweden and Denmark (Kirsten Donskov Felter et al., 2018). Comparable numbers – that is, for baptism and confirmation – are not available from Iceland, but participation in baptism has been declining in recent years.

In spite of the National Church Act (chapter 2.1), the pastor still has the status of a public official and Act No. 70/1996 on the rights and duties of state officials applies to pastors of the ELCI (Lög um réttindi og skyldur starfsmanna ríkisins nr. 70/1996). In addition, the National Church Act contains a special chapter on the office of priesthood, stipulating that “a serving pastor of the ELCI is everyone who, based on calling and ordination, has a permanent position in the ELCI. S/he is under the oversight of the Church’s authorities in ecclesiastical matters...” The legislation stipulates the requirements to be approved for ministry, how pastors in a pastorate should divide work, the process to select a pastor and that a pastor should live in the parsonage, where required by the church.

²⁴ The survey was done by Gallup for the ELCI, the Department of Theology at the University of Iceland, and the Association of Cemeteries in Iceland in 2004. The copy cited here is the unpublished version. The same statistic was published on the ELCI’s website but cannot be found there in 2019. A version is kept at the Bishop’s office.

Having the right education is the first step towards becoming a pastor. A pastor in the ELCI needs to have finished a university degree of M. Theol. (previously Cand. Theol.) and completed the required training by the ELCI to be approved for ministry. The second requirement is a calling, or an endorsement, from a congregation or an institution such as a hospital.

The pastoral office, as it appears in the ordinal, is threefold:

- 1) To preach the word.
- 2) To administer holy sacraments.
- 3) To hear confession and proclaim forgiveness.

(Handbók, 1981)

Naming of these three tasks in the ordination gives clear indication of what has traditionally been seen as the most important task of the pastor and the task for which s/he is set apart – ordained – to do. This tradition is kept alive: the task of the pastor is still the same as it was in the handbook of 1685, the first liturgical handbook for the Danish Lutheran church and churches belonging to it, that is the churches of Norway and Iceland (*Danmarks og Norgis kirke-ritual 1685-1985*, 1985).

There is also a clear hierarchical structure imbedded in the ritual of ordination. The Bishop gives the candidate the office or role of priesthood and preaching, hands it down to him, so to speak, as one who has received the power to do so.

In the ritual of ordination, the pastor also promises:

To educate the youth and the congregation in the Christian religion;

To encourage and support the congregation in private and public;

To help those in need;

To study the Bible, pray and meditate and bear witness to the truth;

The pastor should also be a model for others in true faith and scrupulous life

(Handbók, 1981, pp. 187-188).

The ordination in the Handbook ordains the pastor as the spiritual leader and shepherd of the congregation. It describes part of his/her work as the pastor as being ordained to a holy office, but not to the public office that pastors in the ELCI also hold.

The latter is mentioned in the Letter of Ordination (Icelandic: *vígslubrэф*),²⁵ according to which the pastor should also obey the legislation and rules of the church and the instructions of the Church's governing body.

There, in addition to the promise stated in the ordination, the pastor should follow church order (rules) and enforce church discipline according to church order, "with energy and seriousness but also modestly and justly". The Letter of Ordination also states that the pastor should be on call to assist the parishioners in matters concerning their salvation at any time that they may need or ask for guidance (Letter of Ordination).

A potential for tension is embedded in the term "ministry" or "office" (Icelandic *embætti*), in Latin *ministerium*. There can be a dual interpretation to the understanding of the "office" of the pastor, as it is often understood and interpreted as the public office, with the pastor as a civil servant of the state rather than the ministry of church.

This is evident in cases when disciplinary action is needed and can conflict with the role of Episcopal oversight. The duty of the Bishop to enact oversight can clash with the right of the pastor as a public officer, where, for example, certain procedures apply when a civil servant is reprimanded, how that is done, and what is a necessary precondition for dismissing a pastor from office.

The pastor is ordained by the Bishop and is under his/her oversight. At the same time the pastor has oversight over his/her congregation or tasks according to the Letter of Ordination and in pastoral care. The congregation can also refer matters regarding the pastor to the Bishop, if such situations arise. This tension between being subjected to oversight from above and from the grassroots, while enacting oversight over parishioners, is one of many conflicting aspects of the work that the pastor has to live with and master.

2.3.2 Co-workers and Working Hours

While the concept of serving is central to the role of the pastor, the message to the pastor in the Letter of Ordination is still to serve parishioners in need, at any time. The idea of the pastoral work as a quantifiable success is not in accordance with the traditional understanding. Numbers or hours do not count as much as the quality of the relationship the pastor has with his/her flock. The ecclesiology of the pastoral office is arguably still linked to

²⁵ The Letter of Ordination is given to each pastor after the ordination and states the role or life that the pastor is called to by the ordination.

the traditional image²⁶ and role of the pastor as being there as a shepherd for his/her flock in need – always. In the questionnaire to the pastors in Kópavogur (Case Study III), this concept was mentioned as one possible hindrance to the Cooperation Areas.

The Pastoral Union has repeatedly discussed the working hours and the understanding of the pastoral office as a 24/7 presence. There is tension in finding the balance between the work and the vocation. As stated earlier, the Letter of Ordination seems to assume a constant presence, a lifestyle rather than a job. This is disputed by the Pastoral Union and their legal advisor. Their conclusion is that the Letter of Ordination should be understood in terms of the vocation of the office, but not as a description of working hours (Haraldsson, 2005; Pastoral Union, 2004, 2006). Pastors are not regular employees, but have a pastoral office where they set the working schedule, hours and tasks. This can give them certain freedom regarding working hours and they can also divide the work amongst themselves and cover for each other on their weekly one day off, or have a duty phone to share extra workload on evenings and weekends (Sigurbjörnsson, 2008; Stefánsson & Magnússon, 2011).

The inherent tension between the pastor as a civil servant and a servant of the church, between work and family life is further aggravated by the tension built into the very structure of power in the church.

The congregation, or its representatives, choose the pastor to serve them. A pastor, called by the congregation to serve – in effect selected by the congregation, often from a group of applicants – is nevertheless not employed by the congregation. S/he is employed by the church, appointed by the Bishop, having been endorsed or chosen by the congregation.

A pastor in a parish ministry is therefore chosen by the parish, but is not an employee of the parish. The tasks are described, for example, in Rules of Procedure for clergy, No. 1110/2011 (my translation):

“The Senior Pastor shall lead the work of the congregations of the pastorate and lead the shaping and organising of that. The leadership of the senior pastor does not imply

²⁶ In April–May 2017 the Social Science Research Institute of the University of Iceland conducted a survey on the work environment of pastors for the Bishop’s office. The survey has not yet been published, but it has been introduced at meetings. It showed that 99% of respondents (N=121) agree with the statement: “I am a pastor first and foremost based on my vocation to spread the Christian faith and serve based on this faith”; 72% say that they do not see the pastoral service the same as “any other job”, while 69% agree with the statement: “For me, pastoral service is a lifestyle.” Meanwhile, 61% disagree with the statement: “I can set clear boundaries between my work and private life.” Analysing the answers, this applies to 51% of pastors in the capital area and 71% of pastors in the countryside (Results published with the permission of the Bishop’s office). The survey will not be further analysed here as it was not a resource material in the case studies, but these answers point towards a traditional understanding of pastoral work as a lifestyle, where boundaries between private life and work can be fuzzy. The survey was sent to 139 pastors, with 121 respondents, a response rate of 89% (Félagsvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands, 2017).

management authority or domination of the pastor.” (Article 9) and “The senior pastor shall as a rule participate in the meetings of the parish council, staff meetings, the deanery annual meeting and meetings that the bishop or the dean call...” (Article 10).

The Rules of Procedure concerning parish councils, Article 19, state that the senior pastor and other pastors in the parishes should as a rule participate in the meetings of the parish council and the senior pastor, in addition to meetings of the executive committee if such a committee exists within the parish (Starfsreglur um sóknarnefndir 1111/ 2011).

The pastor works with the parish council and sometimes with other pastors in the parish and staff. The parish council is not the pastor’s superior, nor is the pastor the council’s superior. The structure is horizontal, with defined areas in which the pastor’s decisions should prevail, such as liturgy, but many areas where there is joint responsibility and a lack of clear guidelines. The tension that is built into this structure can easily lead to conflicts. This Lutheran heritage can also be found to differing extents in other Nordic Lutheran churches.

In addition to the horizontal power distribution between parish council and the pastor, the position of a second pastor and the authority of the Dean versus the pastor can cause tension.

The two (or more) pastors are to divide tasks between themselves. The Dean should ensure that this is done and assist if problems arise (Starfsreglur um presta 1110/2011). The Dean is the Bishop’s confidant and overseer, and collects reports from the pastors and the congregations. The Dean is a leader, but not a supervisor. Among the tasks of the Dean is to settle disputes (Starfsreglur um prófesta 966/2006). The Dean, however, has no recourse to disciplinary action if the congregation or pastor decides to ignore his advice or admonition.

2.4 Changes and attempted reforms

Icelandic society underwent rapid changes in many areas during the period 1980–2015. This affected the work of the ELCI and the church responded in different ways (see 2.4.1). In this chapter I briefly discuss some of the changes that directly affected the work of the church. I then list three projects that can be seen as a response from the ELCI and the pastors to the changed environment.

Looking at the changes in society, one notable change was urbanisation. The church, traditionally strong in the countryside, faced two challenges: serving in counties with dwindling numbers of inhabitants, and serving people in larger towns and the capital area where resources were limited and connection to the church was weaker. Changes in demographics also affected church membership. The number of inhabitants rose from

227,000 in 1980 to 318,000 in 2015. In 1980, foreign citizens in Iceland made up one per cent of the population but in 2015, seven per cent (Hagstofa - Statistics Iceland). Membership of the ELCI as a proportion of the population decreased from 90% in 1998 to 69.9% in 2017 (Hagstofa - Statistics Iceland). Membership figures were affected by immigration and emigration, but also by people leaving the church. Changes in legislation regarding the registration of an infant's religious affiliation also had a negative effect on membership numbers.

2.4.1 The Report of 1977

Several attempts to change the inner workings and structure of the church have been made within the church. At the instigation of the Pastoral Synod in 1972, a taskforce was set up to review the structure and work of the Church.

The result was a report published in 1977 suggesting many fundamental changes in the structure and methods of the church from grassroots level to the relations between church and state. This included suggestions relating to the parish structure. Parishes should not be larger than 4000, not smaller than 100. The report also stipulates how often services should be held, according to the size of the parishes (Starfsháttanefnd, 1977). The latter were added to legislation on the ELCI in 1985, but they were not enforced, disappearing in the National Church Act, No 78/1997.

The 1977 report was remarkably foresighted in its efforts to merge and enlarge parishes. More than two decades later, in 2000, the General Assembly agreed on a strategy for the future settings of parishes, pastorates and deaneries, stipulating inter alia the minimum size of a parish and a pastorate (Framtíðarskipan sókna, 2000). However, these changes have been resisted at local levels and, in 2015, 128 of 233 parishes still had fewer than 100 members (Biskupsstofa, 2016).

The 1977 report anticipated that in large parishes, staff would increase and a forum for staff and parish councils would be needed. It put forward ideas to divide work between staff, pastor(s) and lay people. It also proposed specialised services, such as for children and youth, and people who cannot participate in church life due to circumstances such as illness, prison, and so on. Basic services were to be given within the parish, but specialised ministry could be provided on a deanery basis.

One of the more radical ideas of the 1977 report was to abolish the organisational entity of pastorates and make the deaneries independent working units instead of the pastorates. A pastor would no longer be employed by a pastorate, but rather by a deanery.

This would ensure increased cooperation between pastors and other employees of the deanery. This proposal never went further, but similar ideas regarding increased cooperation and lower boundaries between pastorates can be found in a proposal for the service of the church adopted by the General Synod in 2010 (Case Study III).

The 1977 report did not have any immediate impact on the work of the congregations, either in the capital or in the countryside.

2.4.2 Program on Congregation Building in the 1990s

The last decade of the 20th century was dedicated to congregation building in the ELCI. This coincided with increased income by the churches as a result of the change in tax legislation. A project manager for the program on congregation building was hired in 1991. Congregations were invited to attend courses and, following that, to start their own task forces on the subject, research the demographics of the congregations, assess needs, and make plans. Task forces on congregation building were put to work in more than 20 parishes in 1994 (Biskupsstofa, 1994, p. 72).

As finances improved there was increased diaconal work and education, and congregations could employ more people for different services. Also in 1994, research carried out in 148 parishes for the congregation-building project found that only a very limited amount of the available resources in parishes was spent on work in the congregation while more went on renewing the premises (on average 18.7% was spent on premises, 9.5% on music and 2.5% on children and youth work)²⁷ (Biskupsstofa, 1994, p. 73; Ö. B. Jónsson, 1994). In 1997 the project manager for the congregation-building project complained that the project did not have a place in the organisation of the church. Thus it was entirely up to the pastor and parish council whether they wanted to work on this or not (Biskupsstofa, 1997, p. 90).

2.4.3 Strategic Planning and Cooperation

In 2002 the General Assembly decided to embark upon a program of strategic planning. This program is the topic of two of my case studies and will be further described in chapters 5.1 and 5.2. Strategies in some areas of work had, however, been set earlier. These included the

²⁷ The research was carried out by the project manager of the congregation-building effort. Annual financial reports from 71 parishes for the years 1990–92 were analysed. This included all parishes in the capital area and in Akureyri, the largest town outside of the capital. Not all parishes had reports for all three years. A total of 148 reports were analysed. The limitations of the research are that the reports are not standardised. In some cases, the numbers for children and youth can form part of the music (children's choir), or the salary budget for a pastor employed by the parish that is not included in the percentage.

strategy on gender equality in 1998, the strategy on the future organisation of parishes, pastorates and deaneries in 2000, and on human resources in 2002. In the wake of the Strategy Planning Procedure, further strategies were adopted, including on church music in 2004, on education in 2005, and on diaconia in 2006. An environmental policy document was adopted in 2009 and a communication document in 2011. This is not an exhaustive list of policy documents.

Icelandic theologian Guðrún Áslaug Einarsdóttir's research for MPM looks at the reception of four different policies in the ELCI from 1998–2011, on gender equality, education, environment and communication. She argues that while strategic planning is practised to some degree, the governance infrastructure of the ELCI does not support strategic planning efforts. Each parish is an independent unit, financially and administratively, and can decide how to use its own resources. In addition, the financial backup for the programs was not given (Einarsdóttir, 2013). Her main conclusions are in compliance with the results of my research regarding the independence of the parishes and lacking organisational support – including financial support – for the changes.

3 Theoretical discussion

This chapter looks at the theories that form the basis of my theoretical evaluation of the three case studies. In chapter 1.2.4 I put forward a subquestion to the research question, raising the theoretical aspect of the processes of change and reform and the roles of the actors concerned. This question was: *What are the relationships between individual and structural dimensions in the changes and attempted reforms in the ELCI?*

In order to answer that question, I will now describe and discuss some theories on change, especially as used in theories on organisational reform, focusing especially on the subjective-objective dichotomy, and interpretative and functionalist paradigms for change. I then introduce Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration, which is an attempt to bridge this dichotomy. Finally, I discuss different types of authority and what gives authority legitimacy.

3.1 Theories on change and organizational reform

The three case studies all centre on the role of pastors in a certain process of change or attempted reform. In this chapter I will look at some themes in discussion on change in social studies in order to see how it laid the groundwork for organizational studies (3.1.1). I then discuss Giddens's structuration theory in order to place my study in theory, and methodologically within the question of the subjectivism-objectivism dichotomy (3.1.2). The different terms for change or reform are then discussed and an approach in organizational theory introduced as part of my theoretical framework (3.1.3).

3.1.1 The four paradigm grid

In their book *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis*, Gibson Burrell and Gareth Morgan (1979) explained two approaches in early sociological thought based on two opposing theories of change, those of radical change and those of what could be called regulated change. This old debate focuses on approaches that characterize the stabilizing effects of social order, versus those approaches focused more on social change. Looking at the early influential sociologists, Durkheim, Weber, and Pareto were concerned with social order, while Marx was concerned with social change (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 11). A helpful description of the dichotomy is consensus versus conflict (Giddens & Sutton, 2017, p. 91).

All social scientists approach their studies with some preconceptions or assumptions about the nature of the social world and how it should be studied. Burrell and Morgan sketch

out four basic sociological questions that underlie the various theories of organizations, based on the subjective or objective dimension of the scientist.

The first set of assumptions are ontological – is reality external from the conscious or a product of individual consciousnesses? Is reality given or a product of the mind (realism vs. nominalism)?

The second set of assumptions is epistemological – can knowledge be acquired, or must it be experienced (positivism vs. anti-positivism)?

A third set are assumptions about human nature. Are humans determined by their environment, or do humans create their environment – do they have free will (determinism vs. voluntarism)?

Each of these assumptions have important methodological implications. Burrell and Morgan draw a continuum from the subjectivistic to the objectivistic position. Thus the fourth dimension is the methodological dimension, nomothetic (objectivistic) vs. ideographic (subjectivistic). Nomothetic relies more on the methods from the natural sciences, and on hypothesis testing, using quantitative tests and standardized research tools. Ideographic inquiry focuses on getting to know a subject and exploring their detailed background and life history, using e.g. diaries, biographies, and observation.

From these four basic debates and using the order-conflict debate as an ontological continuum, and subjective-objective as the epistemological or possibly methodological continuum, the authors sketch out a matrix using four paradigms to help classify and understand current social theories. They claim that “It is our contention that all social theorists can be located within the context of these four paradigms according to the metatheoretical assumptions reflected in their work.” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 24).

Radical Change		Objective
Subjective	<p>Radical Humanist Paradigm Theorists are mainly concerned with releasing social constraints that limit human potential. Critique of the status quo. Society is anti-human. It is nominalist, anti-positivist, voluntarist and ideographic. Existentialist, anti-organization theory.</p> <p>Radical Structuralist Paradigm Structural conflicts within society that generate constant change through political and economic crises. This is the fundamental paradigm of Marx, Engels, and Lenin.</p>	
Regulation		
	<p>Interpretative paradigm. The approach tends to be nominalist, anti-positivist, voluntarist and ideographic. Sees the world as an emergent social process.</p> <p>Functionalist paradigm This has been the dominant paradigm for academic sociology and organizational study. The approach is realist, positivist, deterministic and nomothetic.</p>	

Table 1.

The four paradigms from Burrell and Morgan, p. 22, adapted by me, based on explanations by Burrell and Morgan on p. 25–35.

The paradigm of Burrell and Morgan aimed at explaining basic concepts regarding theories on change in order to make sense of the broad range of theoretical perspectives that were influencing organizational theory. The four paradigm grid has been highly influential in organizational studies (Deetz, 1996, p. 191; Suddaby, 2016, p. 49). American sociologist Stanley Deetz claimed that while the grid has gained “the almost hegemonic capacity to define the alternatives in organizational analysis” it has also been used to “reify research approaches” and that “its dimensions of contrast obscure important differences in current research orientation” (Deetz, 1996, p. 191). Viewing the paradigms from modern discourse theory, he states that Burrell and Morgan “largely accepted the conceptual distinction from sociological functionalism and its supporting philosophy of science” – thus giving it dominance and from that conception simply asking who else is the “other”, and in what way (Deetz, 1996, p. 192).

Deetz did not maintain that Burrell and Morgan were representationally wrong in their statement about the dominance of the functionalist paradigm. It is evident that functionalism was an influential paradigm in social studies in general, as is demonstrated by Burrell and Morgan, who show which theories make use of it (e.g. Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 29). But the paradigm also brought out growing dissatisfaction with the dominant, functionalist orthodoxy and possibly provided impetus to the legitimising of alternative approaches to the study of organizations (Goles & Hirschheim, 2000, p. 254).

The influence of functionalism in social studies in the 20th Century has receded for several reasons. First, while it is good at explaining consensus, functionalism is less effective at explaining conflict and radical social change. Another argument is that Dürkheimian

functionalism prioritizes societies' constraints on people and does not allow enough room for the creative actions of individuals. Finally, functional analysis tends to impute "purposes" and "needs" to society itself (Giddens & Sutton, 2017, p. 79). And much has happened in organisational theories since 1979, including the application of other paradigms in organisational theory. Canadian organizational theorist Roy Suddaby, has for example demonstrated how different management theories can be fitted into all the diagrams of Burrell and Morgan (Suddaby, 2016, p. 49). And as I will demonstrate below, in their organizational theory, Lee Bolman and Terence Deal made use of all four paradigms for a different view of an organization in their four frame theory.

Looking at the paradigm of Burrell and Morgan above, the research presented in the dissertation would likely fall into the two lower boxes, as I am seeking to understand change from the point of view of regulated change consensus rather than radical change. I say likely, as the tendency to reify the paradigms has been criticized (Deetz, 1996) and I would support the notion of seeing them as ideals, and the boundaries between them as fluid, as I believe the authors intended (see e.g. Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 27) in spite of later development. In the three case studies presented in chapter 5 in this research, there is no underlying assumption of conflict with society or its oppressive elements in the radical understanding of Marx and Engels. There is, however, a question of tension, a possibility of different understanding of aims or values. The Christian message is, at heart, a radical one, calling for a radical change, but the Christian church is often a structured, highly regulated organisation or institution, and the same can be said to be true of the ELCI. The three case studies presented here all look at movements and actors of change within such a regulated environment. The question remains, however, whether the research can be immediately placed within either the subjective or the objective paradigm – or if that is even necessary.

The discussion of subjective or objective approach to change, focusing on the role of individuals or structures can also be framed differently by asking if the change comes from the bottom up or is top down. British philosopher Martin Hollis explained this old discussion taking the examples from John Stewart Mill and Karl Marx respectively and asked: are changes due to the fact that people are critical thinkers who drive social progress (Mill) or are the actions and behaviours of people the result of larger underlying real structures (Marx)? (Hollis, 1994). While the images of "bottom up" or "top down" are easy to understand and to some extent apply, for example, to organisational studies, it nevertheless leaves us with an uncomfortably large grey area in the middle where the two approaches meet.

3.1.2 Structure – Agency

British Sociologist Anthony Giddens found the subjectivism/objectivism dichotomy theoretically unproductive (Aakvaag, 2010, p. 128). Giddens agrees with Hollis in his definitions: subjectivism meant that sociology had to start with the actors and how they freely and independently shape their social environment from the bottom up, whereas objectivism meant that sociology needs to start with the social structure that exists regardless of the actors, and how it shapes the environment of those actors (Aakvaag, 2010, p. 129). Yet the question remains of how far individuals are in control of their lives and how much is the result of social forces or structures outside their control. This issue is generally known as “the problem of structure and agency” (Giddens & Sutton, 2017, p. 86). Giddens’s attempt to bridge this gap is the structuration theory, which holds that “structure and action are necessarily related to each other and are not opposites. Societies, communities and groups have “structure” only insofar as people behave in regular and fairly predictable ways. On the other hand “action” is only possible because each individual possesses an enormous amount of socially structured knowledge, which pre-exists them as individuals. [...] Structuration always presumes this duality of structure in which all social action presumes the existence of structure. But, at the same time, structure presumes action because it depends on regularities of human behaviour” (Giddens & Sutton, 2017, pp. 89-90). Giddens concept of structure is not that structure should be conceived of as a visual imagery, similar to the girders of a building or the skeleton of a body (Giddens, 1984, p. 16). It should, rather, be conceptualized as rules and resources that are implemented in interaction (Held & Thompson, 1989, p. 4). It could be described simply as the fact that structure constitutes everyday action, but that the action at the same time reproduces the structure. The rules and resources that form the structure are embedded within agents’ memories or “memory traces” and form the “knowledgeability” of the agent; that is, “what agents know about what they do, and why they do it” (Giddens, 1984).

Through agency, agents change a particular structure (Giddens, 1984, p. 9) and power is seen as “the capacity to achieve outcomes” (Giddens, 1984, p. 257).

Giddens resolution of the structure-agency problem has its critics, most notably British sociologist Margaret Archer (Archer, 1982), but others too (Baumann, 1989; Gregson, 1989; Loyal, 2003; Thompson, 1989). Margaret Archer maintains that sociological explanations need to establish whether structure or agency is the cause of social phenomena in particular cases. This could be done by identifying a chronological sequence: existing

social structure – individual actions – modified social structure (Giddens & Sutton, 2017, p. 90). Discussing Archer’s criticism of Giddens, British sociologist Anthony King maintains that Archer and Giddens ultimately come closer to each other in theory than their writings originally implied (King, 2010).

While the structuration theory does not solve the subjective-objective dilemma as such, it – and indeed Archer’s criticism as well – offers a tool to view changes in a particular context, where I maintain the boundaries between the agency and the structure can be unclear. This can, for example, be the case when studying the role of a pastor in a process of change or reform within the ELCI. I argue that while the pastor is undoubtedly an actor within the structure that is the environment, in this case the ELCI, s/he is at the same time part of that structure, due to his/her role, especially based on the ordination that makes the pastor a carrier of a tradition, an institution, a structure, outside of him/herself.

In chapter 2 I pointed out the strong position of pastors in Iceland in the parishes as officials of the state and the relatively weak lay movements compared to the other Nordic countries. In chapter 1 I also discussed the notion of the independence of the pastoral office, which also raises the question of how we view them within the agency-structure model. The agency of the pastor should also be kept in mind in the discussion of legitimacy and authenticity in chapter 3.2.2. I have defined the research as bifocal, keeping the focus both on the pastors and on their environment, both in the congregation (in Case Study I) and in the larger church structure (Case Studies II and III).

Viewing the question of subjective or objective, bottom up or top down perspective of the research topic methodologically, I therefore place myself within the discussion of structure and agency and claim the need to keep the focus both on the pastors and their actions and their environment, of which they are a part, and which they influence and are influenced by.

3.1.3 Reform theories

Having listed some of the basic dilemmas in the discussion on theory of change, I now move on to a discussion of what kind of change is being discussed in this research.

The Oxford English Dictionary (online) defines the verb *to change* as: “To make or become different”. And the noun *change* is: “an act or process through which something becomes different”. The same dictionary defines the verb *to reform*: “to make changes in (something, especially an institution or practice) in order to improve it”. The noun *reform* means: “the action or process of reforming an institution or practice”.

Looking at all three case studies that form the basis of this research, they discuss changes or attempted changes that can be defined as having their roots in reform – either in tax reform, which had consequences for the congregations and the pastors (chapter 5.1), or in centrally instigated reforms in the ELCI, the strategic planning (chapter 5.2) and the Cooperation Areas (chapter 5.3).

Norwegian sociologist Harald Askeland discusses further the different concepts used to describe changes in an organisation in his study of the reform of the local church in the wake of new church legislation in Norway in 1996, such as restructuring, organisational development, re-organization, and strategic planning (Askeland, 2000a, pp. 48-54). Reform can in essence be seen as a wider concept than these, especially as it is more open. The two studies linked to centrally instigated reform processes in the ELCI – that is, the studies in chapter 5.2 and 5.3 – discuss strategic planning and an attempt to re-organize work between parishes, but those can be seen to fall within the category of reform. The concept of reform therefore seems suitable to employ in this study. I will therefore look to organisation theories concerned with reform to find a theoretical framework for the case studies.

Looking at different theories on organizations, including their management, leadership and reform, we again find the questions raised by the basic paradigms of Burrell and Morgan: what are the basic ontological and epistemological concepts that are expressed in these theories? Where are they placed on the agency-structure scale?

The model of four frames, introduced by American authors Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, introduces four different approaches – or frames – to view an organisation, which they call the Structural Frame, the Human Resource Frame, the Political Frame and the Symbolic Frame (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 18).

The Structural Frame views the organisation as a system, where roles are clearly defined and specialised, leaders set goals to be met by staff, and relations are formal. This is clearly a frame that focuses on regulation and has an objective approach – and could fit within the framework of the functional diagram of Burrell and Morgan.

The Political Frame symbolises power, conflict, competition and organisational politics. The leader is an advocate for a certain position or task, and is skilled at solving conflicts of power and at building coalitions in the organisational world. Again, the framework is objective, but ontologically it is aimed at conflict solving. It is therefore closer to, if not wholly within, the radical structuralist framework.

