

Achievements of Indigenous Self-Determination

The Case of Sami Parliaments in Finland and Norway

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The postwar period engendered a dramatic period of change and adjustment for Indigenous communities. This is no less true for the Sami, an Indigenous people whose traditional territories have been divided between the four nation-states of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. Despite this fragmentation (and Russia notwithstanding), Sami in the Nordic countries have achieved an extremely high level of political organization. They have also been very active in global diplomacies at the same time as they interact with and between the Nordic countries in a manner self-consciously understood and explicitly articulated as diplomacy. The Sami Council, a representative body with NGO status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council, was established only a decade after the cessation of hostilities of World War II. However, as this chapter will show, official recognition and other forms of "success" in hegemonic or "mainstream" diplomatic arenas may turn out to be quite hollow when diplomacy rests ultimately on mainstream rather than Indigenous ideational foundations.

Following schismatic events surrounding the Alta Dam affair¹ in Norway in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Nordic countries moved to recognize Sami rights (albeit at different speeds) with an emphasis on culture and language rights. Deeply influenced by the political systems and consensus models of the Nordic countries, Sami political and

Indigenous Diplomacies.
Ed. J. Marshall Beier. 2009
Palgrave.

organizational activism has resulted in representative Parliaments in each of the countries in which they reside, except for Russia. Norway, the country where the Sami are most numerous, is arguably where the most significant gains have been made, as signified by the recently passed (2005) Finnmark Act. A comanagement agreement governing the northernmost county of Norway, the Finnmark Act ensures a measure of Sami representation and input into major decisions affecting the use of land and resources in the Finnmark County.

However, a closer examination of legislation shows that Sami, while ably represented by their own political assemblies, may have failed to realize the full potential of the political, financial, and social resources at their disposal. Are Sami land rights a reality or a distant dream while the Sami Parliaments struggle with issues that are more local or even internal in character? With renewed interest in the resources of the Arctic by the nation-states, Sami political organizations are faced with an explosion of development in their traditional territories. Will the Sami and their representative bodies have a real say in the natural resource deals and negotiations, or will their much vaunted success at playing the Nordic system prove to be an empty prize?

This chapter examines the achievements of Sami self-determination with a critical lens. Focusing particularly on Finland and Norway, the chapter asks whether the Sami, with their unrivaled level of political access and financial resources that most other Indigenous peoples could only envy, have fallen short in their quest for self-determination.

Sami Political Organization

The Sami are the Indigenous people of Sápmi (Samiland), a territory that today spans central Norway and Sweden through northern Finland to the Kola Peninsula of Russia. A rough estimate of the Sami population is between 75,000 to 100,000, with 45,000 in Norway. Historically, Sami society was organized locally by the extended-family system called the *siida*. Each *siida* had its own tribunal to look after such matters as hunting and fishing disputes and disputes about a certain territory between two *siidas*. The *siida* system was the early model for Sami self-determination which was, however, completely ignored and gradually erased by the colonizing states. From the 1800s onward, harsh assimilatory policies toward the Sami were implemented in the Nordic countries. This was done mainly in the name of education and social welfare. According to the governments, the need for education and social welfare could be

fulfilled only through learning the majority language of the country. In Norway, for instance, teachers were paid a bonus if they succeeded in teaching Norwegian to Sami. In 1902, a law was passed by which land could only be owned by a citizen who both knew and used Norwegian.

A cooperative body of Sami organizations, the Nordic Sami Council was established in 1956 as a result of increased pan-Sami collaboration after World War II. Its original mandate was to advance Sami cooperation and promote the economic and cultural interests of the Sami people. The Council's work is delineated by the Sami Conference held every four years and attended by the member organizations. Soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Sami officially joined the organization and the name was changed to the Sami Council in 1992. Prior to the establishment of the elected Sami Parliaments, the Sami Council's focus was on internal Sami issues such as education, language, traditional livelihoods, women's issues, health and social issues, and cultural heritage. It also allocates funding for cultural and other projects and grants the Sami Council Literary Prize every year (Sami Council 2007). Besides this, however, the Council has had a growing role in inter-national diplomacies over the last few decades. The Sami Conference was one of the cofounders of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples in 1976 in Port Alberni, British Columbia. Since the 1980s, Sami attentions have increasingly focused on international Indigenous issues. For example, the Sami have been involved in the work of the United Nations' Working Group on Indigenous Populations since its establishment in 1982. The Council has had consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council dating to 1989. The Sami Council is also one of the Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council, a cooperation forum of eight Arctic states, six Arctic Indigenous organizations (called Permanent Participants), and other interest groups.

