



Storheia, built by the company Fosen Vind, is Europe's largest wind power plant.

Samiske mediers dekning av industriutvikling i Sápmi: Fovsen-saken og Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu-saken

Sammendrag: Denne studien viser at innrammingen av nyheter i samiske medier om industriutvikling har endret seg på 50 år, fra en hovedsakelig miljøramme til i høyere grad en menneskerettighetsramme. Studien undersøker nyhetsdekningen i NRK Sápmi av vindkraftutbyggingen Fosen Vind i Fovsen Njaarke Sijte i Trøndelag, og den samiske avisen Sámi Áigis dekning av vannkraftutbygging i Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu (Alta-Kautokeino). Det undersøkes hvordan samiske medier dekker og innrammer industriell utvikling i den samiske regionen i Norge og motstanden fra det samiske samfunnet – og om hvordan denne dekningen og rammene har endret seg i løpet av 50 år med samisk mediehistorie. Det er skrevet betydelige arbeider om samisk mediehistorie, men måten samiske medier har rammet inn industriell utvikling i Sápmi i ulike tidsepoker har ikke vært studert tidligere.

Emneord: Samisk journalistikkhistorie, urfolkjournalistikk, industriell utvikling, framing, urfolksmotstand

Fagfelleurdert

Sámi media reporting on the industrial development in the Sámi region:

The Fovsen case and the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu case

Abstract: *This study shows how the framing of news about industrial development in Sámi media has changed over the past 50 years, from primarily an environmental frame to increasingly a human rights frame. The study examines the news coverage by NRK Sápmi of the Fosen Vind wind power development in Fovsen Njaarke Sijte in Trøndelag, as well as the Sámi newspaper Sámi Áigi's coverage of the hydropower development in Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu (Alta-Kautokeino). The article investigates how the Sámi media covers and frames industrial development in the Sámi region of Norway and the resistance from the Sámi community – and how this coverage and these frames have changed over 50 years of Sámi media history. While significant work has been published on Sámi media history, the ways in which the Sámi media has framed industrial development in Sápmi during different time periods have not been previously studied.*

Keywords: *History of Sámi journalism, Indigenous journalism, industrial development, framing, Indigenous resistance*



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Introduction

This research originates from various disputes between the Indigenous Sámi people and the surrounding nation states concerning the hydropower projects of previous decades and current wind power development projects. The study focuses on two industrial development projects, the Fosen Vind wind power project in the Fovsen Njaarke Sijte¹ in Trøndelag, Norway and the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu River hydropower development in Finnmark, Norway. The former is part of the current acceleration of the green transition on the traditional lands of the Indigenous Sámi people. The Sámi are an Indigenous people living in Finland, Norway, Sweden, and the Kola Peninsula, Russia.

This study asks how the Sámi media has covered and framed the planning and implementation of industrial development in the Sámi region of Norway and the related resistance of the Indigenous Sámi communities. The Fosen Vind wind power project has met with unprecedented resistance by Sámi activists, exemplified by the demonstrations in Oslo, Norway in 2023, which made headlines across Europe, just as Sámi and Norwegian activists did more than 40 years ago when they opposed the construction of a dam on the Álaheadju–Guovdageaidnu river in Stilla, Álaheadju (Alta), Finnmark Norway.

This study focuses on the news coverage of two development projects in the Sámi region of Nor-

way, the current wind power development in the Fovsen Njaarke Sijte in Trøndeland, Norway and the hydropower development of the Álaheadju–Guovdageaidnu river in the 1970s and 1980s in Finnmark, Norway. It examines the role of Sámi media in reporting and informing the Sámi people about industrial development,² related conflicts and the resistance³ of Sámi communities. The assumption is that the Sámi media plays a key role in informing both Sámi and Norwegian society about the industrial development taking place in the Sámi region. Therefore, the study analyses the Sámi news media's coverage of the industrial development in the Álaheadju–Guovdageaidnu river and Fovsen cases to find out how the Sámi media has framed and currently frames the industrial development and related conflicts in recent history in the Sámi region.

The results of the study show that the Sámi media's framing of reporting on the industrial development has shifted during the last 50 years from the environmental effects of industrial development and the collective rights of the Sámi to the violation of the Sámi's human rights. Whereas in the past Indigenous Sámi journalists focused on the consequences of industrial development for the environment, such as pollution and its effects on nature, reindeer, other animals and, finally, humans, today, the focus of Sámi journalism is on humans, human rights and human rights violations caused by industrial development.

This article answers the following research questions:

RQ1: How does the Sámi media's role as a promoter of freedom of speech and freedom of press manifest itself in the news, for example in how Sámi media frame and inform the Sámi about industrial development and the related resistance of Sámi communities?

RQ2: How has the Sámi media's framing in reporting on industrial development in relation to issues relevant to Sámi communities, their histories and environment and the Sámi way of life changed over time?

