

Saami In The European Union¹

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Introduction

This paper focuses on the relationship between the Saami movements and the EU.² In 1995 Finland and Sweden became members of the EU while Norwegian people voted against joining. Still, Norway is co-financing and participating in many collaborative programs of the Union. In this paper, I will firstly use the anthropological fieldwork I completed in Lapland 1996 and my follow-up studies to describe how the Saami activists hope to find independence from their states in the polity-model of the EU and the strategies they follow in pursuit of emancipation together with other stateless nations. The Saami activists are aware of the marginal role cultural minorities play in the European integration. Nevertheless, the dream of being a relatively independent European nation, even though it would be possible only in a few policy fields, and taking care of one's 'own business' is a very powerful identity-building tool. Secondly, I will sketch how the EU takes care of its stateless nations with concentration on the problem of the lack of a definition for the concept of 'Europe of regions.' This concept is widely used today in differing variations: Europe of regions, Europe with regions, Europe of regional minorities, Europe with minorities. In fact, cultural minorities can have power in the EU only in areas in which they have power over or together with their nation states.

Then, I will look at the ways some of the regional funding programs take influence in Lapland with references to my empirical material. The bottom line of the argument here is that it is true that the EU brings new resources to Lapland with multifarious structural funds, but there is no evidence to conclude that the Saami people would have access to these resources of the EU independently of the states. Thus, the Saami and all other European language, culture and regional minorities always need to act in the framework created by

¹ I want to express my gratitude to Kordelin Foundation in Finland for a grant that enabled my stay at the Center for European Studies at Harvard University 2000-2001 during which this article was written.

² The plural form *movements* is used because of the diverse stand points the Saami activists take in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia concerning the EU.

the states. Neither is there evidence to say that these EU-resources would directly empower the Saami or other minority movements, or that the EU as such would offer new opportunities of emancipation. However, there is a certain interesting tendency: The regional funding and structure programs aim to support local ways of livelihood. As a side effect, this support could give the Saami activists more space to determine the direction of the development of the Saami culture. State protection is always strongly linked with a state's own interests. International protection might, if it would not be implemented by state governments, but rather directly from the EU level to the regions for example, increase the visibility of regional interests. However, the problem for the Saami remains that they do not constitute a regional majority and must depend on the good will of the other habitants of the regions, a will that seems to be constantly fading.

Research Design and Methods

This article is based on the material collected for my dissertation. For the purposes of this article, I have carefully reviewed and re-analysed the interviews, selected notes and other materials, which dealt with the EU and programs related to the EU. In its original setting, I conducted fieldwork in 1995-1997 traveling by car around the living areas of Saami in Northern Finland, Norway and Sweden and Sorbian minority in Eastern Germany. Only one and half years after Finland joined the EU in 1996, I interviewed 25 Saami activists and politicians.³ The research basically concentrated on the Finnish side of *Sápmi*. Some of the persons interviewed were working for Saami organizations either in Finland or in Norway, others devoting their leisure time to the minority. The interviews lasted one to three hours and included personal questions and open discussion about the legal, social, economic and educational situation of the Saami. Systemic questions about the EU were not made. At the same time, I had conversations with many people who did not like to be seen as minority members but who were, by their environment, defined as Saami. I also spoke with people who wanted to be members but had not been accepted by the Saami organizations or by the Saami elite. All the interviews are coded because anonymity was important for most people.⁴ As another method of collecting information, I analysed minority publications, leaflets and a diverse selection of organization materials representing the minority, its culture, traditions and language, as well as local newspapers in Lapland.

³ I want to stress that the Saami certainly have had different experiences with the EU after these interviews were conducted and therefore the results should be read in the described context.

⁴ See Interviews, in the reference list following this article. Sources remain anonymous but a code system provides the reader with basic information.

The overall question during in the fieldwork was to learn the ways the activists described their minority movement. It pointed out that the activists tend to look for answers in a nationalistic, ethnic-oriented discourse, which idealizes homogeneity and authenticity of nations (Toivanen 2001a; 2001c). They seem to employ an identity strategy that others have called the 'Benedict Anderson' strategy (i.e., Kay Warren on Maya movements. 1998). This involves a self-definition as a homogeneous national entity with more or less clear identity markers like common language, territory, set of traditions, history and ancestry (Toivanen 2001c). Thus, the analysis points out that the 'old-fashioned' concept of Nation is indeed a very useful tool for the minority activists. Specific kinds of national movements are of course born in specific kinds of political, social and economic circumstances that can induce a 'revival' of a group identity.

To find out more about the circumstances I also looked at the international and especially European minority rights treaties and documents. The conclusion was that the activists have to carefully select special identity markers, especially such markers that the 'outside world' expects to determine this 'revival.' The selected identity markers demonstrate that a distinct culture exists that needs to be protected and supported.⁵ These expectations or assumptions are reflected in the minority protection documents, and in my view, represent an acute pressure for homogenization and nationalization for the group elites who want to form an officially acknowledged minority. The Saami people are together with other minority people or nations bringing claims for rights based on ethnicity and culture before the public, the media and finally the courts with the intention of opening chapters in modern history that can shock by their immorality, injustice and above all lack of democratic values.⁶ In this atmosphere, European minorities have found space for new and more effective means of 'cultural survival.'⁷ I argue that European organizations especially treat minority movements as if they were monolingual and mono-cultural homogeneous entities that should be 'preserved' for the coming generations. This attitude is reflected in the identity politics of all minorities. The minorities imitate the 'minority criteria norm' that we can find in various documents on minority rights in order to be eligible both for support and for the official 'right to exist' (which also includes funding).

