

Ethnopolitics among the Sámi in Scandinavia: A Basic Strategy toward Local Autonomy

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(Received 10 March 1983; accepted in revised form 7 October 1985)

ABSTRACT. Communities in the far north face severe difficulties in trying to function as autonomous units due to the north-south axis in which northern resources are sought by southern industrial powers. Ethnopolitics as practiced by the Sámi in Scandinavia represent a political solution to those difficulties. For ethnopolitical processes to work to the advantage of the minority people, the communities must have a power base leading to local autonomy. Such autonomy is based typically on land and water rights. The entire ethnic minority is dependent on viable local communities leading to cultural pluralism, an effective defense against assimilation by the majority society. Cultural viability, firm land rights and institutionalized ethnopolitics provide the basis for strengthening local autonomies to such ends.

Key words: Sámi, ethnopolitics, local autonomy, land rights, cultural viability

RÉSUMÉ. Les communautés du grand nord font face à de graves difficultés dans leurs tentatives de fonctionnement à titre de corps autonomes en raison de l'axe nord-sud que suivent les ressources du nord recherchées par les puissances industrielles plus au sud. L'ethnopolitique telle que pratiquée par le peuple Sami en Scandinavie présente une solution politique à ces difficultés. Afin d'assurer le succès des peuples minoritaires par l'entremise de ces processus ethnopolitiques, les communautés doivent établir une base de pouvoir menant à l'autonomie locale. Une telle autonomie se fonde ordinairement sur les droits territoriaux et les droits d'usage de l'eau. La totalité de la minorité ethnique dépend de communautés locales viables conduisant au pluralisme culturel, en sorte une défense efficace contre l'assimilation par une société majoritaire. La viabilité culturelle, la fermeté des droits territoriaux et l'ethnopolitique institutionnalisée permettent de consolider les autonomies locales à de telles fins.

Mots clés: Sami, ethnopolitique, autonomie locale, droits territoriaux, viabilité culturelle

Traduit pour le journal par Maurice Guibord.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years the pressure for industrial development in large areas of the Arctic has increased rapidly. Many minority groups experienced severe encroachments on the land they traditionally use. At the same time local communities of various size were established. These communities, be they villages or towns, were mixed communities, usually consisting of one or more native groups coexisting with a white population. Such communities appear as new features in the socio-cultural landscape of the north and form part of the political and administrative structure of the larger society. The difference in land use pattern between the larger society, with its heavy industrial developments, and the traditional resource development of native peoples necessarily leads to conflict. In order to cope with these conflicts of interest the ethnic minority needs to increase its autonomy. Because of the polyethnic situation in most local communities, each ethnic community requires a strengthening of local autonomy. In this sense the different ethnic minorities, such as the Cree, the Inuit, and the Sámi, obtain a stronger position vis-à-vis pressure from the outside. It is argued here that threats to traditional land use patterns caused by new and frequent industrial developments have far-reaching implications on cultural viability among native peoples in the north. Community development and ethnopolitical mobilization appear as an effective means in tackling this cultural dilemma. The ultimate goal for most ethnic groups is to obtain rights to land and water so that the continuity of their particular way of life is protected. In significant confrontations between native groups and the dominant society, ethnic symbols and rhetoric are used to underline articulation and to make the argument more appropriate and explicit in the inter-ethnic context. The Sámi in Fenno-Scandia are an ethnographic case in point for exploring some common features in the north caused by inter-cultural conflict.

To achieve increased autonomy the native group has to take political action. In legitimizing actions taken as ethnopolitical

any policy adopted should be ethnically relevant. This does not mean that the policy should disregard anything optimal in the society at large. Certainly great skill and competence concerning the political procedures of the larger society are required if an ethnic minority group is to achieve its goals. However, to make a policy meaningful it must have a definite ethnic content; the aim should be first to support the maintenance of cultural viability in the local community concerned. The way in which the policy is carried out should not be restricted to being a poor copy of political behavior in general. In order to be meaningful for those actively engaged in politics, as well as for the population as a whole, a policy should contain ethnically recognizable components. The use of ethnic non-verbal symbols and rhetoric in specific inter-ethnic confrontations provides strategic means of articulation to clearly state political intentions.

Non-verbal symbols take the form of wearing traditional ethnic clothes in arenas where the minority members face parties representing the larger society, such as in formal meetings with officials and politicians, or in court hearings concerning matters of principle. Should one want to point out specific ethnic geographical areas during a court case, one uses a map designed for political purposes, e.g., the first Sámi map of their land. This map used only Sámi place names and acknowledged no national borders. It was designed by the Sámi artist Hans Ragnar Mathiesen in 1975 and was a multicolored map showing the area where the Sámi traditionally live. Besides place names, the map indicated poems, mythological statements, information about language diversification, all in a Sámi language. The map was also surrounded by a decorative border showing various expressions of original Sámi handicraft and art. To the map was attached a section showing the entire circumpolar region; in that way emphasis was laid on the cultural community of all arctic peoples.

