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Larger Society in the North, the Sami Case”

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**PATTERNS OF TRANSFORMATION AND LOCAL SELF-DETERMINATION:  
ETHNOPOWER AND THE LARGER SOCIETY IN THE NORTH, THE SAMI CASE<sup>1</sup>**

by Tom G. Svensson

Native peoples in the North are presently facing severe pressure from the outside, the cultural implication of which is difficult to appraise. Over the years indigenous people have experienced a general process of transformation from a state of relative autonomy, both in cultural and political terms, to that of encapsulation. Closer ties to the larger society are thus established, resulting in de-autonomization of the ethnic group. The emerging ethnic minority situation has certain basic features in common, although its specific form may vary from case to case. Such features are 1) a low degree of self-determination, i.e. decision making power in their own affairs, and 2) no, or very poorly developed, negotiation power vis-a-vis the larger society, particularly the Nation-State. Local community development is part of the adaptation to this new ecology, encompassing both environmental conditions and social circumstances, in which ethnopolitical mobilization appears as the primary factor. Due to an extensive land use pattern, native land is most vulnerable to encroachments by industrial exploiters. For this reason firm rights to land and water are crucial to any indigenous ethnic minority group in the Arctic and Sub-arctic region. The general process of change outlined above has recently been noticed by several anthropologists referring directly to the situation in the North. (See, for instance, Paine 1984; Dyck 1985; and Brosted et al. 1985.) Concerning the problem of aboriginal rights, as well as the issue of land rights and its diverse implications referring to two specific cases in boreal North America, Michael Asch and Thomas Berger have contributed with two substantial case studies (Asch 1984; Berger 1985).

The following paper focuses on the same problems as do the works by the aforementioned scholars. Starting from a set of significant transformations, I hope to demonstrate how the Sámi in northern Fenno-Scandia are trying to cope with their ethnic minority situation in order to maintain viability despite ever increasing adversities. The transformations point to the economic and political aspect of solving problems, as well as re-modelling the ecological adaptation. Furthermore, they connect to the strengthening of culture competence and ethnopolitics.

Basically the Sámi are found in the northern parts of Finland, Norway and Sweden. The total population is currently estimated to be close to 60,000, but there is no accurate census available. Norway has by far the largest number, ca 35,000, whereas Sweden contains 17,000, Finland roughly 4,000 and a meager 2,000 are living on the Kola peninsula in the U.S.S.R. Only a small part of the Sámi population, about 7,000, are reindeer pastoralists; far more are sedentary, obtaining their main means of livelihood from small-scale farming and inshore or lake fishing. In addition to pursuing these traditional forms of local economy, several Sámi have chosen various non-Sámi occupations, living in major towns in the north or in large cities or towns in the south. The following paper tries to uncover basic features of social and culture-political change related to the Sámi primary group, i.e. those still carrying on Sámi-specific ways of production, regardless of the nation to which they belong. For obvious reasons the Sámi in the Soviet Union are omitted in this context.

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### Transformations

In order to elucidate change on the community level, it is appropriate to start examining the local community, emphasizing the contrast between it and semi-urban settlements. Among the Sámi, and especially those engaged in reindeer pastoralism, the only genuine social unit of any size is the sii'da. Above all this group is a production unit, characterized by collaboration and individual ownership of reindeer. It is formed by diverse principles for recruitment, but its nucleus is usually made up of close kin, either of a sibling group or of those considered equivalent to siblings, e.g. brothers-in-law or first cousins. Its size may vary according to seasonal changes; this bilateral grouping is dynamic and based on a regular oscillation between fusion and fission and also on shifting personnel. (For a more detailed and thorough account of the concept of sii'da see in particular Pehrson 1957, Whitaker 1955, and Svensson 1976:72-77).

The sii'da unit can be traced back to the era when the economy of most Sámi was founded on hunting and trapping. When the Sámi became more specialized in their ecological adaptation, starting from about 1500, the sii'da remained as the basic social unit. Its local autonomy was substantial up until about the 1880's. Certainly the Sámi had become more and more subject to external pressure long before that time, a process of encapsulation which culminated in the 19th century, but it was not until a State-run reindeer herding administration was established that the Sámi lost a great deal of their local autonomy. The sii'da was then reduced to being a practical solution for making reindeer herding effective and stripped of any real influence. It was replaced by a new institution, a kind of Sámi community called lappby, constructed and instituted by the State in connection with a special Reindeer Pasture Law, offering rules and regulations concerning the Sámi reindeer herding. This new community was basically an administrative unit related to reindeer herding. As a result of legislation the Sámi population was formally divided into two distinct categories: a) reindeer pastoralist Sámi and B) non-reindeer Sámi. Since then only the former category is entitled to particular rights qua Sámi, as specified below. The main reason for introducing this community, with rights of membership restricted to those Sámi still claiming reindeer herding rights, was in part to make reindeer herding more ordered and regulated, in part to facilitate the administration of the Sámi minority and its reindeer herding activities which are based on highly extensive land use patterns.