The Symbolic Frame views the organisation as a culture, with rituals, metaphors, ceremonies, heroes and stories. The leader inspires his/her team and the goal is to create an

organisation that gives meaning to its workers. The teamwork is driven by the vision, the faith, and the legend. This framework can be fitted within the radical humanist paradigm of Burrell and Morgan, especially in its existential position, its quest for meaning.

The Human Resource Frame sees the organisation through the lens of human needs and interaction, relationships and skills. The image of the leader is of someone who empowers others, and there is a call for caring, encouraging leadership in order to strengthen the group dynamics. It focuses on consensus, is subjective in its leanings, is voluntarist, and can be fitted with the interpretative paradigm of Burrell and Morgan.

	Radical Change		
Subjective	Radical Humanist Paradigm Symbolic Frame	Radical Structuralist Paradigm Political Frame	Objective
	Interpretative paradigm. Human Resource Frame	Functionalist paradigm Structural frame	
	Regulation		

Table 2

Having displayed how organizations could be viewed through different “frames” based on some fundamental ontological and epistemological positions, the authors argued that leaders of organizations should not have only one frame when viewing their organization, but be open to using other approaches, other frames, which they claimed was a more effective approach. Which approach to use is based on each given situation. They claim that it is important to match the frame and action when attempting changes, and it is problematic if different actors see the organisation through different lenses.

I used the four frames as a theoretical framework when analysing the Strategic Planning Process in the ELCI (Case Study II: The Gatekeepers of Change). Analysing both the interviews and other material through the four frames showed how different actors viewed the church and the reform process differently. I argued that the Church’s Central Authorities saw the ELCI through the Structural Frame, whereas the pastors in the parishes who were key persons in carrying out the proposals of the Church’s Central Authorities seemed to look at the church more through the Human Resource Frame.

The tools offered by Bolman and Deal can be used to view all three case studies and can offer explanation about the findings, based on the different “frames” that the actors view the reforms through.

The three studies in this research all focus on reforms initiated outside of the parish but aimed at (or effected in) the parish, to be carried out there, by staff and parish council, and in

that process the pastor was a key person. Instructions in the reforms varied: In Case Study I, everything was left to the initiative of the parish; in Case Study II, projects were introduced by the CCA to be considered by the parishes, and adapted and carried out as suited in each place; and in Case Study III, specific instructions were given on how cooperation should be done, especially between pastors. In all cases it was left to the parish to be the agent of the reform and the pastors to be those who could follow up on the reforms. As has been stated earlier, the study itself maintains a focus both on the pastors and their agency and on the structure around them.

3.2 Leadership and authority

The pastoral office has been in transition in the Nordic Lutheran majority churches, due both to legislative changes that change the formal position of the pastor and to societal changes related to work environment and working hours. Some of these changes are detailed in chapter 2, as well as the tension embedded in the parish structure when it comes to leadership.

Many pastors do not have strong leadership skills, but from the point of view of their office, they are all required to lead (Grevbo, 2007, p. 174; Riise, 2000). The pastor in the ELCI is called to lead in many circumstances of his work: in liturgy, in children and youth work, in education, diaconia, organising the work of the parish, and in pastoral care. Events at the crossroads of life such as baptisms, confirmations, weddings and funerals all crave leadership of the pastor in preparation, liturgy and follow-up. In small parishes, the pastor is called to lead with volunteers, while in larger parishes the pastor is expected to be the leader or manager of the staff as well as the spiritual leader of the congregation.

Leadership requires authority. Chapters 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 discuss different aspects of authority and how it can be interpreted both within the church as an organisation and in the pastoral office.

3.2.1 Weber's Definitions of Authority

The tension that the pastor faces in his/her work and concerning a both changing role in society and a leadership role in the church can be viewed through Weber's definition of authority. In his work, *Social and Economic Organisation* (1947), Max Weber defines three ideal types of legitimate authority:

Legal authority (or Rational-legal),²⁸ based on rational grounds, the belief in the legality of patterns of normative rules, and the right of those who have authority according to the rules to issue commands.

Traditional authority, based on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and of those exercising authority under them.

Charismatic authority, which rests on the devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him (Weber, 1947, p. 328). Weber underlines that these are ideal types and not found in their “pure form”, but he sees authority in all its manifestations as characterised by the relations between the leader and those who follow him. That gives the authority legitimacy, i.e. the right and acceptance of that authority. This is especially clear in the notion of a pure charismatic authority. It relies on the belief that the followers have in the mission of the leader. Weber stressed that “in its pure form, charismatic authority might only exist in the process of originating. It cannot remain stable, but becomes either traditionalized or rationalized, or a combination of both” (Weber, 1947, p. 364).

In a study on change in church legislation in Norway, sociologist Harald Askeland (1997) discussed different forms of authority in the Church of Norway. By using Max Weber’s definition of legal, traditional and charismatic authority, he found that whereas leaders of parish councils based their governing role on legal rational authority, “Parish priests can base their leading role on all three forms of authority. Ordination may facilitate routinized charisma. They may have a traditional authority through history and theology. Finally, they may have legal and professional authority through the formal basis of their position” (Askeland, 1997, p. 19). Citing Pål Repstad’s argumentations on differentiating between the three forms of legal authority inherent in Weber’s definition, he lists bureaucratic authority, professional authority and democratic authority (Askeland, 1997, p. 14). Norwegian theologian Kjetil Fretheim also used Weber’s typologies in discussing different agents in the parish, and he assigned two subcategories of legal authority to staff and council: The staff can have legal-bureaucratic authority, and the council legal-democratic authority (Fretheim, 2016, pp. 78-79).

Swedish theologian Per Hansson approaches the same discussion using legality and legitimacy as dichotomy. He points out that (Swedish) senior pastors are supposed to

²⁸ This type of authority is also called bureaucratic authority in some contexts, as it rests on bureaucratic measures for support; for example, legislation that is written down and a support for the system that is based on that legislation.

cooperate with parish councils, other clergy, lay professionals, and churchgoers. To accomplish this cooperation, the senior pastor requires *legality* – that is, the delegation of tasks from the parish council – and *legitimacy* – that is, the confidence (trust) of the staff and the churchgoers (Hansson 1997, 76–77). By making the distinction between legality and legitimacy, Hansson stresses the two different sides of the leadership: the objective (legality) and the subjective (legitimacy). In the absence of clear staff management authority, i.e. legality, the senior pastor must have legitimacy to engage in the task (Per Hansson, 1997, pp. 82-83). This distinction is relevant both in the parish structure and the pastor’s interaction with the parish and with the Church Central Authorities. In this study it is not only used to look at the role of the pastor and the pastor’s legitimacy, but also that of the Church’s Central Authorities, when the legality of their action is not questioned but they do not carry sufficient legitimacy to command adherence.

3.2.2 Legitimacy, authenticity

Danish theologian Kirsten Donskov Felter argues that what can be described as the crisis of ministry in late modernity, which consists of a loss of authority and influence, is a more fundamental crisis of legitimacy (Kirsten D. Felter, 2010). Taking a point of departure in Weber’s definition of rational power (legal-rational) as characterizing modern societies with its bureaucratic authority, Felter cites Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor who challenges Weber by pointing to a subjective turn in modernity that implies that individuals can no longer base their moral and religious conviction on any authorities outside themselves (Kirsten D. Felter, 2010, 2018). The subjective turn thus focuses on authenticity, “the value that is experienced as true to the individual person. By shifting the authority to the individual, Taylor challenges the premise of Weber, that legitimacy comes with the institution, whether it draws on the power of tradition, on the charismatic personality of the leader, or with the rational delegation of power to state officials” (Kirsten D. Felter, 2018, p. 117).

According to the Taylor’s arguments, legitimacy thus comes with authenticity, which is grounded in the subjective experience. Looking at it in light of Burrell and Morgan’s grid, this places authority and legitimacy within the subjective and voluntarist paradigm.

Moving the authority of the pastor from the institution or office to the individual, and basing it on the person’s authenticity, instead of the legal, charismatic or traditional power of the office itself, means that authenticity is related to the personality of the pastor. That is in itself a contrast to the normative pastoral theology of the office of the pastor. In this, as stated earlier, the Nordic national churches share a common history of the status given to the office

of the pastor who was (and still is in some of the churches) a state official, responsible not only for the spiritual welfare of the parishioners (see chapter 2) but for various secular tasks on behalf of the state. Working with these questions in a study on Danish pastors, Felter (2018) found that although the pastors did not see legitimacy as “founded in their outstanding personalities” (p. 117), they did “not see the legitimacy of their work as exclusively determined by the institution of the office.” (p. 117). The institution provides a frame, but there is emphasis on the importance of personal encounters, which suggest a more subjective quest for authenticity.

Looking again at Burrell and Morgan’s grid and how it is used by Bolman and Deal (Table 2), we can easily place the more subjective interpretation of authority mostly in the interpretative paradigm/Human Resource Frame, and the emphasis on institution in the functionalist paradigm/Structural Frame. The normative theology of the office of the pastor as an institution would also be viewed through the structural frame. If the pastor is interpreting his/her role through the more human resource frame instead, then that in itself can affect how s/he sees the role of a reformer in the church, both regarding the authenticity of the institution, the legitimacy of the directives, and the capacity of his/her own agency.

4 Methodological questions

In this chapter I discuss the methodology employed in the research. The first chapter deliberates the use of qualitative research and how this research is broadly defined. The next two chapters both examine ethical considerations. The first, 4.2, debates my position as a researcher and an insider, and 4.3 considers whether the required ethical standards for the research have been met. Chapters 4.4–4.5 describe in more detail the methodology employed in the research, data collection and analyses. Chapter 4.6 reviews the strengths and weaknesses of this methodological approach.

4.1 A Qualitative research

My study is qualitative research (Bryman, 2004; Creswell, 2013; Sarantakos, 2005; Silverman, 2006, 2010; Yin, 2014), based on three case studies. Braun and Clarke speak of qualitative methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 32) and Willig argues that although qualitative research methods can be used by researchers with different epistemological positions, “qualitative researchers also share a number of concerns, and it is these that are commonly referred to as qualitative methodology” (Willig, 2001, p. 9). Creswell, noting that not all researchers agree with that definition, describes case studies as “a methodology, a type of design in qualitative research or an object of study, as well as a product of the inquiry” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). Drawing on other writers on qualitative research, Creswell lists basic characteristics of such research. These include that qualitative research is conducted in a natural setting, a source of data for close interaction; it relies on the researcher as the key instrument in data collection; involves multiple methods; involves complex reasoning going between the inductive and deductive; focuses on participants’ perspectives; and involves an emergent and evolving design rather than one that is tightly prefigured (Creswell, 2013, pp. 45-47).

In a case study “the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g. observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). Silverman defines case studies in a similar manner – that is, a case (or a small number of cases) is studied in detail, using appropriate methods. Each case has boundaries and the unit of analysis must be defined at the outset. “Case studies seek to preserve the wholeness and integrity of the case. However, in order to achieve some focus, a

limited research problem must be established that is geared to specific features of the case.” (Silverman, 2010, p. 138)

I define my study as case-study research, using qualitative methodology, and the design as a study of three cases. The cases are each bounded, by surroundings (the ELCI), by time, and by the distinct processes or projects researched. They all focus on the pastoral role within the church organisation.

This methodology and design was seen as the best way to identify certain variables that I felt could not be easily explored quantitatively, namely pastors’ actions regarding change, or processes from within the church and externally.

The core question in this research is: *How did changes and attempted reforms in the ELCI affect the role of pastors, and which role did pastors play?* This includes pastors’ reaction or inaction and their subjective experience. Epistemologically, the research is therefore grounded in interpretivism, in subjective experiences of individuals, acknowledging the reflexive role of the researcher.

My research was conducted in stages over a period of ten years. Creswell’s description of an emergent design fits well in that the phases of the process could change or shift as data collection and analysis began (Creswell, 2013, p. 47). I was, however, guided by the main steps in qualitative research as described by Bryman:

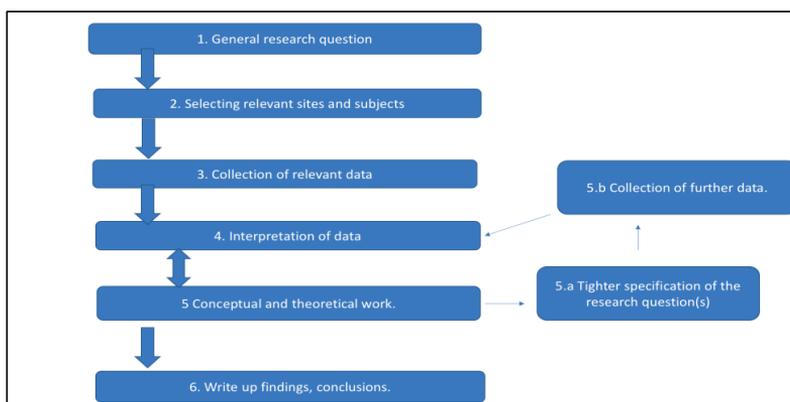


Table 3. Source: Bryman, 2004, p. 269.

All three case studies followed this general model. This included in all cases collection of further data (5b) after the initial data collection. In Case Study I, written material, documents and reports, formed the first part of the study. Having studied them I decided that I needed to do interviews as well to understand better how the change had affected the pastors. In Case Study II, I transcribed the first five interviews and started coding

and theorizing. This led to an additional five interviews with added questions. In Case Study III, I added a questionnaire to a single Cooperation Area for a perspective that I felt was lacking.

At the beginning of my research I was focusing on a single case, looking at the role of pastors in a reform process – the Strategic Planning Process – which was carried out in 2003, and at the subsequent focus projects from 2004–10 (Case Study II). Ten qualitative interviews with pastors about the process showed limited participation in that process, but exploring the reasons brought up new issues on church structure, authority, conflicts and work identity. Theories from organisational and business studies were used in the evaluation and this raised further questions about the church’s organisational structure and the challenges embedded in it. Following up on the Case Study II, the next study focused on proposals that could be linked to the Strategic Planning Process, but was still a separate project, and enjoyed more formal backup (Case Study III). This project was called the Cooperation Areas. These two case studies highlighted the relations between the pastor and the ELCI’s central authorities. In both cases, attempts at reform by the diocesan authorities and the General Assembly had very limited effect in the parishes and on the work environment of the pastors. The third study looked at legislative changes that affected the work environment of pastors. It focuses on what those changes were and what challenges emerged, especially in relations between pastors and parish councils, but also on how the General Assembly reacted to the changes (Case Study I). That study focuses on a period that precedes the other studies and is therefore listed as Case Study I and listed first in chapter 5.

Silverman and Bryman both stress that validity in research is appropriate whether the theoretical orientation is qualitative or quantitative (Bryman, 2004, pp. 272-278; Silverman, 2006, p. 233). Two possible methods to increase validation when using qualitative interviews are a) *triangulation* – comparing different kinds of data and methods to see whether they corroborate one another; and b) *respondent validation*, that is take the findings back to the subject being studied (interviewed) for verification.

Silverman and Bryman both criticize respondent validation. I chose not to use that for my interviews, based partly on my studies but more on my experience as a respondent (twice) in studies by others. I found it hard as a respondent to evaluate reports aiming at academic discussions that I was not part of and not completely familiar with the vocabulary, even as a PhD student myself. I was also in one case hesitant to criticize, which made me consider the complicated relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee.

Silverman criticizes triangulation as a test of validity since “by counterposing different contexts, it ignores the context-bound and skilful character of social interaction and assumes that members are “cultural dopes” who need a social scientist to dispel their illusions.” (Silverman, 2006, p. 235). Bryman is more positive and lists various uses for triangulation, including combining qualitative and quantitative methods. I find Bryman’s arguments convincing, but the researcher needs to be careful about creating additional data and that such aggregation from a different source might not always give a better picture.

As case studies provide the opportunity to use different methods to study a single case, I employed various methods in each of my cases. This included looking for research in similar fields (parish interaction, studies on pastors) to see if the results mirrored the responses I saw. While that is not an aggregation of fresh data, it is helpful in the process of evaluating my own material.

Another question regarding the three case studies is generalizability. Bryman states that the findings of qualitative research are to generalize to theory, rather than to populations, although he acknowledges the possibility of *moderatum* generalizations (Bryman’s italics), which are always limited and more tentative than those associated with statistical generalization (Bryman, 2004, p. 285). Silverman does not agree with Bryman and points to three different methods for qualitative researchers to obtain generalizability with the research. These are: a) combining qualitative research with quantitative measures of populations; b) purposive sampling guided by time and resources; and c) theoretical sampling (Silverman, 2010, pp. 138-150).

I would position myself between the two; I find Bryman’s words of caution convincing, but agree with Silverman that there are various means of increasing the generalizability. In my conclusions of each case study, I do not generalize, but that does not exclude the possibility of generalization or *moderatum* generalization. Looking at my three case studies and the different methods used – interviews, questionnaires, and documents – some quantitative statistics are employed, especially in Case Study I on changed finances. The same can be said in terms of questionnaires to all deaneries. The main approach is, however, a purposive sampling in carefully choosing respondents (Case Studies I, II and III), and when selecting parish records (Case Study I), within the limitation of availability stated in that research.

In chapter 6 I generalize to theory, using all three cases to observe the relations between the agents and the structure in church reform and making conclusions on the types of authority that are at work in different parts of the process of change.

4.2 The position of the researcher

The primary tool of qualitative research is the researcher him or herself (Creswell, 2013, p. 45; Swinton & Mowat, 2006, p. 58). The importance of reflexivity in the role of the researcher is stressed by many qualitative researchers, including Creswell (Creswell, 2013, p. 47), Yin (Yin, 2014, p. 112), and Willig (Willig, 2001, p. 10). Swinton and Mowat explain reflexivity in the following way: “Reflexivity is the process of critical self-reflection carried out by the researcher throughout the research process that enables her to monitor and respond to her contribution to the proceedings” (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, p. 59). Yin discusses how reflexivity can influence the interviewee’s responses and how the responses unknowingly influence one’s line of inquiry and colour the interview material.

Norwegian theologian Tone Stangeland Kaufman stresses reflexivity in relation to the normativity embedded in the research, both in the design and research process as well as in the theories used and opinions (acknowledged or not) of the researcher and the decisions made by the researcher (Kaufman, 2015, 2016, 2018). She encourages self-reflexivity for the researcher throughout the study, identifying normative expectations. Kaufman encourages students to write down their expectations before starting a research project. The aim “is not to eliminate or bracket our prejudices – I don’t think that is possible – but rather to reflect critically on how they shape our research including the interview protocol, the analysis, the findings, and what we do not see” (Kaufman, 2015, p. 102).

Apart from shaping the qualitative research, the position of the researcher can also affect the research subject. The researcher is a co-creator of the mode and content of the encounter in a qualitative interview. Sensitivity towards and awareness of the dynamics of the interview situation is crucial if the co-narration is not to turn into domination by the interviewer.

The researcher, in this case, worked in the church’s diocesan office between 2003 and 2012, was a project manager for the Strategic Planning Process in 2003 and 2004, and worked with the committee on Cooperation Areas in 2006–10. This means that I was an active player in the initial stages of the Strategic Planning Process and the proposal for the Cooperation Areas. The benefit of the involvement is good knowledge of the process, but at the same time, there is a clear risk of bias in conducting interviews and in interpreting results. There was also a clear risk of power imbalance as the interviewer – I – worked in the office of the Bishop and the respondents were pastors in the ELCI. The need for reflexivity was clear from the start. While I was always aware of that, I assessed the process towards the end

by accepting Stangeland Kaufman's challenge by writing my normative assumptions and reflecting on how they changed, and how or if that affected the research.

I will first describe how data was collected through interviews.

Sensitivity about the role of the researcher was especially important when conducting the initial 10 interviews. As the researcher, I was aware of this conflict. The group of pastors in the ELCI is small; I knew them all and was well acquainted with the respondents. I explained that this was not part of any programme of the Bishop's office, but a study at the University and their answers would not be traceable in the written research. No respondent voiced any reservations regarding this. Frank answers indicate a level of trust. There is, however, a possibility that the respondents also tried to send a message to the Bishop's office via the interviewer by voicing strong views. It should be noted that I stressed at the beginning of each interview that this would not be quoted at the Bishop's office, but processed and coded at the University and I would not discuss or disclose any of the interviews at work. Being reflexive means, therefore, not only being aware of the tendency towards internal editing because of my closeness to the programme and the diocesan authorities, but also because of the possible hidden messages to the Bishop's office from the interviewees.

In this respect, the time that passed between the interviews (2008–09) and the final write-up (2015) was helpful. It provided a distance from the time of interviews and the diocesan office, which I left in January 2013, which aided the reflection. Normative expectations/normative understanding and interpretation in my case need to be seen from two periods – the time of the interviews and original writing, and the time of the rewriting in the form of articles. The former time was before active parish ministry on my behalf; the latter was when I was already engaged in parish ministry. I did not think about it at the time, but looking back at the interviews I know that I understood the pastors' situations much better at the time of final writing than during the interviews. Looking at my expectations in 2009, I was an outsider. Among my assumptions were ideas I had of how much pastors could do/accomplish in their parishes, and the extent of their decision-making power and power as change makers. I also believed that since all wanted a better church, they would want to try out the ideas of the Church Central Authorities unless something major was stopping it (I knew they had not done it, but not what had stopped it). As the interviews started it was immediately evident to me that all the pastors were actively working but all from the perspective of their own parish or parishes – not from any strategy of the church as a whole. Sometimes they were barely aware of the things that were proposed, or just not interested. Another thing that surprised me was the anger towards the church central authority, latent or

quite evident and explicit – frustration with what was perceived as weak leadership structure, poor human resource management (lack of care about how the pastors felt), and deficient overall structure. At the time of writing I, myself, was working in a parish and understood perfectly well why decisions tend to be insular – that is, made for the parish alone – as well as the frustration with the Church Central Authorities, which often make decisions that affect the parishes or are the object of negative media coverage, which is then felt in the parishes. My point of view thus changed from seeing changes in the parishes as following ideas or instructions from above, unless something hindered it, to seeing changes first and foremost as grassroots initiatives. My perspective when considering reform had thus shifted from focusing on how the pastors reacted to the demands of the larger structure to how they shaped the structure around them according to their perceived need.

Another set of interviews was four interviews conducted for the case study on the changes in church tax and the improved finances of the ELCI. The respondents all belonged to the clergy, had been pastors in 1987, and were still working. The aim was to ask them to reflect on the changes that occurred. The interviews were carried out in 2011. Again, as a researcher I knew all the respondents, but the topic offered more distance, did not touch upon recent decisions by the church authorities, and the interviewees had a long working experience, which gave them a superior position.

Looking at expectations before starting the interviews, what surprised me most was the difference between the city and the rural areas. I had lived through this change in the city and I half-expected the same to have happened in the countryside. That was not the case. In my research as a whole I was very focused on the effect that increased funding had on staffing, even if the largest share of the increase went to fund new or renovated premises for the work (Ö. B. Jónsson, 1994). Had I focused on those changes, I might have found less change between rural areas and the city.

Two questionnaires were sent out in the course of conducting Case Study III on the Cooperation Areas. As a staff person in the diocesan office, I had been working with the committee that formed the ideas on the Cooperation Areas until 2010. A letter was sent to all nine deaneries, addressed to the deans, in spring 2014. Questions were mostly closed, but the possibility was given to add information or opinion. By that time there was already a distance from my work for the Diocesan office. There is, however, the same need for personal reflexivity concerning my involvement in the ideas and the subsequent exploration of how or if these ideas materialised. There is also the possibility that the respondents were

sensitive to my position, although those who chose to add answers were quite frank in their replies and unhesitant to voice negative experiences of the Cooperation Areas.

Among my prejudices in this field were the assumptions that it had not worked, and could not work. Thus, I did not look at other options until fairly late in the process, when I realized that I had not studied the effect that a successful cooperation had on the pastor. The last questionnaire was sent out as late as June 2017 to six pastors working in a municipality in the capital area. I had worked in a parish in that municipality for four years, between 2012–16, and was therefore aware that the ideas of the Cooperation Areas were used more actively there than in other parishes in the capital area. The questionnaire had open-ended questions. Anonymity could not be guaranteed, as all the pastors in the area were included, except one, who had just started working there. The pastors were informed about this, and that they would be shown the final text and could respond and ask for changes or omissions. All the pastors replied. Again, reflexivity is important. It is possible that the response rate and the frank answers can be explained by the fact that they knew me and trusted me, but I cannot exclude the possibility that they might have been trying to give the answers that I was expecting rather than giving their frank opinion. I felt that as I know their area well, I could also measure the reliability of the information, but that is also based on my subjective experience.

4.3 Ethical considerations

In 2008, when the first interviews were conducted, the website of the Icelandic data protection authorities was consulted. According to the website, the information gathered in the interviews was not sensitive personal information (Persónuvernd, 2014), nor did it fall into medical, financial or other categories that would need permission of the data protection authorities.

In 2014 the University of Iceland adopted ethical guidelines for researchers (HÍ, 2014). Especially relevant for my research are three articles: Article 2.4, which stresses the importance of informed consent of participants; Article 2.2, on the possibility of participants not to participate; and Article 2.3, on the researcher's obligation not to cause harm to the participants. In 2014 the University established the science ethics committee. It provides guidelines and approvals for research proposals, but does not give approval after the research is completed. As I had already started my research and finished most of the interviews, I could not apply for approval from the committee.

An informed consent was given orally in the taped interviews conducted for the case studies. Participants were told that information would not be traceable. The university guidelines from 2014 detail what information should be given when consent is sought. This includes the aim of the research, the right to withdraw participation at any stage, possible consequences if participation is withdrawn, and possible negative effects for participants. The aim of the research was stated when consent was sought, but neither the possibility to withdraw at any stage, nor possible negative effects for participants was mentioned. As this was not sensitive personal information, and as it would not be traced to any one participant, the possible negative effects are not apparent. The same applies to the interviews in 2011. The questionnaire to the deaneries in 2014 mostly asked for statistical information, which is in the public domain. Two questions offered the possibility of interpretation or personal comment. One was: “If the Cooperation Areas did not become active, why do you think it happened?” And finally, there was a possibility under: “Any further comments?” Both could also fall under the definition of information law, but I chose not to name the areas where critical answers came from in order to distance the issues from the people.

The questionnaire in 2017 to pastors in one Cooperation Area was sent with information that answers would be linked to that area. I explained that I would send them what I had written before it was published and they could ask for changes or omissions. All agreed. The information given is not sensitive and their consent to the text was also important to see if my interpretation of their answers was correct.

4.4 Data collection

The three case studies were all chosen for their in-depth analysis of certain cases. All focus on the pastor in his or her working environment, locally (in the parish) and nationally (in the ELCI as an organisation). Embedded (Yin, 2014, p. 55) in all three studies is the question of relations with the church as an organisation, parish councils, the diocese and the General Assembly, including questions on legislation and Rules of Procedure. The case studies are described in chapter 5.

In his book *Case Study Research*, Robert K. Yin lists six sources of evidence that can be used when collecting data, and points out their strengths and weaknesses (Yin, 2014, p. 106). Relevant for the present discussion is the use of documents, archival records and interviews, and semi-structured questionnaires. I will refer to those when discussing the data collected for the three case studies.

For the case studies, I conducted two series of interviews and sent two short

questionnaires with closed and open questions. This material is my main source, along with reports from parishes regarding financial changes in the 1980s (for Case Study I).

4.4.1 Interviews

All the case studies use interviews. The strength of this is the possibility to focus on the case and get insight and personal views from those “affected” or from the participants in the cases explored. The method, however, has embedded weaknesses. These can include bias due to poorly articulated questions, response bias, inaccuracies due to poor recall, and reflexivity between interviewee and interviewer where the interviewee tries to respond as s/he anticipates that the interviewer wants to hear.

From 2008–09, ten qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with a non-random sample of pastors in parish ministry in the ELCI. The respondents were chosen with regard to gender, the size of their congregation, geographical factors (countryside, town and city) and time in office. Of the sample, half were working in the countryside and half in the capital area. Of the respondents, half were women. In 2008 the female/male ratio of pastors was 3:7, so the interviews do not reflect that. By using equal numbers, I hoped to reduce a possible gender bias. All respondents were approached by the researcher and asked to participate. Every respondent who was asked agreed to participate. The purpose of the research was explained to all participants at the beginning of the interviews, as were the measures taken to ensure confidentiality. I knew all the respondents, and the same could be said about all the clergy in the ELCI.