The use of the traditional Sámi tent (*lávvo*) during the 1979 Oslo hunger strike protesting against a hydroelectric development also represented an unambiguous symbol of what the Sámi

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wanted to communicate. To place this *lávvo* directly opposite the Parliament building (Stortinget) offered a visual contrast between majority and minority peoples in a highly effective way. Ordinary Norwegians passing every day while the demonstration lasted began to reflect on the Sámi as an ethnic minority claiming native rights. For most people this was a new issue.

Rhetorical skill in inter-ethnic encounters includes the ability to articulate in an ethnically specific way. Thus an effective difference in verbal style is marked between the official bureaucratic language of those representing the majority and the native mode of verbal expression. The proper mix of formal language, suitable for the occasion, with colorful quotations from native thinking strengthens the general articulation of the minority party. Singing traditional Sámi *yoiks*, which few understand, instead of regular battle songs composed for the event in front of the Storting in Oslo during the hunger strike illustrates means of rhetorical expression.

On the other hand, there is no point in pursuing such an approach if the message the symbols are intended to communicate is not understood by the other party. Only symbols that can be identified as ethnically distinctive and that carry an unmistakable message are effective. The efficacy of this kind of message, therefore, is dependent on the level of comprehension.

To achieve local autonomy through ethnopolitical actions, a power base is required. For most ethnic minorities in northern areas, rights to land and water constitute the basic power source. Their way of life is in most cases highly vulnerable to far-reaching changes in the environment. Since the conflict of interest between the industrial national state and those of various ethnic minority groups has increased in recent years, the ethnic minority is compelled to acquire a strong power base in order to survive culturally. The strategy of going to court in an attempt to attain codification of aboriginal rights has become one means of improving the power base of indigenous people. The last twenty years show many examples of that; the Taxed Mountains Case in Sweden is only one (see below). What the native people aim at is either ownership rights or qualified usufructuary rights, and the rights obtained must have a substantial bearing on cultural viability.

Political actions must also be related to meaning. Basic values asserted by the ethnic group are instrumental for ethnopolitical actions. This refers to political goals, as well as to political process. The process of defining goals, which leads to formulation and frequent reformulation of ideology, gives important data about ethnopolitics. In the same way continued participation in the political process reinforces and reconfirms basic values held by the ethnic minority. And it is the cultural meaning of politics that gives legitimacy in this unbalanced struggle against the powerful nation state.

This argument is illustrated by the Taxed Mountains Case: a legal confrontation between the Sámi and the Swedish state. Specifically it had to do with the question of ownership rights to land and water in the south Sámi region, shown in Figure 1. The case lasted for 15 years and among the Sámi it was frequently discussed and debated both in the national meetings of the Swedish Sámi Union held annually and at grassroots levels. Obviously a case like this, with its far-reaching implications, contributes to a strengthening of ethnic awareness. The Sámi became more articulate and knowledgeable concerning their own precarious situation as the case went on (Svensson, 1978:216-223).

The same was true for the Alta Case, with its spectacular

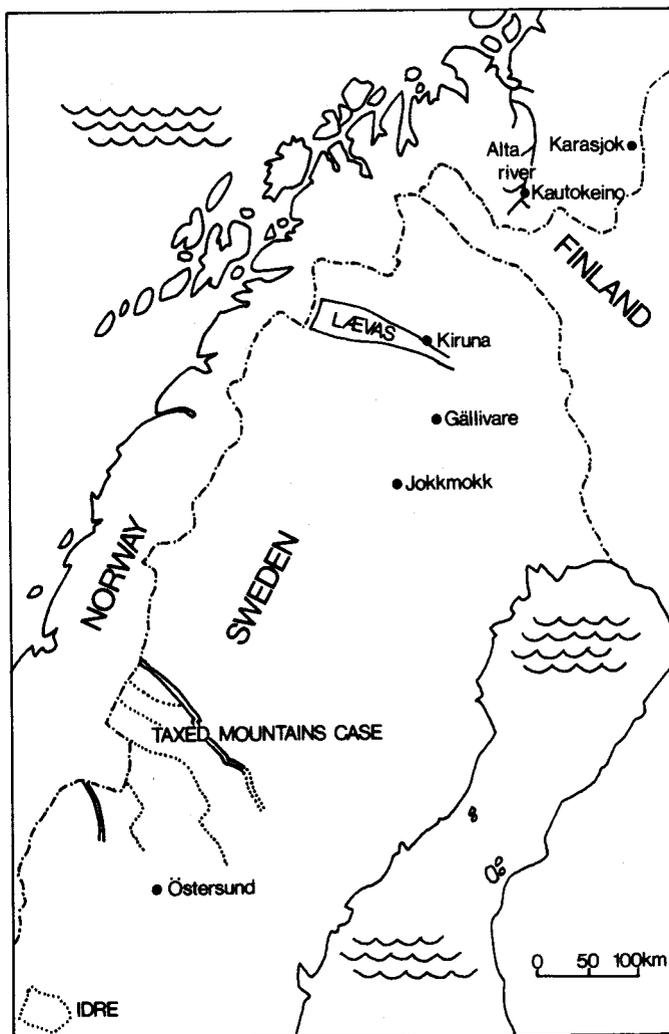


FIG. 1. Northern Fenno-Scandia.

demonstrations in protest against the decision to construct a hydroelectric dam in the Alta River, affecting an area crucial for Sámi adaptation in Finnmark, northern Norway.

