

# Chapter 9

## South Saami Cultural Landscape Under Pressure



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**Abstract** This chapter will analyse the debate over the use and management of the South Saami cultural landscape where the construction of a large number of windmills in South Saami land has drawn the front line between the reindeer herders and commercial interests. More specifically, I will examine how culture and the indigenous people's own history have been activated and are used to influence political decisions. For centuries, South Saami life and business have been integrated in their traditional landscape, where the relationships between people, economic activities and the landscape represent important core values for the South Saami community. The South Saami themselves point out that reindeer husbandry is an important prerequisite for the preservation and continuation of South Saami knowledge and traditions, and that language and culture are at stake if reindeer husbandry is threatened. The continuous use of the South Saami cultural landscape involves sources of knowledge, insight and identification because traditions and rituals are key cultural concepts and important identity markers in the modern South Saami self-understanding. Hence, this chapter seeks to shed light on how the South Saami society relates to the cultural landscape in this struggle, and how landscape, history and traditions act as an important point of departure in the historical and political negotiations with the majority society.

**Iktedimmi** Daate tjaalege sæjhta digkiedimmiem analyseradidh åtnoen jìh reerenen bijre åarjelsaemien kultuvreeatnamistie, gusnie bigkeme aktede stoerre låhkoste biegejårrehtsijstie åarjelsaemien dajvesne lea joekehtsem mierhkesjamme båatsoen jìh kommersijelle iedtji gaskem. Manne sijhtem goerehtidh guktie kultuvre jìh aalkoealmetji histovrije åtnasåvva juktie politihkeles sjæjsjalimmieh tsevtsehd. Gellie tjuetie jaepieh åarjelsaemiej jielede jìh jieleme akte iemie bielie sjidteme dennie aerpievuekien eatnamisnie, gusnie tsiehkje gaskem almetjh, ekonomeles darjomh jìh eatneme Leah vihkeles åejvie-aarvoeh dan åarjelsaemien siebriedahkese. Åarjelsaemieh jìjtjh tjærttestieh båatsoe lea joekeen vihkeles jis edtja åarjelsaemien

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daajroem jih aerpievuekieh vaarjelidh jih guhkiedidh, jih giele jih kultuvre maetieh gaarvanidh jis baatsoe lea havhtadamme. Dennie ahkedh atnosne aarjelsaemien kultuvreeatnamistie daajroegaaltijh, goerkese jih identifikasjovne gaavnesieh dan avteste aerpievuekieh jih vuekieh Leah vihkeles kultuvrelle biehkieh jih vihkeles identiteevæhtah dennie daajbaaletje aarjelsaemien jijtjgoerkesisnie. Daate tjaalege sæjhta dan avteste buerkiestidh guktie aarjelsaemien siebriedahke aktem ektiedimmiem atna kultuvreeatnamasse daennie gæmhposne, jih guktie eatneme, histovrije jih aerpievuekieh vaaroeminie sjidtieh dejnie histovrijes jih politihkeles raaresjimmine jienebelåhkoen siebriedahkine.

## 9.1 Introduction

This chapter has been written while the debate on constructing wind turbines in South Saami reindeer-grazing regions on the Fosen peninsula has been prominent in the media. The South Saami legal argument is centred on the claim that the studies prior to the decision to build the wind turbines had shortcomings and were inadequate, and on the claim that the decision is in contravention of international law when it comes to the protection of indigenous peoples. The courts have made decisions by the valuation tribunal in June 2017, where the *Åarjel-Fovsen sijte* [reindeer herding districts in Fosen] lost (Innrøndelag district court). Fosen reindeer herding district then applied for permission to appeal to the Supreme Court against the District Court's judgment of 15 August 2017. The decision of the Supreme Court came on December 4, 2017, which concluded that the appeal committee unanimously found that the conditions for granting permission were not fulfilled, cf. Section 30-2 of the Dispute Act, and to appeal directly to the Supreme Court is denied (Norwegian Supreme Court 2018).