In a sociological sense the Sámi community is an enlargement of the sii'da. Diverse co-operative efforts in reindeer herding and management and co-habitation form the cement on which locally defined belongingness is based, and its leadership is elected in a more formal way compared to the traditional sii'da organization. (For further details see Svensson 1976.) By means of such de-autonomization, the Sámi came directly under non-Sámi jurisdiction, although they, as a special group of people with a particular occupation, were granted certain exclusive rights, such as monopoly rights to herding reindeer and favorable rights to hunting and fishing on their reindeer pasture land.

The Sámi community is a larger unit than the sii'da, consisting of several siidat, varying from three to ten. The Sámi ethnic minority situation has been greatly influenced by a state of powerlessness in all cases of conflict of interests, where decision making is controlled by officials of the regional administration. In this sense the Sámi experienced a high degree of tutelage, legally enforced by the larger society through its regional and national reindeer administration. (Cf. Paine 1977.) For many years the Sámi quietly accepted this state of affairs, since there was a protective element built into the structure, but as the number and extent of industrial developments in Sámi core areas increased considerably, the Sámi appraised the Sámi community in its original form to be insufficient for approaching these new problems concerning conflict about resource utilization, and they began to work towards an organizational change. After years of trying in vain, the Sámi as a united force finally succeeded in having the government conduct an inquiry leading to a revision of the entire structure of the reindeer herding administration, including the authority of the Sámi community. In 1971 a new Reindeer Husbandry Law, RNL, was passed, which can be viewed as a step towards limited re-

autonomization on the local level (RNL 1971). For the first time the Sámi community is now entitled to have its own meetings concerning all local affairs without active interference on the part of the authorities, also those having an impact on external administrative matters. This is a noticeable improvement, especially as it is accompanied by certain Sámi participation in the decision making in both the regional and national levels of the reindeer administration.

The range of influence, however, is limited to issues connected to the reindeer economy and herding concerns, together with a restricted authority in questions of land use planning. The latter must be strengthened considerably by acquiring improved land rights, something the Sámi have been actively trying to achieve for a good many years now. As to other areas of local political concerns, such as in the field of education and health, the Sámi community has no legislative power. It should also be emphasized that the decisions reached by the Sámi community in the field of land use planning can be overruled by the central and regional authorities if this is deemed necessary with regard to broader state-wide interests. Thus, any power the Sámi community may have, apart from the field of reindeer industry, is most conditional indeed.

Consequently, the transformation from the small, tiny *sii'da* to a rather non-influential Sámi community and finally to a rehabilitated local community with certain power should be regarded as quite necessary when it comes to coping with new environmental conditions from a political point of view. In approaching these new conditions from an economic point of view, the Sámi community may not suffice; in this case we have to look for semi-urban settlements of a kind.

As the state extended its control over territories earlier used primarily by the Sámi, regional centers of a certain size began to grow up in Swedish Lapland in the early 17th century, places like Jokkmokk, Gällivare, and Jukkasjärvi. In the wake of the encapsulation of the Sámi population these centers were traditional meeting places, serving the institutional needs of the people in the fields of religion, economy and administration. In each center a church was erected to emphasize the importance of missionary activity related to the Lutheran State church, and local courts were established to resolve judicial matters as well as to be proper institutions from which official royal proclamations regarding the Sámi were decreed. This new community was also the market place where locally produced commodities, in particular meat and hides from the reindeer, were traded for diverse consumption goods, such as flour, sugar, salt and coffee brought in from the outside. In very concrete terms the court and the church functioned as the extended arm of the State, accelerating the process of encapsulation. In the Sámi traditional ecological adaption, these new local communities were only visited temporarily at irregular intervals, although there were certain recurring holidays during the yearly cycle when large gatherings took place.

These regional centers were gradually transformed into semi-urban settlements, following the industrial revolution and the growing interest for developing non-renewable resources in the marginal regions of Lapland, i.e. in the period 1870-1880. It was especially the rich ore deposits, in particular iron, that generated this change. To this new kind of resource development was later added hydro-electric power and industrial forestry. Over time industrial developments circumscribed the ecological niche of the Sámi; consequently, fewer people were able to subsist from their traditional means of livelihood. The Sámi communities began to suffer from compelled depopulation. A number of those living in a Sámi community were forced to break out and find other means of making a living. The new mining towns Kiruna, in Jukkasjärvi parish, and Gällivare absorbed many of the Sámi trying out alternative career forms. Due to its favorable location where two large rivers flow together, Jokkmokk became the most important place for receiving superfluous reindeer herding Sámi for the labor force which was constructing hydro-power dams.

