

Dress in Gákti Speak in Suits

Appraising the Strategies and
Structural Limits of Sámi Political
Engagement Amid Evolving
Norms and Institutional Maturation

Luke Laframboise



UBMEJEN UNIVERSITIÄHTA

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*To
my Father
Ron Laframboise*

*Who taught me early
That people are people
No matter where you go*

*You never got to see Europe
But I think you would have liked it here
It is like home*

*just with more trains and shorter commutes
But I am told the fishing is just the same
I miss you*

Even now

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Abstracts

English

The Sámi of Sápmi are a people of one nation who have historically been adept at building relations across borders. To accomplish this and engage meaningfully with state-actors, they developed and relied upon Sámi-led organisations to represent them at all levels of political abstraction, from the local to the international. This process of formalised state engagement has been a key part of the evolution of Sámi politics, particularly in the latter half of the 20th century. Yet today, Sámi–state relations appear strained. To explore this effect, this dissertation examines the evolution of institutionally facilitated Sámi political engagement across domestic, regional, and international arenas, with particular attention to the trade-offs produced by long-term engagement with and inclusion within state-centric governance structures.

This dissertation is guided by three research aims. The first aim is to explore and examine the evolving state political norms, state structures, and past relationships that have shaped the state of Sámi political engagement. The second aim of this work is to analyse how institutional maturation has affected the strategies and possibilities of Sámi organisations in the context of long-term engagement with state structures on a formal level. The third aim is to assess what the current state of Sámi–state relations says about the strategies to attain self-determination through state-level engagement. To address these aims, this dissertation draws on three peer-reviewed articles and two supplementary articles, examining Sámi engagement at three levels of political abstraction: from the national in Norway, to the international with the Sámi Council, and within the European Union.

The findings of these articles demonstrate that Sámi political institutions have historically grown through adaptive, relational strategies that enabled significant political gains. However, as these institutions have matured and become embedded within state frameworks, their strategic flexibility has diminished. At both national and international levels, institutionalisation has constrained Sámi agency, limited political outcomes, and exposed a persistent misalignment between Sámi aspirations for self-determination and state-centric norms of authority. This dissertation contributes to Sámi research, Indigenous studies, and International Relations by theorising the effects of institutional maturation on

Indigenous political agency, empirically tracing Sámi engagement across borders and governance levels, and critically problematising state-based pathways to Indigenous self-determination. In doing so, it highlights the structural limits and risks inherent in pursuing Indigenous sovereignty through formal political institutions.

Davvisámeigiella

Bajilčála

Gárvodan gávttiin - sárđnut kostymain: Árvvoštallan strategiijain ja daid struktuvrralaš ráddjehusain sámi politihkalaš áŋgiruššamii, áiggis báidnon rievdadeaddji norpmain ja institušuvnnalaš láddamis

Čoahkkáigeassu

Sámit lea álbmot, mii historjjálaččat lea leamaš čeahppi hukset oktavuodaid našuvnnarájiid rastá. Vai dan olahivčče ja mávssolaš vuogi mielde gulahallat stáhtaaktevrraiguin, de sii leat ovddidan ja luohtán sámi organisašuvnnaide mat ovddastit sin buot politihkalaš dásiin, báikkálaš dásis gitta riikkaidgaskasaš dássái. Dát formaliserejuvvon ovttasdoaimma stáhtain lea leamaš guovddáš oassi sámepolitihka ovdáneamis, erenoamážit 1900-logu nuppi bealis. Otne sámiid ja stáhta gaskavuohta orru garran. Dutkosis guorahallo danin ovdáneapmi dan institušuvnnalaš lámččojuvvon sámepolitihkalaš beroštupmi našuvnnalaš, guovllulaš ja riikkaidgaskasaš dásis, ja erenoamážit fuomášuhtá daid veardádallamiid mat bohtet guhkesáigásaš beroštumiin ja siskkildeapmi stáhtaguovddáš struktuvraide stivremii.

Golbma dutkanáigumuša láidestit dán dutkosa. Vuosttaš áigumuš lea guorahallat ja iskkat rievdadeaddji stáhtalaš politihkalaš norpmaid, stáhtalaš struktuvrraid, ja ovddibut oktavuodaid mat leat hábmen sámepolitihkalaš áŋgiruššama. Nubbi áigumuš lea iskat got institušuvnnalaš láddan lea váikkuhan sámi organisašuvnnaid strategiijaid ja vejolašvuodát guhkeáigásaš áŋgiruššamii ja ovttasdoaimma stáhtalaš struktuvrraiguin. Goalmmát áigumuš lea árvvoštallat maid dálá gaskavuohta sámiid ja stáhta gaskkas mitalit strategiijaid birra vai ollašuhtá iešmearrideami áŋgiruššama bokte stáhtalaš dásis. Ceavzin dihte dáid ulbmiliid dutkkus lea huksehuvvon golbma peer review-dárkkistuvvon artihkkala ja guokte dievasmahtti artihkkala vuodul, gos sámi áŋgiruššan lea dárkkistuvvon golbma politihkalaš dásiin: našunála dásis Norggas, riikkaidgaskasaš dásis Sámiráđi bokte, ja Eurohpá uniovnnas.

Daid artihkkaliid bohtosat vuoseha ahte sámi politihkalaš institušuvnnat historjjálaččat leat ovdánan heivehalli ja relašuvnnaš strategiijaid mielde mat leat addán vejolašvuoda mearkkašahti politihkalaš ovdánemiide. Dađi mielde go institušuvnnat leat láddan ja ovtastuvvon stáhtalaš struktuvrraiguin de goitge sin strategalaš doaimmahanmunni lea njeaidán. Sihke našunála ja riikkaidgaskasaš dásis institušonaliseren lea gáržžidan sámi doaibmaválldi, ráddjen politihkalaš bohtosiid ja čalmmustahtán bissovaš dássehisvuoda gaskal sámi rahčamuša iešmearrideapmái ja stáhtaguovddáš norpmaid auktoritehta ektui.

Dutkkus váikkuha sámi dutkamii, eamiálbmotdutamii ja riikkaidgaskasaš oktavuodaide dainna lágiin go teoretisere got institušuvnnaš láddan váikkuha eamiálbmogiid politihkalaš doaibmaválldi, empiralaččat guorrat sámi searvama rájiid ja hálddašandásiid rastá, ja kritihkalaččat problematiseret stáhtavuodđuduvvon vugiid eamiálbmot iešmearrideapmái. Dan bokte dutkkus čalmmustahtá struktuvrralaš ráddjehusaid ja váraid mat leat čadnon rahčamii ollašuttit eamiálbmogiid sorjjasmeahttunvuoda formála politihkalaš institušuvnnaid bokte.

Svenska

Titel

Klädd i gákti - tala i kostym: En utvärdering av strategierna och de strukturella begränsningarna för det Samiska politiska engagemanget i en tid präglad av förändrade normer och institutionell mognad

Sammanfattning

Samerna är ett folk som historiskt sett har varit skickligt på att bygga relationer i Sápmi över nationsgränserna. För att göra detta och kunna samverka på ett meningsfullt sätt med statliga aktörer har de utvecklat och förlitat sig på samiska organisationer som representerar dem på alla politiska nivåer, från den lokala till den internationella. Denna formaliserade samverkan med staten har varit en central del av den samiska politikens utveckling, särskilt under andra halvan av 1900-talet. I dag framstår dock relationerna mellan samerna och staten som alltmer ansträngda. I denna avhandling undersöks därför utvecklingen av det institutionellt underbyggda Samiska politiska engagemanget på nationell, regional och internationell nivå, med särskilt fokus på de avvägningar som följer av långvarigt engagemang med och inkludering i statscentrerade strukturer för styrning.

Denna avhandling vägleds av tre forskningssyften. Det första syftet är att utforska och undersöka de föränderliga statliga politiska normer, statliga strukturer och tidigare relationer som har format förutsättningarna för det samiska politiska engagemanget. Det andra syftet är att undersöka hur institutionell mognad har påverkat samiska organisationers strategier och möjligheter till ett långsiktigt engagemang och interaktion med statliga strukturer. Det tredje syftet är att utvärdera vad de nuvarande relationerna mellan samer och staten säger om strategier för att uppnå självbestämmande genom engagemang på statlig nivå. För att uppfylla dessa syften bygger denna avhandling på tre Peer Review-granskade artiklar och två kompletterande artiklar, där Samiskt engagemang granskas på tre politiska nivåer: på nationell nivå i Norge, på internationell nivå genom Samerådet och inom Europeiska unionen.

Resultaten från dessa artiklar visar att samiska politiska institutioner historiskt sett har vuxit genom adaptiva och relationsbaserade strategier som möjliggjort betydande politiska framsteg. I takt med att institutionerna har mognat och integrerats i statliga strukturer har dock deras strategiska handlingsutrymme minskat. På både nationell och internationell nivå har institutionaliseringen begränsat samiskt handlingsutrymme, begränsat det politiska utfallet och synliggjort en ihållande obalans mellan samiska strävanden efter självbestämmande och statcenterande normer kring auktoritet. Avhandlingen bidrar till samisk forskning, urfolksstudier och internationella relationer genom att teoretisera hur institutionell mognad påverkar urfolks politiska handlingsutrymme, empiriskt spåra Samiskt engagemang över gränser och förvaltningsnivåer, samt kritiskt problematisera statsbaserade vägar till urfolks självbestämmande. Därigenom belyser avhandlingen de strukturella begränsningar och risker som är förknippade med att eftersträva urfolks suveränitet genom formella politiska institutioner.

List of Articles

This dissertation is based on the following articles:

- Article 1 Laframboise, L. 2023. *Just Like Alta? A Comparative Study of the Alta and Fosen Cases as Critical Junctures for Sámi Rights in Norway*. Arctic Yearbook
<https://arcticyearbook.com/arctic-yearbook/2023/2023-scholarly-papers/486-just-like-alta-a-comparative-study-of-the-alta-and-fosen-cases-as-critical-junctures-for-sámi-rights-in-norway>
- Article 2 Laframboise, L. 2025. *Representing Sápmi: Analysing the development of the Saami Council as an Indigenous paradiplomatic organisation*. Polar Record
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/polar-record/article/representing-sapmi-analysing-the-development-of-the-saami-council-as-an-indigenous-paradiplomatic-organisation/14732A5D26E34AB182BC5A953EE12BFD>
- Article 3 Laframboise, L., Wingens, J., Keskitalo, A. In Review. *Under Negotiation: Examining the Development of Sámi-EU Arctic Relations through the Lens of Norms and Political Legitimacy*, International Journal of Minority and Group Rights

This dissertation was further developed through the following short articles published with the think tank, the Arctic Institute, hereafter referred to as *supplemental articles*:

- Sup. Article 1 Laframboise, L. 2022. *Brussels Looks North: The European Union's Latest Arctic Policy and the Potential for 'Green' Colonialism*. The Arctic Institute.
<https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/brussels-looks-north-european-unions-latest-arctic-policy-potential-green-colonialism/>
- Sup. Article 2: Laframboise, L. 2023. *The Sámi Limbo: Outlining nearly Thirty Years of EU-Sápmi Relations*. The Arctic Institute.

<https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/Sámi-limbo-outlining-nearly-thirty-years-eu-sapmi-relations/>

Articles 1 and 2, as well as supplemental articles 1 and 2, were solely developed by the author.

Article 3 was developed alongside Jacqueline Wogens (née Götze) and Anja Márjá N. Keskitalo. I served as project leader and primary writer. Jacqueline Wogens was primarily responsible for editing and feedback, as well as much of the introduction and the latter half of the analysis. Anja provided expertise and feedback as a then-employee of the Saami Council. I took full responsibility for correspondence and reviewer feedback.

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Acknowledgements

Well, here it is. After six long years, this project is finally done. It has been a long road, with more bumps, detours and roadblocks than I could ever have imagined when I started in 2020. Throughout have been people who have made this project possible, and I would now like to thank them for their support.

To begin, I would like to express my deepest thanks to my supervisors Anna-Lill Drugge and Elsa Reimerson. Without the freedom and guidance you have given me over these six years, I doubt this project would have turned out as it has. I would also like to thank Camilla Sandström for your early contributions and for helping get this project off the ground. This research would not have been possible without the abiding support of the Department of Language Studies here in Umeå.

Given the thematic focus of this project, I ended up finding support across departments in ways few other Ph.D. students would normally expect. On the Language Studies side of things, I want to express my gratitude to my fellow 2020 Ph.Ds.: Kajsa, Solveig, Paulette, Laura, Jenny. We made it. Thanks especially to Solveig and Paulette for the translation work. To Katya, Anna, Lieuwe Jan and Marja Stina, I am so glad to have met and worked alongside you. Sámi research can be a lonely place; I am glad we could make it less so. On the Political Science side, thank you to Linda, Emil and all the others for putting up with this strange Sámi studies guy worming his way into your courses. I swear, I knew what I was doing. Mostly. Also, a big thanks goes to my connections made through my Sámi/Arctic related adventures, including Anne, Gwedolyne, Demjan, Camille and all the others. It was an honour to meet you all during my early wanderings. Finally, my thanks personally to Kristina Sehlin-MacNeil and Lena Maria Nilsson, who have always been there to listen to me ramble about my work and direct me work outwards in ways I never thought possible.

Next, I would like to give my heartfelt thanks for those who made the Sámi-EU articles possible: my co-Authors Jacqueline Wogens and Anja Marja N. Keskitalo. Words cannot quite convey how happy I have been to work with you both. Without your contributions, feedback, and continued support throughout the last year of my Ph.D., I doubt our article would have gotten on its way.

Now, to Norway. In 2022, I was given the opportunity to learn North Sámi at Sámi Allaskuvla in Guovdageaidnu. This was nothing less than a life-changing

opportunity. As such I want to give a heartfelt *giittu* to my classmates, including Brede, Maria, Kai Mikkel, Alena, Karita, Linnea, Odd Martin, Isabell, Lilliani, Anton, Linda and all the others. To my teachers Mikkel Logje and Anti-Mikkel Gaup, *giittu* for putting up with me. My North Sámi may not be strong, but my love for Sápmi is. I hope that makes up the difference. On a related note, I would be remiss in not mentioning Jonathan Crossen and Else Grete Broderstad at UiT. Without your contributions, Articles 2 and 3 would not have been possible.

Lastly, *giittu* to the Saami Council particularly Elle Merete, Gun-Britt, Rune and others. Thank you for providing what support you could in the midst of very busy schedules, I hope in the future we can work together in a more formal capacity.

As we near the end, I would now like to thank the family without whom I would not have completed this mad quest. First, I would like to thank my mother for reminding me where home is and giving me the strength to move on. Nina, thank you for opening the world to me and pointing the way. I would not be here without you. To Thomas, my peerless editor, and the Red Cellar in general: keep rebelling. Leuven was just the beginning. Mats, you are the best work friend I could ask for. Hopefully, we'll find time for another beer at Rött. Sara, you were the first to see what I didn't, and for that I will always be grateful. Issa, your warm words, warm hugs and warm dog helped make this possible, never forget that. Amanda, my sister in disassociation, it is a scary world out there. I just am glad I found someone who has faced such similar terrors and came out as stronger than I ever could be. Finally, Alex. You know what you did, have done, and continue to do. It will not be forgotten.

Jules, my love, it is done. We are free. Can we go to a beach now?

Title Inspiration: Jingo (1997)

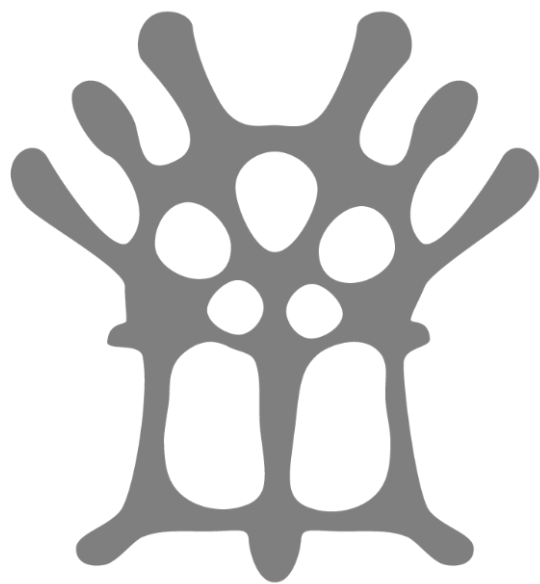
Finding a title for a dissertation is often difficult, I am told. It is hard, I think, to find some way of summing up four or more years of work into something readable. For me, it has been six years and much has changed over that period. What has not changed has been my regard for the late Sir Terry Pratchett and his *Discworld* series. Though ostensibly works of fantasy, anyone familiar with Sir Terry's works would know that he dealt more plainly with reality than most other authors, genre or no.

The work I drew on most in developing the title of this dissertation was the novel *Jingo*, his 21st book in the series, and the 4th in the City Watch cycle. The premise of the book is a satire focusing on the outbreak of a war between the city-state of Ankh-Morpork, which resembles a miniaturised Anglosphere, and the county of Klatch, a Middle East stand-in. The major themes explored by the book include the idiocy of nationalism, the political blindness caused by systemic racism and how conflicts can spiral out of control when patriotism replaces sense.

It also deals a great deal with how diplomacy should work but often doesn't. From this came a section that inspired the title of this dissertation, which is an observation by Watch Commander Sam Vimes, one of the main viewpoint characters, regarding diplomats:

Quite a few of the ambassadors were there, too. They were easy to pick out. They wore their national costumes, but since by and large their national costumes were what the average peasant wore they looked slightly out of place in them. *Their bodies wore feathers and silks, but their minds persistently wore suits.* (Pratchett, 1997, p. 59)

This quote sums up what I have perceived as being the heart of engaging within the bounds of international diplomacy. Though there are attempts at preserving one's culture and difference, in the end, to engage in diplomacy is to conform and legitimise a system of governance not one's own. As the book itself discusses, even if you are a part of the process, conformity is a poor shield when raw power calculations come into play.



Chapter 1: Introduction

The Sámi of Sápmi are a people of one nation. Yet their homeland, Sápmi, remains divided by the borders of four states. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, they are also a people who have become adept at building relations across borders both near and far (Crossen, 2014, 2017; Gaski, 1993; Henriksen, 2008a; A. I. Keskitalo, 1994; Rantala, 2004; Somby, 2025). This skill has been augmented over the years by robust and engaged political institutions at all levels, from the local association up to the Nordic Sámediggit (sing. Sámediggi, eng. Sámi Parliament) (Kuokkanen, 2009; Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008; Minde, 2003b; Rantala, 2004).

Despite this success, Sámi-state relations appear more strained with each given year, as institutional power has steadily shifted from Sámi organisations to state-backed channels of power (Falch, Selle, & Strømsnes, 2015; Junka-Aikio, 2019; Kuokkanen, 2019b; Mörkenstam, 2019; Selle & Strømsnes, 2023). This has become most acute at the national level, made all the clearer by consistent academic attention (Broderstad, 2002; Kuokkanen, 2019a, 2020; Lawrence & Mörkenstam, 2016; Lehtola, 2015; Mörkenstam, 2019). Less considered, however, is the degree to which this pattern has also taken place at the international level or whether it can be traced across time. On this basis, this dissertation seeks to explore and analyse the development of institutionally facilitated Sámi political engagement, how this approach has evolved, and, most urgently, what trade-offs have been made in creating the current state of Sámi politics.

This first chapter introduces the project and gives an overview of its contribution to Sámi research. To establish the necessary background, I will first provide a short introduction to Sámi history and their context within Nordic history and society. From there, I will present the current state of Sámi-Nordic relations. Once this is established, I will contextualise this topic within the wider field of political and international research. Building on this groundwork, I will then lay out the aims, research questions and overall design of this dissertation. This chapter will conclude with a brief elaboration on the contributions of this project to the wider literature, the positionality of this research, and, finally, an overview of how the remainder of this dissertation will be structured.

Historical and Academic Context

An Introduction to Sápmi and Sámi Politics

Sápmi, the homeland of the Sámi, is a region in Northern Europe. Over the span of four centuries, it became politically divided between four states, specifically: Norway, Sweden, Finland and north-western Russia (Henriksen, 2008a; Lantto, 2010). Historically, the Sámi were a people spread across this territory, often living in decentralised family groupings that came together during certain times of the year (Hansen & Olsen, 2014; Kent, 2014). Sápmi is a rugged region, and, as such, establishing hard borders was a near impossibility for much of its history (Lantto, 2010; Minde, 2003a). That did not stop southern states from establishing notional borders. Based on these claims, and following centuries of gradual expansion of state power in the region, by the mid-1800s the region was ultimately divided into the borders that we are familiar with today (Aarsæther, 2023; Lantto, 2012a; Minde, 2003a; Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen, 2023; Zachariassen, 2021). Following this border solidification, processes of assimilation were put in place by the respective in the mid-1850s by the Nordic states to marginalise and erase Sámi claims to their land and, eventually, their culture (Lantto, 2000, 2010, 2012a; Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008; Minde, 2003a).

In the early 1900s, the first wave of organised Sámi resistance began to emerge to combat this unfair treatment. Through a greater sense of shared Sámi-ness, fuelled by motivated activists, the groundwork was laid for the formation of organisations bent on forwarding a greater cultural and political consciousness (Lantto, 2000; Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008, 2015; Minde, 2003a; Tveiten, 2020). Although this movement ultimately faltered, the connections that had been built allowed for a greater rise in the post-War II era.

Following the end of the Second World War, Sámi actors once again came together to assert their rights to political mobilisation, particularly through the formation of cultural and political associations and reindeer herding unions, among other groupings (Andresen, 2016; Lantto, 2003, 2012a; Larsen, 2012). This process coincided with more global efforts. Spurred by the greater decolonial movement, Indigenous groups from across the world also began to reconsider their place in the international order (Lindroth & Sinevaara-Niskanen, 2018; Minde, 1996; Tennberg, 2010; Wilmer, 1993b, 1996b). This movement, which went by many names including the Pan-Indigenous Movement and the Fourth World, envisioned the realignment of Indigenous peoples on the world stage

(Crossen, 2014, 2017; Lightfoot, 2016). From the 1970s onward, international Indigenous organisations have represented their people on the international stage - an arena that is often considered hostile to their interests and ways of being (Beier, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2016; Chater, 2019; Gamble & Shadian, 2017; Lightfoot, 2016).

The formation of the Nordic Saami Council in 1956, now known as simply the Saami Council, was key in establishing an international presence for the Sámi (Broderstad, 2011; Somby, 2025). Founded as part of the broader post-War effort to establish Sámi-led social institutions, this early purpose of the organisation was modest. Initially, it was changed with a few goals beyond the maintenance of a series of cross-border conferences - themselves a platform for greater transnational communication (R. G. P. Hill, 1960; Nickul & Hill, 1969; Rantala, 2004). Over time, the Nordic Saami Council evolved into a key international Indigenous actor, spurred on by a changing international landscape and a greater connection with outside Indigenous peoples (Crossen, 2014, 2017; IWGIA, 2024). The work of the Council and the alignment with a wider movement significantly bolstered the wider push towards the establishment of greater protections for Sámi rights, particularly in the mid-to-late 1970s (Broderstad, 2011; Crossen, 2017; IWGIA, 2024; Minde, 2008a)

Sámi Politics Today: The Possibilities and Limitations of Institutions

Today, the political self-determination of the Sámi ostensibly rests on two pillars: a robust civil society and the state-based institutions that channel their popular will. The Saami Council remains a key part of their international outlook and has supported this alongside the representative political bodies known as Sámediggit, state-backed institutions that arose in the late 1980s and early 1990s in each of the Nordic States (Josefsen, Mörkenstam, & Saglie, 2015; Kent, 2014; Kuokkanen, 2009; Lantto, 2010; Stępień, Petrétei, & Koivurova, 2015). This period in Sámi political history has been one marked by greater political security, particularly in Norway, with the constitutional enshrinement of Sámi rights and the adoption of International Labour Convention 169 (ILO 169), a binding legal framework guaranteeing certain Indigenous rights and freedoms (Kommunal- og distriktsdepartementet, 1987; Ravna, 2014, 2020).

However, the state of Sámi politics today is less secure than it would appear: Although institutional safeguards are in place, their effectiveness has been called into question increasingly each year. First, Sámi in other parts of Sápmi still enjoy

far slimmer protections than their kin in Norway (Junka-Aikio, 2016; Lawrence & Mörkenstam, 2016; Lehtola, 2015; Mörkenstam, 2019; Nyysönen, 2013; Stepień et al., 2015). Second, throughout this period, the political demands of the Sámi are increasingly channelled and articulated not through their own organisations, but through appeals to law and, ultimately, the state-backed Sámediggit (Henriksen, 1999; Lawrence & Mörkenstam, 2016; Mörkenstam, 2019; Stepień et al., 2015). Though this development has provided some degree of democratic accountability to Sámi issues, it also meant that the grass-roots institutions that once dominated Sámi political life have begun to wither in lieu of these official political bodies and channels (Selle & Strømsnes, 2023).

More concerning has been the wider state of Sámi rights, which, as many scholars and observers have noted, has hardly advanced since the 1990s (Falch et al., 2015; Junka-Aikio, 2019; Kuokkanen, 2019b; Mörkenstam, 2019; Selle & Strømsnes, 2023). Instead, this period of Sámi-state relations has arguably been marked by legal triumphs, coupled with state inaction. The most emblematic example of this has been the Nordic Sámi convention, but Fosen and Girjas in Sweden have been other strong examples of this failure to act unless forced (Alfredsson, 1999; Allard & Brännström, 2021; Koivurova, 2006; Lundmark, 2023; Mósesdóttir, 2024). This is brought into further focus by the repeated complaints about the state of the Sámediggit across all three borders.

The aforementioned Fosen protests, driven primarily by discontent over the government's handling of wind farms that were deemed to be built in violation of Sámi rights, have served as a microcosm of these concerns (Grimstad, 2023; Mósesdóttir, 2024; Ravna, 2023). In response to a greater transition towards renewable energy in particular, the term "Green Colonialism" has come into vogue within certain Indigenous circles, Sámi among them (Bjerklund, 2022; Kårtveit, 2021; Normann, 2021). This term describes the return of a colonial mentality towards Indigenous issues as the concern of climate change took precedence in the early 2020s (Fegadel, 2020; Sabina, 2021; Singh, 2021; Zografos, 2022). Though with the greater changes taking place internationally at the time of writing, it is an open question of whether greater challenges than simply colonialism by another name wait in store.

