BEING IN THE FRONTLINE OF A SÁMI CULTURE AND A PRIVATE BUSINESS: CROSS-BORDER REINDEER HERDING IN NORTHERN NORWAY AND SWEDEN

Peter Koch and Judith Miggelbrink

Abstract

This article investigates a conflict that loomed over the mutual use of pastures on either side of the border by various Sámi groups during the last decade. On the basis of a critical reading of Foucault, we analyse the identifications connected to different kinds of spaces that come up in the mediation of this conflict. Surprisingly, the notion of belonging to an indigenous people plays only a very limited role in this conflict. Being a Sámi and a state citizen turns out to be more important. Reindeer pastures are perceived as lands, bounded spaces, and as part of the state space, since reindeer herding is a ‘nationalised’ business. However, pastures as concrete places in themselves have not emerged as an important aspect of this conflict.

Keywords: Sámi reindeer herding, pasture, state border, space, identification

Introduction

The article aims to analyse a recent conflict concerning the mutual use of summer and winter pastures on the Norwegian and Swedish state territory by Sámi reindeer herders and herding cooperatives. The conflict can be briefly sketched as a struggle for the right to use land for pasture and arises between various groups of Sámi reindeer herders from both sides of the border who need adequate pasture. As the state border is the separating line not only between grazing areas but also between different territories with different regulations and jurisdictions etc., state authorities are important actors even though they cannot automatically be addressed as parties to the conflict. Although there have been some tense situations, this conflict should rather be characterised as a sequence of negotiations — in line with ordinarily institutional procedures that are typical in consolidated constitutional democracies — and their failure as described below.

The cause of the conflict — scarcity of adequate pasture and the expiry in 2005 of the 1972 border convention, a bilateral agreement on how pastures should be shared between herding groups from both countries — can be easily identified. However, the way different groups legitimise their claims and approach a solution to the conflict is rather complex. It touches questions of herders’ self-
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understanding as entrepreneurs, as members of a reindeer herding group and as belonging to the transboundary Sámi community or an indigenous people while at the same time being state citizens. It also raises the question of how different identities come to the fore and are used as strategic means towards certain ends.

The article has its theoretical roots in a critical reading of Foucault’s lectures on population, territory and security and sets out to show how different concepts of space and different modes of space production are an implicit or explicit part of the conflict. The article will answer two questions: How are different identities and spatialities – both produced within the social fabric – currently used on the ground? And how far is indigeneity an important or successful concept?

The case study of cross-border use of summer and winter pastures by Swedish and Norwegian Sámi groups illuminates the roles that various definitions of being Sámi – incorporated by the present day national states – play in conflicts and how they are related to different forms of spatiality. These definitions are connected to notions of territoriality and indigeneity that are based on specific social forms of organisation and economic practices that are in line with a (post)nomadic livelihood – reindeer herding. The competing Norwegian and Swedish Sámi groups claim that the states are guarantors of their business interests as they refer to their indigenous right to engage in and make a living from reindeer husbandry.

This article makes two assumptions. The first is that the ways ‘to characterize oneself, to locate oneself vis-à-vis others, to situate oneself in a narrative, to place oneself in a category – in a number of different contexts’ (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 14) play a role in the conflict over the negotiation of pasture regulation. Categories that may be expected to arise include, for example, ‘Sámi’, ‘reindeer herder’, ‘entrepreneur’, ‘indigenous entrepreneur’, ‘citizen of a state’, ‘member of an indigenous people’, etc. Defining which one is of practical relevance is, we assume, a matter of neither arbitrary nor subjective choice in a narrow sense. Rather, it will involve investigating the ways in which a specific, relatively stable structure privileges certain actors, identities, strategies and space-time horizons while marginalising others; these differing advantages are then assumed by individual and collective actors in strategic analyses related to practical decision-making (Jessop 2007: 257). This means that we are talking about the strategic use of ascribed identifications. The second assumption is that at least some of the self-descriptions come along with certain spatialities and, vice versa, that space is a medium that influences the process of forming self-understandings. The incorporation of people into a state population via incorporation of their pastures and living places into a national territory is an obvious example of this. The incorporation into the specific ‘bounded space’ of the nation-state goes along with the subjection of the people to sovereignty, which shapes peoples’ political existence as citizens. This raises the question of how far social and political practices (and the spatialities they produce and are lived in) are regulated and organised, superimposed and transformed by state intervention.
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Starting with a brief summary of the history of border regulations between the Swedish and Norwegian states, some background information will be presented on how borders and reindeer migration routes intersect and how this has been regulated by state conventions. As our focus is on the role various identities and spatialities play in the conflict between the points of view of reindeer herders organised in reindeer herding cooperatives, i.e. samebyar in Sweden or reinfedtstrikter in Norway. We shall sketch out some theoretical considerations on how identification might be conceived. In order to do this, we briefly refer to Michel Foucault’s concept of governmentality, from which we take the idea of a nexus between power technologies aimed at the making of subjects, and the mediating role of space. On the basis of this theoretical consideration we develop the idea of three kinds of space to address the subject of ‘pastures’: land, state space, and place. The empirical findings will show how far reindeer herding is perceived as a widely ‘nationalised’ economic practice that makes it necessary for herders to deal with and to constantly switch between different identification options.

Background of the Conflict: Herding Cycles, Pastures and the Border

Traditional Sámi Herding Cycles and Pastures

Sámi reindeer herding is a migratory pastoral means of livelihood with seasonal cycles from summer pastures on the coast over the mountains to winter pastures in forested areas. One can identify four traditional patterns of reindeer migration in northern Scandinavia (Figure 1). The first (A) is a rather stationary kind of herding located on the coasts of islands and peninsulas, with summer pastures in the central mountainous areas and winter pastures in the forested valleys and by the beaches. The second (B) is a short-distance migration between summer pastures in the mountainous inland and winter pastures with lichen vegetation on the peninsulas. The third pattern (C) consists of migration from summer pastures on the inland mountains to winter pastures in forest areas. The fourth migratory pattern (D) is entirely located in a particular forest area with both summer and winter pastures (Manker 1953; Storm 2009: 17).

The Creation of the State Border and the Lapp Codicil

In 1751, the states of Norway and Sweden established their mutual national border, which passes through the traditional Sámi reindeer herding area, divides its pasture lands and crosses migratory routes. The Treaty of Frederikshögh, which ended the Great Northern War between Denmark-Norway and Sweden-Finland in 1720, by and large stipulates that a border should be established between these two states from Trøndelag northwards (Simowitsch 2010: 40; Storm 2009: 19). The absence of a border led to conflicts over control in the northern areas and
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Figure 1. Scheme of traditional Sámi migration cycles and reindeer pastures

Source: Based on Storm (2009: 18 referring to Kalstad, 1982 and Ingold, 1980).

it was regarded as necessary to determine who controlled which parts of the land that was perceived as *terra nullius*. In 1751, the states finally compromised over the course of the border in the Treaty of Stømstad (Mazzullo 2009: 177); it would essentially follow the inner Scandinavian mountain range and lakes, thereby crossing traditional Sámi reindeer migration routes.

With the creation of the border the states were not concerned about Sámi boundaries but did consider the Sámi’s need for grazing lands on either sides of the border (Marainen 1984: 9). They therefore added the so-called Lapp Codicil (*Lappokodisillen*) to the Treaty of Stømstad, which is often seen as the Sámi *magna carta* (Forrest 2002: 257; Karpri 2001: 398; Marainen 1984: 9). This was the first treaty by which the states affirmed the Sámi’s strong indigenous rights, meaning that the border would not have any effect on Sámi communities, as it permitted “the Sami to continue seasonal migration over the national border” (Karpri 2001: 399). Besides providing for free movement across the border and pastoral rights, the Lapp Codicil also regulates the Sámi’s state citizenship, their taxation by one state only, their neutrality in case of war, and Sámi self-determination and self-jurisdiction (ibid.).