These interviews explored their participation in the Strategic Planning Process and subsequent programmes from 2004–08: the pastors’ attitudes towards change in their congregation; their motivation towards change; their attitudes towards the central church authorities, and to the ELCI as an organisation. The interviews lasted from 40–90 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

In 2011, four pastors were interviewed and asked about the changes that followed the alterations in tax legislation in 1985 and especially in 1987, which increased the income of the churches significantly. From the group of clergy who had been in office at the time and were still working (N=29, male 26, female 3) I chose four who had served in the same area for a long time and who I felt could therefore evaluate the effects of the financial changes. Two were working in rural areas and two in the capital. The respondents had been pastors in 1987 and were still working. Each served the same area from 1985–95. That was a key factor, as that was the time that the effect of the tax reform became effective in the church. At the

time of interviewing I was also asking about the effect of another legislative change, in 1997, and therefore wanted to interview pastors who were still working, or who at least had worked in the church for a decade after those 1997 changes. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. They were all recorded and transcribed for analysis.

4.4.2 Questionnaires

Two questionnaires were sent out in the course of conducting Case Study III on the Cooperation Areas. A letter was sent by email to all nine deaneries, addressed to the deans, in spring 2014. The letter stated that this was a part of a study at the University of Iceland and that the identity of deaneries and pastorates would not be mentioned. It included a short questionnaire as an attachment. The questionnaire had ten closed questions with the possibility to add comments and a space at the end for further comments. Six deans and one deanery pastor replied. Five of the seven added some comments and explanations.

The strength of sending a questionnaire to the deans instead of arranging interviews was partly practical – deaneries are situated around the country and it would take a long time to arrange a visit, interview and transcribe the interview, for what I needed, which was first and foremost some quantitative statistics on the implementation of Cooperation Areas. This I obtained through the questionnaire. The questionnaire asked if the Cooperation Areas had been introduced, who had been invited (different actors listed), if there was interest in cooperation, by whom, in which area (areas of church work listed), if cooperation between parishes had changed, and if the pastors shared an emergency phone.

The weakness of this method is that I could not follow up on replies and not guarantee that all deans viewed the questions in the same way. As there was also an option to add comments, I received comments that clearly showed what the deans saw as a major handicap of the Cooperation Areas.

The latter questionnaire was sent in June 2017 to six pastors working in a municipality in the capital area in connection with the case study on Cooperation Areas. I knew that this municipality was one of few Cooperation Areas where the cooperation was active to a marked extent – that is, the pastors defined themselves as belonging to it, held regular meetings about cooperation, and organised the services to a degree on the Cooperation Area basis. Anonymity could not be guaranteed. The pastors were informed about that, and that they would be shown the final text and could respond and ask for changes or omissions if they wished. All the pastors agreed and replied to the questionnaire. They have since read the relevant part of the report, and made comments that have been taken into

consideration. This questionnaire was sent as I felt that information was missing on how or if the Cooperation Areas affected the work environment of the pastor, in the cases where it was carried out. The questionnaire had both closed and open-ended questions, giving space for reflection on the effects. I have reflected on these responses and my relations to respondents in chapters 4.2 and 4.3.

4.4.3 Documents

Documentation is another source of evidence, and I use various documents and public records. According to Yin (Yin, 2014, p. 106) and Sarantakos (Sarantakos, 2005, pp. 298-299) the strengths of documentation are that it is stable and unobtrusive, specific and broad, can cover a long span of time, many events and many settings. The weaknesses are, for example, that they can be hard to find, there can be biased selectivity if the collection is incomplete, or an unknown bias in any given document, and access to the documents.

My main source of documents is the ELCI, especially from the General Assembly, discussion and Rules of Procedures. These are all public documents and gaining access is not difficult. These are easily found either online or as printed minutes and deeds. Documents from the parliament of Iceland are also easily found, all minutes from debates, every proposal and legislation. For my study on tax legislation and its effects, I searched for parish records from the Bishop's office, which are found in the National Archives. This showed the weakness connected with using written records, as many records are missing, including a whole box of records from the research period 1980–90, which were registered at the National Archives, but could not be located. Selected parishes were contacted in an effort to find the missing records. In three of the parishes, the records could not be found for the period 1987–89. These are financial records showing annual income in parishes from 1985–89. The mid-1970 to 1980s was a period of hyperinflation in Iceland. All income is therefore inflation indexed using the online software from Statistics Iceland (www.hagstofa.is/verdlagsreiknival). In addition to records from parishes, I used an unpublished survey of work in three dioceses conducted for the Executive Council in 2004 (Björnsson & Óskarsdóttir, 2004). This survey included statistical information from every parish in the deaneries on staff and church work. The survey is kept in the archives of the Bishop's office.

4.5 Analyses of the material

For a case study, analysis consists of making a detailed description of the case and its setting (Creswell, 2013, p. 199). In this research, there are three different case studies, each with a new setting, which are detailed in each study. For the final analysis, the aim will therefore be to identify patterns in the three studies that together contribute to explaining pastors' role and response to changes and/or attempted changes.

4.5.1 Thematic Analyses

My main analytical method for interviews and questionnaires was thematic analysis, as explained by Braun and Clarke (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). This included identifying, examining and recording themes within the data. Braun and Clarke describe thematic analyses as a method that is independent of theory and epistemology, can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches and used within different theoretical frameworks. "Thematic analysis is relatively unique among qualitative analytic methods in that it only provides a method for data analysis; it does not prescribe methods of data collection, theoretical positions, theoretical positions, epistemological or ontological frameworks" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 178) It is simply a method and its strength lies in its flexibility. It can be used in a data driven way "bottom-up", or guided by particular theoretical ideas, more "top-down". When choosing this method, it is important to determine the type of analysis and the claims that one aims to make in relation to the data set. It could, for instance, be a rich thematic description of the entire data set, or a more detailed and nuanced account of one or more particular theme(s) within the data, e.g. relating to "a specific question or area of interest within the data [...] or to a particular "latent" theme [...] across the whole or majority of the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). From the beginning, I was looking at specific areas regarding changes or reforms in the church: the role of the pastor, their role in the reform, and how they influenced and were influenced by the reforms and changes. The latter type thus better describes my approach.

Braun and Clarke identify themes within data either in an inductive or "bottom-up" way, or in a theoretical or deductive, "top-down" way (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82; 2013, p. 175). An inductive way could be described as more data-driven, and more suitable for analysis where the approach is more open towards the whole data set and not driven by the researcher's theoretical interest in the area or topic. (However, as I have noted earlier, the researcher will always approach the material from an epistemological point of view; qualitative research is not conducted in a vacuum). Theoretical thematic analyses "tend to be

driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in the area [...] tends to provide less a rich description of the data overall, and more a detailed analysis of some aspect of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). This is the method chosen for my research, also fitting the analytical focus.

The coding was therefore theoretical or deductive, guided by the research question, but additional questions evolved through the process, both during interviewing – especially the 10 interviews for the Strategic Planning – and in the process of coding. When deciding on themes, I looked for patterns in the coded responses, both for explicit and latent answers. I decided to give prevalence not only to the frequency of a theme (e.g., a sense of distance from the Church's Central Authorities was listed by almost all in my interviews regarding the Strategic Planning Process; friendship and importance of the emergency phone was listed by all six pastors responding to a questionnaire on Cooperation Areas), but also to the insight that the themes gave and their links to other explanations (in the interviews for the Strategic Planning Process, financial issues were named only twice but relate to structural complaints (sub-theme); the independence of the office (mentioned twice) explicitly relates to the pastors' ecclesiological understanding and is latent in many answers. The same approach was used for the second set of interviews and the open answers in the questionnaires. After reading through and coding the material, the interviews and questionnaires (open questions) were analysed by themes.

4.5.2 Basic Descriptive Analysis

For analysis of documents I use basic descriptive analysis. This method of analysing is appropriate if the aim is to summarise data, identify main trends and present a description. (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 294). The documents were mostly public records, such as statistics and finance documents (parish financial reports, statistics on the church), annual reports from parishes or reports from committees in the church, legal documents from the parliament and the General Assembly, both on legislation and Rules of Procedure and discussion on relevant legislative documents. In addition, there is information from newspapers and news from websites.

4.6 Methodological strengths and weaknesses

Epistemological reflexivity (Willig, 2001) engages with questions on the epistemological limitations of the research. The researcher needs to ask at any stage: Could I have used

another methodology? Has the research question or design or method of analysis limited the results, or how could this research have been conducted differently?

The strength of qualitative methodology is the possibility to focus in-depth on cases and understand not just what happened but the meaning of what happened, and why. The possibility of conducting quantitative research – especially in case studies II and III – was considered, as were the possible answers it would give. It would have given some measure of statistics on the issue of to what extent pastors participated in the Strategic Planning Process and possibly why they did or did not. It would, however, lack the depth of the interview setting and the possibility to probe further and ask why. As with any quantitative survey, the weakness is also the respondents' understanding of the questions and if they can find their own answer within the available responses. This was felt in the case study on Cooperation Areas, where some quantitative information was gathered with a questionnaire to the deans. While it did provide some statistical information, it was the comments that showed differences between the respondents in their understanding of the Cooperation Areas and the reasoning behind them.

Braun and Clarke stress this active role of the researcher in looking for themes and concepts in the research material when interpreting data using thematic analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 80). The themes do not reside in the data only to emerge fully formed. The “emergence” is the meeting of the material and the reflections of the researcher, thinking about the data and trying to understand it. The researcher approaches the material with preconceptions, then selects, interprets and contextualises the themes.

I see this subjectivity both as a strength and a weakness in any qualitative research. In my research, I constantly tried to monitor my own preconceptions and subjectivity. This was especially important because of my previous involvement and work in the church. It was also important as the group being researched (pastors in the ELCI) is small and I know everyone in the group. However, the subjective responses fit the interpretative epistemological premises of the research. As in any qualitative research, the conclusions have certain limitations. They cannot be quantified. The methodology does, however, allow for certain general learnings. When the three case studies are viewed in light of theories, certain patterns emerge that can help explain the findings of the qualitative research. While they do not show the whole picture, they show a part of the picture, a part of the problem, and give the possibility to theorise on solving it.

Would a different research design have been better suited? It is my conviction that this study needed to be conducted as a qualitative study, but with a different timeframe and

circumstances, other research designs might have been possible. The long period of research that I could already envision early on as it was conducted alongside work engagements meant that focusing on separate cases became a feasible option. I did consider other qualitative measures within this design, such as choosing a focus group in Case Study I and III, but in both cases I chose a different method for practical reasons, considering time, geography, etc.

The benefit of using a case study design is the possibility to look closely at a single case, using different methods and to view it contextually to gain an understanding of its mechanism. In this case, the strength of having three cases shed light on a prevalent embedded theme in the research – on pastors as actors responding to change or reforming; on organisational relations between pastors and other actors in the parish or in the church's administration; and the role of the structure (legislation, organisation) and ecclesiology in enabling change and adapting to changing times. Collectively, it was a possibility to study the relation between the individual and structural dimensions of change and reform in the ELCI.

5 Summary of the articles

This chapter describes the three case studies and summarises the main findings. All three studies have been published in peer-reviewed journals.

5.1 Case Study I: The Making of a City Church

(Published in the Nordic Journal of Religion and Society, No 2, 2017, Volume 30)

This article analyses the effects of legislative changes that boosted church funding in the late 20th century on the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland (ELCI). The four main research questions are: What were the effects of these changes in the parishes? What changed in the working environment of the clergy? How did the ELCI react to the changes with Rules of Procedure? What challenges did this bring about in the relations between clergy and parish council?

The development towards a staff church (Hegstad 1999) is a fairly recent development in Iceland. This has led to changes in voluntary work in the church and, in some cases, less voluntary work. What is identified by Hegstad (1999, 119) as a “staff church” is, in this study, called a “city church” to underline that this change has only taken place in the largest parishes (located in the capital area and the larger towns).

There has been a change from a church that is only open for services and church functions (a country church) to a church that is open on weekdays with increased staff and offers midweek activities for all ages. Instead of one full time pastor and a part-time organist and staff, there is a full-time organist, as well as half and full-time staff in children and youth work, the diaconia, and so forth.

5.1.1 The Research

This study is based on an analysis of various types of existing documents and a small sample of interviews with senior clergy who experienced the changes in the 1980s.

The documents analysed here are, firstly, parish records from the Bishop’s office, which are found in the National Archives. Secondly, annual reports of the parishes were analysed to show staffing development. In addition to the parish records, an unpublished survey of parishes in three deaneries in 2004 was used (Björnsson and Óskarsdóttir, 2004).

Further, a search with keywords in the database timarit.is was conducted to examine the discussion or debate in the print media at the time. The database contains all the main

print media from this period. Legal documents from parliament and the ELCI's General Assembly also formed a part of the data.

In addition to the analysis of existing documents, four semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior pastors who had served throughout this period and were still working in the church in 2011.

The documents are analysed using basic descriptive analyses (Sarantakos, 2005). Interviews were analysed using thematic analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

5.1.2 Historical background

The development of urban areas in Iceland was slow and only began to form in the 19th century (Hugason 2010, 108). The parishes followed a rural model and were geographically defined areas with one church and one pastor.

New legislation in 1940 divided Reykjavík into four parishes, served by six pastors. Further, three new parishes were established by legislation in 1952. This development continued, and the number of parishes increased as the capital area grew. The new parishes were all modelled on the rural parish. They were geographically defined, usually with one pastor, and were aimed at building one church suitable for worship, which was open only for Sunday worship and occasional services. They were, essentially, rural churches in the city.

5.1.3 Church Finances

The collection of parish fees for the ELCI was in the hands of the parish council from the establishment of such payments in 1909 (Lög um innheimtu og meðferð á kirknafé, 1909) and during the greater part of the 20th century. In the capital city, collection was handed over to the local revenue offices in 1948, which charged a commission of 6% (Lög um sóknargjöld 36/1948). Nevertheless, collection continued to be difficult, and church records show that, frequently, up to 30% was outstanding at the end of the year.

The collection of parish fees changed with Parliament Act No 80/1985 (Lög um sóknargjöld ofl. nr. 80/1985). Instead of a fixed amount, the church tax was based on the taxpayer's income. This resulted in an immediate increase in income for the parishes.

In 1987, new legislation on general taxation was passed in Iceland. Instead of a single annual payment at the end of each tax year, taxes were paid monthly. This made tax collection more effective. New legislation on the collection of parish fees for religious associations was adopted simultaneously. With this legislation, the state took over the collection of parish fees for all registered religious associations, indexing them to income and

property taxes (Lög um sóknargjöld og fleira Nr. 91/1987). The tax was one fixed sum, regardless of the general income of the taxpayer.

The change in 1985 increased the income of parishes considerably. The greatest effect of the change in 1987 on the parishes was that it was based on previously increased income and that it became regular and therefore had a stabilising effect.

5.1.4 “Before Christ and after Christ”

In 2011, I interviewed four pastors who served throughout this period of change, two in rural pastorates and two in the capital. The rural pastors both serve five to seven small parishes. The city pastors served one parish.

The rural pastors revealed that the changes in the collection of membership fees had some influence on the work of the congregations. The increased income meant that a part-time organist could be hired. Yet, the reasons for hiring an organist were also related to other issues, such as decreasing willingness of organists to volunteer their services. The hiring of an organist, in turn, led to regular practices of the church choir, which created a more active core group in the congregation. Previously, the choir only practised when needed for a service.²⁹

When one speaks to pastors in Reykjavík, there is no hesitation about the changes brought about in 1987. One city pastor stated: “It was like before Christ and after Christ. First, the amount multiplied. Second, it came immediately [every month], and no commission was paid.” Improved finances meant that funds were available to enlarge their premises and pay for staff. Various new activities were started, including parental mornings, a couples’ club, and mid-week Eucharist and a prayer service followed by a light meal.

5.1.5 Staff management

Traditionally, the clergy were the only staff in the church. According to Askeland’s (1997) analyses of the types of authority, the clergy have both traditional and charismatic authority, as well as professional/legal authority in some areas of the church’s work. The same typology applies to clergy in Iceland, who have the status of public officials, a long history of being the only leader of church work in the parish and authority in the field of church and theology, and who are set apart through ordination.

²⁹ Services are not held in parishes every Sunday, except in larger towns (2000+ inhabitants) and in the capital.

As the finances improved and more staff was hired in large congregations, the pastors increasingly delegated tasks in youth work, and sometimes work with the elderly, to youth workers and deacons.

In some parishes, this has meant the transfer of pastoral tasks to other staff, and in other cases, the variety of church work simply increased. Pastors in the capital area have become the leaders and the organisers, staff managers without a formal mandate, formally under the supervision of the parish council. With increased staffing, congregational growth and management have become important.

There is less increase of staff in the rural areas. This has contributed to a greater difference between pastoral work in the capital area and the largest towns versus the rural areas and smaller towns.

In both places, paid work has taken the place of voluntary work. In larger parishes, improved finances have sharpened the possibility for conflict between the clergy and the parish councils as more staff are hired, but without clear guidelines on management.

5.1.6 Conclusion

The changes in taxation in 1985 and 1987 improved the finances of the congregations in the ELCI. Improved finances in the capital area have raised the number of staff in the parishes as well as the building of congregation halls; in addition, the church buildings have stayed open and offered activities during the week. I argue that the church has changed from a rural church in the city to a city church. In the countryside, increased parish income made it easier for the pastor to conduct his or her work, but, given the small size of many rural parishes, this has not happened to the same degree as in the capital.

The change in taxation therefore contributed to a difference in working conditions in the rural areas versus the larger towns and cities.

5.2 Case Study II “The Gatekeepers of Change”

(Article has been published in Ecclesial Practices, Vol. 3, No 1, 2016)

This is a case study on a renewal process, the Strategic Planning Process, initiated by the ELCI’s central authorities and the response of pastors to the process. The main research question was:

1. What determined the pastors’ (lack of) participation?
 - a. Was it influenced by the methodology used by the church authorities?
 - b. How did the structure of the ELCI affect their response?

2. What does the attitude of the pastors to the Strategic Planning Process reveal about their ecclesiology, their understanding of their role as pastors and their relations to the central church authorities?

The research analyses interviews with 10 pastors on their participation in the Strategic Planning Process, or lack thereof. It also analyses the reasons given by Church Authorities for deciding to embark on this process and the method used, which was taken from organisational studies and carried out under the supervision of an advisor from the University of Iceland, Department of Economics.

In planning change and congregational growth churches often use methods and theories from organisational studies where models of growth are plentiful. These methods are mostly developed for use in commercial surroundings, where financial profit is the goal.

Recognising the limits of the methods in applying them to a church and congregations is important, as these social entities differ in many ways from most commercial organisations.

5.2.1 The Research

Yin describes case study research as a suitable method when the main research questions are “how” or “why” questions that focus on contemporary events (Yin, 2014). The aim of this case study was to look at the pastors’ role in a particular process, the strategic planning process and subsequent programs, “how” they reacted and “why”. Ten semi-structured qualitative interviews with pastors in the ELCI were carried out (see discussion on sample in chapter 4.4.1). They were analysed using thematic analysis (see chapter 4.5.1). The interviews revealed very limited participation in the Strategic Planning Process, and this encouraged me to look for explanations in the interviews and in the context of their work.

One of the prevalent themes in the interviews was a description of distance and even alienation from the Church’s Central Authorities. This was, for example, explained as lack of communication. That raised the question of whether the Strategic Planning Process had been inconsistent with good management. The process was initiated by the General Assembly and carried out by the diocesan authorities. The method was analysed using tools from organisational studies. I used the theories of Bolman and Deal (Bolman & Deal, 2008) on reframing organisations as a theoretical framework and analysed the findings through the different frames explained in their theories. The findings were viewed in light of theories and discussion on congregational development (Birkedal, Hegstad, & Lannem, 2012), what drives it, which models are behind it and what are the theoretical implications.

Another theme, found both expressed and latent in the interviews, was the independence felt by the pastor. This ecclesiological view on the independence of the office in relations with the central church authorities were discussed in light of Martin Luther's writings on congregational matters and interpretation of them by German and Icelandic theologians. The process and its reception were then compared to the Liturgical reform in the Church of Norway and its reception.

5.2.2 The Four Frames

The data in this study was viewed in light of theories on organisational change, using the theories of Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal in their book *Reframing Organizations – Artistry, Choice and Leadership*. (Bolman & Terrence, 2008). They argue for four different approaches – or frames – to view an organisation. The approaches are:

The Structural Frame

The Human Resource Frame

The Political Frame

The Symbolic Frame

With the four-frame model, the authors argue that the same organisation and situation can be viewed in different ways. All the frames have their positive aspects and all suit certain situations. When people in the same organisation do not view the situation through the same frame, it can cause difficulties. However, using all four frames to view an organisation or a challenge within can help resolve a difficult situation. The findings of the interviews were viewed through the lenses of these four frames to see if the church authorities and the pastors saw them through the same frame.

Applying these theories from organisational studies to review the Strategic Planning Process reveals discrepancies in how the process was received at different levels in the church. There was an indication that the central church authorities viewed the process through the Structural Frame and that a follow-up on the diocesan level followed the same premises, to a certain extent. This worked well in planning further policy documents, such as policies on education, diaconia, investments, and so on, but not at the grassroots level.

The qualitative interviews with ten pastors indicated that the specific focus projects of the Strategic Planning Process were not implemented in their congregations. The Structural Frame was not a useful way of implementing such changes, as proper legal structures to

enforce it were lacking. In addition, proper follow-up was lacking, including financial initiatives and clear supervision.

5.2.3 The Liturgical Reform in Norway

Incorrect methodology in the process is one explanation, but it does not explain why pastors felt free to ignore the message completely. A process in changing (or enriching) the liturgy in the Church of Norway was chosen for comparison. In contrast with the liturgical reform in Norway, the way the projects were communicated in the ELCI may have lessened the urgency for action. It was also clear that the central church authorities did not have any legal right to enforce the focus projects in the congregations, and that pastors did not feel pressed to implement these projects. The environment therefore affected both the communication and the reception of the message.

In his study on changes in congregation work in Sweden, Per Hanson concluded that the cooperation of the pastor was necessary – but not always enough – to bring about changes (Hansson, 1990). The same applies for the ELCI. The agreement and cooperation of the pastor is necessary for any process of change to take place in the parish. In this sense the pastors can act as gatekeepers of change. According to church regulations, the pastor organises the work of the parish in cooperation with the parish council. The pastor is, therefore, free to ignore any resolutions by the General Assembly and any project of the diocesan office if it does not suit him or the parish, as long as they are not part of either the National Church Act or the Rules of Procedure and, therefore, are not mandatory.

5.2.4 The independence of the office

Why did the congregations in Iceland feel at ease ignoring the message from the Bishop's office? During a discussion on teamwork and the organisation of the church, two pastors referred to a theological understanding regarding the ordained ministry, the office, namely the "independence of the office" in each pastorate.

In spite of the role lay people played in the selection of pastors, the ELCI has been described as pastor-centric. As evident from the interviews, the pastors saw themselves as the main actors in any change-making efforts in the parish. Harald Hegstad has argued that as the Nordic folk churches function more as a place to go to rather than as a community, the pastor became the main representative of the church as an institution, based upon his/her role as an

administrator of rituals, words and sacraments (Hegstad, 2013). In that light, the independence of the office could be understood as the independence of the pastor.

Gunnar Kristjánsson explains the concept of the Independence or Freedom of the Office (*Freiheit des Amtes*) by referring to Lutheran ecclesiology as the freedom the pastor has “to have his opinion, his own hermeneutics, his own theology, his own religion: his freedom and duty. He is not like a representative of a bank manager in a large bank, not a staff person in a branch from centralized church authority; he is his own master and will stand or fall with his actions. He is entrusted with an office.” When this pastoral identity was forgotten, the pastor could “seek refuge in liturgy [...] or under the wings of a powerful authority, which installs rules on how to sit and stand. Neither is a testimony to the Lutheran Heritage” (Kristjánsson, 2012).

Similar emphasis can be found in Isolde Karle’s criticism of the EKD paper “The Church of Freedom”. Among her concerns are how “the pastor [...] is increasingly turned into a branch manager [...] rather than the ordained herald of the word of god in an autonomous parish.” The independence is compromised by the reform’s demand for uniformity in the church. Karle stresses the independence of the pastor to act according to his/her conscience, firmly based on Word of God, even if it is not in accordance with tradition or the will of the congregation .

5.2.5 Conclusion

Considerable effort was put into the Strategic Planning Process. However, this research shows that the church central authorities did not have the necessary legal or moral authority to enforce action at the parish level. Pastors described limited participation and limited interest; the program did not encourage them to make any changes. Methods from the organisational or business environment must be adapted to the ecclesiological environment. For any such project to succeed, it must be based on affirmed Rules of Procedure and needs to consider the decisive role of the pastors and the independence of the parishes and pastors in deciding what to emphasise in parish work.

5.3 Case Study III: Pastors Without Borders

(Article published in Scandinavian Journal of Leadership and Theology, Vol. 4, 2017)

In 2010 the General Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland (ELCI) adopted a proposal to create Cooperation Areas in the church, across the borders of parishes and pastorates. In the ELCI these ideas met ecclesiology that has emphasised the traditional

role of the pastor as the shepherd, looking after his flock day and night, and ideas about the independence of each parish – and pastor – vis-à-vis the Church's Central authorities.

The main research questions are: What results can be seen in the early attempts and what are the possible explanations of these results? Looking for answers, I focus on the role of pastors and deans in establishing the Cooperation Areas.

5.3.1 The Research

The case study explores the reception of a process called the Cooperation Areas in the ELCI and tries to offer explanations for the results. Three types of material are used: written material, two questionnaires sent to two different groups, and answers from ten qualitative interviews with clergy in the ELCI.

The idea of systematically increased cooperation between parishes and pastorates, called Cooperation Areas, was adopted by the General Assembly in 2010. Documents from the General Assembly in autumn 2013 showed that the implementation of the Cooperation Areas had not been successful.

I sent a questionnaire to all nine deaneries in the ELCI in 2014 to find out how much had been implemented of the program of Cooperation Areas. Seven deaneries replied. The questions were both open and closed, with simple yes or no answers as well as the opportunity to elaborate on the answers. The answers confirmed that participation in the program was limited.

In 2017, I sent a questionnaire with open questions to six pastors who all work in a Cooperation Area where cooperation has to some extent been active. The aim was to find out the effect of the cooperation on their service and parish work. All six pastors replied.

The study also uses material collected for an earlier study on the Strategic Planning Process of the ELCI (Björnsdóttir, 2016). The interviews are from 2009 (Case Study II) and were analysed to find themes relating to cooperation. The aim was to see if this was identified as important.

Interviews and questionnaires are analysed using thematic analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and documents using basic descriptive analyses (Sarantakos, 2005).

The results of the Cooperation Areas study are reflected in the first stages of the deanery reforms in Norway (Huse, 1998; Huse & Hansen, 2002). This particular stage of that reform is chosen as it was a trial period and relied on voluntary participation that compares to the voluntary aspect of the Cooperation Area project. That was done in order to see what was

similar and what was different. The analytical model of Morten Huse and Catherine Hansen was used, and results compared to some degree (Huse & Hansen, 2002, p. 59).

5.3.2 Cooperation Areas

Pastors have long cooperated to a degree in the ELCI, especially in serving for one another during summer holidays. In many areas, there is cooperation with confirmation camps or other special events. This has mostly been informal and based on the interest of the pastors themselves. The idea behind the specific Cooperation Areas goes further than voluntary informal cooperation: it is formal cooperation, where all pastors in the area and other parish staff shall work as one to guarantee that people in the area have access to basic services of the church, regardless of the size of the parish.

Increasing cooperation was a way to counter the isolation felt by some pastors, which had been evident in the SWOT analysis conducted in the ELCI in 2003. Increased urbanisation also meant that in many rural areas, congregations were getting smaller. Deans in the ELCI were asked to organise meetings and introduce this new form of working in early 2011. Three years after the introduction of Cooperation Areas they had still not become active units of work to the extent that the General Assembly intended.

Replies to my questionnaires sent to nine deaneries in 2014 revealed that in none of the deaneries were the Cooperation Areas a reality to the extent that they were intended to be, but many reported increased cooperation in various fields. In three deaneries, there was no interest in further cooperation akin to the model of the Cooperation Areas.

