The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland in a Changing Socio-Economic Environment: Marketization and Changing Discursive Practices

by Marcus Moberg

Introduction

The general character and social position of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland have undergone a range of notable transformations in the modern era. Ever since the initial official establishment of Lutheranism in Finland through the Swedish reformation in 1527, the Lutheran Church has, in various ways, sought to maintain a strong presence at every level of Finnish society and culture. Similar to other national churches with deep historical structural relationships with their respective states, the Finnish Lutheran Church has always developed concomitantly with the rest of society and, as such, always adapted to broader processes of social and cultural change.[1] Mirroring similar developments throughout much of Western Europe, the progressive differentiation of society and social functions in the modern era has entailed a general weakening of the church's structural relationship with the state, coupled with a gradual erosion of its social position and influence over social institutional spheres such as the legal and educational establishment.

The church has responded to its changing position in society by placing an ever stronger emphasis on its role as the main proponent of social solidarity. In modern times, and especially during recent decades, this has frequently been expressed through an idiom of social justice and egalitarianism. At the same time, however, the church has no doubt also been affected by some significant and more recent social and cultural trends that may, at least partly, seem to run counter to its expressed long-standing emphasis on social solidarity, namely, the increasing marketization of social and cultural life as a whole.

The notion of the "market" as a primary mode of governance and social and cultural organization has gained increasing prominence following the emergence and spread of neo-liberal ideologies on a worldwide scale since the early 1980s. Throughout the Western world, and indeed beyond, this development has brought about notable changes in general political economy and significant restructurings of earlier state and civil society arrangements through accelerating processes of decentralization, the privatization and outsourcing of public services, and the establishment of a new organizational culture underpinned by market-oriented values.[2]

As part of these developments, past decades have witnessed an increasing shift from hierarchical, bureaucratic, and centralized national-statist models of social organization and

1 Cf. Peter Berger: The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory on Religion, New York, NY 2011.

2 Cf. Don Slater, Fran Tonkiss: Market Society: Markets and Modern Social Theory, Cambridge 2001; Marcus Moberg, Kennet Granholm et.al.: Trajectories of Post-Secular Complexity: An Introduction, in: Peter Nynäs, Mika Lassander et.al. (eds.): Post-Secular Society, Brunswick, NJ 2012, pp. 1-25.

regulation towards a market model that places horizontal and decentralized network-types of organization in the foreground – a development that has often had profound consequences for traditional religious organizations.[3] As expressed by Gauthier, the establishment and perpetuation of consumerism and neoliberalism has propelled a set of interrelated social and cultural processes "through which economics has dislodged politics as a structuring and embedding force."[4]

Following these socio-economic changes, traditional religious organizations in particular have become increasingly compelled to re-configure themselves in accordance with market-oriented modes of organizational and managerial culture and to communicate their messages in ways that are deemed to more closely correspond to the consumption-oriented sensibilities of modern populations.[5] Current transformations affecting traditional institutional religious organizations therefore need to be approached and understood against the background of the "recent shaping of culture by economics."[6]

The impact of market logics and consumer culture ideologies within the present-day religious landscape of the Nordic countries has recently started to receive more scholarly attention, particularly in relation to church welfare provision.[7] A more cohesive scholarship on market, consumer culture, and religion in a Nordic context is, however, just beginning to emerge. This article explores the impact of processes of marketization and the increasing technologization of discourse within the particular institutional religious setting of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF). As such, focusing on changing discursive practices, it provides a general account of the gradual transformation of the ELCF from a state-oriented, community-building institution to a civil society and service-oriented one. Following a general account of the history of the ELCF, the article highlights how official ELCF discourse has, following broader changes in discursive practices, become increasingly permeated by market-oriented discourses and terminology since the early 1990s. This development is illustrated in relation to a few notable examples from official ELCF discourse.

3 Cf. François Gauthier, Linda Woodhead et.al.: Introduction: Consumerism as the Ethos of Consumer Society, in: François Gauthier, Tuomas Martikainen (eds.): Religion in Consumer Society: Brands, Consumers, Markets, Farnham 2013, pp. 1-26.

4 François Gauthier: Religion, Media and the Dynamics of Consumerism in Globalising Societies, in: Kennet Granholm, Marcus Moberg et.al. (eds.): Religion, Media, and Social Change, New York, NY 2015, p. 71.

5 Cf. Marcus Moberg, Kennet Granholm: The Concept of the Post-Secular and the Contemporary Nexus of Religion, Media, Popular Culture, and Consumer Culture, in: Peter Nynäs, Mika Lassander et.al. (eds.): Post-Secular Society, Brunswick, NJ 2012, pp. 95-128.

6 Tuomas Martikainen, François Gauthier et.al.: Introduction: Religion in Market Society, in: Tuomas Martikainen, François Gauthier (eds.): Religion in the Neoliberal Age: Political Economy and Modes of Governance, Farnham 2013, p. 2.

7 Cf. Anne-Birgitta Pessi, Henrietta Grönlund: The Place of the Church: Public Sector or Civil Society? Welfare Provision of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, in: Journal of Church and State 54 (2011), no. 3, pp. 353-374; Ida Marie Høeg: Familiene i trosopplæringen og trosopplæringens markedstenkning (The Families in Religious Instruction and the Marketization of Religious Instruction), in: Turid Skorpe Lannem et.al. (eds.): Metode, Mål og mening i Den norske kirkes trosopplæringsreform (Method, Aim and Meaning in the Reform of Religious Instruction in the Church of Norway), Oslo 2006, pp. 71-83; Anders Bäckström, Grace Davie et.al. (eds.): Welfare and Religion in 21st Century Europe, Volume 1: Configuring the Connections, Farnham 2010.

