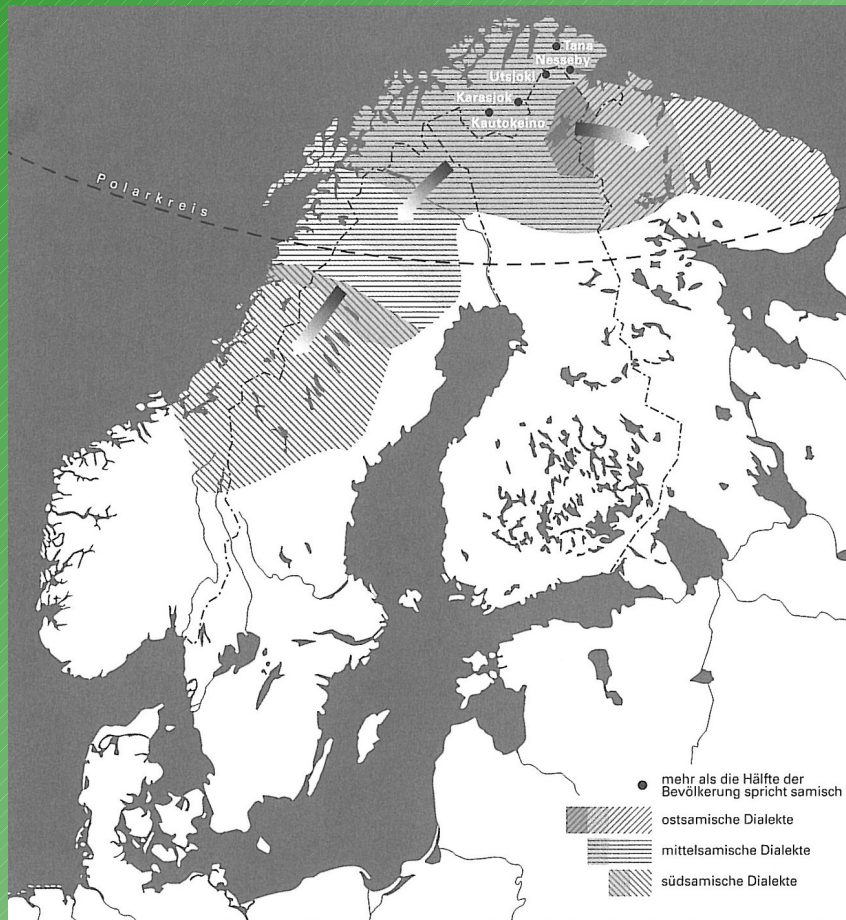


# **Finnish Sámi reindeer husbandry and culture**

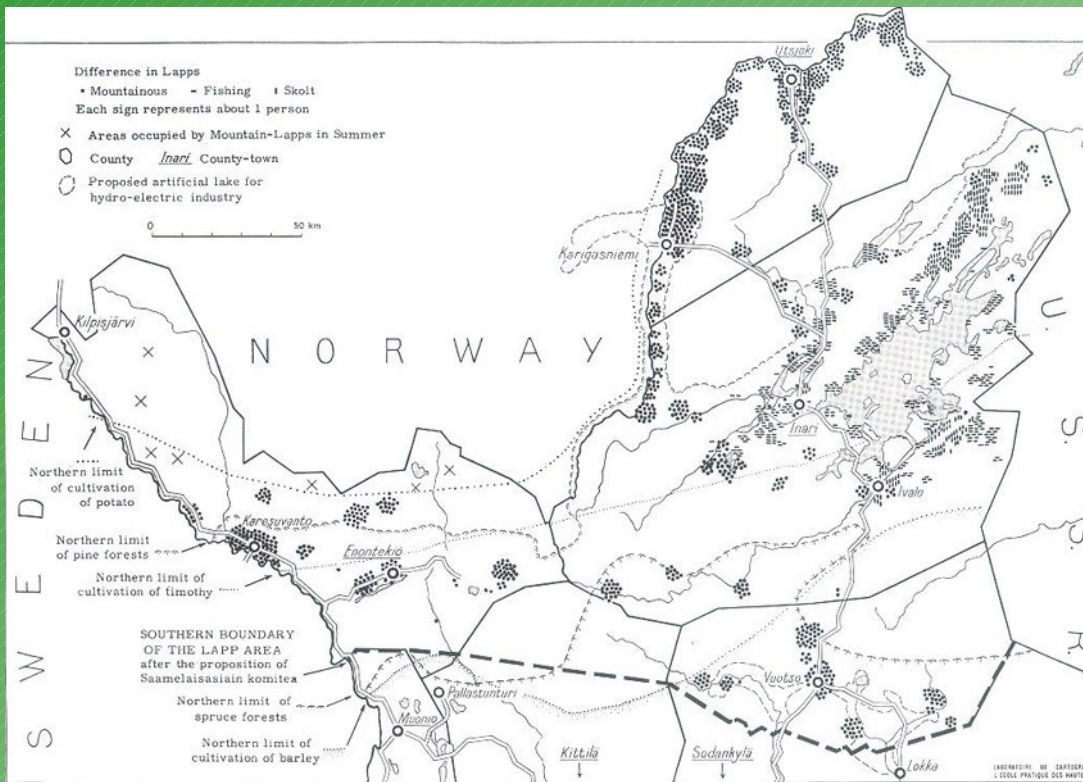
## **Introduction**

The region, where the Saami live and are active, extends from Dalarna in Sweden as far as Engerdal in southern Norway in Hedmark province, and to the north and east to Finland's Utsjoki, Norway's Varank and Russia's Kola Peninsula. It has been estimated that there are 60,000-100,000 Saami altogether. According to one of the latest, conservative estimates, there are around 70,000 of them. The figure quoted for the Norwegian Saami population is 40,000-45,000, the largest proportion of Saami being concentrated in the Finnmark region, where they number around 25,000. In Sweden there are approximately 17,000, in Finland almost 8,000 and in Russia 2,000



In the area shown above, which includes part of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, there are nowadays some 1.5 million people. Of these, however, only 70 000 people belonging to a minority group admit to a Saami origin in regard to their culture and language.

The concept of the "Saami" is frequently used without any precise definition. According to the Saami themselves, a Saami is a person who considers his- or herself a Saami and who also speaks Saami language as his or her mother tongue, or whose parents' or grandparents' mother tongue is or was Saami. In Norway the Saami language is of fundamental importance when, for example, a Saami's origins are being determined, or when it has to be decided who has the right to vote in the "Sameting" (Saami Parliament), or whether a person may stand for election. The same method was used previously in Finland's Saami Parliament, but the definition in the act on cultural self-government introduced at the beginning of this year expanded to include not only language but also those persons who are descended from people who have sometimes long ago paid the same taxes on their land as the original Saami-speaking population. Since 1993, when the Swedes formed an equivalent body, the Saami have had a parliamentary system in all three of the Nordic countries. Russia's Saami are planning to form a similar kind of parliamentary system within the next few years.



## Nowadays Sámi Region in Finland

Biogeographically, Finland's Sámi region includes the upper part of Lapland, the lake Inari lands, Enontekiö, the upper area of Forest Lapland and parts of Mire Lapland. The total surface of this region comes close to 35 000 square kilometres, which amounts to 36 % of the Province of Lapland and 10 % of the entire country. Some 12 000 persons live in this region, and 4 000 of them are Sámi (Helander).