5.3.3 Comparison with Norway

Norwegian KIFO researchers Morten Huse and Catherine Hansen conducted empirical research on the early stages of the deanery reform in Norway. In this trial period, the Ministry of Church Affairs in Norway stipulated that participation should be voluntary and could only take place if all pastors in the deanery participated.

Looking at some of the findings, one significant challenge was the lack of ownership of the experiment. The attempt was initiated by the Ministry for Church Affairs and few in the church, either central or local, felt ownership of it. Differing working conditions, family situations, and so on, affected the interest in participation. Geography also played a big part. Some pastors felt isolated and in need of fellowship but the distance was a challenge and meant an added workload.

Evaluating the early steps of the process in Norway, Huse and Hansen looked at five aspects: organisation and leadership of the pastors; results based on the work situation of the pastor; results for the office of the pastor; congregation and staff, key actors and how they fulfil their role; and the role of geography (2002:59). This approach is helpful to assess the first attempts at Cooperation Areas in Iceland. Direct comparison is not possible, as Huse and Hansen's evaluation was carried out in areas where the reform was tried and there was some participation. Analysing the fate of the Cooperation Areas in light of the model can help distinguish the different factors in the process and possibly help to compare the concerns expressed. I looked at organisation and leadership, results regarding work situation of pastors, results for the pastoral office, key actors and geography.

In Norway, the development later led to pastorates being abandoned and deaneries strengthened. As of 2011, all pastors are employed by the deanery with one or more parish as their core service area.

5.3.4 Implementation of Cooperation Areas

The plan for the Coordination Areas stipulated that certain pastorates should work together in organising their service. The work was to be introduced by the deans. The pastors in the stipulated areas were then to take over and choose someone to lead each year from among themselves or the lay staff.

The guidelines were not very concrete, and in responses from the deaneries there were complaints as to who should lead the work. The role of the dean was simply to introduce this, not to follow up on the work. No financial or other compensation was expected for the organisers, even though organising the cooperation could result in a great deal of work for them.

Looking at the decision makers in the project, it is evident that it had the support of the General Assembly and the diocesan authorities. However, in 2014 the plan for further and more concise implementation was not adopted and the proposal was merged with a new proposal for strategic planning.

The Cooperation Areas have been part of the Rules of Procedure for clergy since 2011 (Starfsreglur um presta 2011), thus formally involving the clergy, but the instructions are not specific. Both deans and pastors can ignore the ideas for cooperation if they see fit, as was evident from the answers to the questionnaire. Involving staff employed directly by the parishes relies on the good will of those staff and the parish council.

5.3.5 Work environment

Icelandic pastors are officials, both in the traditional understanding of having the office of the word and the sacraments, and of holding a formal position within society, defined by employment legislation that gives them a different status than that of an employee. In comparison, with legislation in 1989, clergy in the Church of Norway ceased being officials of the state.

Replies from the deaneries to my questionnaire indicated that clergy do reserve the right to ignore letters or encouragement from the Church's Central authorities if s/he does not agree with the content. In so doing, the pastor identifies strongly with the office and what is perceived as its independence. The limited response means that little can be said about the effect on working conditions in general. However, in the area where cooperation is active, all six pastors said that it had improved their work environment.

Key actors in this process are the Church's Central authorities, the deans and the pastors. The support of the former is clear; the support of the latter two is less so. Deans introduced the project, but those who were intended to take it on rarely did so.

Good geographical conditions helped in the area where it worked well, but was not the only factor. It is not clear whether geography was a significant factor in the decision not to participate.

5.3.6 Conclusion

The evaluation of the Cooperation Areas shows that the organisation and structure of the project is dependent on interest in cooperation and voluntary participation, including volunteering to organise and lead. Given the structure of the church and the independence of the parishes, this was a necessary approach, and a more forceful implementation would have meant further changes to the Rules of Procedure of parishes and/or change in legislation on the church.

Deans and pastors were expected to play a significant role in introducing and organising the cooperation. Considering the structure of their respective offices, the Dean cannot order the pastor to participate and, given the independence of the office of the pastor, s/he can decide not to do so. The qualitative interviews cited and the research on pastors (Hörpudóttir, 2015) show an interest in cooperation and it is clear that pastors often initiate cooperation in various fields where they themselves see the benefit. It is also clear that some want further cooperation and see the merging of pastorates as a solution, but at the same time, there is visible reluctance to do so. Casualia (see chapter 2.2) may play a part, but the

reluctance seems rather to manifest itself in the fact that there is not enough impetus to take on possibly more work without any guaranteed benefits.

Given the limited success of the Cooperation Areas, little can be assumed regarding the effect on pastors' attitude to work. Replies from the area where cooperation had increased list positive aspects, such as being part of a team and the benefit of team work in sharing the workload, the positive effect of a duty phone in setting boundaries, and thus on the effect on family life. This can imply that the attitude of the pastor towards his/her office can both affect participation and be affected by participation.

In Norway, cooperation on a deanery basis was enforced by abandoning pastorates. Given the structure of the ELCI and the results of the first attempt at Cooperation Areas, my conclusion is that Cooperation Areas would only become reality if they were enforced by change in legislation and structure of the ELCI.

6 Discussion

In this chapter I will first reiterate very briefly the main findings of the three case studies and then discuss the issues that link all three case studies in light of the theories introduced in previous chapters. In doing so, I will attempt to answer the research questions put forward in chapter 1.2.4. The main research question was:

How did changes and attempted reforms in the ELCI affect the role of pastors, and which role did pastors play? and a sub-question was: *What are the relationships between individual and structural dimensions in the changes and attempted reforms in the ELCI?*

In addition, there were three sub-questions relating to the three case studies:

1. How did legislation that affected church tax impact the role of clergy in the ELCI? (Case Study I).
2. How did the ELCI's response to changes and planning impact the role of the clergy? (Case Studies II and III)
3. How did the pastor's ecclesiological understanding of his/her office and work identity contribute to or hinder change?³⁰ (Case Studies II and III)

The three last questions will not be discussed separately, but within the general discussion and approached from the theoretical point of view of theories on change and reform, authority and legitimacy and the pastoral agency.

Common to all three case studies is that they, in one way or another, discuss change/reform – an enacted change or an attempted reform. The first case study discusses the changes brought about by tax reform (chapter 5.1.3). These changes raised the number of staff in the parishes in the capital area and large towns and boosted the building of congregation halls; in addition, the church buildings stayed open and offered activities during the week. It showed that pastors were agents of change and responded, with the parish council, by developing both the parish work and the premises. There was a lesser effect in rural areas and this increased the disparity between pastors in the city/large towns and in rural areas. The study also reveals that the ELCI's General Assembly was slow to react to the changed environment and unclear lines of authority in parishes, for example regarding staff. Certain conclusions could be drawn about what and who facilitated change, and as the changes accentuated administrative uncertainty, the study raises the question of what kind of authority is enacted and understood by the various actors in the parish.

³⁰ Each case study has its own research questions, and these are introduced with each case in chapter 5.

The second case study discusses attempts at introducing programs following strategic planning, instigated by the General Assembly in the parishes. The conclusion is that this attempted reform did not, in fact, affect the pastors who participated in the research, as they described limited participation and interest. Organisational issues appear again, in this case the limited authority that the General Assembly or the Bishop's office has when it comes to the work done in the parishes. It also underlines the independence of the parish and, consequently, the independence of pastoral office, which again links to the question of the Bishop's authority and the legality and legitimacy of decisions by the General Assembly.

The third case study looks at another attempt by the General Assembly to instigate reform in parish work, this time by adopting a resolution on formal cooperation between pastorates. The resolution suggested considerable changes in how pastors and other church staff organise their work. The General Assembly followed up on this resolution by adding Cooperation Areas to the Rules of Procedure for pastors, thus giving it a more formal backing. Article 12 of the Rules of Procedure states that when senior pastors and pastors organise their cooperation they should look to "the comprehensive organisation of pastoral services in the pastorate, the deanery and in the Cooperation Area" (Starfsreglur um presta 2011, Art. 12. My translation). However, participation is limited and explanations from the deaneries point to the same conclusion as in Case Study II, that is, the independence of parishes and pastors vis-à-vis the ELCI's Central authorities. This can be discussed both as an issue of authority and legitimacy, and as an organisational issue.

6.1 Discussion on change and reform in light of theoretical paradigms

Looking at changes that took place in the parishes in the wake of tax reforms from the point of view of table 2, I would argue that the changes are best viewed from the paradigms of functional and interpretative approach. The changes in the parishes had their origin in tax reforms, legislative changes, regular changes in a system, affecting other systems. When the effect became clear in increased funding, the parishes reacted in many ways with creativity and energy, but nevertheless the decisions taken reflected traditional ecclesial understanding. Large parts of the funds were spent on premises, but music and children's and youth work were other priorities. Decisions to proceed with parish work were made according to rules and correct procedure in the church. The leading role of the pastor, especially in the city, was evident in the interviews in Case Study I and I would argue that pastoral agency was central in carrying through these changes in parish work. It was a regulated change, which can be viewed through a functionalist paradigm. Looking at Case Study I and following later

development within the parishes in the capital, a new question must be asked. Although the changes can be viewed through the functional paradigm, the structural issues raised by the changes, such as the uncertainties in management structure of the parish, left the field open for a more interpretative approach when it came to authority. I have argued above that the pastor took the leading role and became the manager without a formal mandate, but the question is what kind of authority the pastor has in this situation and whether it rests on the office of the pastor or on the person. I will further discuss this in chapter 6.2.

The reform projects were instigated by the Church’s Central Authorities with the intention that they would be followed through by the parishes, where pastors are key persons. The procedure in the General Assembly and the Bishop’s office views the church from a functionalist paradigm. Theologically, we see a rather normative view of the church and the pastoral role as the project is presented by the CCA. The stress is on the traditional role of the pastor and the traditional tasks of the church, and the assumption seems to be that since this has been accepted by the CCA as a plan it will be accepted and carried out in the parishes. The view is thus close to hierarchical in its organizational thinking. Looking at the results, one might say that the pastoral agency reacted against these ideas and consequently against this normative, functional view of the church, opting instead for a more interpretative paradigm.

Radical Change

Subjective	Radical Humanist Paradigm Symbolic Frame	Radical Structuralist Paradigm Political Frame	Objective
	Interpretative paradigm. Human Resource Frame	Functionalist paradigm Structural frame	

Regulation

Table 2

Looking again at the grid from Burrell and Morgan with the additions of the Frames of Bolman and Deal (table 2), we should bear in mind that Bolman and Deal argued that leaders of organizations should not have only one frame when viewing their organization, but be open to using other approaches, other frames, when that suited the intended operation. This, they claimed, was a more effective approach.

Reiterating the question regarding the relationship between the individual and the structural dimensions in the changes and attempted reforms in the ELCI, the research reveals a disparity in the way the processes are viewed. The functionalist paradigm – the structural frame – sees the church from the point of view of structure, rules and regulations, as an organisation where a rational-legal authority is accepted. This is the paradigm where the emphasis is on the structure shaping the changes, not the individual. Case studies II and III point to this paradigm as the dominant paradigm of the CCA. In the language of Bolman and Deal it views the church through the structural frame. Reception of the policies set out and understood in this paradigm is, however, not understood from the same perspective.

The conclusion in Case Study II was that the pastors, who were key figures in carrying out the strategic planning programs, viewed the church from a different frame than the CCA. They seemed to view it more through the Human Resource Frame, which is a subjective interpretative position. This was apparent both in their description of their relation with the CCA and in how they interpreted their role – that is, what they felt they should do – and their agency – that is, their actions and potential to act and influence the environment. Viewing the results of Case Study III through the same framework, it is clear that while clearly part of the ecclesial structure, objectively positioned as the right hand of the bishop in the deanery, the deans who voiced opinions on the idea of cooperation area did not see the message as part of the structural frame; in essence, they did not see it as something that they should endeavour to fulfil. They interpreted it from their own perspective, thus acting from a subjective point of view, from the human resource frame.

According to Bolman and Deal, it is always problematic if different actors view the reform process or change through different frames. Viewing changes and reform in the church through the structural frame only can thus be problematic for the CCA if other actors in the process, such as the pastors, do not see it through the same frame. To use the imagery of the ARCS' Four Voices (chapter 1.4.2), the operant organisational theory of the CCA – that is, the organisational theory that is apparent in the field – seems to be using the structural frame, operating within a functional concept of the church organisation. This view was voiced by some pastors (espoused theory), but the operant theory is subjective.

6.2 Authority, legitimacy and authenticity

Another dimension of this subjective-objective dichotomy is expressed in the question of authority of the different actors in the research.

Issues of authority apparent in the three case studies can be identified as follows:

1. the authority of the pastor in the parish, in many cases the manager without a formal mandate;
2. the authority of the pastor in interaction with the Church's Central Authorities (CCA);
3. the authority of the parish council in the parishes;
4. the authority of the CCA in the "upper levels of church structure";
5. the authority of the CCA in the parishes.

Chapter 3.2.1 discussed types of authority as defined by Weber. As stated there, Askeland claims that parish pastors can have all three types of authority. Looking at the first question above, what kind of authority gives the pastors the legitimacy to become the de facto leader and manager of the staff in the parish, accepted by the parish council, the body that should have that responsibility?

In the case of parish pastor in this research, traditional authority, based on the sanctity of the pastoral office, or charismatic authority, is likely to strengthen the position of the pastor where lines of authority are unclear, such as in Case Study I. As Weber's types of authority are seen as "pure types" or ideal, the model can be modified based on the situation and speak of traditional authority and institutionalized charisma, referring both to the office of the pastor and the pastor as an ordained minister to that office. In both cases the legitimisation of the power of the pastor is closer to the institution of the office than to the person of the pastor and can be seen as a structural view of the role of the pastor.

Moving to number two on the list, the authority of the pastor in interaction with the Church's Central Authorities, the discussion rests on the premises of the right of the pastor to interpret the demands/messages of the CCA to the parishes and act within his/her parish. It relates to point 3 and 5 – the authority of the parish council and CCA in the parishes.

The parish council is elected and can have legal-democratic authority (chapter 3.2.1) in that it is chosen and operates according to the legislations and regulations of the ELCI. It shares power in the parish with the pastor as is described in chapter 2.3.2 and in discussion on previous research in chapter 1.3.3. I have argued above, based on my studies, that the pastor's actual authority can exceed the authority that s/he has in the parish and that the legitimacy that the parish council places on the pastor is based on traditional authority and institutional charisma. If that is so, then the ordination is part of the authenticity of the pastor and it is based on the institution more than the person. That would, however, not exclude a more subjective understanding in specific circumstances.

In case studies II and III the CCA are first and foremost the General Assembly, with the Executive council and Bishop's office as an executive arm of the Assembly, carrying out its decisions. The General Assembly can also be assigned legal-democratic authority as it is an elected organ. There is no question about the legality of the actions of the General Assembly when it sets regulations, nor about its power in the parish, as long as the decisions of the General Assembly are followed by exact Rules of Procedure that have been formally adopted. When that is not the case, the parish receives the requests and reacts according to its own situation, and the case studies showed that the pastors were influential in the process of decision making. Placing the decision-making process in the grid of Burrell and Morgan, the legitimacy of the decisions of the General Assembly is not disputed as long as it is perceived within the functional paradigm, the structural frame. If, however the parish and the pastor do not see the decisions within that paradigm, there is a vacuum that leaves the field open for other paradigms. In this case, as argued above, the pastors interpreted the process from the subjective perspective of the interpretative paradigm.

The question is if this interpretation is also part of what Charles Taylor defined as the subjective turn (chapter 3.2.2), basing legitimacy on authenticity and the authenticity on a person rather than structure or institution. Or if this independence is part of another tradition, linked to the office of the pastor, who is called to serve the parish (chapter 2.3.1) but given considerable freedom in how his/her time is used to perform this service, and who cherishes that independence (chapter 1.3.3). It is possible that the reality is not clear-cut and that the subjective turn reinforces the pre-existing ideas on independence.

The authority of the pastor is thus understood both as objective, as linked to the formal institution of the office, and subjective, its legitimacy based on the authenticity of the pastor as an individual but fortified by the tradition of an independent office.

6.3 The Pastoral Agency

In chapter 3.1.2 I introduced Giddens's theory of structuration and how Giddens tries to counteract the subjective-objective dichotomy by speaking of agency and structure. Structuration presumes a "duality of structure in which all social action presumes the existence of structure. But, at the same time, structure presumes action because it depends on regularities of human behaviour" (Giddens & Sutton, 2017, pp. 89-90). Using the agency-structure model in the study of the role of a pastor in a process of change or reform, my emphasis is on the fact that the pastor is working within a structure of rules and traditions that s/he is part of and of which s/he has "knowledgeability" (chapter 3.1.2). That

“knowledgeability” that shapes the actions is both a normative understanding of the pastoral office (chapter 2.3.2) and the pastor’s subjective interpretation of the role and situation. At the same time in interaction with that structure, the pastor is constantly reflexive, reinterpreting the messages, subjectively adjusting them and responding, and in doing so, influencing the structure, which responds to the interaction.

Explaining this further by referring to the research, in all three case studies the pastoral agency in church structure is one uniting factor – understanding agency as both the flow of actions and the possibility of the pastor to act independently and of his own free will. The agency influences and interacts with and within the local parish and with CCA. The ten interviews with pastors in Case Study II showed them not only in the “primary” role of deciding in some cases what to do and what not to do, but also “intermediary” role of contextualizing the message from the CCA for the parish council with his/her action or inaction, spoken or unspoken. Given the traditional and strong role of the pastor in the church’s ecclesial structure, I would argue that the pastoral agency also had the capacity to influence the interaction of the parish and the church central authorities (table 4).

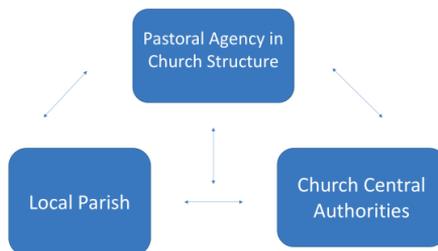


Table 4

Defining the pastor as an individual within the subjective paradigm and the pastoral office as an institution within the objective paradigm, we can see how the pastoral agency encompasses both and restructures and reinterprets the office in its interaction with the structures around, established by the rules and regulations of the church.

6.4 Ecclesiology and organisational models

When analysing an organisation as the church, it is also necessary to consider the ecclesiology behind it. As stated in chapter 1.3.2 and in case studies II and III, theories on institutional reform and business models have influenced the reform efforts in the church. This chapter discusses the meeting of the new organisational models with the old

“organisational” model of the ecclesiology of the National church, especially focusing on the pastors and interaction with the church structure.

The studies have showed the pastors to be initiators in their parishes and contextual in their reactions to reform – their primary concern is the parish, work and relations in the parish. Pastors in the ELCI still link the ecclesiology of the pastoral office to the traditional image with the pastoral role as a lifestyle rather than a job (chapter 2.3.2). Answers in the two studies where relations with the CCA could be expressed often show distrust or apathy towards the CCA, but there are also mixed messages, such as a gap between the expressed belief of taking everything from the “top level” literally (espoused view), and not doing anything about the message of the strategic planning (operant view). Pastors’ descriptions of the CCA and the ideas from the CCA echoed a normative view of the church with the addition that an understanding of the situation in the field – that is, the parishes – was lacking. Those who did express the view of the church in organizational terms with a more objective understanding complained that within that framework the CCA did not follow through with proper planning and financing, so the tools were missing.

If the pastor is acting contextually in the parish, the CCA is reacting to a much larger context – to societal changes bringing fresh challenges, and to new ideas in institutional management. When the CCA adopts resolutions on strategic planning projects or cooperation and sends it to the parishes, they are met and read within the different contexts of the various parishes and interpreted according to the need of that parish. Again, we can view this as a functional or an interpretative approach. In the processes studied, the CCA failed to engage the main actors and, possibly, also to give them the right tools.

Ecclesiologicaly, there is an imbedded hierarchy in the ordination, where the bishop has episcopal oversight over pastors. At the same time, in Lutheran theology the local congregation is traditionally given a rather independent role, and this also gives the pastor of the local congregation an independent role in relation to Church’s Central Authorities. The ELCI as a church also has a democratic structure, electing parish councils and the General Assembly as the highest decision-making body within the restraint of law, and from the General Assembly, an Executive council. But this is an established church, subject to state legislation on its structure that states that the parishes are “independent financial and social entities” (Lög um stöðu stjórn og starfshætti 78/1997 1997). Given the independence of the parishes, the question arises of whether that limits the power of the General Assembly to decide the emphasis in the work of the parishes, and if the answer is yes, in what way. The Assembly can and does adopt Rules of Procedure based on the National Church legislation,

but the rules can never override the legislation. Thus, the statement that the parish is an independent financial and social unit could hinder any attempt to override the decisions that the parish makes about its own work within the constraints of the law. It should, however, be noted that the General Assembly has adopted Rules of Procedures that apply to the general framework of parish work – that is, on parish councils, on churches and parish halls – and on music in the church, including the role of organists. The independence of the pastors themselves is not stated in the legislation and the General Assembly should, on the basis of legislation, therefore be able to set Rules of Procedure on cooperation for the clergy (Case Study III). Rules on cooperation between other staff – staff that are employed and paid by the parish councils – would be more difficult, as the councils are financially independent.

I will therefore argue that the ELCI, in spite of having an elected General Assembly, an Executive Council and a Bishop, cannot be described as hierarchical. The parishes cannot be seen as branches in an organisation, but rather as independent units, forming the basis for the organisation. This means that the church's structure is decentralised and this decentralization was not considered enough when the reforms were started.

In Case Studies II and III, reform projects in Iceland are compared to projects in the Church of Norway, the liturgical reform and the deanery reform. Approaches to the reform are compared: how the message is mediated, what measures are taken, and in the latter case, the status of the pastors, as is pointed out in chapter 2. Framing those models within the structural frame of Bolman and Deal, one of the conclusions of this study is that the organisational thought behind the reforms was more consistent within that frame, with follow-up and support, including encouragement to participate.

Based on my studies, I argue that the Church's Central Authorities need to take into consideration the limits of their authority regarding any proposed changes at the parish level. An attempt at a change in cooperation or emphasis in church at the parish level can only be carried out with a change in Rules of Procedure or with legislation that enforces action, similar to the change that was made in Norway with the deaneries.

If we look at the core tasks entrusted to the pastor at the ordination, the pastoral office has remained the same for centuries. But other tasks have changed, and will continue to change. Continuing debate regarding relations between church and state could lead to full or further separation (Hugason, 2014a, 2014b, 2015). In the case of full separation, the status of the clergy as public officials would likely change.

The pastor is the Gatekeeper of Change (Case Study II). I argue that one of the deciding factors in how the pastor responds to change is his/her identity. There is a need for

an ecclesiological reflection on the role of the pastor, both as an official of the word and sacrament, and as a public official. This reflection should take into consideration how the ecclesiological understanding of the parish as an independent unit has shaped both the identity and work of pastors, and how these affect the relations with the Church's Central Authorities. Such reflection could be a contribution to a discussion on the management of the parish and the basis for clearer Rules of Procedure regarding the tasks of different actors in the parish.

6.5 Conclusion

At the beginning of chapter 6 I again highlighted the research question *How did changes and attempted reforms in the ELCI influence the role of the pastor, and which role did pastors play?* and a sub-question in light of the theoretical discussion: *What are the relationships between individual and structural dimensions in the changes and attempted reforms in the ELCI?*

To assess the relationship between the individual and structural dimensions in the studies I have used models from organisational theory, especially from Bolman and Deal, who in turn build on the organisational grid of Burrell and Morgan (chapter 3.1.1). The subjective-objective dichotomy is apparent in how different traditions view change and authority – that is, whether it is placed with the individual or the institution. My conclusions are that the organisational approach of the CCA is structural, whereas the pastors approached changes and reform mostly from a subjective perspective. This difference in how these actors viewed proposed reforms are part of the explanation as to why they did not work. Viewing the changing role of the pastor in light of authority, the authority of the pastor can be understood in objective terms when linked to the institution of the pastoral office, and in subjective terms when its legitimacy is based on the authenticity of the pastor as an individual. Both are exercised and apparent in the studies. When the authority is linked to the pastoral office as an institution within the objective paradigm, it facilitates legitimacy for the pastor in areas that are not formally part of his/her domain. As the pastor also interprets the office within the subjective paradigm, notably in response to the objective aims of the CCA, we can see the pastoral agency as interacting and reinterpreting the structures surrounding the office and in doing so, affecting them.

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Paper I

The Making of a City Church:

Change in Taxation and Its Effect on Parish Work and the Role of Pastors

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the effects of legislative changes that boosted church funding in the late 20th century on the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland (ELCI). The four main research questions are: What were the effects of these changes in the parishes? What changed in the working environment of the clergy? How did the ELCI react to the changes with rules of procedure? What challenges did this bring about in the relations between clergy and parish council? The study is based on analyses of reports from Parliament and church institutions, as well as reports from parishes and qualitative interviews with four ministers. The conclusion is that the new legislation was pivotal in creating “city churches” in the capital area and in larger towns. The role of the clergy changed in the city with the improved economy. This new role included more managerial tasks, but lines of authority were unclear.

Keywords:

Iceland, church funding, church management, clergy

INTRODUCTION

This case study attempts to show how legislative changes have had transformative consequences for the workings of the established church in Iceland, Þjóðkirkjan, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland (ELCI). A recent European study on financial ties between religious organizations and states finds that all the countries studied have mechanisms for providing public financial support for religious activities. This support is more pronounced in some countries, but exists elsewhere at least indirectly in the form of tax advantages (Woehrling 2015). In the Nordic countries, these financial ties remain strong and are demonstrated by either direct financial support to religious organizations, or collection of church tax or membership fees. This is one of the issues mapped in the NOREL research project which compared religion in the public sphere in five Nordic countries from 1988–2008 (Pettersson 2011; Schmidt 2011; Kääriäinen 2011; Nielsen and Kühle 2011; Pétursson 2011).

This article gives a short historical overview of how parish fees developed in Iceland in the 20th century. The focus is on the financial changes in the parishes in the 1980s and the effect they have had on the working environment of the clergy. The main research questions are: First, what were the effects of these changes in the parishes? Second, what changed in the working environment of the clergy, both in large parishes and in the smaller parishes in rural areas? Third, how did the ELCI react to the changes with legislation and rules of procedure? And finally, which challenges did these changes bring about in the relations between clergy and parish council?

Changes in legislation that affect churches and clergy have been the focus of studies in the Nordic countries, both on specific issues such as the changing relations between state and church (Bäckström, Beckman, and Pettersson 2004; Christoffersen 2010, 2015; Hugason 2010; Pettersson 2011; Schmidt 2011; Kääriäinen 2011; Nielsen and Kühle 2011), legislative changes (Huse 1999, 2000; Askeland 1997, 2000; Hegstad 2005; Palmu 2012), and leadership and change (Askeland and Hansson 2005; Niemelä 2012; Askeland and Schmidt 2016; Petersen 2012). Icelandic theologians Hjalti Hugason and Pétur Pétursson have also both contributed to the discussion of state and church in Iceland (Hugason 2007, 2010; Pétursson 2011) and issues concerning the possibility of new church law (Hugason 2014a, 2014b).

Influenced by American Lutheran theologian Gordon Lathrop (2006) I choose to use the term ‘pastor’ as a translation of the Icelandic word “prestur,” used for clergy. An equivalent could be both ‘priest’ in the Roman Catholic Church, ‘vicar’ and ‘rector’ (senior pastor) in the Anglican Church, or ‘minister’ in many Protestant churches. Several studies have also been conducted on various internal issues in the ELCI. Ásdís Emilsdóttir Petersen (2012) analysed the relations between pastoral leadership and congregation growth, while theologian Hildur Björk Hörpudóttir (2015) studied pastors’ attitude to change and Margrét Guðjónsdóttir (2014) examined the relationships between parish councils and pastors. Those relationships are also defined and discussed in the light of Lutheran understanding of the pastoral office by the theologian Sigurjón Árni Eyjólfsson (2013). This case study adds to this field of research and fills a gap by examining the effects of the changes in church tax and in general taxation. It is argued here that these changes have been instru-

mental in creating the “city church,” that is, a parish church that is open on weekdays, providing programs for people of all ages. This has transformed the work environment for clergy in the capital and large parishes, while increasing the difference between work environment for clergy in large and small parishes. It is also argued that the changes were to some extent unexpected, and the study will show that church authorities reacted slowly to these changes, which left parishes open to conflict of authority between clergy and parish councils.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The ELCI shares many similarities with the other Nordic Lutheran majority churches, both historically and structurally. Studies on changes in churches in the Nordic countries are therefore key to understand the development in Iceland. At the same time an Icelandic case study can help to deepen the understanding of development in the Nordic churches.

