

5.4 Development challenges in Indigenous communities in Swedish Sapmi

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Introduction

The Sámi parliament general assembly is the only legitimate representative for the Sámi peoples. Three Sámi parliaments have been established within Sápmi but also in the three Nordic countries; in the republic of Finland, in the kingdom of Norway, and in the kingdom of Sweden. The informal process of establishing a people's elected organ on the Kola Peninsula within the Russian Federation is now in the progress.

The Sami parliament in Sweden held elections on 17 May 2009 and was inaugurated on 25 August by Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, chair of the UN Permanent Forum of Indigenous Issues. It was the first time that the UN chair was able to open an Indigenous people's parliament. We were proud in her presence.

We, the Sámi people, are the Indigenous people of Sápmi. Our land is divided into four countries and stretches from northern Scandinavia all the way to the Kola Peninsula. Our people have lived here since time immemorial managing the lands and waters with great care and respect. Our culture is based on a life in which humans and all other living beings are interrelated. We view nature as a soulful living being. Our view of nature stands in sharp contrast to the western view of nature. Only through deepened mutual understanding and increased cooperation can we create a common future.

Our deep relationship to nature is difficult to put in words. To live in nature, and to live directly from what nature can give, creates an immediate relationship between us and nature (animals, each other). We rely on a living relationship to Sápmi, our home. If we – or someone else – destroys nature, it will also harm our culture.



Professor Lars Bäckman at Umeå University has through scientific research on Mitochondrial DNA established that the Sámi people do lack relationship with any other known people in the world. The only relationship with other peoples that can be found is in the relation that various peoples that do live in the same area for a longer time will establish.

The environment in Sápmi is delicate. A resilient nature is the basis for our culture and existence – it requires that we use it with utmost care. Land is life! Healthy, largely unfragmented ecosystems with high biological diversity as well as thriving small scale trades are the very basis for a sound development of our culture. The natural conditions in Sápmi have changed at the same time that modern materials, new technologies, and vehicles have become part of our lives. Nature is increasingly exposed to wear and tear, resulting in damage which cannot be repaired in the foreseeable future. Sami customary rights are challenged and even dwindle through court decisions. Lands were altered through expansion of forestry and disappeared due to hydropower development.

Of course, positive changes and essential technical means have also been introduced in modern times. All these changes together have strongly impacted our patterns of life and us. It is important that we distinguish innovations that affect our lives in a positive way from those innovations that make us increasingly dependent on the global economy and the availability of cheap gas and oil.

The global warming and escalating climate change have already changed the everyday life for the Sámi people. The possibilities for the global market and actors with no, or very low, standards of ethical or social responsibility to intrude on Sámi traditionally territories have increased. The Indigenous way of life is very clearly connected to nature whether it concerns culture, languages, livelihoods, or just the joy of being a healthy human under the sun, moon, and the stars. Everything is connected to the land and waters. And the land and waters are inextricably connected to us, the Sámi people.

The spirituality of the Indigenous peoples and their close connection to nature is recognised in the ILO convention no. 169. The convention singles out that dominating people should invite the Indigenous people and begin a process of establishing methods of consultations on the issues that affect the Indigenous peoples. This is based on the two basic principles: respect for



the Indigenous peoples, and respect for their participation in decision-making processes. Respect and participation in decision-making will also make it clear for all citizens, (also among the dominating peoples) that the Indigenous people existence is a valuable contribution in the country in which we do live.

Sweden and Finland have for a long time rejected efforts to strengthen Sámi rights, claiming that it is not in the interests of the dominating people in the republic or in the kingdom to ensure other rights than what the law already grants to the Sámi peoples. This was more or less informally confirmed especially during the Swedish chairmanship of the European Union during 2009, where activities that involved the only Indigenous peoples within the boundaries of the EU, could not be seen.

The Kimberley declaration says:

Since 1992 the ecosystems of the earth have been compounding in change. We are in crisis. We are in an accelerating spiral of climate change that will not abide unsustainable greed. Today we reaffirm our relationship to Mother Earth and our responsibility to coming generations to uphold peace, equity and justice. We continue to pursue the commitments made at Earth Summit as reflected in this political declaration and the accompanying plan of action. The commitments that were made to Indigenous Peoples in Agenda 21, including our full and effective participation, have not been implemented due to the lack of political will.