## Administrative legal situation in Finland

An act concerning both the the Educational Center of Sámi Area and the Sámi Parliament, gives a legal definition of the Finnish Sámi homelands. Finland's Sámi population has no special rights recognized by the legislation based on their livelihoods, land or water. According to the legislation on reindeer husbandry (Reindeer Herding Act), fishing (Fishing Act) and hunting (Hunting Act), the Sámi enjoy the same rights as other Finnish citizens. The Act of Wilderness makes mention of some rights connected with the Sámi culture and traditional livelihoods. According to the Nature Conservation Act, it is possible to grant privileges in respect of grazing and forest use to local people and the reindeer herding Sámi. The living conditions of reindeer herdsman have been improved by way of the Reindeer Farm Act and Reindeer Economy Act.

An effort has been made to improve the living conditions of other people following traditional livelihoods by means of the Act Pertaining to a Natural Economy. In regard to the Skolt Lapps, equivalent arrangements have been accomplished through the Skolt Act. By terms of the Hunting Act, local residents of municipalities in the province of Lapland have the right to hunt over State lands in their home municipality. This right is free and applies to both the Sámi and other people living in the municipality.

The new Forest Act recognizes the position of the Sámi people living in the zone of northern protection forests. The Government of Finland has designated the northern protection zone of 3.3 million hectares where forests are managed and utilized with special care and in such ecological and social way that the silvicultural systems do not result in retreat of the ecologically sensitive timberline. At the same time, other indigenous and traditional means of earning a living, e.g. reindeer husbandry by Sámi, are respected.





### **The ecological standpoint**

In the Sámi region, the environment is sharply divided between a marine ecosystem and an inland one. As a result, human activities based on these two different ecosystems also differ radically. The barren Sámi region forced its indigenous population to live on food from areas even far from settlements. It explains why both salmon fishing and reindeer herding over extended territories became essential to the Sámi survival. Since its origin, the Sámi culture's core has been based on the direct use of natural resources. So, the Sámi culture revolves around what we today might call natural industries, or natural economies.

