



**LUND**  
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Faculty of Humanities and Theology  
Centre for Literature and Languages  
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“We Are the Land and the Land Is Us.”

Analyzing the Construction of Sami National  
Identity in Sami Political Discourse on Land and  
Natural Resources.

Mélodie Viallon

Supervisor: Tomas Sniegon  
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## Abstract

The collective fight for self-determination among indigenous peoples around the world has made headlines over the past few years. The exploitation of indigenous territories by settler-states has revived nationalist feelings among the groups, including the Sami, whose territories spread across four states.

This thesis aimed to explore how Sami national identity is constructed, shaped and promoted through Sami political discourse on land and natural resources and how, consequently, other categories of identities are created. Based on a critical discourse analysis of selected documents produced by Sami politicians in the Nordics between 2016 and 2018, I analyzed and critically discussed the Sami politicians' discourse on land and territory. The theoretical framework of this thesis is based on social constructivism, as well as the concepts of identity and nationalism. A post-colonial approach is held throughout the paper, setting the context of Sami nationalism in the Nordics.

They were two main research goals, the first was to uncover how Sami politicians construct Sami collective identity in discourse about land and natural resources. I argue that Sami collective identity is constructed by associating the Sami people with common spatial narratives, including a common homeland, Sápmi. Reattributing Sápmi to its original inhabitants through discourse is a way to shape Sami national identity beyond the Western definition of state borders. The practice of traditional livelihoods is also identified as a marker of Sami identity, raising the question of Sami people living outside of Sápmi and unable to practice traditional livelihoods for subsistence. Sami collective identity is built through common experiences linked to colonization, marginalization, and assimilation, and a common will to achieve self-determination in their respective states. The second research question was linked to the construction of the "Other". One of the main findings was that the notion of distinctiveness, required for the construction of the nation, is built through common characteristics associated with indigenous peoples (a deep and distinct relation to land, and rights inscribed in international declarations), and through the attribution of territories and social practices to the Sami, which exclude the "Other". I argue that the construction of Sami collective identity takes characteristics from Western theories of nationalism, while including an indigenous approach based on collective rights.

**Key words:** Sami people, Nordic countries, identity politics, nationalism, post-colonialism, critical discourse analysis

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# 1. INTRODUCTION & PROBLEM DEFINITION

The Sami people are the indigenous people of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, and, according to the Council of Europe, are the only indigenous people in the European Union.<sup>1</sup> The United Nations have adopted a common understanding of “indigenous” based on the following criteria:

- Self- identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member.
- Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies
- Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources
- Distinct social, economic or political systems
- Distinct language, culture and beliefs
- Form non-dominant groups of society
- Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities<sup>2</sup>

One of the main elements that distinguish indigenous peoples from national minorities is the deep relation that indigenous peoples have to their traditional lands.<sup>3</sup> As Rauna Kuokkanen, Sami researcher in Arctic indigenous politics states: “for indigenous peoples, land is not only a source of livelihood but also of philosophy; fundamental cultural values and worldviews are derived from the land”.<sup>4</sup>

The indigenous approach to territory differs from the Western and liberal one. In his 2011 report, James Anaya, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, noted that the Sami have traditionally been organizing their territory around the *siida*, that is

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<sup>1</sup> Council of Europe. *SAMI – The People, The Culture and The Languages and The Council of Europe*. 27-29 November 2014. Inari, Finland: Council of Europe. [https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/53-Sami\\_2014/Background%20leaflet%20-%20Sami.pdf](https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/53-Sami_2014/Background%20leaflet%20-%20Sami.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, *Indigenous People, Indigenous Voices, Factsheet*. United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (Accessed 30 November 2016) [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/5session\\_factsheet1.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> "What Defines an Indigenous People?", *Government.no*, last modified November 2014, <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/indigenous-peoples-and-minorities/Sami-people/midtpalte/What-Defines-an-Indigenous-People/id451320/>

<sup>4</sup> Rauna Kuokkanen, "Indigenous Peoples on two continents: self-determination processes in Sámi and First Nations societies." *European Review of Native American Studies* 20, no. 2 (2006), 1.

a local organization that plays an important role in the distribution of lands, water and natural resources. Within the *siida*, members had individual rights to resources but helped each other with the management of reindeer herds, hunting and fishing. On the basis of these structures, the Sami developed sophisticated systems for land distribution, inheritance and dispute resolution among *siida*. Although historical developments have weakened the Sami people's traditional patterns of association, the *siida* system continues to be an important part of Sami society.<sup>5</sup>

Sami homeland, *Sápmi*, spreads across the northernmost regions of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. It is estimated that 80,000 to 100,000 Sami individuals live across the four countries, of whom an estimated of 50,000 to 65,000 in Norway, 20,000 to 40,000 in Sweden, 8,000 in Finland and 2000 in Russia. It is however impossible to know the exact numbers as no ethnical census has been made since World War II. Also, many live outside of *Sápmi* and have multiethnic origins.

The actual borders of *Sápmi* have been determined by wars, negotiations and peace resolutions between the nation-states. British political scientist Malcom Anderson describes borders as processes and institutions with several functions: they are instruments of state policy and control, markers of identity, and elements of discourse in diplomacy, law, and politics.<sup>6</sup> According to Canadian historian Sheila McManus, “nations are made and unmade at their borders”<sup>7</sup>, meaning that the notion of distinctiveness is constructed there. But for the Sami who have inhabited and used these areas long before the creation of nation-states, these borders are first and foremost artificial socio-organizations that physically divided the Sami people. It is also important to mention that there is not just one Sami culture with one language, but several, that have also been separated by borders.

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<sup>5</sup> James Anaya. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people. ‘The situation of the Sami people in the Sápmi region of Norway, Sweden and Finland’. A/HRC/18/35/Add.2. Human Rights Council Jan. 12, 2011. III para 6. Available at [http://unsr.jamesanaya.org/docs/countries/2011-report-sapmi-a-hrc-18-35-add2\\_en.pdf](http://unsr.jamesanaya.org/docs/countries/2011-report-sapmi-a-hrc-18-35-add2_en.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Malcom Anderson, *Frontiers: territory and state formation in the modern world*. (Cambridge: Polity Press. 1996), 7-8.

<sup>7</sup> Sheila McManus, “Unsettled pasts, unsettling borders: women, wests, nations.” In *One step over the line: toward a history of women in the North American wests*. Edited by Elizabeth Jameson and Sheila McManus, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008). 41.

Sami traditional territories have also attracted extractive industries, including mines, gas and forestry. Recently they have also attracted “greener” industries like wind energy, not without controversy. Many of these companies are located on areas traditionally used for Sami livelihoods, like reindeer herding. The ongoing conflicts with the states and the private companies are shaping the debate on Sami land rights and on their right to self-determination.

Living in a region partitioned between state borders, the Sami people have had to find their voice in the different political arenas of the national majorities, while trying to preserve and promote the cultural cohesion of the group. The creation of several national symbols like the flag, the national anthem, or a map of Sápmi were used in an attempt to transform the negative self image of the Sami and into a positive one. The (re)birth of Sami national movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century following protests over land and the creation of the three Sami Parliaments gave an official voice to the Sami people as nation within their respective states. The level of autonomy still differs between the three states, which further creates a gap within the Sami as one people.

After centuries of assimilation policies, the Sami Parliaments and politicians have begun to play important roles in (re)building a Sami nation and developing a sense of belonging. But considering that the Sami are separated by borders, how do these politicians attempt to create a collective identity based on common social experiences and mythologies, while remaining distinct from their dominant societies?

## 1.2 PURPOSE

The formation of Sami collective identity is an interesting case within the field of European Studies because official documents regard them as being “one people across four states.”<sup>8</sup> Two of these states are members of the European Union (Sweden and Finland), one is part of the European Economic Area (Norway), and the last one, Russia, is a neighbor country that benefits from EU regional cooperation in the north. Besides geography, analyzing the construction of Sami identity on both personal and national levels is strongly related to the

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<sup>8</sup> Sametinget, and Regeringskansliet, *The Sami – an indigenous people in Sweden*. (Västerås: Edita Västra Aros, 2005), 3.

field of humanities, which aims to study how certain categories of people document and process the human experience.

The colonial past and the legacies of colonization in the Nordic states have been understudied, mainly because of the general assumption that Scandinavian participation in colonial politics was benign and “only” based on collaboration, in comparison to other European states and their “imperialist” approaches.<sup>9</sup> Finland has never had colonies overseas, nor has it conquered new continents like its Viking neighbors. The country has also been under the rule of two states in its history (Sweden and Russia). For these reasons, the notion of colonialism applicable within Finland seems unthinkable for many Finns. After the Norwegian king in 1997 and the Swedish Minister for Agriculture in 1998 publicly apologized on behalf of their respective states for the poor treatment of the Sami, the Finnish Minister of Justice Jussi Järvenpää, stated: “There are currently no issues that would require an apology.”<sup>10</sup>

Already in 1959, the Sami Council officially used the term colonialism to describe the situation of the Sami. In the 1960s and the 1970s, Nordic historians started to study the history of Lapland and the colonial domination of the states on the Sami, by comparing experiences with other indigenous groups, such as Native Americans. This has led to criticism among Finnish scholars who denied any special treatment of the Sami compared to other inhabitants in Lapland and who stated that this European post-colonial theory was not applicable to Northern historical research. The ongoing debate on the ratification of the ILO Convention no.169 is filled with contested histories about Lapland.<sup>11</sup>

Because of the misconception of Nordic internal colonialism, very few studies exist on Sami identity formation from an indigenous perspective and when they do they are usually conducted within one of the nation-states, but not on an inter-state level. The work of Norwegian political scientist Lina Gaski, for example, is interesting for understanding how Sami politicians in Norway create a sense of “Self” and “Other” in discourse about the

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<sup>9</sup> Gunlög Fur, “Colonialism and Swedish History: Unthinkable Connections?” In *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity: Small Time Agents in a Global Arena*. Magdalena Naum and Jonas M. Nordin (New York: Springer. 2013), 26.

<sup>10</sup> Veli-Pekka Lehtola. "Sámi histories, colonialism, and Finland." *Arctic Anthropology* 52, no. 2 (February 2015): 23. <http://doi:10.3368/aa.52.2.22>

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 25.



Finnmark Act.<sup>12</sup> Scholars have been imagining the Sami nation as divided across borders, according to the respective social systems they live in. While acknowledging the differences in the construction of Sami nationalism depending on the society they live in, I chose to address this issue from a Nordic Sami perspective, by considering the tight historical bond between the three states, and the universal values and worldviews of the Sami as stated by Sami organizations. Unlike liberal approaches to law that prioritize the individual, indigenous approaches are based on a collective dimension to rights.<sup>13</sup> Because a deep relationship to lands and territories is said to be the cornerstone of indigenous identities and acknowledging the Sami as an indigenous people across borders, I approached this inquiry from a Sami national perspective. “National” here refers to the Sami nation as a whole, independently of state borders. I need to mention at this stage that I will not include a Russian Sami perspective for several reasons developed later, but the main one being the absence of a recognized Sami body in Russia, to the level of the three Sami Parliaments in the Nordic states. Because nation-building is by definition a construction of national identity by the power of a state or an institution, the Russian Sami perspective fell outside of my research questions. I will nevertheless demonstrate how Sami politicians in the Nordics include Sami people in their discourse, regardless of state borders.

Considering the diversity of Sami identities, being within each state or across borders, I would like to investigate how Sami politicians construct a collective identity through spatial narratives, and by opposition, identify the “Other”. By focusing on land and natural resources, I would like to highlight the deep connection constructed by political elites between the Sami as a nation and their territories, in order to set a base for further understanding Sami land rights. Sami concerns and revindications over territories expressed in the analyzed material may differ from state to state, as regulations are different. However, my hypothesis is that based on indigenous discourse, the Sami politicians express the same vision and the same importance of land for the construction of the Sami nation.

Research on indigenous issues often does not include indigenous voices. Researchers, biased by their worldview, often talk “about” them, not “with” them. By analyzing the discourse of

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<sup>12</sup>Lina Gaski. "Sami identity as a discursive formation: Essentialism and ambivalence." In *Indigenous peoples: Self-determination, knowledge, indigeneity*, Edited by Henry Minde. (Eburon Academic Publishers: 2008), 219-236.

<sup>13</sup>“Individual vs. Collective Rights”. Unric.org. Accessed May 14, 2018.  
<https://www.unric.org/en/indigenous-people/27309-individual-vs-collective-rights>

Sami politicians and their construction of Sami national identity, I wish to bring Sami voices at the center of this research. I mainly chose material produced by Sami politicians for logistical reasons. The documents that I used were easily accessible through the Parliaments websites, online newspapers, and YouTube. This research does not reflect Sami identity *per se*, but rather the construction of the latter by a political elite. As I will develop in the ethical consideration section, I am aware of my privileged position of being from a majority and that western culture has influenced my values and worldview. My understanding of Sami identity formation and Sami version of reality will always differ from the Sami personal experience itself.