Clergy and Management

Exploring the role of the clergy as managers in the Church of Sweden, theologian Per Hansson and economist Jon Aarum Andersen found that clergy have a low capacity for initiating and implementing organizational change in their parishes (Hansson and Andersen 2008, 91). By comparing the role of vicars as managers to other managers in public administration, they found that vicars stand out as a special group. Their dominant profile is relational in all aspects, rather than goal-oriented, which is more dominant among other managers in public administration (Hansson and Andersen 2008, 105).

Hansson and Andersen (2008, 106) also note that there has been increased demand for leadership training in the Church of Sweden. Organizational changes in the Church of Sweden after 2008 have led to the merging of parishes, and there is now a demand for the senior pastors to have either managerial training or experience (Svenska kyrkans bestämmelser 2008, 3). One of the issues that emerged relating to the financial changes in the ELCI in the 1980s was the possibility of hiring staff in larger parishes, where the clergy had previously been the only full-time employees. This meant that the leadership role of the senior pastor (Icelandic: *Sóknarprestur*) changed, including more managerial work. Pastoral training in Iceland usually focuses on the spiritual aspect of the pastor’s work, and there is no requirement regarding managerial experience. However, pastors are increasingly seeking further education in this field (Eyjólfsson 2013, 174). A survey among graduates from the Department of Theology at University of Iceland between 2004 and 2009 found that graduates who replied (N=47) wanted more leadership training (5/47) (Pétursson et. al. 2009, 46). It should be noted that not all the respondents aimed at pastoral work, and that some were studying as deacons. It is, however, an indication that leadership training has appeared as an issue in pastoral training.

Inbuilt Tension

There is an inbuilt tension in the structure of the parish leadership in the Nordic Lutheran churches (Hansson 1990; Askeland 2000; Hansson and Andersen 2008; Heinsen 2007; Huse 2000; Eyjolfsson 2013). Theologian Harald Hegstad discussed the development in Norway towards a “staff-church,” where the staff took over roles in the congregations that pastors and the active nucleus previously had. He pointed out that prior to this development, the staff tended to be part-time and in positions of support to the pastor. This was traditionally the role of the organist, the verger and the sexton. The parish council started increasingly to define its role as independent, working alongside the pastor. The parish council began to hire staff, including catechists, youth workers, and deacons. Tensions may arise from the fact that the pastor is under the oversight of the bishop, while the other staff is under the parish council (Hegstad 1999, 119–31). In his discussion of Church of Sweden in 1997, Hansson (1997, 78) concluded that both the senior pastor and the parish council have the same area of responsibility, but neither can give instructions to the other.

Similar developments have also taken place in ELCI. The clergy is chosen by representatives of the parish but is appointed by and under the supervision of the bishop, and all senior pastors are paid by a central church/state fund. According to the Church legislation and rules of procedure for the clergy, the senior pastor is the shepherd and leader of the congregation, and works side by side with the parish council (Parliament Act nr. 78/1997; ELCI General Assembly Rules of procedure for Clergy, nr. 1110/2011; ELCI General Assembly Rules of procedure for Parish Councils nr. 1111/2011). The pastors are not members of the parish council, but participate in the meetings. A study of five congregations in the capital area revealed that senior pastors were often the managers, despite lacking formal managerial authority, as the staff was hired by the parish council, which had financial responsibility (Guðjónsdóttir 2014).

What Kind of Authority?

In the absence of formal authority, what kind of authority do the clergy have? In a study on change in church legislation in Norway, sociologist Harald Askeland (1997) discussed different forms of authority in the Church of Norway. By using Max Weber’s definition of legal, traditional and charismatic authority, he found that whereas leaders of parish councils based their governing role on legal rational authority, “Parish priests can base their leading role on all three forms of authority. Ordination may facilitate routinized charisma. They may have a traditional authority through history and theology. Finally, they may have legal and professional authority through the formal basis of their position” (Askeland 1997, 19). Norwegian theologian Kjetil Fretheim also used Weber’s typologies in discussing different agents in the parish, and he assigned two subcategories of legal authority to staff and council: The staff can have legal bureaucratic authority and the council legal–democratic authority (Fretheim 2016, 78–79).

Swedish theologian Per Hansson pointed out that senior pastors are supposed to cooperate with parish councils, other clergy, lay professionals, and churchgoers. To accomplish this cooperation, the senior pastor requires *legality*, that is, the delegation of tasks from the

parish council, and legitimacy, that is, the confidence (trust) of the staff and the churchgoers (Hansson 1997, 76–7). Many pastors do not have strong leadership skills, but from the point of view of their office, they are all required to lead (Grevbo 2007, 145; Riise 2000, 174). In the absence of clear staff management authority, i.e. legality, the senior pastor must have legitimacy to engage in the task. (Hansson 1997, 82–83)

Margrét Guðjónsdóttir (2014) explored from the perspective of administration how the interaction between pastors and chairmen of parish councils affects the culture of congregations in the ELCI. She concludes that misleading wording in legislation and rules of procedure make cooperation and division of management complicated. Qualitative interviews with a small sample of five senior pastors (5/26) and five (5/26) parish council chairmen in the capital area revealed different perceptions of the roles and responsibilities that the parish councils have vis-à-vis the senior pastor (Guðjónsdóttir 2014). Eyjólfsson (2013) argued that the tension is augmented by a lack of knowledge of the Lutheran understanding of the ministerial office, as the Lutheran theology sees the pastor as neither set above nor subjected to the congregation but constituted by Christ to serve the congregation, as a part of the congregation. The clergy's role is understood as functional. There is therefore an unavoidable tension in the relationship between the parish council and the clergy (Eyjólfsson 2013, 153–58).

Clergy and Change

The development towards a staff church (Hegstad 1999) is a fairly recent development in Iceland, as will be demonstrated below. This has led to changes in voluntary work in the church and in some cases, less voluntary work. What is identified by Hegstad (1999, 119) as a “staff church” is, in this study, called a “city church” to underline that this change has only taken place in the largest parishes (located in the capital area and the larger towns). There has been a change from a church that is only open for services and church functions (a country church) to a church that is open on weekdays with increased staff and offers midweek activities for all ages. Instead of one full time pastor and a part-time organist and staff, there is a full-time organist, as well as half and full-time staff in children and youth work, the diaconia, and so forth. While some congregational work was previously carried out on weekdays in churches in the capital area, the change in activities can clearly be seen in the increased staff and the reports on activities. As noted, Hansson (1990) acknowledged a latent tension between the spheres of responsibility of the parish council and the clergy in the Church of Sweden. My study on the role of the clergy as change makers when carrying out programs initiated by the central church authorities in Iceland in 2004–2009 supports Hansson's findings, that their approval is necessary, but not always enough to carry out changes (Björnsdóttir 2016, 29; Hansson 1990, 169). The present study focuses on the effect that exterior changes have had on finances and how this has enabled parishes to expand their work. The pastors should, accordingly, be instrumental in how the work has developed.

As noted, some studies have been conducted in Iceland on the ELCI. Petersen studied the leadership qualities of clergy in relation to congregational growth in Iceland, finding that there is a lack both of leadership training in the church and of support for the clergy

in organizing work in the congregation (Petersen 2012, 415). In addition, a quantitative survey on the attitude of clergy in the ELCI towards innovation, development and changes in their work, found that the clergy (N=144, response rate 54.2%) have a positive attitude towards change and carry out innovation in their work (Hörpudóttir 2015, 79). However, no previous research has been published in Iceland on the effects of the financial changes implemented on parishes in the 1980s or how they have affected the role of the clergy. This study will therefore add to the field of studies on clergy in Iceland and on changes in work environment, as well as mapping the effects of tax legislation on the ELCI.

DATA AND METHODS

This study is based on an analysis of various types of existing documents and a very small sample of interviews with senior clergy who experienced the changes in the 1980s. The documents analysed here are, firstly, parish records from the bishop's office, which are found in the National Archives. These data are, however, not exhaustive, as many records are missing, including a whole box of records from the research period of 1980–1990, which were registered at the National Archives, but could not be located. Selected parishes were contacted in an effort to find the missing records. In three of the parishes, the records could not be found for the period 1987–1989. These are financial records showing annual income in parishes from 1985–1989.

The mid-1970s to 80s was a period of hyperinflation in Iceland. All income is therefore inflation indexed using the online software from Statistics Iceland (www.hagstofa.is/verdlagsreiknivell).

What the data shows is the increased income in parishes from 1985–89. The difference in increase is explained by the size and income of the population in each parish.

Secondly, annual reports of the parishes were analysed to show the development in staff. In addition to the parish records, an unpublished survey of parishes in three deaneries in 2004 was used (Björnsson and Óskarsdóttir, 2004). The survey was conducted at the request of the Church Council gathering statistical information on parish work in all the parishes in the three largest deaneries in Iceland (32 parishes in total, 31 recorded). Information was gathered by interview, using questionnaires. The results provide a picture of parish work in the capital area in 2004. Annual Reports of the ELCI from 1988–94 were also used to view changes in child and youth work. Thirdly, transcripts from Parliament were obtained to examine the parliamentary debates regarding the legislative changes on church tax in 1985 and 1987. These were analysed using basic descriptive analyses (Sarantakos 2005, 294).

Further, a search with keywords in the database timarit.is was conducted to examine the discussion or debate in the print media at the time. The database contains all the main print media from this period. The keyword “Sóknargjöld” (Parish fees) was used to search all the print media in 1985. A total of 15 articles were found which mentioned “parish fees” and which content announced or discussed the change in parish fees. Basic descriptive analyses (Sarantakos 2005, 294) of the 15 articles found that none of them could be classified as opinion or debate.

Legal documents from Parliament and the ELCI's general assembly also formed a part of the data.

In addition to the analysis of existing documents, four semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior pastors who had served throughout this period and were still working in the church in 2011. Each served the same area from 1985–95. Two worked in a rural area and two in the capital. The questions focused on how these changes in legislation affected the parishes and pastoral work. All the interviews had a duration of 60–90 minutes. They were taped and transcribed.

The only debate found on the changes in tax legislation is the debate in parliament. Data from parliament and media are helpful in understanding the environment when the changes took place. Financial data and numerical data show the parish finances changed and the effect that this had on church work, with increased staff. That knowledge is deepened with the four qualitative interviews. Records from the ELCI's General Assembly show the reaction of the church's central authority to a changed environment.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: THE RURAL PARISH IN THE CITY

The development of urban areas in Iceland was slow and only began to form in the 19th century (Hugason 2010, 108). The parishes followed a rural model and were geographically defined areas with one church and one pastor. In 1786, Reykjavík received township status, but it had less than 200 inhabitants. In 1801, they numbered around 300 (Björnsson 2006, 251). At the time, Reykjavík was one parish, with the newly built cathedral as its only church.

Some 110 years later, in 1910, there were about 11,500 inhabitants of Reykjavík (*Árbók Reykjavíkurborgar* year), and the city was growing rapidly. New Christian traditions had arrived in Iceland, including the Roman Catholic Church, the Seventh Day Adventists and the Pentecostal movement. An Evangelical Lutheran Free Church had been established in Reykjavík in 1899. In 1930, the inhabitants of Reykjavík numbered 28,000 but Reykjavík continued with only one parish.

New legislation in 1940 divided Reykjavík into four parishes, served by six pastors. Further, three new parishes were established by legislation in 1952. This development continued, and the number of parishes increased as the capital area grew. The new parishes were all modelled on the rural parish. They were geographically defined, usually with one pastor, and were aimed at building one church suitable for worship, which was open only for Sunday worship and occasional services. They were, essentially, rural churches in the city.

CHURCH FINANCES

This section briefly explains the development of parish fees in Iceland during the 20th century. The collection of parish fees for the ELCI was in the hands of the parish council from the establishment of such payments in 1909 and during the greater part of the 20th

century (Parliament Act nr. 40/1909). Beginning in 1948, it became possible for parishes to ask the local authorities to collect these membership fees along with other local taxes (Parliament Act nr. 36/1948). The parish fee was a fixed sum, regardless of income. Parishes could raise the amount in times of special need, such as for church restoration. Records show that collection often proved difficult.

In the capital city, collection was handed over to the local revenue offices in 1948, which charged a commission of 6%. Nevertheless, collection continued to be difficult, and church records show that annually, up to 30% was outstanding at the end of the year. Repeated visits to the revenue office were needed to recover the funds. In a time of hyperinflation¹, it was important to receive the funds quickly.

The collection of parish fees changed with Parliament Act nr. 80/1985. Instead of a fixed amount, the church tax was based on income. This resulted in an immediate increase in income for the parishes. Table 1 compares the income of several parishes between 1985 and 1987.

Table 1. Change in income 1985–87 in seven parishes. The effect of the new legislation can be seen in 1986 and 1987. Source: Parish accounts from 1985, 1986, and 1987. Numbers in Euros according to exchange rate on 20 February 2017

Parish	1985	1986	1987	Increase 1985–87. Percent
Háteigssókn, Reykjavík	45,657	68,091	78,000	71
Hallgrímssókn, Reykjavík	34,813	48,274	55,641	60
Nessókn, Reykjavík	49,090	78,453	94,155	92
Westman Islands	29,469	40,096	46,067	56
Ísafjarðarkirkja Westfjords	19,768	32,450	39,472	100
Hólssókn, Westfjords	7,948	12,348	14,062	77
Staðarsókn, Westfjords	2,711	3,704	4,603	70

Note: Numbers from 1985–86 are inflation indexed. Inflation averaged 23% from January 1985 to January 1987.

THE STATE TAKES OVER IN 1987

In 1987, new legislation on general taxation was passed in Iceland. Instead of a single annual payment at the end of each tax year, taxes were paid monthly. This made tax collection more effective. New legislation on the collection of parish fees for religious associations was adopted simultaneously. With this legislation, the state took over the collection

1. Inflation in Iceland rose drastically from 1973 and was 50% in 1975, around 60% in 1980 and exceeded 80% in 1983. (Harðardóttir et al. 2011)

of parish fees for all registered religious associations, indexing them to income and property taxes (Parliamentary Act nr. 91/1987). The tax was one fixed sum, regardless of the general income of the taxpayer. The increase (decrease) in income for parishes varied, but the change in the tax system resulted in more effective collection for the churches as the calculation in 1987 was based on income numbers in 1986, that is, based on the already increased income. From 1988 the income was paid monthly and was more stable than in previous years. The change can be seen in table 2.

Table 2. Change in income 1987–89 in four parishes, one in the capital, three rural.

Parish	1987	1989	Increase/decrease 1987–89. Percent
Neskirkja, Reykjavík	140,412	173,010	23.0
Hólssókn, Westfjords	20,971	22,040	5.1
Ísafjarðarkirkja, Westfjords	59,120	56,372	-4.1
Staðarsókn, Suðureyri, Westfjords	6,894	7,361	6.8

Note: Due to high inflation, data from 1987 is inflation indexed in order to compare it with 1989. Information on Hallgrímssókn, Háteigssókn and the Westman Islands could not be found.

Source: Parish accounts from 1987 and 1989. The accounts have been converted into Euros at the exchange rate from 20 February 2017.

These financial changes were much greater for large parishes than for small, rural parishes. However, they were felt everywhere. A Parish Equality fund was established by the government to support church building and restoration, as parishes could no longer increase church tax for that purpose. Of the approximately 280 parishes in Iceland in 1989, there are more than 200 listed churches and this fund was an improvement in the financing of any restorations of old churches or the construction of new ones.

A deanery fund had also been established in 1985. In rural parishes, the fund was used to support child and youth work, as well as to support further education of the clergy and the laity through small grants. In the capital area, the funds paid for the establishment of organizations to coordinate youth work in the deanery and to work with the elderly. It enabled the deanery to hire staff to coordinate leadership training, counselling, workshops and major events.

DISCUSSION ON THE LEGISLATIVE CHANGE

Sociologists have pointed out that the Scandinavian model of secularisation is different from e.g. countries where Calvinist Protestantism is influential, or from traditionally Roman Catholic countries (Davie 2000, 2007, 2015; Van den Breemer, Casanova and Wyller 2014). The Lutheran framework was formative in the shaping of the early modern Scandinavian states and their legal systems. Links between the state and the church remain, despite secularization and increasing religious diversity. The development in most of the

Nordic countries is, however, towards loosening these ties (Pettersson 2011; Schmidt 2011; Kääriäinen 2011; Nielsen and Kühle 2011; Pétursson 2011). In the 1980s the ELCI had a relatively strong position in society (Swatos 1984). A survey in 1990 found that 80% of people agreed with the statement “It is normal that pastors are paid by the state (as it is now)” (Björnsson and Pétursson 1990, 170). An examination of the debate in Parliament and in the media on the legislative changes in 1987 reveals no criticism of the fact that the state was taking over the collection and radically changing the way it was calculated and distributed. The explanatory notes to the Act stated that it was guided by the principle “that the church should have its income undiminished from what it is now. It is also important that new regulations will ensure stability in the parishes’ income. It is also feasible that all regulation facilitates simple execution” (Alþingistiðindi (Parliamentary records) 1987–88, 110. Session, A. Document 133, page 854. My translation).

The change in 1985 increased the income of parishes considerably. The greatest effect of the change in 1987 on the parishes was that it was based on previously increased income and that it became regular and therefore had a stabilizing effect. Considering the effect of the impact on church finances of the legislation in 1985 and 1987 it is interesting to note that it seems to have been passed in parliament with limited debate and no discussion in the public media.

SOME CHANGES EXPERIENCED BY RURAL AND URBAN PASTORS

In 2011, I interviewed four pastors who served throughout this period of change, two in rural pastorates and two in the capital. From the group of clergy who had been in office at the time and were still working (N=29, male 26, female 3) I chose four who had served in the same area for a long time and who I felt could therefore evaluate the effects of the financial changes. To guarantee anonymity, contextual information is limited. The rural pastors both serve five to seven small parishes. The city pastors served one parish. When referring to the interviews I will use Rural pastor A and B, City pastor A and B. Quantitative assumptions cannot be made from those interviews, but they shed light on how changed finances affected the work in those congregations, including relations with parish councils, voluntarism, staffing and management issues. The change directly affecting their working environment described by the pastors in the capital is greater than described in the two rural parishes. Information from parish reports and ELCI annual reports show increased staffing in churches.

Rural Parishes

The interviews with the two rural pastors seem to suggest that the effects they experienced of the changed funding was slightly different than what the two city pastors described. The rural pastors revealed that the changes in membership collection had some influence on the work of the congregations. The increased income meant that a part-time organist could be hired. Yet, the reasons why they could hire an organist were also related to other issues, as rural pastor B says. “It is also because of a generational change. Many organists never

thought of [asking for payments]. Perhaps they lived on a farm [where the church was], and simply saw this as their contribution. But then, a new generation comes, and they start getting paid.”

The hiring of an organist, in turn, led to regular practices of the church choir, which created a more active core group in the congregation. Previously, the choir only practised when needed for a service.² Another change, mentioned by Rural pastor B, was that the hired staff took the initiative in relation to services and parish activities, which was lacking in the volunteers: “...they are both good at taking the initiative, they suggest things [...] And that is a huge relief for me.”

Both pastors also thought that the deanery funds established in 1985 were a big improvement in rural areas and made the pastors’ work easier. It enabled these small parishes to support events such as confirmation camps and Sunday school outings.

Rural pastor A felt that these increased payments contributed to a decrease in voluntary work for the church. In the largest of his parishes, the parish council had started paying for many things for the choir, and subsequently, the choir wanted to have 25% of the income to dispose of as it saw fit. Previously, the choir had been purely a voluntary group. The pastor opposed this, but felt that it was a lost battle. Further, the parish council exerted its power regarding some payments when the pastor wanted reimbursement for costs. The council members wanted to authorise or reject each outlay in advance. S/he said: “Once I even got a no—when the parish council questioned whether they should pay for the copying of the Parish newsletter.” The bishop’s office had to confirm that this cost should not be borne by the pastor himself.

THE CAPITAL CITY

When one speaks to pastors in Reykjavík, there is no hesitation about the changes brought about in 1987. City Pastor A stated: “It was like before Christ and after Christ. First, the amount multiplied. Second, it came immediately [every month], and no commission was paid.” In this parish, the treasurer had struggled to retrieve the church tax from the local tax authorities before the changes. The amount had also diminished almost every year due to inflation, and was insufficient for the upkeep of the church.

City pastor B described the situation in a Reykjavík parish in 1975. There were two pastors in the parish, and the church was under construction. The organist was employed part-time, as in most parishes:

Vergers got some compensation for coming to church on weekends to open and to come when there was baptism. That was all. No church warden or anything. I had decided that a city church had to be open and have a programme during the week as well, not just on the weekends. So, I started prayer meetings on weekdays. But if I wanted to do that, I had to go there myself and open it. There was no staff. Churches were usually closed except for services.

2. Services are not held in parishes every Sunday, except in larger towns (2000+ inhabitants) and in the capital.

The church hired staff for diaconal work, who worked part-time with very small salaries. Staff increased significantly after 1988.

City pastor A started to work in a neighbouring parish at a similar time. As a parish of approximately 5,000 people, it had only one pastor, one part-time organist and a church warden in a minor part-time position. The verger, who assisted with Sunday services, was a volunteer. The pastor described how he had to do everything that he wanted to put in motion by himself: writing, printing, distributing a parish newsletter, Sunday school, a club for 10–12 year olds, youth work, Bible studies and educational evenings—anything that he dreamt of doing to reach people in the parish. The financial changes meant that funds were available to enlarge their premises and pay for staff. Various new activities were started, including parental mornings, a couples' club and mid-week Eucharist and a prayer service followed by a light meal.

STAFF MANAGEMENT AND CONFLICTS

All parish staff was hired by the parish council but led by the pastor. City pastor A explains how weekly meetings were held and tasks discussed, and he describes his governing style in relational terms, using a family analogy.

In some parishes in the capital a new post appeared, that of a parish manager or an office manager. The clergy in the church however, did not have anything to say about the manager's terms of reference. This was the case in parish of city pastor B:

He made an agreement with the parish council. But you realize that a change occurs from 1986–99, and this little parish [...] is suddenly a huge company and handles an enormous amount of money. And the people looking after this are volunteers. Volunteers are hiring people, paying salaries, turning in reports and taxes, etc. And of course, you saw that this was not good enough, and it was necessary to employ someone to look after these matters.

But was it never discussed who the manager's supervisor should be?

No, I don't think it ever was made clear. [...] He was a parish council employee and did what the chairman and the treasurer had done before.

And who would have dealt with the problems, had there been any?

Well, that is the question. It was not at all clear.

Traditionally, the clergy were the only staff in the church. According to Askeland's (1997) analyses of the types of authority, the clergy have both traditional and charismatic authority, as well as professional/legal authority in some areas of the church's work. The same typology applies to clergy in Iceland, who have the status of public officials, a long history of being the only leader of church work in the parish and an authority in the field of church and theology, and who are set apart through ordination. No study has been done on conflicts between clergy or between clergy and parish councils or staff in Iceland, or on the cases where pastors have been transferred due to such conflicts. The fact that such cases have resulted in the transfer of clergy shows that it is not enough for the pastor to be a leader on the strength of his/her office. Given the informal structures, much rests on the

character of the pastor and his/her leadership and management abilities. There is a need for legitimacy (Hansson 1997) not only with the congregation, but also in the eyes of the parish council and the staff, in order to lead the work.

FROM A LONE WORKER TO A STAFF MANAGER

An increase in staff gave the work a boost. An example is child and youth work. Work with children 10–12 years old started in several parishes (Church Annual 1989, 64) and, in addition, many parishes started work with 6–9 year olds (Church Annuals 1994, 98). Participation in youth events in the church increased considerably in the 1990s, as can be seen from Church Annuals.

From 1976 to 2004, there was an increase in personnel in two churches in Reykjavík (see Table 3).

Table 3. Increase in personnel in two parishes in Reykjavík from 1976–2004.

Laugarneskirkja	Pastor	Staff 100%	Staff part time
1976	1	0	2
1984	1	0	3
2004	1	2	5
Hallgrímskirkja	Pastor	Staff 100%	Staff part time
1976	2	0	2
1984	2	1	2
2004	2	7	10

Sources: The statistics from 1976 and 1984 are based on annual reports from the parishes. For the statistics for 2004, see Björnsson and Óskarsdóttir 2004

I have identified the trend toward increasing staff and keeping the church building open and in use all week as movement “towards a city church.” Hegstad (1999) describes similar trends in The Church of Norway, while the data in Table 4 suggest that the same applies to other Nordic Churches. The numbers indicate a slower or later development in Iceland, compared to other Nordic established churches.

Data from 2003/2004 show that the ELCI had the highest number of members per staff among the Nordic churches (see Table 4), but the fewest members per pastor.

Table 4. Nordic majority churches, member/staff ratio. Statistics from 2003/2004.

	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
Members per staff	460	212	741	480	300
Members per pastor	2250	2100	1800	3000	2250

Source: NOU 2006:2 *Staten og den Norske kirke (the State and the Church of Norway) Committee on State and Church 2006:118*

A possible explanation of this difference is that in spite of the development detailed earlier, many parishes are still very small, and the pastor is often the only full-time staff, with volunteers and a part-time organist to assist. This is the case for most of the churches in the rural areas in Iceland. In 1988 there were 289 parishes in the ELCI and 140 parishes had fewer than 100 paying members, that is, members age 16 and older (Statistics Iceland, *Hag-tíðindi* 1989, 53–56). In 2003 there were 281 parishes in Iceland. 144 had fewer than 100 paying members and 84 had 50 paying members or less (Statistics Iceland, www.hagstofan.is).

UNEXPECTED IMPACT

We have seen that the pastors I interviewed described a considerable impact on the church from the change in tax legislation, especially in the capital. It seems, however, that the impact was to some extent unexpected by the legislator or the ELCI's governing bodies, especially the General Assembly, which from 1998 had the task of writing rules of procedure for the church.

Parliamentary Act 25/1985 “On parish councils and staff” does not mention the clergy, while Parliamentary Act 62/1990 “On staff in the National Church” makes no reference to staff other than clergy. Nevertheless, we saw above that there was a marked increase in staff in 1976–2004, including musicians (other than the organist), youth workers, managers and others. In Act 25/1985, there is a description of the right of the parish council to hire staff. It states: “The parish council hires organists, vergers, and churchwardens and agrees on salaries, conditions and period of employment. The parish council can hire staff for certain tasks, that having been agreed by a parish meeting. [...]” (25 art.). The pastor is notably absent in the language addressing the hiring of staff. The pastor only appears in the Rules of Procedure on Parish Councils 732/1998 set by the General Assembly of the ELCI, where it is stated that hiring staff should be done “in agreement with the pastor and the terms of reference shall be drawn by the parish council in consultation with the pastor.” The ELCI's General Assembly does not make any reference to the new post of parish manager, and no regulation regarding this position is found, either from this period or later. To conclude, the governing bodies were slow to react to the changes in staffing in the larger congregations and create work environments that clearly defined managerial responsibility and lines of authority. This increases the risk of tensions and difficulties in cooperation.

CONCLUSIONS

In the beginning of this article I asked four questions regarding the effects of the financial changes in the parishes, on the working environment of the clergy including relations with the parish council, and on the central governing of the ELCI. As I have shown, the finances increased and became more stable in all parishes. As the finances improved and more staff was hired in large congregations, the pastors increasingly delegated tasks in youth work and sometimes work with the elderly to youth workers and deacons. This is evident by the increase in staff in the parishes, seen in church records, ELCI's Church annuals, and is supported by the interviews. In some parishes, this has meant the transfer of pastoral tasks to other staff, and in other cases, the variety of church work simply increased. Pastors in the capital area have become the leaders and the organisers, staff managers without a formal mandate as staff are hired and formally under the supervision of the parish council. With increased staffing, congregational growth and management have become important. There is less increase of staff in the rural areas. This has contributed to a greater difference between pastoral work in the capital area and the largest towns versus the rural areas and smaller towns.