The case before the valuation tribunal provides a good platform for studying what I will call *Historical and political negotiations about the culture and identity of the South Saami*. The chapter aims to examine the negotiation conditions for the South Saami in light of the conflict with the authorities and business interests. Wind turbine construction in South Saami lands raises issues of major importance for the South Saami as a group. This is about rights and the South Saami language. More so, many South Saami believe that reindeer herding is the most important culture carrier where the threats against the grazing regions is a threat against an entire culture.

The ongoing conflict between the wind-power developers and the South Saami is relevant for the discussions about the validity of building wind turbines, not only for the region dealt with in this chapter, but in practice for all land areas used by the Saami (Innrøndelag district court, page 42). Large headlines about huge investments in areas with little industry have in some cases overshadowed the objections that have been raised. Both ignorance and lack of knowledge appear to dominate the debate. It is particularly striking when the Director General of the NHO (the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise) under a visit to the construction site of the wind park argued, according to the newspaper report, that wind power will be less of a nuisance

for many people when located in the mountains: ‘It would have been worse if the windmills had been placed in densely populated areas where people could see them all the time’ (Adresseavisen 26.08.17).

Aesthetics appear to be the main argument, not which consequences such an intervention in nature will have for the landscape and the Saami. The objections raised by the Saami appear to be treated like background noise, and they are apparently doomed to lose the battle against business development and huge investments. The NHO Director General is not familiar with the conflict with the Saami, and cannot comment on it, it is asserted, but points out that ‘[...] we have a good system for impact studies in Norway, and I trust that the authorities have considered all the aspects and done their due diligence’ (Adresseavisen 26.08.17). The Saami are not a special interest group in the traditional sense, rather a group with statutory protection and with special rights. This demands special treatment by the authorities.

Even though there is a stated intention to provide a transparent and balanced assessment of the consequences, it is astounding how the Saami in the Fosen case have been rendered invisible. A major problem for the South Saami is that business and industry interests, politicians and the general public are insufficiently aware of the pressure the Saami have been under and are subjected to. The public discussion shows that only a minority of politicians and others outside the South Saami community have expressed support for the South Saami case. Traditional Saami lifestyles operate on the outskirts of society and apparently have to surrender to progress. Is this a continuation of Norwegianization and marginalization? (Adresseavisen 13.07.17). What will the consequences be for the South Saami if their cultural and memory landscape vanishes and reindeer herding has to be terminated? These are vital questions I will return to. First, I will shed light on the material and the importance and function of the cultural and memory landscape in the South Saami society.

## 9.2 The Landscape of the South Saami—Tradition, Community and Identity

The material consists of editorial texts, chronicles and opinions published by various newspapers and other media, as well as case documents from the courts. Interviews with reindeer herding Saami are important sources and provide personal perspectives on the debate. In connection with the study of South Saami cultural and memory landscape it is interesting to examine how the landscape can be understood as a component in the South Saami culture, and how traditions, history and memories are maintained by the use of the landscape.

It is often asserted that reindeer herding is important for promoting and continuing the South Saami culture, language and traditions; in other words, it is one of the necessary conditions for the survival of South Saami culture. History, location and continuity are key aspects where material cultural expressions and identity markers define and frame the South Saami community (Aarekol 2009: 11). Here lies the key to

the link between the use of the landscape, history and traditions, where South Saami identities have been formed through meetings and negotiations with the majority society, but first and foremost through their own culture and their management of it. This also relates to the connection to the culture, for example, through language, the performing arts, social customs, rituals, knowledge and artisan skills (Aarekol 2009: 11). Events, places, family, material and immaterial representations impact how the South Saami collective is administered and expressed. This is about the importance of reference points in the culture and in the landscape for the people who make up these communities.

Socialization into communities means adopting not only common norms but also acquiring the group's past. Groups will transform key events and interpretations of their own existence in the culture in different ways (Jernsletten 2009: 166). Group affiliation may be created by symbolizing the values and ambitions of the group, and by uncovering and classifying elements in the social life of people as bridgeheads to establish collective memories (Misztal 2003: 50 ff). Reindeer herding as a livelihood cannot represent all the South Saami, but the threats this South Saami livelihood is facing are used to show the marginalization of all South Saami. Joining the fight for grazing lands is thus not the exclusive calling of the people whose livelihood is at stake. Rather it may be something shared by many in the South Saami community.