Context of industrial development in the Sámi region

The Sámi regions of Finland, Norway and Sweden are constantly under great pressure due to the exploitation of natural resources and industrial development by the majority societies. The construction of railways and the establishment of mines, as well as the more recent development of the so-called green transition, are seen as developments that follow one from the other. For instance, elsewhere in the Arctic region where Indigenous peoples live, such as Fairbanks in Alaska, Hay River in Canada, and Kiruna in Sweden, the establishment of mines has guided the construction of railways since the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴ In relation to the green transition, railways are considered a pivotal part of the future global transportation network due to their energy efficiency, lower rate of pollution and lower carbon dioxide emissions.⁵

The focus of this study is two industrial development projects, the Fosen Vind wind power development and the Álaheadju–Guovdageaidnu river hydropower development project. Preliminary plans for damming the Álaheadju–Guovdageaidnu river were made in 1968. According to the first dam plans, the entire Sámi village of Máze⁶ (Masi) with its church along the Álaheadju–Guovdageaidnu river would have been submerged. In 1979, both Sámi and Norwegian activists stopped road construction work in the planned dam area in Stilla, Álaheadju (Alta), Finnmark, Norway. At the peak of the demonstrations, more than 800 protestors opposed the construction of the dam.⁷

Demonstrations against the plan to dam the Álaheadju–Guovdageaidnu river led to a massive police operation in Norway. Consequently, the Stilla protests were reported all over Europe. When protests first hit the headlines, they were also reported by the Finnish Public Broadcasting Company, Yle. I remember



Protester during the People's Action against the development of the Álaheadju–Guovdageaidnu river (the Alta – Kautokeino Watershed) from 1978 to 1982. Photo: Alta Museum.

like it was yesterday when the Yle television evening news showed the Norwegian police carrying away protesters dressed in their Sámi outfits. I was nine years old at the time.

The Fovsen case is a conflict caused by wind power development in the Fovsen Njaarke Sijte in Trøndelag, Norway. The parties are the Sámi reindeer herders of the Fovsen Njaarke Sijte, the Norwegian Ministry of Energy and Fosen Vind DA wind power developers. The conflict heated up in January 2023 when young Sámi⁸ NSR-N activists and Norwegian activists from the Nature and Youth organization started demonstrating in Oslo 500 days after the Supreme Court of Norway's decision stating that the wind power development in the Fovsen Njaarke Sijte violates the rights of the Fovsen Sámi.⁹

When demonstrations started at the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy in Oslo on 23 February 2023, protesters demanded that the wind turbines be removed and the land be returned to the Fovsen Sámi. The demonstrators blocked the entry of the Ministry. The news items by NRK Sápmi refer to the Supreme Court of Norway's verdict that the construction decision was invalid because satisfactory mitigating measures had not been implemented as the reason young Sámi and Norwegian activists demonstrated against the government of Norway and the development of wind power. The demonstrators demanded that the human rights violations of the Fovsen reindeer-herding Sámi be stopped.

Green transition conflict mediation between Sámi and developers

The transition to green energy has multiple effects on Sámi communities and Sámi livelihoods such as reindeer herding. In the Sámi area of Finland, for example, it has been reported that the windmills change

reindeer migration paths.¹⁰ According to the United Nations' statements about the significant increase in the utilization of natural resources in the Sámi region of Sweden and related remarks by Amnesty International, the Swedish legislation should be reformed to better protect the rights of the Sámi.¹¹

The effects of the green transition already extend to the Sámi region of Sweden, and as has been the case since the beginning of colonialism in the fourteenth century, Swedish political decision-making today still ignores the participation of the Sámi.¹² Similarly, in Ájluokta (Drag) in Nordland, Norway meaningful stakeholder participation (MSE) of the Sámi in green transition development still is problematic. When establishing mines, for example, the recognition of commonly accepted set of facts remains challenging.¹³ Instead, it is required that the Sámi should be engaged in policy making from an early stage,¹⁴ and the human rights of the Sámi should be taken into account to create a just, green Nordic society.¹⁵