Wider Political Research: The Habits of Colonial Thinking

The efforts of Sámi actors to engage meaningfully on the international stage should be put in a proper context, as there have been very few studies on the subject until very recently (Somby, 2025). The history of political thought is

replete with depictions of Indigenous peoples as unwilling or unable to engage at a sophisticated level of politics, the definition of such being at the whims of outside powers (Beier, 2005, 2007, 2009; Smith, 2012, p. 26; Wilmer, 1993a). This is despite clear and abiding evidence of Indigenous political traditions of equal complexity (Corntassel, 2021; Davis, 2008; Wilmer, 1993b, 1996a). This is the case for both so-called 'domestic' relations and the international sphere, where Indigenous actors have been particularly disempowered historically (Beier, 2005, 2009; Lightfoot, 2016; Wilmer, 1993a, 1996b). In recent years, Indigenous researchers and non-Indigenous allies have worked to correct this, in line with other critical approaches to mainstream research (Chowdhry & Ling, 2010; Linklater, 2017; Seth, 2013; Tickner, 1997, 2006). However, the field of Political Science, and International Relations in particular, has been slow in making this transition.

As part of the constructivist pivot in the 1990s, Postcolonial Studies, alongside Critical and Feminist research, made inroads in bringing Indigenous achievements to the fore (Chowdhry & Ling, 2010; Seth, 2013). With this came a more nuanced consideration of the role academia plays in enabling and continuing an imperial agenda of erasure, marginalisation and intellectual divestiture (Beier, 2013; Lightfoot, 2016). As Sheryl Lightfoot has noted,

The discipline of international relations (IR) is generally conservative, particularly concerning concepts of the state, sovereignty, and the Westphalian world order....These assumptions can overlook, silence, or completely erase Indigenous peoples, their political communities, and their alternative ways of being in the world. (Lightfoot, 2016, p. 6)

Despite a difficult starting position, ground has steadily been gained in establishing an Indigenous-forward understanding of IR. This was guided by the same principle most Indigenous-forward methodologies follow: reframing the academic narrative to centre Indigenous actors and their experiences (Porsanger & Seurujärvi-Kari, 2021; Virtanen, Olsen, & Keskitalo, 2021). The chief goal of this heterogenous approach has been to bring Indigenous perspectives more recognisably into IR-discourse and, with it, a greater reckoning of the effect past and current colonial thinking has had, and continue to have, on the field (Beier, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2013, 2016; Corntassel, 2021; Graham & Brigg, 2023; Hawkes, 2001; Lindroth & Sinevaara-Niskanen, 2018; Tennberg, 2010; Wilmer, 1993b).

Project Design, Contributions and Delineations

Research Questions and Aims

This dissertation lies at the intersection of the research areas: Sámi research, as a subfield of Indigenous studies; International Relations, as a subfield of political science; and, to a lesser degree, history. The aims of this dissertation are interlinked and threefold. This first aim is to explore and examine the evolving political norms, state structures and past relationships that have shaped the nature of Sámi political engagement, with a focus on the international level as informed by domestic-level factors. The second aim of this work is to analyse how institutional maturation has affected the strategies and possibilities of Sámi organisations in the context of long-term engagement with state structures on a formal level. The third aim is to assess what the current state of Sámi-state relations says about the strategies undertaken by Indigenous groups to attain self-determination through state-level engagement.

More specifically, these aims can be understood in line with the three research questions that guided this research:

1. How have underlying structural conditions shaped Sámi institutional engagement on both a domestic and international level?
2. How has institutional maturation affected strategic options and political possibilities of Sámi institutions/organisations within and beyond state frameworks?
3. What does the evolution of Sámi-state engagement reveal about the tension between self-determined sovereignty and state-centric authority?

Project Design, Approach and Contributions

To address these questions, this dissertation has taken a triangulation approach to cross-compare cases across three levels of abstraction, specifically the national, the regional and the international. Using this approach, three peer-reviewed articles and two supplemental texts have been produced that together form the empirical basis for analysis from this project. I will now briefly introduce each text and elaborate on how they respectively contribute towards answering the aforementioned research questions.

The first article is referred to throughout this dissertation as *Just Like Alta* or Article 1. The goal of this article was to critically highlight and examine the underlying mechanisms of Sámi political engagement in Norway through a

comparison between the historical Alta protest movement and, at the time of writing, more Fosen protests. Both movements take their names from locations in Norway relevant to each protest: Alta, referring to a culturally significant river in Finnmark, and Fosen, a peninsula in Trøndelag. Yet in this project, I have taken to using each as shorthand for each respective protest movement. A key finding of this article was to demonstrate how the events of Alta laid the groundwork for Fosen, as new mature state structures faced potential backsliding through government inaction and shifting priorities. This is a troubling implication for the wider goals of Sámi self-determination and rights protection through state engagement. This is a thread that will run throughout this dissertation.

The second article is referenced as *Representing Sápmi* or Article 2. Being more historical in nature, this article dials back the clock to evaluate the growth and evolution of the Saami Council, from its founding in 1956 to its height in 2000. In doing so, I could establish that the Saami Council was a product of continual adaptive change, influenced by both domestic political events and the need for an Indigenous people to build solidarity outside their local context. The result was, arguably, one of the great success stories of Indigenous diplomatic engagement, which serves as a much-needed contrast with the current state of Sámi politics.

That is where the third article comes in, referred to as *Under Negotiation* or Article 3. As part of the initial research for this article, the two supplemental articles, *Brussels Looks North* and *The Sámi Limbo*, were produced. These two texts, which were published and peer-reviewed through the think-tank “The Arctic Institute”, served as exploratory works on the topic of EU-Sámi relations. *Under Negotiation*, then, serves as the culmination of this work, and was produced in collaboration with Dr Jacqueline Wogens and former Saami Council advisor Anja N. Keskitalo. During our analysis, we were able to identify clear links between the Sámi and the EU. Yet, we argue that, because of ever-shifting political conditions and the absence of a formal European-level framework for Indigenous Rights, political gains remain limited, despite continued efforts by the Sámi themselves to establish an equitable relationship with the bloc.

This project makes three key contributions to the fields of Sámi research, International Relations and Indigenous studies. First, on a basic level, it provides an insight and exploration into how Indigenous political actors have shaped their engagement in the face of structural constraints, particularly regarding state interference and authority. As will be explored more in depth, Sámi political structures have grown resilient by being adaptive and responsive to the changing needs of their political goals, even though this may have slowed down somewhat.

Second, it introduces and problematises the impact of institutional and relational maturation on Indigenous strategies to advance their claims to rights and self-determination. Put succinctly, though Sámi political actors have had concrete successes in the past, their strategy of political engagement through formal channels has been showing signs of strain as they have become further enmeshed in state structures. Third, this project helps to articulate the limits that Sámi political actors face because of becoming institutional actors. Moreover, my findings highlight an inherent and ongoing mismatch between the goals of Sámi actors and the state actors they engage with.

While this concern has been noted within national contexts, this dissertation brings something new to the table by revealing the extent to which this can be seen both within and across borders. As such, my findings call into question the growth of Indigenous agency through state-backed structures and the dangers of seeking self-determination through formal political channels.

General Limitations

Before continuing, it is important to discuss the positionality of the author of this dissertation. This dissertation was written by a Canadian of settler origin, raised and educated in Western institutions using Western methods. This project has been written and guided throughout with an understanding that some clear hazards and limitations arise when doing research on Indigenous topics from a non-Indigenous perspective. Being a non-Nordic, non-Sámi researcher exploring Sámi topics has come with limitations both practical and methodological. I will explore this topic more in depth in the methods chapter of this dissertation, but for now, I will highlight two general limitations that have applied throughout this project.

The first limitation worth acknowledging is that, as an outsider to Sámi culture and community, I had to grapple with the long legacy of outside researchers coming in, exploiting Indigenous knowledge, and then leaving— among a great many other misadventures (Aveling, 2013; R. Hill & May, 2013; Kilian et al., 2019; Olsen, 2018; Smith, 2021). At the start of this project, I did not have direct connections with the organisations researched for the project beyond informal meetings and, later, co-authorship with a then member of the Saami Council. As such, while I stand behind my findings, I acknowledge that someone from within the community and/or within the covered organisations will likely have a better understanding of what is being discussed.

The second limitation I wish to address is regarding language. This work has approached the topic of Sámi history and political strategy from a transnational and international perspective, which, while needed, is made difficult by the borders that have divided Sápmi (Lantto, 2010). At the start of this project, my proficiency in written Swedish and Norwegian was limited. This became less of a problem over time as I increased my reading proficiency in these two languages. This comes alongside a limited grasp of North Sámi. In contrast, Finnish and Russian sources have been, and continue to be, well outside of my linguistic grasp. As such, gaps in understanding through this lack of language skills are likely evident throughout the text.

Choice of Language

On a related note, I wish to discuss the language choices made as part of the development of this project. This Kappa and its accompanying articles were written in English using sources written in that language, as well as in Norwegian, Swedish, and—to a limited degree—North Sámi. This has come with trade-offs, both positive and negative.

The choice to write in English was primarily a practical one, as my mother tongue is English, and that is what I work best in. I am aware that my native language is currently prioritised as the main language of science and research. As such, it is important to acknowledge that this work was conducted in a language that is foreign to Sápmi and has its own colonial baggage. However, as a bridge language, it allows for a greater dissemination across the four borders that currently separate the Sámi homeland. I also believe that through writing in English, this work may be better connected with the wider field of Indigenous studies. With that said, I have worked to forward certain Sámi words and concepts where applicable, though this was limited by my lack of cultural knowledge and context as an outsider.

Throughout this dissertation, Sámi and Nordic and/or English place names are provided when first introduced, but thereafter Sámi names take precedence. Sámi-specific concepts, such as duodji, are given in free-standing Sámi, with an explanation provided. This Sámi-forward approach is taken with care and to show that, while assimilation has taken its toll, the names of the land itself remain.

In general, for the sake of clarity, I have opted to use North Sámi terms for most pan-Sámi concepts or organisations. This is not to privilege one of the fourteen Sámi languages, but rather to be consistent with the terminology throughout to make it more accessible for outside readers. For instance, the Sámi homeland is

referred to as Sápmi, or a Sámi parliament is referred to as a Sámediggi. I also have refrained from italicising these words so as to work to normalise them as official terms, rather than as exoticised items of speech.

The same applies to the term “Sámi” more broadly. The term “Lapp” or “Lapps”, by which the people were historically known, is now considered incorrect and derogatory and will therefore only be used in historical contexts. Instead, the Northern Sámi term “Sámi” will be used throughout. It should also be noted that variant spellings such as “Saami” or “Sami” are also considered correct, if somewhat outdated.

The exception to this is the Saami Council. The organisation in question is known by several coequal designations in various languages. This includes, but is not limited to: Sámiráđđi (Northern Sámi), Samerådet (Norwegian/Swedish), Samelaisneuvosto (Finnish), Са̯мь Со̯бба̯р (Kildan Sámi) and, finally, the Saami Council (English) (Saami Council, 2021). For clarity and consistency, “Saami Council”, or its historical title “Nordic Saami Council”, will be used throughout, as this remains its official title in all current English language contexts.

Outline of Dissertation

To conclude, this dissertation consists of an introduction section, known in Swedish as a *Kappa*, consisting of seven chapters and five appended articles. Following this introduction, the second chapter introduces the historical background for the cases considered by this dissertation. The third chapter provides a more in-depth overview of where this dissertation fits within the literature. The fourth chapter will introduce and explore the underlying concepts of this dissertation. The fifth chapter describes the three theoretical frameworks that were used in developing the articles, united under an approach of theory triangulation. The sixth chapter presents the methods used in the process of this research, as well as the ethical considerations that went into this work. The seventh chapter presents the main findings of the five articles and brings them together within a shared context. The eighth and final chapter offers a synthesis discussion of the results and what conclusions can be drawn from this research.

Chapter 2: Historical Background

In the previous chapter, I framed the current state of Sámi-state relations as the culmination of a long history. In this chapter, I will explore this history and thereby lay the groundwork for this research project. The overall goal is to introduce and expand on the idea that Sámi-state relations have been ongoing for centuries, though seldomly on equal terms.

This section will begin with an overview of early Sámi history, focusing on the beginnings of Sámi-state relations, particularly in the regions that were claimed by Norway and Sweden. This narrative will then continue into the early 1900s to focus on the Sámi response to this period of political, social, and cultural marginalisation. I will show that Sámi political structures arose within roughly twenty years to provide a more formalised form of resistance to this disempowerment. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the post-War era and the revival of political organisation and engagement. This provides the necessary context for my analysis of the current era of Sámi politics, which will follow in subsequent chapters.

Early Sámi-State History: From Partners to Outsiders

To begin, it has to be established that the relations between the Sámi and the states that came to engulf their territory date back a long time (Hansen & Olsen, 2014; Price, 2020). During the early medieval period, the Sámi were noted as being pastoralists, making a living on the land in whatever manner best suited the landscape, with hunting, fishing, and early forms of reindeer herding being particularly prominent (Lantto, 2010, pp. 544-545). It is difficult to tell nowadays when trade between north and south began, but there is clear evidence that, by the early modern period, Sámi hunters were a major supplier of furs to their southern neighbours (Hansen & Olsen, 2014). Over time, trade integration, proselytisation, and, later, taxation would become a more prominent part of Sámi-state relations, though it would be limited to the coastal regions and unevenly applied (Hansen & Olsen, 2014, p. 229). This status continued up until the eighteenth century, when the common areas were divided through the establishment of firmer borders between the Nordic states.

In 1751, the Treaty of Strömstad was signed between Denmark-controlled Norway and Sweden (Henriksen, 2008a; Lantto, 2010, p. 545), which marked the resolution of centuries-long border disputes over the northern edge of both states' assumed domains. The previously common region was divided in the process, thereby creating a barrier that could potentially separate the Sámi from their traditional lands and pastures. The states involved saw this problem and worked towards a resolution to rectify the situation (Henriksen, 2008a). The result was the Lapp Codicil, an addendum that confirmed traditional Sámi rights to use lands across the newly agreed-upon borders (Lantto, 2010, p. 545; Lappekodisillen, 1751; Pedersen, 2006). Most of the Codicil dealt with the Sámi's right to cross the border between northern Sweden and Norway without hindrance – something they traditionally had done to move their reindeer herds from pasture to pasture (Lappekodisillen, 1751, p. 1). The Codicil also guaranteed the Sámi neutrality if a conflict should arise between Norway and Sweden, and that their trans-border activities would continue unhindered in such an event (Lantto, 2010, p. 545; Lappekodisillen, 1751, p. 11). Former advisor to the Saami Council John Hendriksen noted that “the Lapp Codicil is often referred to as the ‘Sámi Magna Carta’, as it formalised the rights of the Sámi across state boundaries, including the right to continue their traditional nomadic reindeer-herding across the newly established border between Sweden and Norway” (Henriksen, 2008a, p. 28). It is for this reason that the Lapp Codicil remains an important document in understanding the possibilities of advancing Sámi rights through diplomacy and negotiation, even if they were not directly involved in the Codicil's drafting at the time.

The 1800s: Border Solidification and Assimilation Efforts

Though the Codicil was an important step at the time, southern attitudes toward the Sámi would gradually begin to sour. State power evolved and would eventually demand greater conformity from its subjects (Lantto, 2010; Minde, 2003a), the first sign of which arose with the Napoleonic Wars of the early nineteenth century.

For the Sámi, these wars—marked by regularly shifting alliances—brought about two changes that would upend the previous status quo in ways that still resonate today. First, Finland was separated from Sweden and fell into the hands of the Russian Empire in 1809 (Lehtola, 2015). After the initial defeat of Napoleon, his ally Denmark had to cede Norway to victorious Sweden in 1814, with which it then

entered a union (Knutson, 1997). These changes would result in a shifting and subsequent solidification of borders that had previously been left vague by cartographers and treaty-makers, ushering in a new era of uncertainty for Sámi in the concerned border regions (Lantto, 2010, p. 546).

The first indication of this new climate came with the border treaty between Russia and Norway in 1826, which divided the common areas into a border region between the two countries (Lantto, 2010, pp. 546-547). In the preceding negotiations between the two states, the opinions and rights of the Sámi were given limited attention, though what attention was paid was for the worse: As a result of the agreement, the new border divided Sámi communities and implemented citizenship requirements to live in the very lands they have called home for millennia. Negotiations in the 1830s and 1840s to possibly reinstate the rights of the local Sámi in line with the Lapp Codicil failed due to worsening relations between the two states: Unable to reach an agreement, Russia decided to close the border for reindeer husbandry in 1852, while Norway banned the Sámi from Russia-controlled Finland from fishing in its territory (Lantto, 2010, p. 547). The same year, negotiations between Sweden and Russia were similarly abandoned, resulting in the Sámi being forced to take citizenship wherever it was most convenient.

Assimilation Policies and Consequences

The failed negotiation efforts between the Fenno-Scandic neighbours coincided with the rise of nationalist sentiment across Europe, which was accompanied by the gradual expectation that minorities would either assimilate into the majority or fade away (Baglo, 2020; Hansen & Olsen, 2014; Junka-Aikio, Nyssönen, & Lehtola, 2022; Minde, 2003a; Sannhets- og forsoningkommissjonen, 2023). In Norway and Sweden, the Sámi were considered a prime target for assimilationist policies. This process was fuelled by several factors, which include the expanded ability of the states to project power into the hinterlands of their northern territory, the rising demand for Swedish timber and iron ore resulting from the industrial revolution, as well as the increased mobility of once-settled populations seeking economic opportunity outside of their home regions (Bjørklund, 2022; Hansen & Olsen, 2014; Lehtola, 2015; Naum & Nordin, 2013). To this end, greater control over the pre-existing population in the North was desirable to ease the transition from marginal to productive territory. Since each state had their cultural ideals and history, these policies came in various shapes—depending on the respective motivations—and resulted in different outcomes.

In Sweden, several policies were implemented that have come to be known as *Lapp-ska-vara-Lapp* (Lapp-Stay-Remain-Lapp) (Hansen & Olsen, 2014; Lantto, 2012a, 2012b; Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008). Founded on the principle of paternalism, the Sámi were considered primitive children who must remain as close to nature as possible to preserve their cultural innocence. It was this artificial image that the *Lapp-ska-vara-Lapp* were supposed to preserve. Two of the more prominent that have been highlighted by previous scholars were the Reindeer Grazing Act and the Lapp Administration (Lantto, 2012a; Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008, 2015). The former was put in place to protect specific areas of northern Sweden for the specific use of reindeer herding, while also opening other parts for settlement and economic exploitation. The latter was formed to serve as a governance board to enforce the reindeer herding acts and manage conflict between settlers and Sámi. Lands once held in common were collectivised and split into administrative units of which the Lapp administration was directly responsible (Lantto, 2014, p. 55). The goal was to keep Sámi herders in fixed areas to limit their interaction with both Swedish settlers and the industries arising around them. This division between settlers and nomads was strengthened by a schooling system that only taught in Swedish and heavily penalised the use of other languages (Kortekangas, 2022, 2023).

Norway, in contrast, would undertake a programme of wide-scale assimilation. Under what is now known as *Förnorskning* (Norwegianization) (Bjørklund, 2022; Minde, 2003a; Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen, 2023), a series of laws and government actions barred non-Norwegians from everyday life through onerous language and cultural demands. This assimilationist agenda was primarily implemented through a regime of mandatory schooling (Minde, 2003a, 2005). All children were required to learn Norwegian, while native languages were forbidden (Ravna, 2011). Furthermore, reindeer herding was closely monitored and viewed as a form of culturally backwards work that had the potential to subvert the national identity of Norway.

In sum, to be Sámi during this period, on either side of the border, was to be forced to make a stark choice: remain Sámi and face marginalisation or become something you were not and hope to disappear into the majority population. As the years wore on, the pressure to make this choice would only increase.

1900-1920: The First Wave of Organised Resistance

The turn of the century initially brought little change to the assimilationist policies imposed by Nordic governments, as they continued to monitor their northern populations for signs of dissent while strengthening their efforts to assimilate indigenous communities (Lantto, 2012a; Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008; Minde, 2003a). The first sign of organised resistance would eventually emerge in Sweden in 1898, when the unpopular revisions to the Reindeer Grazing Act sparked significant opposition (Lantto, 2000; Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008, 2015). At this point, discontent with the aforementioned state-based assimilation efforts had already been brewing for decades (Johansen, 2015; Svendsen, 2021; Zachariassen, 2012). This period also saw the establishment of the first formal organisations based on Sámi culture and identity.

The first documented Sámi organisation, called *Lappska Centralförbundet* (Lappish Central Union), was founded in 1904 by Elsa Laula Renberg (Johansen, 2015; Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen, 2023, p. 249). Though short-lived, the organisation had a lasting impact through its role in publishing *Inför lif eller död? Sanningsord i de Lappska Forhållandena* (Facing life or death? Words of truth about the Lappish situation) (Renberg, 1904; Svendsen, 2021, p. 163). Written in plain language, this pamphlet outlined the injustices committed against the Sámi by the Swedish state and argued for the formation of a national Sámi organisation, for which *Centralförbundet* would presumably have been the precursor (Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen, 2023, p. 249; Zachariassen, 2012, 2021).

Supporting this early movement was the first Sámi newspaper in Sweden, *Lappernes Egen Tidning* (The Lapps Own Newspaper). It was headed by Torkel Tomasson, a contemporary of Elsa Laula's, who also served as secretary to *Lappska Centralförbundet* (Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2015, p. 139). It was only in production for a little over a year, but Tomasson launched *Samefolkets Egen Tidning* (The Sámi People's Own Newspaper) soon after (Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2015, p. 140). Unlike his earlier attempt, this second newspaper found its footing and today remains one of the world's oldest indigenous newspapers under the title of *Samefolket*.

On the Norwegian side of the border, the material and political conditions for the Sámi differed in certain keyways. Perhaps the most important was the impartial nature of *Fornorskning*: According to the overt directives of the policy, every

Sámi—no matter the background, culture, or history—would become Norwegian through language and cultural assimilation without exception (Jernsletten, 1998; Minde, 2003a; Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen, 2023; Zachariassen, 2012, 2021). This blanket approach, designed to slowly but surely stamp out Sámi cultural life, paradoxically created a shared experience among all Sámi – compared to the division faced in Sweden. Furthermore, because the goal was to create proper Norwegians out of the seemingly backwards Sámi, the relationship between Norwegian Sámi and the Norwegian government was seen as more accessible, as political engagement was seen as something that only Norwegians were capable of (Josefsen, 2001). As such, other forms of popular opposition, such as the growing labour movement, were seen as potential allies to the Sámi cause.

Much like in Sweden, the newspaper took on a keen importance in Norway (Cocq & DuBois, 2020). The two most prominent voices in Sámi media at the turn of the 20th century were Anders Larsen and Daniel Mortenson (Gaski, 1993; Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen, 2023, p. 248). In 1904, Larsen and his brothers came together to publish the Sámi language newspaper, *Sagai Muittalægje* (The News Reporter). It quickly became part of the Sámi popular imagination and was produced until 1911. During its run, it was key in launching the career of Isak Saba, the first Sámi to be elected to the Norwegian *Storting* in 1906. Another notable newspaper writer of the time was Daniel Mortenson (Cocq & DuBois, 2020). As a reindeer herder, he had moved across the border frequently and, as such, had a more transnational perspective. His newspaper was published as *Waren Sardne* (Notes from the Mountain), which was more overtly political than *Sagai Muittalægje*. From these newspapers, the idea of a wider movement was discussed and spread. The result of these efforts would be the establishment of the first transborder meeting in 1917.

1917: Meeting in Tråante and End of the First Movement

Elsa Laula Renberg and Daniel Mortenson were the primary architects behind this meeting, as both were keenly aware of the situations faced by Sámi across the border. The event drew interest from across the North, with nearly a hundred and fifty Sámi in attendance in *Tråante* (Trondheim), a city in South Sámi territory (Bjørklund, 2017; Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen, 2023, p. 250). The 1917 congress represented something new in several ways, including the emergence of the idea that the Sámi were one people and, despite the borders separating them, they were part of a larger ethnic and cultural community that transcended linguistic differences, great distances and different economic situations

(Sannhets- og forsoningkommisjonen, 2023, p. 250). The meeting was deemed a success, and therefore further conferences were planned to be held across northern Norway and Sweden – the next was scheduled for the following year, in *Staare* (Östersund).

Despite these successes, cracks eventually began to show in the following years. The reason for this was a combination of both personal disagreements and the material reality of state-enforced marginalisation (Lantto, 2000, 2012b; Tveiten, 2020). First, though united enough to organise the meeting in Tråante, Renberg and Mortenson frequently clashed over how best to propel the nascent movement forward. Mortenson was more in favour of integrating into the existing model of government to formally push for laws to protect their livelihoods. Renberg, in contrast, demanded that the government be left out of their lives entirely. These differences in opinion would prove irreconcilable (Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008) and critically damaged the early movement at a particularly fragile time. One might even argue that this fundamental disagreement continues to resonate through the approaches taken by different Sámi political actors to this day.

Second, the high material cost of cooperation across both long distances and an increasingly impermeable border became another impediment. Though a degree of political will persevered, funding remained a perennial problem. Compounding this was the increasing scrutiny that Sámi activists were beginning to face. Norway was sceptical of the organisational efforts, suspecting that they might be a cover for anti-Norwegian sentiment. When another transborder meeting was held in *Romsa* (Tromsø) in 1921, few attended, and those who were present were monitored closely (Tveiten, 2020). Under this atmosphere of distrust, disunity and organisational poverty, the early organised Sámi movement quietly faded and would not be revived until after the tumult of the World Wars.

1950s: the Second Wave Sámi Organised Resistance

The post-War era was, in many ways, a transition point for Sámi politics. For most of the northern European nations, their early years were focused on rebuilding – particularly in Norway, which had been occupied by Germany for several years (Elenius, Tjelmeland, Lähteenmäki, & Golubev, 2015, p. 321). Yet, this era also brought a renewed look at how governments would accommodate minorities and their traditional livelihoods (Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008, p. 34; Össbo & Lantto, 2011), as well as several socioeconomic changes. For instance, for the reindeer

herding industry, it was a period of rationalisation and economic integration that put them in direct competition with other land-based industries. The old policies of assimilation were also re-examined. However, while they were now considered distasteful in the face of changing political norms, what would replace them remained unclear (Minde, 2003a, 2003b). This presented an opportunity for the Sámi to renegotiate the relationship between them and their respective states. The lingering question was how this would be done.