In both places, paid work has taken the place of voluntary work. In larger parishes, improved finances have sharpened the possibility for conflict between the clergy and the parish councils as more staff is hired, but without clear guidelines on management. This small study shows that the ELCI was not prepared very well for these changes, as the legislation on the ELCI and the rules of procedure regarding the clergy and staff did not provide clear guidelines for leadership in the parish and decision-making regarding the staff.

Improved finances in the capital area have led to the building of congregation halls; in addition, the church buildings have stayed open and offered activities during the week. I argue that the church has changed from a rural church in the city to a city church. In the countryside, increased parish income made it easier for the pastor to conduct his or her work, but, given the small size of many rural parishes, this has not happened to the same degree as in the capital. The change in taxation therefore contributed to a difference in working conditions in the rural areas versus the larger towns and cities.

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Interviews:

- Interview 1: Pastor in a rural parish in Iceland. Interviewed at the parish, July 2011.
- Interview 2: Pastor in a rural parish in Iceland. Interviewed at the parish, July 2011.
- Interview 3: Pastor in the capital. Interviewed at work, September 2011.
- Interview 4: Pastor in the capital. Interviewed at work, September 2011.

Paper II

The Gatekeepers of Change: Strategic Planning in the ELCI and the Role of Pastors

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Abstract

The case study focuses on a renewal process, initiated by the Church Central Authorities and the response of pastors in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland (ELCI) to the process. The main finding was that participation at the grass roots level was limited. This can be explained partly by the method used by the Church Central Authorities and partly by the very structure of the church, which places the authority to make changes in the parish with the pastor and parish council. Tensions between parishes and central church authorities, issues of authority and structural and financial issues emerged as important factors that determined the success of the change process, or lack thereof.

Keywords

organisational change – strategic planning – congregation studies – church – pastor

1 Introduction

We were sitting in a cosy room in his church during an interview about the Strategic Planning Process (SPP) in the church. The pastor (P5) was adamant that he took all messages from the diocesan office literally:

And I am a fundamentalist if something comes from the top level. I do what it says and I think it is important. [...] I want instructions. [...] I want to be a team, part of a team. [...] I would also like a clear message from the church on what are its aims, and strategy in practical matters.

Responding to a specific question about participation in focus projects instigated and encouraged by the bishop, the answer was different:

Q. Did you follow any of the programmes [of the SPP]?

P5. No, we didn't [participate].

Q. Can you explain why?

P5. Lack of initiative

Q. Does it appeal to the congregation or not?

P5. Yes, but I just didn't think there was enough interest in it. It can also be because I was not interested enough – or those of us here 'in house'.

This conversation highlights, in many ways, the issues explored in this research. The original aim was to look at the role of pastors in the process of change, instigated by Church Central Authorities. Semi-structured interviews with ten pastors revealed a lack of participation in the process. These findings encouraged me to look for explanations for the lack of participation in a particular process and how their understanding of their role as pastors in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland (ELCI) influenced their response.

2. Research Background

2.1 The Strategic Planning Process

At the turn of the century, the ELCI¹ decided to embark upon strategic planning to review its position and role in society and sharpen its focus. The General Assembly² asked for a process that should 'define the vision of the ELCI based for example on internal and external analysis of the work of the church, aiming at making it more focused, better and stronger'.³ Among the reasons given for this decision were that such processes had helped both businesses and institutions obtain better results in their work and resulted in a better use of labour and money and to reach their aims.⁴

The work began in 2002, but in 2003, a formal SPP was instigated with a SWOT analysis⁵ under the supervision of a management advisor from the University of Iceland, Faculty of Economy. This resulted in a policy document, which was used in the following years as a basis for further policy documents in various fields of church life, including education, liturgy, diaconia, family and investments. Therefore, the document influenced the policy of the church on an organisational level.⁶

The strategy planning also instigated several projects aimed at the internal work and at the structure of the church. In this paper, I will focus on the impact of the projects aimed at the internal work. They are further described in Chapter Five.

2.2 Research Question

This case study on participation in the SPP reveals important aspects of the church's organisational issues and the challenge of conducting a process of change in a structure

¹ The ELCI is an established and a majority church in Iceland. In 1998, the status of the church changed from a state church model to a model described as a collaboration model. For information on the church and especially relations between church and state, see Hjalti Hugason, "A Case Study of the Evolution of a Nordic Lutheran Majority Church," in *Law and Religion in the 21st Century: Nordic Perspectives*, ed. Lisbet Christoffersen (Copenhagen: Djöf, 2010).

² The General Assembly (kirkjuþing) is the highest decision making body of the Church, within the restraint of the law. It has 29 elected members, 17 lay and 12 ordained (pastor or deacon). Seats are elected every four years, and members give guidance on the work of the church in the form of Rules of Procedure and policy formulation. It also monitors its operations and finances and is a forum for discussion and decisionmaking. The General Assembly elects the Executive council, which is the executive arm, carrying out the decisions of the Assembly. It has five members, two lay members and two ordained, which are elected by the Assembly. The Bishop of Iceland is the chair of the council. The council manages the main funds of the church.

³ Kirkjuþing (General Assembly), "Þingsályktun Um Stefnumótun Fyrir Þjóðkirkjuna (Declaration on Strategic Planning for the ELCI.)," in *7/2002*, ed. Kirkjuþing (2002).

⁴ See further discussion on the underlying assumptions and influences on the process in Chapter 3.1.

⁵ SWOT is an acronym for Strength, Weakness, opportunity, Threat. It is a process often used in business and the model came from the advisor, who was from the Faculty of Economy, University of Iceland.

⁶ Björnsdóttir, Steinunn A. "Stefnumótunarferli Þjóðkirkjunnar 2003–2011. Stöðumat (The SPP 2003–2011 Evaluation)". Unpublished: ELCI Executive Council, 2011.

where central authority is limited and where one or sometimes two persons play important roles in decision making. It focuses on the SPP as a renewal process, initiated from above, and on the response of pastors in the ELCI to the process. Exploring their role, I will focus on two main questions:

1. What determined the pastor's (lack of) participation?
 - a. Was it influenced by the methodology used by the church authorities?
 - b. How did the structure of the ELCI affect their response?
- a. What does the attitude of the pastors to the SPP reveal about their ecclesiology, their understanding of their role as pastors and their relations to the central church authorities?

The first question will be viewed in the light of the theories of Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal in their book *Reframing Organisations – Artistry, Choice and Leadership*,⁷ and will ask if the method used by church authorities to implement the projects was suitable for this project and this organisation. The theories are further explained in Chapter 6. It can be argued that the ideology behind the SPP was partly driven by business and organisational theories (see Chapter 4.1). By using Bolman and Deal the process and results are evaluated through the same mirror.

The second question analyses the answers in the qualitative research and asks about the pastors' understanding of the church as an organisation, their attitude towards the Executive Council and diocesan office,⁸ their role as pastors and how this understanding influences their response to the SPP. These answers are viewed in light of the Lutheran emphasis on the independence of the congregation and its roots in the priesthood of all believers, the relationship between the ordained and lay people and between congregations and church assemblies.

The results will be compared to findings from other processes of change; especially the liturgical reform in the Church of Norway, to determine what lessons can be drawn from the comparison. The Nordic Lutheran majority churches share a common heritage and face many of the same challenges within the church and in society. This particular reform process in Norway was chosen because it was instigated at a similar time (within a decade of the start of the SPP), adopted by the church authorities, and aimed at the internal work of the congregation.

3. The Research Study

This chapter explains issues regarding the design of the study, methods and ethical concerns.

⁷ Bolman, L. and Deal, T. *Reframing Organizations – Artistry, Choice and Leadership*. 4th Edition, (San Fransisco: Josse-Bass, 2008).

⁸ Iceland is one diocese. The bishop of Iceland has an office in the Capital. Two suffragan bishops sit in the old bishop seats of Holar and Skalholt.

3.1 A Case Study

This case study research considers the reception of a particular process.⁹ In this case study, I try to place the process in a larger context and explain the reception using qualitative methods. Creswell describes case studies as ‘a methodology, a type of design in qualitative research or an object of study, as well as a product of the inquiry’.¹⁰ Willig also argues that, although qualitative research methods can be used by researchers with different epistemological positions, ‘qualitative researchers also share a number of concerns, and it is these that are commonly referred to as qualitative methodology’.¹¹

One such shared concern is reflexivity. Willig discusses two types of reflexivity: Personal reflexivity and epistemological reflexivity. While personal reflexivity is important in the process as a whole, it has particular relevance to the role of the researcher, including the ethical dimensions of the research. I will discuss this further in Chapter 3.3.

3.2 Research Method

The research has been conducted in several stages. From 2008–2009, ten qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with a non-random sample of parish pastors in the ELCI.¹² The respondents were chosen with regard to gender, the size of their congregation, geographical factors (countryside, town and city) and time in office. Of the sample, 50% were working in the countryside and 50% in the capital area. Fifty per cent were women. They were all approached by the researcher and asked to participate. The selection and combination is further explained in Chapter 6.1. The purpose of the research was explained to all participants in the qualitative interviews, as were the measures taken to ensure confidentiality.

These interviews explored their participation in the SPP and subsequent programmes from 2004–2008, the pastors’ attitudes towards change in their congregation, their motivation towards change, their attitudes towards the central church authorities and the ELCI as an organisation.

The interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, as explained by Braun and Clarke.¹³ The coding was theoretical, guided by the research question, but the process was also inductive, as additional questions evolved through the process. When deciding on themes, I looked for patterns in the coded responses, both for explicit and latent answers. I decided to give prevalence not only to the frequency of a theme (e.g., a sense of distance from the Church’s Central Authority was listed by almost all), but also to the insight that the themes gave and their links to other explanations (financial issues named only twice relate to structural complaints; the independence of the office (mentioned twice) explicitly relates to the pastors’ ecclesiological understanding). After reading through and coding the material, the interviews were analysed by themes. Several themes emerged:

⁹ It forms a part of larger study on pastors and change in the ELCI, which is based on several case studies. The other studies are on the reception of the structural changes of the SPP and the effect of certain changes in legislation.

¹⁰ Creswell, John W. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, Second Edition ed. (Thousand oaks: Sage Publications, 2007). p. 73.

¹¹ Willig, Carla. *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology: Adventures in Theory and Method*. (Buckingham: open University Press, 2001), p. 9.

¹² Total number of parish pastors in 2009: 125.

¹³ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology,” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* no. 3:2 (2006), pp. 77–101.

estrangement/relation issues, communication issues, structural/organisational complaints and views on the role of the pastor bringing about changes.

Written material relating to the SPP has also been studied. This includes reports to the ELCI's General Assemblies from 2003–2014, reports in yearbooks from the ELCI from 2003–2014, various proposals to the General Assemblies and statements from the committees responding to the proposals.

3.3 The Position of the Researcher

The primary tool of qualitative research is the researcher him/herself.¹⁴ Swinton and Mowat and Willig¹⁵ stress the importance of reflexivity in the role of the researcher as the most crucial dimension of the qualitative research process. 'Reflexivity is the process of critical self-reflection carried out by the researcher throughout the research process that enables her to monitor and respond to her contribution to the proceedings'.¹⁶

Apart from shaping the qualitative research, the position of the researcher can also affect the research subject. The researcher is a co-creator of the mode and content of the encounter in a qualitative interview. Sensitivity towards and awareness of the dynamics of the interview situation is crucial if the co-narration is not to turn into domination by the interviewer.¹⁷

The researcher, in this case, worked in the church's diocesan office from 2003–2012, and was a project manager for the SPP in 2003 and 2004. In spite of the researcher being an active player in the initial stages of the SPP, this should not be considered participant observation,¹⁸ as the work was performed without any further plans of studying the effect. The benefit of the involvement is good knowledge of the process, but at the same time, there is a clear risk of bias in conducting interviews and in interpreting results. There is also a risk of imbalance in relations when the interviewer works in the office of the bishop and the respondents are pastors in the ELCI.

As the researcher, I was aware of this conflict. The group of pastors in Iceland is very small, friendships and acquaintances are common and the researcher knew all respondents personally. I explained that this was not part of any programme of the bishop's office, but a study at the University. No respondent voiced reservations regarding the position of the researcher. Frank answers indicated a level of trust, which can be seen in answers listed in Chapters 6.-7.

Bearing in mind the need for reflexivity I also tried to be aware of any tendency to internal editing of the material because of the connections with this programme and with the diocesan office. In this respect, the time that passed between the interviews (2008–2009) and the final writing (2015) was helpful.

4. Strategic Planning in Churches: Theories and Tools

¹⁴ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM, 2006), p. 58.

¹⁵ Willig, Carla: *Qualitative Research*, (2001) p.10, Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, (2006), p. 59–61.

¹⁶ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, (2006), p. 59.

¹⁷ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, (2006), p. 61.

¹⁸ Taylor, S.J.; Bogdan, R. *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: A Guidebook and Resource*. 3rd Edition ed. (New York: John Wiley & sons, Inc, 1997), p. 24ff.

In this chapter, I will look at the methods used in strategic planning and in programmes that focus on ‘Congregational Growth’. As there is no prior research on these issues in Iceland, it is necessary to look at similar work in other churches.

4.1 Strategic Planning and Congregational Growth

The aim of the SPP was to make the church ‘better and stronger’.¹⁹ Central to this was an effort to increase the capacities of the congregations and enable them to grow. In this sense, the strategic planning can be viewed as a tool for congregational growth. This is especially clear when looking at the projects, which were instigated as focus projects, i.e. Focus on Worship, Focus on Children and Families, Focus on Diaconia, etc. (See Chapter 5.2)

When planning and working on congregational growth models, churches often use methods and theories from organisational studies where models of growth are plentiful. While much can be learned concerning theories and methods, these methods are mostly developed for use in commercial surroundings, where financial profit is the goal. However, it is important to recognise that a congregation is a certain type of social entity, different in many ways from most commercial organisations, and there is great variety in types of churches and congregations.²⁰ Some of the differences between churches and other organisations that are relevant in this case are that religious organisations:

- are not chiefly concerned with achieving specific goals. Existing organisational structures and activities are often ends in themselves;
- try to reach a wider group and offer a wider range of services than most secular organisations;
- tend to be more decentralised than commercial and governmental organisations.²¹

These factors apply to the ELCI in many ways. Belonging to the group of Nordic folk churches, it defines itself as providing service not only to active churchgoers, but to all members and non-members who live in the parish. In spite of increased centralisation brought about by new legislation effective in 1998,²² the Central Church Authorities have limited power when it comes to the work in the congregations, and often also the work of the pastor. This is further discussed in Chapter 7.5. As the field of practical theology increasingly employs methods drawn from the social sciences, it is important to understand that underlying those methods are models and assumptions.²³

¹⁹ Kirkjubing, “*Pingsályktun um stefnumótun fyrir Þjóðkirkjuna* (Declaration on Strategic Planning for the ELCI)”, in *7/2002*, ed. Kirkjubing (2002).

²⁰ Harald Hegstad, “Menighetsutvikling i Folkekirken. Grunnlag og Formål (Congregation Growth in the National Church. Basis and Aim.)”, in *Menighetsutvikling i Folkekirken – Erfaringer Og Muligheter* (Congregation Growth in the National Church - Experiences and Possibilities), ed. Erling Birkedal, Harald Hegstad, and Turid Skorpe Lannem, Prismet Bok (oslo: IKO, 2012), pp. 9–23, at pp. 12–13.

²¹ Harald Hegstad, *The Real Church: An Ecclesiology of the Visible*, Church of Sweden Research Series (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2013), p. 129.

²² A discussion on the legislation and relations between church and state in Iceland, see Steinunn A. Björnsdóttir, “How Lutheran – an Icelandic Perspective,” in *Exploring a Heritage – Evangelical Lutheran Churches in the North*, ed. Anne-Louise Eriksson, Göran Gunner, and Niclas Blåder, Church of Sweden Research Series (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2012), and Hugason, “A Case Study of the Evolution of a Nordic Lutheran Majority Church,” (2010).

²³ Harald Askeland, “Menigheten Som organisasjon og trossamfunn. organisasjonsteoretiske grunnperspektiver og forståelsen av menighet i endring, (The congregation as an organisation and faith community. Basic organisational perspectives and the understanding of a congregation in a process of change)” in *Menighetsutvikling i Folkekirken – erfaringer og muligheter* (Congregation growth in the National

When the SPP was carried out in Iceland in 2003, the method, advice and, to some extent, supervision came from an advisor from the Faculty of Economics at the University of Iceland, who was hired as a consultant for the process. The member of the Executive Council who prepared the proposal to the General Assembly was a former professor of economics at the University. The rhetoric of the proposal is taken from the world of business and organisation. The model used was a SWOT analysis, borrowed from organisational and business studies.²⁴ It asked the congregations to define Strength, Weaknesses, opportunities and Threats. These were analysed by staff members at the bishop's office under the supervision of the advisor from the Faculty of Economics. From this, a statement of values, a mission statement, vision and focus areas were elaborated. First, results were introduced in dioceses and discussed there, as well as at the pastoral synod and the lay synod. Final interpretations, vision statements and focus areas were based on these answers and meetings.

The underlying assumption is that the people who will need to be motivated are those who work in the congregations as voluntary (such as the choir and parish council) or paid staff (organist, deacon, pastor). The majority of participants in the SWOT analyses were lay people. Asking them to pinpoint what was important to them was designed to give them ownership of the project and a voice.

Another underlying assumption in the methodology used in the SPP was that, when the strategy had been set, it would be followed by the people who participated in making it, if the central church authorities encouraged it, for example, by keeping it on the agenda. In spite of being a national church with formal ties to the state, the structure of the ELCI is more decentralised than that of most commercial or governmental organisations. The emphasis on the priesthood of all believers,²⁵ and with it the relative independence of each parish/congregation, has (in Iceland) resulted in a decentralisation of power in congregational work. This makes it difficult for diocesan authorities to set any agenda in that field for the parishes. The structure of the church, Central Authority vis-a-vis parishes, cannot be viewed as a company with branches or departments. This 'independence' and the role of the pastor in it will be explored further in Chapter 7.5.

4.2 Strategic Planning or Reform Projects in Other Churches

Strategic planning and structural changes were initiated in many North European churches during the first decade of this century. Demographic change, increased pluralism and dwindling membership affected these churches, which – in the Nordic case – had enjoyed membership of over 90% of the population was a challenge as the churches faced a new millennium.

Church - experiences and possibilities), ed. Erling Birkedal, Harald Hegstad, and Turid Skorpe Lannem, Prismet Bok (oslo: IKO, 2012). pp. 115–136.

²⁴ The SWOT method itself is not part of this research. It is explained as a background. I focus on reaction to the results.

²⁵ Based on 1 Pet 2: 5–9, Luther discusses priesthood of all believers and its relation to the ordained ministry, i.a. in *To the Christian Nobility of the German People (1520)*, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church (1520)* and on the *Council and the Churches (1530)*. Martin Luther's emphasis on the priesthood of all believers implies that the ordained priesthood is no longer sacramental, but a ministry to the congregation, who should call the minister. Through the common priesthood of all believers, the baptised lay member of the congregation – who is not called to preach – is called to listen to the sermon and judge if it is the Evangelium, to listen for 'the voice of Christ in the doctrine'. Eyjolfsson, S.A.: *Ríki og kirkja (State and Church)*, (Reykjavík, Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 2006), p. 54.

Some changes were directly linked to structural changes in legislation such as changed relations between church and state in Iceland in 1997 and in Sweden in 2000, and a process of separation or changed relations in Norway. The Church of Finland experienced changes in parish structures and the organising of the service of the church linked to changes in municipality structures.²⁶ In Norway, the pastorates were slowly abandoned, leaving only parishes and deaneries. This was finalised by legislation in 2011.

Various reform projects for congregational work were instigated during this period as well. Examples of this are 'A Mission Shaped Church' in the Church of England,²⁷ the 'Kirche der Freiheit' – document and subsequent programmes in the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD)²⁸ and in Norway, a state funded programme on religious education and a church programme on liturgy. The latter will be discussed further in Chapter 7.3 and the results from this study viewed in light of a study on the liturgical reform in Norway.

5. The Strategic Planning Process

A brief explanation of the SPP, its background and ideology is necessary.

5.1 The SWOT Analysis

In October 2002, the General Assembly of the ELCI decided to ask the Executive Council to 'continue to work on strategic planning for the ELCI with regard to its position and role in modern society'.²⁹

The General Assembly stipulated, in particular, that as many church members as possible should participate in the process. The SWOT was done in groups in the congregations. The groups varied in size. One hundred and nine groups gave written replies: 44 from the capital area and 65 from outside that area. The total number of participants was 860, including 360 from the capital area and 500 from outside. The replies were analysed and introduced for further discussion in selected groups. The first phase of the SPP, the SWOT-analysis, involved more than 1,000 people.

The results of the SWOT analysis became the basis for a 16-page policy document, published in 2003³⁰ and sent to all pastors, parish councils and institutions. It was also widely distributed at all meetings and seminars in the following years where the SPP was discussed.

²⁶ Arja, Palmu; Rope, Harry, "The Role of Leadership Culture in Making Structural Changes in Church organisation.," in *Church Work and Management in Change*, ed. Kati Niemela (Porvoo: Church Research Institute Finland, 2012), pp. 43–55.

²⁷ Mission shaped church in the church of England, Church of England 2004. A study on some of the effects was done by Church Army's Research Unit, "Report on Strand 3b an Analysis of Fresh Expressions of Church and Church Plants Begun in the Period 1992– 2012," in *Church Growth Research Project* (London: Church of England, 2013).

²⁸ A study on the first part of the Reform was written by Christina Hoon. Christina Hoon, "Der Reformprozess Der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland – Erste Ergebnisse Des Forschungsprojektes," (Hannover: Institut für Personal un Arbeit, Leibniz Universität Hannover, 2011). Isolde Karle has criticized the Reform for its understanding of key concepts such as professionalism and for disregarding the independence of the parish and its pastor. Isolde Karle, "Ordained and Professional – Contradictory or Complementary Attributes of the Pastor? Professionalism in the ordained Ministry," Research paper, (2009), http://www.ev-theol.rub.de/lehrstuehle/karle/aufsaeetze/2009/karle_ordainedandprofessional_2009.pdf.

²⁹ Kirkjubing, "Þingsályktun um stefnumótun fyrir Þjóðkirkjuna (Declaration on Strategic Planning for the ELCI)", 2002.

³⁰ Þjóðkirkjan (ELCI), "Stefna og starfsáherslur Þjóðkirkjunnar 2004–2010 (ELCI – a Policy Document 2004–2010)", (Reykjavík: Þjóðkirkjan, 2003).

5.2 The Follow-Up

Here follows a very brief description of the follow-up to the SPP of the church. The first four winters had a focus theme.

2004–2005	Focus on Worship.
2005–2006	Focus on bringing up children, supporting the parents.
2006–2007	Focus on Diaconia in the parishes.
2007–2008	Focus on Cooperation. ³¹

Material was published to emphasise the focus areas for the first three years, which the staff members of the diocesan office were responsible for introducing. Congregations were encouraged to use them as tools to assess their own situation and propose any necessary changes.

All major gatherings of the church were used to communicate the themes, in particular, the pastoral synods and the annual meetings of staff and volunteers from all congregations. In addition, several meetings were held exclusively for this purpose in all parishes or deaneries that wished to have a meeting. A representative from the diocesan office came to these meetings. The communication stressed that congregations read the published material and discuss which action should be taken in light of the circumstances of each congregation.

The General Assembly also endorsed policy papers on church music, education, diaconia, family and investment from 2004–2008.

6. Participation and Effect of the Strategic Planning Process in the Parishes: Analysis of the Material

In this chapter, I will identify and provide examples of the main themes that emerged from the qualitative interviews. In the following chapters, I will outline the theories of Bolman and Deal regarding organisational change and consider the results through that frame.

6.1 Qualitative Interviews

Ten qualitative interviews with pastors were conducted in 2008 and 2009. Five were male and five were female, and all, except two junior pastors, were rectors or senior pastors. I will use the word pastor for all of them to ensure anonymity. The ratio of pastors working in the capital area versus the countryside was 48/125. The female/male ratio was 3/7. When selecting the pastors I tried to find pastors that represented different areas and pastorates. I also felt that it was important to have an equal gender ratio to avoid possible gender bias.

Quantitative assumptions cannot be made from the interviews, but an overview of the results summarises the findings regarding participation. Six of the ten pastors participated in the SWOT analysis in 2003. one did not remember if s/he did, and three did not participate for various reasons, which are further listed below (Chapters 6.1.2–6.1.4). No pastor participated in all of the themes, one mentioned using the brochures, some

³¹ Steinunn A. Björnsdóttir, "Stefnumótun (Strategic Planning)," in *Árbók Kirkjunnar 2004* (ELCI Yearbook) (Reykjavík: Biskupsstofa (Bishop's office), 2005).

remembered this as a positive influence, and five had not made use of or discussed any of the themes.

6.1.1 Indirect Influence?

One pastor believed that the SPP as such, had an effect, even if the programmes were not followed.

P1: The SWOT analysis was a lot of work and I think all of us, as pastors – all pastors in Iceland were involved in some way – and this has at least affected us [...]it affected the pastor, and the pastor of course leads the work; so, in that way, it has had an effect. [...]

Two pastors, who did not actively participate, but were aware of the programmes, stressed that the effect might be indirect and gradual, and that one of the changes might be that cooperation had increased and they were more aware of what was being done in other parishes.

6.1.2 Organisational Complaints

The reasons given for not participating are different, but seem to have partly to do with the fact that there was no proper follow-up; the infrastructure was not there:

P2: [...] the follow-up was flawed, and somehow it was forgotten that money is needed to make it happen – and human resources are needed. P10: It was read, you know, regarding the emphasis, but nothing more happened. Because it was not clear who should be responsible for action.

Q: Was that not clear enough in the message?

P10: No, I don't think so. No, because before you start an analysis like this, you need to decide who can do this, who is responsible. one pastor cannot do much if others don't participate.

P6: I remember that there was a focus for each year, but I don't think I did anything about that. [...]

6.1.3 The Communication and the Message

A lack of motivation in the communication was also mentioned.

P3: Well, you see, the motivation is completely lacking. It is not enough to send a letter and say, "now we are going to be very..." The motivation is completely lacking, there is no knowledge about the situation here, you see.

Pastors believed that church communication was not designed to encourage them to feel as part of a larger church.

P3: So, what I think this is needed is that someone comes and says 'This – we would like to do this – how are the conditions here with you?' – and have a meeting with the staff and the parish council. [...]

At the beginning of this article, I quoted one pastor (P5) who described himself as taking all messages from the central church authorities very literally.

This pastor did not participate in the SPP or the programmes that followed. This suggests that the lack of follow-through may have been connected with the form of communication or the type of message that was given. Given the structure, the Church Central Authorities could not insist that parishes follow the programme. It was introduced and encouraged, but could not be enforced. While the diocesan office offered to send people to meetings about the programmes, most of the introduction was at larger gatherings and via letters and brochures.

6.1.4 Estrangement

The words of P3 reveal a feeling of estrangement from the ELCI's Diocesan office. This feeling was voiced in other interviews as well.

P3: I don't usually get any messages from there, or I don't think I do. Relations with the church's authorities are almost non-existent – or minor.

Q: Is that bad?

P3: Yes, I think it is bad. I think that they should be more focused – these connections – they should have more meetings with the pastors. [...]

Another pastor spoke of different priorities in the parish and a lack of connection to the programme. He could not recall any participation.

Q: Do you know why?

P8: No, not really. Maybe lack of interest. And perhaps – I don't know – I think the congregation there in the countryside did not feel like a part of it. [...] I think...they [diocesan authorities] are too distant from what is happening and do not understand the situation in the countryside [...] I think Christianity in the countryside is different from Christianity in the city [...]

Not everyone shared this view, but seven of the pastors voiced some concern or complaint about the church as a workplace or as an organisation.

6.1.5 Gatekeepers of Change

It was clear from all ten interviews that, whether it was the congregation or the pastors who initiated changes, the latter were the ones who implemented them. Changes would not happen without the interest, permission or cooperation of the pastor.

P1: To be honest, changes come because I encourage them. People are very fastidious and traditional and faithful to their own tradition and formation in the church, so the changes that happen come from me.

The parishioners also suggested changes:

P8: I did not give into them because we did not have the capacity. They wanted 'lighter' services, more gospel music and such.