Like other social justice movements throughout the world in the late 1960s and 1970s, the second wave of the Sami movement (the first took place at the start of the twentieth century) demanded particularly an improved recognition of Sami culture and the Sami languages (of which the North Sami is, by far, most widely spoken). In 1992, Sami Language Acts in both Norway and Finland gave the Sami the right to use their mother tongue when dealing with the government agencies and state authorities. There are, however, serious shortcomings in implementing these laws. A recent study on the Sami Language Act in Finland revealed that, despite amendments in the law, many authorities and state bodies either ignore or are unaware of their legal obligations with regard to the Sami language (Haapala 2007). In Sweden, the Sami language has only a

minority language status together with other minority and immigrant languages spoken in Sweden. In Russia, there are no special laws protecting Sami languages.

The Sami movement also led to the establishment of Sami Parliaments, first in Finland in 1973, then in Norway in 1989, and in Sweden in 1993. The Sami in Russia do not yet have their own parliament but the matter has been debated for many years. The Sami Parliaments are elected bodies representing the Sami in their respective countries and have an advisory status on Sami-related affairs, though limited political and decision-making authority. They differ slightly from one another in terms of their mandates and functions, but their advisory role is such that they are in a constant state of diplomatic interaction with the governments in their countries.

The Finnish Sami Parliament started in 1973 as an experiment proposed by an ad hoc Committee on Sami affairs and the first elections were not held until 1975. Its role was largely limited to issuing statements related to Sami affairs in Finland. It also had the right to raise questions that it deemed important to be discussed in the national Parliament. In 1995, the Finnish Parliament passed an Act on the Sami Parliament that strengthened the previously weaker position of the elected body. In addition to its existing tasks of attending to Sami cultural and language-related affairs, issuing statements, and making initiatives, the new act "obligates the authorities to *negotiate* with the Sami Parliament in all far-reaching and important measures which may directly and in a specific way affect the states of the Sami as an indigenous people" (Mynetti 1997, 124). At the same time, the Finnish Parliament revised the Constitution to include the recognition of the Sami as an Indigenous people in Finland and guarantee their right to "cultural autonomy" according to which the Sami, in their geographically defined Sami region,² have self-determination on affairs related to culture and language. This "cultural autonomy" is administered and implemented by the Sami Parliament.

Founded in 1989, the Norwegian Sami Parliament is a result of the work of the Sami Rights Commission appointed after the Alta Dam conflict in 1980 to consider and to make recommendations about the legal situation of the Sami in Norway, especially related to the question of land and natural resource rights. Its first set of recommendations led to the approval of the Sami Act in 1987 and a constitutional amendment to include Sami rights in 1988. The Constitution's article 110a states that, "It is the obligation of the State authorities to create the conditions necessary for the Sami to protect and develop their language, their culture

and their society" (quoted in Henriksen 1999, 37). The Sami Act mandated the establishment of the Sami Parliament and its areas of activity include, according to the Act's article 2.1, "all questions that the Parliament considers to relate to the Sami." Moreover, "the Sami Parliament has the authority to make decisions when this follows from other provisions in the law or is decided in another way" (quoted in Henriksen 1999, 39). Like its counterpart in Finland, the Norwegian Sami Parliament can also raise questions and issue statements related to Sami affairs. Despite the wording of the Act, the political authority of the Sami Parliament in Norway is also limited to an advisory role except in some administrative areas such as allocation of funds to Sami organizations and projects.

The Sami Parliament in Sweden was established in 1993. The Alta River conflict triggered growing pressure to address the question of Sami rights in Sweden as well. In 1981, the Sami in Sweden requested a comprehensive evaluation of their situation and urged the government to start working on a Sami Act. A commission was established to this end and its findings were published in three parts between 1986 and 1990. As a result, a Sami Act was passed at the end of 1992. The Act delineates the establishment of the Sami Parliament with the primary task of promoting "a living Sami culture." Unlike Norway and Finland, Sweden did not approve constitutional amendments to protect the Sami as an Indigenous people as recommended by the Sami Rights Commission. Rather, it was argued that the Swedish Constitution already adequately protects the Sami alongside the country's ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities (Henriksen 1999).