### 1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Considering the issues presented above, I will approach this inquiry with theories of post-colonialism and nationalism. Using a method of critical discourse analysis, I will attempt to analyze a variety of documents produced by Sami politicians in the Nordics, related to land and natural resources.

I will frame my analysis based on the following research questions:

- How do Sami politicians, through official political discourses on land and resources, construct Sami nationhood and identity?
- How do these discursive practices produce other categories of identities? Who are included, and who are constructed as “the Other”?

### 1.4. THESIS STRUCTURE

This thesis started with a short introduction of the topic, followed by a presentation of the research focus and questions. In the next section, I will recount the Sami path towards self-determination after centuries of colonization and assimilation policies. This historical background will hopefully allow the reader to better understand the events mentioned in the analysis. I will thereafter expose the theoretical framework for this thesis, explaining social constructivism and the process of nation-building. I will take a post-colonial approach, defining what the construction of nations means for indigenous peoples, and for the Sami. Using critical discourse analysis as a method, I will present Fairclough’s approach and

explain how it can be adapted for the purpose of this research. The material analyzed, and the limitations of the thesis will be presented.

In the analysis, I examine how Sami politicians use different ways to construct Sami collective identity in documents on land and natural resources. I divided the analysis into four themes that I identified as being prominent in the material. I then discuss the Sami politicians' discourse on land and natural resources and how it (re)creates and shapes the Sami nation. I conclude this thesis by presenting a summary of the findings, and by reflecting on the results. I will also give an outlook for future research.

## 2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: FROM ASSIMILATION TO SELF-DETERMINATION

### 2.1. TERRITORIALIZATION OF THE SAMI AND THE DEFINITION OF STATE BORDERS

The first Sami hunters are known to have settled before 2000 BC around Varanger and in most of northern Norway, half of the Norrland region in Sweden, all of Finland and in the Kola Peninsula in Russia. The changing climate soon forced the inhabitants to quit their sedentary lifestyle for nomadic activities.<sup>14</sup> In the Middle-Ages, the rich fishing grounds in the Varanger area also attracted Norwegians, Faroese, Danes, Scots, and Germans, and all these new inhabitants had to cohabit on Sami traditional lands. Since the birth of nation-states, the Sami have been caught up in conflicts. Both kingdoms of Denmark-Norway<sup>15</sup> and Sweden claimed the Kola Peninsula to Russia. The Peace of Tseunia in 1595 obliged Russia to transfer its taxation rights on the Sami to Sweden, but Danish King Christian IV forbid this transaction which eventually led to the Kalmar War in 1611 between the two kingdoms. Despite Russia taking back the Kola Peninsula in 1612, the Sami continued paying taxes to both states until 1751.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the discovery of large resource areas in the north led both kingdoms to introduce tax privileges for new settlers in the northern territories, which resulted in the exploitation of resources, such as mines and fisheries that were located on the lands that the Sami had settled.<sup>16</sup> The northern border between Denmark-Norway and Sweden (including Finland) was agreed on in 1734, also based on the ongoing regional activities in the area. The Lapp Codicil of 1751, annexed to the Treaty of Strömstad, allowed the Sami across borders to pursue their traditional livelihoods and to remain neutral in case of war. The Sami were now entitled to only pay taxes to one of the states. However, conflicts regarding land use practices, such as farming and herding, were created when large waves of settlements

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<sup>14</sup> Neil Kent. *The Sami peoples of the North: A social and cultural history*. (London: Hurst Publishers, 2014), 6-7.

<sup>15</sup> After Sweden's departure from the Kalmar Union (Denmark, Norway and Sweden) in 1523, the states of Denmark and Norway formed a personal union that would eventually led to the establishment of the integrated state of Denmark-Norway. The two countries had been connected since the 14<sup>th</sup> century when King Olaf II of Denmark inherited the kingdom of Norway from his father King Haakon VI of Norway. The union eventually dissolved in 1814 when the Treaty of Kiel decided that Norway would be ceded to Sweden. This new union would last until 1905 when Sweden recognized Norway as an independent constitutional monarchy.

<sup>16</sup> Neil Kent, 13.

began encroaching on Sami-owned land areas. The liberal ideas of property rights in the 18<sup>th</sup> century did not consider Sami use of lands sufficient for them to gain ownership. At the end of the century and up until the 1920s, Sami villages were seen as taxable units that important people could purchase once confiscated by the state. Many Sami people lost their fishing and herding rights and were forced to resettle.<sup>17</sup>

The Lapp Codicil was abrogated by 1905 with the Norwegian independence from Sweden, which led many Northern Sami to relocate in South Sami areas, creating tensions between the communities.

## 2.2. STATE SOVEREIGNTY AND ASSIMILATION POLICIES

The policy of *fornorsking* (or Norwegianization) conducted towards the Sami by the Norwegian government during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, aimed to build the newly independent Norwegian nation through strong policies of assimilation. Sami people were prohibited from speaking their native language, which soon led to some Sami themselves denying their origins, in order to elevate in society.

Sweden carried out a segregation policy towards Sami reindeer herders called *Lapp skall vara Lapp* (Lapps shall remain Lapps), aimed to “protect” Sami reindeer husbandry from the rest of the society. The Sami were indeed considered weak by the state and incapable of resilience. Therefore, the nomadic school was introduced specifically for children who had parents involved in a nomadic lifestyle. Sami identity was constructed by the Swedish state as being related to reindeer husbandry, which meant that only reindeer herders were considered to be Sami. Thus, many of the Sami were not included in the policy, which created a cultural boundary within the Sami population.<sup>18</sup> The tendency to consider reindeer herding as the main characteristic of Sami culture is still embedded in Swedish policy today. The government still has a tight control over reindeer herding and the Sami Parliament does not have autonomy over issues that concern land and resources.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>18</sup> Patrik Lantto. Tiden börjar på nytt: en analys av samernas etnopolitiska mobilisering i Sverige 1900-1950. (PhD diss. 2000). Umeå University, Umeå. Abstract in English. Retrieved from <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:umu:diva-50562>

<sup>19</sup> “The Sami and the state”. Samer.se, accessed May 14, 2018. <http://www.samer.se/4623>

Throughout their history, Finns have been a minority ruled under other states, first Sweden, then Russia. For this reason, the Sami did not have any particular privileges. The use of Sami languages was never officially prohibited. Considering the minority status of the Finnish language in Russia, some Finnish priests encouraged the teaching of Sami as part of Finland's national issue.<sup>20</sup> The nation-building project of Finland took place through a reinforcement of administration and the development of traffic networks and roads. Gradually, seasonal livelihoods were replaced by agriculture and villages expanded along the roads, connected to the center. The previously isolated Arctic region was now integrated to the south, making Lapland equally developed and improving standards of living for the inhabitants. New services, including health, postal or public authorities were present along the road, but only spoke Finnish. Development in the region also meant exploitation of natural resources, and new roads and settlements along them cut across traditional areas and migration routes, making the practice of traditional livelihoods more difficult.<sup>21</sup>

### 2.3. REVITALIZATION PROCESSES AND THE SAMI RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) defines self-determination as “embodying the right for all peoples to determine their own economic, social and cultural development. Self-determination has been defined by the International Court of Justice as the need to pay regard to the freely expressed will of peoples.”<sup>22</sup> For indigenous peoples, self-determination often does not imply a separation from the state.

The notion of Sami collective identity began to emerge in the 1950s when Sami leaders across borders started to establish contact with one another, in order to promote Sami cultural heritage and Sami rights. In 1956, the establishment of the Nordic Sami Council (since renamed the Sami Council after being joined by the Russian Sami organization), was the first result of cooperation between the Sami organizations from the three Nordic states. Today, the organization holds a status of Permanent Participant in the Arctic Council.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Veli-Pekka Lehtola. "Sámi histories, colonialism, and Finland." *Arctic Anthropology* 52, no. 2 (2015):28 <http://doi:10.3368/aa.52.2.22>

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

<sup>22</sup> “Self-determination of indigenous peoples.” IWGIA. Last modified April 8, 2011.

<https://www.iwgia.org/en/focus/land-rights/330-self-determination-of-indigenous-peoples>

<sup>23</sup> The Arctic Council was established in 1996 by the eight Arctic countries through the Ottawa Declaration. The intergovernmental forum aims to promote coordination and cooperation between the Arctic states, involving indigenous peoples and local inhabitants, particularly on areas related to sustainable development and environment protection.

The Alta protests between 1979 and 1982 against the construction of a hydroelectric power station were considered to be the first major act of self-determination for the Sami, and the most significant event for the formation of modern Sami identity.<sup>24</sup> The project, initiated by the Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate, would create an artificial lake and flood the Sami village of Maze. It was also a threat for reindeer herding and salmon fishing. During the protests, seven men went on a hunger strike, fourteen women occupied the office of Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, and over a thousand, including Sami and environmentalists, blocked the entrance to the construction site. As a result, the government negotiated with a Sami delegation composed of members of the *Norsk Samer Riksforbund* (the Norwegian Sami Association), the *Norske Reindriftssamers Landsforbund* (the Reindeer Herders Association of Norway) and the Norwegian branch of the Sami Council. The dam was eventually built, but it nevertheless forged Sami political activism.<sup>25</sup> More people in Norway and across borders were now aware of the Sami fight for self-determination, which eventually led the government to recognize the Sami people as indigenous and establish the *Samediggi*, or Sami Parliament, through the Sami Act in 1989. The first version of the Sami flag was raised during the protests, but the current version, designed by artist Astrid Båhl, was inaugurated in 1986 at the 13<sup>th</sup> Nordic Sami Conference in Åre, Sweden. The flag colors, red, blue, green and yellow, bring out the colors of the *kolt*, the Sami traditional costume. The circle represents both the sun (in red) and the moon (in blue).<sup>26</sup> The flag is flown on several occasions during the year in the three states and represents a national symbol that unites the Sami across borders.

Another national emblem that was also adopted in 1986, is the Sami national anthem, *Sámi soaga lávlla* (the Song of the Sami), written in 1906 by Sami school teacher Isak Saba and published in the *Sagai Muittalægje*, a Sami newspaper published in northern Norway between 1904 and 1911. The text, originally a poem, is an ode to Sápmi and aims to raise political awareness and shape Sami identity through its connection to land:

Winter time with storm and cold  
Fierce blizzards.  
Sami kin, with hearts and souls  
Their lands do love.

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<sup>24</sup> Neil Kent. *The Sami peoples of the North*, 68.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 68.

<sup>26</sup> “One flag, One People”. *Samer.se*. Accessed May 14, 2018. <http://www.samer.se/4531>

Moonlight for the traveler,  
Living Aurora flickering,  
Grunt of reindeer heard in groves of birch,  
Voices over lakes and open grounds,  
Swish of sled on winter road. (...)  
Our ancestors long ago  
Trouble makers did defeat.  
Let us, brothers, also resist  
Staunchly our oppressors.  
Oh, tough kin of the sun's sons,  
Never shall you be subdued  
If you heed your golden Sami tongue,  
Remember the ancestors' word.  
The Samiland for the Sami!<sup>27</sup>

The “oppressors” here designate the states, that were still conducting harmful assimilation policies during the time of writing. Today, the term can be associated with extractive industries or the authorities that continue to exploit Sami territories without always getting the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) from the Sami<sup>28</sup>.

Norway was the first of the three Nordic states to include a specific section on Sami rights in its constitution in 1988. Article 110a declares that it is the responsibility of the state authorities to ensure good conditions enabling the Sami people to preserve and develop its language, culture, and way of life.<sup>29</sup> This implies funding from the government to the Sami Parliament, which then decides on the distribution according to its priorities.

The Alta protests and the national debate on Sami rights that followed also led to the ratification of the ILO Convention no. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in 1990, and the Finnmark Act in 2005. The purpose of this act is:

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<sup>27</sup> Isak Saba. “Samefolkets sång - den samiska nationalsången”. Written in 1906. Accessed at <https://www.sametinget.se/83377>

<sup>28</sup> The Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is recognized in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and allows indigenous peoples to give or withhold consent to projects that may affect them or their territories. This right is also embedded within the universal right to self-determination.

<sup>29</sup> Constitution of Norway. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Norway of 17 May 1814, Section 110a. Stortinget.no. <https://www.stortinget.no/globalassets/pdf/english/constitutionenglish.pdf>



to facilitate the management of land and natural resources in the county of Finnmark in a balanced and ecologically sustainable manner for the benefit of the residents of the county and particularly as a basis for Sami culture, reindeer husbandry, use of non-cultivated areas, commercial activity and social life.<sup>30</sup>

For the first time in a legislative process, the Norwegian parliament allowed two other actors, the *Samediggi* and the Finnmark County Council, to interfere at this stage. With the passing of the act, former state ownership of the land was transferred to FeFo, a private administration whose executive board consists of six members: three appointed by the *Samediggi* and three by the Finnmark County Council.<sup>31</sup>

Finland was the first state to establish a publicly elected “Delegation for Sami Affairs” as long ago as 1973 that was in charge of monitoring Sami rights and reporting to the government. In 1996, it gained administrative duties in relation to culture and language and was restructured to correspond to the Norwegian and Swedish Parliaments. Finnish authorities have legal obligation to negotiate with the Sami Parliament on matters that may affect the status of the Sami as an indigenous people. Despite this, in many cases, the Sami Parliament is still not invited to the negotiation table, like it was the case for the Tana agreement.<sup>32</sup>

The three Sami Parliaments also enjoy different levels of rights on the political scene. Unlike its neighbors, the Norwegian Sami Parliament can decide which issues to address. Both national and Sami political parties can offer candidates for the *Samediggi* elections, which reflects a closer connection between Sami politics and state politics. Norway also has stronger international obligations, as it is the only state of the three that signed the ILO Convention no.169. Sweden and Finland have to this day not ratified the document, one of the main reasons being the lack of a clear definition of indigeneity applied to the Sami.