As a result of the slowly changing approach to minorities, politically minded Sámi began to reconsider their options. The activists who had been at the forefront of the first wave had stepped aside or passed away in the interim years – leaving the direction of the second wave of Sámi political mobilisation in the hands of a new generation (Lantto, 2000; Minde, 2003b). The benevolent neglect of the early post-War years provided room to reconsider how to organise more sustainably compared to the first wave. In this vacuum, two types of institutions arose to take an organisational leap forward.

The first and most common were Sámi cultural associations. The first of these organisations was *Sámi Ätnam*, which was founded in 1945 in *Suarssá/Sorsele* in northern Sweden, but quickly found its base in Stockholm (Lantto, 2000; Tveiten, 2020, p. 23). Its Norwegian counterpart, *Sámi Saer'vi*, was founded in Oslo three years later (Andresen, 2016). Potentially mirroring the changing times, *Sámi Saer'vi* was created by Norwegian academics and assimilated Sámi who wished to preserve their culture through education (Larsen, 2012, p. 41). The early years of the organisation were marked by tension, as many of their activities were viewed as inauthentic and disconnected from the culture they wished to protect. Nevertheless, what made *Sámi Saer'vi* and similar organisations important at the time was the wider acceptance and support - both within and beyond the Sámi community - they received as cultural actors. This made it possible to both further the goal of cultural protection and gain allies for future conflicts.

It was the advent of reindeer herding associations that finally heralded the rise of the broader pan-Sámi movement (Lantto, 2003; Larsen, 2012; Somby, 2025). As a result of the economically liberal turn undertaken by Norway and Sweden, reindeer herders had begun to be viewed in a different light. Rather than mere upholders of a cultural tradition, they were now viewed as economic entities in their own right (Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008, p. 34). As such, there was a need for organisation, both on a cultural and an economic level. These new associations provided a stable foundation from which Sámi self-determination could be

achieved, as they solved many of the problems that permeated earlier organisational efforts (Lantto, 2003): Unlike previous organisations, each association, due to its make-up as a labour union, had a stable base of income and could build on pre-existing structures as implemented by the Reindeer Management Acts in both Sweden and Norway.

The formation of these organisations would mark the beginning of a second wave of Sámi activism that would reshape Sámi-state relations in ways that have endured, and which are still being negotiated to this day. These endeavours would result in the formation of the Sámediggit in Norway and Sweden, as well as their reformation in Finland, which were seen as the first steps of a more independent Sámi civil society (Henriksen, 1999, 2008a; Müller-Wille, 1979; Stępień et al., 2015). How this came about is the topic of research articles published as part of this project, which I will cover more extensively in subsequent sections.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

The following chapter will now situate this dissertation within the existing academic literature. As I will discuss, my research falls neatly into a niche at the intersection of two sub-fields: Sámi Research, a subfield of Indigenous Studies that also encompasses Historical Research, and International Relations (IR), a subfield of Political Science. To explore said niche, the chapter will be divided into two parts. The first part will delve into the literature of Sámi Research, with a particular focus on its historical and political dimensions. The second part will take this exploration further to discuss the growing body of works focusing on Sámi international engagement and how it fits within the wider field of IR. This will by no means be exhaustive. Rather, I aim to provide a general overview of the main influences of this project and to lay out how it fits within these three fields. Owing to the relatively small size of the field, the Sámi Research portion will more heavily focus on individual scholars and general trends, while the exploration of IR and the Indigenous response thereof will take the form of a more general overview, as there is a more robust body of literature to consider.

Before proceeding, it is worth returning to one major obstacle in doing this work that was introduced in the first chapter: language. As described then, since the introduction of a formalised field of Sámi research in the mid-1970s, the majority of research on Sámi topics has been focused within the states they have found themselves in (A. I. Keskitalo, 1974/1994; Virtanen et al., 2021). Nevertheless, for much of the early stages of this project, the language barrier has been an impediment that I have struggled to overcome. As such, before delving into the wider research, I believe it is worth acknowledging this limitation here and how it has affected my work. In terms of literature, only English, Swedish and Norwegian sources have been employable, and the latter two could only be used to an even more limited extent during the early parts of the project. Unfortunately, Finnish, Russian and Sámi sources, in any of the fourteen languages, have remained out of my reach at the time of writing.

Sámi Research at a Glance

Exploring Sámi History

I will start where I left off in the previous chapter: Historical Research. As evidenced by the extensive historical accounts in said chapter, this discipline has

been an important and long-lasting aspect of Sámi-related literature (Hansen & Olsen, 2014). This perspective is certainly relevant since the political conditions under which Sámi political actors have operated are directly tied to historical policy decisions that continue to resonate today – some as fundamental as border lines and who is deemed worthy of citizenship (Lantto, 2010). Most historical work in this area has been focused on the respective national level, which has meant that, through the course of my own research, I have had to pick and choose. Thus, much like the previous chapter, the focus will be on works from the Swedish and Norwegian side of Sápmi, and less on Finnish or Russian accounts.

On the Swedish side, historian Patrik Lantto has produced several key historical analyses of Sámi–state relations and Sámi political organisations, with a particular interest in developments since the late nineteenth century. His work shows how state-driven processes such as border formation, citizenship regulation, and assimilation policies have shaped—and continue to shape—the conditions under which Sámi political organisation has taken place throughout the century. A theme that can be found throughout his work is how state policy has shaped and constrained Sámi ways of life and thereby altered the forms of collective political action that have since emerged (Lantto, 2000, 2003, 2012a, 2014, 2018; Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008, 2015).

Lantto's article *Borders, citizenship and change: the case of the Sámi people* (2010) is particularly relevant. In this work, he analyses borders as political institutions rather than neutral territorial lines and traces the continually evolving politics that would go on to shape later Sámi responses (Lantto, 2010). Lantto shows how tightening border regimes transformed Sámi political life by dividing communities and forcing adaptations in strategies, identities, and organisational forms. These developments laid the groundwork for institutional arrangements that continue to shape contemporary Sámi politics into the present day.

For this dissertation, Lantto's work provides an important historical reference point for understanding how long-term structural transformations have conditioned Sámi political agency. While other scholars have also contributed important historical insights on the Swedish side of Sápmi (e.g., Kortekangas, 2022, 2023; Össbo, 2018; 2020; Össbo & Lantto, 2011; Svendsen, 2021), Lantto's analyses are particularly central to clarifying the structural developments that underpin this dissertation's focus on institutional maturation and its implications for Sámi political engagement.

Scholarship on the Norwegian side of Sápmi has been particularly influential in situating Sámi political engagement within evolving institutional and international contexts. The work of Henry Minde is especially significant in this regard. He has been important to this work not just because he has written extensively on the Norwegian side of Sápmi, but also on the international trajectory of the Sámi as international actors (Minde, 1996, 2003b, 2005, 2008b; Minde, Nilsen, & Jentoft, 2003). Through a series of studies examining both the Norwegian dimensions of Sámi political development and the broader international trajectory of Sámi actors, Minde provides a foundation for understanding how Sámi mobilisation intersected with state structures and emerging Indigenous institutions. His analyses of the development of the International Indigenous Movement and of the Alta Conflict remain key contributions for contextualising subsequent developments in Sámi policy and political organisation (Minde, 1996, 2003b). One of his main contributions is tying the development of Sami political mobilisation with the wider Indigenous and decolonial movements of the time, a finding I build on throughout this dissertation.

Complementing this scholarship, the work of Jonathan Crossen has been central to framing the early international institutional engagement of the Saami Council. Crossen's research on the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP), both in his dissertation and later publications, traces how Sámi actors participated in and helped shape emerging transnational Indigenous political structures (Crossen, 2014, 2017). This literature connects with broader analyses of the development of the concept of 'Indigeneity' and how Indigenous organisations have mobilised within international institutional frameworks (Lightfoot, 2016; Niezen, 2000, 2003; Wilmer, 1993a, 1993b, 1996a). As Crossen argues throughout his work, Indigenous international actors consistently looked the decolonial process across the world for inspiration, with the use of the term "Indigenous" as a political term being once of the most notable results (Crossen, 2014).

Recent scholarship has further expanded this institutional and historical perspective. Katri Somby's dissertation on the history of the Saami Council provides a detailed examination of the organisation's development and political role, which will be discussed further later in this chapter (Somby, 2025). In addition, a substantial body of research has contributed to the understanding of Sámi-state relations and institutional developments in the Norwegian context. This includes works on the longer history of governance, political mobilisation, and –most recently – the findings of the Norwegian Truth and Reconciliation

Commission. Together, this literature provides an important scholarly foundation for analysing Sámi political engagement and the institutional structures through which it has developed (Andersen & Midttun, 1985; Bjørklund, 2017, 2022; Hansen & Olsen, 2014; Hjorthol, 2006; Jernsletten, 1998; Pedersen, 2006; Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen, 2023; Tveiten, 2020; Zachariassen, 2012, 2021).

To conclude this section, it is also important to note scholarship addressing the Finnish and Russian regions of Sápmi, which contributes to a broader comparative understanding of Sámi political engagement and governance structures across national contexts. On the Finnish side, the work of Veli-Pekka Lehtola has been particularly influential. His studies of Finnish colonial history and its impacts on the Sámi provide important insight into the institutional foundations of assimilation policies and their relationship to wider Nordic state practices (Lehtola, 2004, 2005, 2015). This scholarship has also been useful for situating developments in Finnish Sápmi within broader regional patterns of state policy toward Sámi communities. Finally, regarding the Russian side of Sápmi, the work of Mikkel Berg-Nordlie has served as a key reference point, particularly his analysis of Russian Sámi policy and governance structures (Berg-Nordlie, 2015). While the Russian case lies largely beyond the scope of this dissertation, this research nevertheless provides important context for understanding the differing institutional environments in which Sámi political engagement has developed across wider Sápmi.

Understanding Sámi Politics

Following the overview of historical scholarship, I now turn to the political side of Sámi Research. In contrast to what I mentioned about Historical Research, Sámi-focused Political Science is a relatively recent area of study, which came into its own following the institution of the Sámediggit in Norway, Sweden and Finland in the early 1990s (Bergh, Dahlberg, Mörkenstam, & Saglie, 2018; Dahlberg & Mörkenstam, 2019; Henriksen, 1999, 2008a; Müller-Wille, 1979; Stępień et al., 2015). These representative institutions have provided a central analytical focal point for Political Research, as they structure formal channels of Sámi political participation within the state systems of each respective part of Sápmi. Consequently, much of the literature examines how these institutions operate within national political and legal frameworks, and how they mediate relations between Sámi political actors and the respective states. As such, it is worth examining how each Sámediggit is portrayed to get a sense of the literature.

To begin with, it has been noted by several scholars that the Sámi Parliament of Norway is the most institutionally developed (Broderstad, 2011; Falch & Selle, 2022; Kuokkanen, 2009; Stępień et al., 2015). These assessments are made in terms of its comparatively high degree of political influence and participatory mechanisms, which are often linked to Norway's ratification of the International Labour Organisation Convention No. 169 (Broderstad, 2011). By contrast, the respective Sámi Parliaments of Sweden and Finland have been the subject of sustained academic and political critique regarding their limited mandates and institutional authority (Lawrence & Mörkenstam, 2016; Mörkenstam, 2019; Mörkenstam, Josefsen, & Nilsson, 2016). In the Swedish case, research by political scientists Rebecca Lawrence and Ulf Mörkenstam has highlighted how the restricted mandate of the parliament has been criticised by Sámi organisations, civil society actors, and international bodies for failing to adequately realise Sámi self-determination (Lawrence & Mörkenstam, 2016, p. 113). In Finland, scholarly analysis has focused more on the gap between the comparatively strong formal recognition of Sámi rights and the limited practical authority exercised by the Finnish Sámi Parliament (Broderstad, 2011; Valkonen, Valkonen, & Koivurova, 2016). Together, these debates underscore the importance of the Sámi Parliaments as institutional sites through which questions of Indigenous political participation and state-Indigenous relations are negotiated.

Beyond research centred specifically on the Sámediggit, a broader body of scholarship addresses legal frameworks, governance, and Indigenous rights. Although these themes are not the primary focus of this dissertation, several key contributions have informed my understanding of the legal and institutional dimensions of Sámi politics. In the Swedish context, the work of Christina Allard has been particularly important in analysing major court cases concerning Sámi rights and their implications for legal recognition and governance structures (Allard, 2018; Allard & Brännström, 2021; Allard & Skogvang, 2015). Similarly, research by Ragnhild Nilsson provides an important legal perspective on the concept of Indigenous self-determination, which will be discussed further later in this chapter (Nilsson, 2019, 2021). On the Norwegian side, the work of Øyvind Ravna has been central for understanding the development of Sámi rights within Norwegian law, including contemporary conflicts such as those surrounding the Fosen Wind Farm and their broader implications for Sámi political mobilisation and state policy (Ravna, 2011, 2014, 2020, 2023).

In addition, there exists a substantial body of research on reindeer husbandry governance. Perhaps unsurprisingly, reindeer policy and the political dimensions thereof constitute a key institutional and economic dimension of Sámi politics. This is most acute at the national and local levels in Norway and Sweden. While this dissertation engages with this literature only indirectly, studies by academics such as Annette Löff, among many others, have been useful in highlighting the importance of resource governance frameworks in shaping Sámi political engagement and state-Indigenous relations (Fohringer, Rosqvist, Inga, & Singh, 2021; Johnsen, Benjaminsen, & Eira, 2015; Löff, 2014, 2016; Löff et al., 2022).

The Rise of Sámi International Research

In addition to domestic political institutions, Sámi participation in international forums represents another important, though comparatively less prominent, strand of academic research. This body of literature generally situates Sámi actors within broader analyses of Indigenous political engagement in international governance structures. In particular, scholars have examined Sámi participation in Arctic and global institutions such as the Arctic Council and the United Nations, highlighting how these arenas provide additional channels for Indigenous political representation beyond the nation-state. Contributions from political scientist Douglas Nord, former Saami Council legal advisor John Henriksen, and historians Henry Minde and Jonathan Crossen have been particularly important in documenting how Sámi political actors have engaged with these international institutional frameworks (Crossen, 2014, 2017; Henriksen, 2008a, 2008b; Minde, 2003b, 2008a; Nord, 2016a, 2016b).

Complementing this work, other scholars have explored broader patterns of Indigenous diplomacy and transnational activism, emphasising how international engagement can operate alongside domestic struggles for political recognition and rights (Hossain, 2013, 2016). In the context of current Sámi research, these works on international political participation provide important insight into how Indigenous actors themselves conceptualise the role of politics beyond the national level—a theme that will be addressed further in the second half of this chapter (Corntassel, 2021; Lightfoot, 2016; Lindroth & Sinevaara-Niskanen, 2018). At the same time, more systematic analyses of how Sámi actors strategically engage with international institutions—and how these structures are used as part of broader political strategies—remain relatively limited outside of select studies on specific engagements, such as with the United Nations or the European Union (Broderstad, 2011; Henriksen, 2008a; Toivanen, 2001). In recent years, however, emerging scholarship has begun to address this gap. Two

recent contributions have been particularly relevant for situating my own research within this developing field.

The first is the dissertation of political scientist Jacqueline Wingens (née Götze) titled *Sámi-EU relations: Sámi participation in the EU as an example of Indigenous peoples' participation in transnational policymaking*. This work provides one of the first systematic examinations of Sámi engagement with the European Union from a policy and institutional perspective and thus has been key in guiding this dissertation's direction on this relationship (Götze, 2024). As I also assert in Article 3 and the accompanying supplemental articles, Sámi-EU relations have only recently emerged as a distinct area of both scholarly and political interest (Götze, 2024; A. M. Keskitalo & Wingens, 2023). Wingens' dissertation, as well as subsequent collaborative work, has therefore been particularly important to trace how Sámi actors have begun to navigate EU policy structures as an additional arena for Indigenous political participation and diplomacy.

The second contribution is historian Katri Somby's dissertation *Sámi entering and shaping a globalised world: Nordic Indigenous politics, activist and intersectional movements 1968–1990*. Through extensive historical analysis, Somby reconstructs the development of the Saami Council and its associated activist networks from their formation in the late twentieth century until their consolidation as transnational Indigenous political institutions (Somby, 2025). Particularly significant is her observation that the Saami Council was, in part, conceived as an institutional counterpart to the Nordic Council, which highlights how Sámi political actors adopted existing regional governance models to establish their own cross-border political structures (Somby, 2025, p. 70). This is something I will return to and expand on more in the latter chapters of this dissertation, as this is a key insight for understanding the current direction of institutional Sámi politics. More broadly, Somby's dissertation demonstrates how Sámi organisations and political actors developed institutional capacities that enabled them to engage with evolving regional and international political opportunities.

In summary, these contributions illustrate how research on Sámi international political engagement is continuing to expand as new scholars enter the field. Nevertheless, within the broader scope of academic research, studies focusing specifically on Sámi participation in international political institutions remain relatively limited. As such, situating this dissertation within a more generalizable

analytical framework requires engagement with the wider fields of Indigenous Studies and International Relations.

Indigenising International Relations

An Introduction to International Relations

International Relations (IR) is a subfield of Political Science that was initially founded to focus on interactions between states that went beyond domestic affairs, particularly war and diplomacy (Brown & Ainley, 2009; Holzgrefe, 1989; Lawson, 2023). The main objects of investigation within this field, then and now, have been states and the systems that allow them to operate upon the imagined international stage they are said to inhabit.

In the fifty years following the end of World War II, IR was fixated on explaining how states operated in what they assumed was an anarchic world – one in which states operated according to survival instincts rather than any sense of overriding cooperation (Brown & Ainley, 2009; Gaddis, 1992; Lawson, 2023; A. Roberts, 2008). This period was characterised by the contrast of two dominant paradigms: Realism, which maintained that the aforementioned paranoid understanding of international relations was the only rational way to view the world, and Liberalism, which emphasised the value of cooperation and institutions in moderating this anarchy (Ikenberry, 2009; Moravcsik, 1992, 2008; Waltz, 2001, 2010; Williams et al., 2005).

For a time, all theoretical frameworks in the field revolved around either modifying, rejecting or attempting to unify this division – oftentimes with mixed results. In the years since, the field has opened towards discussing not only *how* states interact, but *why* they do. This has now been considered part of the constructivist pivot in the late 1990s, highlighted by authors such as Martha Finnemore and Alexander Wendt, among others (Adler, 2013; Checkel, 1998; Finnemore, 1996b; Finnemore & Wendt, 2024; Guzzini & Leander, 2005; Wendt, 1992, 1995, 1999). This era also brought a greater appreciation for the work done by non-state actors, be they faith groups or humanitarian actors (Buzan, 2004). Similarly, in combination with his pivot, critical works, such as Feminism and Postcolonialism, made inroads, further opening up the field to outside perspectives (Chowdhry & Ling, 2010; Linklater, 2017; Seth, 2013; Tickner, 1997, 2006).

The Formation of an Indigenous Response

In this environment, the outgrowth of Indigenous-focused International Relations is not unexpected (Beier, 2009; Graham & Brigg, 2023; Lightfoot, 2016; Sharma, 2021). As an area of study, it coincided with the emergence of Indigenous Research more broadly (Tennberg, 2010; Wilmer, 1993a, 1993b, 1996a, 1996b). Linking back to the earlier discussion on Sámi Research, the 1990s saw greater recognition of the need for more critical perspectives on research done on Indigenous topics—including assessing the way it had been conducted historically (Smith, 2012; Wilmer, 1993a). This new awareness gave rise to Indigenous Studies as a parallel development to its sibling field of Postcolonialism (Kovach, 2021; Porsanger, 2004; Smith, 2012; Smith, Maxwell, Puke, & Temara, 2016). As such, it became clear that, moving forward, research in this area needed to be done using tools and perspectives that were developed with Indigenous values and worldviews in mind (Datta, 2018; Drawson, Toombs, & Mushquash, 2017; Kovach, 2015, 2017; Olsen, 2018; Skille, 2021).

Following centuries of domination by outside powers, it is unsurprising that the Sámi found solidarity among and community with other Indigenous groups, who experienced similar stories of oppression and disenfranchisement (P. Keskitalo, Olsen, & Virtanen, 2021; Porsanger & Seurujärvi-Kari, 2021; Virtanen et al., 2021). It is therefore no surprise that, similar to how the Sámi themselves connected with the wider Indigenous community, Sámi Research has dovetailed neatly into the corresponding wider field of Indigenous Studies. Returning to the goals of this dissertation, it is natural then to examine Sámi international engagement through an Indigenous lens. To this end, Indigenous-focused International Relations is bringing these perspectives to IR, which itself has often struggled with accommodating the existence of Indigenous political actors.

As has been mentioned before, the discipline of IR tends to be considered one of the more conservative branches of Political Science (Beier, 2005, 2016; Graham & Brigg, 2023; Lightfoot, 2016). As critical scholars have argued, much of the research in this area has strong positivist tendencies that are found at the roots of its epistemology. This is most clearly seen in the centrality of the state within the field, in conjunction with its related concepts of sovereignty and the Westphalian world order (Havercroft, 2008; Linklater, 1996), which I will further explore in the subsequent chapter.

It is for this reason that IR is often framed as an inherently colonial discipline; one that has internalised many of the discourses underpinning the colonial

project and continues to project this worldview through its major theoretical models, most notably Realism (Beier, 2005; Lightfoot, 2016, p. 6). Moreover, there has been a continued lack of examination of Indigenous contributions to the history of diplomacy and international statecraft as a whole—a process of erasure that continues despite clear and present evidence of their continued existence (Lightfoot, 2016; Wilmer, 1993a).

In response to these critiques, there are ongoing attempts to expand the scope of IR beyond its conservative roots and colonial legacy (Keal, 2003; Pearcey, 2016; Wilmer, 1993a). Building on the principles introduced through postcolonial and Indigenous methodologies, a heterogenous approach has emerged which endeavours to give Indigenous perspectives a voice in the major discussions of IR (Beier, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2013, 2016; Corntassel, 2021; Graham & Brigg, 2023; Hawkes, 2001; Lindroth & Sinevaara-Niskanen, 2018; Tennberg, 2010; Wilmer, 1993b).

Indigenous International Relations Today

Several academic works have influenced the development of this project, whose arguments are worth highlighting. From my reading of this field, there are two broad camps, which—I would argue—differ more in approach instead of being in veritable disagreement.

On one side, there are arguments in favour of IR – perceiving it as a valuable site of engagement for Indigenous Research (Beier, 2005, 2009; Graham & Brigg, 2023; Hawkes, 2001; Lightfoot, 2016; Sharma, 2021; Tennberg, 2010; Wilmer, 1993a). This—oftentimes accompanied by various caveats—is typically framed by highlighting the reality that Indigenous actors have had a long history of engaging in international politics – recognised or not. Two examples that are foundational to this perspective are the book *Global Indigenous Politics: A Subtle Revolution* by Anishinaabe political scientist Sheryl Lightfoot, as well as the much earlier *The Indigenous Voice in World Politics* by political scientist Franke Wilmer (Lightfoot, 2016; Niezen, 2003; Wilmer, 1993a). The two works explore the history of Indigenous International Relations from differing perspectives: While Wilmer introduced the concept as something relatively un-researched at the time, Lightfoot examines the nuances of why and how Indigenous actors engage in international politics at all. Taken together, they provide a strong overview of how the field has evolved, which has been useful in foregrounding the research of this project. More concretely, it has been important to understand what is at stake for Indigenous actors more broadly.

On the other side of this debate is the more critical wing of Indigenous International Relations. Owing to the history of Indigenous treatment at the hands of international structures—and the states that control them—unsurprisingly, scepticism towards them has transferred into research (Alfred, 1999; Corntassel, 2021; Keal, 2003; Lindroth & Sinevaara-Niskanen, 2013, 2018, 2019, 2022; Merlan, 2009; Sabina, 2021). Where other research focuses on the actions of Indigenous actors amid international institutions, this field critically studies the system itself and the outcomes it produces.

By way of example, I turn to political scientists Marjo Lindroth and Heidi Sinevaara-Niskanen's anthology work titled *Global Politics and Its Violent Care for Indigeneity*, though I would argue that any of their writings is just as emblematic of the critical wing of Indigenous International Relations (Lindroth, 2011, 2014; Lindroth & Sinevaara-Niskanen, 2013, 2018, 2019, 2022). The core argument of this book is straightforward and rather damning: For as much as international institutions appear to have changed for the better regarding Indigenous inclusion in decision-making, the reality is that true change remains out of reach (Lindroth & Sinevaara-Niskanen, 2018). Rather, their inclusive image appears more valuable to such institutions than actual justice. The result is a work critical of the concept of change within the current structures of International Politics, a valuable position that will be explored more later in this dissertation.

Chapter 4: Political Terrain and Background Concepts

With an overview of the literature provided, this chapter will now discuss the practical and conceptual realities of the political world that Sámi actors operate within. The aim is to establish a working understanding of concepts and conditions that have built and maintained the current structure of state-based international politics, and to demonstrate how this has shaped the way Indigenous actors have had to interact with this world. A corresponding analytical lens will then be introduced in the following chapter. To do this, I will first introduce and expand upon two concepts that tend to be taken for granted in international relations, “state” and “state sovereignty”, and their role as the dominant form of structural control and constraint for Indigenous peoples. Next, I will describe the concept of “self-determination” and how it guided the institutional engagement by Sámi actors. This chapter will then conclude with a discussion of political scientist Ulf Mörkenstam’s procedural understanding of ‘Indigenous Self-determination’, which offers a useful perspective on how to bridge these often-competing concepts (Mörkenstam, 2015).

Table Setting: Indigenous Self-Determination versus State Power

To begin this conversation, the stakes are to be set with a statement that seems straightforward but permeates all levels of Indigenous life: Indigenous political claims are made inside a constructed order of politics that has been imposed by state actors from above. This ordering of the world is organised around the state as the defining unit of action, with the twin concepts of sovereignty and state-controlled recognition serving as gate and key (H. Bull, 1977; Lake, 2010; Waltz, 2010; Wendt, 1999). This order is, at best, dismissive of or, at worst, hostile to any sort of direct challenge to this structure, which populations like the Sámi, or Indigenous peoples more generally, inherently represent (Graham & Brigg, 2023; Lindroth & Sinevaara-Niskanen, 2018, 2022) (Scott, 2020). This is compounded by the long history of colonial exploitation that has defined all layers of interaction between Indigenous peoples and state actors throughout history (Keal, 2003; Lightfoot, 2016).