Situations in which minorities actively confront the nation state on basic issues related to aboriginal rights necessarily have a very great impact on maintaining the vitality of minority cultures. The well-documented James Bay Project in northern Quebec also provided positive feedback for the Cree and the Inuit, leading to increased awareness and concern for their specific minority situation (Feit, 1980, 1982; Penn *et al.*, in press; La Rusic *et al.*, 1979).

The final verdict of the Taxed Mountains Case was handed down by the Supreme Court in 1981 (Jahreskog, 1982; Svensson, 1982). The Sámi party did not acquire any immediate gains in the specific controversy, but many positive opinions of principles were written into the verdict that over time will attain a formal quality to be utilized by the Sámi in their future political work. Furthermore, new and profound insight about Sámi cultural history was obtained through various scholarly investigations arising out of this trial. For that reason, it is believed by many Sámi, as well as others, that the Sámi now probably have a stronger position as a minority.

LOCAL COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

In an administrative sense the local community is part of a region and subject to regional politics. Similarly it is also part of the nation state. This structural framework affects the degree of local autonomy. A local community can be either population-based or area-based, and it may be mono-ethnic or polyethnic.

Karasjok and Kautokeino in northern Norway are relatively densely populated communities. They are well-integrated units within the larger society with regard to public services and facilities. Each also is the political and administrative centre of a municipality or township. The total population of Karasjok is 2658 and of Kautokeino 2855 (census figures, 1980). The population is predominantly Sámi, but both communities have significant groups of non-Sámi inhabitants. Polyethnicity is the most frequent pattern in larger northern communities such as these.

However, ethnic characteristics are not simply mono-ethnic or polyethnic. There are communities with two, or perhaps more, distinct ethnic minorities coexisting with local inhabitants belonging to the mainstream society. The political leadership now has three options to choose from: 1) to look at the problem at hand in strictly ethnic terms, i.e., working only for the interests of the ethnic group one represents; 2) to form a coalition to work against the larger society identified as a common opponent; and 3) to overlook ethnically defined preferences and work for the best interests of the entire community. If the majority of the local population belongs to ethnic minority groups, as is usually the case in the far north, weighing the alternatives for action is an intricate process.

The case of Easterville in northern Manitoba points to the problem of polyethnicity (Waldram, 1980). Due to enforced relocation of a band of Swampy Cree and some Metis from their original habitat, Chemawawin, to a new community, Easterville, these groups became less isolated and consequently more often subject to official administration. The immediate complication that arose is that the Cree were "treaty" Indians, whereas the other group lived outside the reserve and remained "non-treaty." The former were subject to federal jurisdiction and the latter were under provincial administration. In this community, two councils were formed, a band council representing the Cree and a community council working on behalf of the Metis.

Since the livelihood of all the foregoing people was based on fishing in Cedar Lake, the establishment of the Easterville Fishermen's Association, constituting a branch of a larger cooperative for all licensed fishermen in the district, offered some solution to this community dilemma. Through the fishermen's associations the people in Easterville were able to mobilize a united front to meet government officials on all levels. This may also, in the long run, reduce the possibility of ongoing conflicts between the two ethnic groups in other areas of daily life (Waldram, 1980).

An area-based community, on the other hand, is mono-ethnic. This type of community is found among the reindeer-herding Sámi; an example is Lævas, close to the mining town of Kiruna in northern Sweden. One cannot be a member of a Sámi community unless one is a Sámi. Limited by environmental considerations and semi-nomadic in form, the Lævas population is fairly small and widely dispersed over a large area. On the other hand, the intensity of interaction among the members of a community is high, since herding to a large extent is based on cooperative work. Reindeer herding requires a vast area of land, ranging from high-altitude pasture in summer, to low, moun-

tainous areas in spring and autumn, and finally to the forest or taiga during winter. From a sociological point of view it is appropriate to consider these units local communities of a sort with populations ranging from 20-25 people to 200 or more. More specifically, they are administrative units regionally directed by government officials. The local population has limited self-determination, with the Reindeer Husbandry Act stipulating explicitly the limits to a Sámi community's autonomy (Rennäringslagen, 1971).