P2: [The parishioners] say to us pastors – they are doing this in the capital area – can't we try that here? [...] And then we [the pastors] try to do that...

The qualitative interviews supported Per Hansson's findings that the support of the pastor was necessary, but not always sufficient, for changes to happen.³² The importance of the support of the pastor could also be found in responses to the Liturgical reform in the Church of Norway.³³ In this respect the pastors can be viewed as gatekeepers of change in the parish.

6.1.6 Summary of the Issues from the Qualitative Interviews

The qualitative interviews revealed that the SPP did not have any impact in at least three of the pastorates. Four pastorates participated in the original SWOT, but not in any of the follow-up programmes. In three pastorates, there was an attempt to do a follow-up, as suitable.

The reasons for not following up are several:

- 1) Organisational complaints
 - a. A sense of estrangement from the Church Central Authorities and, therefore, a lack of interest in participating.
 - b. The process was not given financial backup by the central church authorities.
 - c. It was not clear who was responsible for the work.
- 2) Communication
 - a. The process was not communicated in a personal manner with reference to the situation in each congregation.
 - b. The message (possibly also the messenger) did not have the authority to command adherence.
 - c. The message was introduced as a project for the congregations to evaluate according to their own circumstances.
- 3) The pastor was not interested. It was clear from the interviews that the pastor is a key person in influencing parish work and, thus, allowing change to happen.

7. Methods of Assessing the Process

As stated in Chapter 2, the methodology behind the SPP was influenced by organisational theories, widely used in institutions and business. I will also use organisational theories to assess the themes from the qualitative interviews, as well as the process as such. This might help explain if the methods fit the institution and aim from an organisational point of view. I will also look at the results in light of research on processes in other North European churches and finally reflect on the independence of the pastor.

³² Per Hansson, *Styrning och kultur, en studie om förändringsbetingelser i kyrklig församlingsverksamhet. (Management and Culture, a Study on Changes in Church Organizations)* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1990), pp. 168–169.

³³ Pål Ketil Botvar and Hallvard Olavsson Mosdol, *"Noe falt i god jord – den Norske kirkes gudstjenestereform sett fra menighetsnivå (Some Fell on Good Earth – the Norwegian Church's Liturgical Reform Seen from the Congregation),"* (Oslo: KIFO, 2014). p. 17.

7.1 The Four Frames

Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, in their book *Reframing Organisations – Artistry, Choice and Leadership*,³⁴ argue for four different approaches – or frames – to view an organisation. The approaches are:

The Structural Frame

The Human Resource Frame

The Political Frame

The Symbolic Frame

With the four-frame model, the authors argue that the same organisation and situation can be viewed in different ways. All the frames have their positive aspects and all fit in certain situations. The difficulties arise when people in the same organisation do not view the situation through the same frame.

The Structural Frame views the organisation as a system, where roles are clearly defined and specialised, goals are set by leaders to be met by staff and relations are formal.

The Human Resource Frame sees the organisation through the lens of human needs and interaction, relationships and skills. The image of the leader is someone who empowers others and there is a call for caring and encouraging leadership to strengthen the group dynamics.

The Political Frame symbolises power, conflict, competition and organisational politics. The leader is an advocate for a certain position or task, and is skilled in solving conflicts of power and building coalitions in the organisational world.

The Symbolic Frame views the organisation as a culture, with rituals, metaphors, ceremonies, heroes and stories. The leader inspires his/her team and the goal is to create an organisation that gives meaning to its workers. The teamwork is driven by the vision, the faith, and the legend.

7.1.1 Choosing a Frame

Bolman and Deal offer guidance to choosing the right framework for different challenges in an organisation. The starting point is what is essential for the success of the programme. If it is individual commitment and motivation, then the Human Resource and Symbolic Frames should be used. However, if the technical quality is important, the best approach is the Structural Frame. If there are high levels of ambiguity and uncertainty, or if conflict and scarce resources are significant, the Political and Symbolic Frames would offer the best approach.

7.2 Through Different Lenses

7.2.1 The Structural Frame

How did the General Assembly and the diocesan authorities view the church when they started the SPP? Since 1998, the General Assembly has worked extensively to create rules of procedure for the church in accordance with new legislation, the National Church

³⁴ Lee Bolman and Deal Terrence, *Reframing Organizations – Artistry, Choice and Leadership*, 4th Edition ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008).

Act of 1997, which guarantees its independence from the state.³⁵ The Assembly placed less emphasis on the inner workings of the congregation during the first years after 1998. That aspect was, however, taken up with the adoption of the SPP by a resolution in 2002. It could be argued that the elected representatives expected the reception of their resolutions, such as the SPP, to be similar to the reception of the regulations.

According to Bolman and Deal, the Structural Frame views the organisation as a system, where roles are clearly defined and specialised, goals are set by leaders to be met by staff and relations are formal. The procedure at the Assembly level can be viewed through that frame, just like the settings of the diverse regulations.

Two of the pastors interviewed referred to the church in light of the Structural Frame.

P2: 'Much [of the new legislation and rules set by the General Assembly] has worked well [...] but I think people forgot that you need to run this like a company and [...] you need to follow certain rules that apply for everyone and I think are not properly followed through...'

P5: '...the weaknesses [of the church] are in many ways connected to us who work in the church and also in some respect the organisational structure of the church. It is extremely heavy [...] It feels like we, each and every pastor, how he runs his parish, I think it is too free, we have too much free rein, we get away with doing nothing. [...] What sort of nonsense is that? What sort of running is that of a company, if we see the ELCI as a company?'

However, there is a question as to whether this understanding of the church as a company was supported by the congregations when the task was to focus on internal matters, such as the worship, support for home and family and diaconia. The interviews did not support such a view, and there were indications that the Human Resource Frame would have been a better approach.

It can be argued that the approach of the General Assembly and diocesan authorities was the Structural Frame. However, in employing that frame, an important aspect was left out, namely financial initiatives, which would have been helpful to boost motivation.

7.2.2 The Human Resource Frame

The rhetoric of the strategic planning papers focuses largely on images that are closer to the Human Resource Frame rather than the Structural Frame. This is evident in the first chapters where Vision, Foundation and Main Emphasis are laid out. The image there is of a church as a community of people, the need is for emphasis on people and relations,

The ELCI is a fellowship in faith and worship, which is formed by Christ's command of love. It is a human fellowship around a spiritual message. [...]

We want to strengthen the Christian fellowship by fostering personal connections, show warmth and joy. [...] We want to form a living, positive fellowship in the church and strengthen and improve communication within the church.³⁶

³⁵ The change with the National Church Act made the status of the ELCI (In Icelandic called Þjóðkirkjan, the National Church of Iceland) in many ways similar to the status of the Church of Sweden after 2000. However, formal separation has not been acknowledged and the ELCI has its status secured in the Constitution of the Republic of Iceland. Pastors are chosen by the congregation and appointed by the bishop but are public officials, not employees of the congregation.

³⁶ "Stefna og starfsáherslur Þjóðkirkjunnar 2004–2010 (ELCI – a Policy Document 2004–2010)."

It can be argued that the human resource approach was used to some extent in the SPP. In the SWOT analysis, people were offered the chance to participate in a positive change process to influence the future of the church. It can help explain the good response to this part of the SPP.

In carrying out the projects, congregations were again encouraged to take the ideas and adapt them for their own use. The message was delivered through letters and brochures and at both annual and specially planned meetings within deaneries or parishes. In spite of letters of encouragement, the reception was limited.

The qualitative interviews revealed an estrangement between pastor and central church authorities, where the pastor was working from the Human Resource Frame and rejected the approach of the diocesan office, which did not suit his needs.

7.2.3 The Political Frame

Using the approach of the Political Frame would be helpful if there was a need to realign power. In spite of having roots in the resolutions of the General Assembly, the SPP was aimed at the grassroots and the Assembly stipulated that as many church members as possible should participate in the process. After the initial phase, the 'grassroots' did not feel they had ownership of the project, and attempts to enforce the results were resisted. From the interviews, it seems more likely that financial initiatives would have been more motivational. The tension between the pastor and the diocesan authorities was an indication that some pastors viewed this relationship through the lenses of the Political Frame and found it important to defend their turf. If the pastor saw the emphasis of the SPP as an unwelcome intrusion into his/her pastorate, it would lessen the chances of success for the project.

7.2.4 The Symbolic Frame

There was an attempt to rally people around the core values and beliefs of the church, its story of Christ, its message of love, its shelter of care and support in the trials and tribulations of modern life. The strategic planning document stated the values of the church clearly in its Vision, Foundation and Main Emphasis. An example of that is the following statement from the Vision document:

The ELCI is a dynamic and vigorous movement of people who travel together in the faith in God that Jesus Christ reveals and teaches. [...] The ELCI meets every person where he or she is in life, gives support and shelter.³⁷

Research on the ELCI showed that people in Iceland, whether members of the church or not, believed the purpose of the church was to come to people and give shelter, support and encouragement, and that more joy was needed, for example, in services.³⁸ The public view of the church was, therefore, very value based.

The qualitative interviews did not reveal this emphasis either as being part of the respondents' understanding of the SPP. Bolman and Deal emphasised that Human Resource and Symbolic Frames were applicable when individual commitment and motivation were

³⁷ "Stefna og starfsáherslur Þjóðkirkjunnar 2004–2010 (ELCI – a Policy Document 2004–2010)."

³⁸ Capacent Gallup, "Trúarlíf Íslendinga og væntingar til Þjóðkirkjunnar, (the Religious Life of Icelanders and Expectations Towards the ELCI)," ed. Capacent Gallup for the ELCI (Unpublished 2007).

essential to success. Therefore, a lack of this could be one of the possible explanations for the lack of enthusiasm for the SPP projects.

7.3 Liturgical Reform in Norway

The part of the SPP in Iceland, which was studied in this paper, resulted in proposals for projects and focus areas for church work, and for cooperation with other churches, local institutions and organisations. The liturgical reform process in the Church of Norway is an example of a process instigated and encouraged by central church authorities to be employed in the parishes. All congregations were expected to participate, but they had some choice in how much they used the proposed ideas.

The Church of Norway engaged in the reform of its liturgy from 2004 to 2011. The process started with preparation time, from 2004–2008, trials, discussion and report (2008–2011) and an implementation period in 2012. The liturgy should be used in all congregations by Advent 2012.³⁹ The aim of the reform was to make the liturgy less heavy and to give congregations more possibility of local variation, including greater musical variety. More emphasis was put on the involvement of lay people and variety regarding prayers of intercession.

A study in four dioceses on the effect of the reform by Botvar et al⁴⁰ showed that the enthusiasm for reform was most apparent in the capital area with less enthusiastic participation in the two dioceses in less populated areas.⁴¹ It was apparent that the size of the congregation was an important factor in how interested its members were in change.⁴² This might be explained by the difference in the amount of resources available in smaller and larger congregations.

In general, the reception of the reform was ambivalent. Some congregations found it challenging to feel ownership and motivation for the project, which some experienced as something ordered 'from above'.

As in the SPP, the role of the pastor was important, and the pastor's view affected the outcome in the parishes.⁴³ There was a lack of ownership and motivation, a sense of estrangement in some congregations, but also enthusiasm in large congregations with greater resources.

The difference in the response between large and small congregations cannot be detected in the SPP. However, there were similar issues expressed by those who were not happy with the reform of the liturgy, as were expressed in the SPP, i.e. a lack of ownership and motivation, and a sense of estrangement. Comparing the two processes, there was a notable difference in how they were received. In Iceland, the congregations did not feel obliged to participate at all, whereas in Norway, participation was general, if limited, in many places, which raised questions about the how the message was conveyed and the extent of the authority of the Church Assembly and Church Central Authorities to dictate changes in the congregations.

³⁹ Botvar and Olavsson Mosdol, "*Noe falt i god jord*," (2014) p. 8.

⁴⁰ Botvar and Olavsson Mosdol, "*Noe falt i god jord*," (2014).

⁴¹ Botvar and Olavsson Mosdol, "*Noe falt i god jord*," (2014), pp. 42–46.

⁴² Botvar and Olavsson Mosdol, "*Noe falt i god jord*," (2014), p.38.

⁴³ Botvar and Olavsson Mosdol, "*Noe falt i god jord*," (2014), p. 17.

7.4 The Message Modified

When a resolution on the SPP had been approved by the General Assembly in Iceland in the autumn of 2003, the bishop and Executive Council encouraged participation, and the various project managers took on the task of introducing projects or themes. The qualitative interviews indicated that no one felt that the message was imperative; it was seen more as a proposal than a set of instructions.

A study in the Church of Sweden on the fate of a document on Episcopal oversight showed that, in the process of introducing and accepting it, the original document changed dramatically. Instead of a clear message of oversight, the role of the diocese was to act as advisors to the parishes and assist them in developing their own goals. This was partly due to tensions between the diocesan offices and the parishes.⁴⁴

When the General Assembly of the ELCI adopted the SPP, the expectations were that this would be adopted and acted on in the parishes. When the message reached the parishes, it was seen as a suggestion, for parishes could make use of if they wanted. The message had changed. This was not the case with the liturgical reform in Norway, where all congregations were expected to participate and to report how much they were changing.

7.5 The Independence of the Office

Why did the congregations in Iceland feel at ease to ignore the message from the bishop's office? During a discussion on teamwork and the organisation of the church, two pastors referred to a theological understanding regarding the ordained ministry, the office,⁴⁵ namely the 'independence of the office' in each pastorate.

This understanding of the 'independence of the office from the authority of the bishop' can be traced to Martin Luther's writings on congregational matters and the priesthood of all believers. Because of that, lay people – who are not called to preach – were called to listen to the sermon and judge if it was the Evangelium. The doctrinal authority was moved from the pope and doctrinal committees to the congregation and the believer. The congregation also had the right to choose the pastor, according to Luther, even if Luther's own decisions in congregational matters were contextual – he sometimes favoured the will of the congregation and sometimes the choice of the bishop.⁴⁶ In the ELCI, the bishop appoints the pastor that the congregation has chosen.⁴⁷

In spite of the role lay people played in the selection of pastors, the ELCI has been described as pastor-centric. As evident from the interviews, the pastors saw themselves as the main actors in any changemaking efforts in the parish. Harald Hegstad argued that, as the Nordic folk churches function more as a place to go to rather than as a community, the pastor became the main representative of the church as an institution, based upon his/her role as an administrator of rituals, words and sacraments.⁴⁸ Therefore, the independence of the office could be understood as the independence of the pastor.

⁴⁴ Per Hansson, "From oversight to Advice. The Unexpected Change of Episcopate over Parishes in the Church of Sweden" (paper presented at the The second International Conference on Church Leadership, Uppsala, 2005).

⁴⁵ Icelandic: *embætti*, Swedish: *Ämbete*, German: *Amt*.

⁴⁶ On his different handling of matters in Altenburg, Orlamünde, Zwickau and Rostock, see Gert Häндler: *Luther on ministerial office and congregational function* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1981).

⁴⁷ The bishop appoints according to the will of the congregation as long as the selection does not contradict legislation on civil servants, such as gender equality.

⁴⁸ Hegstad, *The Real Church : An Ecclesiology of the Visible*, (2013), pp. 132–133.

Gunnar Kristjánsson explains the concept of the Independence or Freedom of the office (Freiheit des Amtes) by referring to Lutheran ecclesiology as the freedom the pastor has 'to have his opinion, his own hermeneutics, his own theology, his own religion: his freedom and duty. He is not like a representative of a bank manager in a large bank, not a staff person in a branch from centralised church authority; he is his own master and will stand or fall with his actions. He is entrusted with an office'.⁴⁹ When this pastoral identity was forgotten, the pastor could 'seek refuge in liturgy [...] or under the wings of a powerful authority, which installs rules on how to sit and stand. Neither is a testimony to the Lutheran Heritage'.

Similar emphasis can be found in Isolde Karle's criticism of the paper "The Church of Freedom." Among her concerns are how 'the pastor [...] is increasingly turned into a branch manager [...] rather than the ordained herald of the word of god in an autonomous parish.'⁵⁰ The independence is compromised by the reform's demand for uniformity in the church. Karle stresses the independence of the pastor to act according to his/her conscience, firmly based on Word of God, even if it is not in accordance with tradition or the will of the congregation.⁵¹

The pastors in Iceland, who stress this independence, have sometimes put the emphasis on their independence from not just the bishop, but also the congregation, as explained by one interviewee:

P6 [...] it is not just that each congregation is independent because the pastor, the rector, is also independent of the congregation and the congregation cannot touch him. [...] This is the extreme idea.

According to Lutheran understanding of the priesthood the pastor is neither above the congregation nor subjected to the will of the congregation, as an employee. The pastor is selected to serve the congregation, as a part of the congregation. While the priesthood of all believers is given to all in the congregation, the pastor is entrusted with an office that it needed to fulfil certain roles and duties within the congregation.⁵² There is an inbuilt tension in this model which at the same time upholds the professional independence of the pastor and the importance of the congregation based on the priesthood of all believers.⁵³

8 Conclusion

In planning change and congregational growth churches often use methods and theories from organisational studies where models of growth are plentiful. These methods are mostly developed for use in commercial surroundings, where financial profit is the goal.

Recognizing the limits of the methods in applying them to a church and congregations is important as these social entities differ in many ways from most commercial organisations.

⁴⁹ Gunnar Kristjánsson, "Frelsi Embættisins (the Freedom of the office)," paper presented in Málþing Prestafélags Íslands (Seminar of the Pastoral Association) (Reykjavík, Iceland 2012).

⁵⁰ Karle, I. "Ordained and Professional – Contradictory or Complementary Attributes of the Pastor? Professionalism in the ordained Ministry," Retrieved from Ruhr Universität Bochum. Evangelical–Theologische Fakultät website: http://www.ev-theol.rub.de/lehrtstuehle/karle/aufsaetze/2009/karle_ordainedandprofessional_2009.pdf. p. 7.

⁵¹ *Der Pfarrberuf Als Profession: Eine Berufstheorie Im Kontext Der Modernene Gesellschaft, Praktische Theologie Und Kultur* (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser Verlagshaus, 2001), pp. 265–273.

⁵² Sigurjón Árni Eyjólfsson, "Prestsembættið að evangelísk Lútherskum skilningi (the Pastoral office According to Evangelical Lutheran Understanding)," *Studia Theologica Islandica* 37 (2013), pp. 157–161.

⁵³ Karle, *Der Pfarrberuf Als Profession*, pp. 147–154.

Applying the theories from organisational studies to review the SPP reveals discrepancies in how the process was received at different levels in the church. There was an indication that the central church authorities viewed the process through the Structural Frame and that a follow-up on the diocesan level followed the same premises, to a certain extent. This worked well in planning further policy documents, such as policies on education, diaconia, investments, etc. but not at grass root level.

Qualitative interviews with ten pastors indicated that the specific focus projects of the SPP were not implemented in the congregations. The Structural Frame was not a useful way of implementing such changes, as proper legal structures to enforce it were lacking.

In contrast with the liturgical reform in Norway, the way the projects were communicated seemed to have lessened the urgency for action. It was also clear that the central church authorities did not have any legal right to enforce the focus projects in the congregations, and that pastors did not feel pressed to follow these projects. The environment therefore affected both the communication and the reception of the message.

The agreement and cooperation of the pastor is necessary for any process of change to take place in the parish.⁵⁴ In this sense the pastors can act as gatekeepers of change. According to church regulations, the pastor organises the work of the parish in cooperation with the parish council. The pastor is, therefore, free to ignore any resolutions by the General Assembly and any project of the diocesan office if it does not suit him or the parish, as long as they are not part of either the National Church Act or the rules of procedure⁵⁵ and, therefore, are not mandatory.

Considerable effort was put into the SPP. However, this research shows that the central church authorities did not have the necessary legal or moral authority to enforce action at the parish level. Methods from organisational or business environment must be adapted to the ecclesiological environment. For any such project to succeed, it must be based on affirmed rules of procedure and needs to consider the decisive role of the pastors and the independence of the parishes and pastors in deciding emphasis in parish work.

⁵⁴ This is evident in the interviews and the same view is found in the research on the Liturgy Reform in Norway (Botvar et al.). The conclusion is also supported by the findings of Hansson, who in studying changes in parishes in the Church of Sweden found that the agreement of the pastor was necessary, but not always enough for changes to take place. See Hansson, *Styrning och kultur, en studie om förändringsbetingelser i kyrklig församlingsverksamhet (Management and Culture, a Study on Changes in Church Organizations)* (1990).

⁵⁵ The National Church Act is the legislation on the ELCI, set by the Parliament of Iceland. on the basis of this legislation the General Assembly of the ELCI adopts rules of procedure.

Paper III

Errata

P. 14, last paragraph, line 9: Church legislation 1996 should be 1989.

Pastors without Borders

The Reception of a Reform Initiative in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland

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Abstract

This article analyzes the reception of a reform program, establishing Cooperation Areas in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland (ELCI). According to the program, the clergy and other staff were asked to organize cooperation within each area. The main research questions are: What results can be seen in the early attempts and what are the possible explanations of these results? Looking for answers, I focus on the role of pastors and deans in establishing the Cooperation Areas.

This is a qualitative case study based on documents from the ELCI's General Assembly and other public documents, as well as questionnaires to two selected groups, deans in the ELCI and pastors in one cooperation area. Additional research material came from ten qualitative interviews that had been conducted for a previous research. The documents are analyzed using basic analysis (Sarantokos, 2005) and the questionnaires and interviews using thematic analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The findings indicate that participation in the cooperation project was limited. Possible explanations are: first, the very structure of the cooperation project, which relied on voluntary participation without clear instructions on who should be in charge of completing it; second, cooperation, which was made difficult by the fact that the clergy are hired by the central church and receives salaries from a special church fund, whereas other staff is hired by the parish, often in part-time roles; third, the church structure, where each parish is independent financially and administratively and the pastor has a lot of independence in the office regarding the organization of his/her work. However, in an area where the Cooperation Area project was active to some extent, it had a positive effect on the working environment of the pastors.

The cooperation attempt can be seen in context of reform projects in Nordic churches. It is the first study on this project and adds to the limited amount of studies on the ELCI's structure and reform projects. This study focuses on the role of the clergy. For further studies the involvement of parish councils in reform processes instigated by the Central Church Authorities needs to be explored.

The limitation of this research lies in the qualitative methodology and size of the study, analyzing the answers of a sample of clergy. The conclusions drawn from interviews and questionnaires are to be read in that light.

Keywords: Iceland, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland, church and change, cooperation, clergy.

Introduction

In 2010, the General Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland (ELCI) adopted a proposal to create Cooperation Areas in the church, across the borders of parishes and pastorates. According to the proposal, the clergy and other parish staff in each area should work together and plan their work to ensure the best use of human resources and make certain that the same level of service was offered everywhere. In early 2011, deans were asked to introduce this process in their deaneries. The proposal for Cooperation Areas did not result in any formal changes in the church structure and did not abandon pastorates, but it stipulated change in how church work should be carried out.

Ideas of increased cooperation and different use of human resources are well known in corporate management and public management. In the ELCI these ideas met ecclesiology that has emphasized the traditional role of the pastor as the shepherd, looking after his flock day and night and ideas about the independence of each parish – and parish pastor – vis-à-vis the church's central authorities. This case study looks at the reception of this reform of the Cooperation Areas 2011 - 2017. It shows that the program had limited success in the and looks for possible explanations for those results.

The program of Cooperation Areas can be seen as a reform project. Its aim was to enable the church to improve its service and, simultaneously, to ensure a more equal work-load of the staff. This should primarily be carried out through changing the work habits and thus the roles of pastors and staff.

Morten Huse and Catherine Hansen studied the first stages of the Deanery reforms in the Church of Norway (Huse, 1999; Huse & Hansen, 2002). Their analysis model is used in this study and results compared to some extent. This particular stage of that reform is chosen, as it was a trial period and relied on voluntary participation. In Norway, the first stages later led to changes in legislation. As a result of these changes, pastorates were abandoned and the clergy were instead appointed to one or more parishes but also required to work on deanery basis, that is, across the "borders" of pastorates, organized by the deans (Hans Stifoss-Hanssen et al., 2013). This has not happened in Iceland.

The main research questions are: What results can be observed in the early attempts and what are the possible explanations of these results? Looking for answers, I focus on the role of the pastor and ask whether the pastoral identity can explain the results in Iceland.

This study adds to the research on church reform and change in the ELCI as the first attempt to evaluate and explain the fate of these reforms. It contributes to the more extensive field of research in practical theology in the Nordic context by offering a perspective from Iceland, highlighting to some extent the similarities and the differences between two Nordic Folk Churches. In

this study, Norway is chosen as a main comparison, as the idea of Cooperation Areas shares some commonalities with the Deanery reform in Norway, especially during the first phase of that reform.

Previous Research

The Nordic Lutheran majority churches share many similarities and all of them have gone through major changes during the last two decades. Some changes were directly linked to structural changes in legislation, such as changed relations between church and state in Iceland in 1997 (Björnsdóttir, 2012; Hugason, 2010; Pétursson, 2011), in Sweden in 2000 (Bäckström, Edgardh Beckman, & Pettersson, 2004), and in Norway, a new church legislation in 1996 and changed relations with the state effective from 2017.

In addition to changes in State-Church relations, several organizational changes have taken place. Relevant in this context (but not an exhaustive list) are the changes in parish leadership with new church legislation in Norway in 1996; the merging of parishes in Sweden after 2000, where, for example, from 2000 to 2007 the number of parishes in the Churches of Sweden dropped by approximately 700 (Statistiska Statistiska Centralbyrån 2007, p. 104); and a change in pastorates in Sweden in 2014, when pastorates became defined as cooperation form for congregations (“samverkansform för församlingar”) instead of service areas for the senior pastor or rector. This included changes in financial management, where the pastorate now has the financial responsibility for the parishes (Ordinance), 2016; Rosenius, 2015, pp. 82-83). In Norway, The organization of parish service of the church changed with the deanery reform (Huse et al. 2002; Hans Stifoss-Hanssen et al., 2013) . In Finland, changes in parish borders and merging of parishes followed changes in municipality structures, where changes in parish structures affected more than half the parishes in the first decade of this century (Ketola, Niemelä, Palmu, Salomäki, & Kirkon tutkimuskeskus, 2013; Palmu, 2012). The development in the Church of Denmark has been slower but a significant structural change was the establishment of Diocesan councils in 2009, giving dioceses a formalized structure with operational power (Kirkeministeriet, 2014, pp. 91-94).

Various reform projects for congregational work were instigated during this period as well. An example, though not an exhaustive list, are three large reform processes in the Church of Norway; on liturgy, on Christian education and an effort to increase church democracy (Schmidt 2016, Haga 2016); the strategy titled Our Church - a Participatory Community outlining the Church's operation, was approved by the Church of Finland in 2008 (Palmu et al., 2013). In ELCI, the church's central authorities initiated a strategic planning process in 2003, followed by a series of projects and strategies in various fields of church work (Björnsdóttir, 2016).

Management Theories and Church Reform

Norwegian theologians Kjetil Haga (Haga, 2016) and Ulla Schmidt (Schmidt, 2016) have both argued that the recent reforms in the Church of Norway are influenced by institutional reforms in the

public sector of society in Norway and many other countries often labelled as “New Public Management” (NPM), which stresses that the public sector should be governed and operated along the same lines and principles as the private sector and businesses (Schmidt, 2016:44). NPM sees the private sector as a role model for public administration and defines public administration as a provider of services to citizens, who are redefined as clients and consumers (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2002, p. 17). The model is adapted differently in different countries (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2002, p. 34). Among the characteristics of NPM is strategic planning and management (Gruening, 2001, p. 2). Discussing both the education reform and the deanery reform in Norway, Ulla Schmidt states that even if the changes are influenced by external factors such as NPM, they are adapted to church settings to reduce conflict with church identity and history (Schmidt 2016: 53). Schmidt notes that the many reforms undertaken by the Church of Norway in the last two decades also coincide with increased independence of the church with the establishment of a Church Synod in 1984 and a new Church Act in 1996. This increased independence coincided with a decline in membership and demographic changes in society (Schmidt 2016:39). These demographic changes were also felt by the majority churches in other Nordic countries.