The European Union's internal market seeks to guarantee the free movement of goods, capital, services, and people anywhere within the 27 member states. This allows not only for the free movement of goods amongst member states, also the free movement of the factors of production. It is intended to be conducive to increased competition, increased specialisation, larger economies of scale, and to allow goods and factors of production to move to the areas where they are most valued, thus improving the efficiency of the allocation of resources.

The situation on Swedish side of Sápmi has escalated quite seriously after Swedish membership into the European Union. The government has taken a decision to focus on the production of energy, and that can be both as fast-growing trees and production of electric energy ready to be transferred down to the biggest cities of the European continent by the end of 2015.



The slow growing trees that could be found in old forests with a rich diversity and with many small rivers containing fresh waters, was once the source for a limited production of high quality timber. This kind of Sámi forests have now been replaced with forests of fast-growing trees of low quality. Along with a loss of diversity is a loss of the old Sámi culture.

The decreasing average age of forests reduces the production of lichen, both in trees as well as on the ground, and severely affects the food chain for the reindeers. The possibilities to hold a large herd of reindeers grazing in any area where it earlier was possible to do so, are diminishing. Fewer numbers of reindeer, more widely spread herds, lower production of both reindeer calves or kilos of reindeer meat, and more work from the reindeer herders is the result.

The production of energy with tens of thousands of windmills located in various windmill parks all over Sápmi, is what we can face in near future. The fragmentation will increase and reach levels beyond what is possible to control or accept, especially in the coastal areas. Not only the single windmills, but also roads and power lines will limit the area available for reindeer pasture.

The domestic law allows the intrusion and I shall give one remarkable example of the authorities' attitude. A sub-commission in the regional government in the northernmost county in Sweden stated: "If interest of windmill companies and the Sámi peoples can't adjust to each other, than the Sámi peoples have to stand back to benefit the interests of the dominating society". The Swedish government later decided to allow the establishment of a windmill park consisting of 1,101 windmills occupying 10,000km². The Sámi legal property rights to reindeer pasture, confirmed and verified by the Supreme Court in various cases, has so far been neglected by different entities of the Swedish government. The local Sámi village has so far rejected the offers for economic compensation offered by the windmill company. No wonder that the company was not especially keen to come to a deal with the Sámi village with that kind of support from the regional government.

However, there is a small light in the dark tunnel. Samiid Rikkasearvi, Sami Association (SSR) has together with Swedish Vindenergy received financial support for a project with a time span for



2 years; 2009-2010. The aim is to bring forward guidelines such as a code of behaviour, and manuals for prospecting, building, and operating wind power within reindeer herding areas. These guidelines are focused on limiting the negative impact at the Sámi villages, and also to make it easier for cooperation between companies and Sámi villages. Another advantage is to bring forward a best practise and good example of how windmill parks within reindeer herding areas can increase the mutual benefit. Knowledge is an important part of the project in order to increase the understanding between energy companies and reindeer husbandry.

Two seminars have already been held, and the third and last one will be held in the last month of 2010. The result of the project, with all its findings, will be gathered and documented and will be made available for future use. Various companies, Sámi villages, local governments, regional governments, and various state authorities can use the documentation. It is not possible to foresee what the final result will become, but so far does this project looks very promising.

Another example of industrial expansion is the increased numbers of permits of prospecting minerals in northern parts of Sweden and Finland, both member states of European Union. Thanks to the economic recession several of the permits not been used, and they will soon expire. But it will be possible to apply for new permits in due time. It has not been shown to the Sámi representatives, in any way, if the company applying for the permit is a responsible company with a reasonable and needed amount of competence, technique, and financial support. Neither has it been shown if there are any reasons to estimate that findings will occur, in the areas that will be investigated, that motivates the company to apply for the 3 year permit to receive the special right to investigate the area concerned.

When the process of drilling in some cases initiates, it may result ground water contamination from drill holes, the spreading of dust from the drilling processes, and also the leaving samples on the ground instead of gathering them all. This can be very hazardous if the findings are contaminated by uranium. And where can the waste be deposited? This part of the investigations process, as well as the process of granting permits, must be changed.