In this connection, the article also highlights the increasing technologization of discourse within the ELCF that has constituted a central element of these developments.

Marketization and Changing Discursive Practices

The term marketization can, and has been, used in a range of both heuristic, descriptive, and evocative capacities across various disciplines, such as sociology, economics and political economy. Heuristically, the term marketization can generally be taken to denote "the permeation of market exchange as a social principle"[8] and, as such, also the process whereby different social and cultural institutional spheres or sub-systems become gradually, but increasingly, "subjected to a deliberate policy of economizing."[9] It is important to recognize, however, that marketization in this understanding needs to be approached as a multifaceted phenomenon that assumes different forms depending on the particular context in relation to which it occurs.[10]

Processes of marketization can be explored on several interrelated levels, one of the most significant being the 'ideational' and 'discursive', as can be observed in relation to changing institutional discursive practices. The purpose of this marketization-focused approach is by no means to argue for the reduction of social realities to economic determinants but, rather, to highlight the "*noneconomic* [i.e. the ideological, ideational, and discursive] dimensions and effects of market economics and their correlates in globalizing societies".[11] In this discourse-focused approach, marketization is thus understood as a particular type of discursive process that involves the gradual proliferation and increasingly wide circulation of certain sets or clusters of discursive formations centered on market-oriented terms, notions, and values such as 'deregulation', 'cost-effectiveness', 'privatization', 'managerialism', 'new public management', 'autonomy', 'flexibility', and 'entrepreneurialism'. In this perspective, marketization is therefore used to denote the process whereby institutional spheres or domains in society gradually, but increasingly visibly, become colonized by market-associated discourse, language, and terminology.[12]

Analyses of changing institutional discursive practices are usefully pursued by including a historical variable aimed at exploring general "qualitative differences between different historical epochs in the social functioning of discourse".[13] Although, as Fairclough points out, such a historical variable should not be added in order to be able to identify any "radical disjunctures" in discursive practices between different, supposedly clearly delineated

8 Slater, Tonkiss, Market Society (see note 2), p. 25.
9 Uwe Schimank, Ute Volkmann: Economizing and Marketization in a Functionally Differentiated Capitalist Society – A Theoretical Conceptualization, in: Uwe Schimank, Ute Volkmann (eds.): The Marketization of Society: Economizing the Non-Economic, Bremen 2012, p. 37.
10 Cf. Marcus Moberg: Exploring the Spread of Marketization Discourse in the Nordic Folk Church Context, in: Frans Wijsen, Kocku von Stuckrad (eds.): Making Religion: Theory and Practice in the Discursive Study of Religion, Leiden 2016, p. 241.
11 Gauthier, Religion, Media and the Dynamics (see note 4), p. 72, emphasis added.
12 Cf. Moberg, Exploring the Spread of Marketization Discourse (see note 10), p. 242.
13 Norman Fairclough: Critical Discourse Analysis and the Marketization of Public Discourse, in: Discourse and Society 4 (1993), p. 138.

historical periods, it can nevertheless be useful for identifying notable "qualitative shifts in the 'cultural dominant'" with respect to the "nature of the discursive practices which have most salience and impact in a particular epoch."[14] When applied to the analysis of contemporary processes of institutional religious change, this approach is thus based on the contention that an adequate understanding of contemporary transformations in institutional religious life is contingent upon an adequate understanding and analysis of the discursive dimensions of these transformations (although this is by no means the only dimension that needs to be considered). The analysis of changing discursive practices in this chapter will further be pursued in relation to what Fairclough has termed the "technologization of discourse".[15]

As a particular type of discursive practice and phenomenon, the technologization of discourse has developed into an increasingly salient feature of contemporary institutional discursive practice as a whole, including that of religious institutions and organizations. As argued by Fairclough, this has occurred following the emergence and spread of new market-oriented 'discourse technologies' – e.g. managerialism, entrepreneurialism, competitiveness, flexibility, cost-effectiveness, advertising, and promotion, coupled with a notable new emphasis on 'communicative skills' – all of which have increasingly become "designed and projected as 'context-free', and usable in any relevant context."[16] Specialist 'technologists' such as management consultants and management gurus have played a central role in the dissemination and continuous modification of these discourse types as they have developed into central tropes of "an increasingly powerful cultural circuit of capital".[17] Indeed, such discourse types have, over time, gained near-hegemonic status and played a central role in motivating and propelling an increasing technologization of discourse across several institutional domains, ranging from education and healthcare to religion.

More concretely, the technologization of discourse principally involves research into existing institutional discursive practices, a deliberate redesign of those practices according to new context-free discourse types that underpin new criteria of institutional effectivity, and training in the new practices.[18] A technologization of discourse thus occurs when an organization or institution, due to perceived external pressures, becomes increasingly susceptible to discourse technologies, adopts new discursive practices, and deliberately strives to transform its existing discursive practices so as to conform (and be seen to conform) to new criteria of institutional effectivity with regard to, for example, organizational and managerial culture. As such, the technologization of discourse is closely related to a general extension and proliferation of strategic discourse to new domains and tends to be "most widely experienced in the form of top-down imposition of new discursive practices by organizations upon their members."[19]

14 Ibidem, p. 138; Moberg, Exploring the Spread of Marketization Discourse (see note 10), p. 240.
15 Norman Fairclough: Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language, [2]Oxon 2010.
16 Ibidem, p. 139.
17 Nigel Thrift: Knowing Capitalism, London 2005, pp. 34 f.
18 Cf. Fairclough, Critical Discourse Analysis (see note 13), p. 137.
19 Ibidem, p. 140.