By defining the Sámi reindeer pastoralism as individually based rather than community based on certain occasions, the authorities restrict the local population further. Throughout the Taxed Mountains Case, for instance, the existence of local Sámi communities in the south Sámi area was denied both by the party opposing the Sámi, the *Justitie-kanslern* (state attorney), and by the courts. It was maintained that no evidence of such communities could be found in existing official documents. Not until the 1880s, when the first reindeer husbandry law was enacted, were such communities recognized. Even if the court was prepared to recognize that an extended family or a group of closely related families used the land jointly, it maintained that such a group was too small to constitute a community. Undeniably, reindeer herding and, before domestication of the reindeer, wild reindeer hunting were carried out in the area. But the government asserted that these activities were on an individual basis, contrary to the practices in the rest of the Sámi land.

For the Sámi party one of the main issues at stake was the existence of local communities in the disputed area. This was politically crucial, since the ultimate aim of the Sámi was to obtain collective rights of ownership to land and water, not individual rights. Several communities were involved in the proceedings. The Sámi view of collective rights was similar in concept to that of most, if not all, northern indigenous peoples. The Dene declaration, the Nunavut proposal and the James Bay Agreement all followed the same lead as to land rights.

The difficulty the Sámi faced was that they could not prove the past existence of Sámi communities; they could only refer to research conducted by scholars representing different disciplines (e.g., cultural history, historical linguistics, archaeology, and social anthropology). The members of a court, however, insist on evidence with legal validity.

The reason the state argued for individually based land usage was that certain traditional criteria for individual land rights were those from which the Sámi could easily be excluded. Consequently, property rights based on reindeer herding were different from those based on sedentary farming.

No doubt herding communities were extremely small, but even the herding bands, *sijte*, were organized in a special fashion typical of the Sámi culture, with a band leader, *sii' da-ised*, and special criteria for recruitment and other functions (Pehrson, 1957; Whitaker, 1955). The concept of scale enables us to define various types of local communities. Scale refers to size as well as complexity, i.e., the extent of social interaction within a community. And, as Barth (1978) stated, it is essential to discover how scale may condition social form — in this case, forms of political actions. Another consideration is how community scale affects a local population's ability to develop and maintain viable communities based on ethnopolitics.

To maintain their autonomy both in cultural and political terms, ethnic minorities must develop their own political institutions that are fully endorsed by the natives themselves. These institutions are not integrated parts of the general political

structure of the dominant society but work independently for ethnopolitical goals. The political structure of the Sámi in Sweden is presented in Figure 2. A full account of this political system, how it was developed and how it functions in modern times, was presented by Svensson (1976). A similar pattern for organized political action exists in Norway, whereas Finland, with its recently formed Sámi parliament, has a different system (Müller-Wille, 1977).

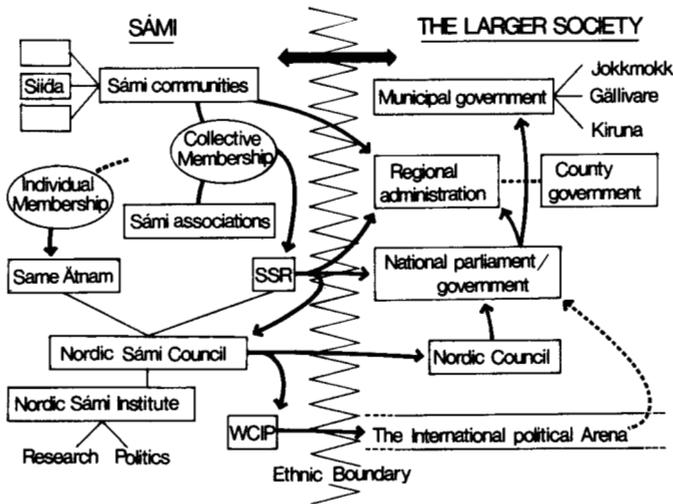


FIG. 2. The political structure of the Swedish Sámi.

In order to understand how a Sámi political system works, it has to be viewed against that of other local communities, such as Jokkmokk, Gällivare and Kiruna, communities in the far north of Sweden with a relatively large minority Sámi population. Neither the *sii'da* nor the Sámi community can be regarded as a political institution; both are local communities of a kind wherein internal decision making takes place. They do not have the authority, however, to act directly against the political body of the township, *kommunfullmäktige*, which consists of elected representatives from different political parties. At the most, one or two Sámi may be elected to that body.

Local political measures must be conveyed through the Swedish Sámi Union (SSR) and from there back to the township or the county. In other words, neither the Sámi community nor the Sámi association is a political institution in the sense of carrying out external political actions. SSR remains the only Sámi political institution working locally, regionally and nationally. This institution is indigenous only in the sense of membership and kind of policy carried out. In form it resembles labor unions and similar special-interest organizations within the larger society.

Political institutions are most readily developed on a level similar to that of SSR, with its flexible range of activity. The forming of Inuit Tapirisat as a form of pan-Inuit movement in Canada in 1971 and the establishment of clearly defined ethnopolitical parties in Greenland, which eventually led to formal home rule for the Greenlanders in 1979, are two recent examples elucidating the same ethnopolitical process (Kleivan and Nørregaard, 1976; Brøsted, 1980).