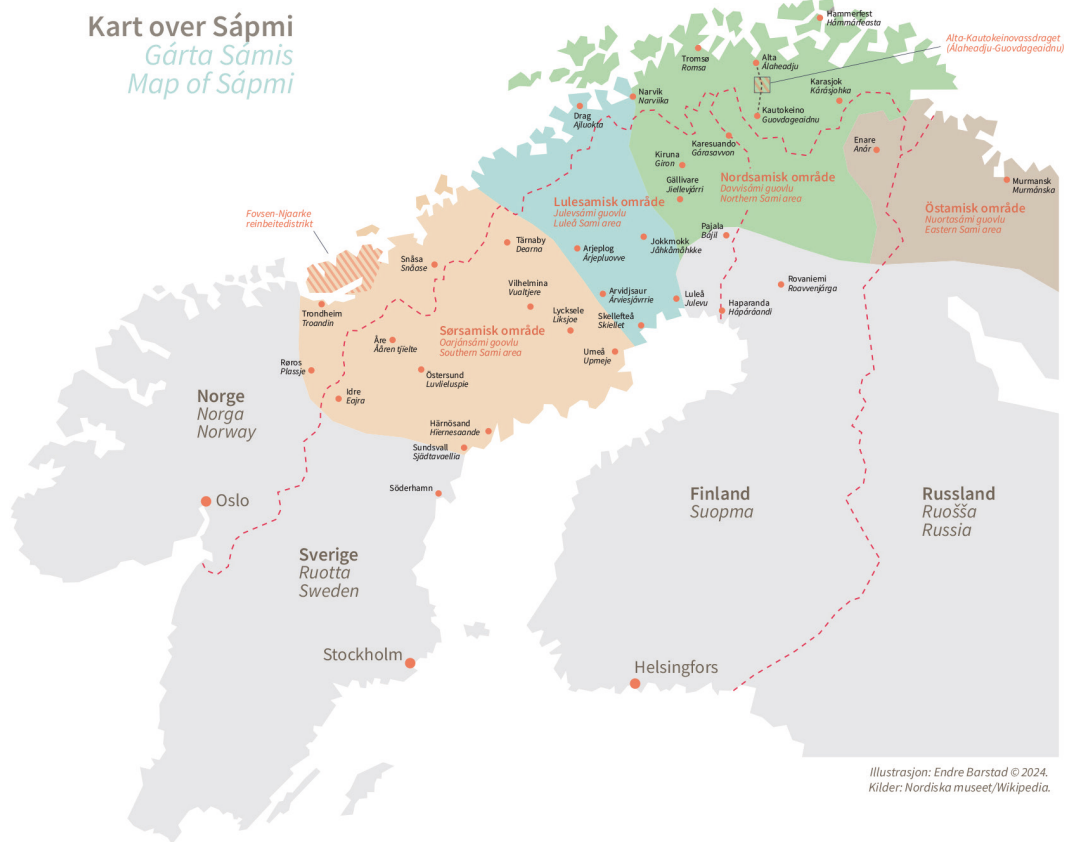
Indigenous journalism

Globally, Indigenous journalism is considered important to Indigenous peoples because it provides opportunities for "community participation and engagement" in selecting and framing news topics that matter to Indigenous communities. Moreover, it offers opportunities to "talk back" to the negative representations of Indigenous peoples proffered by the mainstream media.¹⁶ As in all societies, freedom of speech, freedom of the press and informed citizens are key to progress on their own terms.¹⁷ In Australia, for example, Indigenous communities have used Aboriginal news media to "generate political activity, circulate messages through and beyond the Indigenous public sphere, and educate the broader Australian community."¹⁸ In the United States, the Native American public sphere in the 1960s emphasized the rights of Native Americans, especially the right to self-determination. For instance, Coward (2023) refers to the Indigenous journalist Lehman Brightman¹⁹ who brought poorly resourced Native American schools into the public debate by reporting on them.²⁰

Considering the social power of the media, the role of the Sámi media in informing Sámi communities about the planned industrial development and the resistance it causes is major in the formation of resilient Sámi communities. The core of Indigenous peoples' resilience under colonial regimes is a systematic refusal to disappear, assimilate and integrate with the majority population.²¹ Resilience draws on "culturally distinctive strategies that reflect the specific histories, environments, and lifeways of indigenous peoples."²²

The matters that are relevant to the Sámi communities do not necessarily end up on the mainstream media's agenda. As Vranic and Skogerbø²³ found, for example, regarding the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Norway, the process was barely covered by the Norwegian mainstream media. Firstly, this study hypothesizes that the role of the Sámi media is significant because it monitors and covers Sámi issues that the mainstream media does not. Therefore, it is important to examine how the Sámi media frames the industrial development and the related Sámi resistance taking place in the Sámi region. To this end, the six types of framing of Sámi social issues proposed by Sara²⁴ based on the framing typologies by Hallahan²⁵ and Meriläinen and Vos²⁶ will be utilized.

The first frame, power relations between Sámi society and majority societies, emphasizes the Sámi people's lack of power and their position as underdogs in relation to industrial development. The second frame, Sámi values such as language and culture, is used to emphasize the importance of core Sámi values for preserving the future of the Sámi culture. This frame stresses the state's international obligations towards the Sámi people. The third frame, risky choices for Sámi communities, focuses on the situation prior to industrial development and the risks of wind power and hydropower construction, which can pose a big threat to the entire Sámi society. The fourth frame draws attention to the serious consequen-



Map of Sapmi, separated with colored fields for the individual areas. We have also highlighted the Fovsen-Njaarke reindeer herding district on the Fosen Peninsula in Trøndelag, as well as the conflict in Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu (Alta-Kautokeino) and Stilla, the site of the two Alta actions, in 1979 and 1982. Ill: Endre Barstad © 2024. Source: Nordiska museet/Wikipedia.

ences of industrial development, which may affect the Sámi people’s ability to practice their traditional Indigenous livelihoods in the future. The fifth frame, highlights Sámi ways of looking at issues from an Indigenous cultural, linguistic and historical perspectives. The fifth frame, responsibility and blame, centres the state’s responsibility by blaming the government for inaction.²⁷

In their critical model, Perkins and Starosta²⁸ ask the following questions in relation to media framing. Who is selected or not selected as a news source? Whose statements end up in the headlines? Whose views are favoured and whose views are challenged? Which aspects of an issue are included, and which are excluded?²⁹ Inspired by these questions, this study combines the concept of Indigenous journalism with the concept of Indigenous resistance³⁰ to offer useful insights into the role Sámi news media plays in informing Sámi society about historical and current conflicts between their society and the majority. This research aims to identify the framing used by the Sámi media that projects the ways of resistance emerging from the history and culture of Indigenous peoples.³¹

Indigenous resistance

Indigenous resistance describes the struggle to maintain Indigenous cultures and languages and to preserve the historically recognized political and administrative structures of Indigenous communities.³² Indigenous peoples' resistance relates to colonialism and is a systematic refusal to disappear, assimilate and integrate with the majority population. According to Steward-Harawira,³³ colonisation refers to the state of the affairs where one nation takes over another nation's territory and resources, applies its own administrative systems and laws to the region and mobilizes education to scatter the ontologies, identities, languages and cultures of Indigenous peoples. As the ongoing green transition and related mining activities, among other things, in Indigenous territories show, colonialism is not just a historical phenomenon but a contemporary one with major unpredictable implications for the future of Indigenous communities.³⁴ The revitalization of Indigenous languages, cultures spirituality and political activism and the emergence of Indigenous media, in turn, point to Indigenous resistance. In this context, traditional storytelling and cultural narratives play a significant role in rewriting colonial histories by telling the history of Indigenous peoples on their own terms, ancestral lands and traditional industries.³⁵ This highlights "Indigenous ways of knowing" as part of Indigenous resistance.³⁶