Closure of the Russian Borders and Colonisation

The border situation changed during the nineteenth century when Finland came under Russian rule in 1809 and Norway formed a personal union with Sweden in 1815. A new border was created between Norway and Russia in 1826 and Russia sought to close its borders. In his book *Begrav mitt hjärta vid Udjajaure*,

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Lars Norberg (Lasse 2007) describes well what took place at that time. Russia gave consideration to Sámi seasonal migration and proposed to Norway that the borders should be redrawn. Norway, and then Sweden, rejected this demand for reasons of their military and security interests. Russia then closed its borders with Norway in 1852 (Karppi 2001: 399; Marainen 1984: 11), which caused the loss of winter grazing lands for the Sámi reindeer herders from Finmark and summer grazing lands for the Sámi herders from Finnish Lapland, and thus caused overgrazing. Some Sámi groups therefore decided to leave their ancestral areas. It is documented that seventy families moved into the Karesuando area and thus became Swedish citizens in order to ensure their pastoral rights since the closure of the border only affected Norwegian citizens (ibid.). Consequently Russia decided in 1889 to close the Finnish border with Sweden too (Lasse 2007: 39; Lehtola 2002: 191) and so make seasonal migrations impossible. At this point the Finmark Sámi were in need of new winter grazing lands and more families moved into the Karesuando area, which had its summer pastures in Troms and winter pastures in the Swedish forest areas (Marainen 1984: 12). Pressure on the grazing lands increased and ever more Sámi families moved further south. According to Lasse (2007: 40), some of these families were dislocated even further south by the state until the mid-twentieth century.

Besides the effects of the borders on Sámi reindeer herding, colonisation also increased the pressure on this area. In Norway, Norwegian sedentary peasants were settled in the border region and started farming. The Norwegian government wanted by this means both to ensure control over the northern state territory and to reduce Norwegian emigration to north America. On the Swedish side, colonisation started from the coast and spread inland. As early as 1766 Sweden had already created the border of Lapland (Lappmarksgränsen), and granted the Sámi exclusive rights within Lapland, which is according to Marainen (1984: 9) comparable with a Native American reservation. This did not stop colonisation and so a new border (Oddningsgränsen) was introduced in 1867, which made any kind of cultivation in the remaining part of Lapland impossible (see Figure 2).

However, all these measures could not solve the problems of overgrazing caused by the closures of the Norwegian and Swedish borders with Russia and colonisation. In 1883, Norway and Sweden introduced the Common Lapp Law (Selleslappeloven), which broadly regulated Sámi cross-border reindeer herding in more detail than the Lapp Codicil (Prestbakmo 2007: 57). The reindeer herding area was divided into herding districts and grazing times were defined. The Common Lapp Law is regarded as being the first convention on Sámi cross-border reindeer herding between the two countries.

Independence of Norway and Border Conventions

With the resolution of the Swedish-Norwegian union and then full Norwegian independence in 1905, the border conventions from 1919 and 1972 became more and more concrete and thus led to a loss of extensive grazing lands for the
Swedish-Sámi reindeer herders. The 1919 convention, which came into force in 1923, reduced the grazing lands for Swedish reindeer herders from 17,000 square kilometres to 10,933 square kilometres. The areas lost are situated predominantly on the most remote islands and peninsulas in Troms. The remaining lands began to suffer from overgrazing. The Swedish-Sámi groups were allowed to migrate to the herding area from 1 May with a maximum of sixteen thousand reindeer and from 15 June till 1 October with a maximum of thirty-nine thousand (Prestbakmo 2007: 64). In 1949, this convention was adjusted since the Swedish herding groups had stopped using pastures on the other peninsulas and some inland areas as well, which reduced the pasture land again to 8,053 square kilometres. In these areas the herding groups encountered difficulties with the seasonal migration because of newly settled farmers and the interruption of some migration routes (Prestbakmo 2007: 65). The 1972 convention further reduced the pasture grounds to 3,150 square kilometres and the pasture season from 1 May to 15 September. This meant that the Saarivuoma herding group in particular lost their best summer pastures, even though they had had their pastoral rights confirmed by the Norwegian Supreme Court in 1968 for the Altevatn area. After many complaints,
long discussions and hard negotiations, the Swedish groups regained 724 square kilometres of their areas in 1985 (Prestbakmo 2007: 67, 70, 78). Altogether, the summer pasture area decreased from 17,000 square kilometres before 1923 to 3,834 square kilometres in 1985 for the four most northern Swedish reindeer-herding cooperatives (ibid.: 71). In the meantime, especially during the 1950s and 1960s, new Sámi groups were resettled or invited by the Norwegian government to Troms in order to minimise overgrazing in Finnmark. These groups started herding their reindeer in the now unused grazing lands, but they lacked the necessary winter pastures. In 1963, the Norwegian reindeer-herding districts were rearranged in Troms, and the convention area, which is used as summer pasture by Swedish reindeer-herding groups, was opened to Norwegian herders as winter pasture. Norwegian reindeer herders also received some winter pastures in Sweden through the 1972 convention. From this point in time these grazing lands were used both as summer and winter pastures and so the vegetation could not fully recover.

Negotiation of a New Border Convention 1997–2010

Consequently there was a need of a new border convention. In 1997, a Finnish-led commission was established to investigate in the current conditions for cross-border reindeer herding in Norway and Sweden. In its final report (Svensk-Norska Renbeteskommissionen 2001) the commission presented a ready-made proposal for a new convention, which, however, was not implemented. It confirmed the right to cross-border reindeer herding for Sámi groups from either side of the border and thus underlined the importance of reindeer herding for the Sámi culture. However, Sámi groups from both sides of the border were unsatisfied with the proposal and so the Norwegian and Swedish governments failed to finalise a convention. In Norway, the 1972 convention was unilaterally extended while in Sweden the Lapp Codicil came into force in 2005 (Prestbakmo 2007: 76). This created an unclear legal situation which prevented Norwegian Sámi herding in Sweden and resulted in major conflicts with Swedish herding in Norway since the Swedish herders started to use summer pastures that were used by Norwegian herders (Gruda 2007). Norwegian herders were forced to feed their reindeer with pellets, which the Sámi regard as a non-traditional method.6

In 2010, the governments finally reached a compromise and formulated a new convention, which is still going through the legislative process. It is predominantly based on the commission report and thus does not make statements about the traditional rights of any herding group. It provides for two new bilateral authorities to supervise cross-border reindeer herding, enables herding groups to reach their own agreements, and thus guarantees the right of the groups to challenge government decisions concerning pastoral districts and times in specific cases in court in the relevant country (2010 Convention).
Reindeer Herding: A Political Field

In both countries, several institutions are involved in the management of reindeer herding. In Norway and Sweden this primary sector business is supervised by the ministries of agriculture on the government level. Subordinate to the ministries there are competent state authorities, namely the reindeer herding administration (reindriftsforvaltning) in Norway and the county administrative board of the County of Norrbotten (Länsstyrelsen i Norrbottens län) in Sweden. The kingdom-wide reindriftsforvaltning, located in Alta, is further subdivided into regional branches, while the länsstyrelse as a regional state authority administers reindeer herding also in areas of Sweden that are situated outside the county of Norrbotten. Since 2005, the länsstyrelse has only been in charge of land use rights and manages conflicts between reindeer herding and the activities of other interest groups such as industries and private land owners.