Unlike the Sami Acts in Finland and Norway, the Sami Act of Sweden carefully defines the formal mandate of the Swedish Sami Parliament. Moreover, the Act specifies the Sami Parliament as a state authority not to be considered a self-determining body. The main functions of the Swedish Sami Parliament include the administration of funding for cultural projects and language-related initiatives, dissemination of Sami-related information, and ensuring that Sami needs and interests are taken into consideration in local and regional planning. Further, the Swedish Sami Parliament is in charge of Sami-related EU programs such as the programs on Sami development and on Sami communities. Together with its counterparts in Finland and Norway, it has also participated in the European Union cross-border community initiative called Interreg II (Henriksen 1999).

In 1986, the Sami Conference, the highest body of the Sami Council, formulated and accepted the Sami Political Program that states the following:

1. We, the Sami, are one people and state borders shall not divide us.
2. We have our own history, traditions, culture and language. From our ancestors, we have inherited the right to the land, water and livelihoods (Sami Council 1986).

In reality, the nation-state borders have divided the Sami people for centuries (the first border was drawn in 1751 between the present-day Norway and Finland). In general, however, the state boundaries were not explicitly felt until World War II and its aftermath, when the Nordic countries fell under different camps of the Cold War.³ After the war, Sami were also required to settle down more permanently on either side of the river, although many families had land on each side. New laws were passed to regulate land ownership. According to the Norwegian law, "Finnish citizens" (i.e., the Sami who happened to live on the Finnish side of the river when the border was drawn in 1751) were no longer allowed to own land on the Norwegian side.

In 1995, Sweden and Finland joined the European Union while Norway, following its referendum, decided to stay outside. This has had the effect of increasing the lived realities of borders dividing the Sami people. The Sami in Finland and Sweden were successful in negotiating a separate agreement in the European Union, the Protocol No. 3 on the Sami People, which recognizes the Sami and their rights as an Indigenous people in Europe. The protocol acknowledges the obligations Finland, Norway, and Sweden have toward the Sami according to national and international law to protect and develop Sami language, culture, society, and livelihoods, especially reindeer herding (Henriksen 1999).

To counter the divisive nature of state borders, and thus different national policies and legislation, the Sami have been working toward a joint Sami policy and improved cooperation and collaboration in the four countries in which they live today. The Nordic countries, which have a long tradition of Nordic cooperation, have already created bodies such as the Nordic Cooperative Body for Sami Issues and Reindeer Herding, established in 1964, to address questions related to livelihoods, language, culture, and education (Henriksen 1999). In 1995, the Nordic Council of Ministers agreed to set up a working group to draft a Nordic Sami Convention with the objective of strengthening the Sami rights to language, culture, and livelihoods. Established in 2002, the working group submitted its proposal in 2005 to the Nordic ministers in charge of Sami affairs and the presidents of the three Sami Parliaments for their approval. Negotiations on ratifying the Convention were subsequently delayed due to a lack of action on the part of the Finnish government to debate the

text in the Parliament (Eira 2007). Finland has also had difficulties in accepting some of the articles in the draft Convention, such as Article 3 on the right to Sami self-determination, Article 4 on Sami land rights, and Article 42 on reindeer herding as a Sami livelihood (Josefsen 2007b).

The collaboration between the three Sami Parliaments has been formalized by the establishment of the Sami Parliamentary Council in 2000. With limited funding and no secretariat, the work of the Sami Parliamentary Council has been, thus far, largely limited to occasional joint meetings of the Parliaments and networking among the presidents of the Sami Parliaments. The Sami in Russia attend the work of the Parliamentary Council as observers.

The Status of Sami Self-Determination

Henriksen (2004) outlines four main ways of organizing contemporary Indigenous autonomy and self-government in various parts of the globe. These include autonomy through contemporary Indigenous political institutions; autonomy based on the concept of an Indigenous territory; regional autonomy within the state; and Indigenous overseas autonomy. The Sami Parliaments in Norway, Sweden, and Finland, along with the Torres Strait Islander Commission in Australia and the Waitangi Tribunal in Aotearoa/New Zealand are examples of Indigenous self-government models constructed and practiced by means of contemporary institutions.

It is important to bear in mind that self-determination is a much broader concept than self-government. Self-determination ultimately refers to the right and ability to determine and make decisions in all spheres and aspects of life as articulated, for example, in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Existing Indigenous self-government agreements and structures are generally limited in their political and economic capacity and only allow for self-administration of certain programs. Below, I consider more closely the implementation and materialization of Sami self-determination in Finland and Norway.