Methods and data

The study analyses NRK Sápmi's coverage of the recent Fosen Vind wind power development and the Sámi-language newspaper *Sámi Áigi's* coverage of the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu river hydropower development from recent history. Both the Fovsen case in the South Sámi region of Norway and the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu case in the North Sámi region of Norway have led to conflicts and tension in society between the majority and the minority. Therefore, the study analyses how these two Sámi media outlets frames, the news about these two cases. Framing focuses on highlighting certain aspects of an issue, giving the background for the problem, and offering specific solutions.³⁷ Based on a constructivist perspective, this study suggests that frames are "discursive constructions"³⁸ associated with certain cultural meanings.³⁹

NRK Sápmi is the Sámi division of the Norwegian national public broadcaster Norsk Rikskringkasting (NRK) which has a special responsibility to produce news, current affairs, drama and other media content on Sámi issues for radio, television, mobile platforms, and the Internet. The purpose of the NRK Sápmi division is twofold: to produce and disseminate media content for the maintenance and development of the Sámi languages and culture and to inform Norwegian-speaking Sámi who do not speak the Sámi language and the entire Norwegian population about Sámi issues in Norwegian. NRK Sápmi's newsroom cooperates with the Sámi divisions of Yle, the Finnish Broadcasting Company, Swedish television and Swedish radio. The first Sámi-language radio broadcast was aired from Tromsø, Norway, in 1946. Since 1991, NRK Sápmi has produced Sámi-language children's programmes, and it has produced and aired *Ođđasat*, a Sámi-language television news broadcast, since 2001.⁴⁰

Sámi Áigi was established in 1979 as a Sámi-language weekly newspaper in Kárášjohka (Karasjok), Norway. The predecessor of the current Sámi language newspaper *Ávvir*, *Sámi Áigi* was a North Sámi-language newspaper that produced and published news, current affairs pieces and readers' letters in the years 1979–1993. The newspaper sparked debates on political issues important to the Sámi, such as the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu river dam plan. The paper also promoted the use of the newly introduced orthography of the North Sámi language. *Sámi Áigi* was run by Sámi organizations, and despite receiving press support it ran into financial difficulties and went bankrupt in 1993.

After the bankruptcy of *Sámi Áigi*, a new Sámi-language newspaper, *Min Áigi*, was established in 1994. At the time, *Min Áigi* had just over thousand subscribers. Later, another Sámi newspaper, *Áššu*,



The building housing the local branches of NRK Sápmi and SpareBank 1, in Kautokeino, Finnmark, Norway. Photo: Manxruler – Eget verk, CC BY-SA 4

was established in Guovdageaidnu (Kautokeino), Norway. In 2008, Min Áigi and Áššu were merged and the daily Sámi newspaper *Ávvir* was founded. In this study, 15 news articles by NRK Sápmi about the Oslo protests related to the Fosen Vind wind power development in February 2023 will be analysed. In addition, 15 news articles from *Sámi Áigi* about the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu (Alta-Kautokeino) river dam plan in 1979–1980 will be analysed.

To analyse the research data, the six types of framing of Sámi social issues introduced by Sara⁴¹ based on the framing typology by Hallahan⁴² and the seven framing types for social issues by Meriläinen and Vos⁴³ will be applied. The six types of framing are: 1) power relations between Sámi society and majority societies, 2) Sámi values such as language and culture, 3) risky choices for Sámi communities, 4) consequences for Sámi society, its communities, languages, and culture, 5) Sámi ways of looking at issues from the cultural, linguistic, and historical perspectives of Indigenous people, and 6) responsibility and blame.⁴⁴

Analysis

This study analyses the media framing of those opposing both the Fosen Vind wind power development and the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu river dam plan. The actors opposing those plans included Sámi and Norwegian activists demonstrating against the developments, Sámi politicians, some Norwegian politicians, human rights lawyers, climate activists, nature organisations. This study does not include

those who supported industrial development projects. Supporters of industrial development and their viewpoints are often highlighted in research while the voices of opponents of industrial development remain hidden. This study, for its part, decolonizes Sámi media research, placing the Indigenous Sámi way of thinking and knowledge at the centre.

Power relations between Sámi society and majority societies

The power relations between the supporters and the opponents of the Fosen Vind wind power development are visible in the news. One of the most salient frames of NRK Sápmi's coverage is the human rights frame. Much is made of the fact that even though 500 days had passed since Supreme Court of Norway's decision, the government had done nothing to remedy the human rights violations against the Sámi of the Fovsen Njaarke Sijte caused by the Fosen Vind wind power development. The news emphasizes the underdog position and lack of power of the Sámi reindeer herders in the Fovsen Njaarke Sijte, stating that they have been fighting against the wind power industry and the state for 10 years. Indeed, demonstrators pointed out that "real people live with this abuse every day."⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the government had not taken measures to mitigate the impacts of the wind power development on Fovsen Njaarke Sijte's reindeer herding.