On the other hand, the Sámi parliament in Sweden (Sametinget) is in charge of all internal issues, while its Norwegian counterpart, also called Sametinget, is only an advisory body that the Norwegian government is requested to consult on any issue that may affect the Sámi community in Norway. On a local level, there are reindeer herding cooperatives: reindeer herding districts (reinbetedistrikter) in Norway, and Sámi villages (sambyar) in Sweden. There are some specific differences concerning the organisation of these cooperatives that will not be presented in detail here. Common to both is the fact that the membership is made up of individual reindeer herders with their own herding businesses who organise themselves into subgroups. Most of these cooperatives are members of the reindeer herding associations of their respective countries: the Norske Reindsamers Landsforbund in Norway and the Svenska Samernas Riksförbund in Sweden.

The Norwegian and Swedish ministries of foreign affairs are also involved in issues concerning cross-border reindeer herding, since this requires bilateral contracts, i.e., border conventions. At this point it should be mentioned that the Norwegian and Swedish governments are accustomed to mandating a bilateral commission to investigate the actual pastoral conditions before negotiating a new border convention. These commissions are usually chaired by a neutral party, namely the Danish or Finnish ministry of foreign affairs.

Fieldwork and Interviews

The conflict on cross-border reindeer herding and the negotiation of a new border convention cast its shadow over all the reindeer herding areas along the Norwegian-Swedish border and focused particular attention on those convention areas that the four most northern samebyar and five affected reinbetedistrikter have a stake in (see Figure 2). These pastoral areas are mostly situated in the County of Troms (Troms fylke) and the Municipality of Kiruna (Kiruna
Kommun), which is part of the County of Norrbotten (Norrbottens län). The authors travelled in the region under consideration as well as visiting the capital cities, Oslo and Stockholm, and even Helsinki, several times from November 2008 to March 2011.

Two kinds of interview were conducted in the framework of the case study on cross-border reindeer herding. In a first stage, in summer 2009, the authors conducted open interviews with reindeer herders from one reinheitsdistrikt and three samebyar, and servants from the Norwegian reindeer herding administration in Troms, the Swedish ministry of agriculture and the Norwegian ministry of foreign affairs. The interviews, eight in total, were intended to provide the researchers with some first-hand information.

In a later stage, in spring and autumn 2010, the authors conducted more enhanced and semi-structured interviews, a total of fourteen, in spring 2010 (in Troms and Norrbotten) and autumn 2010 (in Helsinki, Stockholm and Oslo). The questionnaire incorporated theoretical considerations mainly based on Foucault and was composed of six independent question blocks that provided guiding questions on Sámi ethnicity, indigeneity and territoriality, reindeer herding from a cultural and a business point of view, customary law and land rights, the border and border conventions.

This time the authors interviewed individuals from three reinheitsdistriktar, four samebyar, the county administrative board (Länstyrelsen) of the County of Norrbotten, the Norwegian and Swedish ministries of agriculture, the Swedish and Finnish ministries of foreign affairs, the Sámi parliament in Sweden (Sametinget), and the Swedish association of Sámi reindeer herders (Svenska Samernas Riksförbund). Some reindeer herders from two reinheitsdistriktar and the Norwegian association of reindeer herders (Norske Reindriftsamers Landsforbund) were not willing to meet us for reasons they did not disclose, and one Norwegian diplomat could not be reached. Interviews were held in various places, such as the interviewee’s home or office, the interviewer’s hotel room, a restaurant, café or library, or at an actual pasture or car park, and usually lasted from one-and-a-half to four hours. The interviews were predominantly conducted in English, although some interviewees may have changed language during the interview, and only a very few interviews were conducted entirely in either Norwegian or Swedish.

Identification and Spaces: Some Theoretical Considerations

Subjectivity and Identification

This conflict, like any other, can be analysed from various points of view. As we are especially interested in the role various definitions of being Sámi play in conflicts and how they are related to different forms of spatiality, we focus on the nexus between self-definition and space(s). This needs some brief theoretical
elucidation to explain the starting point from which we are going to approach the empirical material presented in the following section.

We argue that neither subject positions, i.e., positions from where subjects are able to speak, nor spaces are simply given but are produced through multiple practices, projects and programmes that contribute to the formation of the self and the other and relations between them as Foucault, for example, has discussed in his *History of Governmentality* (Foucault 2003 [1977–8], 2008 [1978–9]). He develops the idea that there are certain power mechanisms whose purpose is the formation of the modern subject and its relations to others. This does not lead to the emergence of specific distinct identities but to subject positions from where subjects can be invoked and from where they can speak and act. Foucault’s concept need not be discussed in detail here, but it is noteworthy that it enables us to analyse diverse power technologies through which ‘actors’ are governed – including nomadic and postnomadic people. Morton, who recently applied the governmentality approach to the study of pastoral development, argues that the way ‘various marginalized groups within a society’ (Morton 2010: 20), such as ‘the sick, the mad and prisoners’ (ibid.), are studied by Foucault could be applied to ‘all groups that are not simply poor or powerless, but also defined by society as “other”, and therefore requiring exceptional technologies of government’ (ibid.).

This perspective focuses on discourses and practices of identification of certain subjectivities and how this goes along with techniques for governing them, including techniques of spatial separation, exclusion and marginalisation, as well as techniques of identification and transformation of the individual. Even though the shaping of the modern subject is at the centre of Foucault’s work and his analysis starts from the margins of the emerging modern society, his work raises the question not only of how actors are shaped but also of how a population as a whole is governed and how relations are built up between the population and individuals as well as between the population and particular groups.

However, on the ground, when it comes to empirical research, the concept of subject position has to be translated into a tool that enables the researcher to deal with actors’ articulations. For this purpose, we refer to a notion of self-understanding, a term that enables us to come to grips with categories of everyday use and experience or, as Brubaker and Cooper referring to Bourdieu put it, ‘categories of practice’ (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 4) used by social actors. This means that we aim to identify articulations or, to be more precise, ‘[p]articular acts of identification and categorization performed by particular identifiers and categorizers’ (ibid.: 17) of what someone claims to be or by which group belonging is expressed. In other words, we may observe that people are claiming they belong to a certain group or insisting on a particular self-description and this claim and insistence may be regarded as important for explaining, legitimising and rationalising their activities, expectations and demands. Focusing analytically on self-identification and self-description instead of using identity as an analytical concept is advantageous since it ‘lacks the reifying connotations of
“identity” (ibid.: 18) and thereby avoids the problematic implications of that term. However, this is not to deny that, in everyday practice, identifications are perceived as identities, or that ‘identity’ is also subject to politics and, even more, ‘a key term in the vernacular idiom of contemporary politics’ (ibid.: 2). On the contrary, it extends the focus to include more strategic and contextualised uses of identification, which may become necessary in situations, such as conflicts, that are structured and driven by multiple interests, aims and institutions. To concentrate methodologically on a concept of self-understanding is not to deny that everyday practices may be interspersed with strong notions of identity, or that reified identity claims may prove to be useful and potentially helpful in certain limited contexts and for certain ends. Self-understandings may be an outcome of an underlying ‘strong’ identity and may be assumed to be essentialist in nature by those who hold fast to them, while other self-understandings may be regarded as transitory, situational and contextual.

With regard to the methods we chose, it must be taken into account that interviews necessarily create situations in which interviewee and interviewer interact, and articulations may be provoked, sharpened or repressed in ways and for reasons that are hard to control. As a consequence, we can never be entirely sure that self-understandings expressed during an interview give any insight into how action was shaped at the time it happened on the ground or whether they are ex–post rationalisations that reshape events in a way that is regarded as intelligible or appropriate at a later time.