Finland

In Finland, Sami self-determination is framed in terms of "cultural autonomy." The Act on the Sami Parliament was passed amidst intense opposition by the non-Sami population of Northern Finland who feared that Sami cultural autonomy would lead to economic benefits for the Sami

and the recognition of Sami land rights. To dispel these concerns, it was emphasized at parliamentary hearings that cultural autonomy and Sami economic rights related to the land are two different issues and that the former does not anticipate solutions with regard to the latter. However, it has been argued that, as with other Indigenous peoples worldwide, Sami culture and land rights cannot be separated from one another. The Act on the Sami Parliament articulates the Sami participatory rights in relation to land use in the Sami area. For example Article 9 obligates the state representatives to negotiate with the Sami Parliament about "all far-reaching and significant measures" that can affect the status of the Sami as an Indigenous people.

What is more, in international agreements such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and tribal peoples and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, culture is defined in a broad sense that includes economic and material dimensions. For example, the preamble of the UN Declaration recognizes the importance of control over Indigenous peoples' lands and territories in maintaining and strengthening their cultures. Further, in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Article 27, widely employed by Indigenous peoples, culture has been defined to comprise numerous forms, including specific ways of life closely connected to the land and resource use (Scheinin 2001). However, as Henriksen notes, "The current Finnish legislation does not acknowledge or grant any special land rights to the Sami people in their own Homeland, neither does the legislation acknowledge any exclusive rights for the Sami people to pursue their traditional livelihoods. Most of the land areas (90%) within the demarcated Sami Homeland in Finland are regarded as state property" (Henriksen 2004, 5). Although "cultural rights" may provide a basis for Indigenous peoples to defend and advance their collective rights (e.g., see Robbins and Stamatopoulou 2004), it can also be argued that separating Indigenous self-government from a land base transforms "the identity of Indigenous peoples from peoples to other minority groups that do not have a territorial/homeland attachment." It also "denies Indigenous communal ownership" (Altamirano-Jimenez 2004, 354). This approach reflects the neoliberal agenda and construction of Indigenous rights that seek to reduce and redefine Indigenous rights to fit into a new model of market citizenship with a focus on economic development.

Despite the Sami cultural autonomy guaranteed by law, it cannot be argued that the Sami in Finland have self-determination in any meaningful sense of the concept. While a historically varied and contested concept without a single norm (Lám 2000), self-determination for Indigenous

peoples means the right to "freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development" (United Nations Human Rights Council 2006, Article 3). In Finland, the Sami Parliament is not in a position to make decisions about the economic, social, and cultural development of the Sami people nor has it been very successful in putting and maintaining pressure on the national government to ensure, for example, the implementation of the obligation of the state to negotiate with the Sami Parliament in matters affecting the Sami.

There is no real intention or political will to solve the land rights question and the Sami Parliament has largely failed to keep it on their own or the national agendas. There are a few Sami Parliament representatives who consider ensuring Sami linguistic and cultural rights (in a narrow sense) sufficient to Sami self-determination, thus leaving land rights aside altogether because it has been proven to be so contentious. For several years, the Finnish government has indicated that it is interested in ratifying the ILO Convention No. 169 but before it is able to do so it will need to address the unresolved Sami land title and find a solution to it. However, the national government is interested only in finding the minimum requirements for the ratification of the Convention, not genuinely recognizing Sami people's right to their territories.⁴ This is despite recent and extensive legal historical research that incontestably demonstrates that the land currently designated as the state property has belonged to the Sami until as late as the early twentieth century (Korpjiaakko 1993; Korpjiaakko-Labba 2000).

Why have the Sami in Finland achieved so little in terms of self-determination although they were the first to gain their own elected representative body already over thirty years ago? One explanation can be found in its politically weak structure. The twenty-one Sami Parliament representatives are elected on an individual basis (i.e., there are no lists, organizations, or parties involved). Each candidate stands on his or her own merit and also, if elected, only represents himself or herself. This means that the Parliament consists of twenty-one individuals who are not committed to joint political platforms or agendas. Individual candidates may have election platforms but nothing prevents them changing their positions on issues upon being elected. Without a group behind the representative, voters have limited possibilities to have their concerns translated onto the agenda. Plenary meetings often are little more than opportunities for the voicing of a cacophony of individual opinions. Perhaps more significantly, due to institution of individual representation, there is no organized opposition in Sami politics in Finland that would exert pressure on the Parliament, especially in no performance situations.⁵ As Eva

Josefsen (2007b, 19) notes, "The establishment of [the] Saami Parliament [in 1973] led to Saami activists changing their focus from political mobilization to cooperation with the State." This has resulted in an almost absurd situation where the most significant achievement of the last period (2004–7) of the Finnish Sami Parliament is, in the words of long-time president Pekka Aikio, the decision by the national government to build a Sami cultural center in Anár/Inari—an issue that dominated the Sami Parliament agenda and discussions for several years (Yle sameradio 2007).