The situation in Karasjok and Kautokeino in northern Norway is different. There a majority of Sámi are in the municipal government, *kommunestyre*; its chairman is Sámi, since the

local population is predominantly Sámi. These Sámi politicians are elected either from the existing political parties or through a special Sámi ballot. The opportunity of making Sámi political influence felt on the community level may be more direct in these communities; nonetheless no indigenous political institutions have been developed locally. One difficulty is that party loyalty frequently collides with strong attachment for specific Sámi interests.

Using ethnopolitics as the starting point, we conclude that indigenous political institutions are rarely developed in a local community context. That does not mean, however, that political actions based on varying degrees of autonomy will not emerge. As political actions become more institutionalized in their form, we may regard them from a sociological point of view as political institutions, but institutions with no fixed structure.

The area-based community is especially vulnerable to any form of environmental change influencing the resources on which its members depend. Many Sámi communities in Sweden are at present on the verge of total extinction as separate social units as a result.

In this respect there are notable variations between and among different ethnic groups. For territory-bounded groups, such as the Sámi, rights to specific land areas are essential; to others, such as many Inuit communities, the territory concept is rather indistinct, since their adaptation is geared to changes of areas used both seasonally and over longer periods of time. Between these extremes are several types of indigenous communities that vary with respect to attachment to specific territories. The land issue, therefore, should not be understood as rights to specific areas as such, but rather as rights of access to resources in certain ecological zones.

The Idre Case

It is access to resources that has to be protected in a legal sense in order to establish a reasonable power base for most of the ethnic groups in the Arctic. For example, Idre is the southernmost Sámi community. It is small and its viability declined considerably as a result of the development of large-scale tourism, which alienated land previously used for reindeer herding. Thus, the reindeer herds decreased from 5000 in 1960 to 3000 in 1981, divided among 20 community members (Samefolket, 1981).

The future of Idre looked bright in 1968 (Ekman, 1968). There was no inherent conflict between the Sámi and the settled population in the area. Reindeer pasture was abundant and of good quality. For that reason there was no need for subsidiary means of livelihood, as there is in many other Sámi communities, and there was no sign of depopulation. Cooperation in reindeer herding was also well developed. Furthermore, there was no manifest conflict with the special reindeer administration in Östersund. The greatest problem seemed to be that reindeer herds at times increased too much, causing a large number of unwanted reindeer to disperse into neighboring areas in Norway and the Tännäs Sámi community. In such instances plans for large-scale compulsory slaughtering were worked out mutually between the Sámi and the reindeer administration.

Conflict of interest did not arise until the tourist industry expanded as a result of regional and municipal political decisions (decisions in which the Sámi in Idre had no part) by the Älvdalen municipality, of which the district of Idre is a small

part, and the county government of Kopparberg, which wanted to develop this distant corner of the county almost exclusively for tourism.

Because of the favorable pasture conditions in Idre the reindeer herd easily expanded beyond the level of efficient control. To remedy the problem of reindeer dispersion into other community areas fences were erected both along the border with Norway and to the north bordering Tännäs. In the late 1970s, however, a gradual development of heavy tourism took place, and dense concentrations of cottages together with ski lifts for tourists appeared on most mountains. Thus, the unlimited development of tourism in the mountain areas forced the reindeer away from natural grazing areas. Consequently successful herding has become an almost impossible task for the local Sámi.

Later on, an emergency plan was worked out by the reindeer administration. In this vital decision the Sámi were able to exert a strong influence. The carrying capacity of Idre was agreed to be fewer than 2000 reindeer. Accordingly, four production units were established with 400 animals per unit. To meet the requirement of cultural viability, a fifth unit was added later. Idre originally had 20 members, and the reconstruction of Idre in 1984 included 10 people involved in reindeer herding either full or part time. High levels of intensive herding will be involved in the years to come and limited human resources may be a problem. A new fence to direct the reindeer away from unwanted grazing in the forest was recently constructed. The cost for the entire scheme was about 1.8 million Swedish *kronor*, furnished from state funds (Samefolket, 1983).

With joint efforts the crisis of Idre was solved, at least temporarily. With far greater autonomy Idre could have acted much earlier to avoid the critical situation caused by unrestrained tourist developments. The case of Idre, therefore, points to the problems that arise whenever communities do not have enough political power to act in time to protect their vital interests.

The Lævas Case

The Sámi in Lævas live close to the huge mining town of Kiruna, with the continuous threat of an extensive hydroelectric project on the untouched Kalix River. Lævas has experienced many difficulties already: 1) industrial forestry, damaging existing winter pasture; 2) urban expansion and surrounding ore developments that affect natural migration routes on shifting pasture between the different seasons; and 3) increasing pressure on the land caused by expanding tourism, recreational hunting and fishing. Realization of the hydro project will have the most devastating effect. The plans for a series of dams are already developed but were put on a 10-year moratorium ending in 1984, which was then extended. The Sámi consider the development of the Kalix River as the most serious change to occur so far in Lævas, since most reservoirs in the project will be placed in winter pasture areas, an ecological zone degraded by other industrial development. Many Sámi in Lævas are uncertain about their future. Young people are even more reluctant than before to choose reindeer herding as a full-time occupation. The dominant concerns for older people are whether there will be enough land to pass on to future generations of Sámi and the threat to their culture if they all have to work in the mines (Reichwald and Svedlund, 1977).

