# Writing-Weaving Sámi Feminisms

## Stories and Conversations

Knobblock, Ina

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## Stories and Conversations

INA KNOBBLOCK
GENDER STUDIES | FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES | LUND UNIVERSITY

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## Stories and Conversations

Ina Knobblock


LUNDS
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**Abstract**

This dissertation explores, illuminates, and analyses Sámi feminist knowledges, conceptualised as diverse and fluid feminist knowledges that both arise within and create Sámi realities. Centrally, it contributes to and exemplifies Sámi inquiry and conversations where different people continuously create and re-create Sámi feminisms in various contexts. This study focuses on feminist articulations and dialogue from a Sámi context, Sámi feminist theoretical, epistemic, and methodological approaches, and Sámi feminist contributions to gender studies, especially in the Swedish context.

First, the study contributes to reworking hegemonic gender studies in Sweden. For example, it discusses Sámi feminist erasure in Swedish feminist scholarship, gendered settler colonialism, and the intersections of gender and Indigeneity. In dialogue with previous Sámi feminist scholarship and global Indigenous feminist theories, the author argues that gendered settler colonialism against the Sámi people manifests and continues to manifest in several ways. These manifestations include gendered colonial law, the gendered impact on Sámi economies, gendered violence and its colonial intersections, the interplay of gender and religion, and gendered and sexualised epistemicide.

Second, the study foregrounds a shift in the analysis of gender within Indigenous studies from the tradition's margins to the centre. For example, it foregrounds Indigenous and Sámi feminist contributions to understandings and enactments of decolonisation and resurgence – the critical examination and dismantling of colonial structures of power and a (re)imagination and (re)creation of the world grounded in Indigenous experiences and world-making practices. Contrary to being a divisive force in the struggle against settler colonial dispossession, the author conceptualises Sámi feminisms as integral to inclusive processes of decolonisation and resurgence. By exploring the visions and strengths of Sámi feminisms, the dissertation centres on the contributions of Sámi feminisms to Indigenous healing, regeneration, and thriving.

Third, the study contributes to feminist epistemologies and methodologies. Significantly, it foregrounds Indigenous and Sámi epistemes as relational, interconnected, and response-able ways of knowing, being, and doing beyond colonial world-making practices. To conceptualise Sámi feminist inquiry in a way that resonates with Indigenous epistemes, it introduces the conceptualisation of related knowledges. Furthermore, the study explores and develops Sámi feminist methodologies using three approaches: writing-weaving, learning in conversations, and *mujttalit* – storytelling and remembering.

Finally, the study contributes to the broader scholarly project of developing an analysis of Nordic colonialisms, especially on the settler colonial impact on Sámi life-worlds. The main body of the dissertation comprises an introductory essay and seven articles, including individually written and co-authored texts.



**Key words** Sámi people, Sámi feminism, Indigenous feminism, gender, settler colonialism, epistemicide, Sweden, decolonisation, resurgence, Indigenous methodologies, Indigenous epistemes

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Cover image by: Outi Pieski, *Rádjejohtin V/Pacing the Borders V*, detail, 2014, Sámi Parliament in Norway, photo: Jussi Tiainen



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MADE IN SWEDEN

*Gieresvuodajn Viola áhko mujtton, 1925 – 2020*

*Till kärleksfullt minne av min gammelfaster Viola, 1925–2020*

*In loving memory of my great-aunt Viola, 1925–2020*

# Table of Contents

# Acknowledgements

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# Tjoahkkájgæsos

Dát dåktårgrádabarggo åtsåt, gåvvit ja analysieri sáme feminismalasj máhtojt. Dá moattebelagin ja målsudahkkásin dádjaduvvi, de sihke ihti ja hábbmiji sáme dilijt. Ietjá bágoj javladum li da aktelt hábbmidum ulmutjijs vissa dilijn. Dutkamåtsådibme dættot sáme feminismalasj artikulasjåvnåjt, siednabiedjamijt ja ságastallamijt. Dat låggŋi sáme feminismalasj teorijjalasj, epistiemalasj ja metåvdålasj dádjadusájt ja barggamvuogijt. Dat dágástallá aj majt sáme feminismalasj tjállaga li sjiervvediehtagij buktám, sierraláhkáj Svierigin.

Dåktårgrádabarggo l fáron målssomin svieriga hegemonijjalasj sjiervvedieda dutkamav. Duola dagu dágástallá manen så lik sáme feminisma vájlluji feminismalasj dutkamdåben. Vijddásappot tjuovggi dutkam gåktu sjierve vájkkudi man mudduj álggoálmmugij gullu ja sjierve ja ådåårruj vidjurijt. Væråltvijddásasj álggoálmmukfeminismalasj teorijjaj ja sáme feminismalasj dutkama ságájdahttijn dættot tjálle ahte sjierve ja ådåårruj kolonialissma vidjura båhti åvddån moatte láhkáj. Buojkulvisá li kolonialistalasj lága ma sjiervij gaskan ieredi, kolonialistalasj ieridisá li sáme æládusájda njáhkam, vahágahttem sjierve diehti, sjierve ja åsko æjvvalime aktan sjierve guoskavasj ja seksualisieridum epistiemajda, mij merkaj kolonialisieridum juohkusij máhttovuogádagá gádodibme.

Vijddásappot dættot dåktårgrádabarggo man ájnas la sjiervvevidjurijt álggoálmmukoahpojn åvdedit. Tjálle åvdet duola dagu álggoálmmugij ja sámij bargojt dekolonialisierimin ja badjánimen. Tjoahkkáj sisadni dá guokta buojkuldagá lájttális åtsådimev kolonialistalasj fábmostruktuvrajs ja (ådåsit)hábbmimav álggoálmmugij iellemværåldijs álggoálmmugij ietjasa vásádusáj, væråltgåvåj ja máhttovuogádagáj milta. Tjálle milta ij galga sáme feminismajt gehtjadit ærrániddje fábmon ådåårrij kolonialistalasj dætto vuosstij. Farra gåvvit sáme feminismajt viek ájnnasin sebradahtte dekolonialisierima prosessajda. Gå dættot sáme feminisma buorre fámov ja visjåvnåjt, de åvdet gåktu da máhtti viehkken álggoálmmugij væddjámij ja guoddelis boahtteájgij hábbmimij.

Dåktårgráda aj viehket feminismalasj epistemologijjajda ja vuogijda. Åvdemusát låppti álggoálmmugij epistiemav, dat sihtá javllat álggoálmmugij máhttovuogádagáv ja væråltgåvvidimijt. Dá dádjaduvvi relasjåvnålasj, aktij måsskidum ja vásstálasj vuohken liehket, dahkat ja hábbmit máhtov kolonialistalasj væråltgåvvidimij ja práksisij dåbbelin. Váj sáme feminismalasj máhtoj nannimav buojkuldahttá álggoálmmugij epistiema milta de guosske máhto buojkuldahka aneduvvá.

Tjálle sáme feminismalasj metodologijjajt åtsåt ja åvddånahttá gålmå láhkáj: gahpadaktjállem, ságastaládijn oahppat ja mujttalit. Gahpadaktjállem gåvvit gåktu duot dát máhttohábme ja máhttosuorge aktij lådåduvvi. Ságastaládijn oahppat la gå aktan máhtov hábbmi ságastallamij sáme feminismalasj dádjadusáj ja vásádusáj birra. Mujttalit gåvvit subtsastallamvuogijt man ulmme l mujttet ja (ådåsit)hábbmit sáme histåvråv, dálásj ja boahtte ájgev. Dåktårgrádabargon merkaj mujttalit sihke tjálle ietjas subttsasa ja iehtjádij subttsasa, buojkulvissaj gåvvidime sáme girjálasjvuodan ja filman.

Maŋutjissaj máhttá dutkamåtsådibme biejaduvvat vijdep dutkamnjuolggidusájda ma åvddånahtti nuorttarijkaj kolonialismaj analijsajt. Åvdemusát dåktårgrádabarggo analysieri sáme ådåårruj kolonialismav ja gåktu dat la sáme iellemværåldijda vájkkut. Dutkambargo oajvveoasse l akta álggoartihkal ja gietjav dutkamartihkkala. Nágin artihkkala li aktu tjáleduvvam madi ietjá artihkkala li iehtjádij siegen tjáleduvvam.

Julevsámegiellaj jårggålam/Lule Sámi translation: Lars Th. Kintel.

# Sammanfattning

Denna avhandling utforskar, belyser och analyserar samiska feministiska kunskaper. Dessa förstås som flerfaldiga och föränderliga; de både uppstår inom och skapar samiska sammanhang. Med andra ord är de kontinuerligt skapade av människor i skilda situationer. Forskningsstudien fokuserar på samiska feministiska artikulationer, iscensättningar och dialoger. Den lyfter fram samiska feministiska teoretiska, epistemiska (som rör kunskapssystem och världsbilder) och metodologiska förståelser och angreppssätt. Den diskuterar också samiska feministiska bidrag till genusvetenskapen, särskilt i ett svenskt sammanhang.

Forskningsstudien bidrar till en pågående omdaning av svensk hegemonisk genusvetenskaplig forskning. Till exempel diskuteras frånvaron av samiska feminismer i den feministiska forskningstraditionen. Vidare belyser avhandlingen samspelet mellan genus och urfolkstillhörighet och mellan genus och bosättarkolonialism. I dialog med globala urfolksfeministiska teorier och samiska feministiska forskningsbidrag understryker författaren att samspelet mellan genus och bosättarkolonialism kommer till uttryck på en rad områden. Exempel på dessa områden är genusbaserad kolonial lagstiftning, genusrelaterad kolonial inverkan på samiska näringar, genusbaserat våld, intersektionen mellan genus och religion samt genusrelaterat och sexualiserat epistemicid (utplåningen av koloniserade gruppers kunskapssystem).

Vidare betonar avhandlingen vikten av att centrera genusfrågor inom urfolksstudier. Exempelvis lyfter författaren fram urfolks- och samiska feministiska bidrag till dekolonisering och *resurgence* [Eng: återuppståndelse/förnyelse]. Tillsammans innefattar dessa två begrepp en kritisk granskning av koloniala maktstrukturer och ett (åter)skapande av urfolks livsvärldar utifrån urfolks erfarenheter, världsbilder och kunskapssystem. Enligt författaren bör samiska feminismer inte betraktas som en splittrande kraft i kampen mot bosättarkolonialt förtryck. Istället beskriver hon samiska feminismer som väsentliga för inkluderande dekoloniseringsprocesser. Genom att betona samiska feminismers positiva kraft och visioner, framhåller hon deras bidrag till urfolks läkande och skapande av hållbara framtider.

Avhandlingen bidrar även till feministiska epistemologier och metodologier. Framförallt så lyfter den fram urfolks epistem, det vill säga urfolks kunskapssystem och världsbilder. Dessa förstås som relationella, sammanflätade och etiskt ansvarstagande sätt för att vara, göra och skapa kunskap bortom koloniala världsbilder och praktiker. I syfte att begreppsliggöra samisk feministiskt

kunskapande i linje med urfolks epistem introduceras begreppet relaterade kunskaper.

Författaren utforskar och utvecklar samiska feministiska metodologier genom tre angreppssätt; vävskrivande, att lära i samtal och *mujttalit* [lulesamiska]– att erinra sig och att berätta. Vävskrivande beskriver ett sammanflätande av olika kunskapsformer och kunskapssfärer. Att lära i samtal avser ett samskapande av kunskap genom dialoger kring samiska feministiska förståelser och erfarenheter. *Mujttalit* skildrar former för berättande som syftar till att erinra sig och (åter)skapa samisk historia, nutid och framtid. I avhandlingen innefattar *mujttalit* både författarens eget berättande och andras berättande, exempelvis skildringar i samisk litteratur och film.

Slutligen kan forskningsstudien placeras inom ramen för mer omfattande forskningsströmningar som utvecklar analyser av nordiska kolonialismer. Framförallt bidrar avhandlingen till analyser av svensk bosättarkolonialism och dess konsekvenser för samiska livsvärldar. Avhandlingens huvuddel utgörs av en introducerande artikel samt sju fristående forskningsartiklar. Några av artiklarna är individuellt skrivna medan andra artiklar är samförfattade.

# Summary

This dissertation explores, illuminates, and analyses Sámi feminist knowledges, conceptualised as diverse and fluid feminist knowledges that both arise within and create Sámi realities. Centrally, it contributes to and exemplifies Sámi inquiry and conversations where different people continuously create and re-create Sámi feminisms in various contexts. This study focuses on feminist articulations and dialogue from a Sámi context, Sámi feminist theoretical, epistemic, and methodological approaches, and Sámi feminist contributions to gender studies, especially in the Swedish context.

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Third, the study contributes to feminist epistemologies and methodologies. Significantly, it foregrounds Indigenous and Sámi epistemes as relational, interconnected, and response-able ways of knowing, being, and doing beyond colonial world-making practices. To conceptualise Sámi feminist inquiry in a way that resonates with Indigenous epistemes, it introduces the conceptualisation of related knowledges. Furthermore, the study explores and develops Sámi feminist methodologies using three approaches: writing-weaving, learning in conversations, and *mujttalit* – storytelling and remembering. Writing-weaving,

conceptualised as Sámi feminist resistance against settler colonial elimination and fragmentation, is the entwinement of different strands and spheres of knowledges. Learning in conversations pertains to the co-constitution of knowledges through dialogues focused on learning and sharing Sámi feminist analyses and experiences. *Mujttalit* describes storytelling aimed at (re)remembering and (re)imagining Sámi histories, presents, and futures, both the author's stories and stories conveyed by others.

Finally, the study contributes to the broader scholarly project of developing an analysis of Nordic colonialisms, especially on the settler colonial impact on Sámi life-worlds. The main body of the dissertation comprises an introductory essay and seven articles, including individually written and co-authored texts.

## Outline of the dissertation

The main body of the dissertation consists of a list of seven articles included in the dissertation, an introductory essay, and articles included in the order of their publication.

The introductory essay comprises six main parts. The first part includes the introduction, a section on aims and research questions and an overview of conceptual debates regarding the terms 'Indigenous' and 'Indigenous peoples'. The second part provides an analysis of settler colonialism in Sábme. Finally, in the third part, the study is located within Swedish gender studies by identifying the absence of Sámi perspectives within the tradition. The fourth part illuminates Indigenous and Sámi feminist contributions through an exploration of a number of topics: settler colonialism, epistemicide, gender, sexuality, decolonisation, resurgence, and gender.

The fifth section of the introductory essay reflects on the dissertation's methodological location. Here I introduce and discuss Indigenous methodologies and epistemes. I also argue for 'related knowledges' as a way to conceptualise Indigenous feminist inquiry. In addition, I reflect on my location within the creation of Sámi knowledges and on the ways of knowing and writing I have drawn on throughout my research process, learning in conversations and *mujttalit* – storytelling and remembering. Finally, I discuss ethical considerations. The sixth and last part of the introductory essay provides concluding remarks.

# Presentation of included articles

*Article 1*

Knobblock, I., & Kuokkanen, R. (2015). Decolonizing Feminism in the North: A Conversation with Rauna Kuokkanen. *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 23(4), 275–281. https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2015.1090480

The conversation was transcribed, shortened and edited by Ina Knobblock. Rauna Kuokkanen reviewed and made final editions to the manuscript. The article is written in English.

*Article 2*

Tlostanova, M., Thapar-Björkert, S., & Knobblock, I. (2019). Do We Need Decolonial Feminism in Sweden?. *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 27(4), 290–295. https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2019.1641552

The labour was equally shared between the authors, Madina Tlostanova, Suruchi Thapar-Björkert and Ina Knobblock. The article is written in English.

*Article 3*

Knobblock, I. (2021). Att skriva från gränslandet: Dekoloniala berättelser från Sábme [Writing from the Borderland: Decolonial Stories from Sábme]. *Kulturella Perspektiv*, 30, 1–7.

The article was individually written by Ina Knobblock. The article is written in Swedish.

*Article 4*

Knobblock, I., & Stubberud, E. (2021). Bortom gränserna. Ett brevsamtal om språk, tillhörighet och dekolonisering [Beyond Borders. A Conversation in Letters on Language, Belonging and Decolonisation]. *Tidskrift för genusvetenskap*, 42(4), 5–29.

The labour was equally shared between the authors, Ina Knobblock and Elisabeth Stubberud, except for the letters in the correspondence. These were individually written by each correspondent. The article is written in Swedish. Elisabeth Stubberud's letters are written in Norwegian. The article includes translated excerpts in North Sámi, Lule Sámi, Kven, and Meänkieli.

*Article 5*

Knobblock, I., & Höglund, J. (2022). 'Im sïjhth årrodh naan bahha cirkusdjur – Jag vill inte vara ett jävla cirkusdjur': Dekolonisering av det etnografiska skådespelet i Sameblod ['I don't want to be a bloody circus animal': Decolonisation of the etnographic spectacle in Sami Blood]. In Å. B. Larsson, *Bilder av ras i svensk visuell kultur* (pp. 73–88). Kungl. Vitterhetsakademien.

The labour was equally shared between the authors, Ina Knobblock and Johan Höglund. The article is written in Swedish.

*Article 6*

Knobblock, I. (2022a). Sámi feminist conversations. In S. Valkonen, Á. Aikio, S. Alakorva & S-M. Magga (Eds.). *The Sámi World* (pp. 535–550). Routledge.

The article was individually written by Ina Knobblock. The article is written in English.

*Article 7*

Knobblock, I. (2022b). Sámi feminists against mines [manuscript submitted for publication].

The article-manuscript was individually written by Ina Knobblock. The manuscript is written in English.

# Introduction

This dissertation started with a conversation with my mother.[1] One day, she asked me to read the novel *Lappskatteland: en familjesaga* [Sámi tax land: a family history][2] (2006) by Sámi author Annica Wennström. The book touched her because the Sámi family history depicted was similar to ours. Mirroring a central theme in the novel, our family members, who originate from a Forest Sámi family in the area of Jiellevárre/Gällivare[3], have vacillated between denial and knowledge of Sámi history and identity. To read it, my mother said, was to receive an explanation of her feeling of living in the borderland (cf. Anzaldúa, 2007) of Sámi belonging.

*Lappskatteland* tells the intertwined stories of the Sámi girl, Njenna, in mid-nineteenth century Sábme[4][5] and her descendant, an unnamed young woman in early twentieth century Northern Sweden. Both Njenna and her great-granddaughter fight for survival, albeit in different historical times and ways. While Njenna fights for the protection of her family, herself, and her children in very concrete ways, her descendant does so on an emotional level. Doing 'work

[1] The section is based on the article 'Att skriva från gränslandet: Dekoloniala berättelser från *Sábme*' ['Writing from the Borderland: Decolonial Stories from *Sábme*'] (Knobblock, 2021) and the essay 'Omläsningen: om Annica Wennströms *Lappskatteland*' ['The rereading: about Annica Wennström's *Lappskatteland*'] (Knobblock, 2018).

[2] *Lappskatteland* translates to Sámi tax land. Historically, Sámi people were referred to as 'lappar' [Lapps] in Swedish. Today, 'Lapp' is regarded as a racist and derogatory denomination.

[3] There are nine Sámi languages: South Sámi, Ume Sámi, Pite Sámi, Lule Sámi, North Sámi, Inari Sámi, Skolt Sámi, Kildin Sámi, and Ter Sámi. Except for quotations and specific place names in other Sámi languages, I use Lule Sámi orthography.

[4] Sábme (Lule Sámi; North Sámi: Sápmi) refers to the Sámi homeland spanning northern Fenno-Scandinavia and the Murmansk Peninsula. Situated across the national borders of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia, Sábme includes the Sámi traditional territory but also Sámi people, culture, and language. As such, it carries an important symbolic function for Sámi collective identity (Ledman, 2012a, 67).

[5] Wennström writes Saepmie according to South Sámi orthography, reflecting her linguistic heritage.

that the soul performs' (Anzaldúa, 2007, 101), she tries to bridge the void caused by identity loss, moving towards healing and connection over generations, with community and with the land.

Njenna and her family are nomadic reindeer herders living during disrupting times. Sámi people are displaced as settlers lay their claims to the land. Settler colonialism is 'a structure, not an event' (Wolfe, 2006, 388). However, for Njenna, the colonial expansion is concentrated to a single act of sexual violence. Gathering herbs by the family's lake, a Swedish settler rapes her, and she becomes pregnant. When the settler inexplicably dies, she leaves her home and family behind to protect her loved ones from the Swedish authorities' suspicion and punishment.

Alone, Njenna migrates towards the coast and gives birth to a daughter. Marrying a Forest Sámi man, she makes a life for herself as a farmstead settler. In so doing, she crosses the line of the category split constructed by the Swedish state, from a nomadic reindeer herder to a settled Forest Sami – a Sámi group bound for assimilation under Swedish state policy and excluded from Indigenous rights (cf. Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008, 41; Lindmark, 2013, 144; Öhman, 2021). Nevertheless, the surrounding Swedish society treats Njenna's family as 'Lapps' – poor, different, and subordinate. Faced with Swedish racism, the family's children and grandchildren learn to hide and deny their Sámi belonging. Eventually, only fragments remain, single items of Sámi handicraft hanging on a wall, a few pieces of Sámi silver jewellery, and a fragmented story in small and evasive parts.

Njenna's great-granddaughter carries inexplicable emotions of grief, shame, and emptiness – an emotional legacy from dispossession, racism, and (forced) assimilation. Neither Swedish nor Sámi, she feels like a ghost in her own life, devoid of history and identity. However, in one of the first chapters of *Lappskatteland*, she finds a small box made of birch hidden in her mother's attic. It contains old Sámi shoelaces woven by Njenna, a discovery that marks the start of a search for her Sámi belonging.

By going back in history and retrieving Njenna's story, she finds an explanation for the course of events and historical processes that shaped her family's life circumstances. Gradually, she rediscovers a form of belonging through time and space with the land and the Sámi community. Travelling to Njenna's childhood landscape in the mountains, she experiences a form of home-coming for the first time:

> I had entered a lost home. I walked straight into my own heart. I dipped my hands in ice-cold melt water and put my palms against my forehead. I crawled up on the dry heather and felt how I gravitated towards the moist core of the earth. Only

> then did I understand. The connection. How what I felt and thought were traces of the generations before me. (Wennström, 2006, 264)

The novel ends with the young woman reflecting on the shoelaces. No longer hidden away in the attic, they hang on display on her wall:

> In front of me, the shoelaces woven by Njenna hang on the wall. A weave of love, despair, desire, and hopelessness. I imagine her spirit running through its threads like river water. You can feel her. I feel her within me. Her worries and regrets. Her shame. But also, her pride. (Wennström, 2006, 282)

Similar to the protagonist in *Lappskatteland*, I grew up with fragments of a Sámi identity. A form of 'present absence' manifested in the little things: old black and white photos of my grandfather's family, my mother's Sami silver jewellery, and her choice to give my brother a Sámi name. I remember listening to my mother as a child, standing in front of the mirror and talking about herself in terms of being half Sámi. Many times, it was put as a form of joke, but I believe it reflected her incertitude regarding her Sámi belonging. Stories like *Lappskatteland* contextualise my memories. I now understand the background to my mother's description of herself and to me; it is no longer a joke. Rather, it reflects a legacy of colonial divisions of the Sámi, imprinted in my mother's self-perception as well as in my own.

However, *Lappskatteland* is not only a story about loss and fragmentation. Through her storytelling, Wennström also offers ways forward for us, who like the protagonist in *Lappskatteland*, have inherited only fragments from earlier generations: to understand the impact of colonial structures on our families and ourselves; to understand ourselves in the borderland where we live our lives; and, aided by this understanding, to dare to imagine and create other futures.

A few years ago, I visited my grandfather's sister in her small flat. She was 93 years old at the time and about to move to a nursing home. Over the past years, she had carefully gathered all her Sámi items, giving them to me in portions. This time, she made her way to the wardrobe in her bedroom, moving slowly and with great ordeal. On its middle shelf lay a worn Sámi leather bracelet, decorated with delicate tin embroidery. She took it out and traced the tin pattern with her finger. Then she said, 'It's my most beloved item. My best friend made it for me. I have hold on to it until now. But I'm very old and may be gone soon. Now you should have it. Because you will pass on the heritage'. This moment comes to my mind when my child asks me about words in Lule Sámi. I have to look them up and ask others to help me pronounce them. My child asks, 'Mother, how will you teach

me the language if you do not know it yourself?'. I have to keep trying. Because *mij lip ajn dáppe* [we are still here].

## Writing-weaving Sámi feminisms

Opening the dissertation with *Lappskatteland's* intertwined narratives and my mother's recommendation of the novel is a way to locate myself and my knowledge claims, which is essential within feminist (cf. Koobak & Thapar-Björkert, 2014) and Indigenous methodologies alike (cf. Kovach, 2011). The stories in *Lappskatteland* also serve as an introduction to central themes within Sámi feminisms, including my research, because of its portrayal of the colonial dispossession of the Sámi people and Sámi women's intergenerational struggles for survival. Broadly, these themes concern the intersecting structures of power within gendered settler colonialism and the multiple forms of resistance against colonial acts of violence, aiming towards healing, decolonisation, and resurgence.

Wennström's story about Njenna's woven shoelaces has also helped me envision my dissertation's epistemic and methodological fabric – a Sámi feminist framework grounded in Indigenous epistemes. Indigenous epistemes are explained in more detail later in the introductory essay. Briefly, they capture place-based worldviews that transgress the human-nonhuman divide, emphasising interconnectedness, relatedness, and answerability[6] (Kuokkanen, 2017). In line with Dakota feminist scholar Kim TallBear (Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate), by nonhuman I enfold land formations, nonhuman animals, plants, the elements, as well as Indigenous notions of 'spirits' and 'souls' (2017a).

Sámi band weaving, such as weaving shoelaces, is based on the combination of strands of colourful yarn, creating intricate *duodje*, a Sámi 'customary practice of creation' (Finbog, 2020, 1). Sámi scholar and *duodjár*[7], Liisa-Rávná Finbog, explains that *duodje* involves 'aesthetics, knowledge[s] of materials, place, and season as well as a Sámi holistic worldview that touch [sic!] upon spirituality, ethics and the interrelational qualities embedded in the multiple world[s] of creation' (2020, 1; see also Magga, 2022). As such, *duodje*, including band weaving, is an integral part and expression of a Sámi knowledge system.

[6] For a more in-depth discussion of Indigenous relational epistemes, including the conceptualization of the nonhuman, see the section Indigenous epistemes and related knowledges.

[7] Practitioner of *duodje* in Lule Sámi.