“Health is not only absence of damage or injury, but a totally physical, mentally & social well-being”. This is the World Health Organisation (WHO) definition of health that has been in use



for more than 40 years. How is it possible to be in a good mood, to be healthy, when we see how our neighbours, how our neighbours reindeers are going down in numbers? And how can we enjoy living in the midst of a dominating society that so clearly shows how it values and appreciate the Sámi culture, livelihood, and us?

We wish to live in a resilient Sapmi that is rooted in a healthy natural landscape and a living Sámi culture. People and nature shall have a long term capacity to renew themselves and to sustainably evolve even in times of significant changes. Both, nature and culture shall be experienced as enriching for the surrounding world. A resilient living environment is the basis for people, animals, and plants to thrive and evolve. What we take from nature must be in balance with what it can give. Nature conservation and environmental protection must be given highest priority in all planning processes.

We are sustainable experts. Sustainability has always been a necessity for our culture to continue and for our society to go forward. We will use this knowledge in our effort to create a long-term sustainable society. Sustainable development builds on a careful balance between traditional and modern knowledge. As long as innovative technologies are used within the framework of our value system they will neither destroy the living environment nor our health.

Only if we all act together and believe in the future can we handle the challenges before us, we have no time to loose. The world is a beautiful place and we do need to take care of it. What do we want and what do we choose: the easy life or the good life? 1.1 billion people worldwide are overweight and many suffer from diet-related diseases, 925 million people worldwide suffer from hunger and malnutrition. Together we can establish locally produced, organic, and fair food systems for all. 75% of agricultural crops have been lost in the last century; 36 out of 40 of the poorest countries export cereals to feed animals in rich countries; more than half of the food we produce is discarded or lost.

The Sami Parliament's Living Environment Program EALLINBIRAS / IELLEMBIRÁS/ JIELEMEN BIJRE was adopted by the Parliament on 19 February 2009. The programme is very comprehensive and includes various aspects as well as responsibilities into the plan of action. The purpose of the program is to:

- Provide a foundation for all of the Sami Parliament's operations;



- Set goals for a sustainable and resilient Sami living environment; and
- Inspire ourselves and others with the Sami Parliament's environmental perspective and initiatives.

I will briefly mention some of the aspects in the programme:

Biebmu (Food): the Sami Parliament will encourage

- Promotion of Sami food production and food processing (both in quantity and diversity),
- Increased use of seasonal natural foods (e.g. slow food),
- Resistance (boycott) to genetically modified goods, and the
- Purchase of organically produced and fair trade certified foods (applying to foods which cannot be produced in Sápmi).

The living environmental programme has also brought forward requests for each single individual to consider, such as:

Biebmu (Food): The Sami Parliament asks you to

- Question your food habits and to use Sami traditional foods when possible,
- Eat as much seasonal and natural food as possible,
- Avoid genetically modified products, and
- Make sure that the food products you buy which cannot be produced in Sápmi are organically produced and fair trade certified.

With this programme, Sami activities/trades/products will become visible and known as environmentally friendly, sustainable, and for being a healthy and nutritious food. We believe that everyone has a fundamental right to the pleasure of good food and consequently the responsibility to protect the heritage of food, tradition, and culture that make this pleasure possible.

Slow Food's approach to agriculture, food production, and gastronomy is based on a concept of food quality defined by three interconnected principles:

LOCALLY PRODUCED fresh and flavoursome seasonal diet that satisfies the senses and is part of our local culture;



ORGANIC food production and consumption that does not harm the environment, animal welfare, or our health;

FAIR accessible prices for consumers and fair conditions and pay for small-scale producers.

The opening and closing ceremonies of Terra Madre 2010, from the 21st to 24th of October, will be held in Turin. Five representatives of native populations from each continent will also give a speech in their mother tongue: an Australian aborigine, a Gamo (Ethiopia) representative, a Kamchadal delegate (Kamchatka, Russia), a Sámi (Sweden), and a Guaraní (Brazil). Slow Food also has a branch located in Sápmi, Slow Food Sápmi, and it is open for Sámi entrepreneurs who produce traditionally, for instance, products of reindeer and fish.