The government's failure to act despite the ruling that the development would violate the rights of the reindeer herding Sámi to practice their culture highlights the Sámi reindeer herders' lack of power. The Norwegian government does not consider the Fosen Vind wind power development as a human rights violation of the Indigenous Sámi people but agrees that the matter should be resolved in accordance with the human rights obligations.

The power relations between the majority and minority are also visible in *Sámi Áigi's* coverage of the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu river dam plan. The newspaper points out that the government's dam plan is not based on correct information about the effects of damming on reindeer herding and nature. It is noted that in addition to the government's report on the rights of the Sámi, the Sámi were expecting a new fact-based decision on the dam plan by the Stortinget, the Norwegian Parliament. In addition, Sámi organizations are expected to have the opportunity to conduct their own research on the rights of the Sámi and the effects of the dam plan on nature and Sámi culture.

As Nelson⁴⁶ points out, the framing of the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu river case coverage focuses on emphasizing certain aspects of the issue, providing certain kinds of background information, and offering a particular way of solving the problem.⁴⁷ It was argued that the rights of the Sámi to land and water had to be clarified before taking the land. The Sámi's lack of power and their position as the underdog are emphasized by the observation that the decisions of democratic bodies can no longer be influenced by fact-based information: "It is no longer possible to reach democratic institutions with factual information."⁴⁸

Sámi values such as language and culture

The cultural values of the Sámi are emphasized in the news coverage by NRK Sápmi. One of the most striking visual frames, repeated in all the news images, is the protesters wearing their Sámi outfits inside out. NRK Sápmi news⁴⁹ asks why some angry Sámi youth were demonstrating on the streets of Oslo with their Sámi outfits inside out. NRK Sápmi reported on the demonstrations by young Sámi (NSR-N) and Norwegian (Natur of Ungdom) against Europe's largest wind power development, Fosen Vind, the Storheia wind power plant in Trøndelag, Norway, that were completed in 2019 and 2020 respectively. As part of their coverage, they explained why some of the demonstrators were wearing their Sámi outfits inside out, citing a participant who shared that "wearing a Sámi outfit inside out is a traditional form of

protest to express dissatisfaction."⁵⁰ This is an example of how Sámi media coverage provides frames that are related to particular cultural connotations and interpretations.⁵¹

Some news sources argue that the Supreme Court of Norway stated that the human rights of the South Sámi have been violated. Furthermore, it is argued that the Supreme Court of Norway also considered that the utilization of grazing areas for reindeer is essentially prevented. In accordance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR),⁵² these human rights violations must be corrected. But there is no clear vision of how this should be done and what mitigating measures should be introduced. However, it has been argued that the mitigating measures must be concrete, all the parties need to be consulted, and mutual trust needs to be built between the Sámi and the state authorities.

In the coverage of the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu river dam plan, the rights of the Sámi to land and water and to use the land in the traditional sustainable way are emphasized. *Sámi Áigi* reported on claims that it would have been necessary to engage international legal experts to resolve the legal issues related to the plan. More broadly, it was claimed that international experts were needed to resolve the question of the Sámi's rights to land and water.

The government must acknowledge that this is a conflict between the Norwegian authorities and the Sámi people. This entails that the government is part of the conflict. Therefore, international experts must be used to resolve the conflict.⁵³

Risky choices for Sámi communities

Risky choices for Sámi communities, especially reindeer herding communities, in relation to the Fosen Vind wind power development are highlighted in the news reporting by NRK Sápmi. Some parties believed that the Fovsen Njaarke Sijte might lose pastures and thus the Sámi would lose their livelihood in the future as a result of Europe's largest wind power development in Trøndelag, Norway. NRK Sápmi reported that the Sámi reindeer herders in the area believe that the Fosen Vind wind power development will destroy their pastures, and thus violate the right of Indigenous Sámi people to their culture, which is protected by UN treaties. One reindeer herder stated: "Those wind turbines have to be removed, that's the only solution. And when the state decides to ignore that verdict, I have no more faith in [it]."⁵⁴

Sámi Áigi's coverage of the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu river dam plan highlights risky choices for Sámi reindeer herding and the Arctic nature of the Sámi region. The newspaper's framing emphasizes the importance of whose facts and opinions are cited as news sources.⁵⁵ It was argued that the Sámi Village of Máze would suffer greatly from the damming of the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu river as it could cause strong spring flooding. It was also discussed that until the studies were completed, it would be unclear how the damming of the river and the related road construction would affect Sámi reindeer herding in the area.

Some people pointed to research findings that damming the river could have unpredictable effects on the area's delicate Arctic vegetation and climate. Others argued that the authorities should carry out biological and chemical studies on the effects of the proposed dam, because its environmental polluting effects had not been thoroughly studied. The recommendation was that the Norwegian Parliament stop the planned dam. "Especially with regard to where they are going to make a road to the power plant. Only that is enough for us to go to 'Stilla.'"⁵⁶

Consequences for Sámi society, its communities, languages, and cultures

NRK Sápmi's coverage of the Fosen Vind development highlights both negative and positive consequences of the case. It portrays the negative consequences for Sámi reindeer herding communities in the form of

loss of grazing as inevitable. The reporting draws attention to the fact that the reindeer-herding Sámi of the Fovsen Njaarke Sijte must live daily with the negative effects and consequences of the Fosen Vind wind power development: “Reindeer herders in the area believe that the windmills destroy grazing lands in a way that violates the Indigenous peoples UN-protected rights to culture.”⁵⁷ Opponents of the Fosen Vind wind power development argue that it is merely one of many ongoing industrial development projects in the entire Sámi region. The framing demonstrates the role of the Sámi media in bringing attention to culturally meaningful forms of resistance that mediate the ways of life and thinking of indigenous peoples.⁵⁸