Transferred to the academic field, I suggest that weaving can be used as a metaphor for central teachings within Indigenous epistemes – i.e., knowledge is created in a process within interconnected spheres of knowledge that are land-based, practical, spiritual, artistic, activist, as well as academic (Driskill et al., 2011, 3–10). Like weaving, writing is an act of entwinement of different strands of expressions and knowledges, making connections, not of yarn, but aspects of theoretical, social-natural, and emotional worlds. Also likening writing to weaving, Finbog makes the following observation:

> The pattern expresses its imagery, just like the narrative expresses a story, or a line of though [sic], or a specific deduction. As such, when you write, you become the sátnegođđi, the word weaver, creating with language and words a beautiful weave of colours and patterns. (2022)[8]

Furthermore, I conceptualise writing-weaving as a Sámi feminist methodology as weaving is associated with women's practices of *duodje*. Contrary to conventional definitions of *duodje* as a Sámi craft, Finbog conceptualises *duodje* as a Sámi system of knowledge. Hence, it reflects 'deeply rooted collective values, meanings and norms, as well as the immaterial knowledge of processes and experiences of materiality' (Finbog, 2020, 29-30). Drawing on Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014), Finbog argues that the Sámi have suffered epistemicide – a targeted cultural genocide – throughout colonial history (2020, 21). Santos defines that epistemicide is 'the destruction of the knowledge and cultures of these populations, of their memories and ancestral links and their manner of relating to others and to nature' (2014, 18). This destruction of culture has been gendered, reflected in the devaluation of *duodje* to merely a craft and the division of *duodje* into *dipmaduodje* and *garraduodje*, associated with women and men, respectively (Finbog, 2020, 216).

The devaluation of *duodje*, enhanced by gendered binarism, devalued Sámi women's roles as judicial and spiritual knowledge holders. Importantly, however, colonial authorities' ignorance regarding Sámi women's capacities has also enabled Sámi women *duodjára* to safeguard and transmit Sámi knowledge despite

[8] Within Indigenous epistemes, knowledge is communally created and not individually owned. Finbog's reflection, for example, has been developed together with Sámi *duodjár* Beaska Niillas and Sámi poet and artist Timimie Märak. Sámi author Elin-Anna Labba also uses the metaphor of weaving to describe her working process when writing her book *Herrarna satte oss hit* [*Sirddolaččat*: The Deportation of the Northern Sámi] (2020). Further, Sámi literary scholar Vuokko Hirvonen uses unravelling and reweaving in the title of a chapter about the colonial undermining and Sámi reclaiming of identity (1998/2008).

persecution. Such persecution, for example, was directed against the Sámi *noajdde*[9] and the Sámi ritual drums, which were banned, confiscated, and destroyed during the Christianisation of Sábme. Finbog concludes that 'female duojárs[10], by adapting the language of the gievrie[11] to their tjaalehtjimmie[12] was [sic] able to ensure that vital knowledge of Sámi cosmology survived in the practices of duodji up until present day' (2020, 36). Against this background, I suggest that my introduction of the metaphor of weaving, inspired by the practice of *dipmaduodje*, into the circuits of the academic pursuit of knowledge is a Sámi feminist act of (re)imagination.

Last, the metaphor of weaving carries decolonial and resurgent meaning in Indigenous worlds suffering from loss and interruption and fragmentation of identity, culture, and history (cf. Labba, 2020, 12–13). To interweave symbolises an act of re-joining the pieces 'scattered all over everywhere' from the fragmentation that settler colonialist violence entails (Simpson, 2015, 127). There will be imperfections, interruptions, and gaps, yet joined together, each strand contributes to a new wholeness built on all its distinctive parts. Re-generative and healing, I thus forward writing-weaving as Sámi feminist resistance against settler-colonial elimination.

In my own Sámi feminist 'written-weave', two strands are particularly salient. I conceptualise them as 'learning in conversations' and '*mujttalit*[13]' – storytelling and remembering', respectively. The first strand refers to a collaborative process where I have engaged in conversation with 14 other Sámi feminists to learn and share feminist experiences. The second strand consists of storytelling aiming to (re)remember and (re)imagine Sámi histories, presents, and futures, both my own stories and stories conveyed by others, mainly the novel *Lappskatteland* and the film *Sameblod* [Sami Blood] (2016), directed by Sámi film-maker Amanda Kernell.[14] Through 'writing-weaving' conversations and stories, I hope to contribute academically to the pattern created by Sámi feminisms in their multiple forms.

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[9] Sámi spiritual mediators, guides, and leaders (Finbog, 2020, 33).

[10] Practitioner of *duodje* in North Sámi.

[11] Ritual drum in North Sámi.

[12] Ornaments and decoration of Sámi religious beliefs in North Sámi.

[13] The Lule Sámi word *mujttalit* translates to storytelling as well as remembering.

[14] The two approaches are discussed in more detail in the sections Learning in conversations and *Mujttalit* – storytelling and remembering.

# Aims and research questions

Indigenous research contributions critically analyse unjust and painful cultural, social, and historical processes. However, like the parallel narratives in *Lappskatteland*, there is, simultaneously, a focus on constructive paths forward motivated by Indigenous communities' need to envision futures beyond colonial damage. For example, Sámi feminist sociologist Astri Dankertsen suggests that 'feminist interventions can be analysed as part of the healing and transformation of Sámi society' (2020, 104). As Inga[15], one of the Sámi feminist activists participating in my research, eloquently explains:

> Sámi feminism today is, for me, the struggle for Sámi rights; the fight for the survival of the Sámi language; the struggle for the care of nature and the Sámi forms and ways of life; the anchorage in the natural foundation of things; and human dignity. (Conversation with Inga, 2014, cited in Knobblock, 2022a, 12)

Learning from Indigenous research and storytelling centring on healing and thriving and the participants in my project, in this dissertation, I strive to convey a critique of gendered settler colonialism but, equally important, move towards regeneration and resurgence whenever possible. Hence, I explore the visions and strengths of Sámi feminisms to imagine and contribute to the 'flourishing of indigenous thought and life' (TallBear, 2017a, 181). The main aim of the dissertation is to explore, illuminate, and analyse Sámi feminist knowledges. Three research questions are addressed:

- What are central feminist articulations, enactments, and dialogues from within Sámi locations?
- What are central Sámi feminist theoretical, epistemic, and methodological approaches?
- What are central Sámi feminist contributions to gender studies, especially in the Swedish context?

The dissertation consists of several texts, including analyses drawing on Sámi feminist conversations, personal and embodied storytelling, literature, and film. My body of work is predominantly connected through its Sámi feminist ethos and on an epistemic level. They all explore ways of knowing and writing, aiming

[15] Pseudonym.

to transcend Eurocentric epistemic models and move towards creating Sámi feminist knowledges starting from Indigenous epistemes. Significantly, I foreground Indigenous epistemes as relational, interconnected, and responsible ways of 'knowing, being, and doing' (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003) beyond colonial discourses and world-making practices.

As Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes: 'Imagining a different world, or reimagining the world, is a way into theorizing the reasons why the world we experience is unjust, and posing alternatives to such a world from within our own world views' (2012, 204). Aware of such a project's inherent difficulty or even impossibility (cf. Grande, 2018), particularly within the present-day academic system, I deliberately describe it as a movement rather than a realisation. This choice also reflects an understanding of learning and knowledge-creation as open-ended and process-oriented, corresponding with 'the Sámi conception of life' (Helander-Renvall & Kailo, 1998, 1).

# Indigenous and Indigenous peoples: conceptual debates

There is no universal definition of the term 'Indigenous peoples'. However, international bodies such as the United Nations or the International Labour Organisation refer to Indigenous peoples as politically non-dominating groups claiming aboriginality to a specific territory within a state or states. Moreover, Indigenous peoples represent cultures and ways of organising social life different from the dominant societies in the areas where they live or from where they have been disposed (Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 1989; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Indigenous Peoples, n.d.; United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, n.d.). TallBear adds nuance to these understandings: 'the concept "indigenous", forged by delegates from communities around the world in transnational institutions like the Hague or the United Nations, helps individual communities articulate our collective resistance to the assimilative tendencies of the nation-state' (2017a, 187).

That is, 'Indigenous' is an umbrella term that refers to a multiplicity of belongings, life-worlds, and homelands with specific naming practices, such as Sámi and Sábme. Introduced in the 1970s, the term 'Indigenous peoples' places emphasis on the final "s" in peoples as this pluralisation foregrounds different Indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination.[16] In addition, the plural form emphasises the connections between Indigenous peoples, which has enabled Indigenous peoples to build networks and emerge as a collective political voice in the international arena, advancing the rights of all Indigenous peoples (Smith 2012, 7).

In line with Finbog, I understand and use 'Indigenous' as an 'international identity which unite [sic] people that are Native to different territories, but who nonetheless share an imposed colonial experience' (2020, 12). Because Indigenous refers to sovereign nations and national identities, I capitalise the word throughout my work (cf. Younging, 2018, 102).

[16] For an analysis of Sámi self-determination, see Nilsson (2021).

# Colonising Sábme

> *Márjá*[17]*:* I have no trust in the Swedish state. I believe that they deliberately want to erase us from the Swedish map.
>
> *Ina:* Why do think they want to erase us?
>
> *Márjá:* Because then they can take the land without anyone objecting to it and exploit whatever remains [. . .] But we are in the way. (Conversation with Márjá, 2017, cited in Knobblock, 2022a, 539)

In the article 'Sámi Feminist Conversations', I write that '[c]olonial relations do not define Sámi worlds and Sámi feminisms' (2022a, 539). As Dankertsen (2022) discusses, Indigenous individuals, societies, and life-worlds are not primarily characterised by colonial damage. Our lives, experiences, knowledges, relations, and sovereignty[18] are infinitely complex, rich, and joyful and transcend the colonial impact on Indigenous life-worlds. Nonetheless, colonialism is a vital context and a foundational experience shared by the participants in my research, as seen in the quotation by the participant Márjá, a woman in a reindeer herding family. Therefore, in this section, I provide a contextual overview of colonialism in Sábme, focussing on the Swedish example.[19]

As Márjá insightfully observes, there is a strong link between the exploitation of Sámi land and Sámi erasure in Sweden. Her reflection stems from experiences of a specific set of colonial relations, which, in academic literature, are conceptualised as settler colonialism. The settler-colonial analytical framework

[17] Pseudonym.

[18] Following Finbog, I understand sovereignty in an embodied, embedded, and relational sense. It is 'the self-determination of lives, territories, cultures, and languages despite the long-time struggle of Indigenous peoples to gain their recognition as Nations from colonial powers' (Finbog, 2020, 9).

[19] For the sake of limitation, I focus on Sweden. For a discussion of Norway, see Dankertsen (2014), Finbog (2020), and Fjellheim (2020). For a discussion of Finland, see Lehtola (2015), Kuokkanen (2020), and Alakorva, Kylli & Valkonen (2022).

aims to grasp a particular historical condition where the primary objective of the colonial intervention is the over-taking of land (Veracini, 2011; Wolfe, 2006). Accordingly, settler-colonial intervention strives for the dissolution of Indigenous societies to 'erect a new colonial society on the expropriated land base [. . .] Settler colonialism destroys to replace' (Wolfe, 2006, 388).

Settler-colonial studies have focused on diverse geo-political contexts, such as the nation-states United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zeeland, and countries on the African continent, and in the Pacific region, and Palestine, and by differently situated scholars, including white[20] settler scholars[21]. However, the conceptualisation has been embraced in Indigenous and Indigenous feminist literature as an explanatory framework that speaks to Indigenous experiences and knowledges of the specific structure of colonial oppression under which we live and struggle against, historically and presently (Aikau et al., 2015; Arvin, 2019; Arvin et al., 2013; Ramamurthy et al., 2019).

Increasingly, scholars analyse colonial interventions in Sábme through a settler-colonial frame. As argued by historian Åsa Össbo, similar to other settler-colonial societies, colonial interventions in Sábme are characterised by 'the institutionalised dispensability of Indigenous peoples, with the primary objective being to gain land for settlement' (2022, 3; see also Alakorva, Kylli & Valkonen, 2022; Kuokkanen, 2020). Following Össbo (2022), I locate my historical overview within a settler-colonial explanatory framework.

## Settler colonialism

Settler colonialism is 'a structure, not an event' (Wolfe, 2006, 388); due to its permanency, settlers come to a place to stay and to make it their new home. At the centre of settler colonialism, argues Australian scholar Patrick Wolfe (2006), is territory/land, which is inextricably linked to a logic of elimination. Settler formations require land to create their new home territories and sources of capital. Thus, Indigenous peoples and their relationships to land must be obliterated for permanent settler access and capitalisation of the land (Wolfe, 2006; see also

[20] Following Tuck & Yang (2012, 5), I acknowledge that white and whiteness extend beyond phenotype.

[21] For a critical Indigenous feminist discussion of the politics of citation in settler-colonial studies, see Arvin (2019, 335–339).

Morgensen, 2012; Trask, 1999). Maile Arvin (Hawaiian), Eve Tuck (Unangax̂), and Angie Morrill (Klamath) (2013) make this argument succinctly:

> Settler colonialism is a persistent social and political formation in which newcomers/colonizers/settlers come to a place, claim it as their own, and do whatever it takes to disappear the Indigenous peoples that are there. Within settler colonialism, it is exploitation of land that yields supreme value. In order for settlers to usurp the land and extract its value, Indigenous peoples must be destroyed, removed, and made into ghosts. (2013, 12)

The justifications for the overtaking land vary in settler-colonial discourse. Typically, the land is constructed as *terra nullius*, void of or too sparsely populated by Indigenous inhabitants that it is up for discovery and taking by others. Alternatively, Indigenous people are discursively positioned as 'uncivilised savages' or nomadic subjects whose dispossession is justified by their different or 'improper' management of land compared to civilised (European) society (Wolfe, 2006, 389–391). Irrespective of motivation, the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land entails a continued enactment of 'profound epistemic, ontological and cosmological violence' (Tuck & Yang, 2012, 5). Indigenous scholar Eve Tuck and settler scholar K. Wayne Yang make this observation:

> In the process of settler colonialism, land is remade into property and human relationships to land are restricted to the relationship of the owner to his property. Epistemological, ontological, and cosmological relationships to land are interred, indeed made pre-modern and backward. Made savage. (2012, 5)

The elimination of Indigenous peoples and their epistemes occurs in multiple forms and a continuum of degrees. It ranges from outright frontier homicide during the Cherokee Trail of Tears in the 1830s to forced removals and displacements to more sophisticated forms of assimilatory policies, such as reductive identity classifications or the resocialisation of Indigenous children in boarding schools. Ultimately, these interventions aim to disappear Indigenous peoples as distinct collectivities with group entitlement (Arvin et al., 2013, 11–13; Wolfe 2006, 399–401).

Swedish settler colonialism's discourses and practices positioned the Sámi as 'children' – a nomadic, 'uncivilised', and, inevitably, moribund people in need of education, guidance, and governance from the majority society (Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008, 29–34). Historian Isabelle Brännlund expands on this type of discourse:

> The idea was that the Sami people, culture and language were inferior to the Swedish counterparts and would thus undoubtedly dwindle and eventually disappear. This discourse legitimized Swedish state control over Sami lands and affairs, as implicitly they were not deemed capable of exercising appropriate control themselves. (2015, 15–16)

These racialised constructions undermined Sámi sovereignty and served as a moral justification for Swedish land management. Hence, they worked in the material interest of the Swedish state (Brännlund, 2015, 15-16; Össbo, 2022). Notably, they have also endured through time. Sámi historian Anna-Lill Ledman argues, for example, that mid-twentieth century representations in the Swedish press of Sámi women as gendered 'Others' had strong discursive links to Swedish Sámi policy as formulated during the early twentieth century. Moreover, such portrayals upheld 'symbolic boundaries' (cf. Yuval-Davis, 1997, 23, 40–67) between Swedishness and Sáminess and, accordingly, contributed to justifying Swedish superiority (Ledman, 2012a).

## Swedish settler colonialism in Sábme

Historical sources indicate an extended contact period between the different peoples who lived and traversed the vast areas of present-day Northern Fenno-Scandinavia and the Murmansk peninsula (Hansen & Olsen, 2006). However, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Swedish state increasingly made advancements in Sábme, for example, through efforts to integrate the Sámi into the fiscal systems. Swedish efforts were economically as well as politically motivated. Swedish historian Daniel Lindmark explains that the twofold aim was to 'get access and exploit the natural riches of Sápmi and to establish visible presence by populating an area, to which several different nations still laid claim' (Lindmark, 2013, 131). Hence, at the core of the Swedish nation-state's consolidation lies the annexation of Sábme and its incorporation under Swedish jurisdiction.

The start of more structured Swedish settler-colonial intervention in Sábme[22] is linked with the seventeenth-century discovery of silver ore on Sámi land (Össbo,

[22] My overview focuses on Swedish colonialism in Sábme. For critical analyses of diverse Nordic colonialisms, see, for example, Höglund and Andersson Burnett (2019), Keskinen et al. (2019), Loftsdóttir and Jensen, (2012), and Naum and Nordin (2013). For analyses of the Swedish overseas colonies New Sweden (1638–1655), Sankt-Barthélemy (1784–1878), and

2022, 4). In 1673, the state instigated the *Lappmarks Placat* to facilitate farming settlement, which supplied Swedish mines with local labour.[23] The bill offered tax relief and exemption from military duties for people settling in the northernmost parts of the country. Gradually, state authorities and the judiciary undermined Sámi land rights, prioritising the interests of farming and the Swedish Crown (Össbo, 2022, 4-5). For example, Sámi tax land was land in Sámi's possession in exchange for a yearly tax to the Swedish Crown. However, starting in the eighteenth century, this land became redefined as state property within the justice system, substantially weakening Sámi land rights in Sweden (Ledman, 2012a, 70–71).

In the late seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century, the state introduced a policy of expulsion directed at the Sámi people in the southernmost parts of Sábme. Against threats of imprisonment and penal work, Sámi people were relocated from areas in central Sweden to the northern areas. In 1732 and 1733, The Parish Lapp-system was put into place. Because they provided essential labour, one Sámi family per southern parish was allowed to remain and settle. However, they were appointed lowly tasks, for example, the killing of horses. The system protected them from displacement but marginalised their societal position (Larsson, 2019; Larsson, 2020, 361–363).

Concurrently, during the early modern period, the Swedish Church intensified initiatives to christen the Sámi people. As a result, churches were established in several places in Sábme, for example, in Árviesjávrrie/Arvidsjaur and Árjepluovve/Arjeplog, and missionaries were sent out, among them Sámi men who were compelled to educate themselves as priests to undertake missionary work among their people. Moreover, practitioners of the Sámi spirituality (for want of a better word), such as the Sámi *noajdde*, were being persecuted. Sámi practices such as *joiking*[24] were condemned as sinful, and Sámi places of worship and spiritual items, such as the Sámi ritual drums, were destroyed (Fur, 2016b; Hansen & Olsen, 2006, 319-320; Lindmark, 2016; Stoor, 2016).

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Swedish involvement in the Transatlantic enslavement, see, for example, Fur et al. (2016) and Körber (2019), respectively.

[23] In the mine in Násavárre/Nasafjäll, local Sámi were used as forced labour and coerced into transporting ore and other materials needed for mining (Ojala & Nordin, 2015, 11–12).

[24] *Joik* is a Sámi vocal practice and singing tradition. explains: '*Joik* is a way of naming and remembering people, of bringing to life places, animals and other aspects of the environment, as well as a form of storytelling' (Hilder, 2012, 163). Especially since the 1960s, *joik* has been an essential form of expression within efforts for Sámi cultural revival and in Sámi resistance against oppression and assimilation (Gaski, 2004; Hilder, 2012).

The church's ability to exert collective and individual control over the Sámi people had decisive consequences. Centrally, it disrupted Sámi systems of belief and life-worlds (Fur, 2016b, 261-266). The church also intervened in Sámi systems of marriage, courtship, and sexual morals. For example, the church discouraged the Sami practice of *ruthan*, a system of courtship where young men lived and worked with their prospective bride's family during a trial period and when the couple's families exchanged gifts. Sexual relations between the betrothals were not condemned in Sámi society. Commonly, the couple already had children at the time of marriage. Swedish priesthood, however, denounced the custom as 'bride-selling', 'savagery', and 'whoring'. The Sámi women with 'illegitimate' children were forced by the church to seek permission to marry and repent. They were also punished for their engagement in premarital sex (Fur, 2016b, 268–274).

In 1867, the Swedish state introduced the cultivation limit. The limit distinguished between cultured and mountain areas as a way 'to solve' the conflict of interest between farming and reindeer herding. Henceforth, settlement and farming were allowed east of the limit and reindeer husbandry was relegated to the mountains. The cultivation limit cut through Forest Sámi land, another example of the state's disregard for Forest Sámi existence, culture, and subsistence economies, including forms for reindeer herding (K. Stoor, 2020, 235).

The cultivation limit complied with the Swedish state's two-pronged Sámi policy in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. The contradictory, paternalistic, and dualistic so-called 'Lapp-shall-remain-Lapp' policy was partly motivated by the Swedish political economy[25] and partly by a belief that the Sámi would perish if they were exposed to Swedish civilisation. The policy stipulated one legitimate form for Sáminess, modelled on the Mountain Sámi. Effectively, the state split the Sámi people into two groups. The first group, nomadic reindeer herders, were exposed to segregationist and preservationist interventions, influenced by the ideas of Social Darwinism and 'often built on racist assumptions and racist ideology' (Össbo, 2022, 5). Other Sámi, such as Forest Sámi, were deemed to assimilate and were excluded from Sámi rights (Lantto, 2014; Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008; Lindmark, 2013). Eventually, the state 'constrained all Sámi rights to the practice of reindeer herding, denominating and also devaluating customary rights as "Lapp

[25] The Swedish state aimed not only to resolve the conflict between farming and reindeer herding in given areas but also to ensure the continuity of reindeer husbandry (of a distinct kind) (Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008).

privileges"' (Össbo, 2022, 5). Swedish historian Daniel Lindmark explains the situation:

> Concentrating on the living conditions of the Mountain Saami was in line with the comprehensive Saami policy of the government at the outset of the twentieth century. With the nomadic life of the Mountain Saami taken as the only model, an image of the correct an legitimate kind of Saami was constructed, to which the minority rights of reindeer pasturing legislation was bound (Mörkenstam 1999; Amft 2000). In their stead, the Forest Saami who subsisted on hunting and fishing became the object of assimilation. The modern state demanded clear, unambiguous categories, and Saami culture had to be redefined to fit that need. (2013, 144)

Through the Reindeer Grazing Acts of 1886, 1898 (including its amendment in 1917), and 1928 (Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008, 29–32), the division of the Sámi people in Sweden was realised in legislation. As I will discuss in the section 'Gendering settler colonialism', the Reindeer Grazing Acts disadvantaged Sámi women, adversely affecting Sámi women's conditions and positions within reindeer husbandry (Amft, 1998, 2000).

The Lapp-shall-remain-Lapp policy was institutionalised by introducing a colonial authority, the Lapp Administration. Between 1885 and 1971, it ensured the regional implementation of the Swedish Sámi policy in the counties of Norrbotten, Västerbotten, and Jämtland (Lantto, 2012):

> A system of reindeer herding communities called Lappbyar [Eng: Lapp villages] by the Swedish state was imposed on local Sámi society [. . .] Swedish officials, so-called Lapp bailiffs, took charge over information and infiltrated decision-making in the local Sámi society (Össbo, 2022, 5).

A poignant example of Swedish settler colonial policy effectuated by the Lapp Administration was the forced displacements of the Northern Sámi. After the adoption of the Reindeer Grazing Convention of 1919 between Sweden and Norway, Sámi reindeer herders from Norrbotten were closed off from their traditional pastures in Northern Norway and were forced to relocate south. From the perspective of the Swedish and Norwegian states, the measure intended to decrease the impact of reindeer herding on the land, favouring the needs of farming and settled agricultural communities (Lantto & Mörkenstam 2008, 31). However, the relocated Sámi herders were disconnected from their traditional lands and practices, which resulted in intergenerational dispossession and grief (Labba, 2020). Moreover, the displacement generated long-standing conflict over

land use with other Sámi communities native to the areas where the Northern Sámi families were forcibly relocated (Lantto, 2014).

The nomad school reform of 1913 is another example of the institutionalisation of the Lapp-shall-remain-Lapp policy. The reform introduced mandatory boarding schools for the children of Mountain dwelling nomadic reindeer herders. The nomad schools operated according to a separationist and inadequate curriculum compared to the majority Swedish elementary school system. A bearing idea was to 'shield' the Sámi children from outside influence lest they became unfit for reindeer husbandry. For example, it provided substandard housing to prevent children from acclimatising to a settled lifestyle (Lindmark, 2013; 144; Sjögren, 2010, 27–28; Svonni, 2017, 224–225). Sámi scholar of history and education Charlotta Svonni makes the following observation:

> At the time of its establishment, the nomad school was criticised by representatives of the Sámi society because of the substandard accommodation and deficient education, which did not match the standard of national compulsory education and closed the doors to higher education. (2021, 3–4)

In the anthology '*När jag var åtta år lämnade jag mitt hem och kom aldrig tillbaka' – minnesbilder från samernas skoltid*, ['I left my home at eight years old and still I have not returned': Sámi school memories] (2016), elderly Sámi testify to the pain of being forced to leave their families at an early age and for long periods. Prohibited from speaking their Sámi languages, they suffered stigmatisation, violations, and abuse from the predominantly Swedish staff. These experiences often resulted in life-long trauma and identity loss (Huuva & Blind, 2016). Increasingly called into question, the system was abandoned in 1962 (Svonni, 2017, 225–227).

By the end of the nineteenth century, the state's influence over Sámi land had been normalised in Swedish society, consolidating the foundations for the still on-going territorial conflicts between the Swedish state and the Sámi in Sweden (Brännlund, 2015, 14–15; Ledman, 2012a, 71). Concurrent with the Lapp-shall-remain-Lapp policy, the Swedish state pursued a 'highly modernist and industrial colonial policy' (Össbo, 2022, 12) where Sámi land was exploited for forestry, hydropower, and mining. An example is the extraction of the vast iron ore deposits in Giron/Kiruna and Málmmavárre/Malmberget through the development of large-scale mining complexes in the early twentieth century (Knobblock, 2021; Knobblock, 2022b; Ojala & Nordin, 2015, 10–12; Sehlin Macneil, 2017, 8–10). Another example is the damming of watercourses in Sábme such as the river Stuor

Julevädno/The Greater Lule River for the development of hydroelectric power grids (Öhman, 2015; Össbo, 2014, 2022).