The new semi-urban settlements with their rapidly growing populations became poly-ethnic, in which the Sámi appeared as a noticeable minority. In coping with new conditions the settlements offered new opportunities to the Sámi from an economic point of view. First they provided necessary social services in the fields of health and education for all citizens; second they offered differentiated spare time activities. Greater options when it come to shopping, as well as a versatile labor market for cash income were other advantages connected to these newly transformed communities.

As the Sámi modified their reindeer pastoralism to a higher degree of product specialization, changing to a semi-nomadic way of life, these semi-urban settlements became attractive locations for their permanent dwellings. For instance, a large group of the local reindeer herding families are now living in Jokkmokk and Gällivare, a most suitable transformation as these communities are found in the middle of the winter pasture area. The active herders can easily commute back and forth from required herding activities, and living in such regional centers makes it feasible for other members of the family, e.g. wife and grown-up daughters, to engage in full or part-time jobs. This process of change began on a small scale in the 1920's and 1930's but developed at full range first in the 1960's, and in many areas it has now become a common pattern of habitation.

Reindeer pastoralism, as well as wildlife harvesting, can be distinguished as separate transformations closely connected to ecology. Formerly reindeer pastoralism was characterized by intensive herding, i.e. watching the herd day and night, leading to a fairly high degree of domestication. The reindeer were then multi-purpose animals used for meat and for production, for milking, to make dairy products, especially cheese, for transportation in both winter and summer, quite necessary during the era of complete nomadism, and finally for the provision of raw materials for various craftwork and fur clothing. All capable members of a household unit participated intensively in the various herding activities.

Technological change, bringing about a form of selective mechanization of reindeer herding, initiated the process towards semi-nomadism. A higher degree of sedentarization, although necessary mobility during seasonal variations was maintained, and a very definite specialization of meat production for cash, were the immediate results of modifying reindeer pastoralism as a way of life to meet new demands. An optimal division of labour mainly between the sexes, but also among brothers, completed this attempt at making reindeer pastoralism viable even in modern times. This change took place in the years following World War II.

Hunting, trapping and fishing from lakes and rivers have always been decisive factors in the Sámi economy. With technological change in reindeer herding, more time may be devoted to the utilization of wildlife resources. The introduction of new technology also in fishing, such as boat engines and aeroplane transport of large catches of fresh fish, creates new opportunities for the reindeer pastoralists. Before this change only salted or cured fish could be sold on the market, with limited earnings in return, whereas now the Sámi are able to sell fresh fish in large quantities gaining considerably more income. Trapping ptarmigan and other fowl as well as hunting moose are also activities which have become far more efficient as a result of new technological aids, both in making the hunting grounds accessible and in transporting the wildlife harvest to the market.

Thus, in reindeer pastoralism, as well as in wildlife harvesting, we can observe a general process of economic development, converting true subsistence into a kind of subsistence economy with a fairly large cash element built into it. It should be remembered however, that an amount of cash is mandatory in upholding viable subsistence, i.e. an economy on which this particular ethnic group is based.

Let me now turn to a couple of institutional alterations which have a more indirect bearing on ecology, but which both contribute to the reinforcement of cultural viability. The institutions consist of the elaboration of culture competence and ethnopolitical mobilization. In the field of education great changes have taken place, especially in the post World War II era. The educational system evolved is far more complex and well differentiated than the old, rather mediocre system and offers more real choices to the individual Sámi. Previously, local training in reindeer herding and management, giving substantial insight into such factors as environmental conditions and climatic variations, were combined with a very limited schooling, which placed greatest emphasis on religion in the spirit of missionary movements, eventually aiming at de-ethnicization. Schooling lacked most Sámi-specific subjects, including the Sámi language, and the assimilative effect, leading to Norweginization and Swedenization, was apparent. Following upon Sámi initiatives emanating from the organized Sámi, the Sámi schools were improved considerably in the 1960's. The Sámi primary schools were elevated to a level comparable to primary schools in general with the addition of some Sámi-specific subjects. To this new organization of Sámi schools, renamed from the old, somewhat derogatory designation, "nomad schools", was added a Junior High School focusing on subjects relevant for improving culture competence. These subjects include theoretical as well as practical training in reindeer herding and management, and, in addition, the Sámi language and diverse Sámi crafts. To meet the needs of Sámi youth and adults who suffered severely from the deficient standard of the old "nomad school", a Sámi Folk High School was founded in Jokkmokk in the early 1940's. This boarding school has served as an important culture center, gathering young aspiring Sámi from all over Sámi land. In this school the significant revival of Sámi arts and crafts occurred, and one of its main objectives has always been to offer appropriate training in the various traditional Sámi crafts, both from a practical and theoretical, i.e. culture historical, point of view. The Sámi most skilled in crafts work are continuously engaged to give these courses. In this manner a sense of quality, as well as a feeling for traditional values, is secured and also transferred to ever wider circles of Sámi. Advanced courses in the Sámi language, in Sámi culture history and in resource management related to the traditional Sámi environment, are other subjects which give this folk high school its special profile. Training in organizational work and general courses in social science are supplements in furthering culture competence which belong to the body of knowledge common in any school of this type. Such blending of available courses and intellectual training becomes indispensable to handling the ethnic minority situation in the most successful way. To increase the potential force of Sámi relevant schools, a Sámi teachers training college located in Alta, northern Norway has also been established recently. Gradually the Sámi will be able to exert greater control as to level and contents of the Sámi schools, a crucial issue from a minority political point of view.