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<sup>30</sup> Act of 17 June 2005 No. 85 relating to legal relations and management of land and natural resources in the county of Finnmark (Finnmark Act). Chapter 1 General provisions. Section 1 The purpose of the Act. [http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file\\_id=244972](http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=244972)

<sup>31</sup> Eva Josefsen, Siri U. Sørensen, Per Selle. “Regional Governance and Indigenous Rights in Norway: The Finnmark Estate Case.” In *Indigenous Peoples’ Governance of Land and Protected Territories in the Arctic*, ed Thora Martina Herrmann and Thibault Martin. Springer, Cham. (2016): 30. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-25035-9\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-25035-9_2)

<sup>32</sup> The Tana agreement between Norway and Finland aims to regulate the salmon stocks in the Tana river, where the Sami have been fishing for centuries for subsistence. Both parliaments approved the agreement in 2017, despite strong opposition from the Sami parliaments.

Sweden's Sami Parliament is both an elected body and a government agency, which compromises the Sami right to self-determination in the state. In Finland as well, the Sami Parliament's duties are related to language and culture, and it receives a lower budget from the state compared to its neighbors.<sup>33</sup>

Self-determination is based both on internal and external dimensions. The former refers to governance within the state, such as influencing decision-making processes on matters that directly affect indigenous populations. The latter refers to sovereignty and external representation.<sup>34</sup> The Sami Council has been a Permanent Participant of the Arctic Council since its establishment in 1996. Representatives of the Sami from the four states are also part of the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, whose role is to implement the Action Plan of Indigenous Peoples of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region. However, as the only indigenous people of the European Union, the Sami still do not have a permanent representation in Brussels, questioning their right to self-determination in the European project.

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<sup>33</sup> Samer.se, "The Sami Parliaments in Norway and Finland", accessed May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018.  
<http://www.samer.se/4609>

<sup>34</sup> Ruxandra Emanuela NUȚ and Adrian Liviu Ivan. "Sami People and their Right to Self-Determination." *Societate si politica* 9 no.2 (2015): 31

### 3. THEORITICAL FAMEWORK

To frame the problem and the research questions mentioned above, I will utilize post-colonial theory. This will set a basis for understanding the Sami as an indigenous people and their relation to the Nordic states as colonizing powers. I will present the key concepts, followed by the role of place in a post-colonial context. I will use a social constructivist theory to present notions of nationhood, and narrow it to indigenous collective identity, before applying these notions to the Sami.

#### 3.1. POST-COLONIAL THEORY

Colonialism is generally defined by

the establishment, exploitation, maintenance, acquisition, and expansion of colonies in one territory by people from another territory. It is a set of unequal relationships between the colonial power and the colony and often between the colonists and the indigenous population.<sup>35</sup>

The general conception of colonialism implies that imperialist societies have colonies on different territories. In the case of the Sami-states relationship, the concept of internal colonialism can be applied. Unlike external colonialism, internal colonialism refers to the unresolved process whereby a Western society and indigenous peoples have been cohabiting on the same territories, and the continuous resistance of these indigenous peoples over their occupied lands.<sup>36</sup>

Usually utilized by historians after World War II to designate the post-independence period, the term post-colonial had a chronological meaning. Post-colonial studies as a field was developed later to study and analyze the power relations between the colonizer and the

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<sup>35</sup> Nazifa Rashid. "British colonialism in East-Africa during nineteenth century". *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, Volume 19, Issue 3, Ver. I (Mar. 2014), 8.

<sup>36</sup> James Tully. "The struggles of indigenous peoples for and of freedom", in *Political Theory and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* Eds D Ivison, P Patton, W Sanders (Cambridge: University Press, 2000), 39.

colonized subjects, and the legacies of colonialism in both pre- and post-independent nations and communities.<sup>37</sup>

One important notion in a post-colonial context is the concept of the “Other”. The work of Palestinian American professor of literature Edward Saïd on Orientalism questioned the idea of the Orient constructed by Western thinking.<sup>38</sup> The Orient is a phenomenon constructed by travel writers, artists, politicians and intellectuals naturalizing stereotypes about the Orient’s “Other”. European travel writers like Johannes Schefferus (*Lapponia* 1673)<sup>39</sup>, Francesco Negri (*Il Viaggio Settentrionale* 1701)<sup>40</sup> or Jean-François Regnard (*Voyage en Laponie* 1681)<sup>41</sup> introduced a stereotyped vision of the Sami to the rest of Europe, based on this concept of “Other”. Orientalism can also have an impact on self-construction and on the construction of collective identity. Martinican psychiatrist, philosopher and writer Frantz Fanon published in 1961 *The Wretched of the Earth*, in which he clinically studied the effects of colonial domination on the colonized subject, taking a Marxist approach on socio-economic control. He developed the idea of a comprador class, or *élite*, whose native origins were masked by their complicity with the white dominating class.<sup>42</sup> As a critical nationalist, Fanon explained that the need to search for a national culture which “existed before the colonial era finds its legitimate reason in the anxiety shared by many indigenous intellectuals to shrink away from that western culture in which they all risk being swamped” and to “renew contact one more with the oldest and most pre-colonial springs of their people”.<sup>43</sup> Saïd and Fanon also recognized the dangers of creating new *élite* groups, that in the long run can lead to an extension of imperialism. For this project, I chose to analyze discourses from political Sami leaders, while being aware of the diversity and complexity of Sami identities.

In order to better understand the relationship between the Sami and their territories, one can examine the work of Canadian political scientist James Tully, who studied the differences between aboriginal property and Western theory.<sup>44</sup> For him, the conception of property in the modern Western world is focused on the individual ownership and the economic aspects

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<sup>37</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Triffin, *Post-Colonial Studies. The Key Concepts*. Second Edition. (London and New York: Routledge. 2007), 169

<sup>38</sup> Edward W. Saïd, *Orientalism: western conceptions of the Orient*. 1978. (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1995).

<sup>39</sup> Joannes Schefferus, *Lapponia, id est Regionis Lapponum et gentis nova et verissima descriptio*, 1673

<sup>40</sup> Francesco Negri, *Il viaggio settentrionale.*, 1701.

<sup>41</sup> Jean François Regnard, *Voyage en Laponie*, 1681.

<sup>42</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Triffin, *Post-Colonial Studies*. 93

<sup>43</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. (New York: Grove, 1963). 153-154

<sup>44</sup> James Tully, “Aboriginal Property and Western Theory: Recovering a Middle Ground” *Social Philosophy and Policy* 11 no.2 (Summer 1994): 153-180 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052500004477>

of property, including the right to exclude and the right to sell.<sup>45</sup> Property is therefore considered as an instrument of power within a Western society, establishing hierarchies and relationships with others. In comparison, indigenous communities have a more reflective and profound relationship with the concept of land and territory, that can be of religious or spiritual significance, and connected to both the past and the future.<sup>46</sup>

In a post-colonial context, the concept of place is a determinant for the process of identity formation. In many cases, the primary concept of place is embedded in language and cultural history and it does not become a subject of struggle until colonization interferes profoundly with the established system. Colonization may disrupt a sense of place for the colonized peoples who are subject to forced migration, or a redefinition of their borders, and by imposing the colonial language.<sup>47</sup> The emergence of new nation-states changed the internal borders of Sápmi over history. With them, new Sami policies were decided, aimed to prohibit the use of Sami languages and the performance of Sami cultural traditions through the imposition of a common school curriculum and the rule of Christian missionaries. Sami livelihoods were also controlled by the states who imposed taxes for the use of lands. One could then argue that the concept of place within discourse on collective identity became important to the Sami after experiencing colonization. This concept is particularly important to understand the political revindications of the Sami over their lands and resources today.

### 3.1. FROM SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

The social constructionist approach is multidisciplinary and is influenced by fields such as sociology, philosophy, and linguistics.<sup>48</sup> Because it pushes us to be critical of our own worldview, social constructionism is opposed to positivist and empirical notions usually found in the “hard” sciences that state that what we perceive to exist-is the true nature of the world. Instead, social constructionism argues that our worldviews are dependent on our cultural and social norms. How we understand these worldviews and divide them into categories also depends on the time that we live in.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 153.

<sup>46</sup> Nigel Bankes, and Timo Koivurova, eds. *The Proposed Nordic Saami Convention: National and International Dimensions of Indigenous Property Rights*. (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 23.

<sup>47</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Triffin, *Post-Colonial Studies*. 161.

<sup>48</sup> Vivien Burr, *Introduction to Social Constructionism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 1-2.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 4.

In this context, social constructionism is particularly relevant in the study of collective identity formation and the construction of the Sami nation. In early literature, the notion of collective identity, such as in the works of Durkheim (“collective conscience”) or Marx (“class consciousness”), was approached as a natural characteristic. This quality was believed to be internalized by the members of a collective, living a unified social experience, on which social actors could construct a sense of self. Colonial studies on race assumed the presence of common essential features that would distinguish one race from another.<sup>50</sup> More recent anti-essentialist research, based on post-modernism, challenge the concept of a unified collective experience and “expose the ways in which discourse objectified as truth both forms and sustains collective definitions of social arrangements, and hierarchies of power.”<sup>51</sup>

### 3.1.1. THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF SPACE

Geographers in the 1980s started to analyze the role of language and discourse in the construction of “place” and consequently in the formation of collective identities. American geographer Allan Pred, for example, argues that “no local worlds exist without words or other symbols, and that all the practices, all the forms of social life that constitute the world of a place are enabled and sustained by language”.<sup>52</sup> These discourses serve to construct a social reality, while isolating it from others. However, the construction of a community cannot be reduced to a geographical referent. Spatialization is present in all social practices, so discourse does not only construct borders but also socio-spatial communities.<sup>53</sup> Because the borders of Sápmi are not legitimized by legal means, the construction of Sami collective identity might not be as simple as with nation-states. In this case, the role of language, employed by institutions, is particularly important for the construction of a social reality. Through geographical accounts of place, language is shaping communities and contributing to the social spatialization process.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Triffin, *Post-Colonial Studies*. 73.

<sup>51</sup> Karen A. Cerulo, “Identity Construction” 391.

<sup>52</sup> Allan. Pred, "Survey 14: The locally spoken word and local struggles." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 7, no. 2 (June 1989), 212. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d070211>

<sup>53</sup> Anssi Paasi. *Territories, boundaries, and consciousness: The changing geographies of the Finnish-Russian boundary*. (Wiley, 1996), 11.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

### 3.1.2. WE VERSUS THE OTHER

As seen in the previous chapter, the concept of the “Other” has its roots in European discourse, constructing European identity as superior, by opposition to the non-European culture. Typically, the “Other” is constructed through spatial elements, as living *there*. Even if the “Other” lives *here*, “we” is voluntarily constructed as being different from it. Finnish Professor of geography Anssi Paasi developed an analytical framework to study the construction of various territorial identities in relation to social distinctions.<sup>55</sup>

	<i>Here</i>	<i>There</i>
<i>We</i>	Integration within a territory	Integration over boundaries
<i>Other</i>	Distinction within a territory	Distinction between us and the Other

Figure 1.1 An Analytical framework for forms of socio-spatial integration and distinction (Paasi, 1996)

These fields represent discourses that can be adapted in the Sami-states context. Integration within a territory, in this case Sápmi, implies a *we/here* relationship. The *we/there* discourse refers to the intention to integrate a certain group into a community beyond borders. This is relevant for the construction of Sami collective identity, that aims to integrate Sami people across borders. The *other/here* discourse points to the distinction between several social groups within the same territorial unit. This discourse can refer to the distinction between Sami and non-Sami people within Sápmi, or between traditional livelihoods and “modern” economies. The fourth one, *other/there*, aims to distinguish different groups according to territory, which in this case could refer to the states or political leaders who take political decisions and are decentralized. Therefore, according to Paasi, the construction of spatial narratives is based on a dialectical relationship between *difference* and *integration*. The former aims to distinguish a homogenized group or experience from the “Other”. The latter aims to create this homogenized experience through a common spatial experience.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 14.