The Lesson to Be Learned from Idre and Lævas

The cases from Idre and Lævas show that the Sámi communities need increased power, giving them a decisive say in cases when their very existence is threatened.

SSR has stated firmly in its policy program that it cannot accept the elimination of a single Sámi community as a result of environmental changes. A strengthening of local autonomy for the ethnic minority is required for the Sámi communities to negotiate from a position of power.

Ethnopolitical actions of the Sámi are influenced by a set of rules and regulations established by non-Sámi authorities. The political position is defined by the general legislative system of the society and those legal considerations specifically designed for the Sámi — for example, the Reindeer Husbandry Act (1971) and the Reindeer Pasture Convention between Sweden and Norway (Renbeteskonventionen, 1972). These define and restrict the political options available to this ethnic group. And because of this, one of the primary Sámi political goals at present is to alter the political framework in favor of minorities. What is sought is a kind of “positive discrimination,” as some leading Sámi ideologists have phrased it, for only then will it be possible for the Sámi to obtain increased power. The legislated framework could then become a workable asset rather than a constraint. This process of change appears to be one of the most significant strategies in the political program recently formulated by the Sámi. It is probably equally valid for most indigenous groups in the Arctic (Samefolket, 1980; Mathiesen, 1981). Such a strategy agrees with the basic ideas of the World Council for Indigenous Peoples (WCIP), and it was the main reason why the Sámi in Sweden took the initiative to confront the Swedish state in the Taxed Mountains Case.

In contrast to the present powerlessness of the area-based communities of the Sámi, the Cree Indians of Canada are in a much stronger position as a result of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement in 1975. The agreement formally recognized the aboriginal rights of the Cree and Inuit. Although their traditional area was restricted considerably due to the development of the James Bay Hydro Project, their rights to land and water, it was believed, would be sufficiently strong to provide access to adequate natural resources to maintain and develop their traditional subsistence economy (Feit, 1980). This position reflects the essence of most ideological programs formulated by ethnic minorities in the Arctic: enough land to sustain cultural viability, enough land to pass on to coming generations. This point of view was stated by Chief Diamond at the time of the signing of the agreement, quoted in Feit (1980):

“We have always said that we wanted to maintain our way of life. We have always said that we want to pass the land on to our children. Now we believe that this agreement in principle will maintain our life and that we can also pass the land on to our children, just as it has been done in the past. It guarantees the future of our children. It also guarantees that we can continue to live in harmony with nature.”

Similar ideas are expressed by Sámi reindeer herders trying to explain why the Taxed Mountains Case was so important (Svensson, 1978):

“I think a verdict could check future exploitations. As it is now the Sámi are only listened to, but when the final decisions are made, there is little or no consideration regarding the Sámi viewpoints. There are so many encroachments nowadays and life here becomes very insecure. Because of that this verdict will

be of vital importance for us and for our children. Preferably we ought to be able to leave behind unspoiled lands to our children."

Such basic ideas about territorial rights were also well substantiated in the Berger report on the proposed Mackenzie Valley pipeline (Berger, 1977).

Political mobilization around the James Bay project on ethnic terms was facilitated by the immediate threat to cultural survival. Ethnic awareness was strengthened and the problem of cultural viability stressed. And from this process of ethnopolitical activity a certain degree of political autonomy emerged. It is interesting to note that Cree and Inuit could join forces effectively (La Rusic *et al.*, 1979). The James Bay Agreement, though, has not yet provided efficient local governments for the Cree and Inuit, mainly because of financial deficits for which the non-native authorities appear responsible (International Work Group . . . , 1981).

ETHNOPOLITICS — A GENERAL DISCUSSION

Ethnopolitical actions, as they have developed among minority groups in the north, are influenced by certain constraints. Contrary to polyethnic situations, for instance, the minority has to act politically from a very weak power position at the same time as it faces the state apparatus, which appears as a macro-level social structure rather than an opposing ethnic group (Paine, 1985). This appears to be an immense structure consisting of various political institutions, a bureaucracy acting on different levels of society, and finally the legal system made up of the courts and the law.

This affects the deliberate use of ethnic symbols. It may not always be strategically opportune to mark ethnic distinctiveness, but the ethnic boundary between "we" and "they" needs to be made clear. The process of ethnic boundary maintenance, emphasized by Barth (1969), is more complicated in ethnic minority situations and more vulnerable to strategic considerations than is the case in purely polyethnic contexts. The political actors representing an ethnic minority have to weigh very carefully the choice of what to use and not use from their "ethnicity repertoire." Consequently, boundary maintenance does not appear in the same form in all political confrontations, but there will always be some notion of marking ethnic distinctiveness.