Based on her analysis of the early twentieth century expansion of hydropower in Sábme, Össbo makes the following argument:

> The framework of Swedish hydropower expansion has functioned as industrial settler colonialism with every ingredient necessary: an assumption of other people's land and imposing a structure with laws and administration that dispossessed Sámi people of their lands and rights, altering and threatening the foundation on which the Sámi had built their society and culture. The permanent and imposed change in the traditional landscape transformed Sámi livelihoods, compelling people to adapt to the needs of a centre in the south and to accommodate a new industrial settlement in the middle of their own lands. The in-migration of industrial workers and their families is a blatant settler colonial structure, while struggling Sami herders were drawn into the settler economy. A new society emerged, a majority settler society where industrial and non-Indigenous ways became the norm. (2022, 12–13).

As Össbo argues, the Swedish intervention in Sábme clearly corresponds to a settler colonial structure. Notwithstanding, in Swedish historiography, the dispossession of Sámi land has, until recently, seldom been conceptualised as colonialism. Instead, it has been described as an internal expansion in the nation's northernmost parts (Fur, 2016a, 167). This intellectual construct discursively positions Sábme as always part of Sweden, effectively bypassing Swedish settler ascendancy or redefining it as essentially different from 'colonialism proper' (Fur, 2013, 18; see also Sandström, 2020a, 41).

Today, Norrland, the Swedish denomination for the Northern parts of the country, occupies an ambivalent position in the national imagery. On the one hand, Norrland is a naturalised part of the nation-state and a given Swedish resource for industry, agriculture, settlement, and recreation. On the other hand, the region is portrayed as a periphery to the Southern centres, struggling to uphold its population and tax base in the face of urbanisation and a decline in economic growth (Eriksson, 2010; Tidholm, 2012). Consequently, some local residents entertain the idea of an autonomous Norrland. However, Össbo contends that 'Norrland in itself is a colonial construction, created to supersede and exploit Sámi land, a construct labored to make invisible and ignore Sámi rights to continue to exist' (2022, 3, see also Sandberg McGuinne, 2018). Hence, struggles for an autonomous Northern region correspond with the settler-colonial structure's logic: to obscure the Sámi people's presence and land claims.

# We are still here: the intergenerational continuity of Sámi struggle

There is a long history of Sámi struggles against settler colonial and racist oppression. For example, Elsa Laula (1877–1931, later Elsa Laula Renberg) was a Sámi intellectual, activist, and midwife at the beginning of the twentieth century. Today, Laula is regarded as a foremother of the Sámi and the Sámi feminist movement. In 1904, she wrote the first Sámi political manifesto: *Inför lif eller död? Sanningsord i de lappska förhållandena* [Faced with Life or Death? True Words about the Conditions of the Lapps] (Laula, 1904/2003). In her text, Laula analyses the consequences of racist ideology and Swedish policy at the turn of the century on the living conditions of her people, pointing to the structural reasons for Sámi poverty and vulnerability and its links to the loss of Sámi livelihoods and identity. As argued by Norwegian-Sámi scholar Stine Svendsen, Laula's writing is an example of 'extensive theorization and substantiation of the racialization of property in the context of the Swedish settler state' (2021, 121).

Furthermore, Laula's text strongly appeals to the political organisation for Sámi rights and unity. In her political vision, she includes all segments of the Sámi people: women, men, youth, and the older generations (Laula, 1904/2003). To this end, in 1910, she founded the first Sámi women's organization *Brurskankens samiske kvindeförening*. This organisation contributed to the arrangement of the first transnational Sámi meeting in Tråante/Trondheim in 1917, where delegates discussed social and political issues from a Sámi perspective (Broch Johansen, 2015, 84, 115–117).

In 1950, the first national Sámi organisation in Sweden was formed, *Svenska Samernas Riksförbund* (SSR) [The National Union of the Swedish Sámi], which entailed 'a tangible advancement for the Swedish Sámi movement' because its existence 'created a platform for Sami participation in the political debate' (Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008, 33). Since the 1960s, the Sámi in Sweden have been increasingly regarded as members of a minority population.[26] The discursive change reflected the topicality and momentum within the international debate for Indigenous and minority rights (Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008, 3). For example, in the early 1970s, a Sámi activist movement for cultural and political revitalisation was formed – the ČSV (Alakorva, 2022; Dankertsen, 2022; Sandström, 2020a, 30–32). Specifically, these activists mobilized against the

[26] Since the year 2000, the Jews, the Roma, the Sámi, the Swedish Finns, and the Tornedalians are recognised as national minorities in Sweden.

Norwegian government's plan to construct a large hydroelectric dam in the Alta River (Nykönen, 2022).

Since 1977, Swedish constitutional law has recognised Sámi as a people, and since 2007, as an Indigenous people (Sandström, 2020a, 32). In 1993, the Sámedigge[27], the Swedish Sámi parliament was inaugurated although the 'the elected parliament's legal status is as an administrative authority and its field of action is very limited' (Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008, 39). Sweden has not ratified the International Labour Organization's Convention 169 – Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO 169). Moreover, international expert bodies, for example, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination[28], repeatedly criticise Sweden for its lack of practical implementation of Indigenous rights, especially rights to land and water. Exploitation pressures from mining, hydropower, forestry, green energy initiatives, and tourism remain high (Sandström, 2020a, 33–34). Their 'cumulative effects' (Larsen et al., 2017) severely impact Sámi land, culture, and people.

Over a hundred years of Sámi mobilisation[29] have passed since the publication of Elsa Laula's manifesto, yet there are striking parallels between her critique and current positions. Sámi intellectuals, artists, and activists continue to make interventions in the public sphere, challenging majority discourses and practices, including, significantly, the position of the Swedish state (cf. Bergman Rosamond, 2020). The contemporary protests challenge the state of affairs, but like Laula's text, they also see the future, conveying alternatives and hope. Sámi artist Sofia Jannok sings of this history and future in her song *WE ARE STILL HERE* (*mii leat dás ain*[30]):

[27] Sámediggi [North Sámi], Sámedigge [Lule Sámi], Sámediggie [Ume and Pite Sámi], Saemiedigkie [South Sámi], and Sametinget [Swedish] are the official names of the Sámi parliament in Sweden.

[28] On 10 February 2022, the United Nations special rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples, José Francisco Cali Tzay (Maya Kaqchikel from Guatemala), raised concerns with the Swedish government over the proposed mine in Gállok, an area in Jåhkåmåhkke/Jokkmokk. The expert noted the lack of good faith consultations, the failure to obtain the free, prior, and informed consent of the Sámi, and 'the significant and irreversible risks that the Gállok project poses to Sámi lands, resources, culture and livelihoods' (United Nations Humans Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2022).

[29] For an overview of the Sámi women's movement, see Knobblock (2022, 536–537).

[30] Translates to 'we are still here in North Sámi'.

> Kill the bison, dig out the reindeer's land/Gold and iron, blood on greedy hands/Drown the *lávvu*[31], burn the teepee down/We raise new ones, survivors we are now/Because we are still here, we are still here. (2016)

By comparing the eradication of the bison and the tepees with the destruction of reindeer land and the drowning of the Sámi *lavvút*, Jannok claims similarities between the colonial interventions against the Sámi and Indigenous peoples in North America. However, by referring to Sámi and Indigenous peoples as survivors, she also establishes a continuity between a history of elimination and survival and present-day circumstances in the Nordic region and elsewhere. The song's title and chorus, *We are still here*, states a central slogan of the global Indigenous movement against colonial erasure; despite the attempts to eliminate us, we remain present as sovereign peoples.

[31] North Sámi, a tent-like Sámi dwelling.

# Notes on colonial knowledge production

In the seminal work *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (2012), Smith argues that Western research traditions have formed an intrinsic part of colonial exploitation for Indigenous peoples. She especially points to intersections of imperialism, knowledge, and research used to justify the superiority of Europeans over Indigenous peoples. She demonstrates how such hierarchical conceptions have legitimised the exploitation, appropriation, and commodification of Indigenous individuals, land, resources, and culture worldwide.

Early research, such as traveller's and adventurer's tales 'Othered' Indigenous peoples, feeding into colonial scientific and popular imaginaries of the not fully human and primitive savage. According to Smith, this allowed 'distance to be maintained and justified various policies of either extermination or domestication' (2012, 26). Ultimately, such imaginaries legitimised Indigenous peoples' subjugation, colonial rule, and settlement. It also supported the European project of discovering and controlling 'new worlds, new wealth and new possessions' (Smith, 2012, 23).

Today, the nexus of colonial research is predominantly found at the intersection of research and economic pursuits. Smith points to research practices such as charting and mapping of Indigenous land and the sampling from Indigenous peoples, for example, blood for genetic analysis. The gathering of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge for commercialisation and the commodification of central aspects of Indigenous cultures and spirituality, giving rise to struggles over intellectual and cultural property rights, further typify late-colonial research (Smith, 2012, 102–107; see also Stewart-Harawira, 2007, 132–134; TallBear, 2013).

Anticipating the arguments made by contemporary Indigenous scholars, the Sámi intellectual, activist, and teacher Karin Stenberg (1884–1969) questioned scientific truth claims and pointed to the relation between knowledge production, epistemic privilege, and power (Stenberg & Lindholm[32], 1920). In *Dat läh mijen situd!: Det är vår vilja!: En vädjan till den svenska nationen från samefolket* [This is

[32] Co-written with Valdemar Lindholm. Stenberg is acknowledged as the principal author regarding its content and main ideas (Stenberg & Lindholm, 1920, 3), but Lindholm's degree of influence is difficult to assess. Importantly, the book's preface also includes statements from the Arviesjávrrie and Árjepluovve Sámi associations about their support of the book, suggesting collective authorship that 'acknowledges the power of knowledge as belonging to the community' (Svendsen, 2021, 118).

Our Will: a Plea to the Swedish Nation from the Sámi People], Stenberg writes the following:

> Swedes who travel through Lappmarkerna[33] with loaded carts of tinned foods and their heads crammed with their own delusions of grandeur, without knowing our language, without accompanying us on our wanderings, in our work, but let themselves be transported as packages through the country, they write, supported by the state and by individuals, books about us and our lives, that are hallmarked as the truth about 'the Lapp'[. . .] the danger, for us Sámi, of that sort of 'truth about the Lapp' [. . .] is, that the Swedish public, reading these books, receive the same distorted and unsympathetic view of the Sámi as the authors have had, regarding us as ethnographic objects of an already bygone time, and therefore, we shall not even hint at wanting any kind of development. So much evil has already been done in this respect. [. . .] And what is worse of all is that the Swedish authorities in their preparations of their proposed bills often take these literary and scientific 'truths about the Lapp' as their point of departure and therefore proceed, surely with the best of intentions, but at the same time built on prejudice that, since they are more or less false, inevitably results in the wrong conclusions. (1920, 7–8)

Like her contemporary Elsa Laula, Stenberg was deeply concerned about the effect of Swedish legislative and administrative measures on Sámi communities. She argued that Swedish depictions fed into racist imaginaries of the Sámi, affecting Sámi policy in Sweden.

Stenberg wrote during a time of heightened racist research on Sámi people. Beginning in the eighteenth century and undertaken with increased fervour during the subsequent centuries, Nordic and European clergy, travellers, natural scientists, and ethnographers traversed Sábme to evangelise, map, catalogue, depict, and lay claim on its land, resources, people, and culture (Andersson Burnett, 2013, 2017, 2021; Ojala & Nordin, 2019). For example, the Swedish professor Johannes Schefferus' (1621–1679) monograph *Lapponia*, first published in 1673 'had a profound effect on later views on Saami culture and religion' (Ojala, 2020, 163). Moreover, Carl von Linné, the Swedish naturalist and inventor of the modern system of taxonomy, wrote a research journal based on his expedition in Sábme in 1732. The journal contains depictions of the Sámi people that places the Sámi in the realm of the primitive or, alternatively, in the

[33] An old Swedish word for the land habituated by Sámi people.

position of idealised creatures of nature (Linné, 1889/2016[34], 51–55, 101–104, 112–124).

The classification of the Sámi as the exotic 'Others' of the Nordic region spread across the broader circuits of the colonial scientific discourse. Sámi *duodje* and other objects, including Sámi sacred drums and, most gravely, Sámi human remains, were circulated throughout the spaces of European knowledge production. Moreover, in the early nineteenth century, Sámi people were exhibited and commercialised in ethnographic shows for the enjoyment of European audiences (Andersson Burnett, 2013, 2017; Ojala, 2016; Ojala & Nordin, 2019).

In the early twentieth century, the pseudo-scientific field of scientific racism was established in Sweden. Motivated by beliefs in hierarchical differences between 'races' and eugenic concerns regarding the quality of the population, these pseudo-scientists measured the biological traits of people from several communities (Persson, 2021, 10-42). To prove the degenerative effect of racial mixture, the biological traits of the Sámi people, including Sámi children, were studied using physical anthropology and craniometry (Hagerman, 2015; Lundmark, 2008, 214–219). In Sámi communities, scientific racism is a primary example of unethical conduct and abuse in the name of science and has severely 'damaged the trust in research' (Drugge, 2022, 5).

The pursuit of scientific racism was supported by and worked in the interest of the Swedish state. Swedish historian Maja Lundborg accounts for the broad political and economic support for scientific racism, resulting in the establishment of the State Institute for Racial Biology at Uppsala University in 1922. Serving as a discursive and ideological frame, it positioned the Sámi as an inferior race eventually doomed for extinction, while the governing of Sábme by the Swedes was considered as a natural and justified progression of the order of things (Hagerman, 2015, 96, 162, 177–178; Lundmark, 2008, 214–219; Persson, 2011). As argued by Drugge, the consequences of scientific racism are far-reaching, including tensions between different Sámi groups in Sweden due to dualistic 'political strategies to either isolate and preserve, or assimilate the Sámi population into the majority population' (Drugge, 2022, 5).

The article '"Im sïjhth årrodh naan bahha cirkusdjur – Jag vill inte vara ett jävla cirkusdjur": Dekolonisering av det etnografiska skådespelet i *Sameblod*' ['"I don't want to be a bloody circus animal": Decolonisation of the ethnographic spectacle

[34] Original title of the manuscript was *Caroli Linnæi Iter Lapponicum*. It was first published in Swedish in 1889 (Mosesson, 2016, 8).

in *Sami Blood*'] (2022), by Swedish scholar Johan Höglund and me, contributes to the scholarly critique of Swedish colonial knowledge production. We foreground the 'ethnographic spectacle' (Rony, 1996) as a visual tool of racialisation that contributed to creating and upholding hierarchical and racialised boundaries between Swedishness and Sáminess. For example, photography was intrinsic to the project of scientific racism as its photographs of individuals and communities were used to, allegedly, prove the race biologists' knowledge claims.

# The absence of Sámi perspectives in Swedish gender studies

A vital background to my research is the relative absence of Sámi perspectives in Swedish gender studies. As follows, historical and ongoing settler colonial processes against the Sámi people and their adverse effect have been obscured. Moreover, the field of gender studies has failed to acknowledge Sámi feminist contributions such as knowledge of gendered and sexualised settler colonialism and feminist theorisations of Indigenous decolonisation and resurgence (Andersen et al., 2015; Dankertsen, 2021; Svendsen, 2021). Concurrently, the scientific input made by Sámi feminist scholars who early on made analytical connections between Indigeneity, gender, race, and colonialism (e.g., Eikjok, 2007; Hirvonen, 1998/2008; Kuokkanen, 2007a) have not been substantially recognised.[35] Equally, the discipline of gender studies has not yet engaged in a meaningful way with Sámi relational epistemes (cf. Jernsletten, 2011; Kuokkanen, 2017).

Admittedly, the situation has improved in recent years, primarily due to Sámi feminists' critique and intervention in the field. For example, the Swedish national conferences in Gender Studies, G14 and G16, included Sámi keynotes and themes. Nevertheless, the lack of recognition of and engagement with Sámi feminisms, as theoretical, epistemic and methodological contributions, mirrors power relations between national majorities and Indigenous peoples and, possibly, the discomfort, ignorance, and lack of knowledge of majoritarian feminists (cf. Kuokkanen, 2007b, 6) concerning Sámi viewpoints.

My discussion should not be read as an exhaustive mapping of different feminist affinities with Indigenous thinking. Black feminist scholar Jennifer C.

[35] Concurrently, there is a need to centre gender within Sámi studies. Recently, the collaborative project Gender in Sápmi was launched by the Centre for Sami Studies and Centre for Women´s and Gender Research at UiT, The Arctic University of Norway. The project website states: 'Academic studies that specifically focus on gender are still scarce within the Sámi research field. In addition, much of the research that is done on gender is included in studies that do not necessarily highlight gender as the main issue' (Gender in Sápmi, 2022).

Nash problematizes 'responsiveness', which, locking Black feminisms into a project of critique and defence, may inadvertently re-centre whiteness and hinder Black feminisms' 'visionary world-making practices' (2019, 3). Transferring Nash's reflections to the Sámi feminist context, my dissertation's main aim is not to respond to non-Indigenous academia but to explore Sámi feminist knowledges and contributions. Primarily, my focus in this particular section is guided by Indigenous- and Sámi feminist literature and its dialogues with other traditions of feminist thought. The section ends with some notes on hopes, possibilities, and conditions for feminist dialogues and coalitions across differences.

In 2015, I met with Sámi feminist scholar Rauna Kuokkanen for a conversation about her experiences and views on feminism in general, Indigenous feminism more precisely, and Sámi positions and perspectives in particular:

> Nordic feminists don't openly resist Sámi perspectives on feminism, but they don't engage with them either. In fact, I'm not sure if they even know that such things may exist. A good example of ignoring and excluding Sámi feminists and/or Sámi women is conferences. When Nordic feminists organize conferences, they tend or prefer to forget Sámi women unless somebody calls them on their omission. It is as though Sámi women do not even exist–or at least, that we don't have anything to offer to feminist discussions. (Conversation with Rauna Kuokkanen, 2015, cited in Knobblock & Kuokkanen, 2015, 278)

As argued by Arvin et al. (2013) within the North American geopolitical context, recognising settler colonialism as a still-existent structure urges us to re-think gender studies and question the erasure of Indigenous perspectives: 'Native feminist theories yield valuable insights for gender and women's studies, yet are subject to conceptual and spatial erasures (Hall 2008) precisely because settler colonialism as a contemporary social order and structure has been invisibilized' (2013, 13). To reconceptualise the feminist project and not perpetuate settler colonial erasure, Arvin et al. argue that non-Indigenous feminists need to acknowledge and examine the links between settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy, including the potential complicity of feminist theorisation and movements in Indigenous dispossession and elimination. It implies, they argue, denaturalising and making visible settler colonial structures and processes, as exercised by the state and corporations. Furthermore, it entails seriously recognising Indigenous theorisations beyond add-ons or inclusion as the absorbance of difference (Arvin et al., 2013, 21). In a later article 'Indigenous Feminist Notes on Embodying Alliance against Settler Colonialism', Arvin makes the following observation:

> We have to build worlds in which other feminists believe that Indigenous women exist. More than that, we have to build worlds in which Indigenous women are recognized as activists, artists, and scholars with valuable knowledge and theories about our own lives and communities' histories and future, which are not marginalised or isolated from other communities, but often just erased and unacknowledged. (2019, 353)

In our conversation in 2015, Kuokkanen foregrounded a specific problem in conjunction with majoritarian feminism, namely liberal feminism's focus on issues of equal participation in politics and the labour market. As she argues, a one-sided focus on gender discrimination overshadows the consequences of systemic and intersectional patterns of oppression on Sámi women's lives:

> As a Sámi feminist scholar, I see the need to expand greatly the predominant discourse of liberal feminism in the Nordic countries, which tends to focus exclusively on gender discrimination and gender equality and which constructs feminism generally in very narrow terms. The problem in the Nordic context, as elsewhere, has been the lack of recognition of Indigenous women's articulations and conceptualizations of feminism that do not focus solely on gender discrimination or gender equality, especially in terms of participation in politics and/or the labour market. The implicit—and sometimes also explicit–message of mainstream feminists has often been that Indigenous feminism is not feminism–or that it is an inferior form of feminism–if it doesn't squarely address gender equality. There's a need to decolonize feminism in the Nordic countries. A common critique by Indigenous women of white liberal feminism is that the exclusive focus on gender discrimination neglects to address the impact of structural violence on women's lives. In the Nordic context, this means that when Sámi women talk about reindeer herding laws, global capital encroaching on their traditional territories, or the ability to teach the Sámi language to their children, these are not seen or understood as feminist concerns. (Conversation with Rauna Kuokkanen, 2015, cited in Knobblock & Kuokkanen, 2015, 278)

Due to the hegemony of mainstream Nordic feminist discourse, Kuokkanen argues that Indigenous feminism lacks recognition within feminist discourse or is being inferiorised. The situation, she continues, entails a lack of attention to pressing issues for Sámi women, particularly the structural violence that impacts Sámi communities. Therefore, as I understand her, decolonising feminism in the Nordic countries would include a process of centring Sámi feminist analysis and critique within Nordic feminist discourse, including key Sámi feminist concerns and their entwinement with settler colonial structures.

Significantly, there is a dearth of critical analysis in Sweden concerning state-sanctioned gender equality measures and their effects upon Sámi communities. Highly tentatively, however, I suggest the existence of both productive and fraught relations between state feminism, gender equity interventions, and the Sámi feminist movement. For example, over the last two decades, the Sámedigge, the Swedish Sámi parliament, has instigated gender equality projects commissioned and funded by the Swedish government. These projects have been presented and channelled through, for example, *Sametingets jämställdhetsplan* [The Sámi parliament's gender equality plan] (2016, a revision of the first gender equality programme from 2004), *Rapport: Regingsuppdraget 'En särskild satsning för att stärka samiska kvinnors delaktighet i samhällslivet'* [Report: the government's commission 'A special effort to strengthen Sámi women's participation in political and civil life'] (2011), and *Kartläggning av jämställdhet i det samiska samhället* [Survey about gender equality in the Sámi society] (2021). Indeed, through these initiatives, Sámi women (and some Sámi men) politicians and civil servants have productively brought attention to gender equality issues and forwarded policies of gender equality in Sámi communities.

However, as Ledman argues, evaluations of gender inequality in Sámi society, starting from Swedish societal norms and concerns, may misrepresent complex Sámi realities. In other words, comparing the Sámi and the Swedish society based on a Western perspective can produce an image of Sámi society (especially reindeer herding communities) as comparatively inadequate regarding gender equality or the implementation of gender equality measures. Hence, as the result of Swedish interpretative priorities, compared to Swedish women, Sámi women are portrayed as subordinate to men and bound by tradition.

Naturally, Ledman's analysis neither implies that gendered inequality is non-existent in Sámi communities, nor that Sámi society does not benefit from gender equity feminism. Instead, her argument forwards the necessity of contextually sensitive analysis, including a serious engagement with the intersections of gender and Indigeneity (Ledman, 2012a, 149–150). Mirroring Ledman's argument, the latest gender equality report from the Sámi parliament points to the lack of a Sámi point of departure for gender equality initiatives, which they describe as central for their success. Thus, the report identifies the need for Sámi Indigenous feminist perspectives in work for gender equality (Sámedigge, 2021, 5).

Arguably, neither Swedish nor Nordic feminisms are unified entities. Importantly, intersectional, black, postcolonial, and antiracist feminist scholarship have greatly expanded and deepened our understandings of racial regimes and gendered and racialised inequalities in the Nordic region and beyond

(for examples, see de los Reyes & Mulinari, 2020; Diallo, 2019; Sager & Mulinari, 2018; Sawyer & Osei-Kofi, 2020). Yet, I agree with Smith's argument for the need to include Indigenous perspectives within critical interventions in knowledge production:

> Critiques by feminist scholars, by critical theorists, by black and African American scholars have provided ways of talking about knowledge and its social constructions, and about methodologies and the politics of research. But the words that apply to indigenous researchers have been inserted into the text, then read with our world in/sight. (2012, 6)

As argued by Smith, Indigenous theoretical interventions are related to feminist, antiracist, and black scholarship and often draw inspiration from their arguments. Indeed, there are strong concurrences between Indigenous feminist scholarship and other critical feminist interventions concerned with issues of race, difference, and colonialism. Like antiracist, black, and intersectional feminisms, Indigenous feminisms are critical of certain forms of liberal feminist thought 'that continue to contain racial hierarchies and imperial intent' (Goeman & Denetdale, 2009, 10). Accordingly, they argue against universal constructions of feminism, sisterhood, and the origins of women's oppression. Akin to women involved in other anti-colonial movements, and Black and other racialised women (cf. Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991; Mohanty, 1988; Yuval-Davis, 1997, 117–118), they also challenge the idea that women's subjugation solely results from male oppression. Accordingly, they argue for the need to centre an intersectional analysis of axes of power and differences, including but not limited to gender, in the context of settler colonialism (Arvin et al., 2013, 9–10, 17–18; Goeman & Denetdale, 2009).

Nevertheless, while these traditions' contributions provide Indigenous scholars with crucial understandings and ways to speak of gendered colonial and racialised power, they, as Smith (2012, 6) notes, do not do so in the specificity of Indigenous life-worlds. Centrally, the particular Indigenous experiences, resulting from settler colonial elimination and dispossession, gendered settler colonial structures, and Indigenous struggles for decolonisation, nation-building, and resurgence, at large remains outside their conceptual scope of attention. Shari M. Huhndorf (American) and Cheryl Suzack (Batchewana First Nations) address this interplay:

> Since the late 1980s and 1990s, developments in feminist theory and practice have enabled scholars to recognize how nationality, race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity inform axes of gender differentiation. Despite these interventions and the urgency

> of gender analysis specific to Indigenous communities, Indigenous women and feminist issues remain underexamined in contemporary feminist theory. Although presumed to fall within normative definitions of women of colour and postcolonial feminism, Indigenous feminism remains an important site of gender struggle that examines the crucial issues of cultural identity, nationalism, and decolonization particular to Indigenous contexts. (2010, 1–2)

The discipline of gender studies in Sweden has, for example, productively attended to colonial legacies, racialised exclusion, and their manifestations in areas such as migration, citizenship, welfare, labour market, and gendered and sexualised racism. However, less attention, with a few exceptions, has been paid to past and present colonial processes vis-à-vis Sámi people in Sweden, the intersections of gender and Indigeneity, and the meaning of and forms for decolonisation and resurgence in Sámi contexts (cf. Andersen et al., 2015).