In this environment, the concepts of “the state” and “sovereignty” are not politically neutral terms, but rather channels of power that Indigenous actors must navigate around to advance their claims (Lightfoot, 2016, p. 334). This is where the concept of ‘self-determination’ enters the conversation, as the simple desire to make one’s own decisions as a people inherently puts Indigenous peoples at odds with the all-encompassing claim of state control (Wilmer, 1993, p. 753; Scott, 2020, p. 1248). As such, how Sámi actors are supposed to gain access to self-determination has been—and remains—a key challenge and rallying point for them since their political formation in the early 1900s (Henriksen, 2008, p. 17). The main difficulty has remained the same over time: achieving self-determination without facing political repercussions. It is within these constraints that the Sámi have been operating, and it is through this lens that the power dynamics at play become visible. To explore this, the state and sovereignty need to be discussed first to better understand why self-determination is the only path forward and a threat at the same time.

The State and Sovereignty as Structural Limitations

The State as an Enforced Construction

My considerations start where traditional International Relations thinking tends to stop conceiving the state as being something more than simply a neutral mode of existence. In general, the state features prominently in political thinking, but especially in the field of International Relations (IR). Such is the importance of the state in this area that to observe its centrality is something akin to observing the centrality of the atom within molecular biology: self-evident to the point of irrelevance (H. Bull, 1977; Lake, 2010; Waltz, 2010; Wendt, 1999). There have been efforts towards amending this situation, particularly through considering the roles of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), International Institutions and other such non-state actors. Yet, by the very invocation of the terms “non-government” and “non-state”, the field is already ceded to this centrality. Therefore, though there are efforts to expand beyond the state, the concepts remain a monolith that casts a long shadow over any work in the area: The state is a construct, but it is also seen as a given (Schuett & Stirk, 2015).

Several authors have observed an inherent contradiction (Schuett & Stirk, 2015; Wilmer, 2002): Despite being central to the IR project, the self-evident nature of the state has resulted in perhaps less research than the concept requires,

especially in Realist circles (Schuett & Stirk, 2015). As political scientist Peter Stirk notes at the very start of an edited volume on this topic, “Few concepts in International Relations are as controversial and enduring, yet as neglected and under-theorised—as the concepts of state and sovereignty” (Schuett & Stirk, 2015, p. 1). Stirk and others generally point to the dominance of Neorealism as one of the drivers of this neglect, particularly through noted IR scholar Kenneth Waltz’s work, which assumed the state as something that transcends both time, history and context (Waltz, 2001)—a bold claim that has endured nonetheless. As IR scholar Chris Brown has noted, “The realist theory of the state, in so far as they express one, clearly relates to the cluster of ideas developed by the proto-liberals Thomas Hobbes and John Locke – The state is a problem-solving mechanism coping with problems of domestic order” (Brown, 2002, p. 70). Simplifying the state to a mere problem-solving mechanism erases both the history of the concept and flattens any argument against its immutability to simply that of questioning reality itself (Beier, 2009; Schuett & Stirk, 2015).

It is for this reason that the self-evident nature of the state has often been part of a wider colonial project that IR usually pretends not to participate in (Beier, 2013; Wilmer, 2002). Though the state is often referenced throughout this research project, it must be pointed out that the state is a constructed concept – one that is given power through its acceptance as a created reality rather than as a fact of nature (Scott, 2020, p. 1248). Yet it is in the interest of state actors to maintain the fiction of the state as being this neutral, fixed point. Questioning this fact would potentially threaten the order on which state power is built. Any such claim thus tends to be met with hostility. For this reason, Indigenous actors’ claims to self-determination, particularly claims based on their longstanding connection to the land, are inherently threatening to a state. Along this tightrope, Indigenous actors must walk to achieve their goals. This is compounded more directly in Indigenous relations through the concept of sovereignty.

State Sovereignty as Power Projection

In the traditional Western political and international imagination, sovereignty is understood according to the Westphalian definition: A given state has the freedom to operate as it sees fit within a territory it controls, without limit beyond what is deemed appropriate by its governing body (Hayman And & Williams, 2006; Lake, 2003; Osiander, 2001; Schuett & Stirk, 2015). Over the centuries, this conception of state power has shaped how governments, particularly those in or influenced by Europe, have come to view their rights and obligations to their subjects. Based on this understanding, states have in turn built a system of

international governance that assumes this prospect of near absolute power over its subjects – limited only by, arguably, the norms, values and understandings of its ruling body in relation to other states (Bauder & Mueller, 2023; Brown, 2002; Osiander, 2001). The extent to which this remains in practice, and how states themselves conceive of this power today, remains a crucial debate—one that also has had implications for Indigenous actors.

For centuries, this Westphalian conception of sovereignty has been used by state actors as an argumentative barrier against Indigenous Self-determination, as the international system, which was built on this foundation, requires that state actors remain the dominant channels of governance (Beier, 2013; Cobb, 2015; Corntassel, 2021; Lightfoot, 2016; Nicol, 2010). As Critical and Indigenous scholars have noted, state sovereignty has also been used as a cudgel to avoid difficult questions regarding the Indigenous peoples that reside within a state's borders (Beier, 2013; Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Osiander, 2001; Porter, 2002). As Indigenous peoples are generally peoples that have lost—or were not recognised as having—sovereignty, the argument goes that states can do with them as they see fit. As such, when questions of ill treatment are raised, the potential for Indigenous peoples to highlight the inequalities and contradictions inherent to an absolutist understanding of state sovereignty is dismissed as being well within the realm of domestic matters (Lenzerini, 2006; Moreton-Robinson, 2015).

One pertinent example of this, which was touched upon briefly in chapter 2, is the conception of borders as crucial tools for establishing state sovereignty (Lantto, 2010, p. 254). Since they are usually created through state-to-state agreements in the form of treaties, borders establish limits to sovereign action (Salter, 2008, p. 1223). However, the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples caught amid these agreements tends to be ignored completely, as historically their rights to be considered sovereign have been dismissed or, through often unfair agreements, extinguished (Lantto, 2010; Mills, 1996; Salter, 2008; Wilmer, 1993b). This has meant that Indigenous peoples, to be recognised on the world stage, must also overcome an arrangement that is designed to erase any sort of claim to political power (Beier, 2005). It also has influenced the very basis on which they claim self-determination, as the process of achieving it necessitates confronting the sovereignty of states to be the sole arbitrator of power within their borders (Bauder & Mueller, 2023; Havercroft, 2008; Keal, 2016; Moreton-Robinson, 2015).

Self-Determination in General and in Sápmi

The Political Goal of Self-Determination

Self-determination has been a core demand of the modern International Indigenous rights movement since at least the mid-1960s. This development coincided, among other important factors, with the rise of the decolonial movement and the ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 1966 (S James Anaya, 1991; S. James Anaya, 2000; Ravna, 2014; Xanthaki, 2007). The ICCPR remains integral to understanding how self-determination is conceived, as it states “All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development” (ICCPR, 1966, p. 2) On the universalist basis established by the ICCPR, current and former colonised peoples have worked towards establishing themselves as independent political actors through a variety of means, particularly through the international recognition and advocacy this dissertation explores (Henriksen, 2008a; Wilmer, 1993b; Xanthaki, 2007).

In the decades following the ratification of the ICCPR, the right of Indigenous peoples to self-determination has been codified and recognised in several major international instruments, the most important of which being the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 1989 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO 169), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (Henriksen, 2008a; ILO, 1989; Ravna, 2023; Xanthaki, 2007) (ILO, 1989; UNDRIP, 2013). Despite these apparent gains for self-determination, both what it actually means and how it should be implemented remain a key point of contention between states and Indigenous peoples (Henriksen, 2008a; Mörkenstam, 2015). The way the Sámi themselves have come to navigate this struggle has been shaped, as with most Indigenous peoples, by the structures, policies and narratives forced upon them.

Sámi Self-Determination: Rights and Institutions

As I laid out in chapter 2, the Sámi efforts towards achieving a degree of self-determination against the sovereignty of Nordic states have come in a series of waves. The most recent one was perhaps at its peak in the 1970s through the events relating to Alta in Norway, Skattefjell in Sweden, and the first Sámediggi in Finland (Aanesland, 2021; Aarsæther, 2023; Hjorthol, 2006; Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2015; Ravna, 2014, 2020). From this period onward, there were several notable gains by Sámi actors, such as the establishment of the Sámediggit

in each Nordic state and the enshrinement of ILO 169 into Norway's constitution. However, full self-determination, as well as what it encompasses and how to realise it in practice, remains a key point of contention between the Sámi and the Nordic states. Central to this conflict is, as with many other Indigenous groups, the Sámi claim to self-determination through self-constitution, which has been shaped significantly by the state systems in which they exist (Nilsson, 2019, 2021). Where the Sámi contrast with other Indigenous groups is in their relationship to the state, which has had several notable effects on their approach to rights claims.

The first effect pertains to the divergence between collective and individual rights. In Finland, Sweden and Norway, the recognition of the Sámi was originally predicated on their individual equality with other citizens (Henriksen, 2008a). This is in contrast with the more typical approach of Indigenous rights being held collectively. The reason for this can, as is the case with most problems in Sápmi, be traced back to history. The uneven nature of Nordic assimilation, with differing goals among each of the culpable states, has resulted in equally uneven conditions under which self-determination efforts have been able to address this situation (Lantto, 2012a; Lehtola, 2015; Minde, 2003a). As Ragnhild Nilsson has noted, Sámi-led efforts to build a more community-focused definition of Sámi-ness—one that better reflects their traditional understanding of self-determination—have been a key endeavour in pushing towards a more Sámi-centred political future (Nilsson, 2019, 2021). The most well-known has been through the electoral rolls of the Sámediggit. Furthermore, in the Swedish context, the efforts of providing rights to hunting and fishing for all Sámi were paramount (Brännström, 2020; Dahlberg & Mörkenstam, 2019; Falch & Selle, 2022; Josefsen, 2019; Lawrence & Mörkenstam, 2016). The basis of this latter case was tested through the recent Girjas court ruling and remains politically contentious, but also important for establishing the rights of Sámi to make decisions on their own land (Allard & Brännström, 2021; Brännström, 2020; Lundmark, 2023; Mörkenstam, 2019). As such, this tension between individual versus group rights remains one of the defining problems facing Sámi self-determination.

The second effect that is worth highlighting is the degree to which Sámi actors have engaged with and operated within state-centred institutions. Though this will be discussed more prominently later in this dissertation, there are numerous examples of direct engagement by Sámi actors with state institutions through state-backed channels – often with some success – that are worth pointing out early on (Lantto, 2003, p. 1062; Zachariassen, 2021, p. 1066). This has been

particularly pronounced in Norway, with the electoral success of Isak Saba, the first Sámi member of the *Storting* in 1906 (Zachariassen, 2012). There is, in a sense, an understanding by Sámi actors that institutional channels are open to them as members of Nordic societies that allow them to move mostly unseen unless they wish to openly declare themselves. This can be crucial, because oftentimes, when Indigenous actors overtly demand rights related to their Indigeneity, societies tend to respond with even more marginalisation. This existence within two worlds—the majority and the Indigenous—has arguably allowed Sámi actors to understand and interact with these systems more directly. However, this also comes with the risk of tying them more directly to institutional ways of thinking that limit their options, which I will further elaborate on in upcoming chapters.

Bridging the Gap: Recognition as If Sovereign

To close out this chapter, I wish to discuss how this dissertation has approached the inherent difficulties of discussing state sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination, which are of clear importance to international political engagement. For that, I have turned to political scientist Ulf Mörkenstam’s procedural understanding of self-determination, which provides a sort of bridge between the state’s understanding of sovereignty and the desires of Indigenous actors to be recognised for what they are: independent political actors (Mörkenstam, 2015). In his article on the topic, Mörkenstam argues that self-determination should be viewed as a tool that allows Indigenous actors “to level the balance of power between indigenous peoples and the nation-states in which they live” (Mörkenstam, 2015, p. 635). In this view, the inherent power imbalance between the state and Indigenous peoples is built into the very concepts of sovereignty and self-determination: Acknowledging the latter is to accept the former. As he notes,

The normative vocabulary of modern constitutionalism in itself enforces the social relations of power in contemporary societies and function as a constraint on indigenous peoples’ ‘strive for recognition’: they are forced to use the constitutional language available within discourse—terms such as people, nation and self-determination—even though these terms may distort or misdescribe the claim they would wish to make if it were expressed in their own language. (Mörkenstam, 2015, p. 638; Tully, 1995, p. 39)

To overcome this knot of self-referential state power, it is necessary to assume that the claims of self-determination that Indigenous peoples posit are, in themselves, sovereign acts—even if they do not have the state capacity to enforce them.

There is a wider framework under which this could and should be implemented, but in the academic sense, this approach allows for an understanding of Indigenous agency not based on minority status or state-inflicted suffering. Rather, it should be built on the fact that Indigenous peoples themselves never gave consent to losing their sovereignty in the first place. Thus, by asserting their agency, they are putting forth the implicit claim that they are owed recognition of this fact (Alfred, 1999, p. 58; Mörkenstam, 2015, pp. 641-642).

Establishing such a political norm may be far from a reality. Yet through using this procedural view of self-determination as a lens, this dissertation presents a clearer-eyed perspective on how and why Sámi actors have acted as they have. Moreover, it shows the limits that come from working within the state system. As I will explore in the next chapter, this approach of viewing Sámi actors as if they were sovereign has had an impact on how I have come to perceive their study in theoretical terms.

Chapter 5: Theoretical Approach and Frameworks

This chapter builds on the theoretical foundation laid in the previous chapter, with the focus now being on the theoretical approach adopted in this project. To do this, I bring together three distinct theory frameworks under the umbrella of theory triangulation: Historical Institutionalism, Paradiplomacy, and the English School of International Relations, henceforth referred to as simply the English School. This will pave the way for a thorough analysis of the evolving nature of Sámi international political engagement, its relationship to state actors and formalised structures, and how this has affected the agency and political possibilities of Sámi political actors more broadly.

This chapter will proceed as follows: First, I will introduce and discuss theoretical triangulation, what it has provided to this project and how it has been used as part of the development of the empirical articles. From there, I will outline each of the three theoretical frameworks and how they were employed in each respective article, proceeding in the order of publication. This will begin with Historical Institutionalism in Article 1, Paradiplomacy in Article 2 and, finally, the English School in Article 3.

Theory Triangulation: Agency Made Visible across Levels and Time

The term “triangulation” originated in land surveying and is a useful metaphor to explain how this process works in practice (Patton, 1999, p. 1195): In the physical world, when trying to determine the distance of a single object in a straight line, using only one reference point only gets you so far. Yet, when you use multiple similar reference points in the same area, you could better locate yourself at their intersection.

There are multiple ways this approach can be used. The most common being to use different theoretical perspectives to look at the same data, with the overall goal of attempting to understand how findings can be understood from multiple lenses (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014; Patton, 1999). In contrast, the approach I have taken has been to use complementary theories

to explore similar, but distinct, data sources to investigate the same sets of research questions.

The reason for making use of multiple distinct theories is relatively straightforward: to explore the depth of Sámi political engagement on both an international and domestic level requires a breadth of perspectives. Theory triangulation made it possible to reveal the interconnected nature of the local, the regional, and the international through each of the three articles written as part of this project. Accordingly, three theories were put forward. Historical Institutionalism was used in Article 1 to explore agency within and against state institutions across time in Norway specifically. Paradiplomacy was employed in Article 2 to better understand how Indigenous agency, exemplified by the actions of the Saami Council, can be perceived. The third and final theory, the English School, takes the level of abstraction a step further and examines agency on the norm creation level using legitimacy as a bargaining tool. This is used as part of Article 3 and its associated supplemental articles.

Taken as a whole, the triangulation of these three theories has allowed this project to better illustrate how Indigenous political agency has been—and continues to be – multi-pronged but also shaped by comparable political processes and events. With this in mind, I will now turn to the theories themselves and explain how they were employed in practice.

Theory 1: Historical Institutionalism

Historical Institutionalism is an approach that explores how past institutions and events shape current and future political outcomes (Blyth, Helgadóttir, & Kring, 2016; Capoccia, 2016a; Fioretos, 2011a; Peters, Pierre, & King, 2005; Pierson, 2016; C. Roberts & Geels, 2019; Sheingate, Falleti, & Fioretos, 2016; Steinmo, Thelen, & Longstreth, 1992; Thelen, 1999b). It does not solely focus on institutions as such, but instead pays particular attention to how they are formed, maintained, and ultimately change (Capoccia, 2016b; Fioretos, 2011b; Peters et al., 2005). The two most well-known tools used in typical Historical Institutional analysis are the concepts of path dependence *and critical junctures* (Capoccia, 2016a; Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007; Steinmo, 2008; Thelen, 1999a). Before discussing how they were both adapted into my work for Article 1, a brief introduction is in order.

The first concept, path dependence, refers to the idea that once a particular path is taken at a certain point in time, it becomes increasingly difficult to change

course afterwards (Greener, 2005; Peters et al., 2005; Sydow, Windeler, Müller-Seitz, & Lange, 2012). A highly deterministic concept, path dependence highlights that as social structures solidify, the costs of change become exponentially higher (Sydow et al., 2012). As institutions become more and more embedded in society, individuals develop habits and expectations based on them (Peters et al., 2005), which, in turn, makes it less likely that change will occur. On the contrary, any sort of change would constitute a disruption to the status quo that institutions and actors have come to rely upon. As a result, even if more efficient or effective alternatives emerge, they are unlikely to be adopted as the costs and disruptions associated with changing established practices would be considered too high.

This is where the second concept, critical junctures, comes in: It refers to moments of instability or crisis of established procedures, practices or institutions that create opportunities for institutional change. Within the broader scope of Historical Institutionalism, this serves as the major explanation of how institutions change over time (B. Bull, 2007; Capoccia, 2016a; Collier & Munck, 2017; Dunning, 2017). As the theory posits, critical junctures occur when existing institutions are no longer able to cope with changing circumstances. At these moments, there is often a window of opportunity for actors to push for institutional change, as the cost to do so is seemingly lower than before (Schmidt, 2010). It is in these moments of stress that an institution might “break” and, as a result, be replaced or revised to follow a different path (Fioretos, Falleti, & Sheingate, 2016). As mentioned, Historical Institutionalism suggests that institutional change is most likely to occur during critical junctures, but the direction and pace of said change are shaped by past institutional legacies—something that is of keen interest to this project and deserves further scrutiny.

Permissive, Productive Conditions and Critical Antecedents

Despite the central importance Historical Institutionalism attributes to critical junctures, how they come about is relatively underdeveloped in the literature. As such, in the process of writing Article 1, I expanded the framework with ideas first proposed by political scientist Heilel David Soifer. In his work, he highlighted two specific factors involved in the emergence of critical junctures: first, the permissive conditions under which institutional constraints are eased, or tightened to a breaking point, and ultimately allow for change to occur, and, second, the productive conditions, which represent the range of possibilities and outcomes that arise during and after the closing of a critical juncture (Soifer, 2012, pp. 1573-1576). Soifer argues that neither condition is sufficient on its own to produce lasting institutional change (Soifer, 2012, p. 1575). However, when

such conditions arise alongside other factors, a critical moment may grow into something more.

According to Soifer, so-called critical antecedents should also be taken into account, which can be defined as “factors or conditions preceding a critical juncture that combine with causal forces during a critical juncture to produce long-term divergence in outcomes” (Slater & Simmons, 2010, p. 889). This may encompass both successive causes, which directly cause critical junctures but are oftentimes difficult to determine, and conditioning causes, which determine what direction the institution will take once the critical juncture passes. Taken alongside these conditions, Soifer conceived of critical junctures as being built on a series of contingent parts that form a chain of operation that, in turn, may produce institutional change (Soifer, 2012).

How Historical Institutionalism was used in Article 1

In Article 1, Historical Institutionalism was employed to compare the events leading up to and during two critical junctures in Norwegian Sámi politics, between which parallels have been drawn: The Alta conflict in the late 1970s and the then-current Fosen protests in 2021. I used critical antecedents, permissive and productive conditions to illustrate how events such as Alta and Fosen build and develop. During this research, I was able to establish that the specifics of the two cases relied on different contexts to evolve as they did. While Alta certainly laid the groundwork for Fosen, it was also a more successful example of a critical juncture due to a much more concrete set of operating conditions. Fosen, in contrast, points to potential limits of Sámi political efforts. Path dependence may be on their side to some extent, since legal and political advancements are unlikely to be dialled back. However, certain constraining institutional priorities are similarly unlikely to change. Through this, I was able to construct an understanding of the domestic level of politics that, as will be discussed further through this dissertation, has been mirrored at the international level as well.

Theory 2: Paradiplomacy

The second theory that this dissertation makes use of moves up in political abstraction into the realm of regional and international relations. It is termed Paradiplomacy, and it seeks to explain how subnational actors interact on the international stage. It does so by considering that such actors often take on state-like responsibilities if their needs demand it (Aguirre, 1999; Alvarez, 2020; Ciesielska-Klikowska & Kamiński, 2022; Dickson, 2014, 2017; Duchacek, 1990;

T. Jackson, 2018; Schiavon, 2018). Such subnational involvement has already been researched since the early 1970s, and, traditionally, Paradiplomacy has focused on actors such as Canadian provinces or German *Länder*. However, more recent works in this area have also considered other entities, such as cities and ethnic groups like the Sámi (Álvarez & Ovando, 2024; Chater, 2021; Landriault, Payette, & Roussel, 2021; Meissner & Warner, 2021).

Before continuing, I would also state that while there is an increase in interest in non-state actors being understood as taking on characteristics of sub-state actors, that does not necessarily mean they are the same, nor are they equal. Sub-states, by their nature as extensions of state power, have greater access to resources and political legitimacy, often through being included in constitutional frameworks (Royles, 2017). In contrast, non-states are a more diffuse and heterogeneous bunch that often encompasses all manner of political groupings (Chater, 2021). As such, while there are similarities, they should not be overstated. With that said, what paradiplomacy and similar theories like it provides is a useful lens through which to understand how non-state actors such as the Sámi navigate structures not designed for their use. Put more succinctly, sub-states and non-states are not the same, nor are they interchangeable. However, the methods that are used to study one can be useful in understanding the other. Hence, the use of paradiplomacy to explore what is explicitly a non-state Indigenous political actor.

The Typology of Paradiplomatic Action

The concept of a “Micro-” or “Para-”diplomacy became an area of study through the work of political theorist Ivo Duchacek; his book *The International Dimension of Subnational Self-Government* from 1984 is especially noteworthy. “Paradiplomacy”—or, as was termed then, “micro diplomacy”—refers to non-state actors engaging in a sort of diplomatic action which closely resembles the one exercised by national governments (Duchacek, 1984, 1986, 1990). Duchacek posited that subnational entities were at least partially capable of engaging in diplomacy-like activities and have done so for some time. This included, but was not limited to, negotiating agreements, participating in international conferences and events, establishing embassies in other like-minded states and substates, and other state-like actions; all to promote their interests on the global stage (Duchacek, 1984, pp. 13-16). These activities were and are often undertaken in conjunction with, or in parallel to, the foreign policies of the host state—oftentimes to the benefit of both. Yet, the degree to which this coordination takes place, or is supported, varies from substate actor to substate actor (Duchacek, 1990, p. 32). Taken as a whole, this theoretical framework tacitly rejects the base

assumption that the realm of the international is the domain of the (nation-) state alone and shows instead that non-state actors can and do influence international affairs as well.

The field of Paradiplomacy has evolved quite a bit since the days of Duchacek, particularly in terms of refinement and the greater discussion of who and what can be considered paradiplomatic (Kuznetsov, 2014; Lecours, 2008). With that said, his typology of state-like diplomatic efforts remains illustrative. According to this model, there are four conceptual forms or patterns of international activities that subnational actors conduct: transborder regional micro-diplomacy, transregional micro-diplomacy, global paradiplomacy, and proto-diplomacy (Duchacek, 1984; Landriault et al., 2021, p. 2). Each describes a different form of subnational diplomacy that relates to a varying degree of closeness and complexity, and each subnational actor lies along a spectrum, from least to most state-like. Starting with the least state-like, transborder regional micro-diplomacy references the everyday diplomacy of subnational states that share borders and often need to coordinate in order to coexist (Duchacek, 1984, pp. 240-243). This applies to most subnational states as well as regions within many unitary states. The second, transregional micro-diplomacy, takes this a step further, with subnational actors interacting and cooperating with other such actors across borders with more formalised approaches to interactions and more established cooperations (Duchacek, 1984, pp. 243-246). The establishment of sister cities or regional fora between subnational states is one such example of this.

The third, global paradiplomacy, is a further advancement. As Duchacek and others write, activities of this kind straddle the line between out-and-out secessionism and the more limited cooperation that is typically seen between regions. Instead—and put simply—it encompasses diplomatic actions that are initiated and carried out by a sub-state or non-state actor without aspirations towards greater independence or even sovereignty (Cornago, 2000; Landriault et al., 2021, pp. 3-4). This may include a subnational entity's involvement in functional and political relations with not just peer actors, but also full nation-states, both near and far. Global paradiplomacy can be exercised through a variety of channels, such as networks set up between cities, regions, or governments, as well as various agencies and national governance apparatuses like governmental departments, working groups, or individual representatives.

Proto-diplomacy is the final and most extensive stage of Paradiplomacy. As the name suggests, at this level, the actions taken are best described as state-like. This

typically features the establishment of permanent international missions and of strong and long-lasting state-to-state relationships, but it may also entail demands for greater recognition as an independent nation (Landriault et al., 2021, p. 276; Lecours, 2002). Such steps may in fact constitute, though not always, the first steps towards greater secession. Recent examples of this are Scotland in the United Kingdom, Catalonia in Spain, and Quebec in Canada, among many others.