The ELCF: A Brief Historical Overview

Finnish history from approximately the beginning of the 1100s up to the mid-1700s can be divided roughly into two main cultural periods: medieval peasant culture (approx. 1200s–1500s) and estate society culture (approx. 1600s–1800s). The Protestant Reformation can be regarded as the "watershed" between these two cultural periods.[20]

At the time of this watershed, Finland was an integral part of the Swedish kingdom, and, thus, Lutheranism was constitutionally established in Finland as it was adopted as the sole confessional state church of Sweden at the Synod of Uppsala in 1593 (prohibition of any other religious observance was introduced throughout the realm in 1617). The 1600s – commonly referred to as the Period of Orthodoxy – were marked by a strong emphasis on the perpetuation of religious uniformity and the establishment of centralized power structures, of which the Lutheran church formed an integral, and indeed, central part.[21] During this period, the church extended its influence to every aspect of social and cultural life and strove, in particular, to adapt and consolidate its activities and practices with the realities of the local village community, which was the predominant form of life for the great majority of Finns at the time. The establishment of the Lutheran doctrine of the three estates and the resulting three-level division of society further strengthened and consolidated the relationship between church and state (or divine and secular) authority into a single whole.[22] In the course of these developments, the Swedish-Finnish church gradually developed bureaucratic structures and modes of organization. Although Finland was annexed by the Russian Empire in 1809, the Lutheran church retained its position as the state church in what then became the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland.[23]

Finnish industrialization started fairly late. Not truly beginning until the 1830s and 1840s, industrialization picked up pace in the 1860s and 1870s and, as such, coincided with a range of additional broader contemporary transnational social and cultural transformations that eventually brought about a general shift from local to civil society. Several notable changes regarding the relationship of the church to the state and local municipalities also took place during this time. For example, in 1865 political municipalities were no longer identical with the Lutheran parishes. Church-state relations were further significantly altered when a new church law came into force in 1870. The Lutheran Church now gained a notably higher degree of administrational independence from the state through the establishment of its own decision-making body, the General Synod.[24]

Following Finnish independence in 1917, the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the much smaller Orthodox Church were established as official national peoples' churches. Finnish independence was followed by the bitter and bloody Finnish Civil War of 1918, during which the dominant Evangelical Lutheran Church aligned itself with the right-wing side or the "whites". After the right-wing victory in May of 1918, the church was assigned

20 Cf. Kimmo Kääriäinen, Kati Niemelä et.al.: Religion in Finland: Decline, Change and Transformation of Finnish Religiosity, Tampere 2005, pp. 37 f.
21 Cf. ibidem, p. 39.
22 Cf. ibidem, pp. 39-46.
23 Cf. ibidem, pp. 49-55.
24 Cf. ibidem.

an ever more central role as a uniting force in the country, providing, among other things, "a counterbalance to the ideological threat of Communism."[25] The Act of Religious Freedom of 1922 also further greatly affected the legal position of the church.

During the period leading up to the Second World War, Finnish society experienced increasing social differentiation as many social functions previously administered and overseen by the church were gradually taken over by secular government and municipalities. Such developments were indeed characteristic for the Nordic countries more generally and are often taken to have played a key role in the subsequent development of the Nordic welfare state model.[26] The post-war decades brought rapid industrial and service-industrial development and fast-increasing urbanization, resulting in unprecedented economic growth and fundamental changes in the social and cultural life of the large majority of Finns (at the beginning of the 1990s less than 20% of Finns lived in rural areas). During this period the ELCF also strengthened its position as a national or 'people's' church, particularly through emphasizing its 'special task' and role as one of the main proponents of social solidarity.

A more thorough division between parish- and secular municipality administration had already commenced during the 1860s following a renewal of parish and municipality legislation in 1865 and 1869. This led to the establishment of many new parishes across the country, a development that picked up pace in the first three decades of the 20th century and was continued during the post-war reconstruction era up until the 1970s. This trend was eventually reversed following the increasing unification of municipalities beginning in the 1970s, leading to the start of a gradual and accelerating process of parish reform that eventually resulted in further unification of parishes and the establishment of larger parish-unions throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. Historically, the nation-wide ELCF parish structure has typically been affected and altered by broader changes in the structure and organization of municipalities, especially following the general relocation of the Finnish population to urban areas and the ageing of the population remaining in increasingly deserted rural areas.[27] Widespread parish reform has thus constituted one of the most significant general changes in ELCF organizational structure in the post-war era.