Moreover, some authors argue that there are essential shifts in foci and crucial points of difference (cf. Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Tuck & Yang, 2012) between Indigenous feminisms and anti-racist intellectual and emancipatory traditions. Notably, due to the diverse forms of racialisation and subjugation within colonial projects, Indigenous peoples and People of Colour are differently located vis-a-vis the settler-colonial nation-states, resulting in divergent trajectories of liberatory struggles. The feminist critical race scholars Sherene Razack, Malinda Smith, and Sunera Thobani argue this point in the Canadian context:

> Indigenous women and women of colour have historically been differently and unequally, located within the Canadian state, both in relations to "Canadians" and to each other. The racial and gendered politics of the state were organized through a complex triangulation, with Indigenous peoples marked for physical and cultural extinction, European settlers for integration, and people of colour for perpetual outsider status as "immigrants" and "newcomers". This pattern of racial politics has continued to shape processes of racialization within the settler society, with the consequence that not only are the experiences and interests of Indigenous and women of colour quite different but they are also conflictual. While women of colour have struggled for equal access to citizenship and its rights and entitlements, citizenship has been defined as the "final solution" for Indigenous peoples, marking the end of their claims to sovereignty and land. (2010, 4–5)

Hence, Indigenous feminism primarily differs in its analytical focus on settler colonialism as an ongoing project of dispossession and interlocking oppression. As follows, the tradition is also distinguished by the strive to separate and divest from the colonial nation-state by emphasising inclusive forms for Indigenous

sovereignty, community- and nation-building, grounded in Indigenous knowledges and the rejection of Eurocentrism (Arvin et al., 2013; Razack et al., 2010).

Arguably, the line of argumentation by Razack et al. demonstrates the need for serious engagement with the intersectional patterns of oppression within settler-colonial structures. It also foregrounds the importance of building feminist solidarities inclusive of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous concerns. However, recent developments in Black, antiracist, Indigenous, and decolonial feminist literature and especially the dialogues across these locations (see Bird et al., 2018, on 'economies of dispossession' and Grande, 2018, on the links between Black radicalism and critical Indigenous studies in theorisations of the academy) emphasise affinities and interrelations rather than divergences, opening towards coalition building across feminist positionalities.

Feminist critical race theorist Rita Dhamoon, for example, suggests an analytic focus on the interaction of different modalities of colonialism that award disparate forms of privilege and penalty, nationally and globally, to marginalised people within the hierarchies of colonial power. Such a focus also includes patterns of convergences and divergences in social justice struggles, which may (albeit unintentionally) work in compliance with settler-colonial structures. Addressing these problematics, feminists cannot prioritise particular struggles while obscuring others, such as critiquing the exclusionary mechanisms of the nation-state while overshadowing Indigenous nation-based struggles for sovereignty. Instead, she centres a search for grounds for alliances, for example, by addressing 'how state agents and corporations operationalize various processes and practices of settler colonialism to regulate different Indigenous peoples and people of colour relative to one another' (Dhamoon, 2015, 31). This approach emphasises the production and consolidation 'of hierarchies of Otherness' (Dhamoon, 2015, 32) between racialised people as well as the ongoing dispossession and exploitation of Indigenous land:

> [We] must make links between a critique of transnational corporations that exploitatively extract natural resources on traditional Indigenous territories with state support, markets that exploit Third World women's labour for the benefit of the West, and global Indigenous women and women of colour organising against these modalities of gendered colonialisms and racisms, some of which are grounded in Indigenous conceptions of nationhood. (Dhamoon, 2015, 28)

Furthermore, to recognise Indigenous land-based sovereignty, Dhamoon 'invites feminists to transcend the man/nature divide and integrate cosmological, ecological, and spiritual worldviews into theory' (2015, 32).

Indeed, several radical feminist traditions, such as ecofeminism and feminist new materialisms, move beyond the human/nonhuman divide (cf. Finbog, 2021). Ecofeminisms theorise the connection between the oppression of women and the feminine and the subjugation and exploitation of nature (Gaard, 2011; Stevens et al., 2019; Warren & Erkal, 1997). For example, in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993), Australian scholar Val Plumwood engages 'the feminist critique of reason to argue that the master form of rationality of western culture has been systematically unable to acknowledge dependency on nature, the sphere of those it has defined as 'inferior' others' (1993, opening summary). As follows, ecofeminisms foreground the fundamental interconnectedness of environmental and social injustices, particularly gendered, but also racialised, social injustices (Stevens et al., 2019, 1–2). In so doing, the field critically analyses globalised economies, developmental pursuits, and their detrimental consequences, particularly for exposed communities in the Third World (Agarwal, 1992). For example, German scholar Maria Mies and Indian scholar Vandana Shiva (2014) discusses the conditions, knowledges, and struggles of small-scale farmers on the Indian sub-continent who are women.

Feminist new materialisms, partly originating from and overlapping with feminist studies of science and technology (see Haraway, 1991) and feminist posthumanisms (see Braidotti, 2013), is a porous and interlinked field. However, it is assembled through various ways of de-centring humanism: '[Through] attention to the relationship between nature and culture, turn(s) to matter, distributive agency and privileging relations, prioritizing affect, and a movement away from the linguistic turn and representationalism' (Truman, 2019, 3; see also Tuana, 2021). For example, theoretical physicist Karen Barad theorises agential realism as a process 'whereby agency is distributed across relations and bodies, and consequently not solely a human possession' (Truman, 2019, 4). Through notions such as intra-action, entanglements, and diffraction, Barad captures the multiplicity of life and our responsibility/respons-ableness for the phenomena produced within constantly enfolding worlds (Barad, 2007, 2014; see also Thiele, 2017).

Despite their affinities with Indigenous epistemes and Indigenous analyses of the production of hierarchical difference, both ecofeminisms and feminist new materialisms have received Indigenous feminist critique. For example, Ambelin Kwaymullina (an Aboriginal woman of the Palyku people) argues that

ecofeminists, without first recognising colonial oppression of Indigenous peoples, including settler women's involvement in such processes, Indigenous land-based sovereignty, and listening to and engaging respectfully with Indigenous peoples and women 'cannot ethically advocate for justice in relation to women and the environment' (2019, 193) She continues:

> Listening, in this context, does not mean that the cultures and identities of Indigenous women are available for appropriation by ecofeminists, and this includes describing our lives as some idealized form of ecofemininity. On the contrary, the very nature of respecting sovereignty, requires recognizing that our lives are for us to share (or not) and on our own terms. (Kwaymullina, 2019, 201)

According to Kwaymullina, the unwillingness to engage and engage respectfully with Indigenous peoples re-enacts epistemic and colonial inequalities and makes learning from Indigenous peoples impossible (cf. Nixon, 2015).

Similarly, TallBear describes new materialism as a field primarily aimed at lessening 'the hierarchies between 'Westerners' and their nonhuman others' (TallBear, 2017a, 187). She reminds us that 'not everyone needs to summon a new analytical framework or needs to renew a commitment to 'the vitality of [so-called] things' (TallBear, 2017a, 193). Indigenous epistemes, she notes, never 'forgot the interrelatedness of things' (TallBear, 2017a, 180). Furthermore, they are not directly translatable to new materialist thinking:

> Indigenous peoples, our movements and voices are the other it seems the new materialists – indeed most of western thought – cannot fully comprehend as living. They may hear us as ghosts go bump in the night. Once forced to see us, they may be terrified of the claims on their house. The invisibility of our ontologies, the very few references to them in their writing, and reference to indigenous thought by other theoretical traditions as "beliefs" or artifacts of a waning time to be studied but not to be interacted with as truths about a living world – all this is to deny our vibrancy. It is a denial of the ongoing intimate relations of intimate peoples as well as between us and nonhumans in these lands. We are the living that so many new materialists, like so many Western thinkers before them and beside them, refuse to see. (TallBear, 2017a, 198)

As I interpret TallBear's argument, she problematises the disregard for Indigenous scholars' intellectual contributions and ontologies as it re-enacts disengagement, effectively perpetuating Indigenous erasure.[36]

[36] See Todd (2016), for an Indigenous feminist critique of Eurocentric citational politics.

## Moving towards dialogues across differences

Admittedly, the theoretical mapping I have so far undertaken includes critiques of certain forms of majoritarian feminisms and aspects. Nonetheless, primarily it should be read as an opening for dialogues across differences. In this regard, I am inspired by Indian scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty's argument in '"Under Western Eyes" Revisited' (2003b). Commenting on the reception of her earlier critique of Western feminism, Mohanty clarifies that it should be interpreted as an argument for equality, one that is a condition for 'building a noncolonizing feminist solidarity across borders' (Mohanty, 2003b, 224). Similarly, Kuokkanen forwards listening, dialogue, and learning in a shared commitment to rethinking and (re)building 'a responsible (response-able) academy' beyond the normative limits of 'dominant, western intellectual conventions' (2017, 319). This commitment, argues Kuokkanen, would encompass openness, receptiveness, and a recognition of our unfinishedness on constantly shifting grounds of knowledge (2017, 320–323).

Northern Swedish scholar Moa Sandström researches Sámi artivism[37] and decolonisation. She beautifully depicts such an approach in a creative essay in the the literary magazine *Provins*.[38] Decolonisation, Sandström conveys, requires moving towards the unknown, which necessarily entails discomfort:

> Without doubt and uncertainty, we cannot evolve because doubt and uncertainty are the development. When embraced: a state of being – a temporary, fluid state – to protect [. . .] Where do I land as a Swede? What core values and ways can I lean on beyond colonialism? [. . .] To have the courage to welcome incertitude. (2020b, 70)

In other words, incertitude is a precondition for learning beyond given worldviews and truths. It is neither strange nor unwelcome but a necessary step towards changing power relations and building decolonial coalitions, including feminist solidarity (cf. Mohanty, 2003b, 224), across different positionings. Similarly, Arvin promotes the building of alliances in concert with Indigenous feminism:

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[37] Artivism is a hybrid between activism and artistic production aiming at societal change (Sandström, 2020a, 11).

[38] For an academic discussion of Sandström's positionality and methodology, see her dissertation Dekoloniseringskonst: Artivism i 2010-talets *Sápmi* [Decolonising Artivism in Contemporary Sápmi] (2020a, 12-16, 51–70).

> Indigenous feminism is [. . .] concerned with bringing forth different relationships and therefore different worlds for everyone, not only for Indigenous women or Indigenous peoples, who never live in complete isolation. My contention is that building alliances grounded in this kind of Indigenous feminist world-building, in concert with other forms of intersectional feminisms, holds the promise to bring forth not only new methods of combatting settler colonialism, imperialism, patriarchy, and white supremacy, but also new relationships that could make such fights more sustainable for all of us. (2019, 340)

In the Nordic context, the anthology *Feminisms in the Nordic Region: Neoliberalism, Nationalism and Decolonial Critique* (Keskinen et al., 2021) exemplifies an effort to begin making such alliances. The editor's introduction frames the project as making 'the link between antiracism and decolonising critiques of feminisms, as well as linking the struggles of migrant and refugee persons to those of indigenous activists, placing these in the sightlines of changing hegemonic forms of feminism throughout the region' (Stoltz et al., 2021). Similarly, the recently published book *Feminist and LGBTI+ Activism across Russia, Scandinavia and Turkey: Transnationalizing Spaces of Resistance* (Çagatay et al., 2022) explores the commonalities and possibilities for learning across struggles for women's and LGBTI+ rights in Russia, Turkey, and the Scandinavian countries, including examples from the Sámi context.

The scholarly project of Sámi feminist scholar May-Britt Öhman exemplifies another academic feminist dialogue across multiple perspectives and research fields. Drawing on feminist studies of science and technologies and Indigenous studies, Öhman has developed situated Indigenous, decolonial and feminist critiques of large-scale industrial interventions in Sábme, particularly mining and hydropower. Through embodied, engaged, and place-based research, she analyses their fundamentally intrusive and detrimental consequences for Sámi life-worlds – land and waterscapes in interrelation with knowledges, identities, and land- and water-based beliefs and practices (Öhman, 2016, 2017).

Lastly, conversations across different feminist orientations and struggles are made outside academia and within the Sámi feminist and queer movements. For example, as I write in the article 'Sámi feminist conversations' (2022a, 537), the Sámi youth organisation Sáminuorra collaborated on the project Queering Sápmi, which conveyed queer Sámi life histories through text and photographs, resulting in an exhibition and a book (Bergman & Lindquist, 2013). Today, Sáminuorra and the queer Sámi organisation Garmeres spread awareness and engage in transnational dialogues within Sábme, the international Indigenous community,

and interlinked movements involved in a shared struggle for decolonisation, gender, racial, and environmental justice.

For exemple, first, at Sápmi Pride in Tråante/Trondheim 2019, a panel (The voices of Racialized Queer feminists) was held in collaboration with Salam, an organisation for queer Muslims in Norway. Second, in a poetic conversation in letters, crip and queer feminist scholar Christine Bylund and Sámi medical student and poet Tobias Poggats explore points of reference and grounds for solidarity between crip and Sámi locations. Dis/abled people and Sámi people, they discuss, have both experienced and struggled against dehumanisation and oppression at the nexus of science and state, ableism[39], and colonialism (Bylund & Poggats, 2019). Finally, there are emerging contemporary coalitions between the environmental and Sámi movements. For example, Friday for Future, the global activist movement for climate justice, has actively engaged in solidarity with Sámi activists protecting the Gállok area from mining and the Sámi land from deforestation (Boffey, 2022; Thunberg et al., 2022).

Partly, my own dissertation includes dialogues between differently located scholars anchored in somewhat different theoretical traditions. For example, feminist scholars Madina Tlostanova (Circassian-Uzbek), Suruchi Thapar-Björkert, and I co-authored 'Do We Need Decolonial Feminism in Sweden?'. We argue that there is potential for 'deep coalitions' (Lugones, 2003, 98) between decolonial thought, developed primarily but not exclusively from within the Latin American context (cf. Mendoza, 2016), and Sámi scholarship. Understanding the concepts offered by decolonial feminism may allow us to see links between different trajectories of decolonial critique and alternative epistemic positions beyond Eurocentric visions, particularly Indigenous knowledges. In the article, we argue that a decolonial feminist category that may enrich Nordic feminist analyses is Argentinian philosopher María Lugones' concept of 'the coloniality[40] of gender' (Tlostanova et al., 2019, 292-293). I further explore this idea in the section entitled 'Gender, sexuality, and epistemicide', where I engage the notion of 'the coloniality of gender' in conversation with analyses, experiences, and reflections

[39] See Bylund (2022), for a comprehensive analysis of ableism and austerity in the Swedish welfare state.

[40] Coined by the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano (2008, 2010), coloniality of power is a central term of the modernity/coloniality school of thought (see Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, for an overview of the intervention). The term coloniality of power theorises the ascendancy of the global European world order, beginning with the conquest of the Americas, as 'a process of racialization integral to colonization' (Mendoza, 2016, 14). For further discussion of Lugone's concept of 'the coloniality of gender"' see the section Gender, sexuality, and epistemicide.

from the Sámi context. However, in recognition of the need for feminist theoretical, methodological, and conceptual specificity grounded in Indigenous experiences, I primarily situate this dissertation within an emerging Sámi feminist research field.

# Indigenous and Sámi feminisms: issues and contributions

Academic Sámi feminist contributions have primarily been in dialogue with a growing theoretical and activist intervention that is often, but not exclusively, designated as Indigenous feminisms. Indigenous feminisms have arisen in the intersection of the political struggle of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous women's and LGBTQ2[41] people's engagement with gender and sexuality in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous contexts (Nickel, 2020). Today, the body of Indigenous feminist work is rapidly growing. Indigenous feminisms evolve in various geographical and cultural contexts and under shifting denominations such as Native feminisms, Aboriginal feminisms, and Blak[42] feminisms.

In both theory and practice, Indigenous feminisms analyse colonial structures of domination and envision alternatives and futures, critically re-imagining the world. Distinctively, the intervention emphasises difference, diversity, and intersecting power relations, foregrounding Indigenous women's, queer-, trans- non-binary and Two-Spirit peoples' perspectives and lived experiences. By starting from our intersecting realities, Indigenous feminists analyse settler colonialism as a racialised and gendered structure (Green, 2007b; 2017; Nickel & Fehr, 2020; Suzack et al., 2010): 'Indigenous feminism is grounded in critiques of colonialism, particularly the gendered hierarchies that colonialism introduced and continues to maintain in many Indigenous contexts' (Arvin, 2019, 339).

Furthermore, Indigenous feminists engage critically with theories and praxis of decolonisation and resurgence. Recognition and remediation of external and

[41] Abbreviation of Lesbian-, gay-, bisexual-, trans-, queer- and Two-Spirit people. Driskill et al. explains the term Two-spirit as follows: 'Two-Spirit was proposed in Indigenous organizing in Canada and the United States to be inclusive of Indigenous people who identify as GLBTQ or through nationally specific terms from Indigenous languages' (2011, 3).

[42] 'The term Blak proposed by Destiny Deacon is used in the Australian Aboriginal context as a form of resistance to non-Indigenous peoples' labelling and consistent misrepresentations' (Balla et al., 2022, 1).

internal power differences are considered integral to inclusive and transformative decolonial and resurgent thinking and practice (Bardwell Jones & MacLaren, 2020; Denetdale, 2020). A core value is 'relational responsibility' (Nickel, 2020, 15) – i.e., the (re)creation of good relations within interlinked human and natural life-worlds. Binizaá (Zapotec) scholar Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez explains Indigenous feminism as follows:

> As a theory, Indigenous feminism is about engaging with the possibilities of decolonizing while not losing sight of the power relations that inform difference both internally and externally. Indigenous feminism is also about the ability to choose strategies and to construct relevant local meanings. From this point of view, it is about recovering rhetorical and political practices and centring our own experiences in order to reconceptualize the epistemological bases of our research to create an Indigenous feminist theory. (2010, 116)

By redefining feminism on Indigenous terms, as is exemplified in the above quotation by Altamirano-Jimenéz, Indigenous feminisms question the notion that feminism is a non-Indigenous concept or even a detrimental phenomenon due to the association with whiteness and majority positions (Green, 2017, 3). Instead, Indigenous feminisms critique majority feminisms' hegemony and exclusionary forces. Concurrently, heteropatriarchal constructions of Indigenous nationalism are challenged (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2010). For example, In the article 'Indigenous Women in the North: The struggle for rights and feminism' (2000), Sámi feminist activist and social anthropologist Jorunn Eikjok writes about some of the difficulties Sámi feminists have faced:

> We were unpopular among our Sámi brothers for introducing the women's cause into the struggle for our people's rights. We were unpopular among our fellow sisters in the wider community for bringing in our ethnic and culture identity as women. Our brothers ridiculed us because gender was irrelevant for them; our Nordic sisters rebuked and lectured us because the minority and indigenous question was irrelevant to them. (2000, 39)

Above, Eikjok points to challenges for a feminist project situated at the intersection of Indigeneity and gender – constructions of Indigeneity as irrelevant for feminist projects on the part of Nordic feminists and, conversely, the resistance from Sámi men who have constructed feminism as irrelevant to the struggle for Sámi rights. Intersectional predicaments, similar to Eikjok's account, are globally shared and problematised by Indigenous feminists. For example, Joyce Green (English, Ktunaxa and Cree-Scottish Métis) explains that Indigenous feminists,

to make space for Indigenous feminism, are pressed to simultaneously oppose white feminism and Indigenous patriarchy (2007c, 2017; see also Huhndorf & Suzack, 2010). The theme is present in several of the articles in the dissertation. For example, in 'Decolonizing Feminism in The North' (2015), Rauna Kuokkanen discusses that Indigenous women have been made invisible in the majoritarian feminist movement and accused of being divisive when struggling for women's rights in their communities. However, as I discuss in 'Sámi Feminist Conversations' (2022a), Sámi feminisms are not a dividing force among Sámi people. Instead, I conceptualise Sámi feminisms as necessary for creating viable futures beyond intertwined relations of domination (cf. Kuokkanen, 2019).

## Gendering settler colonialism

A central argument within Indigenous feminism is that settler colonialism is intimately connected with regimes of race and gender:

> Native feminist theories centrally address two intertwined ideas that are significant but often overlooked in feminist discourses: the United States and many other Western countries, including Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, are settler colonial nation-states, and settler colonialism has been and continues to be a gendered process. (Arvin et al., 2013, 9)

From these two intertwined ideas, Indigenous feminists forward two equally interrelated arguments. First, the colonial system was destructive to Indigenous relations of gender and sexuality, affecting all spheres of Indigenous life: 'Family organization, child rearing, political and spiritual life, work and social activities were all disordered by a colonial system that positioned its own women as the property of men, with primarily domestic roles' (Smith, 2012, 152–153). Second, Indigenous feminists contend that the regulation of Indigenous gender, bodies, sexualities, and kinship relations have been fundamental in colonial projects' fracture, elimination, and assimilation of Indigenous worlds. Therefore, such regulations have enabled the ascendancy of settler-colonial societies (Kuokkanen, 2019, 5–6; Meissner & Whyte, 2017; Simpson, 2017, 39–54).

Canadian Indigenous feminists, for example, argue that the destruction of Indigenous governance and decision-making systems has decreased Indigenous women's political influence within Indigenous societies. This situation has been made more severe through Western patriarchal legal systems. For example, within

the Canadian Indian Act, the legal conditions regulating Indian status have been different for women and men. Through marriage with non-Indian status men, Indigenous women lost their Indian status (and the right to pass it on to their children) while Indigenous men marrying non-Indigenous women did not. Naturally, this legislation weakened many women's links with Indigenous territory and society, contributing to assimilation and negatively affecting their political and social influence within Indigenous groups. The law was amended in 1985, but discriminatory aspects remain (Green, 2007a, 140–145; Suzack, 2010, 129–132).

The Swedish Reindeer Grazing Acts of 1886, 1928, and 1971 are examples of gendered colonial law in the Nordic context (Amft, 1998, 2000). First, the Reindeer Grazing Act of 1898 was amended along patrilineal descent. The act defined a Sámi as a person 'whose father to some extent is of Lappish origin, but only if his father's or grandfather's permanent occupation was reindeer-herding without cultivation of homestead or settlement' (cited in Kuokkanen 2019, 83). The Reindeer Grazing Act of 1928, in effect until 1971, defined women's roles as wife, widow, or daughter to a Sámi man. Importantly, women's memberships in the Sámi village, the legal and administrative unit for reindeer husbandry imposed on the Sámi by the state, were directly tied to her father's or husband's membership, in accordance with Swedish patriarchal notions of ownership and inheritance. Accordingly, women's Sámi rights depended on their relation to male members in the Sámi village. Moreover, the act stipulated that a Sámi man's reindeer herding rights were unaffected by his civil status. However, a Sámi woman forfeited her birth right if she married a man without reindeer herding rights, Sámi or non-Sámi (Amft, 1998, 30–32). Similarly, Márjá has identified gendered differences concerning Sámi rights and civil status:

> Indeed, Sweden has imposed this [the gendered differences concerning Sámi rights and civil status] on us. [. . .] Moreover, today, unfortunately, it still affects many people's way of thinking. They believe the man has a right to remain, not the woman, if she chooses a Swedish partner. I've grown up with it myself since my father isn't Sámi. They've [the Sámi women marrying Swedish men] had to struggle and do it the hard way to work their way back into reindeer husbandry, but they have managed, and they remain. But it isn't right! (Conversation with Márjá, 2017)

As Márjá's comment reflects, the Reindeer Grazing Act of 1928 imposed and entrenched Swedish notions and systems for belonging, heritage, and cultural reproduction. As Márjá also discussed in our conversation, the legislation side-

stepped Sámi women's equally central roles as holders and reproducers of Sámi knowledges. However, Márjá's quotation also conveys Sámi women's resilience against the effects of gendered colonial law, based on her experiences of women who, despite gendered adversity, have struggled and managed to remain within reindeer husbandry.

The Reindeer Grazing Act of 1971 represents a formal move towards gender equality through more gender-neutral language. The legislators exchanged the words 'wife' and 'widow' for the Swedish equivalents of spouse [Swedish: *make*] and survivor [Swedish: *efterlevande*]. Nonetheless, the law still generates gendered inequalities. Centrally, it retains a clause stipulating that the reindeer of household members [Swedish: *husfolk*], including those of spouses and children living at home, are under the ownership of the active reindeer herding member in the Sámi village. Since the majority of active members are men, the legislation, in practice, effectuates discrimination against Sámi women (Amft, 2000, 80–85).

Similarly, Kuokkanen has explored the gendered effects of colonial rule for Indigenous economies. The loss of the subsistence economy and the introduction of the market economy have profoundly changed Indigenous systems for maintenance and survival, often with adverse effects for Indigenous women. The changing nature of Sámi reindeer husbandry is one example. As reindeer husbandry has changed towards industrialisation and commodification, it has undergone a process of masculinisation (Kuokkanen, 2007a, 79–80; 2009; see also Amft, 2000). Eikjok relates this development to Nordic state intervention in Sámi society: 'The state's management and laws has [sic!] brushed aside the position Sámi women traditionally had, effectively weakening their position in relation to men' (2004, 54; see also Hirvonen, 2007, 14–15). However, gendered expectations regarding men's responsibilities entail specific challenges for Sámi men in reindeer herding communities. These expectations may contribute to mental illness, suggesting a diversity of gendered vulnerabilities (Dankertsen, 2020, 51–52; Jacobsson et al., 2020, 5; J. P. Stoor, 2020).

As far as I know, there are no feminist scholarly analyses of the forced displacements of the Northern Sámi in Sweden. However, based on Sámi narratives, photographs, letters, poems, and documents, Sámi author Elin-Anna Labba has written the book *Herrarna satte oss hit* [*Sirddolaččat*: The Deportation of the Northern Sámi] (2020). She suggests that the enforced change of life circumstances may have hit Sámi women the hardest:

> I sense a pattern in all the stories. Many voices, independent of one another, say that women were the most vulnerable. They remain in the *goahti*[43] when the men meet in the forest. They are left alone with the children when others gather at the neighbouring village's reindeer fences. The women collect the firewood and chop the hole of ice frozen during the night. Their sisters and family who helped in everyday life remain in the north. They miss their female friends. They cannot get a telephone and phone home until many years later. The deportations occur during a transition period when a new form of reindeer husbandry emerges. Up until the deportation, the women walk with the reindeer caravans. It is not an easy life, but they share it with others and work with the reindeer, as their husbands do. During the 1930s, the families begin to remain at the dwelling. It is an irony of history that the new loneliness coincides with the forced displacements. (Labba, 2020, 159–160)

Here, Labba suggests that the impact of the forced relocation on Sámi women's conditions intersected with the twentieth-century changes in reindeer husbandry, described by Kuokkanen and Eikjok as a masculinisation processes. Relating her commentary to these Sámi feminist analyses of Indigenous economies points to the need for more in-depth studies of the intersectional ramifications of the era's colonial policies.