The last years' financial crisis has revealed that major values can lay also in small and slow growing enterprises and local entrepreneurs. If we can show that the Sámi traditional way of living and our traditional knowledge is appreciated in the large countries of the European Union, with that discovery will also spread a feeling of satisfaction, happiness, and make us to be more proud of our origin and our qualities. The international interest as well as the participation of Sámi entrepreneurs in slow food will benefit us all together.

Laponia, the World Heritage area in Lapland is a Sami cultural landscape with traces of human activities which go back all the way to the Ice Age. From time immemorial, the Sami have lived in this area, first as hunters and fishers and later as reindeer herders and settlers. The World Heritage area is also an important natural landscape with mountains, deltas, virgin forests, hundreds of glaciers, and Western Europe's largest marshlands. It is also an area rich in animal and plant life that has several species on the verge of extinction. 95% of the land is in state ownership and under very strict national park and other nature conservation legal control. There are three main stakeholders in the management; the Sami society, two municipalities, and the County Administrative Board who is responsible for the overall management of the site.

Both due to the Sami culture and the natural value of the environment, this region merits its inclusion in the World Heritage list. A world heritage area is a place of cultural or natural importance, or both as in this case, which is of such value that its preservation is a priority for



the whole world. Laponia covers a surface of 9,400 km² and consists mainly of two kinds of landscapes. To the east there is a flat area with enormous forests and marshes while the western area is a mountain area that consists of a variety of natural environments. The management coordination of the World Heritage Site was identified as a key issue in the early stages of the nomination process. In 1996, the World Heritage Committee recommended that the Swedish authorities continue to work with local Sami people and consolidate the management plan for the site. Many of the overlapping nature conservation regulations lack legitimacy in the eyes of the local community and there are fundamental conflicts concerning management that arise from disputed ownership, for example over restrictions placed on the Sámi community over land and resource use.

A few years after the inscription, the Sami representatives questioned the conservation approach in the County plan and submitted their proposal for a management plan to the government. It focussed especially on enhancing Sami culture aiming at a Sami World Heritage management plan. The municipalities, the County administration, and the management drafted parallel nature conservation programmes with the result that a range of development proposals came to a standstill. It was not until almost ten years later that a new initiative by the County has gathered all stakeholders in a “Laponia process” and an agreement on management objectives has been reached.

The proposed management structure includes one coordinated delegation body with representatives from the Sámi society, the municipalities, the County, and the National Environmental Protection Agency. It will deal with the different authorities on all matters concerning the Laponia World Heritage site. The Laponia delegation will meet regularly and does not deal with operational issues. Thematic working groups who meet monthly to develop proposals for current management issues will develop these. While the process leading to a coordinated management plan has been lengthy, the stakeholders now recognise that it has taken time to learn about each other’s needs and development objectives.

Today there are 878 World Heritage sites in 145 different countries. Of these, 679 are cultural heritage sites and 174 are natural heritage sites. Only 25 are combined cultural and natural heritage sites like Laponia. Sweden has 14 World Heritage sites and according to the population we have the most World Heritage sites per inhabitant! Heritage is our legacy from the past,



what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritage is both irreplaceable and a source of life and inspiration. They are our touchstones, our points of reference, and our identity. What makes the concept of world heritage exceptional is its universal application. World Heritage sites belong to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located. By signing the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, countries recognize that the World Heritage sites located on their national territory, without prejudice to national sovereignty or ownership, constitute a world heritage “for whose protection it is the duty of the international community as a whole to cooperate”.

It will not be easy to make the long journey together in for instance Terra Madre or in Laponia, or in any other activity and become successful, but if it were easy your presence here wouldn't be required. You are here because there is tough work that needs to be done and you are the ones who can do it. With these words I do wish you all a good, healthy, and long life. I will end my statement by quoting the Sámi poet Paulus Utsi:

*“As long as we have water, where fish live
As long as we have land where reindeer graze and walk
As long as we have land where the wild hides
We have consolation on this earth
Once our homes don't exist any longer and our lands are destroyed,
Where shall we then live”*

Stefan Mikaelson
Sámi Parliament