### 3.1.3 THE PROCESS OF NATION BUILDING

American historian Benedict Anderson defines a nation “as an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”. By *imagined*, he means that although members of a defined community will never all meet each other, they are consciously tied together. They are imagined as *limited* in the sense that all of them have definite borders, even if they are flexible, that separate them from other nations. They are imagined as *sovereign* because, based on values from the Enlightenment, they dream of being free from divine forces. Finally, they are imagined as *communities* because of a strong sense of comradeship that inspires its members to willingly kill and die for their community.<sup>56</sup> This modernist concept was, according to Anderson, brought by Europeans to the colonies. Through Western education, indigenous peoples were introduced to all the characteristics of nationhood: “common citizenships, popular sovereignty, national flags and anthems.”<sup>57</sup> Anderson does not recognize that indigenous peoples might want to find their own cultural identity, distinct from the settlers’ identity.

Nation building, according to Paasi, can refer to the actions of groups or individuals in their fight for the right to define social practices in certain spatial contexts.<sup>58</sup> This process is usually linked to nation-states and their will to unite their inhabitants, by making them adopt collective interpretations. In the case of this paper, Sami institutions can hold this role of binding individuals within the Sami nation by creating a common worldview through their narratives.<sup>59</sup>

The feeling of belonging to a social group and a common land is what ties individuals to a nation. This way, human beings distinguish themselves from other people who do not live in “their” territory.<sup>60</sup> The concept of place and territory is thus a prerequisite for nationalism. According to British historical sociologist Anthony D. Smith, one cannot reach a feeling of identity and culture without inscribing social experiences into a recognized homeland that they can describe as “theirs”. Nationalism goes beyond the borders of race, religion and language, and aims to construct national identity through a distinct territory.<sup>61</sup> Smith

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<sup>56</sup> Benedict Anderson. *Imagined communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 49-50.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 81.

<sup>58</sup> Anssi Paasi. *Territories, boundaries, and consciousness*, 42.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 42.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, 46.

<sup>61</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism in the twentieth century*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979, 3.



identifies nations as historical and cultural units that are naturally divided into the world by borders. They constitute homogenous groups and are distinct from each other. However, James Tully rejects the essentialist idea that cultures are internally homogenous:

They are continuously contested, imagined and reimagined, transformed and negotiated, both by their members and through their interaction with others. The identity, and so the meaning, of any culture is thus aspectival rather than essential: like many complex phenomena, such as language and games, cultural identity changes as it is approached from different paths and a variety of aspects come into view.<sup>62</sup>

It is therefore important to consider the variety of identities, even within the constructed Sami nation. References to the different social systems will be made during the analysis.

By focusing on *ethnie*, Anthony D. Smith also suggests that nationalism relies on the “rediscovery and revitalization of ethnic ties and sentiments.”<sup>63</sup> These cultural ties can be related to arts, language, customs, or a rewriting of history to construct a common past and destiny. Smith also argues that skin pigmentation can play a role in the construction of *ethnie*. However, Sami researcher Rauna Kuokkanen points that skin color is a non-issue in Sápmi.<sup>64</sup> Also, she points out that indigeneity, as defined by the ILO Convention no.169, is not characterized by skin color. Therefore, an individual is regarded as Indigenous:

on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country ... at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.<sup>65</sup>

Early notions of nationhood suggested that a nation was constructed on one people's common heritage. In that sense, before the colonization of Sápmi by settler states, there was no Sami nation, as the Sami did not represent a homogenous group. Rather, one might argue, there was a multitude of nations, speaking different languages, namely North Sami, South Sami, Pite Sami, Lule Sami, Ume Sami, Skolt Sami, Kildin Sami, Inari Sami, Ter Sami, and

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<sup>62</sup> James Tully. *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity* (Cambridge: University Press, 1985), 11.

<sup>63</sup> Anthony D. Smith. *The ethnic origins of nations*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1986), 145.

<sup>64</sup> Rauna Kuokkanen. "Indigenous Peoples on two continents: self-determination processes in Sámi and First Nations societies." *European Review of Native American Studies* 20, no. 2 (2006), 25.

<sup>65</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, C169*, 27 June 1989, C169, Article 1b. available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ddb6d514.html> [accessed 14 May 2018].

Akkala Sami. They were also involved in different traditional activities depending on their environment. Therefore, the development of a pan-Sami nation could be explained with Anderson's colonial model which suggests that the common experience of colonialism helped developing a collective Sami identity. More broadly, Rauna Kuokkanen states that indigenous peoples throughout the world are united by a shared experience of being colonized, marginalized, and exploited, both in the past and in the present.<sup>66</sup>

American political and cultural sociologist Joane Nagel documented changing patterns in Native American identification in the United-States, using national census between 1960 and 1990. She explained the shifting of identity with three main sociopolitical factors: new federal Indian policy, increased national ethnic policies, and a rise of Native American activism. She also demonstrated how policies and politics influenced a renewal of indigenous identity.<sup>67</sup> Sami policies, whether they were protectionist, like towards the reindeer Sami in Sweden, or associated with assimilation, gave the Sami no choice but to consider themselves as "a race apart", further developing a sense of "Self".

Colonization in Fennoscandia was arguably much subtler than in other parts of the world. By the time of an early Sami cultural awakening in the mid-nineteenth century, most of the Sami cultural and spiritual practices had been forbidden and therefore forgotten and replaced by Christianity several generations ago. But the languages, even if strongly weakened, were not completely decimated, and naturally became the main marker for Saminess when ethnopolitical movements emerged in the 1960s.<sup>68</sup> Today, language is still the main criterion of Sami identity and a common requirement to enter the electoral register of the three Sami Parliaments. But the domination of the majority languages in the states, added to weak minority languages policies made the Sami languages endangered. Sami culture, including values, traditional knowledge or worldviews are at risk of being "absorbed" by the dominant culture. Accordingly, language cannot be the only condition for Saminess.

Unlike other indigenous peoples in the world, issues like poverty, unemployment, access to healthcare or other social services have not been associated with the Sami people to the same extent. The reason being the introduction of the globally-known Nordic welfare state system, built on the principles of "egalitarianism and social equality on one hand, and individualism

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<sup>66</sup> Rauna Kuokkanen, "Indigenous Peoples on two continents", 2.

<sup>67</sup> Joane Nagel. "American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Politics and the Resurgence of Identity." *American Sociological Review* 60, no. 6 (1995): 947-65. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2096434>.

<sup>68</sup> Rauna Kuokkanen, "Indigenous Peoples on two continents", 2.

and an orientation towards the whole on the other”.<sup>69</sup> This model is argued to be opposed to the notion of indigenous collective rights. The Nordic welfare states have provided the Sami with the same social standards than the majorities, while “simultaneously diminishing the importance and realization of the Sami’s collective rights to protect their culture”.<sup>70</sup> The principles of individualism and social equality have tended to ignore the Sami distinctiveness from the majority, and the collective rights entitled with this specificity. This vision can explain the common misunderstanding of Sami claims for distinct rights among Nordic societies.

The Sami Parliaments are mainly responsible for the preservation and development of Sami culture. This limitation of indigenous rights to culture has been criticized by Sami scholars and politicians. Cultural rights are easily recognized by the states for the main reason that they are not considered threatening for the overall status quo and the economy of the state. If they were to declare Sami areas independent or responsible for their own resources the states would lose important sources of income from natural resources present in Sápmi. Nevertheless, as Kuokkanen argues, indigenous societies cannot achieve self-determination without having total control of their territories.<sup>71</sup>

For this thesis, I have approached the formation of Sami collective identity as being dependent from political and historical factors, rather than considering it as something “natural” and internalized in every member of the community. Current issues relevant for the Sami people in the Nordics, such as the forestry industry in Finland, the mineral industry in Sweden or the fishing industry in Norway, served as a basis for this research, which aims to determine the importance of land for the political construction of Sami identity.

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<sup>69</sup> Sven E Olsson, and Dave Lewis. “Welfare Rules and Indigenous Rights: the Sami People and the Nordic Welfare States”. In *Social Welfare with Indigenous Peoples* edited by J Dixon and R. P. Scheurell (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), 177.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 178.

<sup>71</sup> Rauna Kuokkanen, “Indigenous Peoples on two continents”, 5.

## 4. METHOD: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND FAIRCLOUGH'S APPROACH

According to British sociolinguist Norman Fairclough, Critical Discourse Analysis is a form of social science aimed to better understand the nature and origins of social wrongs, the obstacles to addressing them and the possible solutions to overcome them.<sup>72</sup> Social wrongs can be defined broadly as aspects in social systems or orders that can be negative for the human well-being and could be in principle ameliorated, if not eliminated, through major changes in these systems. The social wrong that I chose to analyze is the right to land and natural resources, because this topic is one of the most talked about in Sami media. In an attempt to decolonize research, I determined the social wrong according to Sami voices. The purpose of this research, as mentioned earlier, is to understand how Sami politicians construct Sami collective identity through discourse about land and territory and how, as such, it responds to a dominant discourse in its construction of the world and identities.

According to philosophers Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser, institutions are the tools that connect the complete mechanism of a society to social interactions. Ideologies are vehiculated through these institutions, and “locate human beings in specific ways as human subjects.”<sup>73</sup> The Sami Parliaments and politicians represent the institutions that have the legitimized power to construct certain identities and relations. Critical Discourse Analysis always implies a relationship to a social context, ideologies and power-relations. Culture and society can both constitute a discourse and, at the same time, be shaped by one. CDA is in that sense interdisciplinary and the study of text alone is not sufficient to understand the way language constitute and transmit knowledge, organize social institutions and exercise power. “Identity politics always entails the integration of past experiences, present events and future visions.”<sup>74</sup> Therefore, it was particularly important, before conducting this analysis, to do some research on Sami vision of land and territory, and Sami relationship with the settler states.

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<sup>72</sup> Norman Fairclough. “A Dialectical-Relational Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis in Social Research”. In *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. Second Edition. Edited by Ruth Wodak, and Michael Meyer. (SAGE: 2009), 167.

<sup>73</sup> Stefan Titscher, *Methods of text and discourse analysis: In search of meaning*. (Sage, 2000), 145.

<sup>74</sup> Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer. *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 11.

Fairclough's approach to CDA is also based on the conception that language is both socially determined and socially constructive.<sup>75</sup> It shapes social identities, relationships within a people and between groups of people. Discourse can produce or reproduce relations of power between classes, genders, ethnic or cultural majorities/minorities through the way it represents things and people within a social context.<sup>76</sup> For this thesis, I am interested in the way Sami politicians discursively resist the power abuse of the Nordic states by constructing a distinct collective identity.

CDA is *critical* in the sense that the researcher should have a critical approach towards knowledge, usually taken for granted, and analyze power relations as well as the construction of identities embedded in societies.<sup>77</sup> According to Austrian linguist Ruth Wodak, this *critical* knowledge is supposed to enable members of a society to reflect upon themselves and emancipate from a form of domination.<sup>78</sup> In this paper, I take the term "critical" mainly in the sense of making visible how Sami politicians construct a collective identity through discourse.

Another requirement of CDA is that the results or findings must be of practical relevance to address social problems. The findings of this analysis will help me understand Sami concerns over their lands and territories, and why this has created conflicts within the states. The findings are relevant in the field of Human Rights and social policy, especially related to the use of land and natural resources. For example, this research could help with understanding the concerns and criticism over the newly adopted draft of the Nordic Sami Convention.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 148.

<sup>76</sup> Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak. "Critical discourse analysis". In *Discourse as Social Interaction*. Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction, vol. 2. Edited by Van Dijk, TA. (London: Sage, 1997), 258.

<sup>77</sup> Louise Phillips, and Marianne W. Jorgensen. *Discourse analysis as theory and method*. (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 2.

<sup>78</sup> Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (eds.). *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. 7.

<sup>79</sup> In the mid-1980s, the Saami Council brought the idea that the four States along with the Sami should develop a joint convention to address the rights of the Sami as one indigenous people divided by international borders. In 2002, an expert group was established by the Nordic Council, formed by members appointed for each of the three Nordic States and for each of the three Sami parliaments. The aim was to develop a document that Russia could ratify later. The Expert Group presented a draft and a commentary to the three governments and the three Sami parliaments in 2005. After years of negotiations, the three States came into an agreement and released the adopted Nordic Sami Convention at the end of 2016. The agreement, composed of 46 articles, is now waiting to be ratified by both national and Sami parliaments. Critics over the adopted document have already arisen among Sami bodies. The main concerns are about the articles on Sami self-determination, on rights to land, water and natural resources, and on the definition of who is Sami.

#### 4. 1. MATERIAL AND DELIMITATIONS

When analyzing documents and discourse, it is important to consider who is issuing them, and who are receiving them. As demonstrated above, discourse, as in speech and writing, is shaped by social events and objects of knowledge, and constitutes identities and relations of power between social actors.<sup>80</sup> The chosen material is issued by people working in Sami politics and were/are still in office, representing the majority party at the time of production.