Norway

Unlike in Finland, the Sami in Norway have had strong national organizations since 1948, when the Norwegian Reindeer Sami Association was established. In 1968, the Norwegian Sami Association was established to represent all Sami whatever their means of livelihood. Today, there are other central Sami organizations but it is the Norwegian Sami Association that has been most successful in promoting Sami rights, including land rights. Also unlike the situation in Finland, the representatives of the Norwegian Sami Parliament are elected from lists created by Sami national organizations, Norwegian political parties, and local coalitions (Josefsen 2007b). Until the elections in 2005, the Norwegian Sami Association held a majority in the Sami Parliament. In autumn 2007, the "minority government" formed by the Norwegian Sami Association resigned and, for the first time, the president and the executive council were members of a Norwegian political party, the Labour party. This created a curious situation wherein the Labour party found itself in control of both the Sami Parliament and the Norwegian national government.

The Sami in Norway have, by far, achieved the most in terms of self-determination. The Alta River Case in the 1970s and early 1980s forced Norway to reconsider its Sami policies. In Finland and Sweden, the Sami "have not been able to confront the national authorities in the same manner" (Josefsen 2007b, 23). In Norway, however, the recognition of Sami land rights has not been met with the same fierce opposition and resistance as in Finland. The Finnmark Act, passed in May 2005 and hailed as an example for other states and Indigenous peoples to follow (Min Aigi 2005b; 2005a), recognizes Sami rights to the land and water. However, in its current form the Act only gives a right to limited comanagement.⁶ Besides setting up a comanagement board, the Act stipulates an establishment of a commission to further examine the nature of Sami land

rights. In practice, the act does not mean much for ordinary Sami people in their interaction with the land and resources (Utsi 2005a).

Norway was the first country to ratify the ILO Convention No. 169 concerning the rights of Indigenous peoples in 1989. With the passing of the Finnmark Act, the Norwegian government is also considered the first country in the world to integrate the Convention into its national jurisdiction. However, it can be argued that even in Norway the Sami are not meaningfully in control of their own affairs. While in recent years there have been positive developments in terms of recognizing Sami land rights in Norway, the Finnmark Act merely gives the Sami the right to internal and only partial self-governance in the form of comanagement. And, as James Tully (2000, 57) points out, giving Indigenous peoples "a form of proprietary right to a small portion of their territories under the domestic legal system" does not represent self-determination under international law. "As a result," he continues, "they are precluded from appealing to international law as peoples to redress infringement of their rights under the guise of domestic legal system" (Tully 2000, 57). Thus, internal self-governance "is not a valid form of self-determination at all," but rather, "a form of indirect colonial rule." As Tully explains, "The principle or right of self-determination is, on any plausible account of its own criteria, the right of a people to govern themselves by their own laws and exercise jurisdiction over their territories, either exclusively or shared. A people are said to govern themselves, and thus to be a free people, when the laws by which they are governed rest on their consent or the consent of their representatives" (Tully 2000, 57). In spite of the consultation agreement between the national government and the Sami Parliament signed in 2005 (Josefsen 2007a), the Sami Parliament continues to have limited authority and decision-making power. Lately, it has also been somewhat hindered from within by internal politicking and disarray, including a change of leadership in the middle of term.

Symbolic Institutions without Influence?

Sami political and representative bodies such as the Sami Parliaments and the Sami Council are in many ways direct copies of their Nordic counterparts. They have adopted mainstream political structures, practices, and procedures without careful examination of their appropriateness and without employing traditional Sami self-determination models, such as the *siiida* system, as a foundation or set of guiding principles for contemporary Sami organization. As Australian political scientist Peter Jull (1995) points

out, the trusting approach to the mainstream Nordic governing structures is reflected in the establishment of the Sami Parliaments. Jull's inquiries into process in the context of the Norwegian Sami Parliament "revealed little or no serious thought to structures, staffing, program management, etc. Those things were taken for granted. Capable Sami would simply slip into an elite Norwegian hierarchy" (Jull 1995, 132).