In the early 1990s, Finland was hit by a deep economic depression. During this time the ELCF further strengthened its position as a key proponent of general social solidarity. As was reflected in many of its official statements at the time – a practice that extended way into the 2000s – the ELCF now emerged as a particularly staunch public supporter of the welfare state model. The difficult economic situation of the early 1990s also brought serious financial challenges for the church, particularly as a result of a notable decrease in church-tax revenue.[28] Although the church was not as deeply affected as some other societal institutions, it nevertheless had to adjust and adapt the organization of its activities

25 Ibidem, p. 57.
26 Cf. ibidem, pp. 56-58.
27 Cf. Risto Nieminen, Leena Vallennius et.al.: Seurakuntarakenne murroksessa. Yhdistyvien seurakuntien organisaation ja toimintayhteisön muutosprosessi [A Changing Parish-Structure: The Process of Change of Unifying Parish Organization and Operational Environment], Tampere 2005, pp. 229 f.
28 Cf. Harri Heino, Kari Salonen et.al.: Suomen evankelilais-luterilainen kirkko vuosina 1992–1995 [The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland between the Years 1992–1995], Tampere 1997, pp. 228 f.

to new financial realities.[29] The ELCF's regular four-year reports on church developments (compiled by the Church Research Institute) provide valuable insights into how the ELCF has viewed and responded to broader social, cultural, and socio-economic developments at particular points in time. For example, the report for the period 1992–1995[30] deals with the economic situation of the early 1990s at some length and also includes quite a detailed discussion of the basic tenets and social consequences of neoliberal policies and political economy. Like the ELCF as a whole during this period, the report itself takes a clear stance in favor of the preservation of a robust welfare society, which is represented as a concrete expression and manifestation of basic Lutheran ethical principles of collective care for those in need.[31] The report urges ELCF actors to strive to further develop and deepen their cooperation with secular municipalities and NGOs.[32] However, in what can be seen as a clear expression of the ELCF's contention that social welfare should remain a concern for the whole of society and basically be overseen and upheld by the state, the report simultaneously also warns against the church taking on "too many social functions."[33]

However, in addition to these issues, the report also contains critical remarks on the ELCF's ability to adapt to a new socio-cultural environment. For example, it laments the fact that the ELCF has not been able to sufficiently reduce its bureaucracy, calling for a more thorough reform of church administrational and organizational culture.[34] The report consequently recommends considering new, more flexible organizational and administrational models for the future, such as increasing project-based forms of work and employing people on a part-time basis.[35]

In addition, the report recommends that parishes strive to enhance inter-parish cooperation and more actively and purposefully utilize new ICTs and communication technologies in order to be able to respond and adapt more swiftly to new "economic demands."[36] In general, the increasing public emphasis that the ELCF started attaching to issues relating to social solidarity and the perpetuation of a strong welfare society in the early 1990s has continued to this day. However, as illustrated by the recommendations contained in the 1992–1995 four-year report, there is no denying that the ELCF itself has become increasingly influenced by and susceptible to new market-model related organizational and administrational values.

Religious Change and the Current State of the ELCF

Like the other Nordic countries, Finland has also clearly been affected by the same types of broader processes of religious change that have come to mark many contemporary Western liberal democracies. Although the ELCF has so far managed to retain its social and cultural

29 Cf. ibidem, p. 247.
30 Cf. ibidem.
31 Cf. ibidem, pp. 27-29, 309.
32 Cf. ibidem, p. 312.
33 Ibidem, p. 309. Author's translation of the Finnish original.
34 Cf. ibidem, p. 312.
35 Cf. ibidem, p. 247.
36 Ibidem, p. 248, 309. Author's translation of the Finnish original.

position as a 'people's' church and the dominant religious institution in the country, in the past three or so decades, the Finnish religious landscape has nevertheless been marked by steady institutional religious decline coupled with what Ketola has termed "silent religious transformation."[37] Although 72.8%t of the Finnish population were still members of the ELCF on December 31st, 2015, active church attendance and participation in church activities has decreased sharply over a longer period of time and is now exercised by only a small minority.[38]

It is also important to note that shrinking church membership has already started to pose economic challenges for the ELCF as austerity has emerged as an increasingly important agent of change, forcing it to ponder different alternatives for downsizing and re-thinking its allocation of financial resources. Adherence to ELCF beliefs has also decreased sharply, especially among the younger age groups.[39] Generally, when measured on the basis of conventional sociological indicators, the religiosity of young adults has declined on all fronts, particularly in the Helsinki metropolitan area. Since the mid-1990s, the ELCF has consequently developed and implemented a range of strategies and nation-wide projects aimed at bringing young people back into its fold. A development is now also clearly underway whereby an ever larger percentage of ELCF members who only rarely or occasionally participate in church activities increasingly tend not to participate at all[40] – a development that has also been documented in several other European countries and mainly been attributed to progressively weakening mechanisms of religious socialization.[41]

However, even though increasing numbers of Finns have less and less contact with the ELCF, its legacy as 'the' church still undoubtedly lives on in wider Finnish public discourse.[42] The general attitudes of Finns towards the ELCF have often – using a reformulation of Davie's famous term "believing without belonging"[43] – been conceptualized in terms of a disposition of "belonging without believing",[44] or even "believing in belonging".[45] The term "vicarious religion", also originally coined by Davie to capture the general attitude towards the Church of England among contemporary Britons, has also been used to

37 Kimmo Ketola: Spiritual Revolution in Finland? Evidence from Surveys and the Rates of Emergence of New Religious and Spiritual Organisations, in: Nordic Journal of Religion and Society 20 (2007), no. 1, p. 31; cf. Gallup Ecclesiastica. Regular poll conducted by Kirkon tutkimuskeskus (The Research Centre of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church), kept in their archives, 2011.