How Paradiplomacy was used in Article 2

In Article 2, Paradiplomacy served as the core perspective to understand the development of the Saami Council from its origins in 1956 to the early 2000s. This was done through reconstructing the history of the organisation through document analysis. This history was then contrasted with the four forms of Paradiplomacy to explain the actions and strategies Sámi actors made use of throughout the years. Though seemingly straightforward, this was a novel use of the theory: Up until recently, Indigenous political organisations were not generally considered to be potential sources of paradiplomatic action. This was, therefore, arguably one of the first instances in which such an analysis had been carried out, thereby laying the groundwork for a broader discussion on how this approach might be applied in other similar cases.

Theory 3: The English School

In this third and final theory section, I will introduce the English School, which is something of a middle-range theory. At its foundation, the English School rests on the foundational idea that societies encompass peoples, individuals and institutions and, as such, are as much a part of global affairs as any state is (H. Bull, 1977; Linklater, 2005; Little, 2000; R. W. Murray, 2015; Navari & Green, 2014). Thereupon, the English School posits that societies, states and the people that constitute both society and state exist in a dance that manifests itself in how we generally conceive of international relations (Linklater, 2006; R. W. Murray, 2015). This perspective has attracted the attention of a small but growing group of scholars, which I discussed in more detail in the previous chapter (Keal, 2003; Pearcey, 2016). Moving forward, I will briefly explore the core concepts of this theory before presenting how I employed it in my research practice.

The English School is built upon a tripartite perspective of global engagement founded on the interplay between actors at all levels of society and governance (Buzan, 2001, pp. 474-476; 2004; Linklater, 2005; Little, 2000; Navari & Green,

2014). The first section of this system, termed the International System, is considered the domain of high-power politics exclusively between states, which often—though not always—find themselves in competition with each other (Buzan, 2004; R. W. Murray, 2015). This, in many aspects, resembles the perspective embodied by the Realist tradition of IR. The second section is termed the International Society and constitutes the realm of international negotiation and norm formation. International Society is developed along the lines of the Liberalism school and, as such, is considered the forum in which shared interests between states are most apparent (Epp, 1998; Keal, 2003; Linklater, 2010; R. W. Murray, 2015; Weinert, 2020). The third section is termed *World Society*, and it presents a unique perspective on the role of non-state actors in international relations, as it challenges the state as the alleged prime actor on the global stage (Buzan, 2004; Clark, 2007a; Linklater, 2005; Meyer, Boli, Thomas, & Ramirez, 1997; Pella Jr, 2013).

Historically, World Society has been relatively underutilised compared to the International System and International Society (Buzan, 2004, p. 44; Pearcey, 2016, pp. 34-35). Yet, it is this third level that I have made use of in this dissertation, as several previous scholars have noted its—compared to the two dominant sections—high potential in exploring the role of Indigenous Peoples’ organisations in international relations (Keal, 2003; Pearcey, 2016), though this has not been robustly tested as of yet. To this end, I turned to Ian Clark’s book *International Legitimacy and World Society* for a firmer structure to explore questions of Sámi international engagement.

The Why of World Society

In Clark’s view, the World Society is “the realm of the individual, of the non-official group or movement, and the transnational network of nongovernmental agents’ and thereafter designs a framework that places stress upon the mutual influence(s) between state and non-state actors” (Clark, 2007a, p. 6; Pella Jr, 2013, p. 67). The mutual influence between state and non-state comes from the premise that states inherently have stakeholders, be it ruling parties, financiers or the democratic public, among other examples. These stakeholders, however constructed, have interests that the state must court to gain a mandate to rule, which can be understood as legitimacy. The World Society, then, represents both these overt stakeholders and those who seek to influence, challenge and curry the favour of the same. Clark posits that there are two primary methods of interplay through which states and non-states interact: On one hand, the formation and

maintenance of legitimacy, and on the other hand, the shaping and dissemination of norms (Clark, 2007a).

As a social construct, legitimacy came about in many ways, from the overt force of arms used for enforcement to the subtle power of the ballot box (Clark, 2003, 2007a; Weber, 1978). Over time, Clark argues that the former has turned to the latter, as the costs of brute strength are outweighed by the efficiency of normative approval, be it through elections or other forms of gaining popular support (Clark, 2007a, p. 15). What states gain from this is efficiency, at the cost of having to court approval to further their legitimacy, even if it is just the appearance of such. Further, it allows for power to be used without as much direct constraint by the people that the state rules over.

Through this lens, the World Society serves as a counterweight to the will of states by providing the source of their ability to be perceived as the rightful holders of power. It is for this reason that states have, over time, come to court sub-state or non-state actors as part of their foreign policies. There is power inherent to cultivating such relationships, as they are from whom legitimacy can be gained (Clark, 2007a). What these actors ask for in return is for their ideas to be taken on as full norms, which in turn would be spread to the wider International Society and on to the wider international public.

Norms have been a key point of discussion within IR since the 1990s and have come to be an important part of understanding how states operate on the world stage (Clark, 2007b; Farrell & Finnemore, 2016; Finnemore, 1996b; Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Following the definition of Constructivist scholar Martha Finnemore, an international norm can broadly be understood as “a standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity” (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998, p. 981). Norms are not created from nothing; rather, like legitimacy, they arise from the social context in which states, systems and citizens are born. Returning to Finnemore, she notes that, “States are socialised to want certain things by a society in which they and the people in them live” (Finnemore, 1996a, p. 2). How these sets of values have been developed is part of the conversation around norms since their inception, with no direct answer; there are many possibilities.

Clark's thesis is that norms enter the International Society, specifically through negotiations between the World Society as part of state goals of maintaining legitimacy (Clark, 2007a). How this is done is through the changing social environment upon which legitimacy is founded. Should a norm become spread

throughout the wider International Society, what is considered legitimate can change the capacity of a state to manoeuvre according to the now-changed environment (Clark, 2007a). Thus, norms, especially those originating from World Society as such, can be understood as presenting “a frontal assault, not so much upon sovereignty, but more precisely upon the issue of rightful membership of international society”(Clark, 2007a, p. 184). Non-state and sub-state actors play a crucial role in this process by acting as sources and carriers of legitimacy. As states increasingly depend on external validation, they court these actors as part of their foreign policy strategies (Clark, 2007a, p. 182; Crawford, 2002, p. 4; R. H. Jackson, 1993, p. 130).

This dynamic then places a quiet but powerful influence in the hands of World Society, as states must decide whether to adopt or resist emerging norms based on their perceived popularity. Failing to adapt may risk an erosion of legitimacy and, by extension, a loss of state power. Using this as an incentive, World Society actors, who can use this to encourage change of their own, with the understanding that their approval may well avoid this legitimacy cost. Using this as a frame, one can then better understand how and why seemingly powerful state actors pay attention to non-state groups, and how such influence is wielded.

How the English School was used in Article 3

In Article 3, the English School was used as the main lens through which to understand how the relationship between the Saami Council and the European Union has developed from the accession of Sweden and Finland in 1994 up until 2023. Our analysis shows that the European Union’s ongoing desire to be seen as a legitimate actor in the Arctic often ran into difficulties due to a perceived lack of expertise or norm-following, in line with the model described by Clark. We argue that the Saami Council seemingly sought to leverage this to gain a greater say in the EU’s decisions regarding the Arctic, which had the potential to improve relations through the normative means Clark’s model proposes. However, the question remains how successful this has been and how it has been implemented. I will return to this topic in later chapters.

Chapter 6: Methods, Methodology and Ethical Approach

In the previous chapter, I introduced the theoretical approach of this project, which is built on a process of theory triangulation using three distinct theoretical frameworks. In this chapter, I will continue with this discussion and demonstrate how this approach was implemented in practice. To this end, the subsequent elaborations will be divided into three principal sections. First, I will introduce my overall research design and outline the main motivations behind it and then explain which materials I used for this purpose and why. Second, I will lay out the specific design choices made in developing the three peer-reviewed articles, as well as the two supplemental articles, which form the empirical basis for this study. The third section will conclude this chapter with a discussion of the ethical approach adopted for this research project.

Research Design

General Structure and Approach

At this stage, it is worth reiterating the main objectives of this dissertation to explain how they have shaped the design of this project. As previously mentioned, this project lies at the intersection of Sámi Research, International Relations, and—to a lesser degree—History. The choice to situate this dissertation within this interdisciplinary overlap was made to address three interrelated research questions:

1. How have underlying structural conditions shaped Sámi institutional engagement on both a domestic and international level?
2. How has institutional maturation affected strategic options and political possibilities of Sámi institutions/organisations within and beyond state frameworks?
3. What does the evolution of Sámi-state engagement reveal about the tension between self-determined sovereignty and state-centric authority?

In essence, this research has been primarily focused on the role of structural constraints and institutional maturation in shaping Indigenous political strategies and their outcomes. To meet these aims, this dissertation has employed

a historically contextualised qualitative approach using five interconnected case studies, with similar but distinct research designs. The results of this work have taken the form of three peer-reviewed publications and two popular science articles. For an overview of this approach and its connection to the wider research questions, see Table 1 below.

Table 1: Overview of Article Methodologies

Title	Case Type	Case Focus	Theory	Primary Method	Research Question (RQ) Addressed
Article 1: <i>Just Like Alta?</i>	Comparative Case Study	Alta Conflict vs Fosen Protests	Historical Institutionalism	Process tracing	RQ1 (Underlying conditions) RQ2 (Institutional Maturation) R3 (Self-determination & state institutions)
Article 2: <i>Representing Sápmi</i>	Historical Single Case Study	Saami Council History	Paradiplomacy	Pattern Matching	RQ1 (Underlying conditions) RQ3 (Self-determination & state institutions)
Article 3: <i>Under Negotiation</i>	Narrative Single Case Study	Sámi-EU Relationship	English School (IR)	Process Tracing	RQ2 (Institutional maturation) RQ3 (Self-determination & state institutions)
Sup. Article 1: <i>Brussels Looks North</i>	Single Case Study	EU Arctic policy & Sámi	N/A	Document Analysis	RQ3 (Self-determination & state institutions)
Sup. Article 2: <i>The Sámi Limbo</i>	Historical Case Study	Sámi-EU History	N/A	Timeline Reconstruction	RQ2 (Institutional maturation)

The choice to use both qualitative research and case studies is interlinked. On the one hand, qualitative research is, first, a cornerstone of Indigenous Research, owing to the need for fine-grained analysis of often small-numbered groups that would otherwise be invisible in quantitative research (Axelsson, 2010; Chilisa & Phatshwane, 2022; Kilian et al., 2019). Second, the research questions of this project are also well-suited for qualitative work because they primarily relate to small groups and their decisions instead of the broader population.

On the other hand, case studies—particularly those grounded in the corresponding historical context—were chosen considering the complex and often diffuse nature of Sámi political actions. This difficulty in interpretation is

common in research on Indigenous topics. A high degree of contextual and historical understanding is generally required to fully grasp the nuances of how and why certain events have developed as they have. Above all, the historical legacy of oppressive state policy and the overarching system of colonialism, which continues to shape the political approaches of Indigenous actors such as the Sámi to this day, has to be taken into account (Drawson et al., 2017; Schneider & Kayseas, 2018; Skille, 2021; Smith, 2021).

Analytical Approach: Heterodox Content Analysis

This project has taken on a somewhat heterodox analytical approach, as each article, with its respective case and theoretical framework, has conducted its study in a different manner. Generally speaking, the data analysis approach taken by this dissertation followed closely with the main premises of qualitative content analysis, as well as, to a lesser degree, document analysis (Altheide, Coyle, DeVriese, & Schneider, 2008; Asdal & Reinertsen, 2021; Bowen, 2009; Morgan, 2022; Wach & Ward, 2013). The difference between the two lies in their respective focus and area of application: While the former was used to develop a narrative of a wider phenomenon, the latter looked at specific texts (Armstrong, 2021). In terms of what specific content analysis was used, my method aligned most closely with what social scientists Hsieh and Shannon describe as *conventional qualitative content analysis* (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). I intended to identify recurring themes and patterns across policy documents, historical accounts, and institutional texts relevant to Sámi political engagement. While I did not always follow all procedural steps of a full inductive content analysis, my work was guided by the core principles outlined by Hsieh and Shannon: repeated reading, attention to key concepts in the material, and the development of thematic categories based on the content itself rather than on predefined theoretical assumptions (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

I will briefly describe how this process worked in practice. The analytic process unfolded in three main stages. First, I repeatedly read through all documents to immerse myself in their content and context. Second, I systematically noted recurring ideas, terms, and formulations—particularly those pertaining to institutional change, political strategy, and the evolution of Sámi-state relations. Finally, I grouped these observations into broader thematic categories, which I developed inductively from the material itself rather than from predefined theoretical assumptions. Yet, these categories were formed at a relatively high level of abstraction to reflect the overarching focus of the dissertation. Overall, this approach allowed me to distil key themes from a large and diverse corpus of

texts without resorting to fine-grained, line-by-line coding. My use of content analysis was therefore interpretive and thematic, prioritising a high-level, overarching perspective over systematic micro-level analysis.

This analytical framework has been complemented by process-tracing, which came in use for the development of Articles 1 and 3. In brief, process-tracing is an analytic tool for inferences from diagnostic pieces of evidence – often understood as part of a temporal sequence of events or phenomena (Beach & Pedersen, 2013; Collier, 2011; A. L. George & Bennett, 2005; Yin, 2012). The term ‘diagnostic’ is key here, as it is understood as the result of many occurrences, which come together to form a holistic understanding. How this diagnostic data was assembled has varied for each article, but they have generally been constructed as historical narratives to view descriptive data through the lens of specific theoretical frameworks as a guide. How this came about in practice will be discussed more in the second part of this chapter.

Project Delineation: Three Levels from the 1950s to Today

From the outset, this project has attended to three levels of political abstraction in exploring the aforementioned research topics: the national, which, for this project, also includes the local level; the regional, which encompasses cross-border dynamics in Sápmi; and the international. These observations have covered a period from the 1950s to the early 2020s, though the primary focus has been on the past forty years of Sámi political history.

The use of different levels of political abstraction has been guided by data triangulation. Data triangulation constitutes a research process during which various types of data are gathered and analysed (Patton, 1999). This approach was chosen to compare different structural constraints on Sámi actors and how they have responded to them—both in policy action and in their own structural evolution. This choice was guided by the assumption that such structural evolutions, particularly on the strategic level, can be better understood when viewed in contrast to how political actors responded in different contexts.

Moreover, the specific time period of the 1950s to the early 2020s was selected to explore and articulate the themes of political formalisation and institutional maturation. This choice was motivated by how previous research has described Indigenous political mobilisation – both within and beyond the Sámi context – as coming in waves that leave a distinctive era in their wake (Crossen, 2014; Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008, 2015; Minde, 2003a; Niezen, 2003). Based on this work, I have interpreted the start and end points of my observation period as two

distinct eras of Sámi political history—one representing post-World War II mobilisation and one representing a more established period of institutionalisation in the present day. Based on this premise, I assert that these two eras were punctuated by the formation – or reformation – of the Sámediggit in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Building on this foundation, the cases were chosen to explore the changing relationship between Sámi and state actors—on different levels and over time—and how this has affected their political fortunes and strategies as a result.

Materials: Texts and Documents

This dissertation has primarily relied on documents, specifically textual documents (Asdal, 2015; Asdal & Reinertsen, 2021). They were grouped as either primary or secondary, depending on whether they were directly produced by a given actor or had explicit ties to them. Primary documents include press publications, policy documents, legislative texts, official history and other official documents from relevant actors, principally the Saami Council and other Sámi organisations, the European Union and Nordic governments. Secondary documents, which I view as generally originating from an outsider’s perspective, include newspaper articles, academic articles, external interviews, and informal correspondence, among other forms of indirect data sources related to the actors under consideration.

Documents were typically gathered through a process of snowballing, where one article or document tended to lead to the next (Asdal & Reinertsen, 2021; Naderifar, Goli, & Ghaljaie, 2017; Noy, 2008). The search for these sources was initially conducted through library databases and later expanded into the wider internet through Google Scholar, as well as via word of mouth or connections with relevant actors. In terms of language, I first looked through English-language sources before moving into Swedish and Norwegian as needed. Later, owing to a successful course on North Sámi at Sámi Allaskuvla, texts in that language could also be used in limited amounts for validation.

The decision to primarily rely on textual documents was made for two reasons: the practical and the political. Starting with the practical side, documents provide a readily available source of stable data that is unlikely to change in the midst of analysis and are useful for establishing facts on an exploratory basis (Asdal & Reinertsen, 2021). As the topics of this dissertation are relatively understudied, these are important advantages. On the political side, despite ongoing debates within Indigenous circles about the formal place of textual documents within

Indigenous Research, there are clear sites of Indigenous political practice (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008; Smith, 2012). In particular, the Saami Council has used policy documents and official strategic documents as tools to both express its intent and forward its position as a legitimate political actor worthy of international consideration (Saami Council, 2020, 2022). As such, the critical inclusion and examination of documents provide a clear and invaluable basis for political analysis.

Limitations and Positionality

So far, I have outlined the practical reasons for why and how work on this project has been conducted. As was to be expected, however, there were several key limitations that shaped my path significantly and which should therefore be taken into consideration. Many of them have already been outlined throughout this Kappa, but it is worth reiterating them in the context of my research design. I will start with the more general challenges and then delve into the specific limitations that arose from and during the development of each article.

The first and perhaps most practical limitation has been that of languages. Since this has already been discussed earlier in this dissertation, I will only supplement how it directly affected data gathering. In brief, outside of the frameworks of the European Union and the Saami Council, textual documentation of Sámi policies and politics, as well as news coverage on the matter, has largely remained within the respective state-majority languages only. In terms of practical access, English, Swedish and Norwegian sources have been relatively available. Unfortunately, Finnish, Russian and Sámi in any variation, have not except for in very limited amounts.

The second limitation has been my outsider status as a foreign researcher and the lack of access this has resulted in. As I have mentioned throughout, a constant challenge for me has been to do justice to the Indigenous actors I write about, even though I am a complete outsider to that culture and context. In a more ideal setting, this project would have been co-authored alongside one of the Indigenous organisations in question, such as the Saami Council. This would make it more in accordance with the principle of “No Research About Us, Without Us”, a term originating in disability rights discourse that has since come to be used by many other minoritised groups in their struggles against exclusion and marginalisation (Charlton, 1998). It means simply that decisions, or research, about a group should not be done without their explicit inclusion. I have worked to mitigate these design flaws through a variety of methods up to, and including, informal

consultation and, later, co-authorship with a then member of the Saami Council. As such, while I stand behind my findings, I acknowledge that someone from within the community and/or within the covered organisations will likely have a better understanding of what is being discussed.

In a similar vein, the third limitation is the lack of interviews conducted for this project, even though they were planned in earlier drafts. However, they were ultimately discarded when it became clear that several barriers would have made this difficult. The most crucial was a lack of a known connection to the community, which made it difficult initially to be seen as anything other than an outsider. As representatives of the Saami Council mentioned informally later, low capacity to respond to unknown researchers is a consistent problem. This was made clear to me in early attempts to gain access. This would slowly change as the project developed, but by that time, the window of opportunity for conducting the interviews and completing the requisite ethical review process had already passed. Instead, connections were made through informal background meetings at a series of international political events, such as the EU-Arctic Forum in 2021 and the Sámi EU Summit in 2023. These connections proved invaluable in validating the conclusions of this dissertation. Nevertheless, further research with a closer connection to the Sámi community is the necessary next step.

Finally, the fourth limitation is tied to my educational and epistemological background. The research approach for this project remains rooted in the Western tradition while still writing with Indigenous audiences in mind. As will be discussed further, I have done work to address this contradiction, but the possibility remains that it is not enough. As such, though I did the research and drew my conclusions with Indigenous knowledge and methodologies in mind, the actions of the Indigenous agents explored by this dissertation should be understood within their own context.

Article Case Selection: Design and Motivation

The case selection for the articles on which this dissertation is based was motivated by two research goals. The first was to explore past and ongoing political conditions and goals of Sámi political actors at different levels of political abstraction, while the second was to build a basis for meaningful comparison between these levels of abstraction. With that in mind, I will now explain which cases were selected and why, going in publication order of the articles.

Article 1: Just like Alta?

My work on Article 1, which I refer to as *Just Like Alta?* interchangeably, was initially driven by practical interest. In 2022, the then ongoing Alta protests were discussed extensively in Norwegian media and in Sámi activists’ circles, with parallels being drawn to the Alta conflict of the 1970s. This sparked an immediate research interest, as it appeared to be a ready-made comparison paper, but this soon interlinked with the broader scope of my dissertation project. I subsequently intended to use the two events as a lens through which to analyse the development of Sámi political strategy and goals against the backdrop of shifting conditions: While Norway has granted more rights to the Sámi over the years, self-determination remains out of reach. Within the wider dissertation, this research goal was important to set a baseline for what a positive Sámi-state relationship should look like.

To accomplish this, a comparative case study design was drawn up, using Historical Institutionalism as the primary theoretical and analytical framework. This theory was chosen because of its explanatory power regarding critical junctures and path dependency, which I described in more detail in the previous chapter. The cases themselves were drawn up to cover two time periods. The Alta case was delineated according to common assessments that its antecedents and ongoing events occurred from roughly the end of the 1960s and ended with the start of the formal Sámi commissions in the early 1980s. The Fosen case, in contrast, was developed first as an overview of the post Alta legal environment within Norway, before narrowing in on the Fosen court case and subsequent protests that ended only after publication. For a methodological overview, see Table 2 below.

Table 2: Methodological Overview of Article 1

Theory	Key Concepts	Operational Parameters	Methods	Primary Data	Expected Outcomes
Historical Institutionalism	Critical Junctures	Identify periods of institutional change	Process tracing	Court Rulings	Explore the effect of Junctures on policy trajectories
	Path Dependence	Trace persistence of rules/claims	Qualitative document analysis	Commission reports NGO statements	
	Critical Antecedents	Identify the feedback mechanism	Timeline reconstruction	Media reports	Compare political Conditions
	Operative/ Permissive Conditions			Historical Documents	Analyse the link between past choices and current constraints

Two different sets of documents were used to analyse each case. The Alta case study used historical accounts and academic articles—making it something of a

literature review of past works. Contemporary newspaper articles, while representing another secondary source of information, had to be discarded due to a lack of access at the time. In contrast, more robust sourcing could be employed for the Fosen case study. I used the documents from the Fosen Supreme Court ruling itself to build a timeline of events, which I then supplemented with documents released by activist organisations and press releases from the Norwegian government. Secondary documents used include news articles from English and Norwegian language news sites, primarily Reuters and NRK Sápmi, as well as previous academic research. For the full list of sources, see *Article 1 Materials* in Appendix A. I must acknowledge that, since this was an article published earlier in my overall research process, source differentiation was not as refined as in later works.

Article 2: Representing Sápmi

From the start of my work on Article 2, also referred to throughout as *Representing Sápmi*, the goal has been to cover the development of the Saami Council. This article was initially motivated to explore the organisation's history to find an answer to one core question: Why does the Saami Council always seem to be involved in Sámi international politics, yet never has been the focus of academic research? At the start of this project, there was in fact little written about the organisation—a gap that has only begun to close in recent years with the publication of select works from authors like Katri Somby. However, in contrast to her work, which fits firmly into the field of History, Article 2 evolved more into an analysis of the structures that have shaped the evolution of the organisation and, to a lesser extent, the wider Sámi movement of the time.

In the context of this dissertation, this article is meant to be understood as the linchpin between past historical work and the current political situation, which is stable but stagnant. The Saami Council and its history would, in essence, set a baseline to contrast with the wider questions of structural evolution and institutional maturation. Based on these goals, a case study was developed to examine the first fifty years of the Saami Council's history from 1956 to 2000 (Lange, 2013; Yin, 2009). The article employed data triangulation with textual sources as the main form of data (Carter et al., 2014; A. L. George & Bennett, 2005; Patton, 1999). For an overview of this approach, see Table 3 on the following page.

The primary motivation for covering this particular time period came from my consultation of *Sámiráddi 50 Jagi* (Saami Council 50 Years) by Lief Rantala, the

only historical account published by the Saami Council itself. As the title suggests, it was released to mark the organisation’s fiftieth anniversary in 2004. This made it key in tracing the evolution of the Saami Council in its own words and an ideal guidepost for further investigation.

Table 3: Methodological Overview of Article 2

Theory	Key Concepts	Operational Parameters	Methods	Primary Data	Expected Outcomes
Paradiplomacy	Levels of Paradiplomatic Engagement	Identify non-state diplomatic action Trace and compare actions with paradiplomatic levels Explore actions and growth of institutional development over time	Pattern Matching Qualitative Document Analysis Timeline Reconstruction	Leif Rantala’s <i>Sámiráddi 50 Jagi</i> Sámi Conference Proceedings Historical Documents	Examine the history of the Saami Council Appraise development of the Saami Council as a para-diplomatic organisation Explore the influence of International Indigenous connections on the Saami Council's institutional evolution

This important document was supplemented with proceedings and declarations made during the Saami Conferences, which are gatherings the Saami Council has been hosting every three to four years since 1954. These primary documents were then scaffolded by a variety of secondary sources, including contemporary reports and later academic papers, to fill out the narrative and corroborate the data provided by *Sámiráddi 50 Jagi*. The *Article 2 Materials* section in Appendix A lists all primary documents used, while Appendix B provides a full timeline of the events explored in the process of developing this article.

To explore the structural evolution of this organisation in greater detail, my case study was structured both chronologically and in terms of pattern-matching with the theory of Paradiplomacy. As I discuss in the article itself, the Saami Council and other organisations like it operate as both NGOs and representatives of their respective Indigenous peoples. As such, it was worth exploring its operation as being more akin to sub-state actors rather than non-states. To analyse the evolution of the Saami Council through the lens of Paradiplomacy, I used the process of pattern matching (Lange, 2013, pp. 43-44). In brief, pattern matching is an analytical process that is used to compare the steps taken by the subject under the suppositions of a theory to determine if said theory provides an adequate explanation for the case. This was done in the article itself by introducing the phases of paradiplomacy and comparing them with the evolution

of the Saami Council as an organisation, as understood by Leif Rantala's history of the events. Following this approach, I was better able to outline and analyse the evolution of the Saami Council and how it navigated its surrounding international environment during its first fifty years.