My goal for the analysis was at first to only take speeches. However, looking into the Parliaments' archives was complicated due to language barriers, especially for the Finnish Sami Parliament. I then decided to select my material based on these criteria: 1) it was produced by Sami politicians in office during the time of production by the form of narratives or directives and 2) they addressed the issue of lands and territories. The diversity of the texts provides a broader perspective of the research questions, by recording and analyzing the linguistic relations between different aspects of social life. The period between 2016 and 2018 was selected for several reasons. Firstly, the last Sami elections were held in 2017 in the three states, and it was the occasion for the previous politicians in office to make an assessment of their mandate, and for the newly elected members to set up a base for new directives. Secondly, the year 2017 marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Sami Conference in Trondheim (Norway), which was an event of major significance for the Sami as a people. The jubilee was the occasion to bring back several important issues on the table, including land rights. Thirdly, the newly adopted draft of the Nordic Sami Convention at the end of 2016 created an important debate among Sami politicians and activists, including on issues about self-determination, land rights and the definition of who is Sami. The discussions on the Convention are mentioned in some of the selected material. The Tana agreement between Norway and Finland, regulating fishing in the Tana river, was also passed in 2017, which further alimented the debate about land and resource management in Sápmi. Other elements like the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the independence of Finland and its chairmanship in the Arctic Council, and Sweden's chairmanship of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council were taken into consideration. Since discourse is constructed according to a time and space framework, these events and the debates around them contribute to the understanding of the construction of Sami collective identity by Sami politicians at this period of time.

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<sup>80</sup> Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (eds.). *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 6.

A total of twelve texts were selected, including five speeches, four interviews (written and broadcasted), one chronicle, one brochure and one political program from the *Norske Samers Riksforbund* (NSR). In addition, the introduction to the Swedish Sami Parliament's environmental program, published in 2009 was analyzed, as well as Stefan Mikaelsson's speech from the opening ceremony of Umeå2014, European Capital of Culture. To fairly represent the Sami in the three states, the material has been divided equally among the residents of these states.

A larger selection of material would have given a more accurate representation of the construction of Sami collective identity by politicians. However, considering the limitations in time and length of this research, I claim that this selection is enough to expose some results. The interviews and speeches, that represent half of the material, were considered in their integrality, and gave more substance for the analysis.

The material excludes Russian Sami documents, for the main reason that the Kola Sami Assembly is not recognized by the Russian Federation, and therefore outside of the questions that search to determine how Sami politicians construct a collective Sami identity while simultaneously identify the "Other". I am aware that this is a contradiction with the previous theories that acknowledge the Sami as one people across four countries, and my choice to approach this inquiry from a Sami national perspective. To consider Sami voices from the Russian side, a different study could be made taking for example documents from Sami civil organizations across borders.

#### 4.2. MY POSITION AS A RESEARCHER AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In an attempt to decolonize research, critical indigenous inquiry should begin with the concerns of indigenous people. In the early 2000s, indigenous scholars aimed to deconstruct western science and elaborate methodologies that would favor traditional knowledge, voices, and experiences. According to Māori researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith, qualitative research, in many of its forms, including ethnography, observation, participation, interviewing, "serves as a metaphor for colonial knowledge, for power and for truth."<sup>81</sup> Research, in a colonial context, provides reports about the representation of the "Other" to the Western world.

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<sup>81</sup> Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, eds. *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies*. Sage (2008), 4.

For this thesis, I purposely chose to analyze material already produced by the Sami Parliaments and Sami politicians, so the subjects of the study are the ones constructing identities with their own reality, and not the researcher. Concerns over land and resources is a dominant topic in material produced by indigenous communities, including the Sami. By starting my research with an issue constructed by the Sami politicians themselves, I will attempt to decolonize it. Nevertheless, by limiting the material to Sami politicians and by selecting it according to my research questions, I am aware that I might contribute to the construction of a specific discourse.

My role, as a researcher, especially in the field of CDA, is to always question my position in order to expose different worldviews. I do not aim to expose the truth, but rather a certain construction of the truth at a certain period of time and by certain actors. Because of my background, my interpretation of the results will be different than if the research was performed by someone else.

Critics of CDA like Widdowson believe that CDA is in fact a biased interpretation. The material is selected according to a prejudiced ideology that will support the preferred interpretation.<sup>82</sup> It is true that my analysis will be inevitably influenced by my subjective readings and my own understanding on matters related to Sami land rights and Sami collective identity. Yet, Fairclough points out that unlike other approaches, CDA is always explicit about its own position and commitment. I therefore find it important to give a personal background to allow the reader to understand my perspective and to keep a critical eye on my analysis.

My position in the field is linked with my origins and my personal experiences living both on colonized territories and in majority cultures. My ancestors were few amongst many who were given benefits to resettle to the French colonies of Algeria and Tunisia, to teach or to build farms. The decolonization movements of the 1960s forced them to leave lands they had “owned” for generations to (re)settle in a territory they had never been before. I have never attempted to collect important narratives about this transition period from my family, because the wounds still seem fresh. I have therefore been raised surrounded by relatives who were trying to mitigate the real impacts of colonization, because their personal experiences were different than the ones from the colonized populations. I started to question

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<sup>82</sup> Henry G Widdowson. "Discourse analysis: a critical view." *Language and literature* 4, no. 3 (1995), 158. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F096394709500400301>



and deconstruct this knowledge while attending French school and learning more about the effects of colonization. The discourse was entirely negative, and my background became something to be ashamed of. By constantly searching for new information on indigenous issues and the ongoing impacts of European colonialism, it is, in a sense, a way for me to attempt to reconcile memories, while keeping a distance from my own personal history. I have lived in Arizona on traditional Navajo territory and traveled to different Native American reservations around the South-West of the United-States. Although this was not for academic fieldwork, I had the chance to meet with locals who shared with me their struggles of being from a Native American descent living under “colonial rule”. I went on a university exchange to Norway, where I took a course on Sami religion. I visited Sápmi in the Troms area, and spent a day with a Sami guide, who drove me around different islands, and taught me a lot about Sami culture, history, and relation to land. I was really interested to know more about this “dual” identity, and asked a question to which he gladly replied: “I am a Sami living in Norway, but I don’t feel Norwegian. I feel closer to the Sami people living in Sweden, Finland or Russia, even though we don’t speak the same language. I didn’t choose these borders.” This narrative, although personal, definitely influenced my idea to study Sami identity in the future.

Being an outsider, to both Nordic society and the Sami people, can be a disadvantage to understanding the key concepts of these issues. However, I believe that I am less likely to be biased and can be critical of both parties. This does not take away the fact that my worldview is based on Western values which are closer to the ones of the Nordic states. Because of all the personal experiences mentioned above, I am very much in support of indigenous rights, while acknowledging the complexity of identities and realities within a territory.

## 5. INVESTIGATION

Considering the theories developed in this paper, related to nationalism and territory, and the indigenous status of the Sami, I divided my findings into four categories: 1) creating Sami collective identity through spatial narratives, 2) the concepts of culture and tradition, 3) Indigenous discourse, 4) “us” versus “them”. These themes will hopefully help me highlight by which means Sami politicians construct a collective identity and a sense of belonging among the Sami people, and consequently, how they construct the “Other”.

### 5.1. CREATING SAMI COLLECTIVE IDENTITY THROUGH SPATIAL NARRATIVES

Sami national emblems such as the song of the Sami people, as seen earlier, link Sami nationhood and identity to the traditional lands and traditional livelihoods. This raises the question of Sami people living outside of Sápmi, and who consequently are not always able to practice traditional activities. How do Sami politicians manage (or not) to embrace this diverse population around a common Sami narrative? Who is identified as Sami in the discourse, and simultaneously, who is not?

The distinct culture and way of life of the Sami are strongly associated with their territories. This link between culture, territory and the Sami as a people is important to understand the construction of the Sami nation. Sami politicians constantly create or recreate this deep connection to lands and resources in their discourse, as an attempt to fix centuries of colonization and assimilation, and what has been consequently associated with a loss of culture and thus identity.

In his speech for the inauguration of the European Capital of Culture in Umeå in 2014, Stefan Mikaelsson, then president of the Swedish Sami Parliament Plenary Assembly, mentioned the importance of land for the Sami as a people:

Our lands and territories are the core of our existence - we are the land and the land is us; we have a distinct spiritual and material relationship with our lands and territories and they are inextricably linked to our survival.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> “Speech by the President of Sami Parliament Plenary Assembly - Speech by Stefan Mikaelsson at the official start of the European Capital of Culture year in Umeå 2014. Sametinget.se. Last modified May 18, 2015. <https://www.sametinget.se/66907>

“Our’ lands and territories” emphasizes the idea of the immemorial belonging of the Sami territories, now spread across four states, to the Sami themselves. This post-colonial discourse is used methodically here, since the audience is local, national and international. The use of “Sápmi” later in the speech to define the place they are located in also seems like a way to make the name known and official outside of Sápmi and Sweden’s borders. For the Swedish State, Umeå is the capital of Västerbotten, but for a year, Umeå was also Europe’s window to the north and to Sami cultural heritage. The city’s cultural program was based on the eight seasons in the Sami calendar, and many events were related to Sami culture in several forms, including handicraft and music. For its opening event, the city welcomed more than 55,000 guests, and caught considerable media attention.<sup>84</sup>

Another aspect of post-colonial discourse present in the material is the idea that the Sami have inhabited the region “alone”, since “time immemorial”. This is a common discourse used among indigenous communities living in settler states, as a way to identify these states as colonial powers, and accordingly to justify their right to live on their territories and manage their natural resources.

In its political program for the period 2017-2021, NSR (*Norske Samers Riksforbund*) links the “rich resources found in nature in Sápmi [to the] existence of the Sami”.<sup>85</sup> Because they have been using the natural elements “through generations” for the basis of their culture, traditions and livelihoods, Sami identity is created by the NSR through this strong connection with Sápmi. The program also states that “Sápmi is for everyone”, and that everyone should be able to live on equal terms “regardless of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, disabilities, age or religious affiliation”. NSR implies here that Sápmi should also be open to non-Sami people, as long as Sami rights are respected.

The utilization of Sami names for cities, such as Tråante (Trondheim, Norway) or Staare (Östersund, Sweden)<sup>86</sup> to promote Sami political and cultural events, such as in the speech of Paulus Kuoljok<sup>87</sup>, is a way for the Sami Parliaments and the Sami Council to reattribute Sami traditional territories to the Sami people through narratives.

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<sup>84</sup> Tim Fox and James Rampton. “Ex-post Evaluation of the European Capitals of Culture”. *Final Report*. (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015). Accessed at [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/files/ecoc-2014-report\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/files/ecoc-2014-report_en.pdf)

<sup>85</sup> NSR, “*Prinsippprogram 2017–2021 for Norske Samers Riksforbund (NSR)*”.

<sup>86</sup> “Nyårstal av Paulus Kuoljok”, Sametinget, last modified January 5, 2018 (my translation).

<https://www.sametinget.se/118355>

<sup>87</sup> Paulus Kuoljok has been chairing the Swedish Sami Parliament Plenary Assembly since 2017.

The deep relationship of the Sami people to Sápmi is emphasized by the Sami politicians, using the third person “we”, creating a common Sami habitus. For example, the *Sametinget* released its Living Environment Program in 2009, which states:

We, the Sami people, are the indigenous people in Sápmi. (...) We are a part of the landscape in Sápmi. (...) We rely on a living relationship to Sápmi, our home.<sup>88</sup>

The connection to territory is one of the main elements in the construction of nations. President of Finnish Sami Parliament Tiina Sanila-Aikios, in her speech at the EU High-Level Arctic event in Oulu in 2017, connects the Arctic with “our home, our identity and our land”.<sup>89</sup> Referring to Smith’s theory on nationalism, this connection to a homeland is a way to inscribe Sami collective identity into a common territory that they can identify as “theirs”. This process of social spatialization is realized by constructing Sápmi through a common imaginary, including collective mythologies.<sup>90</sup> Because of the profound spiritual and material connection to nature described by Sami politicians, preserving and promoting Sami culture and heritage relies on an intense protection of land and natural resources. As the NSR program states, “the use of natural resources should be based on the values the Sami people have for sustainable use of nature.”<sup>91</sup> Consequently, the care for nature preservation is constructed as a Sami common value and an important trait of Sami collective identification. “Our people have lived here since time immemorial, managing the lands and waters with great respect and care.”<sup>92</sup> As a result, Sami politicians often emphasize the importance to pass on this value to future generations, in order to preserve Sami cultural heritage.

The Sami are referred by international law as an indigenous people across four countries. During his address to the public and officials present at the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Sami Conference in Trondheim in 2017, Håkan Jonsson, from the Swedish *Sametinget*, constructed a common struggle between the Sami from Norway, Sweden and Finland: “We have almost no influence over our land, water and natural resources in the Sami areas.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> “The Sami Parliament’s Living Environment Program”, *Sametinget*. Sami Parliament Report. Released in January 2009. <https://www.sametinget.se/9008>

<sup>89</sup> Tiina Sanila-Aikio, President of the Saami Parliament of Finland, Speech at EU High-Level Arctic event “A sustainable Arctic – innovative approaches”, June 15, 2017. [http://www2.samediggi.fi/index2.php?option=com\\_docman&task=doc\\_view&gid=3022&Itemid=10](http://www2.samediggi.fi/index2.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=3022&Itemid=10)

<sup>90</sup> The process of social spatialization was studied by Rob Shields in his book: *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>91</sup> “*Prinsippprogram 2017–2021 for Norske Samers Riksforbund (NSR)*”, NSR, last modified July 17, 2017 (my translation). <https://nsr.no/valg-2017/valgprogram/prinsippprogram/>

<sup>92</sup> *Sametinget*. “The Sami Parliament’s Living Environment Program”.