Stable reference frames in the culture enable the South Saami to identify their own past in their contemporary time and will be able, therefore, to establish a sense of continuity and community. For example, physical and symbolic places and actions will be important as key identity markers. Bearing this in mind, the relationship between the South Saami and their cultural and memory landscape will be important, as will the roles that such things as landscapes, places and traditions play for the South Saami community. Reindeer herding may in some contexts be understood as the core element for communication and learning between the generations, where knowledge is passed on and managed within the social and cultural frames of day-to-day communication. The landscape and the activities relating to reindeer herding represent both material and immaterial frames, and are also 'locations' for a preserved and managed past. This is where the concept *communicative memory* finds its real content, referring to a type of relationship to the past which is created, regulated and carried forward through direct personal discourse. Communicative memory is shared by social groups, circulating in families from one generation to the next. The communicative memory is not restricted to direct communication between individuals, but also takes place within social, cultural and political frames (Assmann 1999).

The past, family relationships, representations of the past and the landscape will therefore have great importance for self-perceptions, value issues and power relationships in a group, collective or society. Various mechanisms are used to connect this special past to identity construction and to processing of contemporary challenges. Important events in culture frame the self-awareness of the South Saami, and defeats and victories in conflicts have also consolidated the framework for how such 'memories' function and interact. The mobilization for preserving the South Saami culture and memory landscape highlights features of the community, where the culture and

memory environments, understanding of time and the representations give substance to the formation of identity, and to the South Saami orientation in the present and the future. The relationship to the landscape and its management changes its character and becomes clearer when the threats against it are concrete and comprehensive. For those South Saami who are immediately subjected to the wind-power development, the threats may be perceived as an epochal change in their life and culture in the long term. There are few expressed personal agendas in this debate. Consideration of the collective and coming generations of South Saami is the aspect that is generally highlighted, or in the words of a South Saami: ‘This is not about me, it is about the future for my descendants’ (Adresseavisen 05.03.17).

In light of the ongoing negotiations about the lands of the South Saami, it will be possible to see how the arguments in the conflict between the South Saami and the greater society may be understood according to the concept of ‘strategic essentialism’ (Morton 2007, 126). In brief, this is about how special features of minority societies are displayed and used so the society in question will be heard and understood. In our context, the unique character of the culture is used by the South Saami to promote their political goals. In a South Saami context, it is argued that livelihood, traditions and language are closely related to culture and thus should be given statutory protection. However, the emphasis on reindeer herding as a political measure and a strategic identity marker for all may create internal tensions because not all in the South Saami community are directly involved in this practice as a business and livelihood, and it will appear distant to some. A critical point of view on such an approach is that it may lead to stereotypical simplifications of the South Saami as a group.

This danger of simplification notwithstanding strong forces argues that reindeer herding functions as a symbol for the whole South Saami culture and for the sense of community and coexistence among the members. Reindeer grazing and all activities connected to it therefore are very important for the South Saami identity and social life, not just for the reindeer herding Saami. This is the case even if people live in dispersed locations, only few master the language and not everyone are involved in reindeer husbandry. The cultural importance of reindeer herding is reinforced by the description of the reindeer herding community as separate communities within a *sijte* (a South Saami reindeer-grazing district or Saami village) (UiT, dictionary), as a union of several households with common duties for the herding (Bergland 2005). The families are bound together by common interests, coordination of duties and mobilization when necessary. Here historical and more recent threats have impacted today’s negotiation climate, where the vulnerability of the South Saami community is a crucial point for Saami spokespersons and activists.

### 9.3 Celebration and New Battles

Tame reindeer herding has been carried out in Trøndelag by the Saami for many centuries. When reindeer herding actually became the primary livelihood is difficult to determine, but most researchers believe that it started around the sixteenth or sev-

enteenth centuries (Fjellheim 1995: 58; Justis-og beredskapsdepartementet 2007). The cultural landscape used by the South Saami since that time continued throughout most of the nineteenth century (Fjellheim 1995, 58–82). Everything comprised by Saami cultural heritage and cultural landscape is called ‘the Saami room’ by the historian Sverre Fjellheim (Fjellheim 1995, 65 ff.). Even though there has been necessary modernization to keep up with the times, today’s forms of reindeer herding are an important culture carrier. The relationship between the people and the landscape has left many cultural traces, and this particularly applies to the reindeer herding nomadism. Reindeer herding and its regions, and the narrative relating to the relationships between people and territory, are part of important socialization processes and have helped create a sense of belonging to the Saami community (Fjellheim 1995, 72, and interview 15 March 2016).