Owing to the warm influence of the Gulf Stream, the sea temperature along the shores is fairly constant. As a rule, the average temperature allows a longer active period for the vegetation. In the north Atlantic, many varied fish species sustain the Sámi livelihoods. In fact, fish, whale, seal and bird stocks available for food are quite large and diversified due to the sea.

On the other hand, inland temperature fluctuations are considerable and come up to 70 degrees. Careful scientific estimations state that the tundra cannot feed more than 5 % of what the lands south in the taiga can provide for. The productivity of the tundra's vegetation is low and is subject to great annual variation. Therefore, it cannot be relied on. Its fragility also implies careful use of resources (Kallio).

### **What are the Sámi livelihoods?**

Although the concept of "Sámi livelihoods" has been used for a long time, what it actually means is vague. When speaking of indigenous Sámi livelihoods (or occupations) the common understanding is a reference to primary production as a source of income. It includes such activities as agriculture, reindeer herding, fishing, small-scale family forestry, gathering of natural products, together with the handicraft manufacture of these articles. Nowadays, due to changed circumstances, modern money-earning activities exist together with the traditional ones. Over the last few years, the relative proportion of industries pertaining to nature among the Sámi has fallen by a quarter or even by a half, depending on the municipality.

Meanwhile, the relative proportion of employment in trade and services has doubled, or sometimes trebled. The deepest changes have happened in Utsjoki, and the least marked ones in the Enontekiö and Vuotso areas. The Sámi part of the population living in Enontekiö and Vuotso still practises industries that differ from the ones of other Finnish citizens. This economical and structural difference is even sharper if seen in a wider context i. e. with regard to Finland as a whole. Nevertheless, the still existing difference is the most striking in Enontekiö and Vuotso. As a rule, living off the traditional indigenous activities is vanishing. As a result, economically speaking, the Sámi community is becoming more like the country's general population (Helander).

## The Sámi reindeer herding in Finland

Reindeer herding has been increasingly important among the Sámi people during the past two hundred years, and now occupies the first place in the subsistence economy. Before examining the annual cycle of reindeer herding, it is necessary to consider reindeer herding cooperation, which plays a central role in organization of reindeer herding in Finnish Lapland. All of the Finnish reindeer territory is divided up into cooperation districts.

In many other areas, reindeer herding is, even today, of a greater importance to the Sámi people than it is in Inari, where secondary occupations are readily available to reindeer herders. Also fishing and cattle farming go on losing ground in Inari and Utsjoki.

Reindeer herding is practised in all parts of the Sámi regions of the Nordic countries. In Finland, this activity also exists south of the Sámi area. In Finland, reindeer husbandry is practised in 56 units i.e. the herding co-operatives, 12 of which are located in the Sámi region.

Contrary to the case in Sweden and Norway, in Finland reindeer husbandry is not firmly linked to the Sámi, or even to the Sámi's home region. A reindeer owner can be any person resident in the reindeer husbandry area who is a Finnish citizen, or a herding cooperative made up of reindeer owners, irrespective of land ownership. About 86 % of the reindeer in the Sámi home region are owned by Sámi, which means slightly over one third of Finland's entire reindeer population.

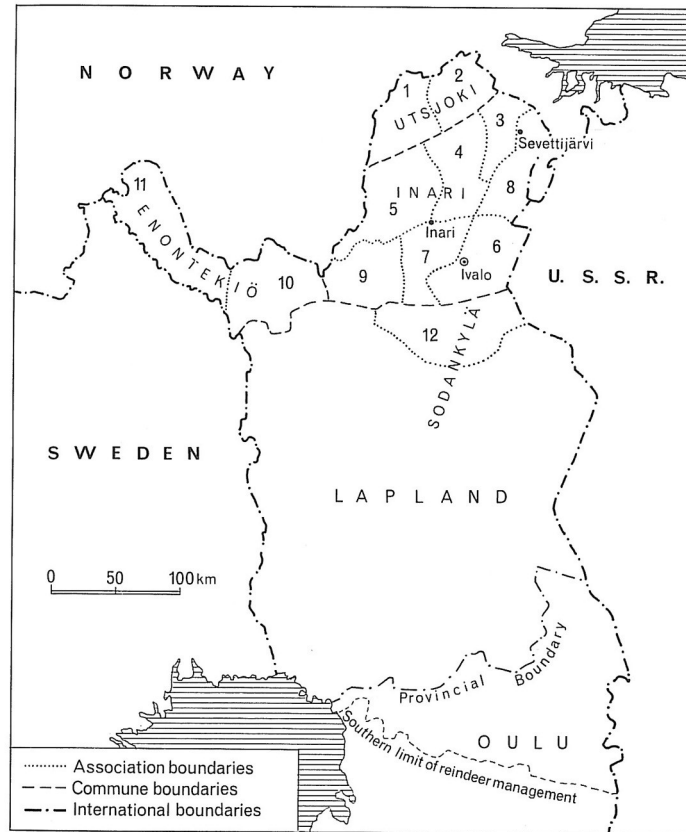


Fig. 4. The Finnish reindeer management area, showing provincial, communal and associational boundaries. Only the twelve northernmost associations, with a majority of Lappish members, are shown:

- |          |                |                  |
|----------|----------------|------------------|
| Utsjoki: | 1. Paistunturi | 7. Hammastunturi |
|          | 2. Kaldoaivi   | 8. Vätsäri       |
| Inari:   | 3. Näätämö     | 9. Sallivaara    |
|          | 4. Muddusjärvi | 10. Näkkälä      |
|          | 5. Paadar      | 11. Käsivarsi    |
|          | 6. Ivalo       | 12. Lappi        |

## The snowmobile revolution

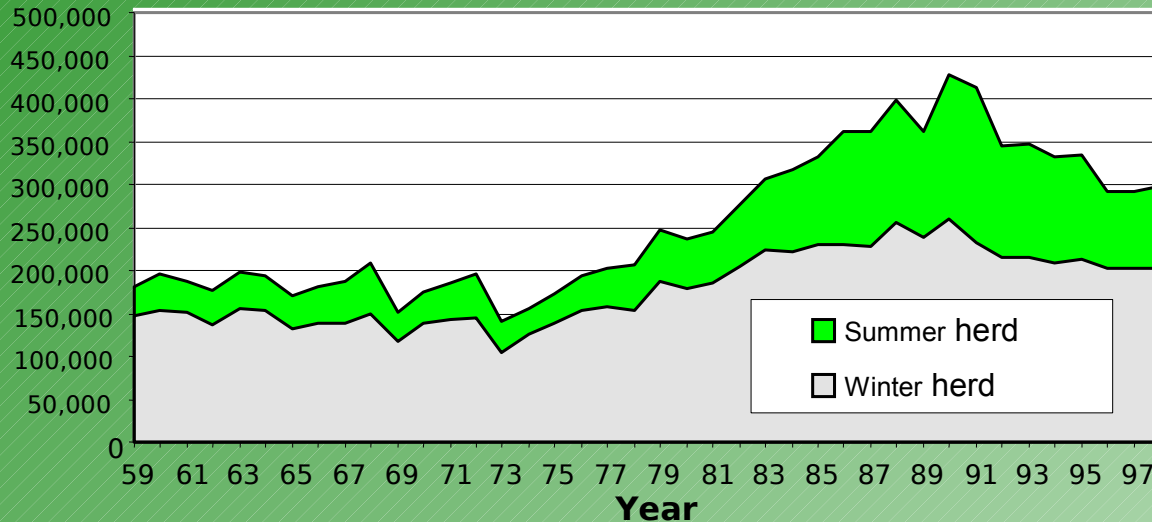
The snowmobile arrived in Sámi region during 1962-64. The principal fields into which the snowmobile has been adopted are herding and transport. In the first case it has replaced the traditional combination of ski man and dog, in the second case the keeping of draught castrates has been rendered redundant. In recent years a case has been made of snowmobile revolution in Lapland. Firstly, it is claimed that introduction of the snowmobile leads to a higher slaughter rate of animals for sale, possibly to a level jeopardising the continuity of the herds. Secondly, snowmobile herding is said to have led to the concentration of power in the hands of big-owners, pushing the small-owner out of business.



Another consequence connected to the snowmobile is the disappearance of echinococcosis, or hydatid disease, which was not very uncommon among reindeer herding Sámi people during the 1950's. The life cycle of the causative parasite involves the dog as the definitive host and the reindeer as the intermediate host, and humans get accidentally infected via dog faeces. The replacement of the herding dog by the snowmobile rider in round-ups and other herding tasks made the dog redundant. Therefore, the Lapp dogs virtually disappeared, breaking the life cycle of echinococcus. Now, the parasite is re-emerging in Finland, not in Sámi region but in areas populated by wolves, which now act as final hosts (Ingold, Pelto, Müller-Wille)



## Reindeer herd development 1959 - 1999



### Is forestry a threat to the Sámi culture?

In recent public debate about forests in northern Lapland, it has been strongly suggested that forestry alone has brought reindeer husbandry to financial despair. However, no material evidence has been presented to prove that forestry carried out in the area would restrict the amount of reindeer or impede reindeer husbandry.