What Kind of Space: Land, State Space or Place?
The question of how identifications and spaces are intertwined refers to a body of theory that discusses the relevance of space as medium, environment and means, tool and intermediate stage in powerfully structured social practices and processes, as Lefebvre put it (Lefebvre 1972: 81). Radical geographers in particular, such as Harvey (1993), have emphasised that it is not space per se that is relevant, but the different ways in which it is appropriated in various, especially economic and political, practices. The notion that derives from this field of discussion is that space is produced as well as productive. This perspective can be enriched by a reading of Foucault insofar as he does not restrict the produced and productive space to the political-economic sphere, but develops ideas on spaces – different kinds of spaces – that mediate the entire complex of governance. Certain forms of governance come along and are realised through different kinds of spaces.

Foucault discusses the question of governance by analysing the various ways in which power is exercised in modern societies. The different power technologies he identifies – juridical power, disciplinary power and security – are directed towards the subject and its evolution. They all treat space in a certain way and thus create certain spaces and work through them. Therefore, Foucault concludes, ‘problems of space are equally common’ (Foucault 2003 [1977–8]: 26) to all power technologies. All the individual and collective forms of control
that, for example, comprise the disciplinary production of the individual, 'the disciplinary treatment of the multiplicities' (ibid.: 32), need and produce a space that mediates the construction and organisation of a multiplicity of individuals 'according to the triple principle of hierarchy, precise communication of relations of power, and functional effects specific to this distribution, for example, ensuring trade, housing, and so on' (ibid.). This asks for a functionality that can be realised through architecture, physical planning and boundary drawing.

While the effects of this kind of 'produced and productive space' unfold in the field of controlling and disciplining individuals, there are, according to Foucault, other spatial concepts that do not directly aim at the subject but at the problems that arise in the context of the governing of a population. Here, space has a structuring function of ensuring what Foucault calls 'circulation' (ibid.: 29, 51) - processes of exchange that meet basic needs within a society. The principle at work is security: '[S]ecurity,' as Foucault puts it, 'will try to plan a milieu in terms of events or series of events or possible elements, of series that will have to be regulated within a multivalent and transformable framework' (ibid.: 35). Security needs spatial mediation just as the disciplinary mechanism does, but in a completely different way. The space of security, the milieu, does not work towards individualisation but towards the organisation of certain conditions to prevent epidemic diseases or hunger riots (those are Foucault's main themes) or, in a more general sense, to enhance welfare. The milieu is the effect of calculation and combination of 'natural givens - rivers, marshes, hills - and a set of artificial givens - an agglomeration of individuals, of houses, etcetera' (ibid.). The milieu, or the logic of security - to which milieu is the spatial complement, follows a relational spatial rationality, as it is not the physical element itself that is of interest but the causalities in which it is included. This also means that a certain physical 'given' may serve different functions, depending on whether it mediates disciplining strategies or security.

From this brief discussion of how space is conceptualised in Foucault's history of governmentality we take the idea that identification and spaces are closely intertwined, and that this should be addressed by asking how various spaces mediate the way subjects find themselves in certain categories and the way they deal with practices of classification, and by asking how relations are built based on spatial means. The 'physical given' that is central to the conflict is the pasture, which will be discussed in what follows under three headings: land, state space and place.

Land

It is obvious, that the notion of land is relevant as the conflict is about a spatially bounded resource, the pasture, which is a main prerequisite for production and productivity. Pasture, especially winter pasture, is a presupposition of reindeer herding and (nomadic) economic activities that needs to be addressed in detail. It is not space per se but pasture land that plays a crucial role in the process of
the production and reproduction of the herds that provide their owners with meat, fur and antlers.

If we emphasise the political-economic dimension of the conflict, 'spatiality' could thus be read as part of struggles over a scarce resource for 'control over the distribution, allocation and ownership'. Land is, as Elden put it recently, 'a relation of property, a finite resource that is distributed, allocated and owned, a political-economic question. Land is a resource over which there is competition' (Elden 2010: 804). Land is by no means a homogeneous space, but one that is differentiated in multiple ways. The differences are not inherent to the physical environment but derive from all the hundreds of major and minor calculations— involving questions of pasture qualities and accessibility, property and land use rights, infrastructure and social organisation, numbers of reindeer and composition of household income, carrying capacity of the pasture and options for additional feeding etc.—that constitute the practice of reindeer herding. When a basic component in the calculation changes, the meaning of the land is subject to change, too. And vice versa: if relevant qualities of the land change, calculations will have to take that into account. Even though this looks like a very simple model, it is to be expected that calculation is not as mechanical as suggested here. To regard pasture as land, that is, as property, is to perceive it as a part of the political organisation of space, i.e., to see it in terms of production, ownership and legal protection. In this context, it can also be argued that pasture is not true land because it cannot be mobilised in economic terms. The pasture in Sweden and Norway is predominantly Crown land, which is dedicated to be used by Sámi people and reindeer herders 'forever' ('urmimnes hâvđ' in Sweden, 'alders tids bruk' in Norway). But this does not automatically imply a general personal right to use it.

It has been mentioned that the very idea of land has turned out to be not universal but 'ethnocentric' in itself (Soja 1971: 10), thus according with the modern nation-state and its individualised population. In this respect, it can be regarded as the spatial correlate of the disciplinary mechanism, creating the individual entrepreneur striving for efficiency and profit. However, to conceptualise pasture only in terms of land would not adequately explain how 'pieces of earth' not only help to shape the individual, but also work on 'a given' (Foucault 2003 [1977–8]: 19) in order to minimise risks and deficits (i.e., the risk of facing revolts or of endangering welfare). That is the realm of the logic of security. 'In order to' suggests the existence of a subject acting according to intentions. However, there is no a priori existing subject with a priori existing intentions. Foucault is not clear about who is the 'maker of' the milieu. When 'a question of constituting something like a milieu of life, existence, and work for a population' (ibid.: 51) is discussed, it leads to the role of the sovereign. Given that this role is implemented only within a state territorial entity and that the importance of the pasture can only be understood in the context of an evolving
nation-state and in relation to the state space, we shall now turn to a brief description of the notions of state space and territory.

State Space
State space as it is discussed below seems to be relevant insofar as the various ways through which a state’s population is created depend on its spatial means and capacities. Even though the ‘idea of exclusive political authority exercised over a given territory’ (Agniew 2005: 456) has become less convincing in the era of globalisation, as Agnew argues, people are still bound in various ways to a population that is territorially organised and ordered. In the case of the Sámi, who are the only officially recognised indigenous people in the European Union (Sámi Parliament 2008), the role of state space is of special interest, as the states they are living in are based on the principles of nation-states, which could be threatened by the very idea of ‘another people’ within the same territory. When the exceptional role of the nation-state as the only form of a social-spatial organization of social relations in which all aspects of sociability, from the institutions of cultural hegemony to civil rights, from the mechanisms of redistributive justice to the monopoly on physical power, rest on the principle of territorial sovereignty (Berking 2003: 249)

was analysed carefully, the epistemological pitfalls of a ‘categorical state centrism’ (ibid.) attracted attention (Agniew 1994).

From the demarcation of a boundary between the Swedish and Norwegian states onwards, Sámi reindeer herding has been a challenge to the states’ territorial logic because it crossed the emerging areal containment and challenged the congruity of the social, political, economic and cultural spheres of the two nation-states. The land – the pasture – was incorporated into the ‘state space in the narrow sense’ (Brenner et al. 2003: 7), which is the distinct form of a state’s spatiality. It comprises borders, boundaries and frontiers, territorial organisation and internal administrative differentiation – in short “the spatialities of the state itself, regarded as an ensemble of juridico-political institutions and regulatory capacities grounded in the territorialization of political power” (ibid.).