A reasonably well educated and articulate elite of Sámi was mainly responsible for this push for improvement regarding both standard and relevance of education. Many grassroots Sámi took part in the process as well, as the problem of adequate education was a deep concern for all Sámi. In order to break the ice and penetrate the firm resistance vis-à-vis appropriate schooling for the Sámi, however, a sufficient number of skilled Sámi belonging to the leading stratum was indispensable: all initiatives leading to favorable changes had to be taken by the Sámi themselves.

The great weight the Sámi have laid on teaching and research regarding their own language is reflected in the desire for a chair in Sámi language and culture connected to the University of Umeå. This well-founded demand was finally met in the early 1970's, and since then young Sámi have better opportunities to add Sámi language to their university degrees; they can also enter academic careers in Sámi linguistics. The first PhD by a Sámi at this department was granted in 1984. Previously, training in Sámi linguistics was only offered in more comprehensive departments in the main universities in the south, such as Uppsala, Oslo and Helsinki. This new specialization in universities located in the north represents a step away from an emphasis on comparative finno-ugric or even ural-altaic languages. Lately the University of Tromsø has followed this model, with a separate institute primarily manned by Sámi personnel and having a student body mainly consisting of Sámi. One should also notice that two Sámi scholars have been appointed to professorships in 1986, one in the History of Religion at the

University of Stockholm and one in Sámi Linguistics at the University of Oslo. This development means a great deal in strengthening Sámi self-respect, and the Sámi have paid great attention to this advance in the academic arena. To produce adequate support for education, such as text books, school materials on all levels, and to promote research relevant for Sámi interests, a special Nordic Sámi Institute, Sámi Instituhitta, was founded in 1973. This institute receives financial support from the five member nations of the Nordic Council, and it is manned entirely by academically trained Sámi personnel. Its present director holds the above mentioned PhD in Sámi linguistics from Umeå University, a female Sámi from Finland. The institute points out the most urgent problems which should be investigated to serve Sámi interests in general; furthermore, it appoints the research personnel most opportune and qualified for each separate project. So far the greatest stress has been laid on Sámi legal history and Sámi history in a broad sense, and from such research activities improved means of education are emerging. The research conducted at the Nordic Sámi Institute is basically action oriented; in addition to the field of education it also has an impact on Sámi political argumentation in broad sectors of life.

In the process towards ethnopolitical mobilization social groupings in a more ordered form become apparent. This mobilization started with the forming of local Sámi associations on a small scale, partly as a reaction to de-autonomization caused by the new legal framework and the firm grip of tutelage directed towards the Sámi, partly as a reflection of increasing cultural awareness among the Sámi. These associations were formed in spite of pronounced opposition by the authorities and played a limited political role until the Sámi succeeded in founding a nation-wide organization in 1950, the Swedish Sámi Union (SSR). The latter is based on collective membership, which consists of all local Sámi communities and Sámi associations. Another national organization, SameÁtnam, with individual membership and with an action program restricted to cultural political matters came at about the same time. To create a united front on the inter-Nordic level, the Nordic Sámi Council was formed in 1956, with conferences occurring every third year to which the two former organizations send delegates. The Sámi in Finland and Norway have developed similar patterns for engaging in minority politics in an organized form.

Furthermore, there is a clear relationship between local-level politics and the politics of these nation-wide organizations including the Nordic Sámi Council: those elected to the higher echelons emerge from local communities and associations and are urged to and have the capacity to promote local community interests. In this manner local concerns and crucial issues of certain magnitude are canalized to higher and more influential organs of Sámi politics. In other words, specific local matters, as well as politics of a more general nature affecting the majority of Sámi, form the platform from which these nation-wide political bodies act. (For a more detailed account see Svensson 1986.)