Today’s threats are one of the many conflicts about regions the South Saami have been forced into over the last century, and are about more than just access to grazing lands. The right to nurture one’s own culture also includes special livelihoods that are connected to the use of land and land resources. This means that ensuring that the South Saami have the opportunity to use natural resources is protected by international law (Inntrøndelag district court, 43). Article 15 of ILO’s Convention relating to Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries is used as the platform for legitimizing the Saami demands.

The documents from the valuation tribunal in Inntrøndelag district court (June 2017) about the wind turbines in Fosen provide insight into the case. Even though the parties agree that Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (FN-sambandet) confers international protection of reindeer herding, the conclusions differ. With support from Article 27, the South Saami have long argued against building wind turbines on their grazing land in several locations. The presentation of the most recent interventions has a historical backdrop where conflicts and loss of land over several generations dominate today’s negotiation climate. The centenary celebration in 2017 of the first Saami congress, Tråante 2017, contributed to renewed media interest in the South Saami cause.

The celebration mobilized large crowds in Trondheim at the centenary of the first Saami congress on 6 February 1917. Saami from all of Saepmie (the lands of the Saami in South Saami language) dominated the streets throughout the anniversary week. Concerts and art exhibitions were arranged, in addition to theme exhibitions, presentations, political rallies and other meetings between Saami interest organizations. During the celebration on the 6th of February, Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg denounced the Norwegianization policy, and President of the Storting (Norwegian Parliament) Olemic Thommesen followed this by stating that the Norwegianization policy was unwise, prejudiced, suppressive and a great loss for Norway (Adresseavisen 07.02.17).

Prior to the anniversary, the President of the Finnish Saami General Assembly stated that it would strengthen border-transcending Saami collaboration, and that it could offer the Saami political progress (NRK Sápmi 16.02.17). Tråante 2017 was therefore a particularly important arena for the South Saami and the entire Saami community, not only in Norway but in all of Saepmie. The fact that the event was

arranged in the South Saami region was used to put more focus on a minority in the Saami community. The experiences from this comprehensive mobilization have contributed to a stronger focus on the Saami as a group, their history, culture and language.

The celebration may be understood as a token of respect to the Saami organization pioneers from 1917 (Norsk biografisk leksikon and Johansen 2015), and how 1917 was a watershed year as the congress started a process that involved the struggle for participation through politician representation, rights and issues relating to language and education on the Saami's own premises. Bearing this in mind, it is of striking that the conflict level has reached new heights in the anniversary year, and that the fight over the regions took place only a few miles from the headquarters of Tråante 2017 and the speech by the Prime Minister on 6 February 2017.

Building wind turbines will mean the beginning of the end for reindeer herding and the Saami culture in Fosen, a spokesperson for the reindeer herding Saami asserts (Adresseavisen 05.03.17). The central authorities have, on the other hand, claimed that the advantages of renewable energy production must weigh heavily in the assessments, and that building a wind park in Fosen is not in contravention of Article 27 (the UN International Covenant on *Civil and Political Rights*) (Innrøndelag district court, 26). The reindeer herding Saami have attempted to argue that the disadvantages are greater than the advantages, and that their arguments are supported by international law.

Attention generated by the case may be a double-edged sword. Many disputes and legal cases in recent years have led to negative attitudes to the Saami as a group. These worries emerge in an interview with a young reindeer herding Saami (Interview I. T. S 2016). The choice of strategy is based on culture having greater impact and understanding than technical matters concerning reindeer herding and economics. The premises for the communication with politicians and public opinion therefore appear to follow one particular track.