38 Cf. Kääriäinen, Niemelä et.al., Religion in Finland (see note 20).

39 Cf. Teija Mikkola, Kati Niemelä et.al.: The Questioning Mind. Faith and Values of the New Generation. Tampere 2007, pp. 80-83, 94 f.; Gallup Ecclesiastica 2011 (see note 37).

40 Cf. Kyrkans forskningscentral: Utmanad kyrka. Evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan i Finland åren 2008–2011 [A Challenged Church: The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland Between the Years 2008–2011], Tampere 2013, p. 410.

41 Cf. David Voas, Alasdair Crockett: Religion in Britain: Neither Believing nor Belonging, in: Sociology 39 (2005), no. 1, pp. 11-28.

42 Cf. Marcus Moberg, Måns Broo et.al.: Contemporary Discursive Formations, in: Peter Nynäs, Ruth Illman et.al. (eds.): On the Outskirts of 'the Church': Diversities, Fluidities and New Spaces of Religion in Finland, Berlin 2015, pp. 56-72; Kate Hunt: Understanding the Spirituality of People who Do Not Go to Church, in: Grace Davie, Paul Heelas et.al. (eds.): Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures, Hamphire 2003, pp. 162-168.

43 Grace Davie: Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging, Oxford 1994.

44 David Martin: On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory, Hampshire 2005, p. 86.

45 Kääriäinen, Niemelä et.al., Religion in Finland (see note 20), p. 85.

describe the Finnish context in that an increasingly large percentage of ELCF members now view the church as a "public utility" that demands little of them but nevertheless provides "a form of religion which they can access as the need arises".[46]

As the church has become ever more concerned and engaged with wider social issues it has also increasingly come to be expected to serve not only its own members but also "the public at large."[47] As Kääriäinen, Niemelä and Ketola pointed out in their general overview of the state of Finnish religiosity in 2005: "Institutional religion has changed from state-oriented to society-oriented."[48] That is, the ELCF has increasingly taken on functions not directly or specifically connected to religious issues. As such, it can be said to have made a range of accommodations to late-modern Finnish society and culture through the growing emphasis it has begun to put on having "more interface with the concerns which people find important."[49] Indeed, the social role or 'social conscience'[50] that the ELCF represents remains highly appreciated by the majority of Finns, regardless of their individual religious commitments.

The ELCF and Current Socio-Economic Developments: Marketization and Changing Discursive Practices

The developments sketched in the previous two sections, relating to broader structural changes in society on the one hand, and changing religious sensibilities on the other hand, have all affected the institutional character and self-understanding of the ELCF in a number of notable ways. As already observed, religious institutions do, of course, always develop concomitantly with the rest of society. A religious institution with long-standing historical and structural relationships to the state and local municipalities will therefore naturally also be transformed as a consequence of wider processes of social structural change.

The challenges posed by changing religious sensibilities and declining church membership have also started to further affect the present-day social position of the church. The main point to note here is that both of these developments – broader societal and structural change and changing religious sensibilities – have posed challenges that have compelled the ELCF to reconfigure its activities and rethink its organizational structures. These two strands of developments have also been linked by the ELCF itself. For example, the challenges brought by the most recent wave of municipality reform are highlighted in the ELCF's four-year report for the years 2008–2011. The report also focuses particularly on the success the ELCF has achieved as a result of the implementation of its general strategy ("Our Church. A Participatory Community: Strategy of the Finnish Lutheran Church until 2015", also available in English),[51] highlighting how its social and aid work has

46 Grace Davie: Religion in Britain: A Persistent Paradox, Oxford: 2015, p. 135.
47 Kääriäinen, Niemelä et.al., Religion in Finland (see note 20), pp. 166-177; Mikkola, Niemelä, The Questioning Mind (see note 39), pp. 47, 55.
48 Kääriäinen, Niemelä et.al., Religion in Finland (see note 20), p. 172.
49 Ibidem, p. 173.
50 Cf. ibidem, p. 173.
51 Cf. Kyrkans forskningscentral, Utmanad kyrka (see note 40), p. 409.

become the most important reason cited among ELCF members for retaining their church membership.[52]

As already noted, during the past two to three decades, the general character of church-state and church-civil society relations in Finland have undergone a range of significant, albeit in many respects still subtle, changes. Although the effects on Finnish society have remained fairly moderate when compared to many other parts of the world, the spread of neoliberalist ideology and the gradual implementation of neoliberal policies have nevertheless brought about a range of notable changes in the Finnish political economy in the form of decentralization processes and an increasing outsourcing and privatization of public services. These developments have taken place alongside a more general perpetuation of new public management ideology that has principally involved the general establishment of an organizational and managerial culture based on market-oriented imperatives and values throughout political and public discourse alike.[53]