Many important decisions have been reached over the years concerning the status and well-being of the Sámi in the respective Nordic Nation-states. A predominant feature has been a common Sámi political program functioning as an ideological guiding line for actions, which was first worked out during the conference in 1971, a revised version of which was finally adopted in 1982. To strengthen cultural awareness and a sense of community among the Sámi, certain symbols of their own must be created. After a few years of discussing various proposals, a Sámi flag was formally adopted by the Nordic Sámi Council during its last conference in July 1986. It consists of the four colours appearing in most traditional Sámi design, blue, red, yellow and green, with the first two as predominant features. All four coloured fields are then united by a circle in blue and red respectively. After its adoption in a plenary session the flag was ceremoniously hoisted on a flagpole immediately to the side of the three Nordic flags, those of Finland, Norway and Sweden. A Sámi national anthem is also on its way. The text is already decided; it is a Sámi poem from the early part of the 20th century by a Sámi pioneer politician, Isac Saaba, who was the first Sámi to become a member of the Norwegian Parliament. The music, on the other hand, must be redone to be more in harmony with Sámi musical traditions.

In the endeavor to internationalize certain crucial and far-reaching political issues, the Nordic Sámi Council represents the direct link between the Sámi and the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP), and ever since its founding in 1975 the Sámi have been actively committed to the ideas of a world-wide community of indigenous minority populations.

In summing up the argument so far I wish to maintain that local self-determination among ethnic minorities cannot be achieved unless their ecological adaptation is modified to meet new conditions by certain crucial transformations. Such ethnopower, however, cannot be carried into effect if it is not associated with firm land rights. In modern times the Sámi, as well as most indigenous people in the Arctic and the Sub-Arctic regions, continuously living under severe pressure from the outside, have to fall back on land rights that really count, i.e. absolute veto power against external exploitation when this is considered detrimental to the interest of the minority group. The actual land rights these people are able to refer to at present are far too restrained to function as a basis to execute local self-determination. On the other hand, by means of limited position of ethnopower already obtained, the Sámi have lately been actively pressing very hard to improve their land rights. Many court cases on matters of principle bear witness of that (see for example The Taxed Mountains Case 1981, the Alta Case 1982). The Sámi Rights Committees appointed by Parliament are presently preparing a complete renewal of the legal framework on which the culture-political position of the Sámi will be based. By such measures the Sámi culture will be strengthened: its subsistence economy will thus be more diverse and improved, all of which affirm cultural viability.

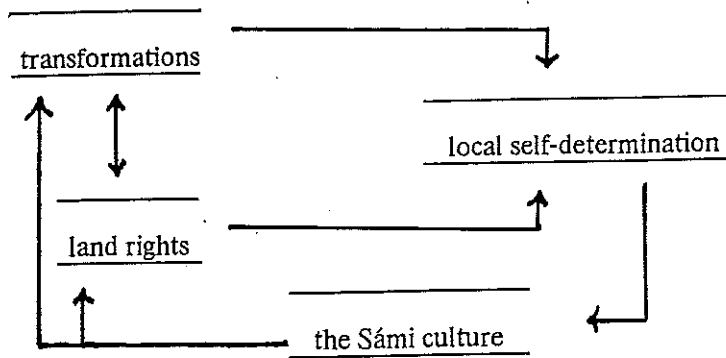
A Sámi Rights Committee is a parliamentary inquiry group granting certain Sámi representation. Its most important task is to investigate questions relating to land rights in a broad sense. Moreover it should present a model for a representative Sámi political organ, a kind of Sámi Parliament. The Sámi language and its range of usage is to be secured by a special language law, and finally, as an amendment to the Constitution, a special Sámi clause is to be added, defining the Sámi as a distinct people with certain aboriginal rights.

The first report of the Norwegian Committee, dealing with Sámi rights, excluding those regarding land rights, was delivered in 1984 (NOU 1984:18). The first issue to be brought to Parliament for legislation was the one concerning a Sámi Parliament (Sameting), prepared by the Department of Justice and introduced in March 1987 (Ot prp nr 33, 1986-87). The Swedish counterpart presented its first partial report in 1986 dealing with the legal position of the Sámi according to international Law (SOU 1986:36).

The weakness in this procedure which separates basic issues that are closely related is apparent. How is it, for example, possible to legislate on the question of Sámi Parliament and the actual power assigned to it, when the controversy of rights to land and water remains unsolved? This dilemma causes both confusion and uncertainty among the Sámi who are to take a stand on these vital questions one by one. On the other hand, such a procedure is by no means uncommon in ethnic minority situations.