Another focal point of Indigenous feminist critique is settler colonial violence and its intergenerational consequences. As the primary motive for elimination within settler colonial formations is access to territory, structural colonial violence has, for example, attacked Indigenous presence and permanence on the land (Dhamoon, 2015, 31; Simpson, 2017, 41–44). For example, Anderson (2001, 2020) describes how Canadian colonial policies specifically targeted the core of Indigenous social organisation, the future generations, by removing Indigenous children from their families and placing them in state boarding schools where they were raised to become 'white' manual labourers. This severely affected Indigenous women's and men's positions and roles in the community, disrupting intra-generational patterns of care and responsibilities. Such historical forms of structural violence are strongly linked to contemporary disempowerment and dispossession.

In Australia, the Stolen Generations refer to children of Aboriginal and Torre Strait Island Descent who were forcibly removed from their families and communities in New South Wales between 1883 and 1969. The policy of forced

[43] Labba uses the Swedish word *kåta*. I have chosen to use the corresponding North Sámi word *goahti* due to the lack of a precise translation to English. A Sámi *goahti* is a hut or a tent with different types of cover, for example, fabric, peat moss, or timber.

removal aimed to remove 'light-skinned Aboriginal children from their families and through adoption place them in white families, and to remove darker skinned children to be trained as domestic servants (if girls) or work on pastoral properties (if boys)' (Behrendt, 2019, 192; see also Balla et al., 2022; Read, 2006). Larissa Behrendt, an Aboriginal feminist lawyer and descendant of a forcibly removed child, underlines the policy's severing connections to family, culture, nation, and territory, resulting in intergenerational trauma. Moreover, she suggests a continuity between the policy and present-day Aboriginal vulnerability to child removal within the child protection systems (2019; see also Haebich, 2000).

Contrary to boarding schools for Indigenous children in North America or the Australian child removal policy, the primary aim of the 1913 Swedish nomad school reform was not assimilation but preservation (of a received Swedish conceptualisation of Sáminess) (Sjögren, 2010, 28).[44] However, the nomad school system disrupted Sámi families' care patterns, language transmission, and intergenerational transfer of Sámi Traditional Knowledge.[45] Thus, effectively the system contributed to assimilatory processes (Huuva & Blind, 2016; Sandström, 2020a, 23–24).

In the second part of article, '"Im sïjhth årrodh naan bahha cirkusdjur – Jag vill inte vara ett jävla cirkusdjur"' ['I don't want to be a bloody circus animal'] (2022), Höglund and I focus on the film *Sami Blood* (2016), directed by Sámi filmmaker Amanda Kernell. A tale told from inside of Sámi people and locations, *Sami Blood* represents a radical, decolonial critique of the colonial ethnographic paradigm and the Swedish colonial policy. *Sami Blood*'s main protagonist, Elle Marja, is a nomad school student subjected to Swedish scientific racism. She escapes her subordination by disavowing her Sáminess and adopting a Swedish identity. Her life trajectory enables her to pursue higher education within a racist system but cuts her ties with her culture, family, community, and land. Elle Marja's radical course of action reverberates through the generations. For example, her son lacks the basic knowledge of reindeer herding and the Sámi

[44] In Norway, the policy known as Norwegianisation, in place from the mid-nineteenth century until 1959, was explicitly assimilatory towards the Sámi people (and the Kven minority) and primarily realised through the education system. The aim was to eradicate the Sámi 'language, culture, and values' (Kuokkanen, 2019, 80). Similarly, the state's approach in Finland was fundamentally assimilatory (Kuokkanen, 2019, 86).

[45] *Árbbediehto* (Sámi Traditional Knowledge) is 'the collective wisdom and skills of the Sami people used to enhance their livelihood for centuries. It has been passed down from generation to generation both orally and through work and practical experience. Through this continuity, the concept of árbediehtu ties the past, present and future together' (Porsanger & Guttorm, 2011, 18).

language. In conclusion, we argue that the film is a nuanced and complex depiction of Sámi experiences of scientific racism, the nomadic school system, and assimilation.

In Canada and the United States, both Indigenous women and men experience very high level of physical violence, including rape, assault, and homicide (Innes & Anderson, 2015b; Kuokkanen, 2019, 186). Kuokkanen argues that 'the disproportionate rates of gendered violence are a result of a history of state violence and institutional practices as well as racist and sexist attitudes in society devaluing and dehumanizing Indigenous women' (2019, 186). There is less knowledge about gendered violence in Sábme than in other Indigenous contexts, such as in Canada or New Zeeland (Kuokkanen, 2019, 179–216; Sámediggi, 2021, Appendix 6, 4–11). However, in Norway, the statistical survey *Saminor II* showed that both Sámi women and men report higher exposure to interpersonal violence than non-Sámi individuals. The prevalence of violence was highest among Sámi women (Eriksen et al., 2015, 2021). In a recently published report commissioned by the Swedish Sámi Parliament and authored by Swedish scholar Monica Burman, a significant need for further research about violence is identified, particularly in the Swedish-Sámi context (Sámedigge, 2021, Appendix 6, 57–58, see also Burman 2017, 196–197).

However, in her analyses of Indigenous self-government and self-determination in Canada, Greenland, and Sábme, Kuokkanen theorises gendered violence in settler colonial contexts. Kuokkanen argues that a central tool of dispossession of Indigenous lands was 'the institution of a rigid, hierarchical, and heteropatriarchal gender binary' (2019, 5). She continues:

> The imposed colonial gender binary has served as an effective tool in political, popular, and military discourses of constructing Indigenous peoples as a deviation from the (also constructed) hegemonic heteronormativity of Euro-American society in order to legitimize their dispossession and assimilation politics. (2019, 5)

Accordingly, Kuokkanen concludes that Indigenous self-determination needs to go beyond the rights discourse in international law and in national legislation. As she explained to me in our conversation in 2015, it must include 'women's individual autonomy and self-determination over their own bodies and reproduction, and the right to be free from violence' (Conversation with Rauna Kuokkanen, 2015, cited in Knobblock & Kuokkanen, 2015, 276). In the book *Restructuring Relations. Indigenous Self-Determination, Governance and Gender* (2019), Kuokkanen suggests a conceptualization of self-determination as a

foundational value of integrity – i.e., the integrity of the land and the integrity of the body – that restructures all relations of domination on both collective and individual levels. As Kuokkanen states, 'there is simply no self-determination without Indigenous gender justice, and there is no Indigenous gender justice without restructuring all relations of domination' (2019, 234).

Sámi feminist scholarship has also attended to the influence of religion, which is interrelated with the issue of gendered violence. Laestadianism, a Lutheran pietistic revivalist movement, started in Sweden in the middle of the nineteenth century. It rapidly spread in Sábme and the Torne River Valley[46] and remains an integral part of life in many Northern communities (Heith, 2017, 9; Olsen, 2022). Sámi feminists (Dankertsen, 2020, 52–54; Kuokkanen, 2007a, 80–82; Valkonen & Wallenius-Korkalo, 2016) argue that the Laestadianism has contributed to strict gendered norms that regulate women's and girls' behaviours. Social taboos around sexuality have contributed to the 'culture of silence' where sexual violence is hard to address. Collective silence much also be understood in the context of a racialised stigma attached to minority and majority societies' inabilities to address gendered and sexual violence in culturally sensitive ways. Indeed, the Laestadian revival is part of the colonial Christianisation of Sábme and has structured society in conservative and patriarchal directions (Nylander, 2022). Nevertheless, Laestadianism has also fostered Sámi belonging and resilience. Particularly, Sámi tradition and beliefs have been channelled through Laestadianism. Sámi scholar Sanna Valkonen and Finnish scholar Sandra Wallenius-Korkalo (2015, 12) remind us that being a woman within Laestadianism is not a fixed subject position. For example, women negotiate and transgress Laestadian norms and boundaries through practices associated with Sámi natural religion.

## Gender, sexuality, and epistemicide

In conversation with Indigenous feminisms, Indigenous queer studies, and trans studies, Two-Spirit critique and studies of Indigenous men and masculinities remind us that gender and sexuality are not limited to the binary categories of women and men. They are (land-based) relations of fluidity and multiplicity

[46] The Torne Valley (Swedish: Tornedalen; Finnish: Tornionlaakso) is a transnational area around the Torne River. The region's cultural and linguistic heritage transcends Sweden and Finland's national borders.

expressed, enacted, and experienced by and across differently gendered bodies and experiences (Innes & Anderson, 2015a; Morgensen, 2016; Pyle, 2020; Rifkin, 2017b; Weasley, 2014). However, they also reference intersecting relations of power, as argued by the Indigenous feminist and decolonial feminist critique of colonial systems.

Notably, the Eurocentric notion of gender was central in the multi-level enactment of colonial violence and the epistemicide of Indigenous relational worldviews and knowledges. In other words, the colonial imposition of gender fundamentally impacted Indigenous selfhood and identities far beyond the spheres of sexuality and reproduction. The Argentinian philosopher María Lugones argues that 'the normativity that connected gender and civilization became intent on erasing community, ecological practices, knowledge of planting, of weaving, of the cosmos, and not only on changing and controlling reproductive and sexual practices' (Lugones, 2010, 745; see also Allen, 1992 [1986]; Oyewùmí, 1997).

In the seminal articles 'Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System' (2007) and 'Toward a Decolonial Feminism' (2010), Lugones argues that gender is a colonising invention – a tool for domination imposed by the European modern/colonial system. It is a binary and hierarchical system where humanity is separated from nature/the uncivilised realm and divided into two genders, the white man and the white woman, bound by compulsory heterosexuality. The first, the white man, was understood 'as subject/agent, fit for rule, for public life and ruling, a being of civilization, heterosexual, Christian, a being of mind and reason' (Lugones, 2010, 743). The latter, the white woman, was understood 'as someone who reproduced race and capital through her sexual purity, passivity, and being homebound in the service of the white, European, bourgeois man' (Lugones, 2010, 743). Lugones continues:

> [A] hierarchical, dichotomous distinction between human and non-human was imposed on the colonized in the service of Western man. It was accompanied by other dichotomous hierarchical distinctions, among them that between men and women. This distinction became a mark of the human and a mark of civilization. Only the civilized are men or women. (2010, 743)

In other words, racialised as not fully human, colonised subjects were positioned beyond the ideals of (white) masculinity and (white) femininity, relegated to the realms of animality and then recast as modified versions of 'men' and 'women' as this binary 'fit the processes of global, Eurocentered capitalism' (Lugones, 2010, 745). Ironically, the ideal embodied by white masculinity and femininity was

positioned as a civilisation's primary mark and its perceived lack thereof among the colonised, which ultimately is used to justify subordination (Lugones, 2010, 744).

Lugones work on the 'coloniality of gender' has, to my knowledge, so far not been engaged vis-a-vis the Sámi context. However, in 'Reading Margins: Colonial Encounters in Sápmi and Lenapehoking in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries' (2006), Swedish historian Gunlög Fur uses similar reasoning. Fur describes how colonial sources conceptualise Sámi individuals as threats against the perceived natural because they crossed or challenged gendered boundaries. Swedish fears for Sámi spirituality played into the depictions. Hence, their Indigeneity augmented their perceived liminality in the eyes of the Swedes. To Swedish authorities of the time, Fur argues, the Sámi represented 'categories of gender and perceptions of gender variance and sexuality that challenged deeply held ideas of religion, morality, and law' (2006, 495). The punishment for their transgressions included metaphorical and literal relegation to the realm beyond humanity and civilisation (as conceptualised by Swedish society).

In 1694, Swedish authorities were informed that a deceased individual known as Carl Lapp and married to a woman had a female body. After the discovery, Carl Lapp was denied a Christian burial, and the body was buried in the forest.[47] Fur argues that 'perceptions of Saami [. . .] lack of civility and proper distinctions between both sexes and social ranks' (2006, 498) may have played a part in the decision. After the birth of her child, a Sámi woman, Gunnila Jonsdotter, was not allowed to marry the father of her child, which she challenged. Shortly after this challenge, Gunnila Jonsdotter was accused of witchcraft, 'resulting from the Saami woman's supernatural powers' (Fur, 2006, 499). The Sámi community testified to her innocence by declaring that she had the powers to heal, not to destroy. Their testimonies, however, were deemed insufficient and Gunnila Jonsdotter was condemned to death or flogging and deportation from her mountain (Fur, 2006, 499).

Fur also analyses a quotation from Carl von Linné's journal written during his travels in Sábme in 1793. North of Ubmeje/Umeå, an area described as Styx (hell), Linné encountered an unnamed Sámi individual. At first, Linné could not decide whether the person was a man or a woman. Finally, however, having decided she was a woman, he described her in ways his contemporaries, Fur argues, would associate with the monstrous, the perverse, the uncivilised, and the

[47] Ironically, Fur writes that 'Swedish pastors had fought hard against Saami practices of burying their dead in the forest rather than in church burial grounds, and at the end of the seventeenth century the battle was far from over' (2006, 498).

primitive (2006, 511). Throughout his travel journal, Linné returns to his perception of indistinct boundaries between Sámi men and women, illustrated, for instance, by their choice of dress and sharing of household tasks. According to Fur, the examples he gave were all unacceptable conduct in Swedish society: '[their] reiteration emphasized the transgressive character of this marginal region' (2006, 513).

The knowledge about historical gender relations in Sábme is relatively limited. Hirvonen notes that one problem is that the primary written records consist of colonial sources focused on 'the activities of men' (1998/2008, 37). In addition, Sámi society has been impacted by majority societies for centuries, particularly by Christianity's 'dualistic notion of women as either good or evil' (Nylander, 2022, 448, 457). As a result, contemporary understandings of past gender and sexual expressions and hierarchies vary among Sámi feminist scholars and activists.

Finbog, for example, argues that '[o]f old, Sámi society regarded women and men as equals; their dynamic characterized by symmetrical and complimentary [sic!] domains, roles and tasks' (2020, 174). In a recently published social media post, Finbog suggests that historical notions of gender and sexuality in Sámi society were more fluid and diverse before the introduction of colonial heteropatriarchy. She proposes that the colonial erasure of Indigenous non-normative histories of gender and sexuality reproduces 'a false idea that same-sex practices and non-binary and/or fluid understandings of gender in Indigenous contexts are at odds with tradition' (Finbog, 2022). Consequently, Indigenous and queer are placed 'in a toxic dichotomy of colonial make' (Finbog, 2022). In other words, Indigenous culture, positioned as static, backward and 'dying' by settler colonial discourse, is constructed as the antithesis of queerness, positioned within the realm of political modernity (cf. Morgensen, 2012). Accordingly, Finbog argues, to celebrate Sámi queerness is to resist colonial heteropatriarchal elimination of the richness and diversity of Indigenous culture and traditions.

Others share Finbog's line of argumentation in the Sámi queer movement. For example, at the Sápmi Pride Parade in Jiellevárre in August 2022, one of the signs read 'Make Sápmi Queer Again!' (Garmeres, 2022). As such, the sign firmly centred queerness in Sámi histories and futurity. Moreover, in collaboration with the *duodjár* Anna-Stina Svakko, queer and non-binary Sámi engage in a project to develop non-binary *gábde* (Märak, 2020; Svakko, 2021). *Gábbde* [sing.] is *duodje* in the form of the traditional Sámi dress. A *gábbde* is a form of non-verbal communication of kinship, belonging, and social relations, a central symbol of Sáminess and 'Sámi cultural emancipation and political resistance' (Magga, 2022, 41). Indeed, by (re)imagining and (re)constructing the traditional Sámi dress,

queer and non-binary Sámi resist colonial erasure and transcend the colonial binaries of man/woman and Indigeneity/modernity, thus envisioning and creating Sámi queer and resurgent futures.

Like Finbog, Hirvonen emphasises the complementary system, arguing that the 'roles of women and men were complementary, which means that the genders were defined as different from each other in such a way that the differences complemented each other' and that '[i]n complementary relations, tasks are clearly divided between the genders' (1998/2008, 156; see also Hirvonen, 2007). Complementary systems are not necessarily hierarchical, Hirvonen notes. However, based on her analysis of colonial source materials and Sámi women's literary production, Hirvonen suggests that within the traditional Sámi system 'the woman was defined hierarchically as being below the man' (1998/2008, 162).

Eikjok, in turn, argues that the introduction of Western rationalities undermined Indigenous and feminine values of care, contributing to the subordination of nature and women:

> When Sámi society became integrated within the dominant society, it changed from one where women held a relatively strong position to one where the European masculine rationality prevailed. […] The scientific and liberal rationality of western modernity has marginalized the feminine (or feminist) and the Indigenous rationality of care, both for the earth and its creatures. This new rationality contributes to violence against nature and women, and oppresses feminine knowledge and resources in Indigenous communities. (2007, 116, 119)

Nevertheless, Eikjok advises to proceed with caution concerning arguments for historical gender equality in Sámi society. Instead, Eikjok forwards the understanding that the 'colonization of Indigenous societies strengthened the original patriarchal structures and, in introducing modern masculine power, overrode any non-patriarchal elements within Indigenous society' (2007, 116). From her experiences as a Sámi feminist activist, solely attributing gender oppression to colonialism may result in a 'repudiation of responsibility', which can 'render the voices and realities of Indigenous women invisible' (Eikjok, 2007, 116; cf. Dankertsen, 2020; Kuokkanen, 2007a, 73–76, 54–55 on the 'myth of the strong Sámi woman').

Eikjok's analysis aligns with feminist critiques situated in other Indigenous geopolitical contexts. For example, Indigenous feminist scholar Gina Starblanket (Cree/Salteaux) makes the following observation:

> The relationship between gender and memory [. . .] extends beyond issues of selective or incomplete depictions of history, but also relates to the ways in which these representations create conceptual boundaries around gender and Indigeneity that get reproduced on the contemporary political terrain of decolonization. For instance, consider the ways that the absence, complementarity or fluidity of gender roles in pre-contact society is invoked to attribute patriarchy exclusively to colonialism and thus show the lack of need of a contemporary gendered analysis in Indigenous context. (2017, 27)

To avoid dismissing the need for feminism in Sámi society through the inducement of a pre-colonial gender equal past, Eikjok suggests focusing on Indigenous women's experiences and perspectives to centre the lived realities in contemporary Sámi society (2007, 121).

In my research, participants discussed the degree of influence from majority society on Sámi gender relations and its implications for the conceptualisation of Sámi feminisms. For example, Sagka[48], quoted in the article 'Sámi Feminist Conversations', concludes that 'it becomes such a complex discussion in the Sámi context. And the question is – what is Sámi in it? What was ours before we got forced into something else?' (Conversation with Sagka, 2014 cited in Knobblock, 2022a, 540). By asking the question ('What was ours before we got forced into something else?'), Sagka opens up a decolonial feminist exploration of Sámi history, expressing a belief in a more considerable potential for more egalitarian relations of gender within pre-colonial Sámi societies.

Another participant, Biret, suggested that, historically, Sábme was queerer, linking it to her elderly male relatives' flexibility, gentleness, and tolerance shaped by lives in tune with nature: 'If you've lived a life close to nature, you're accepting. Norms do not govern you because you know things are constantly changing, just like the weather is always shifting' (Conversation with Biret, 2014). Instead, she primarily associated the devaluation of women with a Northern settler masculinity, which, tellingly, she described as a 'mining mentality' (Conversation with Biret, 2014). Similarly, Márjá conveyed experiences of Sámi acceptance towards different gendered expressions and identities, which she explained through a Sámi worldview based on the acceptance of all forms of life and conditions (Conversation with Márjá, 2017). Referring to the teachings of her *áhkku* (North Sámi: grandmother), she said, 'Like my *áhkku* said, "Well, you are who you are [. . .]". So, I believe there is an acceptance based on living close to

[48] Pseudonym.

nature. You accept, it's the same thing as with the weather, it is what it is. It's like the conditions of our lives' (Conversation with Márjá, 2017).

Simultaneously, participants were careful to avoid idealising past and present Sámi gender relations. First, as Sagka reflected, the fusion of gendered and colonial relations of power makes it hard to discern Sámi gender relations from colonial heteropatriarchy. Second, as the participant Aila[49] noted, the lack of Sámi resilience against the introduction of patriarchal elements, for example, through the Reindeer Grazing Acts in Sweden (cf. Amft, 2000), suggests that pre-existing Sámi patterns of gender inequality may have enabled their establishment: 'if you look at the reindeer husbandry legislation, it hasn't been beneficial for women [. . .] if we had had a gender-equal community, then indeed, we would have found ways to bypass it. But we haven't done that' (Conversation with Aila, 2014, cited in Knobblock, 2022a, 541).

However, participants also expressed how Swedish liberal notions of gender equality result in the misinterpretation of Sámi complementary practices as mere examples of a gendered division of labour, resulting in the devaluing of Sámi women's roles and contributions (Knobblock, 2022a, 540–543): 'Why do you disregard something because, traditionally, a woman is doing it? To me, that is Swedish feminism' (Conversation with Márjá, 2014, cited in Knobblock, 2022a, 541).

Last, within the context of gender, sexuality, and epistemicide, I want to highlight the work of Sámi artist Katarina Pirak Sikku. In the exhibition *Nammaláphán*[50] (2014; see also Pirak Sikku, 2016) at Bildmuseet in Ubmeje [Umeå], Sweden, Pirak Sikku explored Sámi intra-generational trauma due to Swedish scientific racism. Starting from the simple question 'Can you inherit grief?', Pirak Sikku's art displays the embodied and emotional impact of the subordination and othering of Sámi people in Swedish research during the first part of the twentieth century. Her works are deeply personal, yet manifest collective pain. By thinking from Sámi subject positions and experiences, she challenges colonial hierachical dichotomies (cf. Lugones, 2010, 743) as manifested through scientific racism. In so doing, she unpacks the category of race as "scientific" dehumanising discourses and practices on both psychological and corporeal scales. Through the stories of Sámi women elders' encounters with race biologists, especially through *duodje* that celebrates the women's distinct personalities and creativity, photographs, and paintings, she interprets Sámi

[49] Pseudonym.

[50] *Nammaláhpán* means 'lost its name' in Lule Sámi.

subjectivities that are impacted by but resistant to colonial power, thereby questioning distinctions of civilised/non-civilised and culture/nature.

Two poignant examples from the exhibition are Pirak Sikku's self-portraits. First, there is a drawing that mirrors a photo series kept in the archives at Uppsala University, Sweden. These series, photographed by the race biologists, show differently positioned naked Sámi women. At first, Pirak Sikku considered drawing an existing photo series. However, as she explained when I visited her exhibition, she did not want to reproduce the abuse inflicted by scientific racism on the photographed women. Hence, Pirak Sikku decided to place herself in their stead and photograph and draw herself. Through her methodology, she explored her feelings towards the act, its history, and its intragenerational consequences. However, she remained aware that her subject position as a contemporary artist voluntarily placing herself in front of the camera differed from the photographed women of past generations.

The second example is in the form of a photograph. With a determined and dignified composure and dressed in a beautiful Lule Sámi *gábbde*, Pirak Sikku positioned herself in profile in the frame. Over her head, she holds a measuring tool used by the race biologists for their scientific racist measuring of the Sámi people, including Pirak Sikku's relatives. The audience is left with a powerful challenge to the supposed non-civilisation and primitivism of the Sámi society, as represented here by Pirak Sikku herself, and the civility and development of the Swedish society to which the race biologists belonged.

## Decolonisation, resurgence, and gender

At the core of the terms decolonisation and resurgence lies a critical examination and dismantling of colonial structures of power and a (re)imagination and (re)creation of the world grounded in Indigenous experiences and world-making practices. In line with Jeff Corntassel (Cherokee Nation), I understand decolonisation and resurgence as 'interrelated actions and strategies that inform our pathways to resistance and freedom' (2012, 89). Sometimes, the difference between the two concepts is mainly on the terminology level, as decolonisation, similar to resurgence, foreground Indigenous alternatives. As foregrounded by Smith, decolonisation 'must offer a language of possibility, a way out of colonialism, [. . .] that language of possibility exists within our own alternative, oppositional ways of knowing' (2012, 204). Other times, they describe slightly different yet complementary (cf. Nylander, 2022, 49) strategies. For example,

decolonisation more strongly emphasises the critique and dismantling of colonial power, while resurgence centres on Indigenous epistemes, values, and practices.[51] Reflecting my need to use both strategies, my work is situated in the borderland between decolonisation and resurgence (cf. Knobblock & Stubberud, 2021, 10). Increasingly, however, the Indigenous feminist research field and movement have gravitated towards resurgence as an analytical concept and practice, impacting my thinking, approach, and choice of conceptualisation.

Decolonisation is a process of undoing and divesting settler colonial power that reclaims Indigenous rights and sovereignty in a multiplicity of areas: material, political, cultural, psychological, and epistemic (Simpson, 2017, 191–198; Smith, 2012). Kuokkanen explains:

> For indigenous peoples who remain colonized, decolonization refers to the present struggle for political but also intellectual, economical, and cultural self-determination; it includes reclaiming their rights to autonomy, land, identity, language, and worldviews. (2007b, 143)

Of course, the specific meanings and forms of decolonisation are discussed and contested. In the article 'Decolonization is not a metaphor' (2012), Tuck and Yang critique appropriation and metaphorization of the term within education and the social sciences. They argue that decolonisation is fundamentally unsettling and even incommensurable with many other social justice projects as, by necessity, it entails the return and resurrection of Indigenous land and life-worlds:

> Decolonization [. . .] is not converting Indigenous politics to a Western doctrine of liberation; it is not a philanthropic process of 'helping' the at-risk and alleviating suffering; it is not a generic term for struggle against oppressive conditions and outcomes. The broad umbrella of social justice may have room underneath for all of these efforts. By contrast, decolonization specifically requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life. Decolonization is not a metonym for social justice. (Tuck & Yang, 2012, 21)

Kuokkanen, however, emphasises that decolonisation needs to be negotiated and contextualised as 'history has shown that it means different things to different people' (2007b, 144). Accordingly, she embraces work towards social justice on

[51] Indeed, one problem with the term decolonisation is its inherent connection to the colonial structures from which Indigenous struggles seek to delink. Consequently, the word decolonisation, in a sense, fails to conceptualise Indigenous liberation beyond the deconstruction and dismantling of colonial power (Sandström, 2020a, 195).

different levels and areas of social life while remaining attentive to 'the subtle differences between the strategies and objectives of decolonization on the one hand, and projects for redressing social inequalities on the other' (Kuokkanen, 2007b, 143).

For example, in the article 'Sámi Feminist Conversations', I argue that Sámi feminist participants emphasise that decolonisation includes the struggle for rights to land, water, and land-based practices intertwined with attention to gendered, sexualised, and racialised inequalities (2022a, 543–547). In other words, Sámi feminism is conceptualised as an integral part of decolonisation, contributing to the constructive change and healing of Sámi society (Dankertsen, 2020, 104), (re)creating 'good relations within interlinked human and natural lifeworlds' (Knobblock, 2022a, 543).