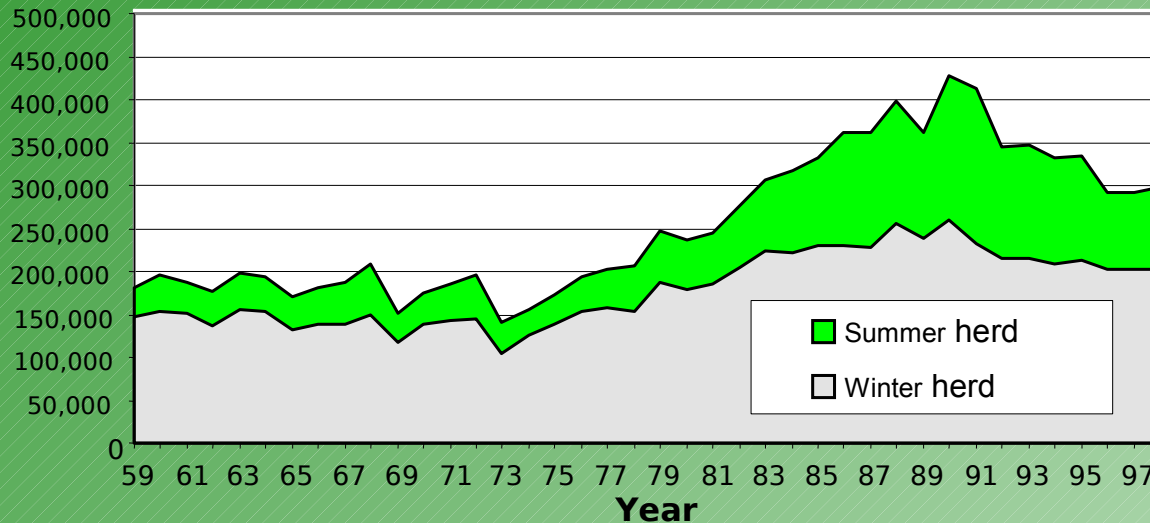
On the basis of recent public discussion, the uninitiated may easily get the impression that it is only forestry in the Upper Lapland region that has led Sámi reindeer herders to financial straits. However, there has been no concrete proof of how exactly local forestry has limited the number of reindeer or hampered the practice of reindeer herding. The number of reindeer has increased 2.5-fold since the early 1970s. The number was highest in the late 1980s and early 1990s, more than three times compared to the year 1970..

During the same period of time, logging volumes in State-owned forests have been decreased by 20%. The volumes were highest in the late 1970s and early 1980s, nearly 1.5-fold compared to the 1970s. Since then, the logging volumes have been reduced to a half, despite claims to the contrary

In my opinion, the problems of reindeer husbandry are attributed more to internal economic factors in the reindeer herding co-operatives (such as fragmented ownership and increased feeding) rather than to logging. The poor condition of lichen ranges is mainly due to excessive numbers of reindeer. Bringing down forestry, however, will not save reindeer husbandry. The problems of Sámi reindeer husbandry lie elsewhere than in forestry operations. The question is about additional subsidies to a subsidised livelihood. Profits from forestry do not only benefit the Sámi but also local businesses, which stimulates economic activity in the region. When looking at reindeer husbandry as a livelihood only, it seems inconceivable to support it by cutting back another, more profitable livelihood. Especially when there have been no ways to prove any damage from present-day forestry to Sámi reindeer herding.

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## Reindeer herd development 1959 - 1999



Reindeer herding in the region has nothing traditional but the free-grazing livestock. Field work is done using snowmobiles and two- and four-wheeled off-road vehicles, and slaughtering has been moved under EU regulations to well-managed and hygienic slaughterhouses. Intensive field feeding is no tradition either.

In Upper Lapland, the real problem of reindeer herding is not so much forestry, but the simple fact that there are too many reindeer owners. In the Sámi Homeland, there are about a thousand Sámi reindeer herders, of whom 60% own less than 50 heads. The average reindeer income of these herders is about EUR 3500 per year, which means that more and more Sámi reindeer owners are forced to earn additional income from sources outside reindeer husbandry. The fragmentation of reindeer ownership has contributed to the present overgrazing situation, which is also seen in all Upper Lapland national parks as excessive erosion of lichen ranges and absence of new birch growth.

In recent years, parties in conflict over the use of Lapland's nature have often referred to research information, such as studies on the status of reindeer pastures and logging.

Studies can always be used to prove that a common comparison can be found for different alternatives. For example, in disputes connected with logging or the sufficiency of reindeer pastures in Upper Lapland, there are two opposing views of how the use of forest is linked as part of the life practices of the dominant society: Will the forest adapt to the conditions of modern forestry or Sámi reindeer husbandry? The choice here is political. The political core of the setup is roughly this: Does the dominant society have room for the life practices of Sámi reindeer herders? If it does, the forests must be preserved as such that the way of life is also possible in practice. But is the Sámi reindeer herders' current way of life such that it meets the criteria of sustainable economy? According to the latest studies, this is not the case. Why could not the different values of forestry and reindeer herding practised by the Sámi be identified, compared and harmonised to produce a result where there is room for both activities?





The goal of the Sámi Parliament and environmental organisations is to shut forestry down in order to secure the interests of reindeer husbandry. Unfortunately, that will not be the salvation of reindeer husbandry: its problems lie beyond the activities of forestry, and have more to do with the increased subsidisation of an already subsidised livelihood.