⁵ Konrad Köstlin (1993, 9) said during the Opening ceremonials of the Sorbian Institute in Bautzen: *Wen wir alle Sorben wären – nicht auszudenken –, dann gäbe es auch nichts zu pflegen.*

⁶ I personally was deeply shocked when I read about the Native Americans in Canada who stated in public that they were raped and otherwise sexually abused as children in the Christian boarding schools as late as the 1960s, or that the Australian authorities were stealing children from their aboriginal parents and placing them in boarding schools and children's homes to *civilize* them.

⁷ With cultural survival I am referring to a similar process often referred to as cultural revival. People who are representing a cultural minority find means and methods to get recognition and resources for the culture as a *people*.

The Dream: Europa with Minorities

How do the Saami activists talk about the EU? What do they expect to be its influence? During the interviews, the representatives of the Saami organizations repeatedly pointed out that the Saami movement is stronger and much more independent than 'states would assume' (interviews). This goes hand in hand with statements by activists that stress that the Saami have internationally recognized rights that will force states to give up some privileges and powers. Many activists used the 'language of rights' (Warren 1998, 31) to describe how the status of the Saami have been defined in various international legal documents. The activists refer eagerly to diverse studies that show evidence for their argument that the era of nation states has ended. In this setting, the concept of 'Europe of Regions' is seen as the perfect and functional alternative to the 'Europe of States.' In the minority activists' vocabulary, the concepts of region and minority are often interchangeable.

The Saami activists often take the position that suggests if the state is not able or willing to help the minority to pursue its agenda, the international and especially European organizations will come and help. The activists think that the international organizations are interested in supporting the minority issues in greater extent than the state (FS2; FS7; FS6). The statement 'Already now the Saami museum in Inari is going to be paid with EU-money' (FS3) implies that the EU considers the Saami culture important enough to be worthy of its own museum building. This, again, shows the (ignorant) people in Finland, Sweden and Norway that the Saami people are important for the EU. So far, the European institution can be utilized as means of pressure against own state. 'It is like Pekka Aikio (president of Saami Parliament) once said in a TV interview that if the state is not prepared to take care of its minority then call all the international organizations on the stage. And, oh my, if that is not going to be little embarrassing for countries like Finland' one activist was laughing aloud (FS2). Media attention is extremely important for a minority that is always dependent on the public funding. This implies that all projects that could possibly attract positive media attention are especially important for the Saami and other minority groups. It should be mentioned that Saami people know how to bring cases before international courts and have successfully done so. All Nordic governments have already been addressed warnings by Human Rights Committee (Aikio & Scheinin eds. 2000). In the course of time, the Saami organizations have become more experienced in how it is to 'take care independently of one's own nation's business' (FS3). These kinds of arguments are often used by the activists not as matters of belief but rather in their strategic setting as a double-edged sword. On the one side is a clear threat posed by the activists warning that government officials have to take care of us and if they don't, the activists will call international attention their cause and the government's reputation will suffer (FS25). On the other side, the argument stresses that every single nation state

has minorities and the questions concerning national minorities cannot be solved on a national level but require the involvement of all European minorities and states.

The Saami people have a realistic attitude toward the EU. In 1996, they were well informed about, and very critical toward most of the programs of the EU that might have influenced Lapland. Still, there were many open questions and worries dealing with 'unexpected' factors. Like most other European people, the Saami interviewed were complaining that the bureaucracy of the EU was 'too complicated for a normal human being' (FS8). As consequence, the Saami activists seemed to take the attitude that they needed to find out what is really going on in Brussels. The Finnish Saami Parliament had established contacts with the EU institutions that are relevant for minority politics long before Finland started the official negotiations with the EU. In addition, the Saami organizations hosted multiple seminars that were aimed to prepare the Saami people for potential membership. These seminars dealt with the contents of diverse EU programs and recommendations that might possibly influence Lapland. A delegation of Saami travelled to Brussels and after that to Wales, where they visited the Welsh minority organization to find out what it would mean to be an 'EU minority' (FS14; FS16). Thus, it has been an important task for Saami activists in all Nordic countries to learn as much as possible about the EU structures and to find ways to utilize the EU for the Saami. It seems so obvious that there is a growing hope in the Saami organizations that the EU would secure more funds for the minority than they were already receiving from the governments.

Nevertheless, the Saami organizations consider the EU not purely as a chance for the future but also as a real threat. They are afraid that a huge EU construct might possibly roll over all smaller nations, and especially that national minorities might remain very marginal in this system (FS4; FS25). Next to the many almost euphoric tones, there are some very critical voices reminding that one should not forget that a strong national financial support is necessary in the future, too. The Finnish Saami Parliament was warning that one should not give the states an impression that their help would not be needed anymore. (Saamelaisneuvosto 1995: 93) One concern was that the Nordic states might just back off their current responsibilities and leave the whole 'minority question' to the care of the EU resulting in a standard for all member states. In such case, 'Saami might end up being treated like any cultural minority in France!' (FS24).