Moreover, all ethnopolitical actions are aimed at three different political arenas: 1) political decision making on the local community level; 2) regional politics and administration; and 3) national politics/bureaucracy. Since every local community is part of wider societal domains, all initiatives from an ethnopolitical point of view have to be planned in light of the structural relationships if political gains are to be attained. Ethnopolitics can be conducted either from within existing political parties to reach the various arenas mentioned above or through the minority group's own associations, working as a pressure group from the outside. In the latter case, ethnic symbols are very important; in the former, party political affiliation makes such usage a delicate matter. A politician from an ethnic minority owes dual loyalty, which creates a role dilemma (Gluckman, 1968). Both types of ethnopolitical activity have been tried by the Sámi. The very fact that such a choice is available often contributes toward a favorable outcome, since the minority can work through more than one political channel.

Viable communities should be contrasted with those affected

by assimilation. It is important here also to distinguish between *local* community and *ethnic* community. In the north it is often the ethnic community in a local context rather than the local community as such that is subject to external pressure. This gives rise to the following questions: 1) Is a local community viable if it consists of more than one ethnic community, each of which maintains cultural viability? 2) Are these two levels of viability incompatible? Ethnic communities cannot resist the constant pressure toward assimilation unless they possess certain autonomy.

To be viable, a community must:

- consist of a significant number of people of the same ethnic origin;
- be well integrated — i.e., frequent interaction should occur among most of its members;
- have a power structure of its own;
- have a sufficient land base for the maintenance of a particular ecological adaptation;
- have an economic system distinct from that of the broader society; and
- have a system of basic values distinct from that of the dominant society.

A local community possessing these features will undoubtedly be viable; consequently it has the potential to act as a fairly autonomous unit toward the outside world. Most local communities in the far north, however, are not yet autonomous in this rigid sense. The area-based Sámi community is reasonably viable. But because the Sámi power structure exists only internally and not externally, this community is extremely vulnerable to changes caused by pressure on the land from the outside. This has to do with the land-base issue, apparently the weak component in the Sámi community. There is a clear native concept of territory, and the people's attachment to a specific land area is well established; but this is not sufficient when the land base is not protected. For this reason the Sámi have stressed the legal struggle so heavily. As has been shown, the Sámi communities such as Idre and Lævas have little local autonomy. As a consequence, cultural viability is maintained only with great difficulty.

To ethnic minority groups autonomy has to do with culture in a wide sense. The overall pattern of communities in the arctic scene is the inter-ethnic complex, in which one or more minority groups coexist with administrative and political leadership representing the wider society. Real autonomy for the ethnic groups, therefore, appears to be most urgent. Certainly communities in the far north face severe difficulties in trying to act as outright autonomous units due to the north-south axis (Dryzek, 1983): the northern abundance of natural resources — fish, rivers for hydroelectric development, forests, mineral ores, and oil and gas — is most attractive to the southern industrial society. The demand for these resources is constantly increasing, impairing most attempts to increase local autonomy. This is the most crucial obstacle to greater autonomy for ethnic minorities both in arctic North America and northern Fenno-Scandia.

Politicians and political processes are central in issues of local autonomy. Politicians acting on behalf of ethnic minorities have to achieve competence in the political behavior of both cultures. They must attain enough skill and proficiency in the formal rules, both written and unwritten, that characterize the political behavior of the dominant society. At the same time they must bring into the political arena values and ideas traditionally held by the ethnic group they represent and must, in their actions,

reinforce traditional ways of decision making. These two qualities, dual cultural competence and marking of ethnic uniqueness, are vital.

Presently, politics among most ethnic groups in the Arctic are moving in the direction of cultural pluralism. This is true for the Sámi and the Inuit and for many North American Indians in the far north. Yet there are difficulties in such a policy. These groups do not wish to have cultural pluralism at the expense of a reduction in the standard of material wealth already achieved. What is wanted is a form of ethnopolitics that will function to their advantage in modern times.

The Sámi do not want to relinquish all the benefits and social services provided by the nation state for all its citizens, while working extremely hard to establish their own political platform. This intricate balancing of the two objectives by the ethnic minority is absolutely necessary to maintain a stage of cultural pluralism, and it points to the ongoing processes of dichotomization and complementarization (Eidheim, 1971) as an adaptive feature of many northern minority groups in modern times. Thus, cultural pluralism may be viewed as a prerequisite for cultural survival for many small and powerless minorities.

This leads us to the question of tutelage, the abstruse role syndrome most non-native people working in the Arctic have to cope with (Paine, 1977). Bureaucrats have a tendency to play roles like those of a patron or broker. Indigenous people become dependent on the bureaucrat in their policy making, since the official alone is capable of providing the necessary expert knowledge. This bureau-patron role, as Paine calls it, inevitably constrains and makes more difficult all ethnopolitical activities on the local level. Furthermore, the way the situation is defined by the actors determines how this fused role develops. In some instances Inuit or Sámi are wards of the bureaucrat; at other times they are his clients. And it is particularly in the patron-client context that the problem of tutelage emerges. Tutelage as such may not be entirely negative for ethnic minority groups; however, in each case the intensity of the bureau-patron participation must be examined. Paine (1977) shows clearly where the problems lie, emphasizing the ethnography of the white northerners and their effect on ethnicity.