The profits of forestry benefit not only the Sámi, but also the economic life of the area in general, by bringing more economic activity to the area. If reindeer husbandry is seen only as a means of livelihood, it seems absurd to attempt to support it by suppressing another, more profitable, means of livelihood. In northern Lapland, the real problem of reindeer husbandry is not forestry, but rather that there are simply too many reindeer owners. There are currently 1 000 Sámi reindeer owners in the Sámi home district, 60 percent of whom own fewer than 50 reindeer. The average annual income those owners make of their reindeer is about 3,500 euros, which means that an increasing number of Sámi reindeer owners are forced to supplement their income by means other than reindeer husbandry. The fragmentation of reindeer ownership has, in part, led to the current situation of over-grazing, which can be seen in the excessively worn lichen areas and in the lack of new birch offshoots in the national park areas of northern Lapland (Kemppainen, Nieminen).



### **The traditional reindeer husbandry was different from the current one**

Earlier reindeer herding communities lived apart from one another, so the type of over-grazing problems we see today were locally rather restricted. Only the period following the Second World War has been a time of far-reaching changes in the whole reindeer herding area, including the co-operatives of northern Lapland. There is no longer anything traditional about reindeer husbandry in the area aside from freely grazing herds. Work on the terrain is done with snowmobiles and two- and four-wheel all-terrain vehicles, and even slaughtering has been transferred, by EU regulations, to well-managed and hygienic slaughterhouses. Furthermore, intensive feeding is not a part of traditional reindeer husbandry.

Nowadays, in many reindeer herding co-operatives, the reduction of natural grazing is compensated by bringing in additional fodder from outlying areas more than ever before. This means that the once self-supporting reindeer husbandry has increasingly been transformed so that it is now dependent on external resources.

Traditional reindeer husbandry was in harmony with the natural environment, satisfying all the subsistence needs, including food and clothing, of each member of the community. The requirements of reindeer herding families in those days were more modest than they are today, and communities could live well within the limits of natural grazing.





### **The cause of the pasture crisis**

This no longer works in reindeer husbandry today, by any means. I believe that the most important factor behind the current grazing crisis is the continual fragmentation of reindeer ownership due to internal issues in reindeer husbandry. The result is that ever-fewer reindeer owners can rely on their herds as a primary source of livelihood. Reindeer owners for whom their herds are the most important source of livelihood have a different outlook from the majority who own just a few reindeer. Today's reindeer husbandry and support systems do not work towards supporting natural grazing for the long term.

Reindeer herders and ecologists see the current problems facing reindeer husbandry differently. A reindeer herder observing the reindeer-meat market sees the lowest real rates for meat in 15 years. Pasture researchers, on the other hand, have, for many years, observed extreme deterioration in lichen areas, which are important as winter ranges, throughout the reindeer husbandry area. Because the researchers know that maintenance of the current reindeer herds is done with the help of over-grazing and supplementary feeding, they are worried about how the continued deterioration of lichen reserves will affect the condition of the reindeer winter ranges and the profitability of the entire livelihood.