Assuming that self-determination as an integral part of aboriginal rights is established, the growing vitality of the minority culture in essential sections of life, such as subsistence and symbolic expressions, will have an impact on future transformations deemed necessary in order to tackle new conditions that may come about. The process of integration may be outlined as follows:





Such a simplified flow chart may be operative for approaching most extensive as well as minor changes within a reasonably controlled ecosystem. Many encroachments by the dominant society have brought about drastic changes for the indigenous minority, partly in readjusting to its new ecological conditions, partly in reinforcing its self-determination, both pertinent factors concerning the maintenance of the Sámi way of life as a cultural force. Certain disasters may occur, however, which go far beyond the control of a delimited ecosystem and even a single Nation-State. The Chernobyl disaster in the U.S.S.R. in late April 1986 points to the dilemma of a new order, the total implication of which is hard to comprehend. The nuclear power fallout from Chernobyl is considered the single most demolishing event ever to come upon the Sámi: by means of the most advanced modern technology a catastrophe from real life has made the above model for readaptation entirely non-operative. Henceforth, the topical Chernobyl case will be used to question the model for explanation introduced, whether it has enough explanatory power to approach problems with such unpredictable consequences. Even at the risk of contradicting my own argument so far developed I wish to devote the remaining part of this paper to the Chernobyl case, especially as it indicates problems containing new dimensions hitherto unknown to social science, but also because it relates intimately to northern conditions.

#### The Chernobyl Case

The Chernobyl disaster is the worst single event ever to have had a negative impact on Sámi life conditions. The effect of this catastrophe is constrained to the South Sámi sub-culture which has experienced its greatest threat so far. Already two days after the explosion at Chernobyl, radioactive fallout hit certain parts of Sweden and Norway. The regions happened to be core areas for South Sámi habitation, which traditionally have upheld a fairly prosperous reindeer pastoralism due to favorable pasture conditions during the different seasons of the year. It is primarily the reindeer lichen, indispensable for winter grazing, which has the property of absorbing and retaining particularly high doses of cesium 137. As cesium 137 causes cancer, a ban on reindeer meat exceeding the limit of 300 bq was soon issued by the Swedish State Agency of Food Products (Statens Livsmedelsverk). As a comparison I can mention that Norway followed the recommendations made by the E. C. countries of 600 bq, whereas Finland allowed 1,000 bq. (Compare the figure for USA, 1,500 bq.) From measurements taken soon after the blow up of the reactor at Chernobyl, both reindeer and reindeer lichen showed extremely high figures. Consequently, reindeer meat from the three counties Jämtland, Västerbotten and Västernorrland, and comparable areas in Norway, could not be approved as human food, for it showed measurements varying from 700 bq to 7,600 bq as average figures and with considerably higher results in extreme cases. Let me give you some examples:

Bq	Sámi community
11,027	Umbyn
15,434	Vilhelmina Södra
12,700	Vilhelmina Norra
10,390	Frostviken Mellersta
7,634	Hotagen
40,000	Southern Norway

Even fish from mountain lakes and rivers are affected. Up to 4,000 bq is not uncommon, and in Västervotten one salmon trout amounted to as high as 19,800 bq. It is not my intention to go deeper into the various technicalities relating to the effect of this disaster; the figures presented, however, serve as evidence concerning the range of consequences for the Sámi reindeer pastoralists. It will be readily understood that with such low permissible figures as 300 bq, for example, practically all reindeer in the area concerned have to be considered contaminated and the meat therefore not suitable for human consumption. In Frostviken N:a, for example, 7,000 reindeer were slaughtered on one occasion and as many as 6,995 animals had to be condemned.

The implications of this disastrous event for the Sámi are very complex and most intricate. In the following I would like to discuss briefly the full range of socio-cultural effects emerging from this incident. The extensive effects may be grouped under four headings; those which concern the health situation, the economic consequences, effects on the demography, and emotional effects.

As far as the health situation is concerned, the increased risks of such deplorable diseases as cancer will primarily cause depression and influence the psychic well-being of the people. Closely related to this medical aspect are the emotional effects. Insecurity regarding future opportunities will grow among the Sámi, and there will also be anxiety, i.e. an expressed feeling of sorrow and rage as well as dispiritedness. The psychic hardship will be even greater as the meaning of herding reindeer eventually will be lost entirely with the knowledge that all animals being slaughtered are inedible. Since the leading theme of conversation nowadays relates to radioactivity, bequerel and polluted food, the psychic health of young Sámi, in particular, is heavily disturbed. It is also a great concern to the Sámi affected that they have not been able to have reindeer meat or lake fish for dinner for a long time, and such food items are staple food for everyday consumption in all Sámi households. Neither should the social costs be neglected: the recurring reindeer slaughtering represents a kind of social festivity bringing many people together for a common aim. It is probably the most important social event in the yearly cycle: it is the harvest time after a long period of hardship and strenuous work with no income. Both economically and from a social point of view this event normally generates prosperity as well as gaiety and contentment. Suddenly all this is replaced by a state of forlornness and utter desperation: the slaughter is totally void of attractive force. These social costs are most difficult to estimate, and right now a feeling of despair is rapidly spreading among reindeer pastoralist Sámi. "Look at this picture- and shudder!" says a late issue of the Sámi journal SAMEFOLKET (1986:10), showing how tons of newly slaughtered reindeer are heaped up in front of a factory which produces fodder for mink and other fur animals. This is a new sight, a new reality which undoubtedly appears frightening and oppressive.