Article 3: Under Negotiation and Supplemental Articles

Article 3, titled *Under Negotiation*, was supplemented by two texts, titled *Brussels Looks North* and *The Sámi Limbo*. They came about through informal meetings with Sámi political actors, particularly from the Saami Council, and representatives of the European Union during the 2021 EU Arctic Forum and Indigenous Dialogue and the 2023 Summit of Barents Euro-Arctic Indigenous Sámi People. While these two events alone made the ongoing engagement between the Sámi and European Union actors obvious, it had not yet been addressed in academic literature. As such, the supplemental articles were the first steps to articulating these phenomena at a public-facing level. During the latter half of this project, however, it became clear that conceptualising the strategies and behaviours underpinning this relationship in more detail would make an important contribution to answering the research questions of this project.

Building on the two articles with these aims in mind, Article 3 was designed as an examination of the history of Sámi political engagement with the European Union, with a particular focus on the past twenty years. This time period was chosen because it generally coincides with the EU's growing engagement in the Arctic—something the Saami Council has also been trying to shape.

This was my first co-authored article, and it was also one in which I served as first author. It was written and designed in collaboration with Jacqueline Wingens, who wrote the first dissertation to date to discuss this relationship in detail, and Anja Márjá N. Kesitalo, a then employee of the Saami Council.

The case study itself was designed as a historical case that explores the EU's Arctic pivot, starting from 2007, through its adoption of the European Green Deal, until around 2023, when the article began. It is on this basis that we have constructed a case study that has been split into two halves, the EU's adoption of its 2016 Arctic Strategy serving as a narrative dividing line. This was chosen because of a marked increase in Sámi interest in EU policy, for reasons that are discussed more explicitly in the article itself. This case study was analysed using the English School approach introduced in the previous chapter to deductively analyse the normative and legitimacy-seeking dynamics that underpin this evolving

relationship (Clark, 2007a). For an overview of our methodological design, see Table 4.

Table 4: Methodological Overview of Article 3

Theory	Key Concepts	Operational Parameters	Methods	Primary Data Types	Expected Results
English School (IR)	Tripartite Levels of International Relations, specifically World Society Legitimacy Political Norms	Establish a timeline of Sámi-EU Relations Analyse motives and underlying conditions to understand relations Identify and examine strategies in the context of theoretical concepts	Process Tracing Qualitative Document Analysis Timeline Reconstruction	EU Policy Documents and Communications Saami Council Policy Documents Media Reports	Trace History of Interaction Compare actions and outcomes to determine the trajectory of the relationship Evaluate and contrast current strategies with potential future outcomes

We have used a variety of primary documents from the two major actors under consideration, many of which were already analysed for the supplemental articles. Among the documents we deemed key to our research were the EU’s most recent Arctic communications from 2016 and 2021, a variety of Arctic and Indigenous-related sources from the European Commission, and the Saami Council’s own Arctic strategies and policy papers (European Commission, 2016, 2021b; Saami Council, 2020, 2022). Our analysis of these documents has been supported by a variety of other secondary documents, such as academic works and news articles, which in sum represent a crosscut of literature on the topic of EU-Arctic relations in general and Sámi-EU-Arctic relations in particular. For a list of the primary sources we consulted, see the *Article 3 Materials* section in Appendix A. A full timeline of the events we covered can be found in Appendix B.

Ethics: Doing Right as Part of Sámi Research

As I discussed previously, research on Indigenous topics—both broadly and concerning the Sámi topics—comes with the baggage of a long history of malpractice and exploitation that remains keenly-felt to this day (Drugge, 2016a; Ericsson, 2021; L. George, Tauri, & MacDonald, 2020; P. Keskitalo et al., 2021; Kovach, 2015; Smith, 2021). The effort towards doing right has been an important objective of Sámi Studies as a field. However, despite frequent discussions on the matter, Drugge has repeatedly highlighted that standards for ethical research on Sámi topics remain woefully underdeveloped. Sweden, in particular, has been slow to implement any specific guidelines to help safeguard either the Sámi or the researchers themselves (Drugge, 2016b, 2022). Instead, at the time of writing,

Sámi Research falls under the broader ethical policies established by Sweden in 2017, which considers the Sámi a protected minority (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017).

In this void, work has been done by the Sámi themselves: In 2019, *Svenska Samernas Riksförbund* (SSR/the Swedish Sámi Reindeer Herding Association) launched their guidelines for ethical research, titled *Riktlinjer vid forsknings- och projektsamarbeten med SSR 2019* (Guidelines for research and project work with SSR 2019) (Rikkasearvi & Association, 2019). This was followed by the Swedish Sámediggi, who published their own strategy in 2021, titled *Forskningspolitisk strategi, Sámediggi* (The Sámi Parliament in Sweden's Research Strategy) (Sametinget, 2021). Finally, the Saami Council has been developing guidelines that appear to be an attempt at unifying the goals of such policies across the Nordic region. The most recent version came out in 2023 – one being targeted at policymakers and the other at Arctic researchers (Herrmann et al., 2023; Holmberg et al., 2023). In the latter document, the Saami Council offers several recommendations for ethical research recommendations for research on Sámi subjects:

1. Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination as a prerequisite for high-quality Arctic research;
2. Indigenous Ethics, methods, and methodology as key for decolonial research;
3. Indigenous-led research in design and practice;
4. Indigenous Peoples' co-equal participation in Arctic research funding structures and decision-making for securing decolonial Arctic research in practice (Holmberg et al., 2023).

These principles embody what has been considered best practice in research by Indigenous peoples across the globe, which can be summarised as “No Research About us, Without Us”, a concept I described earlier regarding limitations (Edwards, Barnes, McGregor, & Brannelly, 2020; Skille, 2021). Due to their general applicability and synergy with my research endeavour, I adopted the guidelines of the Saami Council for this project.

The first guideline, the Indigenous right to self-determination, is a key demand in all aspects of Indigenous politics (Holmberg et al., 2023). It is therefore one of the goals of this dissertation to highlight the agency of Indigenous actors and treat them as the political actors they clearly are. In doing so, I also recognise the sovereignty principle I discussed in the theory chapter (Mörkenstam, 2015). While this should not be a difficult task, the history of Indigenous Research

clearly demonstrates that this basic step is beyond what most states were—and still are—willing to do (Broderstad, 2011; Henriksen, 2008a; Kuokkanen, 2007; Minde, 2008b; Mörkenstam, 2005; Shikova, 2020). In contrast to this practice of erasure, each article published as part of this project has placed the agency of the Sámi at the core of its respective case. By foregrounding Sámi political actors as legitimate agents in charge of their own decision-making, this project therefore openly supports the goals of self-determination.

In light of the second guideline regarding Indigenous methods and ethics, this project has somewhat departed from what might be considered the most obvious pathway (Holmberg et al., 2023): Instead of applying decolonial or postcolonial theory and methods, I opted to use mainstream theory and methods to highlight the importance of considering Indigenous actors as freestanding agents or, in other words, mainstream Indigenous actors and knowledges. My reasoning for this is twofold. First, Indigenous knowledge and agency have, for the longest time, not been considered worthy of research by various academic disciplines, including Political Science and especially International Relations (Beier, 2009, 2013; Lightfoot, 2016; Lindroth & Sinevaara-Niskanen, 2018; Smith, 2021; Wilmer, 1996b). By purposefully highlighting Indigenous actors' fields that have historically erased them and by using what might be considered 'traditional' methods in the western sense, this project makes a relevant contribution towards counteracting Indigenous agency being siloed off from mainstream approaches in academia.

That is not to say that bespoke theories and methods that have arisen from critical or post/de-colonial theories are not useful. After all, my aforementioned approach may come with the risk of downplaying the systemic barriers that Indigenous peoples face – something that such approaches are key in accounting for. That leads me to my second reason for adopting my mainstreaming approach, which is the need to give room to Indigenous actors, be they organisations or researchers, to speak for themselves instead of me speaking for them (Aveling, 2013; Azmat & Masta, 2021; Kilian et al., 2019; Skille, 2021). As a non-Indigenous researcher, I am wary of making use of knowledge and approaches that are not my own (Aveling, 2013; R. Hill & May, 2013; Olsen, 2018). As such, by using the western methods I have some claim to, I can work with the material without worrying about speaking for a people I am not a part of, using methods that are better used by Indigenous actors themselves in their own work.

The final two principles, regarding Indigenous-led research design and co-equal participation, are something that I have alluded to throughout this dissertation.

As I have already discussed in both the research design and limitations sections of this very chapter, it was a challenge to reconcile these principles with my work. Once again, I must reiterate that this project was headed and developed by a non-Sámi, non-Indigenous researcher with only tangential relations to Sámi communities, which certainly warrants critical scrutiny. At the same time, I also find it worth pointing out how the current state of Indigenous ethics in Sweden has made this process even more challenging.

By the nature of this project, and the funding thereof, I had to engage with Sámi actors on my own, lacking any pre-existing relationship or agreement. Moreover, this must be done without having access to any sort of official guide for best practice. As such, the burden of doing right has been placed not only on me as a researcher, but also on any Sámi actor who agreed to work with me through the process of conducting this research. In the Swedish system, guidelines are indeed in place for protecting contacts once the research has been approved by an ethics board (Vetenskaprådet, 2017). There is, however, no comparable process for establishing contact in the first place. Hence, the process of connecting with Sámi actors and organisations places the burden of assent and consent on those who already are “studied to death” (Juutilainen & Heikkilä, 2016). If not handled carefully, this may only incentivise the sort of fly-in, fly-out research that most Indigenous groups, including the Sámi, explicitly do not want.

Throughout my entire work process, I have worked towards including Indigenous actors in this research and ensuring that their voices are heard. For this purpose, I was in direct—albeit infrequent—contact with the Saami Council. In the case of Article 3, I worked directly with a then-employee of the Council during the research process. However, the Sámi themselves should not be burdened with the sole responsibility for ensuring that my research complies with the principles outlined above and can therefore be considered more, for a lack of a better word, “Indigenous”. If anything, the current lack of strong and ongoing structural dialogue and partnerships between the university system and Sámi organisations encourages a kind of tokenism, in which Sámi are expected to be a tick box item rather than a true partner. As a PhD student, I should not have been expected to provide my own solution to what I have come to perceive as a structural failure on the part of the current ethical standards, or lack thereof, for Sámi research. It is not just about doing right; it is about being given the tools to build something together. Anything less and the system will continue to incentivise fly-in, fly-out research.

As such, I now wholeheartedly believe that for true research equity to occur, there should be structures in place to provide funding and guidance for Sámi research, by Sámi actors and researchers, for Sámi interests (Holmberg et al., 2023). Since this is hardly the case, I have done my best to mitigate this by making use of materials already provided by Sámi organisations themselves. This serves the dual purposes of centring their work as valid expressions of a political people, which I discussed earlier, but also reducing the “surplus cultural anthropologist population”. The latter refers to an old joke among Sámi, retold by Indigenous researchers Sandra Juutilainen and Lydia Heikkilä, who stated that “the Sámi family consists of Great Grandparents, Grandparents, Aunts and Uncles, Parents, Children and a cultural anthropologist” (Juutilainen & Heikkilä, 2016, p. 82; Pentikäinen, 1995). Through my analysis of documents directly provided by, as well as through informal meetings and select collaboration with Sámi actors, I have endeavoured not to reproduce this arrangement, but it should not have been solely my responsibility. A systemic change is needed. I, as an early-career researcher, cannot address the gap left by the current state of Sámi research ethics in Sweden, but I at least tried not to widen it even further.

Chapter 7: Findings

In this chapter, I will discuss the results of this project with a view to its general aims. To do this, I will bring the respective findings of my five written works together and explore how both past decisions and political conditions have shaped Sámi-states relations on both a national and international level. The articles will be examined in order of publication, with the notable exception of the supplemental contributions; they will instead be explored in conjunction with Article 3, which built on their initial work. This discussion will lay the groundwork for the conclusions that will be drawn in the next and final chapter.

Article 1: The Transition from Outsiders to Institutions

In February 2023, Sámi-led protests erupted in Oslo. They were sparked by the inaction of the Norwegian government on a then-recent ruling from the state's supreme court on the Fosen wind farm project. At the time, these events were compared to the Alta conflict by several Sámi activists I was in contact with, due to the perceived similarity between the two events. Following this assessment, I moved on to conceptualise them as comparable critical junctures in Sámi-state relations. To this end, I decided to conduct a comparative study with a particular focus on the structural conditions underlying each event.

I will begin by acknowledging that, in the context of Historical Institutionalism, Alta and Fosen are indeed a strong example of a within-case comparison (Ayres, Kavanaugh, & Knafl, 2003). Both events arose because a state had overstepped their bounds, both in terms of written law and political perception, and were accordingly accompanied by heavy backlash. Sámi political activists and allies descend upon the capital, Oslo and other regional centres, driven by a desire to forward and defend their rights, framed in terms of their position as Indigenous peoples (Grimstad, 2023; NHRI, 2023; Solsvik, 2024). From this perspective, the question asked by the title is answered rather neatly. Fosen is, and now was, like Alta. Where they differ is in the details and, particularly, the changed nature of the position the Sámi hold within Norwegian society. While Alta marked the end of one dependent path and the birth of another in the classic case of a critical juncture, Fosen revealed the degree to which Sámi rights have become an institution in themselves. Yet, this has come with limitations that are more clearly

seen when the institution itself is threatened. To explain this, I will first establish the conditions underlying each case and then lay out what this has meant in practice.

Establishing the Cases: Alta vs Fosen

Starting with the earlier case, Alta came at a time of international political change and has become a symbol of the Sámi rights movement for a reason. Following the end of overt Norwegianisation efforts and the emergence of a robust movement of politically interested Sámi actors, Alta was primed to be a moment of political importance (Aanesland, 2021; Alakorva, 2022, p. 277; Hjorthol, 2006; Somby, 2025, pp. 73-77). As I describe in the article itself, what made this ten-year conflict so striking was the inherent contradiction of an outwardly human rights-friendly state cracking down on an Indigenous protest movement at a time when that paradox could be politically leveraged. Moreover, historian Henry Minde posits that there had already been groundwork put in place by the Norwegian government to implement a replacement for the assimilationist Norwegianisation policies (Minde, 2003b). However, this plan had been shelved as redundant in the decade before Alta.

In this context, the Alta conflict represented an unavoidable critical juncture for Norwegian Sámi policy. Previously, such a protest movement could have been safely ignored by the state, owing to a lack of reputational or policy costs. That was no longer the case during Alta, as a lack of policy direction, coupled with the risk of losing international reputation, meant that the institutional incoherence of this moment could not be compensated. In Historical Institutional terms, these permissive conditions, in conjunction with further leveraging by Sámi actors, meant that a new path had to be taken.

The resulting policy regime that came about post-Alta world serves as a clear example of a post-critical juncture path. Sámi rights became institutionalised through law and were even enshrined in the constitution (Ravna, 2014, 2020). Moreover, a Sámediggi was founded, representing a clear symbol of institutional permanence in the Norwegian political landscape (Kuokkanen, 2009). It is in this context of a seemingly robust legal environment that the Fosen protests erupted.

At the time of writing the article, the then-ongoing events were centred around the failure of the Norwegian government to follow through with an adequate legal remedy to a ruling from the Norwegian Supreme Court ("HR-2021-1975-S (Fosen)," 2021). This ruling, which had been more than a decade in the making, found that a windfarm project just outside Tråante (Trondheim) had been

constructed without the proper consultation of local Sámi reindeer herding groups (NHRI, 2023). Rather than having the building permits revoked or the wind farm torn down, the Norwegian government instead chose to ignore the issue. As Sámi activists have highlighted, this represented a clear threat to the institution of Sámi rights that has been in place since the 1980s. The result was a series of protests on a scale not seen since Alta—hence the comparison. Despite this overt similarity, however, Alta succeeded in changing the course of Norwegian politics and altered the legal and political situation of the Sámi, which Fosen arguably did not do.

Since the reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, Norwegian Sámi have gained a degree of rights protections and structural power that has, so far, remained out of reach for their Nordic and Russian cousins (Ravna, 2014, 2020; Stepien et al., 2015). In this context, there is a clear contrast between the Norway of Alta and the Norway of Fosen, with the two protest movements clearly demonstrating this. Whereas Alta was about pushing against a faltering system that was showing signs of illegitimacy, Fosen manifested the defence of the status quo threatened by government inaction. Moreover, it showed how little room for political manoeuvre the Fosen protests had. For, beyond demanding that the Norwegian government follow through with the Supreme Court's ruling, there was little they could meaningfully ask for. During this period, Fosen revealed a discrepancy between what had been implemented by the Norwegian state and its motivations behind it, but also that becoming an institution, as has been the case with Sámi rights since Alta, has its drawbacks.

Different Times, Different Conditions

In the wider European and international context, the early 2020s have not been marked by a particular concern for human rights beyond what has already been normatively mandated. Rather, political debates tended to revolve around concerns of energy, health, security, and a general political uncertainty (Genschel, 2022; Liu, Fu, Wong, & Bashir, 2023). This has been brought about by a global pandemic and, at the time of writing, multiple ongoing wars on the European doorstep. With this has also come political developments that were ostensibly meant to meet the challenge of climate change as its effects became increasingly clear (Amnesty International & Saami Council, 2025; Zografos, 2022). Early in the decade, this was exemplified by a wider European push to shift away from fossil fuels to mitigate climate change (Fleming & Mauger, 2021; Mósesdóttir, 2024). In light of this drive, political priorities in Norway began to

shift away from Indigenous and minority rights to economics and energy security (Kårtveit, 2021; Normann, 2021; Zografos, 2022).

Given this context, the Fosen protests served as a cautionary tale on how far a government is willing to go to balance its obligations to safeguard rights with developmental concerns. Fosen and Alta represent two sides of the same political coin, each showing how political sentiments and material conditions may affect the fortunes of, but also represent opportunities to, Indigenous political movements. Broadly speaking, the comparison between these two cases highlighted that government priorities may continue to threaten Indigenous rights even after they have become strongly encoded into law at the highest levels.

One aspect that was only partially discussed in the article itself, but is of key importance to this dissertation, is how the changing structural relationship between the Sámi and the state—in this case, Norway—has affected avenues of conflict resolution. The growth of a more structured and formalised approach to Sámi-state relations, as represented by the Sámediggi in Norwegian Sápmi, served as a backdrop to the Fosen protests (Josefsen et al., 2015; Mörkenstam et al., 2016; Stepień et al., 2015). Though this was a political achievement in terms of establishing a permanent home for political debate, how Sámi politics are now approached in this new era has remained underexplored.

A recent article by political scientists Per Selle and Kristin Strømsnes has shown that, since its establishment in 1991, the Norwegian Sámi Parliament has become the main site through which Sámi actors engage with politics. At the same time, this has marked a departure from the grassroots organisations of earlier times (Selle & Strømsnes, 2023). Sámi politics is now somewhat taken for granted, legitimised by the existence of the Sámi Parliament and its associated structures. The flipside of this legitimacy is that Sámi political power is ceded more directly to structures instituted by the Norwegian state. Yet, as my analysis of Fosen has shown, expecting the state to always act in the best interest of the Sámi is not always a winning proposition. Moreover, the institutionalisation of Sámi politics has presented a lightning rod through which dissent is made predictable and, if need be, safely ignored or sidestepped. In essence, institutional lock-in, while an outcome of past victories, now means that the Sámi are confined within the very institutions that were designed to foster their self-determination. To underline this lock-in, following the publication of the article, an agreement was reached with the affected reindeer herding communities, which granted them access to the land and veto rights, in return for which the windfarm was allowed to remain (Solsvik, 2024). Though this could be considered a minor victory in some regards,

it still represents a compromise of what had been asked for by those most affected by the Norwegian state's initial inaction.

It is difficult to say whether this same effect can be seen in other parts of Sápmi. No other such study has been done on this topic, and the article by Selle and Strømsnes is quite recent. The political situations in Swedish and Finnish Sápmi are also quite different, as their respective Sámediggit face greater challenges to their legitimacy compared to their Norwegian counterpart (Kuokkanen, 2009; Lawrence & Mörkenstam, 2016). With that said, the formalisation of Sámi politics is evident beyond just the parliaments – in fact, it even predates them. This is perhaps most clearly seen regarding the Saami Council, which has been a pioneer for the formalisation of Sámi-state relations.

Article 2: International Agency and Political Formalisation

Thus far, my analysis has only attended to the Norwegian part of Sápmi, which, nonetheless, allowed me to explore a microcosm of how Sámi politics have changed on a local level. However, the Sámi have been, and remain, a cross-border people (Gaski, 1993; Henriksen, 2008a; Lantto, 2010). This has not always been the case, nor has it been by choice. Sámi agency at all levels has been affected by the division of borders since the early 19th century. Though this has resulted in a branching political evolution, the fact remains that they are still one people. As was famously said in 1971 at the VII Sámi Conference in Jiellevárri (Gällivare),

Vi är samer och vi vill vara samer, utan att därför vara varken mer eller mindre än andra folk i världen. Vi är ett folk med ett eget bosättningsområde, ett eget språk och en egen kultur- och samhällsstruktur.

(English Translation: We are Sámi, and we want to be Sámi, no more or no less than any other people in the world. We are a people with our own homeland, our own language and our own culture and social structure.) (Rantala, 2004, p. 5)

Safeguarding the understanding that the Sámi are one people, regardless of which side of the border they find themselves, is perhaps the most significant political project the Sámi maintain and has been at the forefront of every political struggle they have fought since the early days. This endeavour came to a sort of apogee in the 1990s following the reunification of the Russian Sámi with their Nordic

cousins after the fall of the Iron Curtain (Berg-Nordlie, 2015; Rantala, 2004; Zaikov, 2019). It clearly demonstrates that fostering unity is one of the cornerstones for achieving Sámi self-determination.

A key facilitator of this mission has been the Saami Council, which I have covered extensively in Articles 2 and 3. As both the organiser of the Sámi conferences and the main international organisation of the Sámi for much of their modern political history, the Council has been a quiet but persistent part of the apparatus of Sámi political agency—transcending the borders that confined them. In its own way, the Council has also been emblematic of the evolving balancing act between grassroots activism and formal structural engagement inherent to Sámi politics.

The Saami Council in Review

In Article 2, I explored the development of the Saami Council from its inception to the early 21st century through the typologies of Paradiplomacy introduced in Chapter 4. This framework allowed me to better highlight the degree to which the Saami Council materially changed throughout its first fifty years and how this might affect its prospects. While exploring this history, I also compared the development of the Saami Council to the process of sub-national states developing their own attempts at Paradiplomacy, a process I described extensively in Chapter 4. As a brief reminder, the concept of Paradiplomacy refers to non-state actors, typically proto- or sub-states, taking on actions and responsibilities that resemble diplomacy as it is practised by states (Dickson, 2014; Kuznetsov, 2014).

By applying this framework, I discovered that, as the Saami Council became more engaged in international politics, it continually modified its structure to better fit with what was expected of an international actor – both in capacity and in scope. As a result, I argue that the Saami Council represents an early adopter of the institutional approach to politics that has now become a dominant part of Sámi life, pre-dating the Sámidiggit system by at least twenty years. To further support this point, I will now turn to the findings of Article 2.

The Founding and Evolution of the Nordic Saami Council

At the time of its founding, the Nordic Saami Council—as it was initially called—was designed as a lightweight organisation tasked solely with facilitating the cross-border Saami Conferences. Its remit was accordingly small and its capacity limited, with only a loose permanent structure and a lack of fixed leadership. In Paradiplomatic terms, this placed the organisation at the first level of non-state

diplomacy, transborder regional micro-diplomacy, though it is debatable to call it even that during this period. As I noted briefly in the article, and as Katri Somby has covered more extensively, the early Nordic Saami Council was not truly Sámi in its outlook (Somby, 2025). Rather, it represented the interests of non-Sámi actors who had an interest in Sámi topics, with Sámi themselves being valued, if marginal, actors. As a result, the early years of the organisation were devoted to facilitating the conference. It also looks towards joining the Nordic Council, an interparliamentary organisation representing the five Nordic states and their two autonomous territories, but those aspirations never went anywhere for political reasons (Norden, 2026; Somby, 2025).

This would be the state of affairs until the late 1960s, when a new generation of politically-motivated Sámi would take charge of the Nordic Saami Council and steer it toward their own goals (Somby, 2025, pp. 55-60). This coincided with the period in which Sámi political actors shifted their own self-perception from being a national minority to being Indigenous (Gaski, 1993; Grid-Arendel, 2017; Henriksen, 2008a). As a result, the organisation began to pivot towards a sophisticated political outreach in line with the wider Indigenous engagement that arose at the international stage at the same time (Crossen, 2014, 2017; Somby, 2025).

A key step in this was the reformation of the organisation itself. Following a series of meetings with other Indigenous actors through connections made with the Inuit and the nascent World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP), the Nordic Saami Council reorganised itself into a more rigid, recognisably outward-facing non-governmental organisation. Its remit became presenting the Sámi to the world, and with it came more established structures that are still in place today, such as a permanent secretariat and working groups, as well as a rotating presidency.

In Paradiplomatic terms, this placed the Nordic Saami Council firmly within the territory of transregional micro-diplomacy, particularly as it began to work directly with Indigenous actors on a peer level (Duchacek, 1984, pp. 243-246). In the years following the 1970s, the organisation seemed to quickly acclimatise itself to international politics (Crossen, 2017; Rantala, 2004; Somby, 2025). This was fine done through joining the World Council of Indigenous Peoples in 1976. Eventually, it would rise to obtain observer status at the United Nations in 1989 and set its eyes on other fora.

Further International Outreach and Implications Therein

Going into the 1990s, the Nordic Saami Council solidified its position as it became integrated into the UN system (Crossen, 2014; Hicks & Saami, 2000; Rantala, 2004). It also gained recognition as a Permanent Participant in the Arctic Council, then a newly formed body to facilitate cooperation between and across Arctic borders (Cambou & Koivurova, 2020; Chater, 2019; Gamble & Shadian, 2017; K. Murray, 2014). In conjunction with the formation of the Sámi Parliaments in Sweden, Norway and Finland, this undoubtedly was the start of the current system of structured Sámi political engagement. It was also the beginning of a new relationship between the Nordic Sámi and the European Union, which is the subject of the latter articles of this project. Finally, and most significantly to the organisation itself, following the end of the Cold War, the Sámi of what is now Russia were finally allowed to reunite with their kin across the border (Rantala, 2004). Beyond this symbolic victory, it also meant that the Nordic Saami Council would become simply the Saami Council, recognising its role in representing all Sámi.