In the same manner, the activists were afraid that 'Banana-directive types of agreements will be enforced upon minority protection problems, too' (FS4). The Saami organizations were especially worried about hunting, water and land rights that are seen as essential for the modes of livelihood of Saami. Even though, i.e., reindeer herding is only practiced by ten per cent of the Saami, the way of life associated with reindeer herding, professional fishing, and hunting is considered very important for the Saami identification. Many Saami people

living in the cities still feel more or less attached to reindeer herding which is understood as the ‘traditional way of life of the Saami.’⁸ ‘We use vast territories to support ourselves. The Finnish jurisdiction recognized the rights of landowners, but also there are rights belonging to every person to use land and water. These ‘every persons’ rights’ are now extended to every citizen of the EU member states. So we clearly need to ask for some special historic rights in order to be able to gain our livelihood here in the future’(FS4).⁹ ‘About the national parks: When Finland went [sic] to the EU, they require from us that the EU regulations should be valid even here and that nobody should be allowed to practice any business in a national park.¹⁰ This is just so ridiculous because, our reindeers, they live out there. Our reindeer herding area is to 80 per cent natural park’ (FS4). ‘There are many other EU laws that have a negative influence on us: Law on bio-diversity and ‘habitus-directive’. This all started at Rio’s environment conference 1992, then there is the bird directive and of course the whole Natura 2000. This all has led to actions like they [EU] decided to protect all the animals that are enemies of reindeers. These animals are protected by the EU and they keep eating our reindeer!’ (FS8)

The interviewees were aware about the government’s interest to introduce new cuts in benefits or whatever as ‘Union requirements’. The activists accused the Finnish and Swedish state for using EU as an excuse to enforce some policies that they would not have dared to previously. The opposing voices were silenced with the argument that the governments just have to adapt the national law with the Union law. ‘My sense is that everything has gone to the worst direction after since the Saami got their cultural autonomy. Now the Finnish government can enforce this and that by referring to EU policies and law. They [government officials] come here to tell that now EU wants you do this and that.’ (FS9) This reindeer herder couple was explaining that after the establishment of the Saami cultural autonomy, especially the municipal officials in Finnish Inari continued ‘all time referring to the fact that now you [Saami people] have the cultural autonomy and you should be happy and that’s about everything you can have, the EU is forcing us [the municipality of Inari] to cut this and that money, they [the officials] keep telling us’ (FS8).

In order to be able to profit financially from membership the EU asks for certain qualifications: ‘Next comes that we can get money from the EU. The problem for us is clearly, that we know too little about it. We have failed in filling the application forms correctly, the Swedish Saami were better and they got

⁸ I have discussed the reason for this, *traditionalism* elsewhere, see Toivanen 2001b.

⁹ As on other activist put it: We might come to a point where we need to ask the question: who was actually the first to be here (FS3).

¹⁰ This a direct translation and represents a typical language use in whole Finland still today. Finnish people go to Europe, they don’t consider their home country as a part of *real* Europe. At least, in 1996, this was still true.

some money,' says a Finnish Saami official (FS14). This is certainly one of the biggest problems with the 'Europe of Minorities'. It takes lots of efforts to find out what EU can do and would do for its minorities. In the next part of this paper I will go into this problematic field. The interviews with Saami politicians and activists were filled with expectations without real concrete knowledge of what European integration means for Lapland. I don't think that this was only typical of the Saami experience. During the interviews the catchwords like 'lobbying, financing, taking care of contact persons, and Commission of Regions' were repeatedly used. There was even a certain amount of astonishment in a voice of one Saami activist when she told me that 'you can get EU money to teach your people to become really professional in skills needed for a functioning association!'¹¹ (FS14) There was a lot of hope in the air: [N]ow we have received finally some kind of compensation [to the suffering of inequality in Finland], because we can now apply project money from the EU. We are now applying for the second time and with that money we want to revitalize the use of Saami languages in Vuotso. [We] also wish to buy computers with EU-money' (FS23). About Commission of Regions (COR), the interviewees seemed to think in similar ways, expecting that in one way or other, the Saami will be active participants in the work of the COR. 'I guess, that the COR will be on our side to support our own agenda on self-determination. This cultural autonomy we have now is definitely the first step,' one very experienced local and Saami politician explained (FS 25). Most of the people with whom I spoke referred to the concept of European regions and believed that the Saami land (Sapmi) would of course form a European region, that two 'parts' of Sapmi were outside of the EU (Norway and Russia) did not bother anyone. Norway was anyway 'almost' a member, and would together with the Russian Saami, profit from the interregional cooperation programs like Interreg.

The EU is understood by the interviewed Saami activists as an instance of financial structures. At least when talking about the EU, the activists referred more to diverse funds and financial resources that the EU could secure than to any EU law or other institutions. My impression is that the Saami are aware of the fact that, in the last instance, the states decide about the direction of implementing Union laws. Clearly, the other European organizations like Council of Europe and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe are seen as opportunities that can help the activists to participate more in European politics. The Saami organizations are represented in many different international bodies, such as the Arctic Environmental Process, they have NGO status in the UNO and observer status in the OSCE. When the OSCE held its conference in 1992 in Helsinki, a Saami delegation had the opportunity to give a statement and the

¹¹ This is actually a very curious constellation: The EU teaches the minority organizations how they should articulate their interests and how they should structure their associations in order to benefit from the EU.

