

MASTERARBEIT | MASTER'S THESIS

Titel | Title

Whose land is it? The land rights conflict between the
Norwegian state and the Sámi
A case study of the Máze/Áltá and Fovsen conflicts from a
theoretical Sámi feminist and (neoliberal) capitalist-critical
perspective

verfasst von | submitted by

Katharina Anna Maria Krumpeck BA BA MA

angestrebter akademischer Grad | in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (MA)

Wien | Vienna, 2026

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme code as it appears on the
student record sheet:

UA 066 808

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme as it appears on the student
record sheet:

Masterstudium Gender Studies

Betreut von | Supervisor:

Dr. Tomi Adeaga Privatdoz. M.A.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my supervisor Tomi Adeaga for deciding to supervise me and always replying so quickly and reliably to e-mails. Thank you!

Thank you to Gertrude Saxinger for establishing contacts to Sápmi and always being very encouraging and kind in our e-mail conversations. Thank you to the Sámi scholars who replied to e-mails and especially one of them who took time out of their very busy schedule to talk to me when I was still in the very early stages of my thesis.

Thank you to Gabriele Michalitsch for support and helpful feedback early on.

Due to lack of accessible material in Austria, a research stay in Norway was inevitable and thankfully made possibly by receiving a short time grant by the University of Vienna.

I want to express sincere thanks to the very kind and helpful staff at the Norwegian National Archives, the Norwegian Labour Movement's Archives. Particularly warm thanks is owed to Lena Karlstrøm at the Alta Museum and Nils Jørgen at the Sámi Archives in Guovdageidnu. Thank you so much for your assistance!

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Indigenous Peoples.....	5
2.1. International legal categorisation.....	5
2.2. Indigenous Peoples in Europe.....	8
2.3 Indigenous understandings of the land.....	13
3. Case study context.....	15
3.1. The Sámi on the Norwegian side of Sápmi.....	15
3.2. The Norwegian nation-state.....	19
4. The embedded cases.....	22
4.1. Máze/Áltá-conflict (1968-1982).....	23
4.2. Fovsen conflict (2010-2024).....	27
5. Theory.....	33
5.1. Feminist critiques of (neoliberal) capitalism.....	35
5.2. Sámi feminist theories.....	41
6. Methodology and material.....	47
6.1. Decolonial and Indigenous methodologies.....	48
6.2. Case study.....	52
6.2.1. Archival work.....	53
6.2.2. Document analysis.....	54
6.2.3. Material.....	55
7. Analysis.....	57
7.1. Ontological conflict and decolonisation.....	59
7.1.1. Landownership.....	60
7.1.2. Development.....	64
7.1.3. Valuing land as a resource.....	69
7.2. Epistemic violence and decolonisation.....	71
7.3. Democratic values.....	75
7.3.1. Decision-making.....	77
7.3.2. Legal issues.....	83
7.3.3. State violence.....	85
7.3.4. Solidarity and collaboration.....	87
8. Discussion.....	90
9. Conclusion.....	96
10. Bibliography.....	98
10.1. Archival sources.....	98
10.2. List of references.....	100
11. Appendix.....	110
11.1. Abstract (English).....	110
11.2. Abstract (Deutsch).....	110

1. Introduction

The Sámi are the only officially recognised and one of many Indigenous Peoples in Europe. They have been the inhabitants of Sápmi which is a great land area that is today split into the nation-states of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia.¹ While it is unclear how many Sámi exist, it is assumed that approximately 100,000 Sámi live in all of Sápmi (Hirvonen 2008, 24) with the greatest population living in Norway. As is typically the case in settler colonialist contexts such as Norway, “[l]and is what is most valuable, contested, required” (Tuck & Yang 2012, 5). The Sámi, much like many other Indigenous Peoples, have a reciprocal relationship with the land where they do not consider themselves superior to, but in relationship with it (e.g. Kuokkanen 2019; Styres 2019). As a result, the land is not considered as something to own (e.g. Somby in Kuhn 2020), but is understood as something that is collectively lived on, used and cared for.² Such an understanding of and relationship with the land differs greatly from ruthless and profit-oriented land grabbing as done by settler colonial state and corporate representatives. Since settler colonialism is tightly interwoven with heteropatriarchal structures (e.g. Knobbloch & Kuokkanen 2015; Arvin et al. 2013; Dankertsen 2021), this thesis will investigate how the land rights conflict between the Norwegian state and the Sámi can be analysed from a theoretical Indigenous (Sámi) feminist and (neoliberal) capitalist-critical feminist perspective.