The head administrators of the Sámi, formerly called *lappfogde* (Lapp sheriff), and their assistants developed a highly institutionalized form of tutelage. In their permanent contact with the Sámi these authorities were firmly guided by the legislative framework for action, the Reindeer Husbandry Act, and were explicitly supported by the political authorities. An attitude developed over the years among these special administrators that they knew best what was good for the Sámi (Svensson, 1976). To a certain extent the Sámi managed to reduce this tutelage along with other less formal expressions of tutelage. Nevertheless, it still remains a constraining factor in situations of more far-reaching conflicts.

The distinction between tutelage and wardship should be made clear. Wardship refers to the more formalized relation between government officials and the natives (Tanner, 1983). This is especially valid for status Indians in Canada. Tutelage then remains the treatment of and attitudes toward the Sámi expressed by all non-Sámi other than those directly involved in the Sámi administration.

Aspects of tutelage and wardship undoubtedly play significant roles in realizing the basic aims of ethnopolitics. To what extent these features affect ethnopolitics, however, varies from situation to situation.

CONCLUSIONS

As has been argued throughout the paper, it is essential to sort out those concepts basic to comparative research and then to refine them considerably in order to gain new insight into the dynamics of community development in the far north. The development of local political institutions in the Arctic is a complex and highly diversified process that has just begun.

Without viable local communities no ethnic minority can survive as a distinct cultural group in the long term. For that reason, local political institutions ought to be strengthened ethnically. To invigorate the ethnic community, however, it is not sufficient to establish distinct political institutions of their own. Native leadership must also have access to work through the political institutions of the larger society (Berger, 1977, 1981).

In order for minority groups to acquire self-determination, local political institutions should be designed so as to consider traditional means of decision making. So far no such institutions on the community level have emerged; consequently local autonomy in ethnic terms remains extremely poor. Furthermore, as has been stated by Dryzek and Young (1983), most ethnic groups in the Arctic had only limited opportunities to experience institutions efficient enough to cope with political problems typical of contemporary minority situations.

Nevertheless, most ethnic minorities in the north today are prepared to work out the details of forming such institutions. The Sámi, for instance, want to revive the *sii'da* model. Similar efforts are occurring in Canada (Berger, 1977). The success of these efforts, however, is contingent on the willingness of the authorities representing the majority societies to cooperate with the ethnic minorities. To achieve this objective the usufructuary rights to the land already possessed must be strengthened considerably according to the principles of international law. This means obtaining veto power in certain crucial situations, which could be a common political goal to work for, despite the great variety of situations among different arctic communities. Since the term veto power connotes something absolute and irrevocable, as a follow-up to the Taxed Mountains Case the Sámi have restated their policy and are now advocating a special law for land protection. This is similar to the protection regime already established for the Cree as a consequence of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement in 1975 (Feit, 1982). Such a strengthening of usufructuary rights is more vital to any ethnic minority group than futile attempts to acquire ownership rights. Ethnic minority groups will then be able to act in a manner that reflects cultural viability and will no longer be simply pawns in a political game directed entirely by the dominant society. This goal, however, does not imply isolation or the placement of ethnic communities outside the larger society; on the contrary, it seeks a state of cultural pluralism in real terms. These basic ideas have been fully developed by Thuen (1980).

Various aspects of the Sámi claims to land rights evoked in particular by the Alta Hydro Development were highlighted in a conference held during the heated debate over the project. Implicit in the final report of the conference lay the idea of a veto power for Sámi as a unique people within the dominant Norwegian society. Some of the same ideas concerning conditions in Canada have been presented by Keith and Wright (1978).

Because of demands for industrial development from the dominant society, community development in the north is paramount. Ecological niches to which the various ethnic minor-

ities are adapted must be protected. Such protection can be realized only if the locally defined ethnic community has sufficient political strength to act as an autonomous group in conflicts of interest. Such a minimum degree of local autonomy, which to a large extent is based on protection of land and water, appears as the most crucial requirement in maintaining cultural viability. Finally, without viable ethnic communities, native peoples will find it very difficult to avoid assimilation pressures.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Fieldwork in Swedish Lapland was supported by a grant from the Norwegian Research Council for Science and the Humanities. An earlier version of the paper was presented at an interdisciplinary symposium on Community Development in the Circumpolar North held in September 1981 at the Center for Northern Studies, Wolcott, Vermont, U.S.A. In particular I acknowledge Oran Young and George Wenzel for many valuable comments. My colleague at the Ethnographic Museum, University of Oslo, Norway, Harald Beyer-Broch, also encouraged me to reshape some of my earlier thoughts and ideas. The responsibility for the conclusions drawn in the paper, however, is solely my own.

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