<sup>93</sup> “Tal av Håkan Jonsson i Trondheim den 6 februari 2017”, *Sametinget*, last modified February 6, 2017. (my translation). <https://www.sametinget.se/111995>

This conference came just after the release of the negotiated draft of the Nordic Sami Convention, supposed to harmonize Sami rights across the Nordic states' borders. Norway is often taken as a point of comparison by Sami politicians from Sweden and Finland, to show inequality among the Sami living in the three states. Per-Olof Nutti, Chairman of the Swedish *Sametinget* addressed the *Samediggi* in Norway in October 2017, comparing the autonomy of the Sami on the two sides, thus creating a physical and political divide within the Sami as a nation.<sup>94</sup> When mentioning the lands, these are still gathered under the possessive pronoun “our”.

Putting the idea of the land at the center of Sami existence raises the question of Sami people living outside of Sápmi, who consequently are not able to practice traditional livelihoods on a daily basis. They seem to be excluded from the discourse about collective identity. This also raises the question of people who are not able to enter the electoral register but live on these territories, or even practice traditional livelihoods, as it is the case in Finland.

## 5.2. THE CONCEPTS OF CULTURE AND TRADITION

The concepts of culture and tradition are often used in Sami political discourse to legitimate the practice of traditional livelihoods, which connect Sami identity and Sami territories.

“Many of [the Sami] traditional livelihoods are nature based, like reindeer herding and fjord fishing”.<sup>95</sup> Sami politicians describe these practices as “an important cultural bearer related to language, nature and traditions”.<sup>96</sup> As Finnish Sami politician Áslat Holmberg explains:

When I go fishing I have to know something about the river, about the salmon, about the water levels, the weather, the nets and the boat. For me, all of this information is in Sami language. Fishing has really been one key way for me of learning the language. I don't learn these things if we sit with my father in our house. It's when we go outside

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<sup>94</sup> “Hälsningstal av Per-Olof Nutti, styrelseordförande, Sametinget i Sverige, vid det 8:e öppnandet av Sametinget i Karasjok, Norge den 11 oktober 2017”, Sametinget, last modified October 13, 2017 (my translation). <https://www.sametinget.se/116756>

<sup>95</sup> Aili Keskitalo, interview.

<sup>96</sup> Inger Eline Eriksen. “Kronikk: Tanaavtalen - En fullstendig overkjøring av lokaldemokratiet og samiske rettigheter - Kronikk ved Inger Eline Eriksen, sametingsråd for klima og miljø.” *Samediggi*. Published February 24, 2017. <https://www.sametinget.no/Om-Sametinget/Arkiv-perioden-2016-2017/Nyhetsarkiv/Kronikk-Tanaavtalen-En-fullstendig-overkjoering-av-lokaldemokratiet-og-samiske-rettigheter>

and when we do these things and he starts to talk and tell about things, and that's the way also I learn the language but also the knowledge required to do this livelihood.<sup>97</sup>

According to the studies of linguists and anthropologists such as Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, in which they develop the linguistic determinism hypothesis, the structure of our language strongly determines our vision of the world.<sup>98</sup> Sami languages have for example more than a hundred and eighty words to describe snow, compared to approximately twenty-five in Swedish. Sami languages are consequently strongly related to the environment and traditional livelihoods. According to the Sami politicians' discourse, if these practices disappear, it is then Sami cultural heritage as a whole that will be endangered.

Reindeer herding is described not only as a way of subsistence and a traditional practice, but also as the cornerstone of Sami identity. As one member of the Saami Council explains: "It's our life, and it's a way of existing."<sup>99</sup> Altogether, approximately 6,500 Sami are involved in reindeer herding, including 2,800 full-time. Compared to the estimated size of the Sami population, they represent a minority. Both in Sweden and Norway, only Sami people can practice reindeer herding. While Norbotten and Västerbotten counties are the largest herding areas in Sweden, they are also home of most of Sweden's mineral deposits, which creates conflicts with the Sami population.<sup>100</sup>

Nature is also the base for the other livelihoods defined as "Sami", such as "fishing, gathering, hunting and handicrafts".<sup>101</sup> This is often emphasized when justifying the Sami people's strong connection to their lands. According to the Norwegian *Samediggi*, Sami culture's dependence on nature has created a deep understanding and respect for it among Sami people.<sup>102</sup> This is justified by a common discourse on sustainable resource management, for which it is the Sami people's "duty as stewards of this legacy to ensure that

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<sup>97</sup> Áslat Holmberg, "Climate justice in Sápmi: Áslat Holmberg, Fisherman & politician", interview by 350.org. YouTube video, 3:17, July 8, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QLqx7hYhghs>

<sup>98</sup> Oswald Werner. "Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis." *Concise encyclopedia of philosophy of language* (1997):80.

<sup>99</sup> Inka Saara Arttijeffer, and Saara Tervaniemi. "Finland's Reindeer-herding Sámi Women Fight Climate Change." Interview by Sonia Narang. *Public Radio International*, March 07, 2018. Accessed April 14, 2018. <https://www.pri.org/stories/2018-03-07/finlands-reindeer-herding-s-mi-women-fight-climate-change>.

<sup>100</sup> Koivurova et al. "Legal Protection of Sami Traditional Livelihoods from the Adverse Impacts of Mining: A Comparison of the Level of Protection Enjoyed by Sami in Their Four Home States." *Arctic Review on Law and Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (2015), 11-51. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17585/arctic.v6.76>

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Samediggi, Lokal forvaltning av nasjonalparker og større verneområder, "Informasjon til Sametingets oppnevnte medlemmer i verneområdestyrene", Karasjok. (2017) Accessible at <http://docplayer.me/35753737-Lokal-forvaltning-av-nasjonalparker-og-storre-verneomrader-informasjon-til-sametingets-oppnevnte-medlemmer-i-verneomradestyrene.html>

future Sami generations will be able to pursue their traditional livelihoods”<sup>103</sup> and continue to only take what is necessary for their own survival.<sup>104</sup>

The concept of cultural survival, present in most of the material, legitimates the Sami’s fight against climate change and land exploitation. Tiina Sanila-Aikio, president of the Finnish Sami Parliament, went as far as comparing the Arctic railway project between Rovaniemi (Finland) and Kirkenes (Norway) to a decision “which will make Sami people to extinct.”<sup>105</sup> The potential line will indeed pass through two Sami areas dividing the available grazing land, making the practice of reindeer herding much more difficult.

Stefan Mikaelsson recalled in 2014 in Umeå:

When our lands and territories are devastated, we jeopardize our traditional culture and run the risk of disappearing as an indigenous people.<sup>106</sup>

In Sweden, if the Sami are referred to as indigenous, they are not granted land rights in connection to the ILO 169 Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.

The forestry industry in Finland has also caused many conflicts between authorities or private companies and the Sami, especially with those pursuing a traditional activity such as reindeer herding. Logging changes the vegetation altering the migration route of the reindeer. “For reindeer herding, [we] need forest that is healthy,” says Inka Saara Arttijeffer, advisor to the President of the Finnish Sami Parliament.

Resource industries are not the only challenge for Sami traditional economy. Climate change has transformed the land over the years, and the available food for the herds have become rarer. Because of warmer winters, the snow transforms into icy rains that covers large portions of the grazing land. “Reindeer cannot find food in the forest ... and that makes them weaker. Your herd gets smaller and smaller.”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Paulus Kuoljok, New Year’s Speech.

<sup>104</sup> Samediggi, “Informasjon til Sametingets oppnevnte medlemmer i verneområdestyrene”

<sup>105</sup> Tiina Sanila-Aikio, “Sámi concerned about Arctic railway plans” Video interview by Thomas Nilsen, *The Barents Observer*, June 09, 2018. Accessed April 09, 2018. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/life-and-public/2017/06/sami-concerned-about-arctic-railway-plans>

<sup>106</sup> Stefan Mikaelsson. Speech for official start of the European Capital of Culture year in Umeå 2014.

<sup>107</sup> Inka Saara Arttijeffer, and Saara Tervaniemi, interview.

Sami identity through traditional livelihoods is also associated by many with future generations, associating Sami culture and identity as something from the past, the present and the future.<sup>108</sup> In its program, NSR “wishes to innovate and develop jobs and business in Sápmi, to ensure settlement and thus continuation of the Sami language and culture for the future generation.” Sami identity is constructed here through the strong connection between language and settlement in Sápmi.

### 5.3. INDIGENOUS RIGHTS DISCOURSE

The concept of indigeneity in the Nordics is more ambiguous than in immigrant-based societies. The relation to land and nature is also very present among “ethnic” Norwegians, Swedes or Finns, and the Sami claims for their territories led to some confusions and conflicts among majority societies. Norway is the only state of the three that has officially declared that the country was built on the territory of two peoples: the Norwegians and the Sami. Even if they are recognized in Sweden and Finland as indigenous peoples, the Sami have the status of national minority, which does not grant them the same access to distinct rights over their lands.

The continuous reference to the Sami as a “people” implies that they have certain characteristics and are entitled to certain rights associated with this category. The Swedish *Riksdag* recognized the Sami as an indigenous people in 1977 and as a people in its constitution in 2011. “An indigenous people has cultural rights, but a people also has political rights”<sup>109</sup>, says Håkon Jonsson during the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> Sami Conference in Trondheim.

The right to self-determination, as developed in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, serves as a reference to legitimate the Sami right to manage their own resources. Article 3 states that by virtue of that right, “they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”<sup>110</sup> The realization of this right requires the Sami to be able to control the natural resources in their traditional

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<sup>108</sup> Paulus Kuoljok, New Year’s Speech.

<sup>109</sup> Håkan Jonsson, speech.

<sup>110</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly*, (October 2, 2007), A/RES/61/295, Article 3. available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/471355a82.html> [accessed 14 May 2018]



areas, particularly those serving for their own subsistence. As Håkan Jonsson mentioned in his speech:

According to the declaration, the Sami shall be entitled to restoration or compensation for land and natural resources used without the consent of the Sami. Part of self-determination is to give indigenous peoples the right to decide and / or exercise influence over their land and water areas, natural resources and traditional livelihoods, as several UN agencies have emphasized.<sup>111</sup>

By framing the issue on land and resources not only as a Sami issue, but also as an indigenous issue, the Sami politicians give a normative connotation to the arguments, in which “indigenous” is connected to a deep relationship with nature. This way, the Sami connection to land and resources is implicitly constructed through this indigenous discourse. However, the extensive use of the indigenous discourse to legitimize Sami land claims might lead to a universalization of indigenous peoples’ experiences, and potentially (re)inscribe the essentialist Western discourses about the sameness of the “Other”.<sup>112</sup>

Håkan Jonsson acknowledges the complexity of the indigenous approach to self-determination and recalls that the right to self-determination is a principle applying to all peoples, indigenous or not.<sup>113</sup> The principle of Free-Prior and Informed Consent, rooted in the ILO Convention no.169, is used in the discourse to legitimate the right for the Sami to be consulted on issues they define as being of concern for the Sami people<sup>114</sup>:

It is embedded in the right to self-determination and should be obtained when approving any project affecting our lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources.<sup>115</sup>

This argument has been used in many cases related to land and resources exploitation in Sami areas. One of the examples mentioned in the material is the Tana Agreement between

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<sup>111</sup> Håkan Jonsson, speech.

<sup>112</sup> Carla Wilson, Review of *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2013). Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand. Accessed at [http://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/journals-and-magazines/social-policy-journal/spj17/17\\_pages214\\_217.pdf](http://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/journals-and-magazines/social-policy-journal/spj17/17_pages214_217.pdf)

<sup>113</sup> Håkan Jonsson, speech.

<sup>114</sup> Aili Kesitalo, interview.

<sup>115</sup> Tiina Sanila-Aikio, President of the Saami Parliament of Finland, Speech at EU High-Level Arctic event “A sustainable Arctic – innovative approaches”, June 15, 2017. [http://www2.samediggi.fi/index2.php?option=com\\_docman&task=doc\\_view&gid=3022&Itemid=10](http://www2.samediggi.fi/index2.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=3022&Itemid=10)

Norway and Finland, aimed to preserve the salmon's stocks in the Tana river, where the Sami have been fishing traditionally for centuries for subsistence. The agreement has been restricting Sami traditional fishing while extending permits for non-residents, even introducing new licenses to cabin owners in Finland so they can fish on both sides of the river without travel requirement. Sami politicians consider "unfair" that those traditional ways of fishing are the most restricted<sup>116</sup>, to the benefit of people who consider fishing as a sport or recreation.<sup>117</sup> Local representatives have not been invited to the negotiation table, which is against international and national conventions.