Partly following from its own experience of slow but steady decline and changing relationships between church and state and civil society, the ELCF has gradually started to reconfigure its organizational culture towards a model that corresponds more to the market-oriented organizational values of new public management and managerialism. In the process, it has also become ever more susceptible to processes of internal marketization.[54] This development is still most clearly discernible at the level of changing discursive practices within the ELCF, in relation to which it is possible to observe an increasing general emphasis on strategic discourse, promotion, service provision, customer orientation, and marketing and advertising. This development is evidenced in particular by a steady increase in the development of elaborate strategic documents of various kinds While changes in discursive practices always occur gradually at different levels of organizations, this notable new emphasis on strategic thinking itself constitutes an empirically observable instance of gradual discursive change within the ELCF. This is not least because strategic discourse tends to play a particularly important role in the introduction, establishment and eventual normalization of new discursive practices within organizations. Indeed, in the early 1990s, strategic documents of the type that has now become commonplace were few and far between. For example, the ELCF developed its first ever communication strategy in 1992. This was followed, however, by a much more elaborate new communication strategy in 2004 which has, in turn, been followed by several new large-scale communication-related strategic initiatives. There is thus clearly a sense in which changing discursive practices of the type mentioned above have emerged concomitantly with an increasing general emphasis on strategic thinking within the ELCF. Emerging at a time when market-related values and terminology started to spread and become more established throughout Finnish public and organizational discourse as a whole, the official strategic documents developed within the ELCF since the early 1990s constitute concrete manifestations of the types of changing discursive practices on which this article focuses. These strategic documents thus provide ample data and material for an analysis of these developments. In the following, we shall consider a few examples of this in a little more detail.

52 Cf. ibidem.
53 Cf. Moberg, Broo et.al., Contemporary Discursive Formations (see note 42).
54 Cf. Gauthier, Woodhead et.al., Introduction (see note 3), p. 21.

Let us start by considering the ways in which the ELCF has gradually begun to openly reconfigure its activities in accordance with the (presumed) consumerist sensibilities and expectations of modern populations. On a general level, such an emphasis can be seen in the ways in which the ELCF has increasingly started to engage in different types of market research for the purposes of being better able to identify core publics and 'customers' and to improve its ability to gear different types of church 'services' and activities to various niche audiences. This has, among other things, involved an increasing emphasis on the need to improve the 'quality' and entertainment appeal of various types of church services and activities. It has also involved efforts to reduce the demands put on participants (sometimes conceptualized as 'customers') in terms of belief, commitment and lifestyle. Examples of this include reducing the time people have to spend participating in divine services or creating alternative modes of participating (e.g. through the use of modern communications media). These efforts have also introduced a general "avoidance of explicit obligational meanings",[55] whereby the expectations put on participants and potential participants (e.g. in terms of beliefs or commitments) have been reduced to a minimum. These developments have been accompanied by the gradual emergence of a discourse that recasts the church as a service provider and parishioners as customers.[56]

To give an example of this, the former official communication strategy of the ELCF[57] contains a section titled "Advertising and marketing". This section highlights "flashy media advertising" as "one, and sometimes a very effective, way among others of communication."[58] It goes on to state that, provided that it is employed correctly, advertising "produces an image of the church" and provides "added value to a product or event."[59] This provides an apt example of a type of discourse that recasts church events (including core events such as special divine services) as products and potential participants as customers. As such, this type of discourse simultaneously also recasts church events as types of events that can be both advertised and marketed like any other kind of service and engaged with through a general frame of consumption.[60]

In addition to customer orientation and advertising, an increasing emphasis on the development of an organizational and administrational culture suitable for contemporary times has also become increasingly discernible throughout official ELCF discourse. The general *Our Church* strategic document provides an illustrative example of this. The section of the document that outlines the ELCF's 'Strategic Guidelines until 2015' contains the subheading 'Structures that serve functions' under which the following is stated:

55 Jörg Stolz, Jean-Claude Usunier: Religions as Brands: New Perspectives on the Marketization of Religion and Spirituality, in: Jörg Stolz, Jean Claude Usunier (eds.): Religions as Brands: New Perspectives on the Marketization of Religion and Spirituality, Farnham 2014, pp. 17 f.

56 Cf. Fairclough, Critical Discourse Analysis (see note 13), pp. 156 f.

57 Kirkkohallitus: Vuoropuhelun kirkko: Suomen Ev.Lut kirkon viestintästrategia 2004–2010 [An Interactive Church: The Communication Strategy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 2004–2010], Helsinki 2004.

58 Kirkkohallitus, Vuoropuhelun kirkko (see note 57), p. 57. Author's translation from the Finnish original.

59 Ibidem. Author's translation from the Finnish original.

60 Cf. Moberg, Exploring the Spread of Marketization Discourse (see note 10), p. 248.

– We are developing inside the Church a personnel structure that will implement the strategic aims.
– We support the spiritual growth of our personnel.
– We will build the Church into an ideal participatory employer.
– We will maintain an efficient administration, both lightweight and effective.
– We will keep our active units at a human size. [sic!]
– We will invest more in strategically appropriate areas.[61]

This excerpt constitutes a clear example of the increasing prevalence of strategic discourse throughout official ELCF discourse as a whole. However, it is of particular import to note that the strategic discourse found in the document constitutes strategic discourse of a specific type that is closely connected to market-mode types of organization and organizational values. This is evident in the frequent use of market-related vocabulary and terminology such as "strategic aims", "active units", "ideal participatory employer", 'efficient, yet slim' mode of administration, and 'investing' in "strategically appropriate areas".