The actual economic consequences are more readily ascertained. First of all the Sámi acquire no cash from sale of reindeer, fish, moose and other available wildlife products. The mode of household consumption will also have to be changed markedly. Far more cash will be spent on consumption goods, violating the subsistence element of the household economy. The negative propaganda communicated through mass media will create a sceptical attitude among very many non-Sámi consumers towards

reindeer food products. This resistance when it comes to buying reindeer meat may last for quite a long time, and include all reindeer meat regardless of where it originates. The Sámi in general, therefore, may for some time have difficulties in disposing of their reindeer products. Finally, the new arrangements brought about by the Chernobyl disaster will occasion a great deal of extra work respecting herding activities.

The accident at Chernobyl may also have effect on the demography. As a result of growing anxiety and pessimism for the future, problems will arise when it comes to recruitment: fewer capable young Sámi dare to take the chance of choosing reindeer herding as their occupation and primary means of livelihood. They are no longer motivated for such a career choice. This in turn may cause a decrease in the rate of establishing reindeer herding families, which eventually will give rise to a decline in nativity. Demographic disequilibrium, whether it is between the sexes or between different age categories, will assuredly make the Sámi culture, so vulnerable to defilements from the outside world, less viable in the future. To the Sámi the aspect of demography has been a dilemma for quite some time, partly due to increasing encroachments from the majority society constraining their ecological niche, partly as a response to the current of modern ideas emerging from developing culture contact.

#### How to Cope with the Problem

In general the Sámi are critically exposed to changes disrupting their ecological adaptation. In most instances, however, there are means of reacting to these changes: in modern times the Sámi have developed moderate influence concerning their own affairs. In the well-known Alta case in northern Norway a few years ago, for instance, the opponents were readily identified, i.e. the State Hydro-Power Company and the political authorities granting the former its right to construct a dam on the Alta river for hydro-power production. As we recall, the Sámi protested against this exploitation in various ways: they went to court to have the powers applied for hydro-power development ruled unlawful; and they set off diverse demonstrations. In Alta they tried to stop construction of the dam by blocking access to the work site; in Oslo a symbolic, but most explicit, message of opposition to the project was given by means of a spectacular hunger strike conducted from a traditional Sámi tent placed right in front of the Parliament. By use of such identification it is possible to open a dialogue with the party responsible for the change; this pattern does not leave the Sámi entirely restrained in their action. The Chernobyl disaster represents a completely different situation. In this case the opponent is basically invisible. Even though the party responsible can be identified, it remains beyond the reach of any direct Sámi counter action. This new state of affairs makes any struggle for justice extremely difficult to bring about. This is to be regretted as the Alta case in comparison with the accident at Chernobyl has only to a limited extent influenced Sámi life conditions in a decisively negative way.

As expected the Sámi have reacted firmly and unmistakably to the far-reaching damages caused by this incident. Soon after the immediate shock, leading Sámi organizations came out stating their demands for compensation. Individual Sámi expressed their views and worries; the Sámi media have for months been devoted to extensive news coverage and debate concerning the Chernobyl accident. Sámi also join demonstrations against nuclear power, an opinion lately growing among people. In various meetings the Sámi communities directly involved expressed their great uncertainty as to household viability, because each Sámi community is dependent upon maintaining a sufficient number of viable household units. During the last conference of the Nordic Sámi Council at Åre last summer, pan-Sámi demands were worked out addressing the political authorities in the respective Nordic countries. By such joint demands the Sámi express their full solidarity with those suffering the most from these damages. In extensive ecological crises the need for unification is apparent, and in this particular case the Sámi emerge as a concerted force more firmly than ever before. Although the Chernobyl disaster was not on the agenda it became a dominating issue throughout the conference, and the accident was considered a severe threat to the Sámi culture as a whole, because Sápmi, i.e. the Sámi land, would be

harrowed for generations to come. The statement concludes by saying that in this particular case the Nordic countries should assume full responsibility so that the Sámi and their reindeer economy are indemnified.