Compared to decolonisation, resurgence[52] captures positions and processes that more strongly emanate from and generate Indigenous life-worlds. According to Corntassel, resurgence captures 're-localised, community-centered actions premised on reconnecting with land, culture and community' (2012, 91–92; see also Coulthard & Simpson, 2016, 254). The resurgent political and cultural turn, grounded in Indigenous visions of freedom and autonomy, opens a space towards 'future-oriented political action and dialogue within Indigenous communities' (Starblanket, 2017, 22). However, as Starblanket argues, the turn 'inward' towards (re)remembering and revitalisation of Indigenous ways and land-based practices risks reinforcing gendered essentialism and gendered notions of cultural authenticity. In other words, we must remain attentive to diverse experiences and power relations, including every day and structural gendered and colonial violence. Otherwise, we risk (re)silencing and (re)marginalising Indigenous women and LGBTQ2-people and circumscribing our full participation in the resurgence process:

> The internal focus of the resurgence movement can be an incredible strength if our understanding of empowerment includes a process of engaging in honest and open discussions surrounding the historical and ongoing relationship between gender, sexuality, and oppression. (Starblanket, 2017, 28)

[52] Another similar concept is Indigenisation, which captures 'a process of making something more native' (Nylander, 2022, 449). Finbog suggests that Indigenisation is a process 'whereby the significance and application of Indigenous knowledge is asserted into academia, but from a place of Indigenous sovereignty, and centred in Indigenous values, practices, and knowledge systems' (2020, 52).

For example, in the book *As We Have Always Done. Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (2017), the writer, scholar, and activist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg) argues for resistance against settler colonialism through Indigenous intelligence – i.e., refusing to think and act through the logic of the settler-colonial society and to locate radical resurgence as uniquely Indigenous theorising, thinking, and political organising. She states that resurgence has to 'come from within Indigenous thought systems, intelligence systems that are continually generated in relationship to place' (Simpson, 2017, 16).

Moreover, Simpson firmly centres gender and sexuality within the resurgence project. Linking her life experiences with an analysis of gendered settler colonialism, she theorises from her position as *kwe*: 'woman within the spectrum of genders in Nishnaabemowin' (Simpson, 2017, 29). Notably, *kwe* differs from 'woman' because it 'does not conform to the rigidity of the colonial gender binary, nor is kwe essentialized' (Simpson, 2017, 29). Especially, Simpson critiques the gendered dispossession of *kwe* and queer-, trans-, and Two-Spirit-people. She forwards a radical resurgence project that centres the reattachment to land and to networks of relationships and ethical practices (Simpson, 2017, 39–54).

Another Indigenous feminist body of scholarship related to resurgence is Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez work on body land. Body land (*cuerpo-territorio*) has been developed as a resistance slogan within Indigenous feminist movements in Abya Yala[53] to express the ontological relation between humans, especially Indigenous women, and the land. As an analytical concept, Altamirano-Jiménez suggests body land captures the interrelated consequences of colonial and extractive violence made to Indigenous territories and the violence enacted upon humans and nonhuman beings. In the specific context of Oaxaca, Mexico, particularly Indigenous women and their children tend to bear the brunt of interventions, argues Altamirano-Jimenéz, in the form of gendered violence and undermined possibilities for subsistence because of the destruction of land and water. However, Indigenous women are at the forefront of the struggle to protect their related bodies and territories. Thus, body land is also an act of refusal against dispossession grounded in Indigenous worldviews (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2021a, 2021b).

[53] 'Abya–Yala, which signifies 'land in full maturity', is the name coined by the kunas of Panama and widely adopted by indigenous peoples in 1992 to refer to the territory and the indigenous nations of the Americas' (Walsh, 2011, 5). Compare this to Turtle Island (The North American continent for some Indigenous peoples) and Aotearoa (the Maori-language name for New Zealand).

Similarly, my article 'Sámi feminists against mines' (2022b) centres on the link between gender, land, and bodies through exploration of the knowledges evolving from Sámi feminists engaged in the anti-mining struggle. The text includes not only a critical decolonial analysis of the nexus of contemporary Swedish settler colonial intervention and transnational capitalist exploitation of Sámi land but also Sámi resurgence as alternatives in the form of relational epistemes and practices. Moreover, following Altamirano-Jiménez (2021a, 2021b), Kuokkanen, cited in Knobblock & Kuokkanen (2015) and Simpson (2017), I centre on Sámi women and non-binary people's knowledges within Sámi decolonial and resurgent struggles against mining. Indeed, as Sagka observes, different bodies are positioned differently within intersecting power relations. Describing the stark difference between the mining advocates and their adversaries, she says, 'it is so fascinating with the mining issue that so many older white men from a certain class are coming and on the other side of the barricade stands a group of Sámi mothers of small children' (Conversation with Sagka, 2014, cited in Knobblock, 2022b, 13).

From within a Sámi knowledge system, mining entails fracturing the relational web of connection. Consequently, it represents a multi-generational threat against the survival of Sámi land and life-worlds. However, I suggest that my conversational partners and Ti/Mimie[54] Märak, through their spoken-word poem 'Us Local People', argue for an episteme that challenges the settler colonial and capitalist frameworks of the Swedish state and the mining industry. Their worldviews emphasise the interconnectedness of land, nature, and people and the necessity of protecting our interlinked life-worlds today and in the future.

In Sábme, the decolonial and resurgent effort to reimagine and reconstruct the world is also prominent in the arts (Kramvig, 2020, 96). Historically, art has played a fundamental role within the Sámi movement and continues to do so in present-day struggles for Sámi decolonisation and resurgence (Sandström, 2020a). Sandström, for example, argues that Sámi contemporary artivists[55] forward the idea that settler-colonial and heteropatriarchal logics operate within a binary and hierarchical system. Consequently, the land is separated from humankind and

[54] Timimie Märak has changed their name and pronoun since the performance in 2013 – from Mimie/she to Timimie/they. Following Sandström and her deliberation with Timimie Märak (2020a, 61), in the context of the specific poem, I write the name Ti/Mimie to reflect that they created and first performed the poem using the name Mimie.

[55] Sandström engages with four contemporary Sámi artists/activists: Ti/Mimie Märak, Jörgen Stenberg, Anders Sunna, and Jenni Laiti (including Suohpanterror) (2020a, VII).

subordinate to human interests similar to how gender and race are constructed according to logics of difference and stratification (Sandström, 2020a, 178–181).

Instead, artivists use a strategy of generative refusal[56], an act of saying no to and turning away from colonialism, which opens for the generation of Sámi sovereignty as Sámi rights to the land and Sámi land-based knowledges and practice. For example, in the Ellos Deatnu[57] movement, artivists create mental and material spaces where they treat the land as a sovereign, conscious, and sentient being. Essentially, such acts are anchored in *Árbbediehto* – Sámi Traditional Knowledge – and Sámi values of reciprocity and relatedness (Sandström, 2020a, 196–216). Furthermore, as Kuokkanen argues in 'Ellos Deatnu and Post-State Indigenous Feminist Sovereignty', the movement transcends the patriarchal settler-colonial state by 'articulating and embodying explicitly anti-oppressive alternatives for Indigenous governance' (2021, 311). Such alternatives are based on the *sijdda*[58], a traditional Sámi social and political organisation. These alternatives, Kuokkanen notes, include 'consensus and collaborative decision-making; spiritual leadership, and ceremony; art and practical creativity, gift economies, and relationship-building with people and the land' (2021, 311).

Relatedly, Finbog's analysis of *duodje* is partly done using art of Sámi artist Outi Pieski (2020, 143–144). In collaboration with Finnish archaeologist Eeva-Kristiina Harlin, Pieski has developed a project about *ládjogáhpir*, a Sámi woman's headdress. The *ládjogáhpir* was abandoned in the nineteenth century, they suggest, due to the weakening of Sámi women's positions as a result of the heteropatriarchal colonial ascendancy, especially in interplay with the Christianisation process and Laestadian influence (Harlin & Pieski, 2020). As Nylander makes a similar observation in her article 'Ládjogáhpir rematriated':

> Along with the new religious movements, new values and meanings were introduced into Sámi society, and they influenced women's self-understanding and

[56] For an extended discussion of Indigenous political refusal, see A. Simpson (2014).

[57] 'Ellos Deatnu!' translates to 'Long live Deatnu!'. In 2017, a group of young Sámi people set up a camp and declared a moratorium on an island in the Deatnu/Tana River near the town of Ohcejoka/Utsjoki in Sábme: '[Ellos Deatnu] emerged to resist, challenge, and undermine the assertions of sovereignty of Nordic settler colonial states in general and the 2017 Deatnu Fishing Agreement in particular' (Kuokkanen, 2021, 310; see also Nykönen, 2022).

[58] A *sijdda* 'comprises of a small number of extended families and their territories' (Kuokkanen, 2021, 319). Historically, Sábme was divided into many *sijdda*, which 'allocated lands and resources to the use of individual families' (Kuokkanen, 2021, 319). For further discussion of *sijdda* and Sámi self-determination, see Nilsson (2021).

> Sámi cultural values and practices [. . .] The Sámi way of dressing – strong colours and accessories such as silver – were considered worldly, flashy, and sinful. [. . .] This probably strongly influenced the wearing of the ládjogáhpir. (2022, 453)

Unfortunately, Nylander writes, the *ládjogáhpir*'s original symbolism may forever be lost to history although 'still contains spiritual aspects based on Sámi cosmology, in which sacred elements are a part of everyday life and fluctuate through the whole of existence' (2022, 454). Today, the making and wearing of the *ladjogáhpir* acquire new and subversive meaning. It is a rematriation[59] process linking us with the strengths of our foremothers, thus representing a form of decolonised feminism. Through the *ládjogáhpir*, Sámi women collectively reclaim power, pride, and belonging as well as Sámi knowledge inherent within the practice of *duodje* (Nylander, 2022, 454–460)

In two of the articles included in the dissertation, I (and in the case of one of them, my co-author, Kven and Sámi feminist scholar Elisabeth Stubberud) use a literary writing style to convey a more open-ended and emotional way of knowing (cf. Gunaratnam, 2007, 274). Inspired by Sámi artistic practices, we seek to explore and communicate alternative histories and epistemes moving towards decolonisation and resurgence. The article 'Att skriva från gränslandet: Dekoloniala berättelser från Sábme' ['Writing from the Borderland: Decolonial Stories from Sábme'] (Knobblock, 2021) centres on embodied and localised stories in Sábme. Drawing on Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing, the article explores my Sámi and Tornedalian family histories within a settler-colonial structure and assimilatory policies towards minorities. Specifically, the context is the interrelated mining towns of Gällivare and Malmberget. I foreground analytical themes such as loss, silences, dispossession, decolonial resistance, and (re)imagination. Furthermore, I suggest that embodied narratives may express diversity, difference, and complexity. As such, they may contribute to inclusive decolonial processes and knowledge production.

In 'Bortom gränserna. Ett brevsamtal om språk, tillhörighet och dekolonisering' ['Beyond Borders. A Conversation in Letters on Language, Belonging and Decolonisation'] (2021), Elisabeth Stubberud and I explore forms of inquiry based on Indigenous relational epistemes. Through a co-authored conversation in letters, we learn with one another through dialogue about our lived experiences of Sámi and Kven/Tornedalian belonging, decolonisation, and feminism. Our interchange focuses on embodied and affective minority

[59] Rematriation is 'the reclaiming of ancestral remains, spirituality, culture, knowledge and resources, instead of the more patriarchally associated repatriation' (Nylander, 2022, 448).

experiences, especially connections to land and communities to heal and re-create relations. We move across interconnected analytical themes: language, place, belonging, reproduction, and the in-between spaces of academia and social and geographical spaces of origin.

At the end of our article, we discuss reproduction and decolonisation. In a letter to me on 27 September 2020, Stubberud writes:

> [W]e need alternative strategies for decolonisation that are less linked to reproduction. Not only for people like me who embody the queer 'dead-end' but also for people with children who are left with a weighty responsibility. Maybe cultural and linguistic survival shouldn't be so dependent on reproduction. I believe collectivity is of central importance. Where we have a community or can create a community is where we can recreate our languages and cultures, support each other, find or practice to find our inherent strength together, and speak up in a common voice about our demands and needs to authorities. It's not your responsibility to speak Sámi to your children, but maybe it's your responsibility to introduce them to a collectivity, an 'us', where the language exists as a possibility. (Stubberud in Knobblock & Stubberud, 2021, 20–21)

Writing from her location as a queer Kven and Sámi scholar and activist, Elisabeth critically reflects on individual and collective responsibilities and the production of boundaries. Furthermore, she forwards non-exclusionary alternatives for the decolonial struggle that centre on creating collectivities and communities of struggle rather than on biological reproduction. Hence, her writing exemplifies a Sámi queer feminist re-imagining of the decolonial project and Sámi survivance (cf. Vizenor, 1999).

# Methodological location: Indigenous epistemes and methodologies

Methodologically, my research can be located within Indigenous and decolonial intellectual traditions, which strive to de-centre the hegemony of the Western/modern rationale within academia. These critical interventions foreground the centrality of knowledge production within colonial ascendancy and rule, including the intentional suppression and subjugation of Indigenous histories, narratives, values, and worldviews (Tlostanova et al., 2019, 291; see also Smith, 2012). Instead, these contributions foreground 'the plurality of knowledge' (Santos, 2014) within the pluriverse, 'the partially connected unfolding of worlds' (Blaser, 2012, 55; see also Valkonen et al. 2022, 2–3). In other words, they argue for a heterogeneous understanding of the world(s) as being constituted through diverse knowledge systems, values, and experiences (Chakrabarty, 2008). Centrally, they underline the imperative to delink from the Western canon (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018) and advance 'other modes of thinking and being in the world [. . .] in their attempts to build a different conceptual apparatus to explain the world and launch an agency to change it' (Tlostanova et al., 2019, 290).

In response to the many times deeply unethical Western research practices that have intrinsically subjugated and dispossessed Indigenous peoples worldwide, Indigenous methodologies forward the locations of Indigenous peoples for creating inclusive, emancipatory, and transformative research. At the core of Indigenous methodologies lie a commitment to foreground Indigenous alternatives – i.e., ways of (re)imagining and (re)constructing the world beyond the European/modern rationality, racialised difference, and settler-colonial subjugation of Indigenous land, people, and life-worlds (Chilisa, 2011; Kovach, 2009; Porsanger, 2004; Smith, 2012). Below, I explain Indigenous epistemes – Indigenous worldviews and knowledge systems grounded in a relational understanding of the world transcending the human/nonhuman-split. Embedded

in my discussion of Indigenous epistemes, I also put forward 'related knowledges' as a way to conceptualise Indigenous feminist inquiry.

Then, situating my dissertation within Indigenous epistemes, I reflect on my location within the production of knowledge – the 'literal and metaphorical places' (Koobak & Thapar-Björkert, 2014, 47) from which I speak and write about Sámi feminisms. Next, I present and explain the two main strands of my written-weave, or put differently, my two main methodological approaches in the dissertation's articles. I conceptualise these as learning in conversations and *mujttalit* – storytelling and remembering, respectively. Finally, I reflect on my research's geographical and linguistic locations and consider research ethics.

## Indigenous epistemes

Indigenous scholars argue that Indigenous peoples, on a collective level, have specific ways of knowing, being, and doing (Martin & Mirrabopa, 2003) – i.e., epistemes. Moreover, these epistemes differ substantially from the worldviews and practices of colonising societies, for example, concerning conceptions of time, space, and subjectivity (Moreton-Robinson, 2017; Rifkin, 2017a; Turner, 2006). Kuokkanen makes the following claim:

> While recognizing that indigenous peoples are not homogeneous even internally and that their cultures, histories and socio-economic circumstances are not the same, I maintain that underpinning these apparent differences is a set of shared and common perceptions and conceptions of the world related to ways of life, cultural and social practices and discourses that foreground and necessitate an intimate relationship with the natural environment. (2008, 65)

Kuokkanen conceptualises an episteme as a 'system of knowledge, way of thinking, worldview or traditional philosophy' (Kuokkanen, 2007b, 57) that are 'the invisible principles according to which a society functions' (Kuokkanen, 2017, 314), which we are often socialised into early in life (cf. Balto, 2005). This definition is broader than the concept of epistemology within many Western philosophical discourses, which 'usually denotes the (theoretical) study of knowledge or (philosophical) theories, definitions, and identifications of knowledge' (Kuokkanen, 2007b, 8). Kuokkanen develops her understanding of the concept of 'episteme' in dialogue with French philosopher Michel Foucault's conceptualisation in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969/2002): '[episteme is] the

totality of relations that can be discovered, for a given period, between the sciences when one analyses them at the level of discursive regularities [. . .] it is what, in the positivity of discursive practices, makes possible the existence of epistemological figures and sciences' (1969/2002, 211). However, Kuokkanen argues, her conceptualisation differs in that she suggests the existence of 'concurrent and parallel epistemes based in different discursive practices, value systems, assumptions about the world, and perceptions of knowledge' (2007b, 58) during the same historical period.

Indigenous relational epistemes, advance an interconnectedness between land, nature, and people that carries with it specific social, cultural, and ecological responsibilities (Nilsson, 2021, 15–18, 210–212):

> [T]he world as a whole comprises an infinite web of relationships, which extend and are incorporated into the entire social condition of the individual. Social ties apply to everyone and everything, including the land, which is considered a living, conscious entity. People are related to their physical and natural surroundings through their genealogies, their oral traditions, and their personal and collective experiences with certain locations. (Kuokkanen, 2007b, 32)

Simpson provides a similar explanation. Within Nisnaabeg ontology, the world is 'a non-linear, overlapping, emergent and responsive network of relationships of deep reciprocity, intimate and global interconnection and interdependence, that spirals across time and space' (2017, 24). Indigenous homelands are central to Indigenous peoples' peoplehood, sovereignty, and survival due to their located and place-specific interrelations with traditional territories (TallBear, 2017a, 185). For Kuokkanen,

> survival does not imply only physical sustenance and an ability or right to practice certain livelihoods, but that the very existence of a distinct people with a culture, knowledge, language, worldview and value and knowledge systems is dependent on the land with which there has been a historical connection and continuity for generations. (2004b, 82)

Accordingly, within Indigenous epistemes, identity can be conceptualised as 'the product of a co-constitution of human and nonhuman communities' (TallBear, 2017a, 185). More to the point, Indigenous peoples emphasise their "'emergence as particular cultural and language groups in *social and cultural relation* with nonhumans of all kind – land formations, nonhuman animals, plants, and the elements in very particular places – their 'homelands' or 'traditional territories', for example' (TallBear, 2017a, 186). In her understanding of nonhuman life,

TallBear includes entities beyond biological life, such as stones and metals. Importantly, she also enfolds 'spirits or souls into descriptions of the beingness of nonhumans' (TallBear, 2017a, 191). Likewise, Valkonen et al. argue that the environment, being inseparable from the Sámi social world, encompasses 'the animals, earth, air, water, weather, sacred sites, the cycles of the year – all of which are knowing and acting subjects, co-constituting each other' (2022, 6).

In other words, Indigenous frameworks, including Sámi frameworks, are relational, recognising 'the co-constitutive entanglements between the material and the immaterial – that is, indigenous peoples' social relations also with 'spirit' beings (for lack of a better term)' (TallBear, 2017a, 192). Thus, as TallBear asks, 'what insights are added by being receptive or seeking knowledge about the nonhuman world brought to us by spirits – relations that science may never see or measure – in dreams or ceremonies?' (2017a, 194). TallBear's question may appear highly radical to some academic traditions. However, it is an essential query if we want to engage seriously in the decolonisation of knowledges in pluriversal worlds.

## Related knowledges

Indigenous peoples worldwide, it is argued, share the experiences of colonialism, the denial of their sovereignty and rights to land and culture. Thus, as colonised peoples, they have a different social position than privileged groups within the regimes of colonial power. Hence, their specific location entails distinct standpoints and understandings, especially regarding colonial and racist oppression. This argument parallels feminist standpoint theorisations of societal margins and oppressed groups' life-experiences as productive locations for feminist analysis, particularly for analysis of power relations (cf. Harding, 1995; Harding, 2004a; hooks, 1989).[60]

However, in the article 'Towards an Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory: A Methodological Tool' (2013), Goenpul scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson argues that a relational understanding of the social and the self distinguishes Indigenous research paradigms from feminist standpoint theory – they are neither based on a 'body/earth split' (2013, 335) nor on a 'definition of the self as multiple, becoming, and unfixed' (2013, 336). Hence, while, for example, feminist standpoint theory usually sees the self as historically and socially constituted (cf. Harding, 2004a), Moreton-Robinson argues that for Indigenous

[60] For a collection of central contributions to feminist standpoint theory, see Harding (2004b).

people, the self and the social are primarily constituted through interconnected relations to land and human and nonhuman kinship. In a later article, Moreton-Robinson makes this clarification: 'The social is constituted by our histories, our culturally embodied knowledges and life force that connects us to our respective lands, our creators, all living entities and our ancestors' (2017, 71).

Similar to Indigenous epistemes, feminist standpoint theory has radically challenged 'the abstract, rationalistic, and universal image of the scientific enterprise' (Narayan, 1989/2004, 213). For example, theorist of science Donna Haraway criticises doing the 'god trick of seeing everything from nowhere' (1988/2004, 86). The god trick entails adopting an all-knowing and disembodied position from which you claim to have the definitive and objective truth[61] (Haraway, 1988/2004). Such a position, Haraway argues, is always illusory. Research is not an innocent practice but is always socially and politically embedded. Instead, Haraway argues that '[f]eminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and the splitting of subject and object. In this way we might become answerable for what we learn how to see' (1988/2004, 87). Neither a positivist nor a relativist position, situated knowledges entail 'location, embodiment, and partial perspective' (Haraway, 1988/2004, 89). Thus, Haraway does not argue that all perspectives and positions are equally valid. Instead, she argues that it matters from where and how you make knowledge claims (Haraway, 1988/2004, 91).

Haraway's conceptualisations of 'situated knowledges' and 'partial perspectives' have profoundly influenced feminist epistemologies. Furthermore, admittedly, her line of reasoning closely aligns with Indigenous epistemes. Accordingly, her framework and intellectual language have been both productive and valuable for Indigenous feminist scholars (cf. Öhman, 2017; TallBear, 2017b). Indeed, to situate yourself is 'congruent with a [Indigenous] knowledge system that tells us that we can only interpret the world from our experience' (Kovach, 2009, 110). In other words, situatedness and partiality have bestowed Indigenous scholars with ways to articulate, translate, and convey Indigenous epistemes within and across feminist scholarship. Nonetheless, I suggest that Haraway's 'situated knowledges' may not be the most accurate conceptualisation in an Indigenous epistemic context. Rather, and paraphrasing Haraway as a way to acknowledge her valuable contribution, I propose 'related knowledges' as an alternative

[61] The doing of the god trick is exemplified by Swedish ethnographers' presentation of their uninformed writing as the 'literary and scientific "truth about the Lapps"' (Stenberg & Lindholm, 1920, 8).

conceptualisation that better resonates with Indigenous epistemes and Indigenous feminist contributions.

By *related knowledges*, I indicate knowledges made in intimate and place-specific relations with the land, humans, and nonhuman others. Following TallBear, by nonhuman, I enfold vitality in and beyond a biological meaning, including life and ways to relate across the knowing/belief divide (TallBear, 2017a, 186, 191). Such knowledges transcend the category splits of mind/body, human/nonhuman, and nature/culture by centring on interwovenness instead of separation. They also encompass the interrelatedness of knowledges made in interacting spheres, going beyond yet including academia. They are historically and socially embedded just as they are embedded in the land. Consequently, they recognise power in knowledge production and forward located and ethically response-able inquiry, acknowledging all our relations.

Furthermore, related knowledges foreground the specificity and relatedness of Indigenous epistemes as distinct cosmologies in conversation with other trajectories of inquiry, for example, other anti-colonial and feminist traditions (cf. TallBear, 2017a). Hence, related knowledges recognise the existence of pluriversal understandings and world-making practices (cf. Blaser, 2012, 55; Valkonen et al. 2022, 2-3), not the one, which, when engaged in dialogue and deliberation across differences, may enable moves towards more life- and kinship-affirming ways of (re)imagining and (re)creating the world, foregrounding 'survival on local and planetary scales' (Tlostanova et al., 2019, 294).

## Sámi epistemes

Sámi epistemes manifest, among other things, in beliefs and practices that convey 'porous and indeterminate boundaries between the human and the natural worlds' (Kuokkanen, 2007b, 33). An example is gift-giving to the land, known as siejdde practices (Andersson, 2021; Bäckman, 1975; Kuokkanen, 2007b, 34). Likewise, Sámi child-rearing and pedagogies (Balto, 2005), storytelling, and Árbbediehto (Traditional Knowledge), at once theory and practical application, convey and transmit Sámi worldviews (Gaski, 2019; Jernsletten, 2011, 99–100; Porsanger & Guttorm, 2011). Sámi epistemes also underlie the conscious commitment to long-term and sustainable land use (Nilsson, 2021, 17–18) and are expressed through the Sámi languages. In the article 'Verbing meacchi; Living Sámi lands' (2020), Sámi scholars Solveig Joks, Liv Østmo, and British scholar John Law analyse the meaning of the North Sámi word meacchi and contrast it with Norwegian and English mistranslations, such as 'utmark' or 'wilderness'. Meachit

(plural), they argue, are 'practical places, uncertain but productive social relations with lively and morally sensible human and non-human beings in which there is no division between nature (Norwegian natur) and culture (kultur)' (Joks et al., 2020, 305; see also Valkonen et al., 2022, 1–3). On this note, Finbog aptly reflects on the North Sámi language of her father:

> In the language of my áhčči, [father] there is no word that is equivalent to the Western concept of nature. Instead, a variety of terms are used depending on context and relation. The term *luondu* for example, implies nature as in the character of something or someone; *olbmo luondu* meaning the nature of a human, or the environment being expressed as *luonddubiras*. On the other hand, when speaking of a geographical area or territories the word *meachcci* is used. And even then, the meaning of *meachcci* depends on which practice the area is associated with. Sámi concept of 'nature' is as such relational, defining relationships rather than any one definitive thing. (2021)

Arguably, Indigenous understandings of relations across the knowing/belief divide may be the primary example of the non-translate-ableness of Indigenous epistemes into Western intellectual language. However, possibly, poetry may be a way to transfer some of the evasive experiences that are out of reach for most rational scientific accounts. As argued by the sociologist and poet Yasmin Gunaratnam, artistic expressions can evoke the 'non-measurable; the contradictory; that which exceeds identity categories (Adorno, 1984); the "indescribable and the undiscussable" (Bar-on, 1999); and the hopefulness of a "not yet" (Bloch, 1986)' (2007, 274) Consider, for instance, the expression of a Sámi relational episteme in a poem by Áillohaš-Nils-Aslak Valkeapää:

> We still did not erect our lávvu
> without the spirit's permission
> moved lávvu if it chanced to be
> placed on a trail
> And when we left our winter camp
> we apologized if we had acted
> wrong
> and thanked the camp because it
> had fed us and our reindeer
> And when we came to the summer camp

> Some of us dressed in red gáktis[62]
> adorned ourselves
> offered a libation as well to your
> light beautiful camp
> and asked it to open its embrace
> for protection once again. (1994, n.p.)[63]

A more contemporary poetic example is 'The Saami Manifesto' performed the 6 February 2015 in Jåhkåmåkke by a group of artivists: Anders Sunna, Jenni Laiti, Niillas Holmberg, Max Mackhe, Maxida Märak, and Ti/Mimie Märak. Later, introduced and contextualised by Holmberg and Laiti, the manifesto was translated into English and published on the homepage of Idle No More, an Indigenous movement founded in Canada:

> Because everything begins and ends with Eanan, mother, land. Eanan is the base for everything. Eanan is the question and the answer. Nothing defines us better than her. Our survival depends on her. It is our responsibility to protect, respect and take care of our mother, so that we, and all the generations to come can live as one with her. Reconnected. (Holmberg & Laiti, n.d.)