Indigenous and Sámi feminist (Knobbloch 2024; Kuokkanen 2019; Hirvonen 2008; Dankertsen 2021) and (neoliberal) capitalist-critical feminist perspectives (Brown 2015) have been chosen as the main theoretical foci because an intersectional approach is indispensable when discussing the complex interdependence of gender, race and the nation in settler colonial land rights conflicts (Knobbloch & Kuokkanen 2015). The devaluation of land as an exploitable resource that is independent from humans is part of colonial, capitalist and gendered binary thought that divides and hierarchises between human–nature, human–animal, economy–nature and culture–nature. While especially able-bodied, *white*, middle-class men are positioned on the superior cultural and economical level, members of minorities such as the Sámi are ‘othered’ and denigrated as belonging to nature, tradition and the past. By contrast, Indigenous and Sámi feminists emphasise the relationality,

1 Sápmi is North Sami. In Lule Sami it is “Sábme”, in Southern Sami “Saepmi”, Pite Sami “Sämijednam”, Ume Sami “Sábmie”, Inari Sami “Säämi”, Skolt Sami “Sää’mjânnam” and Kildin Sami “Самь ёмьне” (Saam’ jiemn’n’e).

2 I will use ‘land’ in my thesis similar to how Tuck & Yang (2012, 5) do as an umbrella term that includes “land/water/air subterranean earth”.

interwovenness and plurality of these supposedly opposed poles (Knoblock 2024, 133). Sámi feminisms discuss and analyse these developments and highlight the gendered consequences of the interplay between colonial and heteropatriarchal logics (ibid., 149).

While a critique of capitalism is often part of Indigenous feminist discussions, the role of current capitalism and its “neoliberal reason” (Brown 2015) in previous and current conflicts often remains insufficiently addressed. Heiret (2024) points out that the neoliberalisation of the Norwegian state is an under-researched topic, which is also partly due to the fact that neoliberalism happened differently in the North than in other countries in the world. Heiret (2024) observes that the Norwegian welfare state perseveres not in spite but because of neoliberal structures. This finding is relevant for my thesis as the Norwegian state-owned company Statkraft is the owner of the Áltá hydropower station and part-owner of the Fovsen wind-park (Statkraft). Both the Máze/Áltá (Masi/Alta)³ and the Fovsen (Fosen)⁴ projects were not only part of a colonial state project, but also a (neoliberal) capitalist one where land and nature are understood as monetary values to be dominated (e.g. Federici 2014) – an understanding that is fundamentally different to Indigenous ontologies. Complementing a Sámi feminist with a (neoliberal) capitalist-critical perspective allows an in-depth discussion of the political, economic and gendered dimensions of the conflict between Indigenous epistemes⁵ and Norwegian state interests.

There has not yet been any comparative research on the land rights conflict in Norway with a theoretical Indigenous feminist and decidedly capitalist-critical feminist perspective. Research on the Máze/Áltá conflict has been mostly published in Norwegian and is, compared to academic publications on the Fovsen conflict rather limited. A number of master’s theses have been written on the subject, with one of them explicitly focusing on how the conflict has impacted Sámi politics and nation-building in Norway (Aanesland 2020), while others focus on the conflict between growth and conservation within the Labour Party (Melbye 2015; Lepperød 2023). Even though this is fairly recent research – which underlines the apparent lack of academic discussions of the conflict while many

3 The Sámi criticise the term “Alta conflict” (in Norwegian mostly “Altasaken” – “the Alta case”), since it focuses solely on the construction of the dam and distracts from viewing it as part of the ongoing Sámi movement to have their rights acknowledged and respected by the Norwegian state (Guttormsen et al. 2023). Máze is the name of the town that was originally intended to be flooded for the construction of the dam. By writing Máze/Áltá I attempt to not only include but foreground the Sámi perspective.