OSCE gave an official response to that statement (FS12). These kinds of occurrences encourage the activists because they clearly indicate that the Saami delegations are taken seriously by the international community even if this community is dominated by states. One activist told me that there are actually nowadays too many international projects and cooperation forms and that it is difficult to keep track of all of them: 'First, there are so many Saami organs and institutions with which we need to cooperate. Then you add the regional projects like Barents regions, Arctis-Arctis and whatever and, then, the international ones!' (FS11) The speeding 'internationalization' of minority politics does not only bring advantages. The minority organizations need a growing number of qualified representatives who are able to function in the international arena. To be qualified to take care of the future of their minority, the activist constantly needs new skills. For example, the field of new media and IT is increasingly important for the everyday life of a minority group. In 1996, the Saami were still complaining that 'we are not even on the internet even though very many minorities are' (FS14). At that time many activists were working hard in order to learn to operate internet services. Today, Saami organizations can be proud of the many home pages and services. Another obstacle is the high price of 'internationalization' and visibility, starting with travelling of the activists and publicity work. One Saami Council employee complained: 'we live constantly with lack of appropriate resources. Our field of work is the whole globe, and it leads to the fact that we lose our whole working capacity in administrative tasks' (FS14).

The European minorities are not only participants of some transnational organizations of states but themselves form many organizations like the Federal Union of European Nations (FUEN). These and similar interest groups can help the minority representatives to tell their stories and build their rights claims in a correct way.¹² A Sorbian politician who is active in the FUEN told me that '[i]n the FUEN we [representatives of European minorities] have...there was this discussion about the Framework document on minorities and about the additional protocol to the European Convention of Human Rights and what kind of role the cultural rights of minorities have. At that point we were able to formulate our standpoint to the Council of Europe...We [FUEN] introduced our own proposals' (DS8).

The Saami activists need the dream or the vision of the Europe with minorities. When the minority elites act more self-confident in the European fora, it has the consequence that they are taken more seriously on the regional level. The activists stress that not even the local politicians can any longer say that the group does not even exist. At the very end, the public discourse can serve as a recruiting aid because the potential minority members learn from media that

¹² In the 'correct way,' I mean that minority activists learn from each other and from scientists and experts how to write their identity claims in a way that it will be recognized by the international community.

belonging to an ethnic minority is no longer a stigma but something modern and even fashionable. The interviewed activists drop names of diverse European programs that potentially could be beneficial for Lapland. As much, they liked to talk about their diverse encountering with EU officials and underline the impression that 'in Europe, they take us seriously' (FS25). In this way the local authorities look like 'mickey mouses' that are too simple to understand how things are really rolling.

At the same time, the activists have a realistic picture of the EU in which Europe is seen as a kind of summary of fifteen state policies. The Saami people know that in the system of EU, they would even as a legitimate region deeply depend on and remain attached to their nation states. The Saami groups of different Nordic countries want to cooperate and coordinate their political work but it does not mean they would be ready to give up their respective states and state protection, and especially national support. The trust in a national frame is, in very last end, stronger than the trust in the EU.

To summarize, an idea of the 'Europe with minorities' as a synonym for Europe of regions dominates a discourse that establishes and strengthens the minority identity. In this vision, the state power diminishes and the regions gain strength. It alludes to concrete ideas about the powerful minority elites who are moving in the European and international arenas as representatives of independent nations or at least as for independence striving nations. In this vision, the movement is understood in terms of a serious, internationally recognized nation. This vision serves multiple strategic purposes: On the one side, it helps to win the confidence of potential members to join the movement. It represents the minority in positive terms and shows that it is gaining more importance and power. On the other side, it underlines the postulate that the nation states have to treat their minorities better because these groups are internationally respected and recognized. In addition, the vision encourages other minority movements to join the battle against state pressure by underlining how some groups have managed to overcome the repression and find ways to fight for equality. The vision of Europe with minorities, also, motivates current minority activists by giving them a taste of power. Long made short, the vision of the Europe of regions when understood as Europe with minorities means a Europe where the minority members take equal part in decision-making. This vision is a very powerful slogan in the mobilization and 'revitalization' process of European national minorities.

The Problem: Europe of NUTS Regions

It is argued that European regions form a 'third level of government' (Nagel 2001a, 68). In this so called 'sandwich model' that sometimes attracts minority nationalists, the state is seen as caught in the middle between the regions and

Union (Nagel 2001a, 68). On the one side, political integration of the EU, which includes a somewhat uniform administration of justice aspired to by the members of the Union, carries with it the additional abatement of the sovereignty that national states are used to enjoying (Coulmas, 1997). Globalization includes, to a certain point, redefinition of national competencies. This redefinition is clearly one fact in the future of European integration. On the other side, the function of the state is threatened by growing regionalism and ethnic rivalry within most European countries. I have elsewhere argued that regional and ethnic movements seem to be experiencing a renaissance in this situation in which the power is being shifted to a supranational level (Toivanen 2000a, 112). What kind of 'shifting' is in question here and what is the role of regionalism in this process?