Instead of bringing a greater self-determination for the Sami in the form of increased control over our lives and future as a people, mainstream practices and agendas contribute first and foremost to the increased personal power and high-level positions for a handful of individuals. It is important also to recognize the ways in which mainstream politics and practices reflect patriarchal bias and thus reproduce existing gender hierarchies and inequality. The three Sami Parliaments in Norway, Sweden, and Finland have been male-dominated and, in the cases of Sweden and Finland, continue to be so (the percentage of women is 35 percent and 43 percent, respectively). The Norwegian Sami Parliament has had special campaigns to recruit more women as candidates as well as to encourage women to vote in its elections. In the autumn 2005 election, women formed, for the first time, the majority (51 percent) of the Norwegian Sami Parliament's total of 39 elected representatives (before the 2005 elections, the percentage of women representatives was as low as 12 percent). There is, however, a need to look beyond numbers and percentages. Although significant, the achievement of gender parity in the Sami Parliament does not automatically guarantee political practices or procedures that revoke or even challenge patriarchal structures, priorities, and political processes.

In contemporary Sami and other local organizations and political processes, they manifest, for example, through practices of trivializing and discrimination against women. Most often, these practices are very subtle and difficult to expose as discrimination but, as feminist scholars (see, for example, Enloe 2004, 5; Plumwood 1993) have pointed out, they nevertheless function as powerful mechanisms of control. Sami women politicians' perspectives and attempts to participate in a political debate is particularly trivialized when the topic under discussion is something traditionally considered as belonging to the "male sphere"—for instance, all-terrain vehicle permits, reindeer herding policy, and natural resource management. Aili Kesitalo, the first woman president (whose term came to an early and unexpected end in autumn 2007), challenged the practice of trivializing women's perspectives on such issues on several occasions (Utsi 2005b). She was the first high-ranking Sami politician to point to the reality of male mechanisms of control operating in Sami

politics—such as having her views discounted by her male colleagues who considered her lacking in competence—as well as witnessing the undermining of other Sami women politicians who have been told that "they don't know what they are talking about" (Aslaksen 2007).

The Nordic countries are considered world leaders in terms of social welfare, well-being, and equality of all of their citizens. Importantly, these countries also choose to promote and present themselves in that very way in international contexts. In keeping with this, they also cultivate an image of themselves as governments friendly to Indigenous peoples at the UN and in other fora where Indigenous rights are debated. They all voted for the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in September 2007 at the UN General Assembly. In the midst of this apparently favorable environment, the Sami also enjoy relatively good access to national authorities and politicians with long-standing cooperation (rather than mobilization) (Josefsen 2007b). Why, then, have the Sami not achieved a stronger position to implement their self-determination?

In his comparative study, Jull (1995) notes that, unlike countries such as Canada, New Zealand, and the United States, there is no visible Indigenous opposition in the Nordic countries in politics, the media, the academy, or other public arenas calling attention to Sami issues and criticizing the governments. There is a noticeable lack of political and public debate of the sort that is required to change public perceptions—as Jull points out, there is no change in policy without changing public perceptions. The Sami have also failed, by and large, to use media, courts, and other avenues to demand attention to Sami issues and to place and maintain political pressure on governments. Jull concludes that, although the postwar Sami movement developed somewhat earlier than Native movements in Canada and although the Sami appear among "the best educated, the most work-skilled, and the greatest participants in mainstream politics" of all Indigenous peoples in the world, the Sami seem "to have achieved less of what Canada's indigenous peoples regard as the main indigenous political agenda" (Jull 1995, 131).

The Sami leadership has chosen a different strategy, that of diplomacy and collaboration. Sami politicians have traded off their political agendas "for some official recognition and high-profile positions" and have "chosen to cooperate quietly" (Jull 1995, 138). As a result, Sami political discourse can be characterized as conservative; radicalism is commonly considered negative and "troublemakers" are made unwellcome if not ostracized altogether in and by public and political Sami discourses. During my own involvement in the work of the Sami Council in the late 1990s, I was told that the Sami approach is decidedly

different from the militant, radical, and adversarial ways of Indigenous peoples in North America. According to what I was told, the Sami approach, that of diplomacy, was much better because it has brought the Sami respect in various circles and led to leadership positions in international circles. This is a kind of conservatism that is commonly framed as a "common-sense approach" and validated by arguments according to which it is not a Sami tradition to "rock the boat." Instead, the central Sami strategies have always been adaptation and withdrawal and these have guaranteed the continuance of Sami culture despite assimilative pressures and policies. As Sami scholar Veli-Pekka Lehtola argues: "In the face of new influences, new models of government, new restrictions and new abuses and drawbacks, the Sami never rushed to an uprising and resistance. Instead, they have always given way, receded and retreated but yet held their own and integrated changes as an integral part of their own culture" (Lehtola 1996, 17–18).