The Saami General Assembly has adopted such a line of thinking. A statement made in October 2009 states that 'the Saami General Assembly underlines the importance of reindeer herding for Saami culture and social life', and adds that weakening or obliterating reindeer herding will have 'negative effects on the South Saami culture in Fosen' (Innrøndelag district court 2017, 7). The same arguments are pointed out in an expert report from 2008 which analyses the consequences of introducing wind-park and power-line projects in the same area (ASK Rådgivning AS and SWECO Norge AS 2008).

The life and activities of the South Saami have for centuries been integrated in the landscape through the lifecycle and migration of the reindeer, where the relationships between the people, the reindeer herd and the landscape have a special position linguistically, culturally and materially. The negotiations that are still ongoing about the landscape are perceived as a threat against the very core of the South Saami culture. The concession rights have important conditions connected to the basis for wind-power facilities and power lines, which state that it must be rational in a social sense, and that the advantages must be balanced against the disadvantages (Innrøndelag district court, 13). The premises for what is socially rational and the

underpinning for balancing advantages against disadvantages are placed with other people than the Saami.

Thus, much is at stake, and not only for the reindeer herding Saami. Heavy commercial interests have already invested substantially in preparatory work for the wind park, and political gains are glimmering in the distance with the talk of renewable energy. The former Saami General Assembly President Vibeke Larsen has said that the state authorities must bear the responsibility for eradicating the South Saami language if the wind park becomes a reality (Sagat 23.08.17). These harsh words raised the conflict level and hardened the frontlines in the period following the evaluation tribunal's decision.

The emphasis on language and culture is pervasive, and not only from the Saami side. International law provisions have been introduced in the debate to find support for the South Saami arguments. A member of the Storting (Parliament) asserted in an interview 'we as a nation' are obliged to preserve the Saami indigenous population, their language, culture and livelihood, and for this reason, the herding of tame reindeer cannot be reduced (Trønder-Avisa 03.09.17). Several politicians have been concerned about preserving the South Saami culture, and a small group of politicians and South Saami spokespersons highlight culture and language as the most important aspects in the debate. Saying that the lines of conflict are drawn between *culture/language* and *wind power* may be seen as a simplification, but this is in fact an effective indicator of what is at stake.

The wind turbine park in Fosen is one of the biggest industrial investments in this part of Norway in recent decades. Approximately NOK 11 billion will be spent on the project, in addition to significant amounts to be used for building the required infrastructure. Spokespersons for the project have claimed that it will generate growth in an area with limited business opportunities and with negative population development. Politicians on different levels and the developers have argued that new workplaces will be created and long-term investments will have ripple effects for businesses and the municipal economy. A complicating factor, which is an interesting and demanding political issue, is that the industrial developers have won on their arguments about economic gain and environmental advantages with the general public and the authorities.

In a letter dated 14 April 2011, the reindeer herding Saami in South Fosen asserted that little intervention is needed before it is in contravention of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and that the sum total of earlier interventions is so large that any new intervention will be in violation of international law (Inntrøndelag district court, 16). In response to this, the wind-power developers claim that the ILO Convention (on indigenous and tribal peoples in independent states) has not been embedded in Norwegian legislation, and that the Saami thus cannot base rights directly on this platform (Inntrøndelag district court, 31). This has been an important and contentious issue where the Saami people have believed that the ILO Convention confers special rights and protection.

The developers have stated that the intervention will not prevent the practice of Saami culture in the region, but that the intervention is planned in such a way that it will permit 'the minority to continue to have financial gain from the activity'



(Inntrøndelag district court, 33). It is not clear what is meant by the formulation 'continue to have financial gain'. The core issue is that in referring to the same legislation the Saami are using, *Fosen Vind* and *Statnett* find that the assessment of the scope and consequences of the interventions is that they will not prevent reindeer herding in the area. The objections from the Saami have included the importance of the lands for the exercise of their culture and the possibility of carrying forward a traditional livelihood (Inntrøndelag district court, 37).