The 'democratic way' for liberal nation states to take care of the minorities in their territories often meant that the minority populations started to disappear either physically or culturally through assimilation under a new 'hegemonic rule.' Michael Mann (1999) has called this process the dark side of democracies and says that mistreating a part of the population has always belonged inherently and inseparably to the nation building and democratization process.¹³ In essence, the hegemonic ideals of the nation state entail suppression and forcing-to-be-silent to make the creation of the nation-state possible (Toivanen 2001a). This means, that for the functioning of a democracy, it is important to deal with the 'others,' who are not considered as part of the 'civil us.' Take for example democracies that were established through non-democratic decisions or national cultures that could only emerge after multifarious local cultures were exterminated (Kukathas 1995, 235; Offe 1996). National cultures are based upon an ideal of elimination of difference or transforming difference into a form that is considered harmless to the construction of the state (Toivanen 2001a). As Köbler and Schiel (1994, 17) stress, the emergence of nation states was closely related to the negation of ethnicity. The claim was, and I think still is, closed territory for homogenous populations.¹⁴ Kraus (2000, 138) reminds that 'the traditional ideas of an exclusive and almost hermetical state sovereignty never could offer much more than a very rough and often enough thoroughly mystifying approach to the real world of politics.' This all implies that minorities are not only an important, but even an essential element of – at least Western type – liberal-democratic nation states. Here, we might find some hidden reasons for the fact that especially Western European states have been astonishingly weak when they have dealt (or tried to deal) in democratic ways with the rights claims based on democratic arguments posed by minority groups (Toivanen 2001b).

¹³ Similarly, Christoph Menke (2001) argues that hostility against aliens (*Fremdenfeindlichkeit*) is substantial element of liberal democracies.

¹⁴ Minorities seem to imitate this 'modern claim' in defining their own nations. (Toivanen 2001c).

This could lead to a conclusion that might mean the rise of minority cultures is just another level or aspect of an ongoing democratization in the world of nation states. Others speculate about new medievalism, which implies that the rights monopoly of a state is broken and overlapping forms of authority are accepted (Coulmas 1997). Koschmal (1995, 134f.) suggests that in the era of postmodernism, Europe looks increasingly more like a patchwork of different minorities. In the previous section, my aim was to describe how the Saami activists think about the Europe of regions and which expectations are attached to this term. In the following, my aim is to discuss the role of minority nations in the regionalism of the EU. Does the EU provide a means by which Saami groups can activate their political agenda? My argument is that EU does not aim to strengthen Saami minorities in the Nordic member states. However, indirectly Saami organizations receive resources for their identity politics from the EU and this helps them establish right claims in their respective states. This everything supports the Saami activists effort to define the politics of identity that is needed for a modern 'cultural survival.'

In every member state of the EU there are groups of people who speak a language different to that of the majority of the national population. It is estimated that at least 40 million citizens of the Union speak a regional or minority language. In 1992-1993 the European Commission needed to take stock of the direction of policy in the area of minority languages and cultures. Therefore, the Commission decided to solicit proposals for a study of the minority language groups in the EU. The Euromosaic report deriving from this study argued that language is a central component of diversity, and that diversity is the cornerstone of innovative development. (Euromosaic) The Commission as well as the European Parliament have tried to avoid the field of cultural diversity but have opened a chapter for regionalism. The reason for regional policies was not, and is not, to foster cultural diversity. In addition, the contact between EU and regions is generally very restricted. The only policy field, according to Klaus Nagel (2001a), where regions and Commission have direct contact is the regional policy.

Until the 1980s, the European Community largely ignored the regions. The Regional Development Fund was established not because of regionalist or minority nationalist pressure but because the Community's needs to compensate the new member states for the subsidies which they could not receive, i.e., in the field of agriculture. Later, the funds were reformed and doubled to buy off poorer states like Greece, Portugal and Spain. Nagel (2001a) underlines that this partnership between especially economically and politically weaker regions, is a very important factor which empowers the peripheral regions. But this partnership does not necessarily encourage minority nationalism (Tichy 1993). For Nagel (2001a; 2001b) there are two reasons why not. Firstly, because the states are involved in all decision-making. Secondly, because a European system of Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) regions based on the

administrative units of the member states defines which regions are eligible for funding. The system of NUTS was established in order to create a single and coherent structure of territorial distribution. Here again, the states hold the decision power. The Committee of Regions (COR) was established by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992. Many Saami activists mention this Committee, and were optimistic in interpreting it as a support for the 'third level' government. To the disappointment of many minority activists, the states are free to decide who is to represent the state in the COR. While, i.e., Nagel analyzes that the strong regions are the real losers in this cooperation, it is clear that minorities that form even on a regional basis will not enter the COR. In which case might a state elect a minority representative to address national interest?