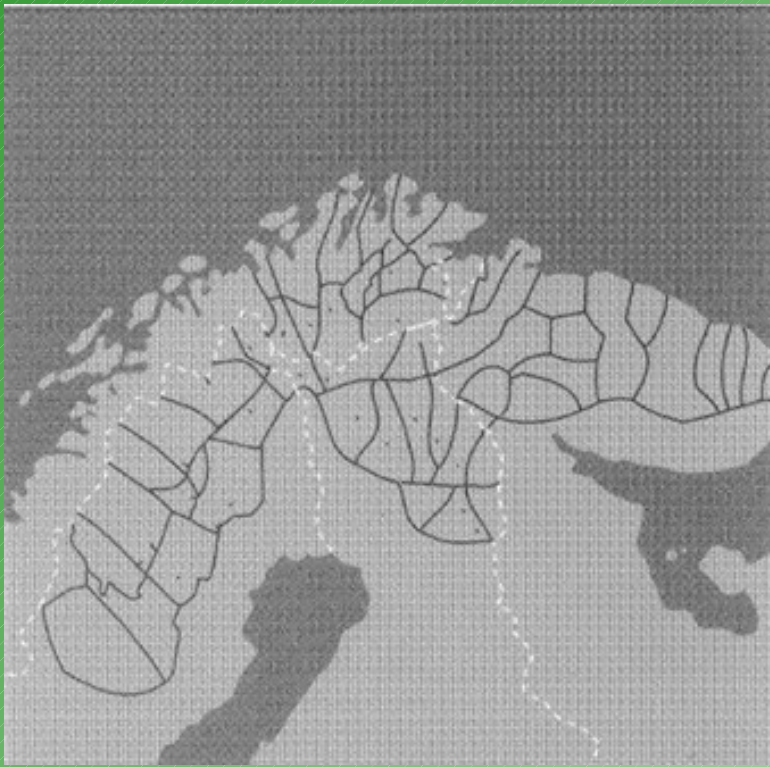


### **Research helps**

The goal of forest management and reindeer husbandry, respectively, is to efficiently produce wood and reindeer meat, both of which are the result of physiological processes. I believe that attention must be paid to what is ecologically necessary, technically possible and economically feasible in the management of forests and reindeer grazing lands. The latter two principles have apparently dictated most of the solutions adopted in forestry and reindeer husbandry, but in recent times ecological points of view have also increasingly been taken into account because of the problems that have begun to emerge.

Taking proper consideration of the ecological point of view in forest and pasture management also requires research on the ecosystem. It must be determined what effect activities will have on the forest ecosystem as a whole. The current state of reindeer grazing land in areas where felling was conducted in the 1950s and 60s should also be looked into as part of the soon-to-be-launched research project initiated by the Finnish Forest Research Institute (Metla).





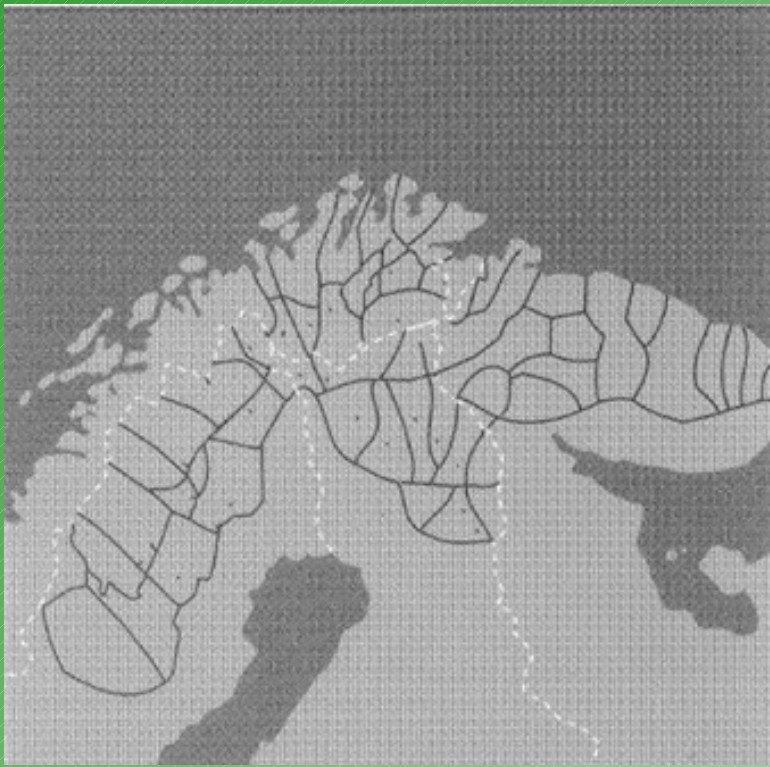
### **About Sámi rights and ILO Convention**

Since the Second World War, there have been many proposals in Finland regarding the establishment of the Saami's land and water rights. In particular during the 1990s, this issue became topical in connection with the ratification of the ILO (International Labour Organisation) Convention. Matters relating to the ILO Convention have been dealt with very broadly in the Nordic countries in recent years, for example, in report SOU 1999:25 in Sweden, and in reports NOU 1997:4 and 5 and Jebens (1999) in Norway. Vihervuori in 1999 and in 2001 Governor of Lapland Ms Hannele Pokka's committee endeavoured to arrive at a solution to the Saami issue which would have meant Finland ratifying the general ILO Convention associated with right of indigenous peoples.

The cornerstone of the Saami policy followed by the Finnish government in recent years has been the regulation incorporated in the constitution adopted in July 1995, according to which the Saami, as an indigenous people, "have the right to maintain and develop their language and culture". Instead of devoting effort to improving the status of the Saami language and culture, the Saami Parliament has required radical change in land ownership and occupational conditions in the Saami region, such that the primary right to use land and water in the pursuance of Saami livelihoods should be held by those Saami individuals whose names appear on the Saami Parliament's register of electors. The administrator did not attempt using documentary evidence to determine to whom the rights to land and waters in the Saami home region should belong as a chain of events and a practice running unbroken through the different centuries. Rather, this question has been avoided by concentrating on giving grounds for numerous proposals for changes in different laws, interpreting only the ILO Convention applying to indigenous and tribal peoples, as though the question were one of a people lacking a written history, documentary proof, and above all the concept of civilisation generally held by civilised nations.