In reflecting on the evolution of the Saami Council during this period, it is important to note that the changes the organisation underwent were chiefly pragmatic. As I explored, the Saami Council served throughout as the primary vehicle through which the Sámi were able to operate internationally, which was important to link up with the wider Pan-Indigenous Movement. As such, solidifying its structure and expanding its scope were essential prerequisites for the Council to be able to operate on that at the global stage. The consequence, however, was that it became attuned to the norms and priorities of international politics, which are inherently state-based and where institutions are designed to, first and foremost, centre state priorities. The choice to move away from the WCIP in favour of the United Nations was arguably emblematic of this change (Crossen, 2014; Rantala, 2004; Somby, 2025).

By the turn of the millennium, the Saami Council had fully positioned itself as an independent political entity. This came with lasting commitments to several key international fora, most notably the UN and the Arctic Council, and Indigenous allies across the world. To accomplish this, the organisation increasingly took on responsibilities that resemble those of other, more explicitly state-like entities. Thus, during this time, the Saami Council had assumed an unusual position as an NGO; not a state by any means, but a representative of an Indigenous nation.

In Paradiplomatic terms, this would place the organisation in something of a grey zone between transregional micro-diplomacy and global paradiplomacy (Duchacek, 1984, pp. 240-246). What makes the difference here is the level of permanency in its outreach and capacity, which the Saami Council continues to struggle with even today. Notably, this has been the case even after it had become a fully Sámi-led organisation following the de-prioritisation of non-Sámi allies in the late 1960s. How they approach politics thus remains an ongoing choice for Sámi actors.

Throughout the history of the Saami Council, it was clear that this evolution was a deliberate choice to align itself more closely with the norms of international politics. While this has come with the benefits of permanence and recognition, as well as placing the Sámi closer to power, it also meant ceding to state-centred expectations—a dynamic that mirrors my earlier elaborations on Alta and Fosen. In the international world, this is particularly acute, as the very structure of international diplomacy is built on the acceptance of state power. Though I discuss this in the article itself, I cannot help but wonder if this evolution shaped its priorities and strategic approaches as well. As the Saami Council has matured and become a fixture in Indigenous political discourse, its options have arguably become narrowed by the structures it has reshaped itself to fit within. This is seen more clearly in my findings of the remaining articles of this project.

Article 3 and Supplemental Articles: Exploring EU-Sámi Relations

Arctic Institute Articles: Establishing Facts

Building off the work done as part of the development of Article 2, the latter three articles were designed to explore more concurrent events in Sámi international relations. It is on this basis that Article 3 and the two supplemental articles focused on the ongoing relations between the Sámi, primarily represented by the Saami Council, and the European Union. At the time of writing, there had been vanishingly little written on this topic, with the most recent being two articles in the early 2000s (Broderstad, 2002; Toivanen, 2001). Into this gap, I, alongside a few notable others such as Jacqueline Wingers with their 2024 dissertation, have stepped up to fill this gap (Götze, 2024). This has been timely, as interest in the Arctic and those who inhabit it has become more in focus. Driving this interest has been the work of the Saami Council itself, which ramped up its engagement and knowledge gathering following the establishment of its EU Unit in 2019. The

three articles were developed in conjunction with this buildup, perhaps unintentionally, with an interest in exploring how the development of this relationship and what it says about the current state of Sámi international outreach. I will start by exploring the findings of the two supplemental articles, *Brussels Looks North* and *The Sámi Limbo*, which were published in 2022 and 2023. From these two short articles, there were three findings that are worth establishing.

The first finding, as discussed in *Brussels Looks North*, was that as the EU turned its gaze north, it did not seem to truly understand what it saw. As a result, its policy pivot at the time was uneven and seldom credible. This was a well-trodden point at the time of writing, that had been brought up by previous scholars of the region (Raspotnik & Østhagen, 2021; Raspotnik & Stepien, 2020; Stepień & Raspotnik, 2016). Often missing in this discourse, beyond cursory mention, has been a consideration of how Indigenous people, such as the Sámi, have acted to engage with this pivot. This is where this article came in. As I explored in the article itself, there were indications that the EU lacked an understanding of the issues of the region. With this came a risk of exacerbating pre-existing problems involving land and water rights and mineral extraction on Indigenous land. Moreover, this had been something locals had been warning about for years, with Sámi actors being amongst the most vocal (Bjerklund, 2022; Kårtveit, 2021; Normann, 2021).

The second finding, as the Saami Council had uncovered, and I passed on *The Sámi Limbo*, there is, and remains, a gap between the rights granted by the European Union to external Indigenous peoples and those who inhabit the bloc internally (Saami Council, 2022). The result is that despite (partly) being EU citizens, Sámi had fewer rights protections than their counterparts who lived outside of Europe. This situation contributed to a sense that while the Sámi were given minority protection, the EU had little idea of how to properly interact with an Indigenous people. To plot this development, I also presented an outline of the history of interactions between bloc and people. Taken in context with the initial findings of *Brussels Looks North*, what these two supplemental articles established was a relationship between bloc and people that was in its early stages. Yet it already bore similarities to past histories of state-Indigenous interaction, for better or worse. On this basis, the third and final peer-reviewed article of this dissertation was put into development.

Article 3 - Part 1: Exploring Leverage, Legitimacy and Norms

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, this article was co-written alongside Jacqueline Wiggins (German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS)) and Anja Márjá N. Keskitalo (Saami Council). I was the project lead on the development of this article and was listed as the first author. The initial idea of this article was to take conditions established by the two popular science articles and expand them into a full examination of the relationship between Sámi actors and the European Union. The two goals of this paper were to put into print the history of this relationship and, more importantly, explore the mechanisms of engagement that the Sámi made use of to forward their own goals.

I should first briefly reintroduce the framework of analysis. As described in Chapter 4, we made use of the English School theoretical framework (Linklater, 2005; Navari & Green, 2014; Pella Jr, 2013). This was adapted to focus on non-state actors through an interpretation of the theory introduced by political scientist Ian Clark (Clark, 2007a). According to this perspective, one of the most important tools available to non-state actors, such as the Saami Council, is to be providers of legitimacy to state actors, which is guided by the norms states have taken upon themselves to adhere to (Clark, 2007a; Finnemore, 1996b). On this basis, our argument was founded on the idea that as the EU continued to pursue Arctic legitimacy, it would need to strengthen its credibility. One pathway to do this would be to make inroads with Indigenous actors who, at the time of the article's development, were considered to be important partners through their normative inclusion as part of the Arctic Council (Cambou & Koivurova, 2020). Knowing this to be the case, the Saami Council would then be well positioned to leverage this need for credibility to forward their own rights claims in other arenas. How this worked in practice, however, has been messier than expected.

Starting with the descriptive findings, we found strong evidence of collaboration between the Sámi actors, most notably the Saami Council and the Sámi Parliaments, and the European Union as early as the accession talks of Norway, Sweden and Finland in the early 1990s. The result of these early collaborations, spearheaded by the Norwegian Sámi delegation, was the implementation of Protocol 3, later known as the 'Sámi Protocol', which granted 'exclusive rights to reindeer husbandry within traditional Sámi areas', with a basis granted for further rights protection as needed (EUR-Lex, 1994). Though Norway never joined the European Union, the efforts of the Norwegian Sámi would remain the most striking example of EU-Sámi collaboration to date.

With the assessment complete, there was a clear drop of engagement by Sámi and European actors, with the latter seemingly forgetting that it had an Indigenous minority within its borders. This only began to change with the EU's Arctic pivot in the late 2000s. With this came a greater level of engagement by the European Union at what it referred to as the stakeholder level, which included state, industrial leaders and Indigenous peoples. Despite the latter's inclusion, we saw little direct engagement with the Sámi during this period. Rather, they were gradually brought into consultation, an ad hoc series of meetings that would eventually become what is today known as the EU Arctic Forum and Indigenous Dialogue. As we argue in the article itself, this uneven courtship was a result of the EU's previous attempt at joining the Arctic Council, which failed, in part, due to an unforced error that crippled the Inuit seal fur trade.

This relationship would intensify in the later years of the 2010s and the publishing of the EU's Arctic Strategy in 2016 (European Commission, 2016). In response, the Saami Council itself would pivot to engage with the EU more directly in 2017. In 2019, this engagement was made more formal with the establishment of a dedicated EU Unit within the Saami Council (Saami Council, 2023). The next key event in this relationship was the release of the EU's most recent Arctic Policy in 2021. There, the Sámi were directly cited as being consulted in the drawing up of the policy, as well as a robust acknowledgement of the importance of engagement with Indigenous peoples more broadly (European Commission, 2021b, p. 13).

Based on our reading of the data we gathered, we can see that there was a shift in approach regarding Indigenous peoples by the EU, arguably influenced by greater engagement by Indigenous organisations. This is most clearly seen in the comparison of how Indigenous actors are treated between the 2016 and the 2021 Arctic policies (European Commission, 2016, 2021a). The Sámi, alongside the Inuit, were named in the latter document as key partners, with stronger language in place to describe their place within the Arctic. Moreover, in informal meetings with the Saami Council, it was made clear that inroads had been made within the European Commission, specifically, meaning that direct communication had been established.

Article 3 - Part 2: Areas of Concern

Despite these modest, if promising, gains, there are other indications that show that, while the EU does recognise the value of the Sámi in Arctic matters, this recognition does not extend outward into other policy areas. Key to the 2021

Arctic Policy was an adherence to the EU's Green Deal policy initiative, which, among other things, worked towards accelerating the developing renewal sources of energy (European Commission, 2019, 2021b). This emphasis has, and had, the potential to further exacerbate the already strained capacity of Sámi actors to defend against harmful development on their lands (Saami Council, 2025). Thus, the seeming recognition of the Sámi, which at this point feels mostly symbolic, comes at a time when their material claims are being categorically ignored, not just at a national level, but at the European level as well.

Initially, we argued that this paradox has arisen because of a narrow perspective displayed by the EU, in which the Sámi rested in the Arctic portfolio and nowhere else. However, a greater problem that arose in the process of developing this article was the changing nature of the Arctic itself. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the international balance of power has shifted (Andreeva & Rottem, 2024). With it has come a renewal in interest in the Arctic. No longer a peripheral region, notably only for its shared political management, it has now become (again) a politically contested arena that faces unprecedented climate and developmental changes. Moreover, following the suspension of Russian participation in the Arctic Council organisation, the primary vector for normative behaviour in the Arctic lost one of its principal reasons for being, threatening its own legitimacy (Andreeva & Rottem, 2024). This may have dire ramifications for the norms of the region, as this perceived weakening has the possibility of changing how Arctic actors are expected to behave. In this context, the norm of Indigenous peoples' inclusion in decision-making is particularly vulnerable.

It is for this reason that the leverage presented by the Arctic is both valuable and vulnerable for actors such as the Sámi, as it is one of the few direct levers through which they can gain access to decision-making. As time goes on, and the Arctic continues to be a focus of southern interest, the question of how long Indigenous actors will remain at the table will become all the more pertinent. Currently, it appears that, at least on the European level, there remains a certain paradox to European recognition of Sámi claims to the region. On the one hand, there is a developing relationship, but on the other, there is little material movement in recognising their rights, even in terms of bringing them in line with what is already in place externally. As I will explore further in the next chapter, this highlights the difficulty of achieving rights through institutional means. Governments, which the EU resemble, are often incentivised to provide recognition over action unless there are external factors that force the issue. Arctic Indigenous peoples' inclusion could be that leverage, but currently, it is

facing difficulties of its own, narrowing the path towards rights recognition, at least for the time being.

Chapter 8: Synthesis and Conclusions

In the previous chapter, I introduced and defined the findings of each of the three articles and two supplemental texts written as part of this project. In this chapter, I will bring the findings together to attempt to provide some answers to the three research questions of this dissertation. To reiterate on these questions, they were:

1. How have underlying structural conditions shaped Sámi institutional engagement on both a domestic and international level?
2. How has institutional maturation affected strategic options and political possibilities of Sámi institutions/organisations within and beyond state frameworks?
3. What does the evolution of Sámi-state engagement reveal about the tension between self-determined sovereignty and state-centric authority?

To this end, this chapter will be divided into five sections. The first section will introduce a framing narrative I have found useful in developing this analysis. From there, the next three sections will be devoted to exploring and answering each of the research questions in turn. This chapter will then conclude with a short discussion on the impact of this work, how it might be used to understand wider debates on Indigenous agency within the constraints of state-centric structure, and suggestions for further research.

Historical Framing: Tråante 1917

To begin this discussion of structures, strategies and maturing political approaches, I want to take a moment to reflect on the evolving nature of Sámi-state relations and how old debates still shape current approaches to politics. As I introduced back in Chapter 2, since the start of the 20th century, Sámi political engagement has undergone a series of waves, ebbing and flowing based on opportunity and political conditions, from the earliest attempts of the 1900s to the ongoing efforts of the present (Lantto and Mörkenstam 2015; Somby 2025; Bjørklund 2017). The goal of these activities, then and now, has been advancing the rights to self-determination within their own homeland and across the

borders that have come to divide them (Henriksen 2008; Mörkenstam 2005; Kuokkanen 2019, 2009).

This has been a continuous and ongoing process, driven by Sámi political actors and organisations that have shown themselves to be flexible and responsive to changing times. They have had to be, as resilience is the price of colonial practices and state-centred marginalisation (Lindroth & Sinevaara-Niskanen, 2019). For the reality is that to make the advances they have meant making compromises and building structures capable of withstanding the whims of state power. At the centre of this reality is a core political tension between the need to engage with and through state-centric structures and the desire for full self-determined political action. The question of how to balance this a question that has been at the centre of Sámi political activism and political engagement from the start. As such, it is useful to return to the early days of Sámi political mobilisation to see how long it has been in play.

In the early years of Renberg, Mortensen and the 1917 Tråante/ Trondheim meeting, this tension was framed in terms of which direction the nascent movement should take. Should it work within the structure of the state and work towards reform from the inside, or should it reject state relations entirely and work towards reclaiming what had been lost through centuries of marginalisation (Lantto, 2000, p. 75; Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008; Tveiten, 2020)? As with such a fundamental debate, there were notable proponents for each. Daniel Mortensen, from the Norwegian side of Sápmi, was an advocate of the former position. In contrast, Elsa Laula Renberg, originally from the Swedish side of Sápmi, was a proponent of the latter. Despite efforts to find a middle ground between these two views, this disagreement was not resolved (Lantto, 2000). Ultimately, it would prove to be one of several fatal factors that resulted in the fracture and dissolution of the first Sámi movement.

What this early disagreement highlights are three important factors that have influenced my thinking throughout this project. First, the choice to engage on equal terms with state actors was not an accident of history. Rather, it was a deliberate choice on the part of Sámi actors, one that has been continually debated and contested within the constraints of their context. Second, this early split demonstrated the tension inherent to attempting to enact self-determination through structural means and the political cost that comes from doing so. Political agency through state institutions has meant ceding the right to make one's own choices in part to structures not of one's own making. In terms of Indigenous agency, this is doubly true, as it requires trust in state institutions that

have historically worked to assimilate them and have the power to continue to do so. Finally, third, is that the current state of Sámi rights exists within an uneasy state of compromise between people and respective state, one that requires continual negotiation and renewal. As I turn to answering the research questions of the dissertation, it is important to remember that self-determination should mean considering alternatives if the current structures are no longer fit for purpose.

Research Question I: Structural Choices

I will turn then to the first research question of this project, which deals chiefly with the structural choices that have shaped the approach Sámi actors have taken to engage on the domestic and international levels of politics. In brief, what I believe has occurred is that Sámi politics has come to emulate state-like politics through the constraints imposed upon them by engaging with state actors. This is most apparent in how structuralised and formalised Sámi political engagement has become. Briefly, let us explore the facts on the ground before discussing what the results of this have been.

Since the end of the 1970s, relations between Sámi political actors and the states that have divided them have become more structured and formalised (Henriksen, 1999, 2008a; Stępień et al., 2015). More recently, particularly following the reforms of the early 1990s, this process has been increasingly channelled through institutions (Falch & Selle, 2022; Josefsen, 2001; Kuokkanen, 2009; Müller-Wille, 1979; Selle & Strømsnes, 2023; Stępień et al., 2015). The Sámediggit have become emblematic of this evolution, but it can be seen all across Sámi politics (Selle & Strømsnes, 2023). This institutional reality came about following the last great wave of Sámi political activism; forty years of local and regional political engagement built on the foundation of a committed Sámi civil society (Henriksen, 2008a; Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2015; Somby, 2025).

Scaffolding this has been civil society actors, such as the Saami Council, that would remain a vital part of the Sámi movement (Somby, 2025). In parallel to national developments, the Saami Council has served as the international wing of the Sámi cause (Saami Council, 2021). Through this, the organisation has played an important role in both establishing links with other Indigenous peoples, as well as shaping international political policy, particularly at the United Nations (Somby, 2025). Much of the research of this project has been on this organisation, as much for its importance to Sámi rights as its longevity on the international

stage. As a direct result of this evolving role, the Saami Council has been adept at changing to fit the moment, as it has continually reorganised to become a more outward-facing representative of the Sámi people (Rantala, 2004).

This formalised institutional character of Sámi politics is a fact that is both obvious and fundamental to understanding the current Sámi political landscape. The work done to achieve this has come because of deliberate choices made by Sámi political actors across nearly a century and at three levels of political abstraction: Norwegian state level, European regional level and the international level. The gains that have come because of this institutionalisation should not be underappreciated.

Starting at the national level with Article 1, the contrast between the Alta and Fosen conflicts is, I would argue, down to a difference of approach to, and the conditions of, institutional power. Alta was a critical juncture between Norwegian state politics and a lack of policy to back it up, allowing for Alta to break through, in line with the theory of Historical Institutionalism used in exploring this topic (Aanesland, 2021; Capoccia, 2016b; Cramér, 1975; Fioretos, 2011a; Hjorthol, 2006; Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008). This represented a success of Sámi political will, as well as providing a clear-cut example of the theoretical argument of that article, which is that path-dependent government policy can be broken given the right conditions and momentum. It is also notable that Alta came about not through institutional action. Rather, by combining grass roots organising with a clear appeal to a wider political movement, as going through official state channels at the time failed at both a political and legal level.

In contrast, Fosen was very much a story of institutional conflict, one that presents a mixed picture of the current state of Norwegian Sámi politics. On the one hand, it was an example of institutional success, as the Norwegian Supreme Court did, in fact, rule in favour of the affected reindeer herding communities (Ravna, 2023). Moreover, though the Norwegian government was slow in doing so, it did eventually give compensation and veto rights to the communities, though at the cost of leaving the Fosen wind farms in operation. It is on this latter basis that the Fosen protests were a failure of a kind as well, as they showed the limits of grassroots organising, as further protections were not put in place. Rather, that would instead come about through a parallel institutional process, which I have not discussed as much in this dissertation, which has been the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that I will discuss more on later in this chapter. What this revealed was the degree to which Fosen represented, not changed, but

a defence of a path-dependent structure that had little room for change (Capoccia, 2016b).

Moving to the international level, we can see more clearly how building towards harnessing institutional power has shaped Sámi political engagement in its clearest form. Through my work as part of Article 2, I was able to show that this development followed along a path of paradiplomatic action that has been observed in more traditionally state-structured bodies. Alongside this process, particularly in the 1970s, the Saami Council came to mirror its domestic counterparts in importance, but with a structure built more in the direction of state power on an international level. In hindsight, it becomes clear that this period resulted in the development of a vibrant and interconnected series of political structures that would allow motivated Sámi actors, be they individuals or actors, to politically punch above their weight, given the right conditions (Henriksen, 2008a; Somby, 2025). This, I argue, came about through the slow embrace of a structure and outlook not dissimilar to other non-state actors, which was shown in comparison with the levels of paradiplomacy (Duchacek, 1990).

Through this same process, the Saami Council and the nascent Sámediggit were allowed to shape Sámi policy on a European level, as part of the Nordic accession process of the early 1990s. The result of this was Protocol 3, grounding a key Sámi right to free movement into the agreements that brought Finland and Sweden into the Union (Albanesi, 2019; EUR-Lex, 1994). From this foundation, the Saami Council has once again taken up the mantle of representative of Sápmi, this time to the European Union, through both the EU Arctic Forum and more informal, and less regular meetings. How they went about this was framed, in theoretical terms, through the lens of the English School's World Society (Clark, 2007a).

Throughout all five of the articles written as part of this dissertation, the primary focus has been on Sámi organisations working within the system of institutions. At each level, I have found long-term evidence of Sámi political actors shaping their political strategy and developing their organisations to better fit within established political channels. In each case, there have been specific reasons for this, be it for greater recognition, established norms of political operation or, in the case of Fosen, because such actors have become fully integrated into the state apparatus itself.

This has had notable results, two of which I would like to highlight. The first result has been the establishment of clear channels of communication and relations between the state, state-like entities, such as the United Nations or the European

Union, and Sámi political actors (Henriksen, 2008a; Somby, 2025). This approach has proved successful and, as a result, these relationships and the building thereof have become a fixture of Sámi politics on an international level. The apogee on the national level of this has been, of course, the establishment of the Sámediggit and the subsuming of political life into state-based structures. The second notable result has been that state-centric avenues of political debate and change have become the default legitimate route through which Sámi rights can be protected and expanded. This can be seen at all levels and across different contexts, as demonstrated by the triangulation approach taken by this project. It has made politics predictable, stable and, to some degree, routine.

This is path dependence behaviour in its simplest form, as the structures inherent to the current system allow for a low political cost of engagement for all involved parties, particularly the states involved (Fioretos et al., 2016). Rather than an interconnected ecosystem of organisations, now politics is, in many ways, channelled through state-backed institutions domestically and, internationally, one major NGO in the form of the Saami Council. The result has been the establishment of clear sites of engagement, be it through meetings of the Sámediggit or the United Nations. In essence, Sámi politics has become state-structured politics, with all that entails. The question is whether this is working or not.

Research Question II: Institutional Limits

In the past two decades, there has been increasing evidence that there have been trade-offs and limits imposed by the greater formalisation of relations between Sámi and the state, something that can be seen in parallel with wider Sámi research (Junka-Aikio, 2019; Junka-Aikio et al., 2022). This has relevance in answering the second research question of this project, which focuses on the consequences of maturing institutions. In brief, I would argue that a major trade-off that has come about because of Sámi political institutionalisation has been the complacency engendered by the normalisation of Sámi politics. Put simply, as Sámi institutions have matured, states no longer see their rights advancement arguments as being as pressing when there are pre-existing structures in place to handle them. This has, in turn, narrowed the room for manoeuvre for Sámi actors and limited their scope for self-determination. A chronic example of this trade-off is the Sámediggit themselves.

As has been explored more rigorously by other scholars, the Sámediggit in Sweden and Finland have faced difficulties for decades now (Josefsen et al., 2015; Lawrence & Mörkenstam, 2016; Mörkenstam, 2019; Nyysönen, 2013). For a variety of reasons, these bodies have come to be emblematic of the failed promises of self-determination through state agencies. Be it through limited funding, limited legal remit or simply political neglect, or a combination of all three, neither body has functioned well (Mörkenstam, 2019; Stępień et al., 2015). Instead, they are state institutions that represent the face of Sámi grievance, rather than serve their outward purpose of serving the Sámi people. Yet I would argue that the greater problem of these institutions has been the limiting of the politically possible. Through ceding the political will from the Sámi themselves to these institutions, much of the power to change the current state of politics now must come from the will of the states themselves. To explain, I think the failure of the Fosen protests and slow embrace of the Sámi by the EU is illustrative of this point, which is best understood by returning to the triangulated theories used in the respective articles.

In Article 1, I argued that to understand Fosen, one first had to understand it in context with the world that Alta brought about. Through the struggles of those who took part in the 1970s protests and court battles, Norway was forced to rebuild its legal framework to better protect its Indigenous minority (Aanesland, 2021; Ravna, 2020). In effect, following a break in the path dependence of the state through a critical juncture, a new path was implemented, this time with the Sámi being the primary beneficiaries (Capoccia, 2016a). In the time since, the Norwegian Sámi have come into the position of having greater political say and stronger legal rights than their neighbouring kin (Mörkenstam, 2019; Ravna, 2014, 2020; Vik & Semb, 2013). The Norwegian case, in many aspects, is unique in the Nordic context, as the efforts of Sámi-state normalisation have resulted in one of the most robust protection regimes that Indigenous peoples have access to.

With that has come a sense that Sámi rights have become a norm part of Norwegian political life, strengthened by the appearance of a strong path dependence through the continual implementation of Sámi rights (Fioretos et al., 2016). The reality has been less generous, as numerous examples have illustrated that these protections are continually threatened by development projects and state overreach, even before the Fosen protests erupted (Kårtveit, 2021; Normann, 2021; Saami Council, 2025). As such, when Fosen arose, this apparent political path dependence was brought into conflict with the older and more

established priorities of the state: industrial development under the guise of climate concern. As I discussed earlier, this result, following the publishing of Article 1, was, rather than ordering the removal of the Fosen wind farms, the Norwegian government settled the case with the reindeer herders involved through cash payments and veto rights on any further development (Solsvik, 2024).

In an earlier draft, I argued that this speaks to the clash between the expectations of protection and the realities of institutional maturation. However, the Fosen protests, and the resultant settlement, came to an end in the midst of the finalisation of Norway's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Nor. Sannhets og forsoningskommisjonen, abrv. TRC) (Broderstad & Josefsen, 2023; Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen, 2023). To avoid going too far beyond the scope of this section, the Norwegian TRC was designed to map and catalogue the facts and effects of Norwegianization policies and set out guidelines on how to go about repairing the state's relationship with those affected, of which the Sámi were included explicitly. The findings of the commission's report came out at the end of May 2023 and arguably have overshadowed the controversy of the Alta protests. The report's findings were comprehensive and covered a wide swath of the history and effects of the Norwegianisation policies, with recommendations directed at strengthening, among other aspects, language and cultural rights (Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen, 2023). These are positive steps, and though the process appears slow, there is movement, which points to the positives of long-term state engagement, so long as the state remains interested.

Despite this, the root paradox at the heart of Fosen, between Sámi rights and economic concerns, remains unaddressed. The focus, instead, has been on cultural and linguistic concerns, rather than those of a more political-economic nature. As Sámi activists and organisations have continued to point out, other developments continue apace across not just Norway, but Sápmi more broadly (Amnesty International & Saami Council, 2025; Quinn, 2025; Saami Council, 2025).