Similarly, the coverage of the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu river dam plan highlights the negative and unexpected consequences of damming on reindeer herding and nature in the area. However, the coverage shows that the protests related to the proposed dam also had some positive consequences for the Sámi in the form of a clarification of their rights. Clarifying the rights of the Sámi has long been a political goal of Sámi organizations, which now seems to be realized. The paper reported the government’s acknowledgement of the lack of clarity concerning Sámi rights:

The government decided to conduct a broader professional and political investigation into the rights of the Sámi in Norway. Thus, Sámi organizations have achieved what they have been demanding for a long time. Sámi organizations have stated that larger dams must not be built until the legal and political status of the Sámi in Norway has been clarified.⁵⁹

Indigenous cultural, linguistic and historical perspectives

The Fovsen coverage by NRK Sápmi reflects a fundamental difference between opponents and supporters of the Fosen Vind wind power development. According to the news, the Fovsen activists argued that, in accordance with the Supreme Court of Norway’s decision, the construction of the Fosen Vind wind power development violated the human rights of the Sámi of the Fovsen Njaarke Sijte and was illegal, and therefore the wind turbines should be removed, and the land must be returned to the reindeer-herding Sámi. Furthermore, the protesters were reported to have claimed that the fact that the government had not done anything to correct the human rights violations despite the decision of the Supreme Court of Norway’s decision did not fit the Sámi’s sense of justice. The protesters therefore stated that they intended to sit at the entrance of the ministry forever or until the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy did what it needed to do to correct the human rights violations.

Some Sámi and Norwegian politicians supported the demonstrators, stating that the protests were a brave, safe and peaceful way to express their opinion. Moreover, some people echoed that the only way to solve the problem would be to remove the wind turbines and return the area to the Fovsen Njaarke Sijte Sámi in its natural state. The reporting emphasizes that this is not a climate issue, but a human rights issue. The case is presented as an example of green colonialism, where the need to produce green energy to combat the climate crisis is used to justify the violation of the Sámi’s human rights. “The problem is that the government does not comply with the final decision of the Supreme Court of Norway, according to which the Fovsen Njaarke Sijte’s situation must be arranged.”⁶⁰ The fact that these human rights violations have not been stopped is presented as an intolerable situation.

Similarly, in the Sámi newspaper *Sámi Áigi*’s coverage of the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu river dam plan, protesters argue that the government’s plan is based on false information such as the alleged lack of electric power. Like the Fovsen activists, about 300 opponents of the planned Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu river dam in Detsika, above the Fállá River Álaheadju (Alta), announced in mid-July 1979 that they would not give up until the government stopped the dam work in Stilla, Finnmark. In addition, the protesters expected Stortinget, the Norwegian Parliament, to reconsider and reverse the decision to dam the river.

Some protesters stated that Sámi rivers must be protected, and that the Sámi were there first and were not going anywhere. Some stated that the Sámi do not need money as compensation for damming the river, but our children and grandchildren need pastures:

This is how our fathers, mothers, grandmothers, and grandfathers lived, and this is how we want to live in the future. And if someone claims that damming the river will only affect a few dozen reindeer, they have no idea what they're talking about.⁶¹

This framing reflects the Indigenous media's way of telling the history of the Indigenous people⁶² as a way of justifying their existence.

Responsibility and blame

When the Fovsen protests began in February 2023 in Oslo, the NRK Sápmi news reported that the reindeer herding Sámi of the Fovsen Njaarke Sijte had to live daily with the severe consequences of the Fosen Vind wind power development and human rights violations. Blame was attributed to the government for not following the Supreme Court of Norway's injunction to take mitigating measures. One Sámi reindeer herder stated that the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy lacked the knowledge necessary to deal with reindeer herding issues and argued that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food had the necessary expertise.

Furthermore, it was reported that the protesters could not tolerate the fact that Norway, as a human rights state, was treating the Sámi this way. Because of this, many young people have lost trust in Norway as a human rights state, a rule of law and democracy. They blamed the Norwegian government, saying that it cannot be tolerated that Norway, as a democracy, does not follow the decision of its Supreme Court. Some also stated that since the state has decided to ignore the Supreme Court's decision, it is unlikely that the wind turbines will be removed.

Police removed demonstrators from the lobby of the Ministry of the Petroleum and Energy at 2.30 am, on the morning of Monday 27 February 2023, leading a Norwegian politician to claim that it was beneath the police's dignity to remove the demonstrators secretly at night. The motives behind the project were also called into question: "This is a clear example of green colonialism: pretending to save the planet while violating human rights and completely violating the rights of the Sámi."⁶³

Some demonstrators stated that they were shocked when the police removed them from the ministry in the middle of the night. The activists had some supporters who said that police operations at night do not stand in the light of day. The argument is made that Indigenous peoples must be listened to when their human rights have been violated. The reporting reiterates that 500 days had passed since the Supreme Court of Norway's verdict that the wind power development on the Fosen peninsula (Fosenhalvøya) violated the rights of the Fovsen Njaarke Sijte Sámi and the government had still done nothing. Moreover, it raises the question of who was committing the true crime. Furthermore, it is argued that there is no opposition to green transition, but climate action cannot be implemented at the expense of an Indigenous people's rights. The green transition cannot be fair if human rights violations and the colonisation of Indigenous peoples continue at the same time.