4 Sámi spellings will be primarily used throughout the thesis for places located in Sápmi, with Norwegian spelling added in brackets when first used.

5 Rauna Kuokkanen defines “the concept of ‘episteme’ to denote ways of knowing, understanding and relating to the world” (2010, 61).

non-academic publications and documents exist – that provides a good overview of different aspects of the conflict, its gendered dimensions are not discussed. Similarly, the only explicitly comparative academic text about Fovsen and Máze/Áltá (Laframboise 2023) only very generally compares the two conflicts without paying any attention to gender or capitalism. Laframboise ends their article by clarifying that further research on this topic is needed, which is something this master’s thesis seeks to contribute to.

In recent years, more research has emerged that discusses ‘green colonialism’ in the Nordic context. ‘Green colonialism’ refers to state and corporate intrusions into Indigenous lands that are justified by their contribution to the ‘green’ energy shift. Eva Maria Fjellheim (2023a,b; 2024), Rauna Kuokkanen (2023) and Susanne Normann (2021) have done research on the Fovsen conflict that sees it as an example of green colonialism. They argue that it follows existing colonial structures and practices of exploitation that are being justified as ‘necessary’ costs for the green shift. In the process of reaching their political and economic goals, state and corporate representatives purposefully silence and sideline Sámi rights, knowledge and voices in the decision-making process, thus threatening their existence. Research on the Fovsen conflict also often addresses the legal dimension of the conflict (e.g. Ravna 2022; Olsen 2019) as the Norwegian Supreme Court ruled that the concession given by the Norwegian government is a violation of the Sámi’s human rights to practice their culture. By applying a comparative approach and complementary theories in my thesis, it will *be* illustrate how the persistence of colonial power structures as well as resistance against them are gendered in Saepmi.

To answer the research question, a qualitative explanatory case study of the conflict between the Norwegian state and the Sámi was conducted. According to Yin (2018; see also Gerring 2004), case studies are an empirical research method that are particularly suitable for investigating contemporary complex social phenomena in their real-life contexts. For this thesis an embedded single-case study with a focus on the Máze/Áltá and the Fovsen-conflict which revolved around the construction of a hydroelectric power station on the Áltá/Guovdageidnu (Alta/Kautokeino) river and Europe’s largest on-land wind park in Fovsen was done. Both conflicts are located in Sápmi: the Máze/Áltá conflict in North Sámi territory (Finnmárku/Finnmark)⁶ and the Fovsen-conflict in South Sámi areas. While both conflicts span a wide period of time (the Máze/Áltá-conflict from 1968-1982 and the

⁶ Finnमárku (Kven: Finmarkku) is the northernmost county of Norway where also Máze and Áltá are located. It is a land area that has traditionally been dominated by Sámi.

Fovsen-conflict from (2010-2024), the focus will be on the height of the conflicts, meaning the years 1979-1981 and 2023-2024, when the demonstrations and protests reached their height.

The two conflicts have been chosen as they have been the largest and most publicised organised demonstrations against the Norwegian state's dispossession of Sámi lands. A comparison of the Máze/Áltá and Fovsen conflicts makes it not only possible to identify patterns of settler colonialist and heteropatriarchal structures in decision-making processes, but also Indigenous feminist counter-strategies (cf. Kuokkanen 2021). As the case study is based on documents, such as press statements, speeches, letters and few newspaper and media reports, a document analysis (Thompson 2015; Noetzel et al. 2018) will be done. With few exceptions, most of the material on the Máze/Áltá case stems from archives in Norway while for the Fovsen case similar documents that are online accessible were used. Since this thesis is dealing with colonial relations and I am a *white* researcher from another country, following Rauna Kuokkanen's belief – inspired by Gayatri Spivak – that “one of the first and most pressing responsibilities of the academy is that of doing homework” (2010, 62), particular attention was paid when choosing the literature and texts used. By doing this case study from a decolonial positionality (Smith 2021; Kuokkanen 2000; 2010) and theoretical Sámi feminist and capitalist-critical perspective, the study enables an in-depth analysis of the structural mechanisms behind the land rights conflicts and its gendered dimensions and contributes to the debate on social justice and Indigenous self-determination not only in Norway and Europe, but globally.