An additional obstacle is that there is no clear definition for the concept of a region. In the EU, the term is used in different settings and meanings. It is confusing when various interest groups use the concept in very diverse ways. The Saami activists have their own understanding that differs from the ones used by Bavarian local government. Esterbauer (1988) has proposed that ethnicity and ethnic borders should be given highest priority in Europe (similar Hilf 1993). In Ludwigs (1993, 179) design of the European federal state, the regions would, together with the remains of states constitute the political structure. In this setting, the regions would not only be local actors, but rather govern with equal access to the top level of international institutions.¹⁵ Conzelmann (1996, 61) defines the term 'Europa of the Regions' as a concept with multiple meanings, which in the history of political ideas appear for the first time as a utopian alternative to a political order that is based on the nation states. This 'anti-state' understanding was very quickly pushed to the political offside. However, for the national minorities, 'anti-statism' has become a favoured parole in the fight against the concentration of the EU powers in the hands of states only. Tichy (1993) points out that Europe of regions is a slogan that is often used in order to clarify that exactly regionalism is the solution to all the ethnic problems in Europe. The activists don't stand alone with such interpretations. They are supported by academics like Weber and Nelde (1998, 159) that argue that minority living regions should be organized as 'system of minority' according to the subsidiary principle. This would mean that groups of experts should get engaged to support and create a collective regional identity for every minority '*gemeinschaft*.' In a situation in which the states are experiencing decrease of power, the 'systems of minorities' should be able to take over responsibilities and functions of the state, the authors maintain.

The principle of subsidiarity was created to help to control the power shifting from state governments to the EU. Subsidiarity means that policy should be

¹⁵ One quite practical proposal was made by Federal Union of European Nations that suggested that a representative organ of national groups should be established next to Council of Europe (Pan 1993).

implemented at the lowest level able to handle the policy in the most efficient way. Some authors argue that the subsidiarity principle empowers sub-national groups and regions (i.e. Weber & Nelde 1998). This argument aims to show that the regional and minority groups can find new opportunities and space for identity politics in the European order. Indeed, the Saami organizations have insisted that the principle of subsidiarity has given them more space for self-determination (i.e., Swedish *Sametinget*). Still it remains unclear how much of this 'new power' has to do directly with the EU's institutional design. When listening to the minority activists in various parts of Europe, I have realized that many activists ignore, with purpose or unwittingly, that the subsidiarity principle does not include the regional level but works only between the member states and the Union. This means that the contact between the regions and the European institutions is mediated by the states as described in depth in Nagel (2001a).

I will conclude with agreeing with Tichy (1993, 109) who states that 'regionalism is not necessarily helpful toward diminishing ethnic problems.' Nagel (2001b) makes the point in his contribution by stating that the regionalism in Europe opens new chances for regional governments only if they accept certain rules of the game. The rules of the game seem to dictate that Saami organizations can have power in the EU only if they manage to gain power in Sweden and Finland – and Norway as a strong partner of the EU. To the question, does the EU provide a means by which minority groups can activate their political agenda, I would answer yes. Yes, the EU provides means for revitalization strategies. Not consciously and directly but, clearly the EU supports a vision of minority power. Various structural funds and resources help the activists and minority elite to look for new strategies of cultural survival. In the last part of this paper, my aim is to introduce some of these resources and explain why I think these resources add to (a very specific kind of) cultural survival of the Saami.

Between Money and Authenticity: Coping with Regional Structure Funds

Before the referendum on the EU-membership, in 1994, the Saami political leaders were, in general, very sceptical about the EU. There was nothing especially 'Saamish' in that scepticism since the whole of Lapland voted against the EU. Even locally, the Saami are in a minority position as is the case in almost all of the municipalities of the Saami home region. In the minds of the people of Lapland, the EU was seen as a 'monster,' which only would be interested in exploiting the natural resources of Lapland. European capitalism and the bureaucratic machinery that are strongly linked to the image of Brussels, were rejected by the inhabitants of Lapland. In the following, the focus will be on how the Saami activists cope with EU. It is interesting to see how and why many influential members of the Saami organizations started to change their minds and see EU as a possible new opportunity. Certainly, one aspect in this process

is a human adaptation process. Sweden and Finland became members. There was no way out. Norway did not but it was clear that the Nordic cooperation would continue over the borders. The Saami organizations were very active in finding out ways in which the Saami could benefit from the EU.

Finnish Saami activists, and even Finnish politicians, reported about their disappointment in Finnish membership negotiators who failed to ask any special rights for the Saami minority. Even though the additional Protocol 3 on Saami was added to the Swedish membership negotiation, the Norwegian government was the only one of the Nordic negotiators who expressed its worry about the future standing of the only European indigenous groups, the Saami. This protocol creates some misunderstandings in the Finnish case because in Finland, in opposition to Sweden and Norway, reindeer husbandry is not solely a privilege of the Saami population. There are many Finnish reindeer herder families. In Finland, there was a great fear that the right to own reindeers in Finnish Lapland would get extended to all EU citizens.