The territory is central to the state space; it is the areal extension where power is collectively binding. Moreover, coming from a discussion of Henri Lefebvre’s conception of state, Brenner and Elden emphasise the role of specific strategies that produce territory and are therefore territorial. Building roads and pipelines, ‘projects of territorial cohesion and integration, and mechanisms for addressing territorial inequalities’ are strategies that ‘facilitate the production of the territory of the state, and often, in turn, that of the nation-state’ (Brenner and Elden 2009: 369). Territorial strategies have also been addressed more comprehensively as ‘state space in the integral sense’ (Brenner et al. 2003: 7) comprising all kinds of state intervention in social and economic processes by using spatial means or even spatial strategies regulating and (re-)organising social and economic
relations. Some spatial modes of state intervention may be territorial, but there are also non-territorial, place- or scale-related modes of intervention.

How does the territory 'work'? From a Foucauldian perspective, it may have several functions. As the spatial complement of the juridical mechanism of power, it is the areal limit of the law. But beyond this, the disciplinary and security mechanisms of power also make use of the territory, which emerges as a given or a building material for the exertion of power. The sovereign is necessarily a

territorial sovereign [who] became an architect of the disciplined space, but also, and almost at the same time, the regulator of a milieu, which involved not so much establishing limits and frontiers, or fixing locations, as, above all and essentially, making possible, guaranteeing, and ensuring circulations: the circulation of people, merchandise, and air, etcetera (Foucault 2003 [1977–8]: 51).

It is not territory per se that is addressed here, but the way power makes use of it, the way territorial strategies are applied.

**Place**

In contrast to land and state space, the third kind of space – place – is a concept that is mainly used in order to grasp 'localised' human experiences and is thus 'understood contextually (and at times metaphorically) in relation to ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, body, self, etc., often in such a manner that it becomes one constitutive element in the politics of identity' (Puasi 2002: 806). With regard to the Sámi, anthropological studies could indeed point to the dimension of diverging concepts of place of reindeer herding Sámi groups and sedentary populations in Finland as 'place-binding' and 'place-bound', respectively (Mazzullo and Ingold 2008: 32). On that basis, a distinct Sámi spatiality, which is connected to herding, hunting, fishing etc., is being considered. 'Sámi spatiality' is based on an 'adaptive use' of lands in the framework of collective forms of organisation (sáida) and seasonal migration (Helander 1999; Karppi 2001; Sillanpää 1994).

At first glance, this seems to imply a dualistic conception of state and titular nation on the one hand and indigenous people on the other, which implies two different modes of production of space: indigenous and state. The latter is mainly identified with the territorial model discussed above, emanating from the modern state and characterised as 'a fixed (permanent), exclusive (belonging only to them), and geographically bounded (defined by hard lines) piece of land' (Forrest 2002: 251f).

However, in social science there are still disagreements about how the emerging nation-states have treated the other spatial concepts of the nomadic groups they have incorporated and how place and territory are intertwined. On the one hand, some argue that state authorities have ignored divergent spatial concepts in order to impose their own interests and ideologies through territorial politics. On the other, nation-states could not 'understand' these concepts adequately even if
they supported a pro-Sámi policy (Forrest 2002: 264 and passim). Furthermore, Karppi (2001: 394) stresses that in ‘the case of the Nordic countries, the idea of state territoriality has not remained static – strictly state-centred – throughout the centuries, but has tolerated the Sami territoriality and, to some degree, negotiated the conflicts arising from this difference’. However, there is agreement on the ‘simple fact that this territoriality has collided with the exclusive and fixed state territoriality [which] has subjected the Sami to assimilation during different periods of time’ (ibid.: 397). From this point of view ‘the Sami people are an example of an indigenous people and a minority, which has been able to face the changing forms of state territoriality and negotiate their interests rather well with the nation-states’ (ibid.: 395f).

If a basically instrumental understanding of space is accepted, one can support this dualism. But coming back to the state, it must be acknowledged that it is far too easy to equate ‘the state’ with a purely abstract and instrumental notion of ‘space’, which can be contrasted with a notion of ‘place’ created through human experience. As Taylor and Flint argue (2000: 364), the modern state that has become a nation-state as well as a welfare state has developed the capacity to become a place. As a consequence, Sámi place-making must be seen against the background of political struggles through which state space is transformed and ‘subjects become citizens’ (ibid.). Within these struggles, various spatial concepts can be referred to as strategic resources11 that parties to conflict use to both explicitly and implicitly formulate and enforce interests. From a strategic point of view, it is less important that there is a spatial concept based on both lived and remembered practices that differs from the territorial concept of a nation-state that incorporates these practices. What is important is who can legitimately argue with these practices and under which conditions and with what chance of success.

‘The border between Sweden and Norway is a big thing’: Identification and Spatial Orders among Reindeer Herders from Both Sides of the Border

The Integration of Reindeer Herding into the Domestic Economy: Legislation, Administration and Subsidies

After World War II, reindeer herding became more and more a subject of national policies and was integrated into the domestic economy. This led to a situation in which it was the economic aspects of reindeer herding that predominantly became the decisive factor in state actions, as this statement by Juuvven,12 a Sámi reindeer herder and politician from Sweden, illustrates:

[F]or example in Swedish law [it]self, from 1971, the main goal is to rationalise the reindeer herding. [T]here are more economical outputs of the reindeer herding ... and so on. There are none talk[ing] about [the] social ... situation, there are none talk[ing] about the cultural ...
tradition. The[ir] main goal was ... to get economical output of the
reindeer herder. ... And it means that you ... view reindeer herders with
big reindeer herds. And then you can ... get economical ... output of it.
... And none talk[s] about ... the culture; the tradition, the history or ... so on.

Using the criterion of efficiency mentioned by Juven, state legislation regulates
all aspects of this business that it can – e.g. the maximum number of reindeer
permitted, the grazing lands and grazing periods, and who can be a reindeer
herder. Aslak, a Sámi reindeer herder from Norway, speaking about the example
of concessions, i.e., a herder’s licence to run a herding business, accepts that not
all these regulations need automatically to be regarded negatively, as they may
minimise the risk of conflicts between groups and the consequent substantial loss
of animals:

[Yes], concession... So, it doesn’t need to be bad either, because it is
protecting those who are really living off reindeer herding. When we get
more and more people you have a cake to share. At last this piece can
get so small, nobody will get enough. So, thinking behind it is not that
bad. You know, it is not traditional. It is more Western way of thinking.

The issue of concessions is also a good example of the differences between
Norwegian and Swedish reindeer herding legislation. Mures, a Sámi reindeer
herder from Sweden, illustrates these differences well:

[I]n Sweden we are [born] in the sameby. We are, how to say... When
you are a child, you are born in, you have the rights to be in this sameby
because your parents [are] there. So you earn your legal ... right to
this area. But in Nors[ay] you have something th[at] is called district.
It’s something like the sameby, but to that place anyone[3] can ... be
a member and get [a] reindeer herd. And it’s the government who ... say[s]: ... ‘you not’, ‘you are accepted’, ‘you are not accepted’. But in
Sweden it’s the sameby who says if you are a member of the sameby.

As these different herding legislations affect not only the herders of the respective
countries but also the herders of the other country when their herds cross the
border and so enter the neighbouring country, the regulation of reindeer herding
can be addressed in terms of extraterritorial governance. Here, Mures speaks
about the administrative system on reindeer herding in Norway:

The government in Nors[ay], they have something they are call[ing]
reindriftsforvaltning [Norwegian: ‘Reindeer herding administration’]
... and it’s people from the government who are sitting in this place
... You have in Finnmark, you have in Troms, you have in everywhere
you have reindeer herders. ... So we have the problems with them
because the government has written something laws and if we are
coming over the border we have to take their orders from them. And
Swedish and Norwegian government ha[ve] agreed ... about that in the
renbeteskonventoner [Swedish: ‘Reindeer herding conventions’].
Being in the Frontline of a Sámi Culture and a Private Business

The difference in legislation prevents reindeer herders from cooperating easily with each other across the border, as Aslak explains:

You know, there are different regimes on the law, on reindeer herding, on the politics. What is the goal for the reindeer herding? It is totally different. And there is the bureaucracy on reindeer herding. Of course this makes it ... difficult, misunderstandings, when reindeer herders from those two regimes [are] trying to collaborate. Because the law is different. And how to act? What is legal? What is not legal? Many such things. Maybe not that big things, but the details.