In the following thesis, I will first give an overview of Indigenous Peoples and the legal framework of land rights (2.1.) before providing a brief insight into Indigenous Peoples in Europe (2.2.) and Indigenous understandings of ‘the land’ (2.3). The third chapter offers more information on the case study context: the Sámi on the Norwegian side of Sápmi (3.1.) and the Norwegian state (3.2.). The final chapter of these contextual chapters is chapter four in which the Máze/Áltá (4.1.) and Fovsen conflict (4.2.) are described. In chapter five the theoretical foundation of the thesis is illustrated by discussing feminist critiques of (neoliberal) capitalism (5.1.) and Sámi feminist theories (5.2.). This chapter is followed by the methodology and material chapter in which decolonial and Indigenous methodologies (6.1.) and the case study (6.2.), including archival work (6.2.1.), document analysis (6.2.2.) and a specification of the material (6.2.3.), are presented. These first six

chapters constitute the necessary basis for the analysis in chapter seven which focuses on ontological (7.1.), epistemic (7.2.) and democratic values (7.3.) from a theoretical Indigenous feminist perspective. Lastly, the discussion (chapter 8) and conclusion (chapter 9) conclude the thesis.

2. Indigenous Peoples

This chapter will give a brief introduction to Indigenous Peoples which is used as an umbrella term for many different peoples in different contexts, including the Sámi. According to Schackt & Wæhle (2021), over 250 million people could be classified as Indigenous Peoples. However, the term has also been criticised for subsuming a diversity of peoples and experiences with different imperialist and colonial powers under one umbrella term (e.g. Smith 2021, 6; Finbog 2020, 12). Thus, it is considered more respectful and accurate to use the respective names, such as Sámi, Māori, Wayuu or Cherokee. At the same time, the collective term Indigenous Peoples can be useful as an international legal and political category that enables wider visibility, transnational collaboration and solidarity. It serves to highlight the fact that Indigenous Peoples share “experiences of invasion, colonisation and loss of their land areas and existential basis” as well as experiences of modern forms of discrimination, racism and the inability of practising their culture (Schackt & Wæhle 2021). Dankertsen (2019, 124) emphasises that “the history of both the Sámi people and Indigenous people globally is a complex process in which indigeneity has been racialized differently in different times and places.” We need to always be careful to contextualise who we are talking about when we speak of Indigenous Peoples as well as being conscious of who is and is not included in international discussions on Indigenous Peoples.⁷ As the Sámi on the Norwegian side of Sápmi been centrally involved in the Indigenous Rights movement, including the writing of the International Labour Organisation’s Convention 169 and have thus been part of the global Indigenous movement and using the term themselves, this chapter should help embed their land rights conflict in a greater Indigenous Movement’s context, while maintaining a focus on contextual specificities.

2.1. International legal categorisation

While there is no definition of Indigenous Peoples that everyone agrees on, the “Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 169” of the ILO from 1989 is the only “international

⁷ Smith (2021, 288) also points out that “[t]here are many countries where Indigenous is not a term that can be used safely by communities who might wish to call themselves Indigenous” as that would make them more vulnerable to state violence.

human rights treaty that explicitly aims to regulate the relationship between states and groups with the status of indigenous peoples” (Semb 2015, 350). According to Sámi legal scholar Øyvind Ravna, “[d]espite relatively low international support, the main principles of the Convention can nevertheless be regarded as an expression of common international indigenous law” (2020, 235). UN Declarations also exist, such as the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (2007) – which includes many principles that are also stated in the ILO 169 (Ravna 2020, 235) – as well as Article 27 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) that states that “ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities [...] shall not be denied the right [...] to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.” While both UN declarations have been adopted by Norway – in 2007 and 1972 respectively, they do not require any further ratifications or national measures. Nonetheless, it has been said that the UNDRIP has been symbolically important (Andresen et al. 2021, 461).