Will the external pressure the Saami are experiencing cause the internal sense of community to be strengthened, and the South Saami society to also include South Saami that are not engaged in reindeer herding? The historical backdrop of marginalization and displacement is not only a part of our history that is behind us, but, according to the reindeer herders, it also appears to continue under new conditions and with new actors. Today's conflicts must also be considered in connection with earlier actions and mobilizations for Saami interests. In the South Saami's area, the protests against an artillery range have been important because they established an alliance between environmentalists and the reindeer herding Saami. The plans to develop an artillery range in Fosen in the 1970s and the hydropower dam in Alta/Kautokeino in the 1980s (Fylkesmannen i Nord-Trøndelag 1982), which both involved substantial interventions in Saami lands, have coloured all later regional conflicts between the Saami and the greater society, and the plans for development have both divided and brought together local communities across political parties and alliances. Where landowners and municipal politicians have seen financial gains and workplaces, others have seen destruction of nature and harmful interventions.

On 11 November 2016, the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy decided to reject the applications for wind-power development by Fred. Olsen Renewable AS—Kalvvatnan vindkraftverk (wind-power facility) in Bindal and Namsskogan municipalities. The Ministry clearly stated that reindeer herding is of decisive importance for carrying forward the South Saami culture and the South Saami language. The two reindeer herding districts in question are among the few districts where South Saami is used as a native language and as a working language. The Ministry therefore concluded that reindeer herding enjoys a special position based on the principles in international law about material protection of indigenous peoples, and that no concession could be granted for the Kalvvatnan wind-power facility (Olje-og energidepartementet 2017). The outcome in this case may turn out to be important in other cases in the South Saami area.

The Ministry's conclusions have been supported by recent research reports from Norway and Sweden (Coleman et al. 2014; Skarin 2016). The documentation from Sweden and the many reservations that appear in the Norwegian study give grounds for agreeing with the critics of wind power in grazing areas; it is harmful to reindeer. The case has a human aspect that reveals how brutal the situation is. An area report cannot possibly capture all the circumstances and factors that adversely impact a small community. The reindeer herding Saami Arvid Jåma has complained several times about the situation, but in spite of support from several quarters and from expertise on the rights of indigenous peoples (Åhrén 2016), he is beginning to give up:

I am disgusted by society, that they are so vulgar that they are willing to crush so small an ethnic minority, so brutally. Now they have harassed us for several years with this decision. [...] Several of us will be forced to stop herding reindeer if the project is realized, it will be the end of many of us. We need large areas of land for the reindeer, and for us this is a question of resources. [...] It does not only concern me personally, but also adults and children in many families. Our grazing lands will be destroyed. (Fosna-folket 23.02.16)

Several South Saami say that the ongoing battle to make the case heard and protect their rights and interests is draining them of energy. One reindeer herding Saami in an interview claimed that the importance of reindeer herding for the South Saami community is underscored by the fact that people from various districts show their support in the fight against development through active participation (Interview M. K. J. 2016). The solidarity that comes to light between the South Saami is vital for maintaining the will to fight through community action and having faith that resistance will bring positive results. The Saami General Assembly has on a number of occasions supported the South Saami, and there is a dawning interest internationally which shows that the core of the case is more than simply reindeer herding (Artic Deeply 2016). This is apparently completely in accordance with the South Saami's own media strategy. The threats against identity and community are highlighted and used to show what is at stake, and become more tangible as in the following:

The feeling you get when you get up there and you know that this is mine – this is where I belong. Here generations of my family have lived far back in time. I feel I belong in the mountains, and it's an important part of my identity that I feel at home there. [...] I feel that it's very difficult because the mountains are where we are allowed to be ourselves, and without experiencing prejudices and day-to-day racism against the Saami. You feel that you are seen as being different. But when we go into the mountains, where you live and herd the reindeer, then there are no questions. Then you can be yourself. Knowing that it is being taken away from us is so painful, and we see that it is destroyed right in front of my eyes. (Interview with I. T. S 2016)

Identity is connected to the personal self-image and the individual self-understanding and position in social communities. In social and cultural communities these will be events, landscapes, objects, rituals and actions that the community recognizes as authorized carriers of traditions in the culture. But what characterizes South Saami identity? Everybody I have been in contact with points to the language, culture, landscape and the community connected to it. The Saami reindeer herders highlight the work, the mountains and the landscape as identity-forming, and as a hub of the Saami community.