Indeed, in 'Sámi feminists against mines' (2022b), the participants in my research express a kindred relational understanding of the self, the social, and the land. For example, Biret[64] says, 'we are all one with everything' (Conversation with Biret, 2014, cited in Knobblock, 2022b, 16). Likewise, Sire[65] explains that she sees 'no way for us to separate ourselves from the land' (Conversation with Sire, 2014, cited in Knobblock, 2022b, 17). Here, Sire refers to the particular part of Sámi land to which she is related and where her family and ancestors have lived with relationally for centuries. Moreover, to Sire, the interrelation with the land is practical and embodied in a sense that goes beyond written languages and cartographies:

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[62] North Sámi, Sámi traditional clothing. Compare *gábbde* in Lule Sámi.

[63] Valkeapää's poem is cited in Kuokkanen (2007b, 34). Kuokkanen writes regarding her inclusion of uncommented poetry in the margins of her book *Reshaping the University,* 'I do not assume that these excerpts represent authentic voices of the native informant; I do hope that they offer a mode of theorizing on epistemic ignorance that engages the reader at levels that conventional, hegemonic discourses cannot' (2007b, xxi).

[64] Pseudonym.

[65] Pseudonym.

*Ina:* Can you explain more about what you mean when you say that you cannot apply a theoretical book on the land?

*Sire:* I mean, to me, it's so fundamentally practical. [. . .] It's so physical and practical in a fundamentally different sense from everything I was taught at school. [. . .] You can't replace it with a book or map. [. . .] You have to be present, learn, and see.

*Ina:* By seeing and being?

*Sire:* You have to be present. If you're not, then you cannot learn. And I believe that is the essence; it's physical. You can't convey it through words. So, I have to be it and at the moment. (Conversation with Sire, 2014)

Biret and Sire's knowledge suggests that Sámi feminists contribute to the Indigenous feminist understandings of, in my conceptualisation, 'related knowledges', as exemplified by Moreton-Robinson's (2013) and TallBear's (2017a) theorisations from the Aboriginal and Dakota feminist contexts, respectively.

## Learning from Indigenous epistemes

Discussing Indigenous peoples' relationship to land may result in problematic essentialism and romanticism – i.e., the re-enactment of the colonial 'Othering' of Indigenous peoples where our relegation to the realm of nature effectuates our dehumanisation and therefore subjugation in the settler-colonial structure's hierarchical nature/culture split. Reflecting on the possibility to convey Sámi relations to land in Swedish feminist contexts, Elle[66], for example, relates her embodied experiences of exotification:

*Ina:* Is the relationship or connection to the land something you can convey in a Swedish feminist context?

*Elle:* You know, I'm not sure I would want to. Maybe I could, but it depends on the premises. I don't want to, or I'm afraid, in many contexts. [Elle pauses to reflect] I do yoga. And when I do yoga, I prefer to remain silent. I don't want people to hear my dialect or know that I'm from the North and, absolutely not, know that I'm Sámi because then [Elle pauses to reflect] You quickly become

[66] Pseudonym.

> worshipped as some creature connected to the land, the water, and the spirits. So, when I talk about it, it becomes super-exotic and very desirable. But it doesn't become true. [. . .] It becomes something over there [. . .] an image of these Indigenous peoples living in a bubble, in harmony. (Conversation with Elle, 2014)

As Elle reflects, sharing Sámi knowledges in majoritarian contexts entails risks. In her account of yoga practice, Indigenous belonging and knowledges are othered by majoritarian subjects who romanticise and distort Indigenous relatedness. I am not arguing that Elle, in this quotation, speaks directly about the Swedish feminist community. However, her narrative is applicable in a feminist context because it reminds non-Indigenous peoples to engage with Indigenous peoples and epistemes respectfully, beyond romanticism and appropriation. Akin to Kwaymullina's (2019) analysis of white ecofeminisms, Elle's reflection also relates to Indigenous peoples' sovereign right to decide whether to share or not share our knowledges.

Romantic stereotyping interplays with the logic of elimination in settler-colonial discourse and legislation. As argued by Wolfe (2006), demands for 'repressive authenticity' enables the elimination of a 'large number of empirical natives from official reckoning' (2006, 402). Similarly, Smith discusses outsider's tendency to position Indigenous peoples as the 'Authentic, Essentialist, Deeply Spiritual "Other"' while simultaneously judging Indigenous authenticity and 'the validity of indigenous claims to cultural beliefs, values, ways of knowing and historical accounts' (2012, 76). Smith continues:

> At the heart of such a view of authenticity is a belief that indigenous cultures cannot change, cannot recreate themselves and still claim to be indigenous. Nor can they be complicated, internally diverse or contradictory. Only the West has that privilege. (2012, 77)

Moreover, Smith notes that concepts such as authenticity and essentialism are employed differently in Indigenous worlds than in Western discourse. For example, the 'authentic' is a way to invoke national consciousness and refer to Indigenous peoples' authentic sense of selves beyond colonial dehumanisation. Conversely, referring to 'essential' characteristics may be strategically important in struggles for Indigenous rights. Centrally, however, referrals to the essence of an Indigenous person or Indigenous peoples capture relationality: 'A human person does not stand alone, but shares with other animate and, in the Western sense, 'inanimate' beings, a relationship based on a shared 'essence' of life' (Smith, 2012, 77).

Furthermore, Kuokkanen argues that 'Indigenous people understand the land's bounty both as a gift and as a relationship made manifest, but they do so in concrete rather than romanticized terms' (2007b, 42). As expressed by Arvin, Indigenous relationships to land 'are not essential in the sense that they are not magical or automatic features of Indigenous lives, but rather are practices and knowledge that communities work to keep alive despite constant threats from settler colonialism' (2019, 342). Kuokkanen also underlines that Indigenous epistemes are not monolithic, self-contained, or 'apply to every single Indigenous individual in the world' (2017, 315).

First, colonial domination has eroded many Indigenous epistemes and represented their practices as backwards or impossible or brush aside their cosmologies as 'superstition':

> Nonindigenous society has put much effort into erecting a barrier between what is thought humans can know through their materialistic, empirical investigations and what (some) humans believe to exist beyond the knowable material world. This knowledge/belief divide [. . .] is a form of discrediting language used, for example, even by sympathetic anthropologists when explaining indigenous subjects' cosmologies. (TallBear, 2017a, 192)

Concurrently, Indigenous peoples have been alienated from or denied access to their knowledge systems. Second, of course, there are diverse processes of socialisation and ways of thinking within Indigenous communities, colonial impacts notwithstanding. Third, Indigenous intellectuals engage in critical and productive exchange with various theoretical interventions and frameworks found in diverse locations. Accordingly, Indigenous epistemes are characterised by multiplicity, diversity, change, and development as are other worldviews and knowledge systems (Denzin et al., 2008; Driskill et al., 2011, 3–10).

Nonetheless, I strongly agree with Kuokkanen's criticism of 'epistemic ignorance' as the subordination, marginalisation, and foreclosure of other than dominant epistemes in academia and society (2017, 317). Following Spivak (1999, 2000), Kuokkanen urges the academic community to engage in 'learning to learn from below' (2017, 322). According to Kuokkanen, this approach entails 'transforming the conventional modes of thinking and knowing embedded in modern, Eurocentric episteme, often characterized by linearity and monocasuality, to relational, participatory, and narrative modes of being and knowing in the world' (2017, 323). Hence, Indigenous relational epistemes need to be recognised as valid, co-existing, and diverse ways of being, knowing, and

doing that widen, contribute, and challenge our knowledge pursuits and understanding of interrelated and unfolding worlds.

## Writing-weaving across Indigenous differences

In the beautiful poem "for asinykwe" in *Islands of Decolonial Love: Stories & Songs* (2015), Simpson conveys the world-altering and unsettling experience of colonial power:

> this story takes place a long time ago or maybe right now. the world was thrown. the mother was shaken so hard that everything cracked. shattered. we cracked. everything fell to the ground in thousands of pieces. and when everything hit the ground the pieces flew through the air scattered all over everywhere.
>
> no one knew what to do.
>
> some people did not survive.
> some people gave up. moved on. buried. forgot.
> some people found ways to cope.
> some people worked hard at just breathing. just breathe. (2015, 127)

As the pieces 'flew through the air scattered all over everywhere', Indigenous people found themselves in varied positions and with different strategies for survival. Colonialism deeply affects Indigenous peoples, but it affects us differently. The various way its structures shaped the beings and lives of our ancestors means that we, as contemporary Indigenous people, today find ourselves differently positioned in relation to Indigenous worldviews. For example, some of us still live on the land, while others of us only retain fragments of land-based epistemes after centuries of (forced) assimilation (Paradies, 2006).

In a Sámi-Norwegian context, Dankertsen conceptualises a collective phenomenon that she names 'Sámi melancholia':

> To feel different in Norwegian society, without really being able to pin down a concrete form of oppression, I interpret as a form of Sámi melancholia. Experiencing that you cannot speak of your Sámi background, even with your closest ones, or try to understand why your parents or grandparents chose not to teach their children Sámi, can also be interpreted as a melancholic experience. To feel that you stand with one foot in Sámi culture and one foot in Norwegian culture is another form of experience that many of the participants [in

> Dankertsen's doctoral research] try to get to know themselves within that I interpret as a form of melancholia in this dissertation. (2014, 19)

Dankertsen's conceptualisation resonates with Finbog's analysis of present-day consequences of historical trauma experienced by our ancestors. Finbog suggests that many Sámi descendants are affected by a trauma of absence, marked by a sense of loss, emptiness, and disconnection. As previous generations were trying to escape from oppression directed against the Sámi people, their Sámi belonging was hidden and suppressed, resulting in the erosion of identity and historical memory (Finbog, 2020, 150–156).

In the opening pages of her book *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, Contexts* (2009), Margaret Kovach (Nêhiýaw and Salteaux) tells the reader about a meeting she had with a student after a presentation:

> She said that she was of Indigenous ancestry but had grown up in the city and did not have any connections with community. She said that she was drawn towards using an Indigenous methodology but did not think she could go this route because she did not have the necessary cultural connections. [. . .] This young Indigenous student was questioning whether she could embrace her Aboriginal culture. It did not seem that her reasons were stemming from a lack of desire, but more about belonging. I did not ask for specific reasons, but I suspected that some of them were ours collectively born of a colonial history that shadows our being. [. . .] I offered her the best guidance I could should she choose Indigenous methodologies – start where you are, it will take you where you need to go. (2009, 10)

I write as a Sámi- and Tornedalian[67]-identified woman whose family has vacillated between denial and recognition of our Sámi belonging. Like the Indigenous student above, I have wondered how to locate myself within Indigenous inquiry. Put differently, a central methodological issue has been navigating my situatedness (cf. Haraway, 1988/2004) or, perhaps more to the point, my relatedness. How can I convey Sámi knowledge from a position such as my own, shaped by the Swedish colonial state's assimilatory policies? Like Simpson, I could write about learning to see beyond the marks of colonial society: 'I could barely even imagine the worlds that had already been lost' (2017, 2). In other words, how do I write from within Indigenous epistemes in a contemporary situation where colonial histories have profoundly shaped my very thoughts and emotions? And how do I

[67] My father and his family are Tornedalians, one of the five national minorities in Sweden.

write with respect for other Sámi positions, shaped by intertwined yet different historical trajectories and contemporary patterns of struggle?

Kovach's advice to the student she met was to 'start where you are'. For me, starting where I am entails an endeavour to explore, (re)remember, re(imagine), and reweave Sámi epistemes from my place of fragmentation and partly broken ties with the land. Indigenous methodological interventions that emphasise inquiry between and among differently positioned Indigenous people have profoundly inspired these explorations. For example, Driskill et al. in the introduction to *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature*, makes the following claim:

> Writing in conversation enables representing Indigenous lives in multivalent contexts. Indeed, such writing may present Indigenous lives not by matching the self-representation of every Indigenous reader, but instead reflecting a core intention to argue that that [sic!] diversity is crucial to writing for Indigenous audiences. (2011, 6)

As the authors clarify, this means moving towards 'conversations across differences' (Driskill et al., 2011, 8) in relational interaction and within a context where the boundaries for knowledge production are porous.

Similarly, in 'Standing With and Speaking as Faith: A Feminist-Indigenous Approach to Inquiry' (2017b), TallBear argues for inquiry with the people and communities with which you engage – i.e., approaching them as colleagues rather than as research subjects and work in connection with their intellectual projects and goals for social change, which you may already be part of and invested in yourself. As TallBear writes, it is a 'co-constitution of one's owns claims and the claims and acts of the people(s) who one speaks in concert with' (2017b, 82). The other important part of TallBear's methodology is 'speaking as faith'. 'Speaking as faith' is speaking as someone implicated in the context you engage in while acknowledging that perfect representation is impossible. This recognition is not a sign of your inauthenticity but a recognition of the inescapable condition of the act of speaking (TallBear, 2017b, 82).[68] However, recognising the incompleteness of all positions is deeply interconnected with relationality and dialogue. As such, I believe, TallBear provides an opening for inquiry where we can engage in the pursuit of knowledge also within and between differently situated, or, perhaps more to the point, differently related, Indigenous peoples. In the following two

[68] TallBear's methodology is inspired by Nefertiti Tadiar's articulation of sampalataya, Tagalog for "act of faith" (TallBear, 2017b, 82).

sections, I describe the two main strands in my 'written-weave' of Sámi feminist inquiry across Indigenous differences: 'learning in conversations' and '*mujttalit* – storytelling and remembering'.

## Learning in conversations

Métis (Cree) thinker Fyre Jean Graveline, states that 'we learn in relationship to others, knowing is a process of 'self-in-relation"' (cited in Kovach, 2009, 14). When my project was still merely a sketch on a paper, I felt I could not write about Sámi feminist perspectives only through academic readings. I needed to relate to others who were also engaged in the issues and struggles in question. To paraphrase Graveline, I needed to learn and write about Sámi feminisms 'in relationship to others'. My primary way to learn with others or, in TallBear's words, 'co-constitute' knowledge (2017b, 83) is through conversations focussed on learning and sharing Sámi feminist analyses and experiences.

As I describe in the articles 'Sámi feminist conversations' (2022a) and 'Sámi feminist against mines' (2022b), between 2014 and 2017, I had conversations with 14 feminists who self-identify as Sámi and feminists. Nine were from the Swedish side of Sábme, four from the Norwegian side of Sábme, and one from the Finnish side of Sábme. My conversational partners were chosen based on recommendations from people within the Sámi feminist community and sometimes from the participants themselves. At the time of the conversations, the participants' ages ranged from the early 20s to the early 60s, and they were active in various ways – e.g. reindeer herding, social movements, academia, politics, and arts. To facilitate their participation, I met with them at a place and time of their convenience. Therefore, our exchange took place in different areas in Sábme and other locations within the Nordic nation-states in participants' homes, workplaces, or public spaces. The conversations lasted between one hour and three hours.

My choice to engage in conversations was inspired by Indigenous and Sámi feminist working methods. For example, in the book *No Beginning, No End: The Sámi Speak Up* (1998), Sámi scholar Elina Helander-Renvall and Finnish scholar Kaarina Kailo work with conversations to centre Sámi positions and worldviews. Likewise, Aboriginal feminist Tina Beads (Ojibway) and Rauna Kuokkanen (2007) engage in embodied exchange through co-authored conversations to explore Indigenous feminist activism. The main advantage of such conversational approaches is that they emphasise participants' conveyance of their reflections, interpretations, and experiences (cf. Kailo and Helander-Renvall, 1998, 8–9).

Furthermore, they provide a space for embodied interaction between researcher and participant.

Central to my approach was to treat all participants as knowledgeable subjects, softening or challenging the binary between researcher and researched, or in TallBear's words, 'the binary [. . .] between knowing inquirer and those who are considered to be the resources or grounds for knowledge production' (TallBear, 2017b, 80). I see participants in my projects as colleagues, peers, or mentors and, accordingly, all conversations emphasise participants' views, standpoints, and engagement. Although I do not cite every conversation in my articles, I regard each of them as a significant contribution to understanding and engaging with feminism from Sámi locations. All have contributed to my knowledge, learning process, and analyses in rich and meaningful ways. To further open up to deliberation in the research process, at the end of each conversation I asked the participants if there is something I should consider in terms of my research as a whole or my methodology. In response to these questions, I have often received valuable advice, helping me make decisions about the trajectory of my research process, for example, to focus on mining.

Of course, my choice of illustrations and analysis does not cover the full complexity of the arguments made by each participant. Nor do the dialogues represent all Sámi feminists' positions or speak for an authentic 'we' in my writing. My aim is not to reproduce racialised differences but to illuminate and explore Sámi knowledge systems within feminist theory, particularly in the Nordic context. Furthermore, my specific situatedness from which I research enables me to see, reach, and analyse some aspects relevant to the people participating in my research, although other elements and interpretations might escape my notice. This inevitable situation does not render my analysis invalid, but it does make it inevitably partial (Knobblock, 2022a).

Last, the dissertation also includes conversations in other formats, such as the letters between me and Elisabeth Stubberud in the article 'Bortom gränserna' ['Beyond Borders'] (2021). In addition, the article 'Do We Need Decolonial Feminism in Sweden?' (Tlostanova et al., 2019) and the article '"Im sïjhth årrodh naan bahha cirkusdjur – Jag vill inte vara ett jävla cirkusdjur"' ['"I don't want to be a bloody circus animal"' (Knobblock & Höglund, 2022) are texts written in a conversation between differently situated scholars with similar but somewhat different theoretical entry points.

## *Mujttalit*: storytelling and remembering

I call the second strand of the dissertation *mujttalit* – borrowing the Lule Sámi word carrying the dual meaning of storytelling and remembering[69]. Finbog explains that *muitalus*, meaning story in North Sámi, 'has its etymological origin in the verb *muitit*, meaning to remember (Cocq 2008: 41). In fact, muitalus is considered to be "*an account which is factual*" and "*truthful"* (Gaski 2011: 594)' (2020, 68-69).[70] Sámi literary scholar Hirvonen expands the concept of *muitalus*:

> *[M]uitalus* is a story which is in some way based on beliefs and reality and which people consider to be more or less true. The term *máinnas* is more clearly linked with the imagination, although, in practice the Sámi do not necessarily make a clear distinction between the two (see Samuel Aikio 1984:86). In other words, *máinnas* and *muitalus* are not a binary pair like the terms *fiction* and *truth*. (1998/2008, 83)

In Sámi communities, storytelling is and has always been an essential part of Sámi epistemes. Through stories, philosophical and practical knowledge and experience have been transmitted over the generations, including historical and communal memories (Gaski, 2019). Sámi scholars Sanna Valkonen, Saara Alakorva, Áile Aikio, and Sigga-Marja Magga write that 'story-telling is an integral, constitutive part of the Sámi knowledge system. For the Sámi, dialogue and narrative are not only ways of seeking knowledge but also ways of producing and sharing knowledge, hence building a theory of the world' (2022, 5).

Traditionally, storytelling refers to a process where bearers of experience-based knowledge, particularly Elders, teach children practices or activities using stories as an 'integrated, conceptual part of the learning process' (Gaski, 2019, 264). However, Indigenous knowledge is not static but innovative and changing (Valkonen et al., 2022, 15–16). Here, I use *mujttalit* in reference to storytelling aiming to (re)remember and (re)imagine Sámi histories, presents, and futures – both my own stories and stories conveyed by others.

First, it refers to my process of turning to my family history and exploring its intersections with Swedish colonialism, both my memories and memories shared by other family members. By telling parts of our stories in the articles 'Att skriva från gränslandet: Dekoloniala berättelser från *Sábme*' ['Writing from the

[69] *Mujttalit* (verb), to tell a story and to remember. *Mujttalus* (noun): a story/a remembrance.

[70] The explanation of *muitalit*/*muitalus* has been developed by North Sámi-speaking scholars. With the exception of quotes, I use the Lule Sámi equivalents *mujttalit* (verb) and *mujttalus* (noun).

Borderland: Decolonial Stories from Sábme'] (2021) and 'Bortom gränserna' ['Beyond Borders'] (2021), I (re)remember and (re)connect with our Sámi belonging and histories. This storytelling is also 'relational work' (Kovach, 2009, 3), a way of searching to understand and convey the location from which I engage with others, construct knowledge, and write.

Similar to autoethnographic accounts (Ellis et al., 2011), Indigenous contributions, including my own, interweave embodied and personal experiences with cultural, political, and social spheres. However, Indigenous stories about colonialism should not be interpreted as autoethnography, although they are embodied through personal stories. Centrally, within Indigenous epistemes, the colonial knowledge system's split between a research subject and research object does not need to be overcome – it was never there in the first place. Simpson explains this as follows: 'My body and my life are part of my research, and I use this knowledge to critique and to analyse. I will not separate this from my engagement with academic literature, because in my life these things are not compartmentalized' (2017, 31). Instead, Indigenous stories should be understood through a tradition of the 'plurality of knowledge' (Santos, 2014) and 'speaking truth to power' (Collins, 2013), where intersubjective dialogues and collective memories and experiences form the basis of the narratives.

Second, it refers to my engagement with Sámi artistic contributions as 'pathfinders' (Kuokkanen, 2004a, 92), expressions of Sámi knowledge that have aided me in understanding and finding my way through (de)colonial histories and presences. In particular, I engage with the novel *Lappskatteland* in 'Att skriva från gränslandet' ['Writing from the Borderland'] (2021) and, together with co-author Johan Höglund, with the film *Sámi Blood* (2016), in the article '"Im sïjhth årrodh naan bahha cirkusdjur – Jag vill inte vara ett jävla cirkusdjur"' (2022). The storytelling in both *Lappskatteland* and *Sami Blood* re(imagines) Sámi-Swedish history from within Sámi locations, depicting the impact of colonial oppression and divisions of the Sámi people and working towards healing them. Wennström, the author of *Lappskatteland*, has a similar view as she reflects on her writing: 'In various ways, I've tried to approach the heritage from colonialism. [. . .] In writing, I've tried to write us back. Make room for the silenced and disavowed. Push through a redress with our own words, our own worldview' (Wennström, 2019, 36).

Conceptualising the novel and film as forms of *mujttalit* – storytelling and re-remembering – does not divest the artworks of their literary or cinematic values or disregard the fact that they are fictional. Furthermore, of course, my (and in the case of *Sami Blood*, my co-author's) engagement with them is an

interpretation. However, it does mean that I read and see them as histories that faithfully bear witness (cf. Lugones, 2003; Figueroa, 2015) to collective Sámi memories and experiences. In so doing, I recognise that stories are 'an Indigenous method for sharing experience', 'interpretative, subjective understanding is accepted' (Kovach, 2009, 176), and 'a theoretical discourse for many people, including [. . .] indigenous people' (Kuokkanen, 2007b: xxi).

## Going away, going home: geographical and linguistic orientations

As a young student, I moved south to continue my higher education. Eventually, I began my research about Sámi feminism at the University of Lund, one of Sweden's oldest, most prestigious, and most southern universities. However, while Lund and its university may be at the centre of hegemonic production of social thought in Sweden (cf. Connell, 2007), it is, in many senses, peripheral to Sámi society and its concerns.[71] As illustrated by a drawing by Sami artist Katarina Pirak Sikku, the Swedish dichotomous pairing of south/centre and north/periphery does not hold from a Sami location. The drawing titled 'Om Sápmi vore Sápmi' ['If Sápmi was Sápmi'] shows a map of Sábme different from the traditional cartographies of northern Norway, Sweden, and Finland. Turned upside down and excluding the southern parts of Norway, Sweden, and Finland, the maps show Sábme as a territory undivided by current national borders and all place names given in Sámi. To depict the area like Pirak Sikku does shifts the perspective. The centre moves and shifts the power relations between the north and the south.

My research has entailed an orientation towards the north in an abstract and a concrete sense. This orientation has meant a simultaneous process of going away-going home, leaving the site of my work and my everyday life but returning to my family of origin and the places of my childhood. In other words, I was living in southern Sweden, but my mind and my heart were elsewhere. Eventually, this

[71] Of course, the social and cultural spaces that encompass and are impacted by Indigenous people transgress bounded geographical locations, and Sámi society and individuals occupy and relate to spaces other than northern spaces (see Dankertsen, 2022, for a discussion of Sámi youth activism in urban areas). Arguing otherwise would discursively freeze Sámi people in space and reproduce false notions of authentic Sáminess as 'strongly bound to ideas of northern, peripheral and rural areas' (Dankertsen, 2022, 566). Nonetheless, many spaces for Sámi intellectual, cultural, and political exchange are in Sábme.

became untenable and half-way through my research process, I moved with my family to Ubmeje [Umeå], a northern university town on Sámi land. Of course, this decision was deeply personal, motivated by homesickness and attachment to place and people. But it was also intrinsically bound up with a need for geographical and physical closeness to the community.