The ILO 169 is the only internationally legally binding document and, as such, has direct legal and political effects and not merely symbolic value. It defines Indigenous People as

peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.

This definition clarifies that Indigenous Peoples lived in an area that has been colonised and that borders of states have been drawn without considering Indigenous Peoples’ lands. The convention emphasises that Indigenous Peoples and their “institutions, property, labour, culture and *environment* of the peoples concerned” (my emphasis) should be safeguarded (Article 4) and that “[g]overnments shall take measures, in co-operation with the peoples concerned, to protect and preserve the environment of the territories they inhabit” (Article 7.4.). In Article 7.1. it is elaborated that Indigenous Peoples “shall have the right to decide their own priorities for the process of development as it affects their lives, beliefs, institutions and spiritual well-being and the lands they occupy or otherwise use [...]” as well as to “participate in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of plans and programmes for national and regional development which may affect them directly.” Contrary to common settler colonial practice, they are to be included in the decision-making processes that affect their land areas.

In the second part the convention that focuses on “land”, the right to be consulted is further elaborated on. The governments are to respect the relationship Indigenous Peoples have with the land and the value it has both for their spirituality and their culture and acknowledge that this relationship is often of a collective rather than an individualistic nature (Article 13). Article 14.1 emphasises that “[t]he rights of ownership and possession of the peoples concerned over the lands which they traditionally occupy shall be recognised” as well as their rights to lands they have traditionally had access to. Indigenous Peoples are to be consulted when development projects are planned in their environments and should have the right “to participate in the use, management and conservation of these resources” (Article 15.1). Ravna (2020, 236) notes that this right to “consultations and participation in decision-making is still one of the main challenges in the relationship between indigenous peoples and the majority population in many nation states.” Ravna also highlights that the legal duty stated in this document includes more than mere consultations and carifies that “indigenous peoples must have a real influence on decisions made in relation to the aforementioned resources” (2020, 239). This right to be consulted has been enshrined in a Norwegian consultation agreement in 2005 (Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion 2018). However, it does not yet include the principle of free, prior and informed consent is central in the UNDRIP 2007 and makes Norway’s Indigenous rights strategy seem a bit outdated (cf. Ravna 2020).

While such international legal declarations have been considered important achievements in Indigenous Peoples’ fight for sovereignty and rights, scholars such as Rauna Kuokkanen (2019, 32) criticise that Indigenous law is state-centred and only views Indigenous rights through such a state-lense (cf. Venne 2015, 29-30). In addition to that, gender is not mentioned in the convention.⁸ According to Barsh (2015, 89) Canada’s proposal to include gender equality in the ILO 169 was “resoundingly” rejected. While some wanted to include it, “others feared that any admission of the possibility of discrimination or wrongdoing was a breach in the wall of self-determination they were building” (Barsh 2015 89-90). Thus, the question of gender has been completely sidelined in this legal document, which makes the Indigenous feminist contributions to both Indigenous theory and practice all the more urgent.

8 Apart from mentioning that women should not be sexually harassed at work (Article 20.3.d).

2.2. Indigenous Peoples in Europe

This chapter will mostly focus on the Sámi as they are the only officially recognised Indigenous People in Europe. However, the fact that the Sámi are the only officially recognised Indigenous Peoples in Europe may in itself indicate the difficulty and imperfection of the category of Indigenous Peoples. There exist many more Peoples in Europe that could be classified as Indigenous and the reasons for why they are not classified as such vary – even in the Sámi context, Norway is the only country that has ratified ILO 169. Consequently, this chapter will commence by giving a brief overview of a number of Indigenous Peoples in Europe to illustrate how wide and diverse the category of Indigenous Peoples can be – from the Scottish and Irish to the Kalaallit of Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland) and the probably less well-known Livonian Peoples of Latvia (Vaivade 2025). While they all share very diverse histories of colonial oppression, assimilation, trauma, discrimination, and shame, they also work hard for reviving their languages, continue practising their cultures and to gain more legal rights and political visibility. As the panellists of *Indigeneity in Europe* (2024)⁹ all point out, Indigeneity is very context-dependent and the use of the term as well as the often simultaneous use of decoloniality and decolonisation always needs to be clearly defined so as to avoid drawing simplistic parallels between and homogenising Indigenous experiences that often differ greatly in terms of violence and duration of colonialism, as well as their decolonisation processes.