On the international level, the Saami Council's increasing involvement with the European Union has shown mixed results so far. As discussed in Article 3 and outlined in the supplemental articles, the approach from the Saami Council's perspective appears to be to use their normative status as legitimised Indigenous actors in the Arctic to leverage gains in relations with the European Union. This matches with the tactics used by the Saami Council in their own dealings with the United Nations, which Katri Somby has shown in her dissertation, which

resonates with this approach taken (Minde, 2008a; Somby, 2025). What we saw was evidence that inroads for Sámi rights were framed in Arctic terms, particularly during a period when the EU had a clear desire to be seen as legitimate in the region. This shows that modest gains are possible over the short term, with the presumption that the Saami Council views this as a long-term strategy.

In terms of industrial policy, there appears to be limited interest in taking Sámi interests into account. The EU Green Deal, and particularly the Critical Raw Materials Act, clearly have taken precedence over any sort of minority protections, let alone bespoke Indigenous measures (European Commission, 2019; European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2024). As such, while direct relations between the Sámi and the EU remain in their early stages, there is a clear possibility that Sámi voices will continue to be ignored in favour of most established political and industrial interests. In effect, though there might be some legitimacy gains in implementing greater Sámi rights protection, there is little institutional penalty for ignoring their demands. The Saami Council has been quite fierce in highlighting this contradiction, particularly with greater funding going into resource development projects across the north.

I believe these two cases highlight the paradox inherent to the institutionalisation of Sámi politics that I have touched on throughout. As much as this process has provided stability and identifiable levers of power, it has also placed much of the power for change to occur in the hands of state, or state-like, actors. This, in turn, has meant that as these institutions mature, and states become comfortable in this role as guarantor of Sámi rights, it becomes easier to ignore fundamental questions in favour of focusing on the easier topics.

The logic for this, from a state perspective, is relatively simple. The Sámediggit and the system built around them in each of the three Nordic states have proved their longevity and their legitimacy. They represent the Sámi as a people to their given state, with responsibilities that cover most, though not all, of the rights that the states have granted to their Indigenous people. Though there are difficulties in implementation, a state can always use the continued functioning of Sámi-focused institutions as a cover for a lack of policy follow-through. As such, further rights are not necessarily needed because what the protests raised can simply be directed to the institutions that have been built to filter them. This is despite, or perhaps because of, these very institutions not fully meeting the needs of Sámi interests. The institutions in place are currently serving their purpose, and that is

enough; anything further can wait until an undefined period (Lindroth & Sinevaara-Niskanen, 2022).

This can be seen more clearly when re-examining the two previously mentioned cases. The contradiction at the heart of the Fosen protests, that being the Norwegian state's preference for economic priorities over reindeer herding rights, was not fully resolved (Solsvik, 2024). Instead, it was ignored and passed over in favour of focusing on certain noncontroversial topics, such as cultural and language rights, as outlined by the TRC (Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen, 2023). On the European level, this same sidestepping, in which Indigenous rights are put aside in favour of economic priorities, is much more apparent, despite the Saami Council's current efforts (Saami Council, 2025). What this demonstrates is that there is a clear limitation to engaging as equals with state institutions and of using institutional engagement as the primary means of political action.

Research Question III: Sámi Aspirations versus State Structures

At this point, I turn to the final research question, which examines the paradox of Indigenous self-determination pursued through state institutions and the broader trends illuminated by the Sámi case. I argue that over the past thirty years, as these institutions have matured, a growing mismatch of expectations between state actors and the Sámi has become increasingly apparent. This mismatch, rooted in the enduring tension between Indigenous self-determination and state power and discussed throughout this study, has not narrowed over time. Instead, institutional maturation has brought it into sharper relief, widening rather than resolving the gap between these competing visions.

To explain, let us approach the current state of Sámi politics from a more grounded perspective. In the 1990s, the Sámi became a people explicitly represented by and through state-backed institutions. The Sámediggit, and what they represented, were designed to represent them on important political issues, salient to their rights as Indigenous peoples (Kuokkanen, 2009). This was a future that was explicitly fought for by the Sámi themselves, who had seen the value of organising and engaging through state channels. Through this process, Sámi politics and political aspirations were intermeshed with state actors and took on aspects that allowed them to better appeal to state actors. This can be seen in the transformation of the Sámi Council, which increasingly took on state-like diplomatic duties, which I identified as paradiplomatic in character (Chater,

2021; Duchacek, 1990). This can also be seen in the avenues they have used to engage state, and state-like actors, be it through legal means in the Fosen case, or influence lobbying with the European Union. These were inherently legitimising actions that paved the way towards developing their movement towards the institutional character that it appears to have today.

It is worth reiterating here that the choice to meld the Sámi with the state was part of a much longer history of state-engagement. Like any politically engaged group, these conditions have inherently influenced their approach to politics, filtered through their cultural preferences and the strategic choices at hand. One notable result of this history has been an implicit expectation that so long as they continue to engage like states, they will be respected in similar terms. Using the terms of Mörkenstam, they act sovereign in the hopes of being perceived as such (Mörkenstam, 2015). Yet, despite this approach, what has been shown thus far is that since the transition to becoming fully recognised institutional actors, there has been little policy movement outside certain prescribed areas. I have already started this conversation in the previous section, so I think it is worth taking it to its conclusion now.

First, based on the evidence of the three cases, I would argue that states, or the EU for that matter, do not see the Sámi as particularly politically relevant unless they have been forced to through legal or international means (Alfredsson, 1999; Allard & Brännström, 2021; Koivurova, 2006; Lundmark, 2023; Mósesdóttir, 2024). Despite claims to perceive Sámi, or Indigenous, interests as being worthy of protection, there remains clear evidence that what is worth protecting remains limited to certain key rights. The Norwegian TRC makes it clear what these rights are: language, culture and, to some extent, historical preservation (Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen, 2023). Other, thornier topics, such as land rights and economic development, remain in the domain of protestors and legal challenges.

This, I argue, is by design. Baked into the institutionalisation of Sámi politics has been the strengthening of state power and legitimacy through allowing these few, chosen rights, while politely ignoring others (Lindroth & Sinevaara-Niskanen, 2022). From this perspective, it is perhaps for this reason that rights to land and water remain static, sectioning them off from true political power and rights and stuck in never-ending negotiations (Fjellheim, 2023; Lawrence & Mörkenstam, 2016; Mörkenstam, 2019).

Looking outside the scope of this dissertation, the paradox of Indigenous rights through state institutions is not a particularly new finding and is in line with

wider research on Indigenous-state relations (Corntassel, 2021; Ivison, 2020; Lindroth & Sinevaara-Niskanen, 2022; Wolfe, 2006). Rather, this is well-trodden ground in terms of Indigenous political research. As such, it is worth highlighting what this dissertation provides, which is a demonstration of what/how this situation is, and currently remains, a continually negotiated choice made by Sámi political actors who have inarguably benefited but now face the limits of this approach. This is despite decades of political activity occurring through bespoke political institutions, both formed by the Sámi or built for them, at multiple levels of politics. Perhaps more troublingly, we are starting to see the limits of the degree to which institutional power is able to be swayed to further support these rights (NHRI, 2023).

This raises questions of the extent to what extent the current approach of Sámi institutional engagement is working, particularly in the realm of advancing their rights both domestically and on the European Level. Returning to the cases for a moment, Fosen was one case among any similar examples of Sámi rights being tested by state-sanctioned economic priorities (Mörkenstam, 2019; Mósesdóttir, 2024). One does not have to look far to see that though Sámi rights remain enshrined in Norway, that does not always extend to fundamental questions of land and property, even if the examples such as the Finnmark estate provide some contrast (Josefsen, Søreng, & Selle, 2016; Saami Council, 2025).

It is too early to say if this same process, of institutional entanglement and policy circumscription, will take place in the Sámi's engagement with the European Union. Despite this, early indications do not seem favourable. The approach of anchoring their rights claims in an Indigenous, and particularly Arctic, context was a smart political decision, one born of decades of political experience (Chater, 2019). Yet the current political climate makes it difficult to be certain if such normative claims will still hold in the face of a changing Arctic environment (Andreeva & Rottem, 2024). Moreover, the EU itself seems to be reconsidering its own green goals, making the opening for potential Indigenous carve-outs more difficult.

Bringing in the English School for a moment, what is represented is a potential shifting of norms, which weakens the institution of the Sámi as World society actors (Clark, 2007a). The result could be an overall lack of effectiveness in approach, meaning that Sámi could face a similar policy stasis as they see elsewhere. The lack of any action on the part of the EU towards rectifying their current Indigenous rights paradox does point in this direction (Saami Council, 2025). Time will tell if this will be borne out, though.

Put into the wider context of Indigenous political research, the Sámi are often introduced as a representative of a sort of best-case scenario of Indigenous rights through institutional action. This has been on the basis that they have been granted a high degree of institutional buy-in by the states they live in, compared to other Indigenous peoples (Greaves, 2016; Kuokkanen, 2009; Spitzer & Selle, 2021). Given the context of what has been discussed, this calls into question how far institutional approaches to self-determination reach. In engaging on an equal basis with state actors through state-built institutions, particularly on the international level, Sámi actors have placed much of their own power into state hands. The current approach has resulted in stability, yes, but also stagnancy. Rather than achieving greater self-determination through institutions, this approach has instead placed a cap on just how far it can extend.

Conclusion: The Tråante Debate Lives On

This dissertation set out to explore the political structures that have been developed in response to these conditions and how they have developed over time. Throughout, it has become clear that Sámi actors have faced great challenges in overcoming state power imposition (Lantto, 2012a; Minde, 2003a; Sannhets- og forsoningkommissjonen, 2023). To overcome this, they have worked tirelessly to develop the support structures necessary to expand their own potential political power (Kuokkanen, 2009; Somby, 2025). The result of this work has been a long and sustained relationship between the Sámi and the international political world. For a time, this resulted in a virtuous feedback loop, in which new ideas and connections fed into domestic approaches to state-engagement (Crossen, 2014; Minde, 2008b; Somby, 2025). The result of this has been the current state of Sámi political institutions that channel politics today.

This period of formalised political action can be perceived in several ways. On the one hand, it is arguable that this is a moment of consolidation and stability for a people that has faced assimilationist policy and societal marginalisation on a concerted level for more than two centuries (Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2015; Minde, 2003a; Sannhets- og forsoningkommissjonen, 2023). From another perspective, this is a period of political stagnation where state power has once again taken the place of activist mobilisation as the key driver of Sámi political destiny (Josefsen et al., 2015; Lawrence & Mörkenstam, 2016; Mörkenstam, 2019; Selle & Strømsnes, 2023). More generally, Sámi rights protections remain contested across Sápmi, with the interests of mining companies, windfarms and state-

backed renewable projects continuing to take precedence (Kårtveit, 2021; Normann, 2021; Saami Council, 2025).

There is still a lot that continues to be unknown about this formalisation process and the effect it has had on Sámi political engagement. As mentioned throughout, a recent paper has shown that the Norwegian Sámi Parliament hollowed out Sámi society, leaving much of Sámi political power in the hands of the parliament (Selle & Strømsnes, 2023). Similar surveys of the Swedish and Finnish side of Sápmi would be key in mapping to what extent this is true across the region and what it may mean for the future of Sámi political engagement. Moreover, a more concrete study of the Finnish and Swedish evolution of political formalisations would be useful to better explore how this third wave has affected Sámi political engagement outside of the state-mandated structure. More broadly, the Saami Council remains critically under-researched, and its connections with the wider Indigenous world have only recently come into focus (Götze, 2024; Somby, 2025). As such, there is ample room to explore its role in facilitating Indigenous diplomacy, particularly in the global south. Finally, the ongoing relationship between the EU and the Sámi has only been tentatively explored by this dissertation. There is ample evidence that a critical examination of this relationship is needed, and I would welcome a more critical take on the power dynamics underlying our findings.

As I now come to the end of this chapter, I wish to return to a fundamental question raised in 1917 by Mortensen and Renberg: should the basis of Sámi politics be based on engagement with, or within, the state or go their own way (Lantto, 2000, p. 75; Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008; Tveiten, 2020). This question remains a central part of the Sámi political landscape. For the past thirty years, and perhaps longer, Mortensen's approach of engagement has been dominant. Yet there are signs that there are flaws inherent to this approach and, with it, limits on what is possible.

It is difficult to say what happens next. The Sámi, like any other people across the world, face unprecedented challenges from climate change and other fundamental changes to the political world order. However, what can be seen through the research of this dissertation is that there has been a clear formalisation and maturation of Sámi political structures, built by the Sámi themselves to challenge state power. The questions raised during the Tråante conference remain even more relevant today. While Mortensen might have won the argument for now, there is certainly time for Renberg to provide a rebuttal.

Appendix A

Textual Materials

Below are tables depicting the texts used in each article included in this dissertation. The tables are in order of publication. The tables, and the classifications thereof, differ somewhat do to changing methods throughout the process.

Table A1: Article 1 Materials

Document Title	Context and Relevance	Source	Source Type
Conflict and Local Mobilization: The Alta Hydropower Project (Andersen & Middtun 1985)	Academic Article covering Alta five years after the event	Academic Article	Secondary
Alta – kraftkampen som utfordret statens makt (Hjorthol 2006)	Retrospective on Alta and Sámi-Norwegian relations afterwards	Academic Article	Secondary
Who Owns the Land? Norway, the Sámi and the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (Vik/Semb, 2013)	Academic Overview of ILO 169 in the context of the Norwegian constitution and state actions	Academic Article	Secondary
Sámi law and rights in Norway – with a focus on recent developments (Ravna 2020)	Overview of Sámi Law and Rights from the 1990s to 2020	Academic Article	Secondary
Judgment HR-2021-1975-S (Supreme Court of Norway 2021)	The official ruling of the Norwegian Supreme Court on	Norwegian Supreme Court	Primary

	the Fosen Windfarm Project		
Norway wind turbines should be torn down, reindeer herders say (2021)	International News article before Fosen Ruling	Reuters	Primary
Two Norway wind farms lose licence in landmark ruling over indigenous rights (2021)	International News article following the Fosen Ruling	Reuters	Primary
The Fosen Case and the Protection of Sámi Culture in Norway Pursuant to Article 27 ICCPR (Ravna 2023)	Academic reaction to the Fosen Ruling	Academic Article	Secondary
500 dager med menneskerettighetsbrudd: vi okkuperer Olje- og Energidepartementet (Natur og Ungdom 2023)	Activist coverage of their occupation of Norwegian government offices and demands for action on the Fosen ruling	Natur och Ungdom (Activist Organisation)	Primary
About the wind farms on Fosen and the Supreme Court Judgement (NHRI 2023)	Overview of the Fosen judgement, the resultant protests and the stakes for Sámi reindeer herders	NHRI (Norwegian Human Rights Institute)	Secondary
Én av to mener Fosen-anlegget bør stoppes (Molde/Mudenia 2023)	Coverage of Fosen Events and Response from locals	NRK (Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation)	Primary
Advokat: – Staten har medvirket til å gjøre samer til «skyteskiver»	Coverage of Norwegian	NRK	Primary

(Gaino Buljo 2023)	government response to Fosen protests		
Aktivister er klare for å aksjonere på nytt i Fosen-saken (Grimstad et al 2023)	Coverage of Fosen Protests	NRK	Primary
Tviler på politiets maktbruk på Fosen (Utsi 2023)	Coverage of Norwegian government response to Fosen protests	NRK	Primary
Sannhet og forsoning - grunnlag for et oppgjør med fornorskingspolitikkk og urett mot samer, kvener / norskfinner og skogfinner (Sannhets- og forsoning kommisjonen 2023)	Norwegian Truth and Reconciliation Report	Norwegian Government	Secondary

Table A2: Article 2 General Materials

Document Title	Context and Relevance	Source
The Lapps today: in Finland, Norway, and Sweden Part 1 (1960)	Compilation of records from the first two Sámi conferences, held in 1953 and 1956 respectively, translated into English on behalf of the Nordic Saami Council with commentary from outside academics	Nordic Saami Council, <i>Bibliothèque Arctique et Antarctique</i>
The Lapps to-day: in Finland, Norway, and Sweden Part 2 (1969)	Compilation of records from the next three Sámi conferences, held in 1959, 1965 and 1968 respectively, translated into English on behalf of the Nordic Saami Council with commentary from Karl Nickul	Nordic Saami Council, <i>Bibliothèque Arctique et Antarctique</i>

Saami Council 50 Years (2002)	First, and so far, the only official document from the Saami Council to present the history of the organisation from its founding until 2000	Saami Council
Sámi Conference Proceedings (15 documents in total, 1953-2004)	Proceedings and declarations were published as part of each Sámi conference since its foundation. For the full list of documents, see next table.	(Nordic) Saami Council

Table A3: Sámi Conference Proceedings

Title of Document (Untranslated)	Conference Number	Location of Conference in English	Year of Conference
Sámiid dilit: Föredrag vid Den nordisak samekonferensen	1	Jokkmokk	1953
Berättelse över nordiska samekonfensen i Karasjok den 16-18 augusti 1956	2	Karasjok	1956
<i>Document Unavailable</i>	3	Inari	1959
<i>Document Unavailable</i>	4	Kiruna	1962
Femte nordiska samekonferensen i Tana den 30 juni-3 juli 1965	5	Tana	1965
Sjätte nordiska samekonfensen i Hetta den 16-19 augusti 1968	6	Hetta	1968
Sámiid Kulturpolitiikalaš prográm'ma - dák'kehuvvun Davvikiriikaid VII sábmelaškonferansas Váččiris 11. – 14.8.1971	7	Gällivare	1971
Sámiid 8. Konferan'sa Snåsa 26-28.6.1974	8	Snåsa	1974
Samernas IX Konferens 1976	9	Inari	1976
Samernas X Konferens Arjeplog 20-22.6.1978	10	Arjeplog	1978
Samernas XI Konferens Tromsö 16.-19.6.1980	11	Tromsö	1980

Samernas XII Konferens Utsjoki 11.-14.8.1983	12	Utsjoki	1983
<i>Document Unavailable</i>	13	Åre	1986
Sámiid 14. Konferensa Leavdnja 4-6.8.1989	14	Lakselv	1989
Sámiid 15. Konfereansa Hesseset 15.-17.6.1992	15	Helsinki	1992
Samekonferansen i Murmansk 1996 – deklarasjon	16	Murmansk	1996
Samekonferansen i Kiruna, 28.30-september, 2000 – deklarasjon	17	Kiruna	2000
Honingsvåg-deklarasjonen	18	Honingsvåg	2004

Table A4: Article 3 Materials

Title of Document	Context and Relevance	Source Type
Protocol No. 3 - on the Sámi people (1994)	Protocol included as part of Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish Assession negotiations to protect Sámi right to herd reindeer across borders, as well as provisions for cultural protection	EU Law
Commission Working Document - on support for indigenous peoples in the development co-operation of the Community and the Member States (1998)	First EU document designed to support work with Indigenous peoples in external countries. Basis for all further policies relating to EU-external Indigenous relations	Commission of the European Communities
Report from the Commission to the Council - Review of progress of working with indigenous peoples (2002)	Follow-up to the 1998 working document. Strengthened language around Indigenous rights, as well as included a reference to consultation with Indigenous actors, including the Saami Council	Commission of the European Communities
Communication From the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council - The European Union and the Arctic Region (2008)	First EU Arctic communication directed at developing an Arctic strategy. Would guide EU Arctic decision-making until revision in 2016	European Commission
An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic (2016)	The second EU Arctic communication, directed at developing an Arctic strategy and stood as the main Arctic policy document until 2021	European Commission

Joint Staff Working Document - Implementing EU External Policy on Indigenous Peoples (2016)	Revision of the earlier working document on external Indigenous policy	European Commission
The European Green Deal (2019)	Landmark series of policies designed to reshape EU policy towards green energy.	European Commission
The Sámi Arctic Strategy (2020)	First Sámi-specific Arctic strategy, designed by the Saami Council to advocate on behalf of their people	Saami Council
New EU Forest Strategy for 2030 (2021)	An EU strategy has been developed to bring the line land use of forests to the goals of the EU Green Deal	European Commission
A stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic (2021)	Third and most recent EU communication directed at developing an Arctic strategy.	European Commission
Sápmi-EU Strategy (2022)	First Sámi-specific strategy designed to engage with the European Union	Saami Council
Critical Raw Materials Act (2023/2024)	Regulation designed to secure the supply of critical raw materials to EU member states, with a clear focus on the expansion of the EU's domestic capacities to extract, process, and recycle raw materials	European Parliament, Council of the European Union

Appendix B

Timelines

Depicted below are two reconstructed timelines of events notable in developing the current state of Sami politics. The first relates to the development of the Saami Council, from its foundation to 2000, which is an adaption of Lief Rantala's work. The second is a timeline of the development of relations between Sami organisations, primarily the Saami Council, and bodies representing the European Union. This was developed as part of the creation of Article 1 and the two supplemental articles.

Table B1: (Nordic) Saami Council History (1952 to 2000)

Timeline of the Saami Council (1952-2000)	
1952	<i>Duodji</i> Conference in Stockholm. Talks begin regarding formal Saami Conferences. Nordic Council Founded.
1953	First Sámi Conference held in Jokkmokk, Sweden.
1956	Second Sámi Conference held in Karasjok, Norway. Nordic Saami Council Founded.
1959	Third Sámi Conference held in Anare/Inari, Finland.
1962	Fourth Sámi Conference held in Giron/Kiruna, Sweden.
1965	Fifth Sámi Conference held in Tana, Sweden.
1968	Sixth Sámi Conference held Hetta, Finland. Last Conference to see non-Sámi attendance majority.
1971	Seventh Sámi Conference held in Gällivare, Sweden.
1973	First International Indigenous Meeting hosted by International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) in Copenhagen, Denmark.
1974	Eighth Sámi Conference held in Snåsa, Norway. Finnish Sámi Parliament is formed.

1975	First World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) General Assembly held in Port Alberni, Canada.
1976	Ninth Sámi Conference held in Inari, Finland. Nordic Saami Council officially joins WCIP.
1977	Second WCIP General Assembly hosted by the Nordic Saami Council held in Giron/Kiruna Sweden.
1978	Tenth Sámi Conference held in Arjeplog, Sweden.
1980	Eleventh Sámi Conference held in Tromsø, Norway. The Nordic Saami Council restructured to include a permanent, rotating president.
1981	3rd WCIP General Assembly held in Canberra, Australia.
1983	Twelfth Sámi Conference held in Utsjoki, Finland.
1984	Saami Council opens a bureau on behalf of WCIP in Geneva Switzerland. Fourth WCIP General Assembly held in Panama City, Panama.
1986	Thirteenth Sámi Conference held in Åre, Sweden. Sámi Flag, National Anthem adopted.
1987	Fifth WCIP General Assembly held in Lima, Peru. WCIP bureau in Geneva closed.
1989	Fourteenth Sámi Conference in Lakselv, Norway. Nordic Saami Council gains NGO roster status at United Nations. Norwegian Sámi Parliament Founded.
1990	Sixth WCIP General Assembly held in Tromsø, Norway. Talks regarding the formation of the Arctic Council begin.
1992	Fifteenth Sámi Conference held in Helsinki, Finland.

	Nordic Saami Council renamed to Saami Council following reunification with Russian Sámi.
1993	Seventh WCIP General Assembly held in Guatamala City, Guatamala. Swedish Sámi Parliament Founded.
1996	Sixteenth Sámi Conference held in Murmansk, Russia. WCIP officially disbands. Arctic Council founded in Ottawa, Canada.
1997	Sámi Parliamentary Council founded after meeting between Saami Council and Nordic Sámi Parliaments
2000	Seventeenth Sámi Conference held in Kiruna, Sweden. UNESCO appoints the Indigenous Peoples Forum.

Table B2: Sámi-EU Relations History(1989 to 2023)

Timeline of Sámi-EU Relations (1989-2023)	
1989	Norwegian Sámi Parliament Established
1993	Finland, Sweden, Austria and later Norway begin Accession Negotiations. Parties from Sámi community on all three states included in negotiations through Saami Council and newly established Sámi Parliaments Swedish Sámi Parliament Established
1994	Accession approved via referendum in Austria, Finland and Sweden, fails in Norway
1995	Finland, Sweden and Austria officially join the European Union
1997	Following Meeting in Luxumbourg, EU begins to prioritise external Indigenous rights in international trade agreements

1998	European Commission publishes working document titled <i>On support for indigenous peoples in the development co-operation of the Community and the Member States</i>
2000	At meeting in Kiruna, Saami Council begins call for the establishment of internal Indigenous rights within the European Union. This would become a stated goal of the organisation moving forward
2002	EU working document on external Indigenous Rights revised. Saami Council cited as working in direct collaboration with European Commission
2004	At meeting in Honningsvåg Saami Council continues called for internal EU Indigenous Rights regime
2007	Russia plants national flag on bottom of Arctic Ocean as a symbolic gesture of ownership European Union officially adopts the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)
2008	European Commission and High Representative of the European Union present paper calling for a joint Arctic Strategy. European Union begins to investigate joining Arctic Council as a permanent observer
2009	Following years of debates European Union effectively bans seal products coming into common market. Inuit cash economy collapses. As a direct result EU is barred becoming Arctic Council permanent observer
2010	First European Union Arctic Dialog begins on an ad hoc basis. Possibility of Indigenous inclusion raised for first time
2011	European Parliament passes resolution calling for the development of a joint Arctic
2013	EU Arctic Forum expands to include officially include Indigenous representatives for the first time.
2014	Ukraine Euromaidan crisis erupts, Russia subsequently invades Crimea.
2016	EU publishes joint Arctic policy titled <i>An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic</i>

	EU concurrently publishes <i>Joint Staff Working Document - Implementing EU External Policy on Indigenous Peoples</i>
2019	European Union Green Deal is introduced Saami Council founds EU Unit
2020	Several key EU Green Deal policy initiatives brought online including the 2030 Climate Target Plan, the European Climate Pact, and several others Saami Council publishes <i>The Sámi Arctic Strategy</i>
2021	EU publishes revised joint Arctic policy titled <i>A stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable, and prosperous Arctic</i>
2022	Russia launches widescale invasion of Ukraine. Arctic Council activities suspended as a result Saami Council hosts EU-Sámi week in Brussels, first such outreach event to date Saami Council publishes <i>Sápmi-EU Strategy</i>
2023	EU introduces Critical Raw Materials Act

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