A global ecological movement is working to respect, cherish and preserve environments, where the interests of indigenous peoples are incorporated into this way of thinking (Spruce and Trasher 2008). It is therefore a paradox that wind power, which basically is sustainable, clashes with the rights and interests of indigenous peoples. Saami cultural heritage and landscapes are under threat and are being violated. The history of the Saami and their presence and use of a region are not necessarily concurrent with the perception the majority society has of the region. This is a key element in the discussion about the right to use, customs, rights and co-determination. Issues connected to this have been on the agenda repeatedly, where representatives of the

South Saami have argued with the authorities and the greater society over the rights to the landscape of indigenous peoples. Political and emotionally charged concepts are taken into use, such as ‘invasion’, ‘occupation’ and ‘survival’ when describing the threats against the South Saami region (Letter to the Ministry of Justice and Public Security from Åarjel Fovsen Sijte 2009).

For the South Saami, the development of wind parks is only one of many attacks. ‘We have fought before, but always lost’, says one of the reindeer owners in Fosen. She is referring to the many previous interventions in the grazing lands that have put pressure on grazing and reindeer from all sides. There is no more space to lose, it is claimed (Interview with I. T. S. 2016). Developing more and more regions into infrastructure has made it more difficult to herd reindeer, and the consequences of further encroachments will be ruinous for sustainable operations. It has also been pointed out that the total calculations have not included ruined nature and other social expenses, and that for this reason, the project cannot be profitable. The developers disagree with this analysis (NRK Trøndelag 28.05.15).

## 9.4 Conclusion

During the annual South Saami culture festival under the direction of *Saemien Sijte* (South Saami museum and cultural centre in Snåsa) it was decided on 29 September 2017 to submit a statement to the Saami General Assembly, the Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget) and the Government about the lack of recognition of the Saami right to lands and natural resources (Saemien Sijte 2017). This statement connects South Saami culture and reindeer herding closely to each other. The letter states that the material basis for South Saami culture has already been marginalized, and that this is very serious when it comes to ‘preserving and developing the South Saami culture and the South Saami community’ (Saemien Sijte 2017). The importance of the landscape and reindeer herding for preserving and developing culture and society is thus being raised as a point to be heard in the land dispute.

On the local and regional levels, the conflicts in the South Saami region refer to managing the inheritance passed down by their forefathers, an inheritance that clashes with economic interests and infrastructure requirements. In a larger context, this issue is about whether indigenous peoples should be given opportunities to maintain their culture through the practice of the culture, work and livelihood. This is also part of a larger international discourse on indigenous people where parallel issues to what is now taking place in Fosen supply perspectives on domestic matters. The conflicts between grazing land and wind power are tangible evidence of the vulnerability of the South Saami culture, and also show that this land has a special position in a Saami context. But what we have also learned is that many South Saami can mobilize and stand together against political decisions. Mobilization and alliance-building led to victory in Namdal/Bindal, and convincing arguments have been given by the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy about vulnerability and threats to the South Saami culture which may be used in future cases.

In a larger perspective, the situations of the indigenous peoples in Australia, Canada and the USA have been studied and analysed (Vickers 2002). The inheritance after the colonists is a heavy burden, and many indigenous nations are today fighting for recognition and acceptance of their demand for the right to lost lands and restitution after being marginalized. The conflict where Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in North Dakota in the autumn of 2016 and into 2017 protested against a pipeline which was planned to cross their only source of drinking water is an interesting parallel. This case, as the one in Fosen, is about much more than preserving the landscape, the danger of ruining important cultural heritage and culture landscapes and issues relating to conflicts of interest and rights. On the surface, it is about the fight for natural resources, but at the heart of the conflict it is about preservation of culture and strengthening the opportunities of indigenous peoples to live in their traditional ways and to practice their culture through rights to land and autonomy. The commercial interests of the majority society, affluence and utility put much pressure on marginalized groups. This is a recurring topic in official UN reports on the situation for indigenous peoples, where many are fighting to manage and develop their traditional territories and resources (UN). The remaining indigenous peoples of the world lose ground steadily, not just losing area, but also losing in political, financial and health and culture terms. In a report from 2015, the UN concludes that indigenous peoples suffer from political marginalization and loss of autonomy (UN 2015, 53). How this is addressed by concrete measures varies. In Norway, it appears as if the authorities are pursuing a dual give-and-take strategy. In such a context the negotiations over Fosen and Namdal/Bindal reindeer-grazing districts are interesting cases. The issues raised in both cases are strikingly similar, but the outcomes are different. Why is it so? It appears that the timing of case processing has been decisive for the outcome of the two cases. It is likely that the knowledge about the South Saami community, its challenges with the reindeer herding and the threats against the culture, was broader in the public society and the ministry after the first case in 2013. Because of this, the political will to constructing wind turbines in South Saami reindeer-grazing regions has perhaps changed from 2013 to 2016.