The Kalaallit of Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland) are, next to the Sámi, the only Indigenous People that are included in the *Indigenous World's book of 2025* (The Indigenous World 2025). While Kalaallisut (of West Greenland) is the main language of Kalaallit Nunaat, there exist two more languages spoken in Greenland, namely the Livi oraasia that is spoken in East Greenland by the Livit of Kangia and Inuktun that is spoken by Inughuit/Avanersuarmit near Thule in the North of Greenland (ibid., 487). Kalaallit Nunaat has been self-governing since 2009, but as Aaju Peters in her film “*Twice Colonized*” (2023) and Bjerregaard & Larsen (2016) point out, decolonisation is an ongoing process. The 2009 Act on Self-Government considers the Kalaallit “a people under international law

9 At this panel Feargal Mac Ionnrachtaigh (Ireland), Annika Pasanen (Finland) and Paul Meighan (Scotland) all discussed to what extent the Irish and Scottish fit into the picture of Indigeneity, while Pasanen contributed from her perspective of having worked in and on Sápmi for a number of years. A leading question was to what extent Indigeneity in Europe may be considered to be an oxymoron – considering the colonial past (and present) of European nations. They agreed that it is complicated and that clear distinctions need to be made – both within Europe and especially beyond – when discussing Indigeneity and decolonisation.

with the right to self-determination” (ibid.). The ILO 169 was ratified in 1996 and the parliament voted for the UNDRIP in 2007 (The Indigenous World 2025, 487-488). However, as noted by Andersen et al. (2015, 241): “[e]ven though Greenland has obtained a larger degree of self-government, Denmark still governs it in a range of areas”. Kalaallit Nunaat is the country with the highest suicide rates (World Population Review 2026) which has been linked to colonial trauma (Bjerregaard & Larsen 2016), and illustrates the ongoing need for decolonial work in all areas of society, even when legally and technically many rights have been secured. The ratification of conventions alone does not simply transpire to the de facto improvements of peoples’ and communities’ lives.

The Sámi are similarly faced with a number of conflicts regarding de jure and de facto rights and ongoing discrimination. They are the Indigenous Peoples of Northern Europe, including the Kola Peninsula that belongs to Russia.¹⁰ While definite numbers are not available it is assumed that 100,000 in total exist today, whereof most live on the Norwegian (ca. 50,000-65,000), approximately 20,000 on the Swedish, 8,000 on the Finnish and 2,000 on the Russian side of Sápmi (The Indigenous World 2025). Sápmi refers to the land areas that have traditionally been lived on and used by the Sámi.¹¹ It is also used to emphasise a pan-Sámi identity that goes beyond the linguistic, cultural and political differences of the respective nation-states. There used to be eleven Sámi languages or dialects¹² of which two (Akkala Sami and Kemi Sami) are no longer used (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 20).¹³ While all are considered threatened today, North Sámi is the most spoken of the Sami languages while Pite Sami, South Sami and Lule Sami are on the UN list of endangered languages (Andresen et al. 2021, 444).¹⁴

10 The focus in this chapter will remain on the Scandinavian countries as there have historically been the most ongoing contact and similarities due to geopolitical reasons.

11 It stretches all across the North until the Kola Peninsula and while there exists no clear Southern border of Sápmi, there have always been Sámi settlements in the South and today many live there again, for instance in Oslo (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 20).

12 Gaski speaks of one language and different dialects “for political reasons” (as cited in Kuhn 2020). Similarly, Stefan Mikaelsson (as cited in Kuhn 2020) explains that he likes to speak of one “Sámi nation” because “[w]e have everything that is usually attributed to a nation: our own language, culture, and tradition. They were created by ourselves and existed long before the nation-states were created. Their leaders drew borders because they couldn’t unite. We never needed borders.”

13 The still used Sami languages are: South Sami, Ume Sami, Pite Sami, North Sami, Enare Sami, Skolte Sami, Kildin Sami and Tersami.