After the referendum of 1994, some Saami activists visited Brussels and came back home with rather positive messages. Some of the activists who had gone to Brussels and Strasbourg explained that the EU officials had in general taken their concern about the future status as the only European indigenous group very seriously. The message was clearly sent out to illustrate how much more seriously the EU officials took the worries of Saami than local or state officials. Many of the persons I spoke with said that the best way of making the EU staff to listen to concerns was to stress the fact that Saami are recognized as 'indigenous people.' There is obviously something very powerful in this concept recognized by the EU, too (FS4, FS18, FS23). Especially in Sweden, some Saami activists argued that without the international pressure on Sweden and especially European political means of forcing Swedish government to take steps to improve the legal status of the Swedish Saami, Sweden would have kept its ignorant policies. One has to wonder if there really was any special 'EU pressure' in regard to these issues. There was certainly European and even international pressure on Swedish government but it was never really formulated as a EU issue. As I have tried to illustrate, the image of EU is better and much more powerful than the reality.

As pointed out earlier the Saami activists see the EU, basically, as a funding instance. Interestingly, in the interviews, the interregional programs of the EU were conceived as if they were founded to support regional minorities in the first place. In the interviews, i.e., the structural fund INTERREG II was often interpreted as if the EU would be paying special attention to the problems of Saami. Further, as if the INTERREG would be there to serve the Saami nation when it needed to deal with the fact that the Saami people live in four different countries. The fact is, as described in the earlier part of this paper, that the regional funds are distributed on the basis of NUTS regions. NUTS and minorities do not match the reality.

However, during the period between 1995-2000 there were many funding resources that were considered by the Saami activists as 'Saami' programs such as the Barents Region. The Barents Region is a political project. It is based on voluntary cooperation between Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. The cooperation areas of Barents are environment, economy, science, technology, regional infrastructure, and indigenous people and their culture. Cultural life and economic aspects of Saami are part of the focus, especially in the Russian part of Sapmi. The Barents Region was mentioned by most of my informants, and was believed to play an important role in the future EU energy policy as the Union's dependence on imported resources is increasing. The Barents has massive resources of oil and natural gas. Talking to Saami activists gives the impression that projects like Barents Region are there to support the Saami people. The Saami will profit financially from this program since they will be involved as experts and contact organizations for seminars, etc. However, the Saami Council surprisingly is not even a member of Barents Region Committee even though the Saami inhabit all four countries of the Barents region.

The other project is called the North Calotte, 'the roof of Europe.' It consists of the northernmost areas of Finland, Norway and Sweden. The goal of North Calotte program is to develop and strengthen the structures in these borderlands. (Jama 1995, 105-106) These two INTERREG areas funds brought USD200 million to Saami living areas. (Rawlinson 1995, 103-104). In addition, there are multifarious EU programs that can offer money for Saami organizations to develop language education and teaching materials including Sokrates, Leonardo, Tempus, and Carolus. There is also annual project funding available for language minorities through organizations such as the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL) (Ketolainen 1995: 109-114).

In general, the INTERREG programs subsidize cross-border cooperation. In Lapland, INTERREG II A – North Calotte consists of four areas. The fourth is called INTERREG Sápmi by the Saami activists. Geographically, this fourth region covers Sami living areas in Sweden, Finland and Norway but this area is not inhabited only by Saami. As stated earlier, the Saami are in minority almost in every municipality. The sixth area (Objective 6) aims to create equal economic conditions throughout the EU regions and seeks to support, with special means, the economically peripheral areas north of the polar circle. These areas would have been left without support because the original criteria of structural funding did not apply in the northernmost areas of Sweden and Finland. The following priority areas of the Objective 6 are important for the Saami: Promotion of IT in the Saami language and spreading of Saami culture via the Internet, development of special Saami knowledge and Saami enterprises, encouraging higher education for Saami youth and investments in modern technology combined with new ecological considerations in the reindeer business. The EU contributed half of the total amount of money invested in this program. One positive experience of Objective 6 has been that the Saami parliaments have, in their

own view, experienced more understanding from EU officials and they have felt that it has been easier to discuss regional disadvantages and injustices in Brussels than in state capitals. For the years 2000-2006, there is a structural funding program Interreg III-Objective 1 in Lapland.

The NUTS II Objective 1 regions have a GDP that is less than 75 per cent of the community average. In addition Finnish and Swedish regions covered by Objective 6 that are development regions with an extreme low population density are also included in this objective. Interreg III is all the more important given that the EU is in the process of enlargement. The Interreg III will, among other projects which basically promote economic structures, co-finance a larger program on Saami language and cultural revitalization. The representatives of the Saami have stressed that the funding programs like INTERREG should be outlined and realized in a way that they strengthen and foster the unity of the Saami nation. (Aikio 1995: 98) My impression is that the Saami activists have been fairly satisfied with the EU's efforts to treat the Saami people as one nation.

In many ways, the Saami see the EU as a new opportunity. The nation states have supported a certain type of 'traditional' culture and language. This has empowered the states because the states have been able to co-determine the contents of Saami traditions. At the same time, they have benefited from improved international reputations without having to give the Saami any special rights that might have involved financial consequences. Today, the EU supports the economy of the Saami, i.e., reindeer husbandry and modernization of this livelihood. The stronger the Saami people are economically the more they can participate in the arenas of political decision-making. One interpretation of this development is that without any special interests, the EU is 'accidentally' supporting the new Saami identity politics by giving financial resources to the Saami. However, there is to my understanding no EU money, which is not controlled by the states.