In Finland, when talking of Saami livelihoods, for the sake of clarity it needs to be said that these are followed not only by the Saami themselves, but also by the Finnish descendants of the same families. Reindeer husbandry in Norway and Sweden differs from that in Finland. The reason for this lies in the settlement history of the northern part of Finland. The Saami, the so-called forest Lapps, and the Finnish peasants have together inhabited the wildernesses of the Saami region since at least the 1700s. Local means of earning an income continue to be shared by everyone in the district. It thus seems difficult to elevate one group of Lapps (the Saami speaking faction) merely on the basis of language to a superior status compared to another permanent group of Lapps (the Finnish speaking faction). Thus, it is not possible to confine the practising of various kinds of livelihoods and opportunities for improving these forms of livelihood only to people entered on the Saami register. This is not required by the ILO Convention.

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To clarify the issue a little, it is necessary to mention that in addition to the Saami, the Finns living in the area, as well as the Finnish-speaking descendants of the “taxable Lapps”, have also traditionally gone in for reindeer herding and other Lappish activities. Such people do not appear on the Saami Parliament’s register of electors. I consider it extremely questionable for land and water rights to be arranged solely on the basis of the ILO Convention, ignoring the existing documentary evidence by going back three generations, thereby depriving some people of their rights, while willingly granting these to others. The grounds for such a distinction would be language, rather than historical rights.

The administrator’s proposal has led to a situation in which the “Lapps” practising the same forms of livelihood as the Saami who have inhabited the region for longer are now bickering over their rights.

The new Finnish Constitution secures the right of the Sámi people to practice their own culture and indigenous occupations in their homelands. In addition to the rights enshrined in the Constitution, the Sámi have been demanding ownership rights to State land and exclusive rights for Sámi people to engage in reindeer husbandry, hunting and fishing. However, in autumn 2002, the Constitutional Law Committee stated that protection of Sámi cultural autonomy by law does not change the legislation currently in force which regulates who is allowed to practice traditional occupations in the Sámi homelands. These provisions can only be changed through amendment of the legislation currently in force. The Committee further underlined that if amendments are proposed to the right to practice certain occupations, they must be based on valid research results. The Ministry of Justice commissioned a study on Lapland land rights from the Universities of Oulu and Lapland together, and the study was completed in October 2006 and published in the Ministry series of publications. These studies show unequivocally that there are no collective rights the State would have taken solely from Sámi people. Therefore, the statement that Sámi culture could be saved just by solving land owning rights is doubtful. The political leaders of the Sámi Parliament appear to have problems in admitting that the Sámi definition was made without sufficient background research and the law based on this definition cannot solve land ownership disputes. The newest study by Oulu and Lapland Universities will mend this lack of background research and help democratic decision processes in land ownership questions. To morrow is not yesterday in this matter. Regarding the ILO Convention, it is intended for protecting aboriginals living in old style, not Sámi people living like other Finnish, Norwegian or Swedish citizens. Perhaps it just sounds finer to call one selves indigenous people instead of just a group of people.

All in all, the juridical starting point for the ratification of the ILO Convention, and the contents of the latter, have an historical basis, and the applying of historical factors (= the Lappish village system) today to a variety of stakeholders in an advanced juridical system and society calls for meticulous preparation and a careful study of all the consequences of the proposal. Thus, the correct and sustainable basis is the recognition of historical continuity.



According to current Finnish law, conflicts regarding existing rights and ownership are resolved in a court of law. Even Parliament is not permitted to resolve an ongoing ownership controversy by means of an ordinary Act. Hence, if stakeholders wish to contest the State's ownership of lands within the Saami region, this must be resolved in the courts.

Finally, I would like to remind you that Finland and Sweden have a long common history. I sincerely hope that we can jointly carry out this investigation to ensure that nobody's constitutional and human rights are violated, either in Finland or in Sweden (e.g. a verdict document as an appendix).

This kind of investigation neither violates nor weakens the rights of Saami speaking people and their opportunities to carry out the traditional Saami forms of livelihood.

Provisions under the Reindeer Husbandry Act which entered into force in 1990 allow the Sámi to draw up guidelines for the reindeer husbandry practiced by their herding cooperatives which prevent 'outsiders' from making incursions into Sámi reindeer herding and thereby their source of livelihood.



I was born on 17.1.1943 in Inari, one of Lapland's northernmost municipalities. I am a son of the Reindeer Sámi People and my parents lived in the wilderness. Between 1976 and 1995, I was member of the Sámi Delegation of the Finnish Sámi Parliament which is elected every four years, and in 1995, I was elected to the new Sámi Parliament in association with Sámi cultural self government which took effect at the beginning of 1996. I have served as editor of the Sapmelas magazine, a Sámi publication, since 1980. The magazine appeared ten times a year and was distributed free to all Sámi speaking families until 1998. Now, the magazine is extinct because of a lack of economic resources from the Sámi Parliament or from alternative sources of funding.