The discourse of the document also constitutes an example of an (at least seemingly) very deliberate technologization of discourse in that it represents a clear shift in ELCF discursive practices from an earlier idiom which emphasized community and civil society idiom towards a new type of market-mode oriented and effectivity-emphasizing discourse. As such, it represents a marked difference to earlier discursive self-representations and institutional storytelling. At the same time, however, rather than retaining an impersonal or distant tone, the discourse of the document instead functions to construct a picture of the ELCF as an open, democratic, and participatory community. This is achieved in particular through the representation of both the source and addressees of the discourse of the document in terms of an unspecified 'we', which can also be viewed as an example of the inclusion of a promotional element in discourse that connects to a more general contemporary "generalization of promotion as a communicative function [...] – discourse as a vehicle for 'selling' goods, services, organizations, ideas or people – across orders of discourse."[62] Another characteristic of discourse of a promotional culture surfaces in the document's ambiguity when it comes to the dividing line between what is to be considered information and what is to be considered promotion.[63] The discourse of the document is generally marked by a high degree of interdiscursive complexity and can be described as constituting an "interdiscursive mix"[64] that combines and simultaneously articulates a variety of religious, promotional, and managerial genres.[65]

Let us consider another example of the more recent proliferation of strategic discourse and increasing emphasis on developing a new organizational culture within the ELCF. The English-language final report for the creation of the strategic document "A Church of Encounter – Guidelines for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland until 2020" states the following: "A range of operational policies and strategy documents have been drafted on

61 Our Church – a participatory community, n.d., available from http://sakasti.evl.fi/sakasti.nsf/0/9297F603C875C1C8C225770A002E3448/$FILE/Our_Church_Strategy2015_t.pdf [last accessed: 18.11.2016].
62 Fairclough, Critical Discourse Analysis (see note 13), p. 141.
63 Cf. ibidem, pp. 150 f.
64 Ibidem, p. 146.
65 Cf. Moberg, Exploring the Spread of Marketization Discourse (see note 10), pp. 251 f.

the basis of the Our Church strategy. The Our Church strategy has also inspired numerous undertakings intended to support the church's strategic and forward-planning work and individual priorities."[66] This excerpt can be seen as an example of a self-appraising discourse through which the ELCF has come to present itself as an institution that systematically plans and organizes its operations in ways that are fully in line with what is nowadays expected of modern, well-managed institutions. As such, it can also be viewed as an example of a technologization of discourse in that it serves to highlight the establishment of a new organizational culture within the ELCF as constituting a welcome and positive development. Like the previous excerpt quoted above, discourse of this type makes up a central part of institutional storytelling through which an institution, in this case the ELCF, strives to re-articulate its institutional identity and professional ethos. Thus, the difference between this and earlier types of institutional storytelling is made quite explicit.

Following the progressive decline in church membership rates and a few notable instances of negative mass media attention in recent years,[67] the discourse of the ELCF has recently also become ever more marked by a general language of crisis, which has led to the emergence of an often quite ambiguous discourse on the need for thoroughgoing structural and organizational "change". This development has, in turn, motivated the creation of several additional strategic undertakings. These include a document called "A Church in Transformation – Communication Plan" that was developed in 2009 and outlines the development and implementation of a 'change communication' program within the ELCF. The document starts out by stating the following:

> "The overall goal of our change communication is to renew church structures and ways of operating so that the church can respond to the challenges of a changing economic and operational environment and so that the work of the church can be ever more concentrated on spiritual work. In this way, we create prerequisites for the strengthening of commitment to church membership.
> The aim of the communication project is to make sure that the need for change is understood and accepted within the parishes and that the leadership and superiors understand the necessity for change and are committed to reform."[68]

It is important to note that 'change communication' constitutes a sub-discipline of the broader disciplines of corporate communication and so-called 'change management' which originate from fields such as management and business administration theory. 'Change

66 A Church of Encounter – Guidelines for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland until 2020 [Report], 2014, p. 8, available from http://sakasti.evl.fi/julkaisut.nsf/2FDCB3893D7A4404C2257E2E0012D57A/$FILE/255155_KKH_Kohtaamisen_kirkko_kortti_engl_v2.pdf [last accessed: 18.11.2016].

67 Cf. Marcus Moberg, Sofia Sjö: The Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Media in Post-Secular Finland, in: Stig Hjarvard, Mia Lövheim (eds.): Mediatization and Religion: Nordic Perspectives, Gothenburg 2012, pp. 79-91.

68 Kirkko muutoksessa – viestintäsuunnitelma [A Changing Church – a Communication Plan], 2009 available from http://sakasti.evl.fi/sakasti.nsf/0/4DAF211156EBB429C2257B5D0031B83C/$FILE/Kirkko%20muutoksessa%20-viestintasuunnitelma.pdf. Author's translation of the Finnish original [last accessed: 13.10.2016].

communication' constitutes a particular type of corporate re-organization practice that is principally aimed at improving the integration and grounding of new policies and structural changes within a particular firm, organization, or institution.[69] As is also illustrated in the excerpt above, a central aim of change communications is to generate acceptance of and minimize resistance towards desired structural changes among employees through a language of persuasion rather than command.[70] For the purposes of our discussion in this article, it is especially worth noting that change communication itself constitutes a prime example of a particular type of discursive technology that has emerged and developed concomitantly with the proliferation of broader discursive formations on new public management (e.g. total-cost management, management by objectives) in recent decades. Change communication strategies and models are principally developed and disseminated by specialist technologists such as communication consultancy firms and individual so-called communication gurus[71] who operate in what Thrift has termed a global "cultural circuit of capital".[72] Indeed, in what constitutes a particularly notable illustration of the degree to which the ELCF has adopted external market and managerial discourse, the logo of a consultancy firm has been visibly left at the top of the document from which the above excerpt is taken.