What it comes to *Sámi Áigi's* reporting on the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu river dam plan, the paper reported on the demands of some reindeer herding Sámi to be allowed to discuss directly with politicians, because the authorities did not seem to listen to the Sámi's demands. Blame was attributed to the authorities for not taking Sámi concerns seriously and for claiming the dam plan would have no effects on the Sámi people. The authorities were accused of having insufficient information to make this claim, and it was alleged that their decision was based on false information.

In addition, the paper reported that the government's dam plan for the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu

river contained incorrect information that needed to be corrected before dam work continued. The claim was also made that Sámi organizations should be able to conduct their own investigations on the rights issue. Furthermore, the government was urged to recognize that this was a conflict between the government and the Sámi people, and that relations between the majority and minority had deteriorated as a result: "These riots have damaged the good relationships between the Sámi and Norwegians. And some Sámi no longer dare to wear a Sámi outfit."⁶⁴ Finally, it was argued that an external international expert should be chosen as the chairman of the commission investigating the rights of the Sámi.

Conclusions

In both the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu case and the Fovsen case, news coverage in the Sámi media highlighted the Sámi's underdog status and their lack of power to influence decisions related to development projects. Existing research shows that decision-making affecting Sámi communities takes place from the top down, and the only way to resist is to protest. In both the cases discussed here, activists were prepared to continue protesting as long as necessary. And in both cases, the role of the Sámi media in the resistance manifested itself in reporting and providing information about the government's actions or lack of action and the insufficient information provided by the government in relation to development projects that could harm Sámi communities and their traditional industries. According to the research data, the role of the Sámi media in the resistance of Indigenous peoples is to make the power structures of the majority society visible and to share information about government decisions that affect the Sámi. Fifty years ago, *Sámi Áigi* also highlighted the fact that "the Sámi were here first" to support the claims and goals of the demonstrators.

The biggest difference between NRK Sápmi's and *Sámi Áigi*'s reporting is that the latter emphasizes the effects of hydropower development on nature – and thus on the traditional livelihood of the Sámi, reindeer herding – and only then on humans. NRK Sápmi's coverage of the Fovsen case lacks the nature frame, and discussion of the effects of wind power development on nature is almost completely absent. Instead, it highlights the human rights of the Sámi, a frame which is completely missing from *Sámi Áigi*'s coverage. *Sámi Áigi*'s coverage focuses on the collective rights of the Sámi to land and water on a general level and related to the status of the Sámi in connection with the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu river case.

The greatest change thus seems to be the shift in focus from the frame of nature and collective rights to that of humans and their individual and human rights. When it comes to the traditional world view of Indigenous peoples, nature has always been the focus of their thinking. It is worth noting that the violation of Indigenous people's human rights related to development projects was not discussed in either international arenas or in the public debate at the time of the dam project. However, in both cases, lawyers specializing in Sámi and Indigenous affairs are used as news sources to explain the legal aspects the cases.

Both outlets report on the risks of development projects for Sámi reindeer herding. This has not changed over time. In addition to the precarious situation of reindeer herders, *Sámi Áigi*'s coverage is particularly concerned with the risks and possible harmful effects of damming the river on the nature and climate of the Arctic, the balance of which the people of the north depend on. Already at the time of the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu river dam protests, the Sámi's views on industrial development and its risks and consequences were very different compared to those of the supporters of this development and of the government. This is still the case with the Fovsen demonstrations.

The reporting of the Sámi media reflects the Sámi way of thinking. According to both NRK Sápmi and *Sámi Áigi*, the protesters' views on industrial development are the opposite of those of the supporters of the industrial development. However, whereas fifty years ago, the news called for the protection of

the rivers of the Sámi region, today's news does not feature similar calls to protect nature. The similarity between the two instances of news coverage is that in both cases the protesters were portrayed as not planning to give up until the development was stopped.

In both cases, blame was attributed to the government for the lack of trust. News coverage portrayed the events as testing the Sámi's trust in democracy and the rule of law. In the Fovsen case, some Sámi were losing trust in the government because it had not corrected what the Supreme Court of Norway had deemed to be human rights violations against the Fovsen Sámi. In the Álaheadju-Guovdageaidnu river case, the government was accused of making it impossible for the Sámi to counter the false information underlying the decisions. NRK Sápmi's coverage does not include the "we were here first" frame. *Sámi Áigi's* coverage underlines that the Sámi do not need money, but grazing land since reindeer herding is the way their ancestors lived and is the way they and their children will live. Based on our findings in this study, we recommend that this matter be further studied in more detail by examining at a broader set of data.