Such strategies can be at least partly explained by the strong influence and heavy emphasis on equality in the Nordic context. Despite the Sami presence as well as the presence of historical minorities and increasing numbers of immigrants and refugees, the notion of homogeneous nations (the national romantic idea of "one people, one nation") prevails in public imaginaries and political discourses (Tuulentie 2001, 2003). This has led to framing equality as sameness, minimizing differences and emphasizing similarities (Gullestad 2001). Moreover, this framing of equality as sameness takes place in the framework of individualism in which there is very little, if any, attention paid to structural relations of power. In other words, although Sami rights are recognized as having a collective dimension, they nevertheless are largely constructed and represented within the frameworks of individualism and equality of individuals.

Another explanation for the apparent complacency of Sami political discourse and leadership can be found in the integration of the Sami in the Nordic welfare state after World War II. This has meant that, at present, "welfare services are by and large extended to Sami individuals in the same way as they are to the majority population in each of the Nordic states . . . [including] a wide variety of health and other personal social services, social assistance, education and occupational training, and housing" (Olsson and Lewis 1995, 162). As a result of this integration, the Sami in general are not plagued by social problems such as housing, unemployment, and ill health to the same extent as Indigenous peoples in other "First World" countries like Canada, the United States, and Australia. While the positive effects of the welfare state on the Sami

are visible to everybody, the negative effects have not been considered, even among the Sami themselves.

Sociologists Sven E. Olsson and Dave Lewis (1995, 177) have analyzed the conflicting ideologies of the welfare state and Indigenous peoples' collective rights and note that the principles of egalitarianism, social equality, and individualism represent "fundamental obstacles to the development of Sami cultural autonomy" and contribute "to the limited perspective of Sami minority [*sic*] rights held by non-Sami, Scandinavian policy-makers and society at large." They argue, "Of particular effect in this regard has been the dual Scandinavian expression of individualism and societal wholeness, leaving little space for the Sami to express or develop their own collective cultural interests. In essence, the Nordic welfare states have provided social security to Sami individuals with the intent of ensuring them a parallel standard of living to that of the Scandinavian majority while, simultaneously, tending to diminish both the importance and realization of the Sami's collective rights to protect their culture" (Olsson and Lewis 1995, 177–78). Individualism and social equality, the much-praised pillars of the Nordic welfare states, have diminished and thus diminished the sense of collective existence of the Sami as an Indigenous people who, besides individual rights and freedoms, also have collective rights. Interestingly, this conflict between individual and collective rights has not been raised, discussed, or further examined by the Sami themselves, including the Sami leadership and political bodies. This is so despite the fact that the conflict goes to the very core of the question of Sami identity as a distinctive collectivity separate from the Nordic nation-states and peoples.

If the Sami are to achieve a higher level of self-determination, there is a need to examine the incompatibility of the values of the welfare state ideology and the basic tenets of Indigenous peoples' collective rights. Robert Paine (1977) has coined the term "welfare colonialism" to describe the economic integration of Northern Indigenous peoples by the Canadian state. The central elements of welfare colonialism include a radical undermining of traditional livelihoods and placing Indigenous people on welfare benefits. As a form of colonialism, welfare represents a subtle means of neocolonial social control through well-meaning policies which erode and hinder local autonomy. By creating dependency and passivity, welfare colonialism paralyzes mobilization and practices of self-governance.