Norway is the only one of the three states that has ratified the ILO Convention no.169. "That obligates them to consult with us, and they do. It's not perfect, but it is a good example on how to organize a minority or an indigenous people within a national state, and how to structure the interaction between an indigenous parliament and a national state", says Aili Keskitalo to Arctic Deeply.<sup>118</sup>

The right to self-determination, the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent and the right to land are also given as arguments to internalize land use into the indigenous rights discourse. This applies to all altered land use, including "mineral extraction, wind power, transport projects and fish farming".<sup>119</sup>

#### 5.4. "US" VERSUS "THEM"

Throughout the material, various categories like "Sami artists, "musicians", "handicraft persons", "hunters", "fishermen" and "reindeer herders" are mixed up to deliver a polyphonic message under the pronoun "we". These categories of identities are associated by Stefan Mikaelsson, in his speech in Umeå, with "honoring our ancestors and predecessors, making our children proud of their Sami origin".<sup>120</sup> These different categories are all related to a traditional and ancestral livelihood, thus excluding Sami people living in the majority culture and practicing a different lifestyle. A bearer of Sami culture is therefore identified as a Sami who is involved in a traditional livelihood since it is by this mean that culture can be transferred to future generations.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Áslat Holmberg, video interview.

<sup>117</sup> Inger Eline Eriksen, chronicle.

<sup>118</sup> Aili Keskitalo, interview.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Stefan Mikaelsson, speech.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

In 2005, the Norwegian Parliament voted the Finnmark Act which gave the inhabitants of Finnmark, for a good part Sami people, autonomy over their land. The Norwegian territory of Sápmi covers approximately half of Norway, and different Sami areas enjoy different levels of autonomy. “Hopefully, in the future, we will be able to co-manage more of our homelands”, says Aili Keskitalo.<sup>122</sup> The will to co-manage Sami territories with the local governments is normalized to the whole Sami people through the pronoun “we”. The act has nonetheless been criticized for not following the principles of the ILO Convention no.169 that implies that rights are non-discriminatory between Sami and non-Sami people in the county. The Sami still do not have ownership rights over their lands for the practice of traditional livelihoods.<sup>123</sup>

In Sweden as well, different levels of protection are accorded to the Sami areas. In the comments of the *Sametinget* on the Swedish 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), President Per-Olof Nutti points out at the “so-called forest Sami districts” that enjoy a weaker protection of their lands than the “so-called mountain Sami districts”, due to a strong forestry industry.<sup>124</sup> Rights on reindeer husbandry as defined in the Reindeer Herding Act only allows members of Sami districts to practice reindeer herding, hunting, and fishing within their traditional lands.<sup>125</sup> This excludes Sami people living outside of these Sami areas and who for this reason cannot pursue these traditional livelihoods.

In Finland either, indigenous rights do not apply to every Sami. As Áslat Holmberg mentions:

I will not be allowed to fish with traditional methods because I have decided to study, so I don't live permanently in my home region. I see that these restrictions really threaten the whole continuation of the culture and the way of life in the river valley.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Aili Keskitalo, interview.

<sup>123</sup> Rauna Koivurova et al. “Legal Protection of Sami Traditional Livelihoods from the Adverse Impacts of Mining”

<sup>124</sup> Sametinget. *Comments of the Swedish Sami Parliament regarding Sweden's 22nd and 23rd Periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*. Dnr. 1.2.7–2017-1532. Published November 17, 2017. <https://www.sametinget.se/117554>

<sup>125</sup> Sveriges Riksdag, *Rennäringslag* (Reindeer Husbandry Act) (1971:437). Accessible at [http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/rennaringslag-1971437\\_sfs-1971-437](http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/rennaringslag-1971437_sfs-1971-437)

<sup>126</sup> Áslat Holmberg, video interview.

If the plurality of (traditional) livelihoods is mentioned and recognized by the Sami politicians, the relationship to land and natural resources is constructed through a common vision and a collective ownership: “our homelands”, “our traditional livelihoods”<sup>127</sup>, “our concerns”, “our languages”, our “landscapes and industries”<sup>128</sup>. Again, they implicitly exclude Sami people 1) who have grown up and lived outside of the Sami homeland, 2) who do not speak the language and 3) who do not practice traditional livelihoods.

The heterogeneity of the Sami is also addressed across borders. For example, when speaking to the Norwegian *Samediggi*, Per-Olof Nutti mentions the different levels of rights and self-determination attributed to the Sami on each side of the border.

From the Swedish side, we see that you have more resources on the Norwegian side than us, you have greater responsibility for Sami culture and Sami cultural heritage and for Sami educational issues. The Sami Parliament in Norway has greater freedom and you can define what you want to work with. In Sweden, the Sami Parliament is a state authority governed by the state. You have a Sami state secretary in government, we do not have that.<sup>129</sup>

These disparities are gathered into a common identity and a common goal, to “jointly represent our people in the EU and the world” through the Sami Parliamentary Council, and to defend “our lands and our culture against exploitation and abuse”.<sup>130</sup>

Cross-border Sami organizations have helped construct a national Sami identity through common values and worldviews. The Sami Council is even active on the international scene, particularly in the Arctic Council where it has the status of Permanent Participant. Through this, the Sami people can negotiate and influence decisions within different working groups, with one common vision.

Youth Sami organizations have been criticizing the Sami Parliaments for not giving them a voice in current debates. *Saminuorra*, the Sami youth organization in Sweden, protested in February 2017 against the lack of opportunity for civil society to participate in the

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<sup>127</sup> Aili Keskitalo, interview.

<sup>128</sup> NSR, *Prinsippogram 2017–2021 for Norske Samers Riksforbund*.

<sup>129</sup> Per-Olof Nutti, speech.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

negotiations about the Nordic Sami Convention.<sup>131</sup> In his speech in front of the Norwegian *Samediggi*, Per-Olof Nutti addressed the issue:

You're a little older, I'd like to listen to the young generation too. You were also young once. Be generous and be patient. In SPR's action program, we write that it is important to focus on Sami youth. It means giving them influence and giving them space to grow.<sup>132</sup>

Per-Olof Nutti is here excluding the “young generation” from the general audience, the members of the Sami Parliament, to highlight their non-participation in the debates. By using the second person, he is pointing out the issue directly to the members, making them responsible for the issue and actors of change. By using the example of SPR's program, he is insinuating that it is the politicians' responsibility (“we”) to invite the future generation to the table.

“Future generations” are often associated with the argument that the environment should be preserved, in order to pass on the culture. By inscribing Sami culture in the past, the present, and the future, the politicians are making it “alive”, far from Western stereotypes that construct Sami or indigenous culture as something from the past, that should be untouched and preserved from modernity. “We” here is constructed through the “duty as stewards of this legacy”<sup>133</sup> to ensure that the environment, vital for Sami culture, is preserved and well-managed, both by the Sami and by others. As the *Sametinget* Living Environment Program states: “If we – or someone else – destroy nature, it will also harm our culture.”<sup>134</sup>

“The Others” are “the state politicians and government officials” who want to exercise power over “us”, and who do not respect Sami rights to self-determination.<sup>135</sup> They are the politicians “inviting all of the world's industry to get a piece of the Arctic cake or the Sami cake”.<sup>136</sup> They are the industries themselves, like the forestry industries in Finland and Sweden that threatens Sami livelihoods. The “Other” is also including the non-Sami. For example, in the politicians' opinions about the Tana Agreement and the fishing regulations, two lifestyles are opposed: fishing for subsistence and fishing for pleasure:

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<sup>131</sup> SVT Nyheter, “Unga i tyst protest mot Sametingets politiker”. Last updated February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017. <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/norrboten/unga-i-tyst-protest>

<sup>132</sup> Per-Olof Nutti, speech.

<sup>133</sup> Paulus Kuoljok, New Year's Speech

<sup>134</sup> Sametinget. Living Environment Program.

<sup>135</sup> Håkan Jonsson, speech.

<sup>136</sup> Aili Keskitalo, interview.

The Sami have for a long time been harvested by the salmon of the Tana valley in a sustainable way in the river and fjord. For centuries we have transferred experience-based traditional knowledge between the generations. Fishing is, therefore, an important cultural bearer related to language, nature and traditions, and at the same time a traditional nutritional combination and part of the natural habitat. This is something completely different and far more than a sport and recreation.<sup>137</sup>

The notion of distinctiveness from the “majority culture” is a common aspect in the construction of the Sami nation. The discourse of priority over the lands serves, in a post-colonial context, to distinguish the original inhabitants from the settlers, and to (re)attribute the territories to the Sami as “one people”. As the NSR program states: “Our languages, relatives, landscape, and industries have existed long before the state borders were created.”<sup>138</sup> Because of these common issues, politicians stress the need for a better cooperation between Sami institutions, that will “build down barriers that prevent a real Sami societal development.” A cross-border cooperation through common institutions is a way to “jointly represent our people towards the EU and the world”.<sup>139</sup> NSR goes as far as wishing for a common Sami Parliament in the future. The Sami people do not have a permanent representation in Brussels, which is criticized by many Sami politicians and activists in the media. Taking as an example the status of the Sami Council as Permanent Participant in the Arctic Council, Tiina Sanila-Aikios reminds EU officials that “the participation of the Sami People in the EU must be enhanced to guarantee our self-determination”.<sup>140</sup> A distinguished status in the European Union would further recognize the Sami as a distinct people and give them a real power in the decision-making process.

If Håkan Jonsson separates “Sami and Swedish society”, Sami collective identity and distinctiveness is mainly constructed in the material through the Sami “particular” and strong relationship with their lands and territories, despite this “global world, full of challenges”.<sup>141</sup> In recent years, the renewable energy sector has boomed in the Nordics, and new wind turbines have settled in Sápmi. This has caused many conflicts with reindeer herders in the past years, as the turbines interfere with the activity, and these projects often do not consider

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<sup>137</sup> Inger Eline Eriksen, chronicle.

<sup>138</sup> NSR, *Prinsippprogram 2017–2021 for Norske Samers Riksforbund*.

<sup>139</sup> Per-Olof Nutti, speech

<sup>140</sup> Tiina Sanila-Aikio, speech.

<sup>141</sup> Stefan Mikaelsson, speech.

the Sami's right to FPIC. This "green colonialism"<sup>142</sup> is performed by the states, who are therefore constructed as the "Other" through a center-periphery discourse.

Thus, the "Other" is not directly constructed in ethnic terms, but as the authorities, the states, the recreational fishermen. One's identity is also constructed through their difference with others. By attributing traditional livelihoods such as reindeer herding, fishing, and hunting to the Sami, the politicians are creating the identities of those who should not be pursuing this lifestyle. However, Sami identity is not defined by genetics/blood in any of the three states, which makes the border between "us" and "them" blurrier.

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<sup>142</sup> Áslat Holmberg, video interview.

## 6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

One of the leading research questions was to know how Sami politicians, through political discourse on land and territory, construct Sami identity and nationhood. For this, I analyzed documents issued by Sami politicians in the form of speeches, interviews, chronicles, or programs to investigate how Sami collective identity and other identities are shaped and promoted. The implementation of symbols, like the Sami flag or the Sami national anthem, are one way of constructing collective identity. Both symbols are strongly related to the constructed relationship of the Sami people to land and the natural elements. This strong and deep relationship to nature is also constructed in the material through an indigenous discourse. Because of the continuous reference to the Sami as an indigenous people, some distinct characteristics are connoted in the discourse.

First, according to the general understanding, indigenous peoples have inhabited territories before the establishment of colonial or settler societies.<sup>143</sup> This argument is used continuously in the material as to connect the Sami people to a common heritage, fundamental to form a nation. Second, as an indigenous people, the Sami “have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.”<sup>144</sup> Because this right is often ignored by the states, mentioning issues related to land rights is a way to politicize such conflicts and sharpen the group boundaries by mobilizing the members. Through mobilization, Sami people can become aware of their national unity. Third, indigenous people, “practicing unique traditions, retain social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live.”<sup>145</sup> These characteristics are identified through “Sami” livelihoods, such as reindeer herding, fishing or hunting, through major political events like the Sami Conference, or through the establishment of the Sami Parliaments. The construction of collective identity always involves the notion of otherness to identify those who do not share the same culture and experiences as the given group. Therefore, using an indigenous discourse is a way to isolate those who consequently are not indigenous, not Sami.

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<sup>143</sup> United Nations. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. *Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Voices*. Factsheet. [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/5session\\_factsheet1.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf)

<sup>144</sup> UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Article 26 para 1.

<sup>145</sup> United Nations PFII. Factsheet.



Another way to construct Sami collective identity through spatial narratives is by using Sápmi to identify the original lands of the Sami, and in a way, to reattribute these colonized territories to the original inhabitants. Sápmi does not consider the current borders created by the states and using *Sápmi* serves to reunify the Sami people divided by Western constructions. It has been argued in the theory chapter that the sense of belonging to a social group and to a distinct territory is fundamental in the formation of nations. Nationalism, according to British political geographer James Anderson, both looks inwards to unify the nation and its attributed territory, and outwards to distinguish the nation and its territory from others.<sup>146</sup> Through language, Sami politicians delimit the borders of Sápmi and bind the Sami people to a shared and distinct territory, isolating them from the constructed states. Using Paasi's analytical framework, the construction of the "Other" is made through a distinction between several territorial units. By identifying Sápmi, Sami politicians identify the "Other" as being culturally different and living somewhere else. It can refer to the state authorities that take decisions from the capitals, or even European leaders who decide on the future of the Arctic from Brussels. The use of Sami names for cities located in Sami areas aims to connect the people to the territory through a shared cultural element.