14 The Sámi languages are considered to be “one of the most developed languages in the world when it comes to describing Arctic nature and conditions of life in the North” (Gaski 1997, 13). It is a very “precise” language that also reflects peoples’ relationships with each other and the natural world (Gaski 1997, 14; Jernsletten 1997, 88). Helander (1996, 2) also emphasises that “[t]he Sami language expresses cultural knowledge, ecological know-how and knowing, and values in relation to a sustainable way of living” (Helander 1996, 2).

It is unclear when exactly the Sámi arrived in what today is Sápmi, but in the course of the first 700 years CE a Proto-Sami language spread in the North and West from what is today South Finland and Karelen (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 24). Sámi culture did not develop in isolation but together with other cultures and traders (ibid., 26). While the middle ages were a time of increased settlements in Sápmi that led to both conflict and economic possibilities (ibid., 32), in the early modern period settler colonialist policies increased,¹⁵ especially in the form of setting incentives for people to move to the North, such as tax freedom and release from military services (ibid., 44, 52; Andresen et al. 2021, 41, 84-85, 177; Niemi 1997). The reason for these policies were state expansion politics, an increasing population and an interest in the natural resources (Niemi 1997; Andresen et al. 2021, 42-43; Barraclough & Donecker 2016, 39). In the later modern period, national borders were starting to divide up Sápmi while both colonial and missionary pressures on its inhabitants and resources increased (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 37-38, 42; Andresen et al. 2021, 115; Niemi 1997, 65).¹⁶

It is only since fairly recently that colonialism has been used to describe the developments in Sápmi (Höglund & Burnett 2019, 1). While Berg-Nordlie (2024, 43) also calls for caution as to the extent of which one can speak of colonisation in the Sámi context, as in some areas settlements by Norse, Swedish and Finnish people go back a very long time, “the northern coast, the northern and middle Scandinavian inland and the eastern areas towards the White Sea” were clearly dominated by the Sámi (ibid.). The claiming of land via individual and industrial settlements show clear parallels to settler colonial practices elsewhere. The colonisation of Sápmi and other parts of the world happened simultaneously with similar motives at play: “economic gains, settlement of ever-growing populations, missionarisation, ‘civilisation’ of the ‘savages’ and the like” (Andresen et al. 2021, 142).¹⁷

15 The modern period stretched from ca. 1500 until the early 1800 (Berg-Nordlie 2024).

16 The interest in Northern natural resources was not limited to the Nordic countries, also England and the Netherlands were involved (Niemi 1997, 65). It was also during this time, and especially in the later half of the modern period, that Sámi religious practices were beginning to be actively repressed and forbidden while agricultural colonialism severely increased and the first mines were opened (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 53; Hætta 1996, 17).

17 Sweden and Denmark-Norway also had external colonies in North America, the Caribbean, Ghana, West Africa and most-well known and close to home: Greenland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands (Höglund & Burnett 2019, 4). Andresen et al. (2021, 83) clarifies that the rulers in Copenhagen (who then ruled over Denmark-Norway) thought of both these external colonies Greenland, Island, the Faeroer Islands and internal colonies such as Finnmark as “exotic” areas they wanted to monopolised trade in the 17th and 18th centuries. Finnmark was also used as a penal colony which means that convicts were sent up North to populate the lands until 1842 (Andresen et al. 2021, 84, 119). These various settler colonial tendencies are all closely connected to the idea of a ‘last frontier’ or ‘terra nullius’ (Niemi 1997; Berg-Nordlie 2024, 57) – a typical devaluation of Indigenous Peoples’ ways of life that denies their right to

Due to the similarities between the colonisation of Sápmi and other settler colonies and as the term has been used by Sámi representatives and activists themselves, settler colonialism will be used in this thesis to refer to past and present power imbalances while being aware that settler colonialism has had different manifestations depending on the context, also within Sápmi.