As settler Xicana[72] Aimee Carillo Rowe argues in the article 'Be Longing. Toward a Feminist Politics of Relation' (2005), our sites of belonging are always imagined and created in webs of power and with others. Although our identities and locations affect how we see and theorise the world, they are not fixed. Thus, for transformative feminist theorising and politics, it matters to whom we relate, intellectually and affectively. Who do we speak with, who do we learn from, and who do we engage in embodied interaction? Carrillo Rowe addresses these questions:

> My work [. . .] gestures toward deep reflection about the selves we are creating as a function of where we place our bodies, and with whom we build our affective ties. I call this placing a "politics of relation." It moves theories of locating the subject to a relational notion of the subject. It moves a politics of location from the individual to a coalitional notion of the subject. (2005, 16)

Moving north, moving 'home' can be seen as a form of 'politics of relations', enabling me to build more profound levels of relations that only spring from multiple and a long-standing participation in people's lives, social worlds, and places of importance to them (Kovach, 2009, 52). To move towards 'standing with' (TallBear, 2017b), I need to be physically present as a researcher, community member, friend, and relative. I think of this as I sit with my third cousin, Nina, a *yoiker* and musician, on her porch in a small village outside Jåhkåmåhke [Jokkmokk]. We talk about our similar searches for Sámi belonging and feminism and her engagement in the anti-mining struggle. Sharing thoughts and feelings, we engage in embodied and affective interaction. Such encounters are my daily life rather than a period of fieldwork with a beginning and an end, being an open-ended and never-finished orientation.

'Language is also a place of struggle' (1989, 16), writes hooks, foregrounding the central role of language in anti-racist and feminist struggle. Language both conveys and constructs meaning. It carries worldviews and co-creates our worlds. To use Indigenous languages is an act of world-making from within Indigenous

[72] As Carillo Rowe describes her positionality in the article 'Settler Xicana: Postcolonial and Decolonial Reflections on Incommensurability' (2017).

epistemes. It is also an act of cultural revitalisation and resilience (cf. Fjellgren, 2019). Speaking and writing in a Sámi language is beyond my capacity, being a beginner in *julevsámegiella* (Lule Sámi). However, considering my present knowledge, I use the Sámi language and terminology (e.g., place names) as a first step or orientation towards decolonial language use. Elisabeth Stubberud and I have also included translated excerpts in North Sámi, Lule Sámi, Kven, and Meänkieli[73] in our article 'Bortom gränserna' ['Beyond Borders'] (2021).

My research has travelled between several languages. I write in English and Swedish, my mother tongue. Some participants speak Sámi while others, like me, do not, reflecting histories of linguistic assimilation against the Sámi people. Many of them are bi- or multilingual, and the conversations have been held in Swedish, Swedish/Norwegian, or English. When necessary, quotations have been translated into English. My choice to write large parts of the dissertation in English makes the research less accessible to Swedish-speaking readers. However, it enables me to share my text with Finnish- and Sámi-speaking readers. Additionally, Indigenous and Indigenous feminist intellectual conversations are highly transnational. Therefore, writing in English can add value as my research may reach Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences beyond the Nordic area.

Last, I wish to emphasise the transnational aspects of my work. Sábme is a territory divided by the nation-states of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. The participants in my research, including me, continuously relate to, on the one hand, shared Sámi experiences and, on the other hand, the impact of divergent national contexts, historically and presently. It is challenging to acknowledge the concurrences and differences of diverse national contexts. Although, to some extent, I have broadened my research beyond the limited Swedish national context, I have excluded the Russian Sámi context. This choice was purely due to my limitations, especially my abilities to travel and relate to vast and complex historical and contemporary contexts. I also wish to acknowledge the Swedish location of my work. The majority of the research participants are from the Swedish side of Sábme, and I write from within Swedish academia. Thus, our shared knowledge and experiences have inevitably gravitated my work towards the Swedish Sámi context.

[73] Kven and Meänkieli are closely related Northern minority languages.

## Ethical considerations

Relationality, a core aspect of Indigenous epistemes 'requires attentiveness and a conscious commitment to uphold the act of being in relation with the non-human world and each other' (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2021b, 323). In other words, relationality is a profoundly ethical engagement of responsibility and answerability on a fundamental level: 'From an Indigenous perspective, research ethics is not merely an institutional regulation, but includes a more profound focus on building and maintaining relationships and connectivity' (Drugge, 2022, 6). Drugge further explains that the building and maintaining of relationships go beyond the individual level, including communities, collectives, the land, and nonhuman entities (2022, 7).

As follows, within Indigenous methodologies, research ethics are foundational throughout the entire research process, understood in an extended way beyond the formal starting and endings of research projects and going far beyond gate-keeping practices and on-off gestures. Ethical responsibility and answerability are, for example, conceptualised as a deep commitment to ensuring that Indigenous peoples, their knowledge, and environments are not exploited in research. Instead, research should be respectful, reciprocal, culturally safe, and meaningful to Indigenous peoples (Drugge, 2015, 2016, 2022; Kovach, 2009, 141–155). Similarly, ethical guidelines in Indigenous research include epistemic issues. In Drugge's words, they are 'encouraging alternative research methods to be recognised, and for traditional knowledge, Indigenous worldviews, and oral traditions to be valued in the knowledge production process' (2022, 7).

I hope that such an ethical commitment translates through the pages of my dissertation and reflects in my epistemic, methodological, and theoretical starting points and the choices. Research participants' encouragement has been a critical ethical guideline, reassuring me that my research is meaningful to others. I endeavour to reciprocate with work that thoughtfully considers the contribution made by Sámi feminists and supports its critical, emancipatory, and decolonial approach.

Notwithstanding primarily locating my ethical approach within Indigenous epistemes, I produce a dissertation at a Swedish academic institution. Accordingly, I need to comply with guidelines concerning research ethics in Sweden (Drugge, 2022, 3) such as informed consent, confidentiality, and the handling of research material. Thus, regarding the conversations, I have provided the participants with written information about my project and a consent form. After the meetings, the dialogues have been transcribed in full, treated confidentially, and stored in a

locked space. One of the participants asked for a copy of the recording of our conversation, which she received. I offered everyone the opportunity to review and comment on an unedited transcript of the conversation they participated in and the near-completed manuscript if I cited them in an article. However, collaboration is always an offer, never a request, especially as there are limits to participants' time and energy (cf. Löf & Stinnerbom, 2016, 141).

Sometimes, combining mainstream and Indigenous ethical approaches actualises complex dilemmas (Drugge, 2022, 2–4). For example, anonymisation is a default ethical measure in the social sciences. Nonetheless, as is discussed within Indigenous methodologies, the practice raises critical issues about subjecthood and ownership of knowledge. Swedish scholar Anette Löf and Sámi politician Marita Stinnerbom argue that '[t]he principle of anonymity can [. . .] be used as a means to take control over information, make knowledge keepers and original experts invisible, and exploit resources and stories without compensation' (2016, 142). Additionally, people are more easily recognised in smaller communities such as the Sámi feminist community. In cases when anonymisation is recommended, it may still be difficult to guarantee (Ledman, 2012b). Therefore, practices of anonymisation and naming require careful consideration.

Indeed, anonymisation may appear inconsistent with my desire to treat participants as knowledgeable subjects (cf. Svalastog & Eriksson, 2010, 5). However, after deliberation with the participants, I have given them pseudonyms to protect them and their stories. Although I have tried to ensure anonymity to the best of my abilities, I have also acknowledged the difficulty of guaranteeing complete anonymisation, which participants have understood and accepted. As she requested, I have not anonymised Rauna Kuokkanen. Therefore, I cite her with her name or as the co-author of the article 'Decolonizing feminism in the North' (2015).

Another ethical issue in my research concerns the nature of closeness and connectedness of my methodological approach. To implicate others in research, despite the best of intentions, inevitably gives rise to dilemmas of representation and power. Although these dilemmas may never be resolved entirely, they need to be carefully considered and navigated. While close and reciprocal methodologies are increasingly embraced within gender and Indigenous studies, feminist researchers have also discussed them critically. Through closeness, empathy, and the development of friendships between researcher and participants, power relations in research may be temporarily forgotten, but they are never wholly settled (Mulinari, 1999; Stacey, 1988).

My embodied experiences and interactions with people manifest in a general way in my analyses and writing. They have all been learning experiences, shaping my understanding of the world. However, aware of my power as a researcher, I have only included accounts of events or interactions where I have asked for consent from the people involved. Mainly, these are the transcribed conversations and the writing where I portray my family members. Furthermore, I have had to carefully consider the reasons for and consequences of including some parts of participants' stories or deliberate with participants before I did. For example, sharing sensitive stories in a conversation where the research relation is sometimes subdued is different from having them included in a publication. Here, the participants' review of the transcripts and, when cited, the manuscripts have been critical. Their identification of extra-sensitive dialogue or any parts they considered too sensitive for inclusion has guided me concerning which details to omit or treat with particular care.

Research that portrays intimate relations entails particular ethical consideration. In this case, my family's love for me as a daughter and granddaughter has meant that they have wished to help me in my process by sharing their reflections and emotions with me. Accordingly, I am responsible for ensuring that my writing does not cause them harm. Most of my family members do not read academic English. However, the articles 'Att skriva från gränslandet' ['Writing from the Borderland'] (2021) and 'Bortom gränserna' ['Beyond Borders'] (2022) are written in Swedish, enabling them to take part of my writing. I have also explained my work to them in person, and they have given their consent based on this, knowing that our relationship makes it impossible to anonymise them. Furthermore, together with my mother and father, I have discussed degrees of exposure and vulnerability and the 'faithfulness' (cf. Lugones, 2003) of my writing. My parents have also read my work being mindful of elder relatives and their interests, which has been valuable from an ethical point of view (cf. Ellis, 1999, 681).

Finally, while the dissertation consists of conversations, stories, and recollections involving other people, the responsibility for the final work is only mine or, in the case of the specific jointly written articles, mine and the identified co-authors. Mohanty writes on the opening page of her book *Feminisms without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practising Solidarity* (2003a) that 'ideas are always communally wrought, not privately owned. All faults, however, are mine, for seeking the kind of knowledge that emerges in these pages brings with it its own gaps, faults, opacities' (2003a, 1). Inspired by Mohanty, I acknowledge the importance of others' voices and insights yet recognise my full accountability (cf.

Brännlund, 2015, 51–52) for the choices, interpretations, and analyses I have made throughout the process.

# Concluding remarks

The main aim of the dissertation has been to explore, illuminate, and analyse Sámi feminist knowledges. I have endeavoured to grasp feminist articulations, enactments, and dialogues from within a Sámi context, with a particular focus on Sámi feminist theoretical, epistemic, and methodological approaches, and Sámi feminist contributions to gender studies, especially in the Swedish context. However, as I write in the article 'Sámi feminist conversations', my aim has not been to 'provide a finished answer regarding the nature of contemporary Sámi feminisms. Such a purpose would foreclose the openness and potential of Sámi feminist thinking. [. . .] Bearing diversity in mind, I wish to contribute to an ongoing conversation in which different people continuously create and re-create Sámi feminisms in a variety of contexts' (2022a, 536). Hence, I do not claim to have created 'a comprehensive picture' (Valkonen et al., 2022, 16) of Sámi feminisms. Nonetheless, my research process has enabled me to learn from Sámi feminist contributions and together with other Sámi feminists. Therefore, in these concluding remarks, I will reflect on some of my central learnings from Sámi feminist knowledges.

## Sámi feminist knowledges

In dialogue with variously located Indigenous feminisms across the globe, Sámi feminisms name, analyse, and theorise settler colonialism as a gendered process of Indigenous dispossession and elimination. In the Swedish context, central areas and issues are, for example, gendered colonial law, gendered violence and its colonial intersections, the gendered impact on Indigenous economies, the interplay of gender and religion, and women and non-binary people's struggles against the dispossession and exploitation of Sámi land. Moreover, Sámi feminisms contribute to the understandings of gender, sexuality, and epistemicide, foregrounding, for example, the colonial impact on Sámi women's knowledges and practices, exemplified by and channelled, among other things,

through *duodje*. Finally, in conversation with queer Sámi discussions and activisms, Sámi feminisms critically analyse the colonial introduction of hierarchical binaries of sex and gender. Furthermore, the intervention underlines the link to other binary constructions, such as human/nonhuman and civilised/uncivilised, within the systems of colonial oppression. Instead, fluid, multiple and land-based relations of gender and sexuality are foregrounded.

Concurrently, Sámi feminisms contribute to critical discussions, (re)imaginings, and (re)creations of decolonisation and resurgence on both theoretical and practical levels. An example is Rauna Kuokkanen's extensive theorisation of Indigenous self-determination as a foundational value of integrity. By encompassing the integrity of the land and the integrity of Indigenous women's bodies, she argues for restructuring all relations of domination. A second example is Astri Dankertsen's theorisation of Sámi feminisms as integral to diverse and thriving Sámi societies. Finally, Sámi feminisms also contribute to critical Indigenous feminist analyses of settler feminist erasure of Indigenous peoples. Similarly, in dialogue with the global Indigenous feminist interventions, I suggest moving towards decolonial knowledge production through dialogue, learning, and creating feminist coalitions across differences. Centrally, Sámi feminists, myself included, foreground the need for a meaningful engagement with Sámi feminisms as valid and co-existing feminist thinking and theories.

On epistemic and methodological levels, Sámi feminisms, at large, articulate and exemplify Indigenous epistemes and methodologies that centre on relationality. Indigenous epistemes refer to fundamentally interwoven worldviews and knowledges that transcend boundaries between cultural, social, and natural worlds. Contrary to Western epistemologies' compartmentalisation of the world into human and nonhuman spheres, Indigenous epistemes understand the world as multiple, unfolding, and intimately interlinked realities. Learning from the participants in my research, Indigenous feminist theorists of science, and in conversation with other feminist epistemologies, I propose related knowledges as a way to conceptualise Indigenous feminist inquiry in resonance with Indigenous epistemes.

Importantly, I do not suggest that related knowledges are the only valid form for Sámi feminist knowledge production. In contrast, by related knowledges I underline that Indigenous feminist inquiry is neither monolithic nor made in isolation. Some Sámi feminist pursuits of knowledge start from Indigenous epistemes. However, other contributions draw on more conventional epistemologies and methodologies or adopt combinational approaches. To exemplify, Sámi scholar Astri Eriksen's and her co-authors' statistical research on

gendered violence and health in Sábme is essential to Sámi feminist knowledge production. Thus, I do not argue for epistemic or methodological purity by related knowledge. Instead, I foreground a multiplicity of knowledges where related knowledges exemplify some Indigenous feminist ways to apprehend pluriversal worlds.

In the dissertation, I propose, develop, and explore 'writing-weaving', 'learning in conversations', and '*mujttalit* – storytelling and remembering' as Sámi feminist methodologies. However, Sámi feminist methodologies encompass numerous approaches. For example, Finbog learns with other *duodjára* and objects of *duodje*, collaborative research partners whom she names *verdde* (friends in North Sámi). In turn, both Kuokkanen and Dankertsen work in close collaboration with other members of Sámi communities, including Sámi grass-roots activists. Such collaborative work is done in various contexts, including urban milieus and Sámi traditional territories. Moreover, Sámi feminist thinking arises in historical analyses, literary analyses, and through engagement with the Sámi feminist archive.

Sámi feminist methodologies also evolve outside academia or within overlapping spheres of academic scholarship, activism, the arts, and literature. Examples are the artistic research of Katarina Pirak Sikku and the collaborative academic-artistic project by Eeva-Kristiina Harlin and Outi Pieski. Arguably, such artistic approaches may evoke Indigenous epistemes and Sámi feminist ethos in ways beyond the Western intellectual languages. Concurrently, Sámi feminist ways of knowing, being, and doing are enacted and embodied in concrete and practical senses. For example, Biret argues that 'all the women that I know that are hardcore [linguistically and culturally more radical] are real feminists. But it's not in an intellectual way. Instead, they are living it' (Conversation with Biret, 2014, cited in Knobblock, 2022a, 542).

To conclude, I want to revisit Sámi feminist diversity. I argue in 'Sámi feminist conversations' that 'Sámi feminists share many starting points and analyses due to their Indigenous social positions, but their viewpoints, like those of other feminist communities, also differ' (2022a, 536). For example, the various viewpoints discussed in the introductory essay's section 'Gender, sexuality, and epistemicide' regarding historical relations of gender and sexuality and their implications for present-day Sámi societies and feminisms illustrate Sámi feminist heterogeneity. Through conversations about gender, sexuality, and epistemicide, Sámi feminist and queer communities contribute to critical and multiplex analyses of Sámi histories, historical memories, contemporary realities, and the diversity of Sámi lived experiences. Such conversations across differences are essential for Sámi

feminist scholarship and activism alike for enhancing our understanding of colonial impacts and imagining and creating anti-oppressive resurgent presents and futures.

## Directions for further research

In this sub-section, I indicate some directions for further research, which, hopefully, may help other scholars develop or learn from Sámi feminist inquiry. Of course, they do not comprise an exhaustive list of future research needs. On the one hand, my ideas originate from identifying areas with potential for widened and deepened knowledge production. On the other hand, they encompass issues and themes that I have not been able to sufficiently discuss in my body of work or require further collective engagement and deliberation.

First, I identify a need for additional empirical studies of gendered settler colonialism in Sábme. Arguably, we require more knowledge regarding specific processes and events and the diverse meanings and impacts for different communities in Sábme. For example, what were the gendered impacts of the forced deportations of the Northern Sámi in Sweden? Furthermore, to fully grasp the gendered impacts of colonial settler violence, we would benefit from historical research of the interplay between colonial structures and gendered and sexual violence. For example, Wennström's novel *Lappskatteland* depicts an act of settler colonial sexual violence in literary form. Scholarly and contextualised historical research into the occurrence of such events would be highly valuable. Here, research on scientific racism as a practice intertwined with gendered violence would be relevant.

Moreover, we need enhanced analyses of epistemicide and its consequences in a Sámi context. First, from a Sámi feminist and queer perspective, there is a need to continue the critical discussions of settler colonialism's gendered and sexual ramifications. For example, how have Sámi notions of gender, sexuality, and systems of complementarity been affected by epistemicide? Second, what can we learn from and with Sámi queer, non-binary, and trans peoples' embodied knowledges about the creation of decolonial collectivities and kinship? Furthermore, analyses could be developed regarding Northern masculinities. How have settler colonial structures impacted the formation of masculinities in Sámi and non-Sámi communities? In particular, what are the gendered implications of the settler colonial industrial interventions and exploitation of Sámi land?

On a different note, several scholars have identified a need for further research about gendered violence in contemporary Sábme, especially in Sweden. Presently, an ongoing mixed-method research project at Ubmejen universitiähta/Umeå University[74], aims to produce quantitative and qualitative data on the subject. However, further initiatives to this end would be beneficial. I would be interested to see further research into intersectional vulnerabilities and resilience at the intersection of gender and Indigeneity. In addition, there is a need to research both every day and structural gendered racism against Sámi people.

Despite the need to critically analyse systems of oppression, we must not forget to focus on positive change, regeneration, and futurity, as exemplified by Dankertsen's research on Sámi youth activism. First, how and in what ways can Sámi feminisms engage in conversations with and across Sámi health research? Second, how can we further understand and envision Sámi feminist resurgences and sovereignties? In this respect, Liisa-Rávná Finbog's work on *duodje* as a Sámi system of knowledge is inspirational. Finbog has also made significant contributions to Sámi feminist methodologies through her collaborative and creative research process. Furthermore, Finbog has added to Sámi feminist terminologies by introducing Sámi language terms and concepts. Developing more Sámi feminist terminology in the different Sámi languages would be of interest, especially since language co-creates worldviews and worlds.

Here, learning from Sámi feminisms may require us to challenge standard academic knowledge production. Centrally, to relate takes time and engagement beyond the cycles of short-term research projects or employment contracts. Making space for Sámi feminists and related inquiry, by necessity, entails a need to examine these issues on the institutional level. Otherwise, the dual burden involved in undertaking related inquiry within non-supportive academic structures falls heavily on the individual (often Indigenous) scholar.

In addition, there is a need to discuss how to accommodate communal and related knowledges in an individualistic academic system. Usually, academic structures promote individual labour and competition before co-research, co-authorship, and collaboration. Institutions are resistant to change. However, are there ways to move towards collaborative and related work, for instance, by supporting forms for the co-constitution of knowledges? In other words, how can we relate and interweave rather than individualise and separate in our pursuit of knowledges? Last, as academics, how can we acknowledge knowledges experienced and expressed beyond spoken and written words, such as the

[74] Undertaken by the research group 'Lávvuo-Research and education for Sámi health'.

concrete, practical, and place-based Sámi knowledges that do not easily translate into academic intellectual languages? I do not have an answer. Nevertheless, I believe it is a highly valid query if we want to recognise epistemic diversity and multiplicity in gender studies and other research fields.

Finally, my dissertation engages in conversation across diverse feminist traditions, primarily Sámi feminisms, in dialogue with other trajectories of Indigenous feminist thinking. However, potentially, we could engage in more extensive cross-contextual dialogues. For example, what relations exist between different place-based Indigenous epistemes? How should we explore and ground Indigenous epistemes in the Sámi context while staying in relation with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous epistemes?

In the context of gender studies, I propose further critical conversation with other anticolonial and antiracist traditions, for example, Black and decolonial feminisms. Here, a key issue is how to create coalitions against the intersecting systems of oppression that negate and undermine our survival. Regarding relations between the majoritarian and Sámi feminist movements, I would be interested in feminist historiographies that examine the links and convergences between the Nordic and the Sámi feminist movements in the eras of Elsa Laula and Karin Stenberg and moving forwards in time. In my research, I have not engaged with the Sámi context in Russia. However, feminist scholars could potentially develop dialogues concerning and across the Sámi and the Soviet and Post-Soviet experiences (cf. Koobak, 2022). But, of course, such conversations would need to consider the interest of the Sámi people in the Russian nation-state as well as the state of the geo-political present.

I also believe we would benefit from coalitional feminist theorising and activism across minoritarian positions. Together with Elisabeth Stubberud, I have tentatively begun such work through our joint writing from embodied experiences as a Sámi-, Kven-, and Tornedalian-identified feminist scholar. Last, I would welcome scholarly engagement across Sámi and environmental perspectives. A critical node for such engagement is Sámi activists' critique of 'green colonialism' – that is, green energy initiatives on Sámi land to facilitate the societal transition towards a carbon-neutral society (cf. Persson Njajta, 2019).

# Research is a river: the fluidity of Sámi feminist inquiry

Research is a journey, writes Margaret Kovach. Thus, she grounds it in a specific time and place and acknowledges that it has been affected by her location and starting points. She also emphasises transformation along the way, especially when meeting others and their knowledges. My dissertation work has been a journey, intellectually and personally. In retrospect, I appreciate the duplexity of my project. In the beginning, I aimed to learn from Sámi feminist contributions. Gradually, I have realised that, through my written-weave, I also contribute to Sámi feminist conversations, despite starting from a place of fragmentation and partly broken ties with the land. However, as TallBear teaches us through the notions of 'standing with' and 'speaking as faith', to inquire in relation 'may take you to new and surprising places' (2017b, 84).

Entering my project, I was unsure about my Sámi belonging. Engaging with critical analyses of settler colonialism's eliminatory policies, I realised that, deep down, I still measured my family's Sáminess according to the Swedish state's divisive Sámi policy. However, through learning from other Sámi people's similar experiences, Sámi feminism's emphasis on inclusion, difference, and diversity within struggles for decolonisation and resurgence, and, significantly, encouragement from others in the Sámi feminist community, I have been able to re-conceptualise our relatedness.

Instead of seeing us as fixed within a position of irreversible lacking, I understand us to be carrying a heritage of fragmentation due to colonial histories of assimilation of the Forest Sámi in Sweden. Importantly, I have also realised that my family and others like us must continue to resist the fulfilment of the settler-colonial state's end goal – elimination of Sámi histories, memories, and identities, ultimately entailing the full realisation of epistemicide and Indigenous erasure. Instead, together with other Sámi people and recognising the need for learning and dialogue across our Indigenous differences, I believe we must embrace our belonging as an act of refusal and resurgence. Hence, while our weave may be fragmented, we are still here.

Kovach's conceptualisation of research as a journey also speaks to me because of its relatedness, open-endedness, and lack of closure. As Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes in her conclusion to *As We Have Always Done*, I 'look forward to the coming years when I'll look back on this book and see the weakness of my arguments and how much my thinking has changed, and this will be a very good thing' (2017, 247). Akin to Simpson writing from the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg

context, I hope my work may inspire others to engage in Sámi feminist storytelling and conversations beyond my analytical abilities and imaginative horizons.

To my mind, Sámi feminist inquiry is like the rivers journeying through Sábme, continuously shifting and moving. At times, the rivers are quiet and frozen over, yet they are never stagnant or dead. And in the spring, as the snow melts, they flow abundantly, transferring new vitality through the land. Rauna Kuokkanen writes about the river Deatnu: 'Its unceasing movement seems linear, yet because of the various currents, rapids, and eddies, that movement is also circular. The Deatnu's fluid, shifting nature defies clear and fixed boundaries. This ambition is the river's strength, which cannot be reduced to binary oppositions' (2007b, ix). Indeed, like with the rivers, there is no beginning, no end to Sámi feminist inquiry. Sámi feminist learning is always unfinished, just as relating is an ongoing and reciprocal process. This realisation is humbling, but most of all, it is profoundly hopeful.

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## Conversations

Conversation with Aila [pseudonym], 2014.

Conversation with Biret [pseudonym], 2014.

Conversation with Elle [pseudonym], 2014.

Conversation with Inga [pseudonym], 2014.

Conversation with Márjá [pseudonym], 2017.

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Conversation with Sagka [pseudonym], 2014.

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**‘Sámi feminist inquiry is like the rivers journeying through Sábme, continuously shifting and moving. At times the rivers quiet and freeze over, yet they are never stagnant or dead. And in the spring, as the snow melts, they flow abundantly, transferring new vitality through the land.’**

This study explores, illuminates, and analyses Sámi feminist knowledges conceptualised as diverse and fluid feminist knowledges that both arise within and create Sámi realities. The study focuses on feminist articulations, enactments, and dialogues from Sámi locations. Particular attention is paid to analyses of gendered settler colonialism and gendered epistemicide in Sweden and Indigenous feminist contributions to decolonisation and resurgence. By exploring the visions and strengths of Sámi feminisms, this study emphasises their significance to Indigenous healing, regeneration, and thriving.

The author foregrounds ways of knowing and writing beyond colonial world-making practices to move towards creating Sámi feminist knowledges starting from Indigenous epistemes, conceptualised as relational, interconnected, and response-able ways of knowing, being, and doing. By centring on Sámi perspectives, the study contributes to gender studies in Sweden and the broader scholarly project of developing an analysis of colonialisms in the Nordic region.

Ina Knobblock (born in Jiellevárre, 1981) is a Sámi and Tornedalian feminist scholar. *Writing-weaving Sámi Feminisms: Stories and Conversations* is her doctoral dissertation in gender studies.

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