Several research Networks have published research surrounding the structural changes in Nordic Churches, as well as changes in work conditions of pastors and leadership in churches and religious institutions (Hansson (ed.) 1997, Huse (ed) 2000, Askeland et al. (eds) 2005, Niemela (ed) 2012, Askeland et al. (eds.) 2016). Catherine Hansen and Morten Huse studied the early stages of what led to the deanery reform in the Church of Norway (Huse & Hansen, 2002, 2003) and several studies have been carried out on the later stages (Askeland, 2016; Hans Stifoss--Hansen et al., 2013). In this study, I focus on the early stages of the deanery reform, as that period is more comparable with the attempt to establish active Cooperation Areas in Iceland. For the comparison, I will rely on Huse and Hansen’s study on the early attempts (Huse & Hansen, 2002).

In Iceland, the relations between state and church changed in 1998, giving the church autonomy and making the General Assembly its highest decision making body within the constraints of the law (*Lög um stöðu stjórn og starfshætti*, 1997). The Cooperation Areas can be seen as the last project connected to a strategic planning process carried out at the request of the General Assembly in ELCI in 2003. The models used were those known in the business world, and advisors came from the department of Economics at the University (Björnsdóttir, 2016). In this respect, the ideas behind the Cooperation Areas can be traced to ideas on management. The church was not alone in this in Iceland; institutional reforms in the public sector of society, including strategic planning and policy making, has been influential in Iceland, as well as other Nordic countries (Hlynsdóttir, 2012; Kristinsson, 2013; Kristmundsson, 2003)¹.

¹ Icelandic political scientist Gunnar Helgi Kristinsson studied the preparation of public policy by the parliament and the executive power in Iceland and compared them to the process in three Scandinavian states. The policy preparation was assessed in light of the theory of bounded rationality, which “regards rational policy making as a process which fulfils certain requirements with regard to agenda setting, fact finding and analysis, and decision making which fulfils minimum requirements” (Kristinsson, 2013, p. 258). Kristinsson found that Iceland deviates from the other countries on various levels, including less systematic analysis of policy alternatives and setting of priorities. At

The Pastoral Office, a Lifestyle or a Job?

The Cooperation areas are an attempt to modernize parish work and the work environment of the clergy in the ELCI. It is therefore helpful to look at the development of the pastoral office, especially where the traditional ecclesiology meets modern demands of work and family life.

The traditional view of the pastoral office (Icelandic: *Embætti*) in Iceland is that, while it gives the holder the freedom to organize and prioritize his or her work, s/he should also be available at all times. This understanding can be seen in the Letter of Ordination² in the ELCI, which states that the pastor should be on call to assist the parishioners in matters concerning their salvation, *at any time* that they may need it and ask for guidance. This emphasizes the understanding that to be a pastor is to be on call 24/7; it is a lifestyle, not a job. Research in Norway and Denmark shows that this view is changing amongst pastors (Felter, 2016; Stangeland Kaufman, 2016), and these changing views can also be observed in Iceland (Björnsdóttir, 2013; Hörpudóttir, 2015; Petersen, 2012). In Norway, this change is most clear in the changed working environment for pastors in the Church of Norway, where new legislation requires planning and counting the hours that pastors work and payment for overtime. It means also that instead of having an independent office where they can organize and prioritize their own work and working hours, pastors now have more limited freedom.

Norwegian theologian Tone Stangeland Kaufman argues that there is a change in the attitude of pastors towards boundaries between work, leisure and family life and that this change is a compromise between viewing the pastoral office as a calling, being available for the congregation at all times, and being a 9 to 5 job. The emerging pastoral type is a pastor who sets boundaries and is not on call 24/7, while respecting that the pastoral office is a calling and has spiritual dimensions (Stangeland Kaufman, 2016).

In a recent qualitative study on pastors in the church of Denmark, Kirsten Donskov Felter (2016) stresses that they see their vocation as a lifestyle, where there are unclear boundaries between work and time off. Living in a rectory emphasizes the idea that being a pastor is not something one does but something one is. There is however, a marked effort to steer the tasks that can be controlled into an 8 to 4 schedule, whilst acknowledging that some tasks need to take place outside of office hours. The Danish pastor has the freedom to organize his/her work within the limits

the decision stage, “departures from the conclusions reached during the preparatory phase are much more common in Iceland than in the other states” (Kristinsson, 2013, p. 258). The main conclusion is that policy making in Iceland deviates more from the premises of the theory of bounded rationality than in Scandinavia. The strategic planning process in the ELCI was not part of Kristinsson’s research. He claims that the limited research that has been carried out on strategic planning in Iceland indicates that the general emphasis on research, analyses and acceptance found in the Nordic countries, does not exist in Iceland (Kristinsson, 2013, p. 260). My study differs from Kristinsson’s research and the two are not comparable, as I look at the reception of the documents while Kristinsson is concerned with the making of the strategy. Kristinsson’s assumptions, however, raise the question whether strategic planning in public institutions in Iceland shares some commonalities in inadequate preparation.

² Letter of Ordination (Icel. *Vígslubrэф*) is given to the pastor at ordination and states that s/he has been called and ordained to holy service of word and sacrament, listing the general duties of the office.

of these expectations and can therefore take time off during weekdays to counteract long working hours. (Felter, 2016).

In this respect, the Icelandic understanding of the office and working environment is similar to that in Denmark. Rectories are still common in the countryside, even if they are slowly being abandoned. In some areas, pastors take turns with a duty phone for emergencies, which can be reached, for example, by the police and health authorities if a pastor is needed outside office hours. This can take the pressure off being on call at all times, as stated in the Letter of Ordination. The pastoral union has repeatedly discussed working hours and the understanding of the pastoral office as a 24/7 presence. There is tension in finding the balance between the work and the vocation. A committee on working conditions of clergy in 2004 found that the statement in the Letter of Ordination should be understood in terms of the vocation of the office but not as a description of working hours (Haraldsson, 2005; Pastoral Union, 2004, 2006; Stefánsson & Magnússon, 2011). The conclusion is that pastors are not regular employees but have a pastoral office where the working schedule, hours and tasks are set by the pastor. The independence of the office also means that the clergy have certain freedom regarding working hours and can also divide the work amongst themselves and cover for each other on their weekly day off. (Sigurbjörnsson, 2008; Stefánsson & Magnússon, 2011)

In Kaufman's study, the change in attitude towards working hours is related to age. Younger pastors are more interested in setting boundaries. A quantitative study by Icelandic theologian Hildur Björk Hörpudóttir (2015) on pastors' attitude to change, however, does not find differences regarding age, gender or other factors, when asked about the need for change in work procedures in their own pastorates, deaneries or regarding the church governing organization. This study does not ask specifically about working hours but gives the possibility to add comments. When asked about how they feel in their work, some mention isolation and the pressure on family life. Comments included the view that the Letter of Ordination reflected a different reality from modern times, where both partners work and share responsibility for the family. Regarding work environment, there are comments about the need for increased cooperation, merging of parishes and Cooperation Areas (Hörpudóttir, 2015).

Data and Methods

This case study explores how implementation of the Cooperation Areas fared in the ELCI and tries to offer explanations for the results. Three types of material forms are used; written material, two questionnaires sent to two different groups, and answers from ten qualitative interviews with clergy in the ELCI. Written material is official documentation of the process from the ELCI, both from the General Assembly, the executive council and the strategic planning process. These include progress reports to the Executive council and the General Assembly and reports from meetings of the cooperation committee, as well as proposals, resolutions and statements for the Assembly.

A proposal for resolution in autumn 2013 stated that the implementation had not been successful. To follow up on that, I sent a questionnaire to all nine deaneries in the ELCI in 2014 to find out how much had been implemented. Seven deaneries replied. The questions were both open and closed, simple yes and no answers. The questionnaire also offered the opportunity to elaborate on the answers. In the introduction, I told the deans that deaneries or pastorates would not be mentioned by name. I therefore explain the type of deanery in the text but not location. These documents and the questionnaire to the deans are analyzed using basic analysis (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 293). Open answers from that questionnaire are also analyzed using thematic analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 77-101).

In 2017, I sent a questionnaire with open questions to six pastors, who all work in a Cooperation Area where cooperation has been active to some extent. All six pastors replied. Those six pastors are aware that their identity as a group and even as a person might be visible to church people, and they read the text relating to their answers, affirmed it and gave permission. These answers were analyzed using thematic analyses, looking for explicit and latent answers.

Thematic analyses are also used for analyzing material collected for an earlier study on the strategic planning programs of the ELCI (Björnsdóttir, 2016). This consists of ten qualitative interviews with pastors, five male and five female. At the time, women pastors were approximately 30% of the total number, but they are 50% of respondents, as I hoped to limit a possible gender bias by having even numbers. At the time, 48 of the 122 pastors working in parishes worked in the capital area. The sample for interviews included five pastors in the capital area, two in larger towns, one in a small town and two from predominantly rural areas. The interviews were performed in 2008-2009 and focused on participation in other fields of the strategic planning process. Eight interviewees were rectors or senior pastors (*sóknarprestar*), two were junior pastors.

The ten interviews precede the formal launch of Cooperation Areas and are used here as a resource material regarding each pastor's thoughts on cooperation and on the identity of the pastoral office. As they were conducted, the idea of increased cooperation was being discussed at the General Assembly, and increased cooperation and different methods of working was voiced in some of the interviews. I do not draw any quantitative conclusions from the responses. They do, however, give insight into the thoughts of those pastors and can, as such, offer some interpretation both for the possible need for increased cooperation and the reluctance to increase it. When these pastors were interviewed, they were told that confidentiality would be ensured and printed information would not be traceable. In the small community of pastors in Iceland, this is not easy and can in this case only be carried out by leaving out gender (I use s/he) and position.

The Position of the Researcher

In any qualitative research, one of the primary tools is the researcher herself. (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, p. 58). In addition to shaping the research, the position of the researcher can affect the research subject. I worked in the ELCI's diocesan office from 2003 – 2012, was a project manager for the Strategic planning process in 2003 and 2004, and a secretary for the committee that introduced the Cooperation Areas in 2007-2010, called Committee on the Comprehensive Services of

the Church. The benefit of the involvement is good knowledge of the process, but at the same time, there is a clear risk of bias in interpreting results. As the researcher, I was aware of this conflict. Since 2012, I have worked in parish ministry in the capital area, first in an area where the Cooperation Areas are most active and later in an area where they are not implemented at all. Bearing in mind the need for reflexivity (Willig, 2001, pp. 59-61) and danger of bias (Yin, 2014, p. 106), I have tried to be aware of any tendency to internal editing of the material because of the connections with this program and with the diocesan office, as well as bias in questions and response bias from the respondents. The background of working in two different Cooperation Areas has given me added insight into the practical aspects of the program.

Cooperation Areas

Pastors have long cooperated to some extent in the ELCI, especially in serving for one another during summer holidays. In many areas, there is cooperation with confirmation camps or other special events. This has mostly been informal and based on the interest of the pastors themselves. Establishment of special Deanery Funds in 1985 created possible financing for events like camps, concerts or other common events. The idea behind the specific Cooperation Areas goes further than voluntary informal cooperation. It is formal cooperation where all pastors in the area and other parish staff shall work as one to guarantee that people in the area have access to the basic service of the church, regardless of the size of the parish. A resolution defining the service of the church as a whole and proposing the Cooperation Areas as a working model was adopted by the General Assembly in 2010.

Increased urbanization in Iceland had resulted in many rural congregations getting smaller. The General Assembly had encouraged parishes and pastorates to merge (Framtíðarskipan sókna, 2000; Kirkjuráð, 2001), but those plans were met with resistance at the grass root level. By proposing cooperation instead of mergers, the Church's Central Authorities would be opting for a softer version, possibly making mergers easier later. In the original proposal, the focus was on the pastors, and the proposal was to reorganize pastoral service, including to distribute workload more evenly. In the General Assembly, the focus shifted and instead of focusing on the working conditions of pastors, the focus was on the service of the church as a service provider.

Deans in the ELCI were asked to organize meetings and introduce this new form of work in early 2011. The rules of procedures for pastors, as amended in 2011, already mention the Cooperation Areas (Starfsreglur um presta, 2011). Cooperation Areas have also been cited since 2012, when positions for clergy began to be advertised. Clergy are called to work in a pastorate but also in a certain cooperation area. Other staff positions advertised by the parishes do not mention Cooperation Areas.

Three years from the introduction of Cooperation Areas, they had still not become active units of work. A resolution to strengthen and formalize the Cooperation Areas was put to the General Assembly in November 2013. The report stated:

'It seems the Cooperation Areas start slowly and in many places, very little has happened. The reason is not clear, but perhaps, as in many other cases, this can be explained by lack of follow-up, no one feels he or she has the responsibility to do so and there are not enough resources to hire someone to do that, which often seems the best solution.'
(Kirkjubing, 2013)

The resolution proposal from 2013 proposes that pastors and deans should be sent new terms of reference, stating their obligations in terms of cooperation. Furthermore, the legislation and procedures should be changed to strengthen the existence of Cooperation Areas (Gerðir kirkjubings, 2013, pp. 66-91). The proposal was not accepted, and in 2014, the General Assembly combined this proposal with another on the strategic planning process of the management of the ELCI (Gerðir kirkjubings, 2014, pp. 141,166). The matter has not been taken up in the General Assembly since then. The Cooperation Areas still exist but without any further attempts to strengthen them.

Wish for Cooperation

My earlier study on the fate of other projects instigated by church authorities in relation to the strategic planning process shows the programs have not been met with enthusiasm. Qualitative interviews with ten pastors in the ELCI, conducted in 2008 – 9, showed that they were important actors in enabling changes in the parishes, but pastors did not feel obligated to follow the programs suggested by the diocesan authorities (Björnsdóttir, 2016). However, a desire for more cooperation was evident in many of the qualitative interviews.

Pastor 2 works in a large parish in a town in the countryside. S/he felt strongly that the pastors were too isolated in their own parishes. "Pastorates should be larger and more pastors should be [working together]..."

Pastor 6 works in the capital area but shares the colleague's concern: "...There are too many one-man-shows in the church. The areas need to be larger, where people work together and [...] different talents can flourish [...] It is a generational change [...] It is definitely to some extent linked to the increase of women pastors."

Another pastor in the capital linked this to age: "I am one of the younger generation and I want cooperation." (P4)

Casualia (funerals, weddings, confirmation classes and baptism outside of regular service) is paid extra in the ELCI and can boost income significantly. This was mentioned as another possible hindrance to cooperation the view that pastors are not prepared or trained for cooperation.

My dream would be to have two pastors here, dividing the work on basis of equality - I have my strengths, he has his, and we would not be competing [...] For this to happen the

church authorities need to prepare the pastors much earlier - that being a pastor is not about being in competition with other pastors. (P10, a large parish in a town)

More pastors mentioned the collegial competition. Not all agree that pastors want to work together, and one stipulated that this was a job for soloists.

In the interviews, a wish is expressed for increased cooperation, but at the same time, there is recognition of the possible hindrances in payments for *casualia*. The comment that women want increased cooperation finds some support in a quantitative research among ordained women by Hörpudóttir, but it is not conclusive (Hörpudóttir, 2015). These comments can also be reviewed in light of the traditional view of the office of the pastor, where young people and women are the newcomers (women entered the ordained ministry in Iceland in 1974). While many of the interviewees express the wish for increased cooperation, they do not seem to see it as being in their power to change it.

Response from Deaneries

I sent a short questionnaire to all nine deaneries in May 2014 to follow up on the emphasis by the ELCI's General Assembly on Cooperation Areas. I received answers from seven deaneries. One deanery in the capital area and one in the countryside did not respond. The other two deaneries in the capital area responded, as well as five deaneries in the countryside. In all those deaneries, a meeting to introduce this resolution had been held, as requested by the church central authorities, although not all in 2011, as proposed.

In no deanery were the Cooperation Areas a reality to the extent that they are meant to be, but many reported increased cooperation in various fields. In three deaneries, there was no interest in further cooperation akin to the model of the Cooperation Areas. Reasons varied. One dean, whose deanery is in a mostly rural area, said the pastors were simply not interested and the model cannot be enforced. According to this dean, Cooperation Areas do not work, as there is nothing in the ELCI's legislation or rules of procedure that supports this idea. The church as an organization is based on parishes and most of them are small. Several small parishes form a pastorate, usually served by one pastor.

The pastorate is the real Cooperation Area for a pastor. If the General Assembly wants to create larger Cooperation Areas, it will have to merge the pastorates in the cooperation area. As it is, pastors can simply say that they are not interested in teamwork and no one can do anything about it. (D1)

This dean noted that the duty phone was used in one area of his deanery but did not really work, as people preferred to call their own parish pastor. Another dean (D3) said that in his deanery there was growing cooperation in many fields of parish work, but this was not organized along the lines of the Cooperation Areas and there was no interest in doing that. The reason seemed partly due to suspicion related to other structural changes in the church, namely the merging of deaneries and

pastorates. In the last decade, deaneries have been merged³ and some now cover large areas with difficult roads. Changed demographics, with increased urbanization and fewer people in rural areas, have led to merging of pastorates and fewer pastors serving the same area. Similar developments can be observed in health care and other social services in the rural areas. The dean (D3) felt that the idea of Cooperation Areas, the merging of deaneries and of pastorates, and the reduction in the number of pastors serving the area, were all falsely introduced as having the aim of better serving the people and securing basic services.

I have never experienced that cutting down staff increases service and quality. [...] Quite the contrary. There is perhaps some financial advantage, but no increased quality or service in any way. (D3)

With the challenge of organizing the work with ever fewer pastors and the threat of losing more positions, the new idea of Cooperation Areas was not welcomed by staff in the deanery and not carried through. One rural dean observed that the idea of Cooperation Areas simply did not apply in the deanery.

There has always been cooperation in this area since 1985. [...] [Our cooperation] has been flexible and between deaneries, pastorates and parishes and there has never been a problem [...] Therefore, this idea about Cooperation Areas [in our deanery] which was started by the Church Central Authorities, has been completely meaningless in our context. (D5)

The comment indicates that there is a limit to the acceptance, at least for this dean, to the extent that he accepts the resolutions of the General Assembly and the authority of the Church's Central Authorities.

In 2014, Cooperation Areas were active to some extent within three deaneries. In one deanery in the capital area, cooperation had been growing, and a specific fund was set aside by the deanery to strengthen cooperation.

The areas are not all alike and neither is the cooperation, and I think that is good, that the cooperation is shaped by the needs and situation in each area. (D6)

In another deanery in the capital area, the idea was introduced but nothing else happened. The dean says this is partly because there is uncertainty about the Cooperation Areas, and it is unclear who should initiate the change, whether it is the dean or the senior pastors.

³ In 2009 from 15 to 12 and in 2010 from 12 to 9.

Experiences from an Active Cooperation Area

In one municipality in the capital area, Kópavogur, a Cooperation Area has been active to a greater extent than in other places. The cooperation involves a duty phone, sharing responsibilities for the care institutions in the town and organizing summer holidays and common services in summer. A questionnaire sent to the pastors in 2017 reveals that their cooperation had started before the formal Cooperation Areas were activated and was at the initiative of the pastors. This is felt to be one of the reasons for its success, as well as geographical circumstances, as this is one municipality consisting of four parishes near one another, and good leaders who want to overcome hindrances.

All the pastors feel that the cooperation has increased their quality of life. The duty phone (present before 2011) relieved the pressure to be always on call, which was good for family life. They mention that collegiality increased, they help each other out, and respect each other's strengths.

All are friends and no one seems worried that the colleagues are taking anything away from them. (K1)

When the pastors are confident and content in their work, the will to cooperate increases. (K2)

All the pastors felt that further cooperation was feasible. They mentioned better use of both money and human resources, for example in office work, education and youth work, making use of the different talents. Asked what they thought the biggest hindrance in other areas was, they named mostly geography and differences in workload. The advantages need to be clear if someone is changing or increasing his/her work. Additionally, if the actual work in the pastorate was limited, a pastor might feel less inclined to cooperate. Others, furthermore, might understand their vocation as such that they themselves needed to be on call for the parishioners. Three of the pastors in the cooperation area wanted to go further and merge the four parishes into one pastorate, which would make all cooperation easier.

Evaluating the Cooperation Areas

Norwegian KIFO researchers Morten Huse and Catherine Hansen did an empirical research on the early stages of the reorganization of pastoral service in Norway, or the deanery reform, in Norway. Behind the evaluation were visits to ten areas where different attempts could be studied (Huse & Hansen, 2002). These early stages, or trial period, of the Deanery reform in Norway provides a comparison with the Cooperation Areas. I will therefore describe them briefly and list the main findings of Huse and Hansen. In this trial period, the Ministry of Church Affairs in Norway stipulated that participation should be voluntary. The presupposition for the trial stage was that this

should not increase cost. However, where this was enacted there was some compensation for increased work, as all pastors became senior pastors (sogneprester). Another precondition was that everyone had to agree to participate. A single pastor could veto participation in their area. A lot was, therefore, hanging on motivation, both for pastors, deans and bishops who should oversee the attempts in their dioceses.

Looking at some of Huse and Hansen's findings, one significant challenge was the lack of ownership of the experiment. The attempt was initiated by the ministry, and few in the church, either central or local, felt ownership of them. Different work conditions, family situations, etc., affected the interest in participation. Geography also played a large part. Some pastors felt isolated and in need of fellowship, but the distance was a challenge and meant added work. Some felt that increased cooperation impinged on their independence in office. Many pastors clearly wanted to be able to organize their own time. Motivation was a keyword, and cooperation was established where interested actors – bishops, deans or pastors - led the way. Most of the pastors who participated felt that the collegial spirit became better. Distribution of *casualia* affected the work of the pastors. Some of the pastors worried about losing oversight over their main parish and worried that they might lose their position in the parish and simply become functionaries of clerical acts. Others felt that this change was positive. The congregation no longer owned them.

In Norway, the development later led to pastorates being abandoned and deaneries strengthened. As of 2011, all pastors are hired to the deanery with one or more parish as their core service area.

The main findings of Huse and Hansen find resonance in the response to the Cooperation Area reforms. There is lack of ownership, interest in preserving the independence plays a part and motivation is important. Those who participated felt that it increased collegiality.

Evaluating the early steps of the process in Norway, Huse and Hansen look at five aspects: organization and leadership of the pastors, results based on the work situation of the pastor, results for the office of the pastor, congregation and staff, key actors and how they fulfil their role and the role of geography (2002:59). This approach or model is helpful to assess the first attempts at Cooperation Areas in Iceland. Direct comparison is not possible, as Huse and Hansen's evaluation is carried out in areas where the reform was tried and there is some participation. Analyzing the fate of the Cooperation Areas in light of the model can help distinguish the different factors in the process and possibly compare the concerns expressed. I will look at organization and leadership, results regarding work situation of pastors, results for the pastoral office, key actors and geography.

Organization and Leadership

The plan for the Coordination Areas stipulated that certain pastorates should work together in organizing their service. The work should be introduced by the deans. The pastors in the stipulated areas should then take over and choose among themselves or from the lay staff someone to lead each year. The cooperation was expected to be inclusive of all church work that affects non-clergy staff, such as organists, youth workers, etc. It should be noted that many congregations have no

full-time staff other than the pastor. Organists are often in part-time positions outside of the largest towns. Deacons and youth workers in paid positions can only be found in large parishes. Clergy is hired by the ELCI, not by parish councils, but other staff are usually employees of parish councils. The cooperation would therefore depend on the willingness of the parish councils. In this, the structure stretches over two groups of employees with very different working conditions. This can clearly complicate cooperation.

The guidelines were not very concrete, and in responses from the deaneries there is a complaint as to who should lead the work. The role of the dean was simply to introduce this resolution, not to follow up on the work. No financial or other type of compensation was expected for the organizers, even though organizing the cooperation could result in much work for them. The leadership point is therefore weak, relying on good will and not acknowledging the fact that leadership is a skill and that leading a group of equals to divide work, giving some of them more to do, requires experience, commitment and a clear mandate.

The Work Environment and the Office of the Pastor

The arguments behind the deanery reform (Huse and Hansen, 2002:20) to improve working conditions for pastors also have a reflection in the argumentation behind the Cooperation Areas, which originally focused on the pastoral service and distribution of workload but was changed by the General Assembly to include all services of the church (Heildarskipan þjónustu kirkjunnar 2006).

The prerequisites for the Cooperation Areas were based on the idea of participation, which had to be voluntary. It should affect the quality of the service and the working conditions but not salaries of pastors or other staff. Evaluating answers from the deanery questionnaire shows that relying on voluntary participation does not work. If the clergy do not find it in their interest to increase cooperation, it does not happen.

One of the aims in Norway was to distribute the workload of pastors, including *casualia*. In the ELCI, *casualia* is paid extra. As a result, more equal distribution would affect the income of the clergy in some cases. It is among the things mentioned by pastors in Kópavogur as a possible hindrance to further cooperation. This can possibly explain why *casualia* is not part of the discussion or recommendations or seen as a motive regarding the Cooperation Areas. Icelandic pastors are officials, both in the traditional understanding of having the office of the word and the sacraments and as a formal position within society, defined by employment legislation as different from the status of an employee. By comparison, the clergy in the Church of Norway ceased being officials of the state with new Church legislation in 1996. The independence that the office enjoys is sometimes defined further by the clergy as giving independence from the Church authorities (Björnsdóttir, 2016), defined by one respondent as “where each pastor is his/her own bishop” (K3). Replies from the deaneries to my questionnaire indicated that clergy members do reserve the right to ignore proposals or encouragement from the Church central authorities if they do not agree with the content. In this the pastor is identifying strongly with the office and what is perceived as its independence.

Key Actors

Looking at the decision makers in the project, it is evident that it had the support of the General Assembly and the diocesan authorities. However, in 2014, the plan for further and more concise implementation was not adopted and the proposal was merged with a new proposal for strategic planning. In 2015, the Committee introduced ideas in an interim report on increasing the independence of the deaneries and proposed that deaneries could decide more about workload distribution within the deaneries. The General Assembly did not give clear guidelines on how to proceed, and no decision has been made. This could be interpreted as lessening commitment by the General Assembly to the Cooperation Areas.

The deans were asked to introduce the idea in 2011 but were not made responsible for the implementation. It is clear from their answers to the questionnaire that not all the deans agreed with the program, and this affected their support. Pastors were asked to take it further but no-one was given a specific mandate. The Cooperation Areas are part of the rules of procedure for clergy since 2011, thus formally involving the clergy, but instructions are not specific. Both deans and pastors can ignore the cooperation ideas if they see fit, as was evident from the answers to the questionnaire. Involving staff hired directly by the parishes relies on the good will of that staff and the parish council. This can be further complicated by the fact that staff is often in part time positions and/or with defined work areas, and cooperation is usually about more work, not less.

Did Geography play a Role?

The participation in the Cooperation Areas was so limited that we cannot assume anything about the role of geography. However, participants in the active Cooperation Area Kópavogur felt that geography helped, in other words, that this was one municipality and the churches are not too far from one another.

Conclusion

The evaluation of the Cooperation Areas shows that the organization and structure of the project is dependent on interest in cooperation and voluntary participation, including volunteering to organize and lead. Given the structure of the church and the independence of the parishes, this was a necessary approach, and a more forceful implementation would have meant further changes to the rules of procedure of parishes and/or change in legislation on the church.

Deans and pastors were expected to play a significant role in introducing and organizing the cooperation. Considering the structure of their respective offices, the dean cannot order the pastor to participate and given the independence of the office of the pastor, s/he can decide not to do so. The qualitative interviews cited and the research on pastors (Hörpudóttir, 2015) show an interest in cooperation and it is clear that pastors often initiate cooperation in various fields where they themselves see the benefit. It is also clear that some want further cooperation and see the merging of

pastorates as a solution, but at the same time, there is visible reluctance to do so. *Casualia* may play a part, but the reluctance seems rather to manifest itself in the fact that there is not enough reason to possibly take on more work without any guaranteed benefits. In Norway, cooperation on deanery basis was enforced by abandoning pastorates. Given the structure of the ELCI and the results of the first attempt at Cooperation Areas, my conclusion is that Cooperation Areas would only become reality if they were enforced by change in legislation and structure of the ELCI.

Given the limited success of the Cooperation Areas, little can be assumed regarding the effect on pastors' attitude to work. Replies from the area where cooperation had increased list positive aspects, such as being part of a team and the benefit of team work in sharing the load, the positive effect of a duty phone in setting boundaries and thus on family life. This can imply that the attitude of the pastor towards his/her office can both affect participation and be affected by participation.

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