Because of this fact that the states are strongly involved in all regional politics, the member states see their chances of 'milking money' from structural and other funds of the EU by mentioning the special care needed by 'their' minority population. There is nothing new in this, however. Before the EU membership, it was considered totally normal, at least in Finland, that the municipalities applied money from the state with the argument that they needed extra funding for some special needs of the Saami population. When the money was received, the same officials did not want to know anything about Saami or want invest the resources in any special needs of the minority population. During my main fieldwork period in 1996, it still occurred that when schools applied for funds for, i.e., hiring a new teacher for Saami pupils, the money was then used to hire a teacher indeed, but a Finnish teacher, not a Saami (FS 23, FS18, FS20). Throughout Saami homelands, it has been known that the statistics were, often made to look more beautiful. In one case, the statistics showed that the municipality had hired extra teachers for the Saami pupils. The paper did not reveal that

these pupils were not taught in any of the Saami languages but separated in another classroom with a Finnish-speaking teacher. The history repeats itself and the structural funds that are targeted to special Saami issues are often misused to other local interests. For example in Finland, all other municipalities except Utsjoki have Finnish majorities and the local politicians are very much aware of the financial value of Saami but have very little awareness of the reasons and background why Saami people should receive special or extra funding (Toivanen 2000b).

The question was posed earlier: What kind of 'shifting' of power is going on in regionalization and what does this imply for the Saami? I would argue that there is certainly a shifting of power going on in the course of European integration. This shifting of state competencies to the Union level offers the minorities protection against state repression. At the same time, it gives modern minority movements the chance to express criticism against titular nations and act independently of their state in the international fora. In this atmosphere, the Saami have more space to create and recreate themselves as people and as one nation. However, the activists need to accept certain 'rules of the game' including a certain type of self-definition. In addition, they need to understand that the 'shifting' does not mean that the nation states will lose any controlling powers. States matter and European minorities have to find a balance between lobbying in Brussels and in state capitals.

Conclusions

The definition and understanding of ethnic identities have been transformed throughout the on going modernization. The Saami are not only members of a minority but also modern citizens of a state. The activists definitely do know how to use the rights rhetoric. They know how to speak the 'rights-talk' and put moral pressures on their governments. The professional minority representatives know where and how to express their rights claims, they know also which claims are realistic and which ones rather exaggerated. Both phenomena, the revitalization of minority movements and the current tendency of empowerment of the (even transnational) regions seem to go hand in hand with this phenomenon of 'modernization'. In the very beginning of the EU-membership of Sweden and Finland, the national politics mattered far more for the activists than today. European Union was seen basically as a threat to the independence of the nation states and especially negative associations received the image of Brussel bureaucrats who possible would decide about the practicalities back home. In the course of the negotiations of Norway, Sweden and Finland with the EU, the Saami intellectuals collected information what the membership would imply for the minorities. They learned about the potential structural funds that would help Lapland as an economic periphery of the EU. They learned about Bureau for

Lesser Used Languages and its potential financial support. They learned that autochthonous languages were spoken by more than 40 million EU citizens (counting Sweden, Austria and Finland) and that cooperation between different language groups could be very effective and helpful to find means of survival. When EU became a fact in Sweden and Finland, the Saami activists decided to make the best out of it. This applies to Norwegian Saami too, since Norway contributes to multifarious EU programs.

The regional policies aim to raise living standards in the European periphery of Lapland and Saami, as local residents, are eligible for great many support programs. Of course, with an extremely high number of unemployment, it is difficult to make the youth to understand that a minority culture or language would matter. But the image of being a modern European nation attracts young people. The European integration process does not leave that much space for minorities to express their wish for a recognition of cultural and ethnic distinctiveness. As stated earlier, the Saami will need certain arguments – and evidence on the plausibility of their arguments – before they can even enter the arena of claiming for distinctiveness. All the Saami movements together have been successful in taking the first steps toward building such an argument. Even though it would be difficult to argue that the EU as such would empower the Saami people, the Saami activists have been able to secure resources that are helpful in cultural revitalization. The municipalities have understood at least the economic value of Saami which offers the minority more power over the local authorities. With the minority argument the national governments can secure more resources for their peripheries. Maybe that Sweden and Finland actually need the Saami people.

It is clearly not especially an EU issue to take care of European minorities. This was again made clear in the treaty of Amsterdam where only the three first of the so-called, ‘Copenhagen criteria’ for the new member states were written into the primary law of the treaty. The fourth criteria, ‘respect for and protection of minorities’ was left outside (Nagel 2001b). The overview about what regionalism or federalism have to offer for groups like Saami pointed out that the Saami representatives are not independent actors in Brussels and regions alone do not have much to say in the EU. Gary Marks has stated ‘When it comes to finances, the EU is a state-centric polity, and a regional government that is oriented to money will operate through national rather than European channels’ (ct. after Nagel 2001a, 70). Still, some changes have occurred in the attitudes of the European Parliament in minority matters that might in future continue and strengthen the position of regional, cultural and language minorities in Europe.¹⁶ For Saami activists the regionalism and federalism are the strongest ideological frameworks of argumentation. Even though the EU itself would not have any specific interest of empowering the minority nations, the structural

¹⁶ I guess it is not an accident that the ‘religious’ minorities are mentioned more and more seldom.

funds together with a certain kind of dreaming about regionalism, are helpful tools in the politics of identity of Saami activists.

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