As an example Aslak mentions that in his reinheitdistrik they used in the past to slaughter their reindeer in Sweden and then re-imported the meat into Norway, which nowadays has become more difficult:

Now it is a couple of years ago but we used to butch[er] our reindeers in [a sameby in Sweden]. They have a slaughterhouse. ... And it work[ed] so well. And it was much cheaper for us to butch[er] the reindeers there. We got more money for each reindeer. But [the] Norwegian government, they did not like it very much. It is not forbidden but one has to apply for an import licence in order to get the meat back from Sweden to Norway [sentence translated from Norwegian by the authors]. They make so fucking much bureaucracy to do this, so we stopped it. One has to pay Norwegian customs for one’s own meat [sentence translated from Norwegian by the authors]. ... You have to pay taxes to take it over the border. ... They made it impossible, [the] Norwegian landbruksdepartementet [Norwegian: “Ministry of Agriculture”]. ... They say that Norway is not [a] member of the EU.

Here Aslak is pointing generally to the most symbolic spatial reference in this place: the border. This not only creates different jurisdictional spaces, or territories, but, by defining Sámi individuals as Norwegian or Swedish citizens, it also breaks up individual Sámi groups or at least it makes the coherence of a given group more complicated, as this example provided by Niillas, a Sámi reindeer herder from Sweden, illustrates:

The border ... between Sweden and Norway make[s] ... a big... It’s a big thing [from] my [point of] view. ... Because we are ... living with our reindeers ... half a year in Norway. ... I see Sápmi is Sápmi14. So ... we have many ... good... [on the Norwegian] side of [the] border15. So Norwegians. And also old ... members [of our sameby] who had to quit and stayed in Norway. ... But they kept some reindeers in [our sameby]. ... And so they could take ... food reindeer during the summer when [our] herd came to Norway for [the] summer. Then they ... came to the corrals and took ... maybe two. But the Norwegi[an] government put a stop on that. They ... said that ... Norwegian citizens ... are [not] allowed to have reindeers in Sweden. ... So they ... had to kill all the ... reindeers. But now we [have] very good contact with those old ... members.
Unsurprisingly, herders address problems arising on the ground in terms of doing reindeer herding. However, we were given some statements that framed the conflict in more abstract terms as a problem of spatial order(ing). Martti, a Finnish diplomat, summarises possible reasons for these legal differences when he speaks about the different conditions surrounding this economic activity in the two countries:

[It differs clearly. First of all it differs in the size, the volume. There are much more reindeers in Sweden than in Norway. And it differs ... because of geography. Sweden has a larger territory. The Norwegian territory is very limited. ... And it differs also in that sense that the plans of creating a more specific Sámi territory ... are much further in Norway than in Sweden. There is much more willingness, political willingness, in Norway to create [specific rules] for the Sámi area, territory. So there are many differences, I would say. Which also is a reason why the interests are not always, let’s say, on the state level the same.

Recognising the simple fact of the states’ existence and their superior role in the legislative processes, Juven, however, calls for a harmonisation of the legislation concerned with Sámi reindeer herding in Scandinavia and sets it out as a prominent Sámi political goal:

[O]f course Norway and Sweden and Finland and Russia, they never ... are going to that step that they say ... there is no borderline because they are countries. ... I have never heard some who once said ... 'Okay, we can ... take away the borderlines and we are one country in Scandinavia'. I have never heard about that. But the question is: how can they harmonise the laws, so [that] the Sámi people and the Sámi union can still exist ... in the future? That’s ... a main goal for us.

Reindeer herding has also become a receiver of state subsidies through its integration into the national economy. Riggj, a Sámi reindeer herder from Norway, points to the state’s role as an economic actor:

[You have some kind of subsidies that you can, atta sake om [Norwegian: “so, apply for”] to have, ... but the state, I think, is the, you could say, the biggest investor.

The role of subsidies is widely accepted because pastures have been shrinking constantly throughout recent centuries and at the same time state authorities have become the main framers of herding conditions. State representatives justify the practice of subsidising reindeer herding by treating it as a branch of agriculture, which in general depends on subsidies, so reindeer herding is structured in a similar way to other kinds of agricultural production. This in turn may lead to understanding reindeer herding as part of the national culture. This interpretation is sometimes put forward to legitimise subsidies, as it is here by Hendrik, a Swedish civil servant:
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Reindeer herding is one part of the Swedish cultural heritage, and the Sámi cultural heritage. Therefore it is supported with subsidies. And other branches are also supported. So these primary branches as we call them are all very much dependent on subsidies. And reindeer herding is no exception. So farming is subsidised, fishing is subsidised. [Translated from Norwegian by the authors.]

However, Sámi reindeer herders from both Norway and Sweden have rather critical opinions on subsidies. Subsidies are basically seen as a means of increasing state control over the Sámi herding business and thus making herders dependent on the state. Aslak regards subsidies as a threat to herding for this reason:

I think that these subsidies are not very healthy to your livelihood ... as reindeer herder or as indigenous. ... Because you are getting more depend[ent] to this government. And they are going to govern our... What is the word? ... Control! ... It is an easy way to get control. ... At least some control. You know, like the fact they have been talking like for fifteen years, that there [are] too many reindeers. ... Maybe more than fifteen years. Like Norwegians started to come up north. They said there were too many reindeers.

As a consequence, subsidies do not only transform reindeer herding into a state-dependent economy, but are also seen as an attempt to control the behaviour of individual entrepreneurs. Niillas supports this idea and explicitly points to Norway as being extensively engaged in subsidising reindeer herding:

[The] Norwegian government pays ... a lot of money to the Norwegian reindeer herders. And that way the government can rule over the reindeer herders and say: 'You have to do [it] that way and that way and that way.' ... And the herder say[s], 'No, I don't want to do that ...'. 'Okay, you don't get money.'

Negotiating over a Limited Resource across the State Border: Pastures, Pastoral Rights and Identifications

After discussing statements that broadly refer to the incorporation of the pastures into the territory of two different nation-states and the consequences of that, we now turn to the pasture as land. No matter what conditions the states create the most important resource and the most decisive factor in reindeer herding will always be pasture. Mures gives an example of the make-up of good pastures:

Reindeer herding is, you have like the seasons, lands of seasons, in winter times, summer times. So we have, all of our summertime is on Norwegian side, because there's high mountains and very good ... grass growing and the reindeer need to have high mountains in the summer, because of the heat and it's growing good with the grass and reindeer need only grass, the green, how to say, not the lichen in the summer time. The lichen is only in winter times. So we have all summers on
Norwegian side and autumn, spring and winter it's more on the Swedish side. So we need very big land for the reindeer herding. And ... if wintertime is good we don't have any ice on the ground, you need less of land to herd your reindeers. But if it's ice on the ground the reindeers have to walk in bigger ... more land for the feeding.

As mentioned above, the pastures in the convention areas are used as both summer and winter pastures. Niillas explains what this means for a herder group:

[Sámi] who work and live at the Norwegian side ... they don't have lived there forever. They came there during the sixties. ... The late sixties. Early seventies. ... They came there from Kautokeino. ... And ... that way it had been a bit conflict ... between us. Because they came to our land, our land that we use during the summer. And [they] also took ... winter land from us. ... So our land that we had [gets] very much more ... smaller. [And that] ... makes ... that we can't ... get so ... big ... herds, so everyone can ... live from the ... reindeer herding.