The discourse *we/there* which refers to the integration of a social group over borders, can be associated with the politicians' will to unite the Sami people across borders, through common institutions and representations. The Sami Council, which actively participates in the Arctic Council's working groups, is one example of this integration. Politicians have also expressed their will to have a permanent representation in Brussels, in order to be included in the negotiation processes at the European level. The Nordic Sami Convention, through a legal harmonization, aims to integrate the Sami people across borders. The proposal, approved at the end of 2016 by the three national Parliaments, is still waiting to be ratified by the Sami Parliaments. Politicians and lawyers have raised many concerns over the document, mainly on issues related to land rights, self-determination and the definition of who is Sami. The length and difficulties of the negotiations show the complexity of identities within the Sami population.

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<sup>146</sup> James Anderson, "On theories of nationalism and the size of states", *Antipode*, 18. (September 1986): 218. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.1986.tb00364.x>

The second part of the first question was related to the construction of Sami personal identity by the Sami politicians. Which person should be defined as Sami is a complicated and much debated issue in the three Nordic states. First, it is important to state that the Sami people's right to self-determination gives them the right to determine the conditions for membership of their own group, in order to protect the collective identity of the group as such.<sup>147</sup> Unlike the Western liberal approach to law and policy-making, that prioritize the individual as a political and legal subject, indigenous approach to rights tends to be collective by nature. Because the conditions for inclusion in the electoral register are built on cultural aspects and not on blood/ethnicity, they are inevitably built on subjective criteria. A definition solely based on self-identification would eventually lead to an assimilation of the Sami into the majority society. Hence, according to minority law scholars Mathias Åhrén and Antti Aikio, the definition should also include objective criteria, that distinguish a Sami individual from a majority origin person.<sup>148</sup> Scholars like Tanja Joona suggest for example that the Sami definition in Finland should be based on living in areas of former Lapp villages and practicing "Sami traditional livelihoods".<sup>149</sup> However, historically, the term *Lapp* referred to people engaged in livelihoods originated from Sami culture, but who were not necessarily Sami. Many ethnic Finns started to engage in reindeer herding, hunting or fishing already a hundred years ago. Therefore, the fact that someone was referred to as *Lapp* in the past does not automatically imply a Sami ethnic origin. Today, many people from Finland, especially in the north, descent from people who were once characterized as Lapps. Unlike in Norway and Sweden, people from all ethnic origins are entitled by law to practice reindeer herding, hunting or fishing. Living on traditional Sami lands and pursuing Sami livelihoods should then not be used as an objective criterion. The term "Sami livelihoods" is nonetheless used by Sami politicians from all states, including Finland, to describe reindeer herding, hunting, fishing, gathering and handicrafts. A livelihood can only be defined as "Sami" by the members of the community at a given time. A person must accordingly be identified as Sami prior being able to engage in "Sami livelihoods".

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.142.

<sup>148</sup> Antti Aikio and Mattias Åhrén. "A reply to calls for an extension of the definition of Sámi in Finland." *Arctic Review*5, no. 1 (2014): 136. Available at <https://arcticreview.no/index.php/arctic/article/view/51>

<sup>149</sup> Joona, Tanja, "The ILO Convention No. 169 in a Nordic Context with Comparative Analysis: An Interdisciplinary Approach", *Juridica Lapponica* 37, University of Lapland, Rovaniemi 2012 and Joona, Tanja, "The Subjects of the Draft Nordic Saami Convention" in Bankes, Nigel and Koivurova, Timo (eds.) *The Proposed Nordic Saami Convention; National and International Dimensions of Indigenous Property Rights*, (Hart Publishing, Oxford and Portland, 2013).

The second and third questions were related to the construction of various identities and the “Other”. If reindeer herding is identified as a Sami livelihood and therefore applies to the Sami across borders, Article 4 of the Nordic Sami Convention uses reindeer herding as a criterion for Saminess in Norway and Sweden, but not in Finland. In both Norway and Sweden, a person owning reindeers is automatically perceived as being Sami since only people from Sami origin are allowed to practice reindeer herding. In Finland however, because of the reasons mentioned above, this activity does not define a Sami person.

With this in mind, reindeer herding and fishing are still identified as a “Sami livelihoods” in the material produced by Finnish Sami politicians. There are also connected to the indigenous discourse of subsistence and cultural survival, which makes those who are practicing them for recreation illegitimate to join the group. The Sami nation is therefore constructed through a collective attribution of social and cultural practices, performed *here*. Taking Paasi’s analytical framework, “Sami livelihoods” is used in the discourse to differentiate “we” and the “Other” within Sápmi. The “Other” can be identified as recreational fishermen who are not fishing for subsistence and whose practice is not linked to cultural identity, logging companies that threaten traditional livelihoods, or other extractive industries present on Sami territories.

The last type of discourse, *them/there*, refers to the states and the dominant societies. They are mainly identified through notions of “distinctiveness” between the Sami as a people (implying all the common characteristics described above) and the majority cultures. By constructing Sami nationhood as “distinct”, Sami politicians are also implicitly identifying the “Other”. As the actual definitions of who is Sami are contested, it is important to recall that the interpretation the addressed audience have of the “Other” is only valid at the time of production of these discourses. If the definitions would come to be modified, including or excluding more people, the “Other” as presented in the material would have another connotation.

Many people who identify as Sami also live outside of Sápmi and are involved in mainstream activities. Pursuing Sami livelihoods for subsistence can therefore not be an objective criterion for Sami identity. The language criterion, that is the base for entering the electoral register in the three parliaments, is also problematic since many Sami people and their parents or grandparents have not learned the language. An individual can be identified as Sami by different ways, all of which are valid. Yet, these subjective criteria are not sufficient

to build definitions in legal documents. This can explain why negotiations on a common Sami definition and common rights for the preparation of a Nordic Sami Convention have taken years.

When analyzing discourse, it is always important to identify the issuers and the recipients. For example, when Sami politicians from Finland talk about “Sami livelihoods”, the discourse has a different connotation than if it was issued by a Sami politician from Norway or Sweden. We have seen previously that audiences in these countries are more likely to attribute these livelihoods to the Sami. By identifying reindeer herding and traditional fishing as Sami, Finnish Sami politicians are politicizing the issue.

If the reception of the discourse might differ according to the different social systems the recipients live in, the way Sami politicians construct Sami collective identity is similar among the three Nordic states. The Sami nation is constructed uniformly by the politicians through common spatial narratives, including the deep connection to a homeland; through a distinct culture and traditions, associated with nature and linked to the Sami people’s survival; through an indigenous discourse, implying collective rights to their lands and natural resources; and through a common past and vision for the future. Taking an indigenous approach, land rights become therefore a collective issue.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Although Anssi Paasi's definition on nation-building is generally applied to nation-states, I argue that this process can also be applicable for the construction of Sami national identity. This process refers to the will of a group of individuals, through actions, to define social practices in certain spatial contexts.<sup>150</sup> The states, by constructing common mythologies associated with a territory, attempt to tight its inhabitants together. After the Norwegian independence and the final definition of state borders in the northern region in the ninetieth century, the government's goal was to unify this segmented territory into one Norwegian identity, speaking the same language: Bokmål. Other symbols were introduced, like a constitution, a new flag, and a national anthem. This concept of imagined communities, as defined by Benedict Anderson, was brought to the Sami, mainly through education.<sup>151</sup> Children were uprooted from their original culture and prohibited to speak their language in public. These assimilation policies applied to the entire population of Norway, including the Sami, who consequently lost their right to be recognized as a distinct people.

The Alta protests and the revitalization movements of the second half of the twentieth century started building a sense of community among the Sami people across borders, who realized how similar their experiences with the states were. Following Sami scholar Rauna Kuokkanen's idea of indigenous identity, the development of a Sami national identity could be associated with a shared experience of being colonized, marginalized and exploited, both in the past and in the present.<sup>152</sup> This shared experience, in order to build the nation as such, needs to be transmitted to the members of the self-defined community by legitimized leaders, through the introduction of collective symbols.

The Sami Parliaments, representing the Sami people in their respective states, exercise their power as agents of truth, legitimized by their electoral processes. They construct Sami identity and the Sami nation not in terms of blood or ethnicity, but rather through a common cultural heritage. Bearers of Sami culture are thus identified as those who pursue traditional Sami livelihoods and arts, and those who can speak the Sami language.

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<sup>150</sup> Anssi Paasi. *Territories, boundaries, and consciousness*, 42.

<sup>151</sup> Benedict Anderson. *Imagined communities*. 81.

<sup>152</sup> Rauna Kuokkanen, "Indigenous Peoples on two continents", 2.

One's feeling of identity and culture, according to Anthony Smith, can only be achieved if these social experiences are imbedded into a distinct homeland.<sup>153</sup> According to post-colonial theory, indigenous nations were segmented before the establishment of state borders, and the idea of a common land started to emerge when settlers divided it and began to exploit its natural resources. In the case of the Sami, the nation-building process is strongly linked with historical and political factors, external to the group as such. By defining the borders of Sápmi and by associating a collective reality to it, and by introducing national symbols, I argue that Sami politicians are applying certain aspects of Western theories of nationalism, brought to them through colonization and assimilation. In addition, the collective approach to land rights is a specific aspect of indigenous identity discourse, constructed through cultural exchanges between indigenous and tribal peoples around the world, and through the realization of common struggles linked to colonization. The notion of race or skin pigmentation is not present in Sami discourse, unlike for other indigenous peoples living in immigrant-based societies, who use this criterion to distinguish themselves from the majorities. Until the end of World War II, the concept of race was very present in Europe, attempting to justify experiments on different individuals, including on the Sami. The trauma of the Holocaust and the development of a welfare state system in the Nordics gradually erased the notion of race from official documents. Consequently, Sami nationalism is a model on its own, borrowing concepts from both European and indigenous approaches, and applying it to the model of society the Sami people live in.

This study represents a small contribution to a wider project which is to understand how the Sami people, without legal definite borders, build a collective identity and a sense of belonging. This thesis could not cover the full topic of Sami collective identity for logistic reasons. To complete this research, one could investigate how such discourse constructed by Sami politicians affect a sense of belonging among individuals, by collecting narratives. It would be particularly interesting to analyze how people who identify as Sami, living outside of the homeland and practicing mainstream activities receive discourses constructed by Sami politicians on land and natural resources. In future inquiries, one must find a way to include Sami voices from Russia, for example by analyzing discourse from the Sami Council, which

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<sup>153</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism in the twentieth century*. (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979), 3

includes Sami associations from the four states, and that have a say in international organizations.

It would also be relevant to analyze how Sami national identity has been constructed over time, before and after major social changes, like the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007, or the Norwegian ratification of the ILO Convention no.169 in 1990. The material for this paper fell right into the debate on the Nordic Sami Convention, supposed to harmonize the rights of the Sami between the three states and facilitate the development of Sami society across borders. When the document will be ratified, it would be interesting to compare the discourses before the release of the first draft and after the signature of the convention.

This model of analysis could be applied to study the collective identity formation of other indigenous or tribal peoples divided by state borders. The case of the Inuit would be interesting: the Inuit Circumpolar Council represents different indigenous communities in the Arctic under the collective term “Inuit”. How does this international organization create a sense of community among its members? Another case is the U.S-Mexico border, where several Native American groups have been separated on their sacred land, but through treaties, are still allowed to cross the border freely. New immigration laws under the Trump administration and the construction of a wall will threaten this right and physically separate the people.<sup>154</sup>

In this thesis, I modestly tried to highlight the current situation of Sami land rights in the Nordics and interpreted how Sami politicians constructed a collective identity through political discourse. Even if my position as a researcher was limited and biased due to my non-indigenous origins, I believe that it is by trying to understand other worldviews that different groups can cohabit while respecting rights attributed to distinct peoples. This research also made me more aware of other concerns expressed by indigenous and tribal peoples around the world, especially those related to land and natural resources. The European Union, in its new policy for the Arctic, expressed its will to engage with Arctic indigenous peoples to ensure that their views and rights are respected and promoted, while developing new EU policies affecting the Arctic.<sup>155</sup> For that, progress would have to be

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<sup>154</sup> USA Today, “A border tribe, and the wall that will divide it”. The Wall Project, Last accessed May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018. <https://www.usatoday.com/border-wall/story/tohono-oodham-nation-arizona-tribe/582487001/>

<sup>155</sup> Council of the European Union, *Council conclusions on the Arctic Foreign Affairs Council, 20 June 2016*. Article 4. <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10400-2016-INIT/en/pdf>

made. Sweden, for example, is still the largest iron importer in the EU, and many mines are located on Sami traditional lands. Without a real representation in Brussels, the only indigenous people of the European Union are still a long road away from achieving self-determination.



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