Tully (2000) also discusses the strategies of incorporation as contemporary forms of internal colonization. He points out that, in the Canadian context today, there are two main competing strategies: assimilation and

accommodation. One of the characteristics of assimilation is difference-blind liberalism that treats Indigenous people like any other members of the mainstream society. The ideologies of individualism and social equality that translate into "sameness" have been very powerful driving forces in Nordic society for the past several decades without prevailing counter-discourses (except, to some extent, in Norway since the Alta River conflict) to make a strong case for a collective "Indigenous difference" of the Sami as is the case, for example, among Indigenous peoples in Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. As a result, there are Sami who are content with rights that are more individual in nature, such as the promotion of Sami language in daycare, education, and media, and consider demands for collective land rights excessive or "impossible to achieve, thus utopian." A strong pressure to conform and the faith in the authorities—that the government will provide—have resulted in a general atmosphere of passivity, the lack of mobilization, and, in many cases, the adoption of a colonial mentality.

Conclusion

In recent years, particularly Indigenous women around the world have mounted timely and legitimate criticisms toward existing self-government models that must be taken seriously if we want Indigenous peoples' self-determination to succeed beyond words and beyond internal self-governance. The realities of multilayered violence faced by Indigenous women within and outside their communities are directly linked to the question of survival of Indigenous communities. Indigenous women play a crucial role in maintaining and cultivating practices, systems, and bodies of knowledge, values, languages, modes of learning—aspects that the recently adopted United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, for instance, seeks to safeguard. In short, Indigenous women play a crucial role in envisioning models of autonomy that do not merely replicate patriarchal, hierarchical structures that often reproduce the marginalization and subjugation of sections of society.

If the Sami are to succeed in establishing and putting in practice successful and viable structures of local autonomy and self-determination, it is necessary to closely and critically examine the hegemonic, often invisible and even taken-for-granted systems and relations of power that naturalize (if not deny) the social and political inequalities and thus undermine, prevent, and sometimes also negate the realization of Sami self-determination. This necessarily includes analyses within Sami society

and local communities in order to prevent the replication of colonial, patriarchal, and masculinist practices and structures of power. It might also be necessary to reconsider the centralization (and thus, consolidation) of power to national bodies such as Sami Parliaments while recent examples from other Indigenous peoples—in Canada, Chiapas, Bolivia, and elsewhere—indicate that implementation of self-determination is most successful at local and regional levels.

Sami leaders and Sami scholars alike have yet to engage in this kind of critical analysis and interrogation. Perhaps most importantly, there is a pressing need to engage in an ongoing public and political debate about the underpinning, unexamined (and unchallenged) liberal notions of Sami rights that construct them in individualistic, equal opportunity terms and thus fail them. One of the reasons that Indigenous peoples in Canada and New Zealand, for example, have achieved more in terms of articulating their rights as collective rights is that they have questioned and rejected "difference-blind liberalism" and argued for Indigenous difference that is not only cultural difference but includes material practices (see Macklem 2001). Obviously, the Sami Parliaments and other political bodies are an important dimension in implementing Indigenous self-determination, but far from the only one, especially if they exert their power and authority by and large in symbolic terms.

Notes

1. This was a major political issue in Norway that mobilized significant protest and other forms of oppositional politics in response to construction of a hydroelectric dam in Finnmark at the cost of flooding of Sami lands.
2. In Finland, the Sami region consists of the three northernmost municipalities as well as the northernmost province of Soadegilli/Sodankylä municipality. Only in the northernmost municipality, Ohcejohka/Utsjoki, are the Sami in a numerical majority.
3. Northern Norway was liberated from the German occupation by Russians while Finland was, at the end of the war, a German ally. Norway became a member of NATO while Sweden remained outside the military alliances. Although also officially neutral, Finland was, for decades after the war, under heavy supervision by the Soviet Union.
4. This is a good example of the continuing double standard of the Finnish government and its position on Sami rights. In international fora, Finland is keen to present itself as a progressive promoter and defender of Indigenous rights, yet at home the same Ministry of Foreign Affairs gives its support to Metsähallitus, the state-owned enterprise that administers "the state lands"

and which is logging in the winter grazing areas of Sami reindeer cooperatives (Scheinin 2001).

5. There is only one national Sami organization in Finland, Suoma Sámiid Guovddásearvi, established in 1996 to solve a representation problem with regard to the Sami Council. Previously, the Sami representatives from Finland to the Sami Council were elected from the Sami Parliament due to the lack of a national Sami organization. Another Sami organization, Sami Litto, was established in 1945 but never gained much strength in terms of representing the Sami in Finland (Sillanpää 1994). The organization no longer exists.
6. Limited because the Act excludes, for example, traditional fishing rights of the coastal Sami. Further, the Act only covers the northernmost county, whereas the Sami inhabit several other counties in Norway.