The problems to be solved refer to 1) full compensation and clarifying what is meant by that, and 2) how to dispose of slaughtered reindeer. Choosing from different alternatives, both the authorities and the Sámi finally agreed that the least damaging would be to convert reindeer meat to mink food. In this way at least the meat will come to some use. The question of full compensation is more complex. According to Sámi claims this must include: full market value of each slaughtered reindeer, i.e. 1,700 kr., or 375 Cd. (compare the price of 10 kr. or 1.4 Cd. paid by the fodder factory), and additional costs. The problem remains, however, that all costs cannot be estimated in terms of cash.

The faulty propaganda resulting in "bequerel hysteria" must be corrected; 2/3 of all reindeer in Swedish Lapland are still unaffected by cesium 137, for instance. The spreading of such misleading information, almost in panic, has caused the sales curve for reindeer meat to decline drastically, by as much as 80% compared to the normal rate. Currently there is little demand for reindeer meat, and the export to the U.S.A. is practically nil. The enforced change in consumption habits, i.e. practically all food has to be bought and shopping tours for food provisions to town-like settlements must be made more frequently, means that household expenditures increase tremendously. This must be recompensed as must the devastation of fishing, a supplementary economy crucial for all reindeer pastoralists. The Swedish government has confirmed that the Sámi will be entitled to full compensation. What is negotiated at present is the actual content of this concept.

An unsolved problem the Sámi keep coming back to is the lack of appropriate insight: "We know too little", the Sámi maintain. To the Sámi and their long experience with the industrial society and its various forms of exploitation, the Chernobyl disaster represents a unique occurrence. The Sámi definitely know too little and, therefore, are uncertain as to how to react. The authorities do not have enough experience with similar accidents to handle such catastrophes, either internally or from an international perspective. Finally, the scientists are still unable to offer authoritative and unimpeachable pronouncements. The diverging assertions emerging from various scientists and experts have caused great confusion among the Sámi. This emphasizes the feeling of insecurity and paralysis even further. The Sámi do not want to remain in complete darkness due to insufficient knowledge. To throw some light on certain socio-cultural consequences of this incident from a strict Sámi perspective, researchers at the Sámi Instituhtta are presently pondering their own Chernobyl project.

In order to elucidate the complexity of the problematic situation we are witnessing right now, allow me to offer one more example. In Nordland county in Norway a hydro-power construction has recently been actualized in the river Salttdal. If this development is carried out it will have detrimental effects on the winter pasture in the herding district. The radio-active fallout from Chernobyl has already reduced the available alternatives of good winter pasture. As a rule, prosperous reindeer management is based on alternative seasonal pastures depending on climatic variations from year to year. The Sámi feel they cannot permit another heavy exploitation constraining the vital winter pasture even more. This points to a need for new forms of decision making, in which the Sámi can enter as a real negotiating party. One experience, which can be derived from the accident at Chernobyl, is the undeniable urgency for a revised political form in which the Sámi minority will be able to act from a relevant basis of power.

It should be added that now, one year after the actual disaster, scientists and experts are able to provide more accurate and definite opinions about the effects than was possible immediately after the incident. Now there is a fairly general agreement that the figures for bequerel permissible per kg of meat were set far too low in time of the immediate shock. The conclusion of the changing attitude is that far too many reindeer were slaughtered for mink food last season. It also means that the spreading

of disinformation and the condemnation of large quantities of reindeer meat based on false, or highly disputable, premises caused unnecessarily great anxiety and uncertainty among many Sámi. Because of such misleading information, however, the Sámi are most hesitant in accepting the recent pronouncements uncritically. The situation is too serious to jump at new conclusions too hastily, and the process of restoring the viability of the reindeer economy must go on at the slow speed the Sámi consider necessary. The idea that this effort is worthwhile has in no way changed in the year passed.

New techniques for reducing the level of radioactivity in the reindeer have also been worked out, but how long it will take before the lichen pasture, in particular, is restored to its pre-Chernobyl condition is still very much disputed, both among experts and among Sámi.

### Summing Up

Local self-determination is a vital feature for all indigenous minority groups. As has been demonstrated, such ethnopower falls back on 1) continuous transformations readapting to new circumstances, and 2) improved land rights. In facing new problems resulting in ecological crises, such as the recent Chernobyl disaster, local self-determination appears inadequate. In such cases a political form generally valid for the entire ethnic minority is required. Arctic and Sub-Arctic environments have for years been the target for diverse encroachments. The technologically very advanced nuclear power plants in the industrial world, which do not recognize any national boundaries if accidents occur, now appear as a new deadly threat to minority cultures in the Northern Fourth World. The idea of protecting enough land for future generations, necessary for cultural maintenance, is now confronted with a new dimension. Or to paraphrase Robinson/Ghostkeeper (1986) natives must learn how to adapt to the "next ecology". I predict that the abolition of nuclear power on a world-wide basis most likely will be on the agenda of WCIP for years to come.

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