The strategy of keeping business and livelihood in the background and rather highlighting the importance of reindeer and grazing lands or preserving the culture and language may have shifted the power relationship in favour of the South Saami in some cases. In the debate about development in Fosen the arguments about heavy investments in an area with little industry are suppressed and environmental policy arguments are received positively by politicians, landowners and industrial developers. It is thus striking how economic arguments and arguments about the need for renewable power by developers silence the Saami and push them far into the background. This was seen in the Trondheim newspaper *Adresseavisen* on 23 September 2017 when a letter on behalf of the developers on the effect of wind power did not mention the reindeer herding Saami at all (*Adresseavisen* 21.09.17). Despite the fact that the trial regarding compensation for the loss of grazing lands occurred simultaneously (*Adresseavisen* 01.05.18 and 16.05.18), the same was seen in another regional newspaper, *Trønder-Avisa*, on 16 May 2018, where the wind-power project was described without mentioning the reindeer herders perspectives (*Trønder-Avisa*

16.05.18). According to *Adresseavisen*, in June 2018, the High Court (*Lagmannsretten*) was worried about the wind-power developer's situation because a stop in the construction work, which the Saami believed was reasonable while the question of compensation was being considered, would have significant financial consequences for the company. This means that the 81 turbines will be in place in the South Saami pastures before the case has been processed in the judicial system (*Adresseavisen* 06/06/18). The case has been appealed to the Supreme Court.

To keep social communities together it is important to be able to communicate, act in harmony and share common experiences. In my judgment, the various connections the South Saami have to reindeer grazing play an important role through work as cultural manifestations. A significant proportion of the South Saami people are currently engaged in reindeer husbandry (about 170 man-years and more than 500 people in 2016 in the counties of Nordland, Trøndelag and Hedmark, the Norwegian Agriculture Agency 2017). The debate about establishing wind power in the grazing lands shows that there is close interaction between those working for the Saami case and how cultural tools are put into play. If so, it may be perceived as unfortunate that there are disagreements between the reindeer herding groups in Fosen. Internal disagreement may nevertheless be understood as the result of heavy and long-term pressure from the greater society. This puts the cooperation to difficult tests and makes it hard to stand together when major commercial actors and state institutions argue for the planned interventions. A rift benefits the developers and is also used as an advantageous argument in the courts.

However, many things indicate that reindeer herding and the land in a wide sense are key cultural points for many South Saami and their self-understanding, a fact that mobilizes them to fight for their culture and language. The efforts to engage and move opinion and politicians by highlighting the importance of the reindeer for the practice of the Saami culture have probably led to increased awareness of the Saami in southern Sápmi. Tråante 2017 has thus helped enormously to raise awareness of Saami culture and the Saami community. The reindeer herding Saami in Fosen have attempted to benefit from the relatively large media interest in Saami culture both before and during the celebrations. Terms such as 'cultural genocide', 'racism' and 'occupation' are used by some South Saami to describe new conflicts with the greater society. An application to the UN Committee on the elimination of racial discrimination was in October 2018 submitted as an urgent request for interim measures to halt the construction of the Power Plant (Saami Council 2018). This application was not processed upon completion of this article. In spite of the harsh words and references to the injustice of previous times and waning future prospects, it appears that the South Saami will encounter more pressure and new demands to yield grazing lands for their reindeer in the years ahead.

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