For the herder groups in Norway that have a particular lack of winter pastures, this results in a shift in herding patterns. For example, Riggu speaks about his group having to feed pellets to their reindeer:

We feed them with pellets also, you know, you could say as a tillegsfør [Norwegian: 'additional food']. You understand? ... Because ... the problems are, we started in early nineties with the pellets. I think that, maybe that is, we couldn't do ..., you could say, traditional reindeer herding. I think the pellets [have] come to, come for good, you understand? ... That is, you know, we give them, you could say everyday, but it's more like a tillegsfør. ... You know the winter areas here [there is] much ice, snow. So therefore, ... I used to think sometimes ... if you have one hundred reindeers, maybe fifty eat pellets. ... I used to think if those fifty eat pellets, ... the other fifty ... get more ... normal food, you understand?

Riggu also points to some of the more positive effects of pellets:

[You have much better controls like against the predators and other things, to take it more to get more control. You know, when the eating conditions for the reindeer gets bad, you say they go everywhere ... So with the pellets you got many good things with that, too. Not only bad.

But as Riggu also says, the supplementary feeding of the reindeer contrasts with traditional herding methods and thus is often seen as something bad within the Sámi community. Niillas points to a clear example:

The herders in [Norway] give food to reindeers almost ... every winter. During the winter. They feed the reindeers. ... It's bad. ... You can see it [in] many ways of course. You have a better [percentage] of calves ... that survive, because the female reindeers are stronger. But then you get bad genes, you can get bad genes that way. Because the calves who are weaker survive.
Therefore many Sámi see the need for exclusive pastoral rights in particular areas. At this point, indigeneity becomes an argument. When speaking about the differences between Sámi and Scandinavians, Martti names what are taken to be the two most central pillars of Sámi indigeneity: that the Sámi are the first inhabitants of Scandinavia, and that they were once nomads.

In ethnical sense... I mean there is a clear difference because the Sámi people are traditionally close to the F[i]mo-Ugric language group. I mean I can understand, by speaking Finnish I can understand, let's say, ... the counting for example is the same and by listening to Sámi I can find out what they are speaking about but I cannot understand it. So Finnish and Sámi languages are close but ... Scandinavian languages belong to the Germanic languages. So that's the difference. But ethnically, I mean everybody ... acknowledge[s] today that the Sámi people are the original indigenous dwellers without land, no farming but they were nomads and they probably covered [the area] before the invasion of Germanic and F[i]mio-Ugric people. They [settled in] at least half, whole of Finland – except ... the coastal areas – and the whole of Northern Sweden and Norway probably. So, they have the historical heritage there.

Sámi may use these definitions as potentially legitimate arguments as they adapt to their situation. Mures underlines the right of his herding group to their traditional grazing land without blaming the Sámi herders from Norway. He explains the difficult situation thus:

We have ... a dispute on the borders in Norway, because ... the Swedish reindeers are [going] in summertime to [Norway]. But in the last fifty years ... the Sámi from Norway, Kautokeino, get too many reindeers, so it was full so that the state of Norway said, 'you have to move', to the Norwegian Sámi, 'you have to move south of Norway'. So that's why we have a dispute with them in [the] North, [on the] Norwegian side. Because they are taking our lands. That's the dispute. So we have an argument with them. But it's not the Sámi people ... who ha[ve] done that. It's the state of Norway and the state of Sweden.

In contrast, Iskko, a Sámi reindeer herder from Norway, argues that the herding group he belongs to gained legitimate pastoral rights from the Norwegian state that are also in accordance with a Sámi way of thinking:

Our family, he and his father, they came from Finnmark in 1950. They got invited by the Norwegian[s] because this reindeer area was empty. There wasn't been reindeer herding here for forty years. So they wanted to, the government and the state, wanted to have reindeer herding here so they got invited to move here with the reindeer herd. ... We have used these areas from 1950. In Norway it's like ... that, if you used a[n] area for reindeer herding for over thirty years¹⁶ ..., not illegally, then you get the right to the area. If you understand what I mean. You don't get any rights if you use an area [il]legally. ... It has always been like that in Norway and other places. If a family stops using one district area
then [others come] in. Like that we have, the reindeer herders have ... been reindeer herding always. There [has] been like a little changing of the areas all the time.

However, none of these arguments seem to be decisive and so citizenship becomes a stronger argument and Aslak is not happy with that:

That's why I am talking about the nationalism .... They make it, they use, take advantage of belonging to one state. And then say, just looking back to 1820 ..., 1890 or something.

What sounds like a strategic option of self-identification indicates the general question of how different potential identifications are related. On the other hand, Martti, the Finnish diplomat, makes clear that states are not able to resolve the problem in this way — through citizenship — since pasture land is a limited resource.

I mean it's, even if you respect the minority of the Sámi people, the cultural rights and so on and so far which both governments certainly do, now we are speaking about the economic interests which are, can never be a hundred per cent accommodated, so to say, that everybody is happy. I mean they cannot increase the grazing land just by deciding so. It's a natural resource, ... it's not an increasing resource so to say. So you have to divide it.

This raises the question of which way of apportioning pastures would be adequate and legitimate, and according to what standards and assumptions. But many Sámi are not satisfied by this approach, so they start to call on their state to represent their interests as citizens, which results in disappointment, as is the case with Iskko from Norway:

Sweden has been before much bigger and stronger than Norway. They were like the big brother. ... They [Norway] give after, they give all that ... Sweden wants. They give it to them. ... They don't care about their own reindeer herders in Norway.

Niillas, Iskko's Swedish counterpart, is unhappy with the Swedish state, too. Nevertheless he does not question belonging to the Swedish population:

I ... say that ... Sweden want[s] to be so good friends with [the] Norwegians. So it just gave away their land, [or] our lands, ... to Norwegian reindeer herders. So I'm so disappointed of ... Sweden. ... I don't really believe in ... Swedish governments. ... They don't look after ... their own people.

A Transboundary Perspective on Reindeer Herding: Sámi Business, Culture and Community

However, some Sámi, like Rigga, see things differently and recognise the difficulty of finding a solution to the dilemma caused by the limited pasture resource:
When you negotiate things, not just this kind of things, anything, ... you have to ... lose some and you win some. ... I believe it’s difficult for those who were negotiating also about the new convention. So everybody can’t be happy and satisfied. That is, I don’t know if you can ever get it that way.

This pragmatic view, built on a rational business approach, may be a good basis on which to work towards the situation that Juvvén calls for. It focuses on the Sámi as a transboundary community and stresses the central importance of reindeer herding as being at the heart of Sámi culture, such that any herder who has to give up this way of living is lost.

You have exactly the same discussion on the Swedish side ... between Sámi villages. And you have [it on] the Norwegian side ... ‘Is it my right or is it my neighbour’s right?’ ... That’s exactly the same question, but you have a borderline [in] between. Is it ... the Norwegian reindeer herders’ right or the Swedish? ... Yes ... then the biggest question here is: ‘is it my right, is it your right or is it ... my neighbour’s right? and so on’. You have not the vision about the whole Sámi ... community. ... That’s the ... first part of the question. And the other part is: you have a competition ... between business[men] in the Sámi villages. Because I’m a businessman in ... my Sámi village. My neighbour is a businessman in [his] Sámi-village. ... From our point [of] view we ha[ve] to start a negotiation that we can see at everyone in the reindeer herding? ... Because reindeer herding totally is a ... very small business. And everyone who must finish it is a lost for everyone. And that’s the main goal: ... Can we get ... any solutions where everyone can see that they have a future? ... So that the rein[deer] ... can use [the land in] a way that it ... [gives] a future for the ecological, economical and cultural ... reindeer herding in ... both countries. ... We don’t talk about ... to destroy our neighbours in Norway, because we can have a better life. We must see it on the overview.