Concluding Remarks

This article has aimed to provide a broad-stroke sketch of general societal developments that have played a key role in the more recent historical transformation of the social position of the ELCF. The story of changes and transformations occurring within the ELCF that has been told in this article is, of course, only a partial one. In many ways, it provides a historically very specific 'snapshot' of how official ELCF discourse has become increasingly permeated by market-oriented language and terminology. The picture presented here is, moreover, one that has primarily focused on a small selection of a larger set of interrelated developments. Indeed, the types of changes that have been highlighted here are still primarily discernible on the level of changing discursive practices within the ELCF. Having said that, it is important to keep in mind that actual changes in the organizational structure and practices of organizations tend to be preceded by changes on an ideational level, such as the emergence and gradual establishment of new ways of understanding the nature of a given organization and new ways of conceptualizing future aspirations. The official discourse of an organization such as the ELCF at a particular point in time thus presents researchers with a particular type of material that allows for the identification and analysis of some of the main ways in which broader discursive change relates to, and often also translates into, different types of organizational change.

69 Cf. Deborah J. Barrett: A Best-Practice Approach to Designing a Change Communication Programme, in: Sandra Oliver (ed.): Handbook of Corporate Communication and Public Relations, London 2004, pp. 20-33.
70 Cf. Thrift, Knowing Capitalism (see note 14), p. 118.
71 Cf. Staffan Furusten: Popular Management Books: How They are Made and What They Mean for Organizations, London 1999.
72 Thrift, Knowing Capitalism (see note 17).

My argument in this article has been that the changing discursive practices of the ELCF with regard to the proliferation of market-related discourse coupled with an increasing technologization of discourse should be viewed as mirroring broader discursive changes occurring in society and culture at large. Indeed, market-related and efficiency-emphasizing discourse has increasingly come to provide the unquestioned and taken-for-granted language for discussing and conceptualizing desired developments and aspirations within a number of organizational and institutional domains, such as healthcare,[73] education,[74] and non-profit and ideological organizations.[75] In a discursive perspective, this development can be viewed in terms of the establishment and perpetuation of a new 'cultural dominant' that is beginning to have an increasingly formative effect on the very character of organizational and institutional life as a whole, including that of religious institutions such as the ELCF.[76] The changing discursive practices of the ELCF are thus not arbitrary, nor are they without their practical implications and consequences. As Thrift highlighted, capitalism and its associated values have become a "theoretical enterprise in which various essentially virtual notions (network, the knowledge economy, the new economy, comunity of practice) are able to take on flesh as, increasingly, the world is made in these notions' likeness."[77]

Based on an exploration and analysis of changing discursive practices within the ELCF, it might thus be possible to at least tentatively argue that the ELCF has started to engage in what could be termed a 'self-marketization' process. If employed in a generally heuristic sense, we can take this term to denote cases where an organization or institution increasingly re-configures its discursive practices, and gradually also its actual organizational structures, on the basis of market-related organizational modes that emphasize values such as 'effectivity', 'management', and 'flexibility' (however vaguely defined such terms or notions may sometimes be). As a result of such efforts, irrespective of whether such changes in organizational culture are able to produce the desired effects or not, an organization or institution may gradually start to espouse a view of its own long-term fate, survival, and regeneration as being fundamentally dependent on its own perceived ability to adapt to (presumed) new organizational-cultural demands. What the actual practical consequences for future ELCF ecclesiastical polity, welfare provision, diaconal work, communication practices, etc. will be still remains to be seen.[78] However, as has already been thoroughly documented in relation to other social fields, market-mode types of actual organizational changes tend to be preceded by changing discursive practices coupled with an increasing technologization of discourse.

73 Morten Balle Hansen: Marketization and Economic Performance, in: Public Management Review 12 (2010), no. 2, pp. 255-274.
74 Fairclough, Critical Discourse Analysis (see note 13).
75 Marie-Laure Djelic: Marketization: From Intellectual Agenda to Global Policy Making, in: Marie-Laure Djelic, Kerstin Sahlin-Andersson (eds.): Transnational Governance: Institutional Dynamics of Regulation, Cambridge 2006, pp. 53-73.
76 Fairclough, Critical Discourse Analysis (see note 13), p. 138.
77 Thrift, Knowing Capitalism (see note 14), p. 6.
78 For a study on the German case see Jens Schlamelcher: The Decline of the Parishes and the Rise of City Churches: The German Evangelical Church in the Age of Neoliberalism, in: Tuomas Martikainen, François Gauthier (eds.): Religion in the Neoliberal Age: Political Economy and Modes of Governance, Farnham 2013, pp. 53-67.

Zusammenfassung

In diesem Beitrag wird aufgezeigt, wie in Analogie zu Veränderungen in Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft Sprache und Terminologien in den offiziellen Diskurs der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche von Finnland (ELCF) eindrangen, die zu einer fortschreitenden Technologisierung des Diskurses vonseiten der ELCF selbst führten. Diese Entwicklung wurde von den Anpassungsbemühungen der ELCF an ein im Wandel begriffenes sozioökonomisches Umfeld gefördert. Die ELCF entwickelte sich im Rahmen dieses Prozesses schrittweise von einer staatsorientierten, gemeinschaftsbildenden Institution zu einer dienstleistungsorientierten Institution der Zivilgesellschaft.

Aus dem Englischen übersetzt von Annika Rathjens, Lüneburg