Endnotes

- 1 There are at least two languages that are used here. Fovsen Njaarke Sijte is the name of the siida that is used in the Fovsen coverage by NRK Sápmi. Siida's official name is Sør-Fosen Sijte, as it is registered in Brønnøysund Register Centre. The wind power company's official name is Fosen Vind AS, also as it is registered in Brønnøysund Register Centre.
- 2 Sara et al., 2021
- 3 Ahenakew et al., 2014, p. 221
- 4 Lasserre and Tétu, 2020, p. 21
- 5 Borda-de-Água et al., 2017
- 6 The Sámi village of Máze (Masi) is located in Finnmark (Finnmark), Norway, 61.5 kilometers from the Sámi village of Guovdageaidnu (Kautokeino), and 70.9 kilometers from the town of Álaheadju (Alta).
- 7 <https://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alta-konflikten>
- 8 Youth organization of the Norwegian National Sámi Association (NSR-N) and Nature and Youth (Natur og ungdom)
- 9 Cambou, 2023
- 10 Segovia-Tzompa, 2024
- 11 Persson and Dymitrow, 2024
- 12 Össbo, 2023
- 13 Nystø Gállok, 2024
- 14 Össbo, 2023
- 15 Cambou, 2020
- 16 NiBroin et al., 2021, p. 197–198
- 17 Kemper, 2010, p. 3
- 18 Burrows, 2010, p. 33
- 19 Lehman Brightman (1930–2018) was a Sioux and Creek Indian from the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation in South Dakota also living in Oklahoma US. Brightman was educator, activist, college professor, father, grandfather who promoted social change for Indian Affairs, <https://www.lakotatimes.com/articles/lehman-l-brightman/>
- 20 Coward, 2023, p. 268
- 21 Steward-Harawira, 2021, p. 360
- 22 Kirmayer, 2011, p. 86
- 23 2022
- 24 2018
- 25 1999
- 26 2013
- 27 Sara, 2018, p. 124–125
- 28 2010, p. 73
- 29 Perkins and Starosta, 2010, p. 73
- 30 Ahenakew et al., 2014, p. 221

- 31 Kirmayer, 2011, p. 86
- 32 Beard, 2019, p. 568
- 33 2021
- 34 Steward-Harawira, 2021, p. 359
- 35 Kirmayer, 2011, p. 89
- 36 Ahenakew et al., 2014, p. 220–2021
- 37 Nelson, 2004
- 38 Bardhan, 2013, p. 395–396
- 39 Weaver, 2007
- 40 https://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/NRK_S%C3%A1pmi, https://nn.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%A1mi_%C3%81igi,
<https://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%81vvir#Opplag>
- 41 2018
- 42 1999
- 43 2013
- 44 Sara, 2018, pp. 124–125
- 45 NRK Sápmi, 23 February 2023, “Ekte mennesker lever med dette overgrepet hver dag”, https://www.nrk.no/sapmi/500-dager-siden-fosen-dommen_-na-aksjonerer-ella-marie-haetta-isaksen-departementet-1.16307645
- 46 2004
- 47 Nelson, 2004
- 48 Sámi Áigi, 18 January 1980, Álateaju-Guovdageainnu eanu dulvadeamen: Boazosápmelaččat Osloi, p. 1.
- 49 NRK Sápmi, 27 February 2023, Derfor aksjonerer de mot Olje- og energidepartementet, <https://www.nrk.no/norge/derfor-demonstrerer-samer-og-natur-og-ungdom-mot-regjeringen-og-vindkraft-pa-fosen-1.16314273>
- 50 NRK Sápmi, 27 February 2023, Aksjonistene fjernet med makt av politiet – får fullstøtte av Greta Thunberg, <https://www.nrk.no/norge/aksjonistene-ble-baret-ut-av-oed-av-politiet-1.16313754>
- 51 Weaver, 2007
- 52 SopS 7-8/1976
- 53 Sámi Áigi, 29 April 1980, Álbmotákšuvdna lea bures ráhkkanan vuostalastimii: Girdit ja helikopterat leat gárvásat ákšuvdnii, p. 15.
- 54 NRK Sápmi, 23 February 2023, Beaska Niillas doarju nuoraid miellačájeheami Oljo- ja energija Departemeanttas, https://www.nrk.no/sapmi/beaska-niillas-doarju-nuoraid-miella_ajeheami-oljo--ja-energiijadepartemeanttas-1.16309893
- 55 Perkins and Starosta, 2010
- 56 Sámi Áigi, 23 May 1980, Álbmotákšuvnna hoavda Alfred Nilsen: Mi leat “Stillas” dan beaivve go mášiinnat ge, p. 1.
- 57 NRK Sápmi, 27 February 2023, Derfor aksjonerer de mot Olje- og energidepartementet, <https://www.nrk.no/norge/derfor-demonstrerer-samer-og-natur-og-ungdom-mot-regjeringen-og-vindkraft-pa-fosen-1.16314273>
- 58 Kirmayer, 2011
- 59 Sámi Áigi, 16 May 1980, NBR Ráddehusa Álaheajudiedahussii: Veadjemeahttu dulvadit ovdal vuoigatvuodát čilget, p. 3.
- 60 NRK Sápmi, 27 February 2023, Elvestuen ut mot regjeringen, <https://www.nrk.no/sapmi/elvestuen-ut-mot-regjeringen-1.16314991>
- 61 Sámi Áigi, 5 October 1979, Per J. Eira doarju Stilla-ákšuvnna – Min eatnamat mávssoleabbot go ruđat, p. 9.
- 62 Kirmayer, 2011
- 63 NRK Sápmi, 27 February 2023, Greta Thunberg om Fosen-saka: – Klimakrisa og urfolksrettar går hand i hand. – Klimakrisa og krenkinga av urfolk sine rettar og menneskerettar går hand i hand, seier Thunberg, https://www.nrk.no/norge/greta-thunberg-om-fosen-saka_-_klimakrisa-og-urfolksrettar-gar-hand-i-hand-1.16314867
- 64 Sámi Áigi, 8 February 1980, Britta Johansen lahttu rádiu prugamrádis: Muitala čáhppes giellasiid Oslo – dadja ovddeš leansmánne Arvid Dahl Sámi Áigai. Geahččala kriminaliseret Oslo -nealgudeaddjiid, p. 11.

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