Conclusion

From the interviews it can be concluded that no single or uniform self-identification is claimed by the actors involved in the conflict and the negotiations concerning cross-border herding. As might be expected, the incorporation of reindeer herding into different national spheres has affected self-identification and led almost ‘inescapably’ to an identification on the basis of citizenship because the main condition of reindeer herding, the milieu in which it takes place, is highly state-controlled. However, with regard to different spatialities, the notion of pasture as land is dominant. This corresponds to a strong identification as (in fact competing) businessmen, which in this case seems to be more important than being a member of an indigenous group or people. It is the increasing scarcity of a factor of productivity that concerns the interviewees. The main resource,
the pasture, is scarce, as almost all interviewees mention, and there is virtually no substitute, perhaps because substituting ‘artificial food’ for the ‘natural food’ that is regarded as traditional somehow interferes with indigenous identity, and thus stands in the way of more flexible feeding management. To that extent, the difference between non-traditional and traditional breeding may affect profits and income. Nevertheless, indigeneity does not play a dominant role in this case.

Furthermore, identification is influenced by different conceptualisations of the role of the relevant state and state authorities. For the Sámi who may want the state to protect their business and solve the conflict to their advantage, it may be reasonable to emphasise their belonging to the state population, a perspective that correlates with the dependency of reindeer herding on the state. Claiming to be a businessman of a certain state, as the same informants sometimes do, thus means walking a tightrope, as on the one hand it legitimises and buttresses the expectations of the states but, on the other, is also regarded as a means of integrating the Sámi people into the national community, thereby making the Sámi members of a state population. However, being Sámi and at the same time being a Norwegian or Swedish citizen does not generally seem to be incompatible. On the contrary, some interviewees suggest that reindeer herders practise a kind of pragmatic functionalism, invoking a contextual, adjusted use of economically relevant identifications whenever appropriate. At the same time, a strong and true Sámi identity is maintained. This is remarkable considering that there was only one interviewee who argued that a Sámi community might serve as a potential starting point from which new solutions to the conflict could be developed. Transferring Sámi identification from self-identification to a political concept could perhaps, from this perspective, strengthen the idea of a transnational community or a sociopolitical entity beyond national fragmentation that might enable a more appropriate reorganisation of pasture use and reindeer herding.

These findings in terms of identification are largely supported by the findings concerning spatial concepts. While ‘land’ and ‘territory’ seem to be prevalent, as well as closely intertwined, a distinct spatiality in terms of ethnic, nomadic or indigenous place-making is of minor importance in this conflict. This should not lead to the conclusion that there is not a certain and specific notion of place as it has been considered in several anthropological studies, but it does not seem to have a decisive role in making the ‘border conflict’ intelligible or to play a strategic role in strengthening the position of Sámi reindeer herders. Rather it is the interplay between the different levels of self-identification, as highlighted in the article, that makes it possible for the herders to deal with the conflict.
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Notes

1. This article has been written in the framework of the Collaborative Research Centre ‘Difference and Integration’ (SFB 586) hosted by the Universities of Halle-Wittenberg and Leipzig and financed by the German Research Foundation. The article is a product of the SFB 586 E9 project ‘Power Technologies’ Production of Space. Sámi Territoriality and Indigeneity’ conducted at the Leibniz Institute of Regional Geography, Leipzig, in collaboration with the Arctic Centre, University of Lapland, Rovaniemi.

2. An example of a tense situation is the removal of the fences around a Swedish reindeer enclosure by the Norwegian police in 2006 (Gruda 2007).

3. In an era when states are not fully consolidated, the first step can simply be demarcating a boundary.

4. At that time, the Norwegian and Finnish states already existed but were under Danish rule until 1815 and Swedish rule until 1809, respectively.

5. Lars Norberg wrote this book under his pseudonym ‘Útrja Lasse’.

6. Ensuring that reindeer have a natural diet is considered to be part of a traditional way of herding. According to Paine (1994: 14), ‘T]he diet of the reindeer is at all times limited to a few plant species. However, there are significant seasonal differences of choice. While there is snow cover (November to May), reindeer ordinarily exist on lichen... which they reach by digging through the snow with their forefeet. As soon as the spring thaw begins, they search for a few species of soft and juicy grasses. Throughout the summer, they prefer a selective grass diet. In the autumn they are most interested in mushrooms and toadstools.’ Under harsh herding conditions – especially in winter – such as icy snow, too limited pasture grounds or poor feeding vegetation, herders may need to feed the reindeer pellets instead, which is ‘restricted to periods of acute difficulty’ (Tyler et al. 2007: 198) in Norway. To maintain a traditional way of herding is regarded as a supreme value among Sámi herders in a rather essentialist manner that consequentially is not further justified. However, this issue may become important as a strategic argument in situations in which pastoral rights are negotiated.


8. ‘Radical Geography’ is a school within human geography that started in the early 1970s with a fundamental critique of quantitative-spatial geography (Peet 1998: 74). Radical Geography has its theoretical roots in Hegel and Marx but also draws on the Frankfurt School. One point of the critique was that space has been treated as a closed
and separate system of locations without taking into account the conditions under which spatial dimensions of social life have been produced.


10. See e.g. Constitution of Norway § 110a and Constitution of Finland § 17.

11. This does not mean that they can be both bodies and means of subjective projections of identity at the same time.

12. In this section we present findings from eight interviews of the second stage (cf. previous section on fieldwork and interviews). In order to improve readability, we decided to correct obvious language and grammar mistakes in the presented transcriptions. These are marked with square brackets. Explanations for Sámi, Swedish and Norwegian terms (these are italicised in the transcriptions) used by the interviewees, as well as translations of interviews conducted in either Swedish or Norwegian, are also put in square brackets. In consultation with our interviewees, we decided to anonymise all persons and particular reindeer herding cooperatives that we talked to, since the Sámi community is comparatively small and the situation is highly politicised.

13. In this context ‘anyone’ refers to any Sámi. In both Norway and Sweden reindeer herding is exclusively permitted to Sámi only by law.

14. The concept of Sápmi represents predominantly the traditional settlement area of the Sámi which nowadays can be read as both a spatial and a community reference. As Eriksson (2002: 239) puts it, ‘the image of and struggle for a single, common homeland for all Saami appears to be a 20th century phenomenon’. Contrasting this spatial approach, Bjorklund describes Sápmi as the Sámi nation when he says: ‘What all these forms of social mobilization have in common is the experience of a larger national community – Sápmi. The notion of Sápmi has gradually become a point of reference for the whole Sami community ... – a community which is national in the sense that it is founded on a common language, a shared history, and a culture shared across national borders’ (Bjorklund 2000: 45).

15. The speaker hesitated to complete his sentence because he could not decide how he should name the people on the other side of the border since they are both Norwegian citizens and former members of the sameby as well.

16. ‘Thirty years’ refers to ‘the period of one generation’.

17. By this, he means to start a negotiation that considers the interests of all reindeer herders (‘see at everyone’), regardless of nationality.

References


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Peter Koch and Judith Miggelbrink

in the North and Their Consequences for the Sámi], Svenska Samernas Riksförbund, Umeå. (= Sápmi 2).


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**Peter Koch** is a Ph.D. student at the Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography. He has a regional focus on northern Europe and the Baltic Sea Region and works on society, spatiality, territoriiality, cross-border reindeer herding, and national park policies.

Email: p_koch@ifl-leipzig.de

**Judith Miggelbrink** is head of a research group at the Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography in Leipzig. She has led and carried out several research projects concerning the role of spatiality and territoriiality in society, especially on the effects of borders in everyday life and practices. Her regional focus is on northern and middle eastern Europe.

Email: j_miggelbrink@ifl-leipzig.de