After decades of pressure on the Sámi and Sápmi by the settlement of farmers from the South, taxation policies and laws, the situation of the Sámi took a substantial turn for the worse in the course of the 19th century when Social Darwinist and other racist theories and ideologies increased in popularity across Europe. In addition to that, the national borders were permanently defined and the nationalist ideology of one nation that has one language, one culture, one heritage and one history led to an intensification of colonial policies and state pressures against the Sámi in all of Scandinavia, though to varying degrees (Andresen et al. 2021, 46; Finbog 2020, 46). While in Norway there was an explicit assimilationist policy aimed at the Sámi and other minorities such as the Kven (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 74), Finnish politics were also assimilationist, but only in general terms (ibid., 94).¹⁸ In Sweden, on the other hand, they made more of a differentiation between the ‘real’ Sámi as reindeer herding Sámi who should remain Sámi and were segregated, to other Sámi who were not deemed to be ‘real,’ thus, should be assimilated into Swedish society (Kuhn 2020, 22). Regardless of the different implementations and forms of colonialism, Kuhn (2020, 18) emphasises that “settlerism, forced migration, and assimilation policies” affected all of Sápmi, resulting in the Sámi being reduced to a minority almost everywhere they live today.¹⁹

While a lot of knowledge has been lost and social structures were actively weakened through colonial policies, it is assumed that “men, women and two-spirit people had their specific roles and responsibilities. These duties were usually gender differentiated but considered equal and complimentary” in Sámi societies (Kuokkanen 2021, 312; Andresen et al. 2021, 96). It was considered normal that women owned and inherited reindeer (ibid.; cf. Kuokkanen 2009; Eijkok 2004, 54),²⁰ and the production of handicraft was not labelled as ‘female’ work. Máret Sara (1982, 23) also notes that it is assumed that Sámi women

land and justifies colonial encroachment upon it.

18 Berg-Nordlie (2024, 78) explains that general assimilationist policies are policies where the government agencies act as if minorities did not exist while specific ones target them directly.

19 One of the places where the Sámi are still a majority is in Finnmark, Norway’s northernmost county.

20 Kuokkanen (2009) writes in her article about how women are systematically excluded from reindeer herding through state policies that defined it as a male profession.

took part in fishing and hunting. It was also usual for husbands to live with their wife's family for at least a year after marriage – thus strengthening the matrilineal bond as opposed to the patrilineal one (ibid.). Sara (1982, 22) also clarifies that Sámi women have always been politically active as is also reflected in the demonstrations against the building of the Áltá dam and the Fovsen windparks.

With missionary work, colonialism and capitalism, strict binary gender roles were introduced that set 'the man' more visibly in public areas, doing productive work and 'the woman' in private, doing reproductive work. These changes mostly had negative consequences for Sámi women (Finbog 2020, 24; Sara 1982). Kuokkanen (2009, 503) clarifies that "[t]he process of incorporating indigenous societies into the capitalist economy has also been highly gendered and has had many gender-specific consequences" (cf. Eikjok 2004, 54). It resulted in a shift from a "family and kinship community" to "a privatized community and services provided by institutions" that greatly impacted existing gender relations (Hirvonen 2008, 213). Kuokkanen elaborates on this by saying that for Sámi women this has meant "the loss of both their status and visibility in their livelihood and in policies regulating it. This has led to changes in reindeer-herding activities, which in turn has radically reshaped communal work practices and introduced a new, gendered division of labor" (2009, 503). Kuokkanen (2019) sums this up by stating that gender discrimination and heteropatriarchy were part of the colonisation of Indigenous Peoples (cf. Finbog 2020, 24; cf. 5.1.).

The traditionally nomadically living Sámi, much like many other Indigenous Peoples, have never thought of the land they have used for fishing, reindeer herding and that has played a central role in their religious, cultural and linguistic practices as something to own. Rather, the use of it was communally and collectively arranged. Especially in the case of reindeer herding, land in Sápmi was organised in community groups called *siida* (North Sami)²¹ until circa the 17th century when colonial pressure on the land increased (Ruong 1937, 17-21 in Finbog 2020, 38).²² The *siida* system is a traditional Sámi community organisation of the land where 10-12 families got together to herd reindeer on specific land areas (Jernsletten 1997, 90; Finbog 2020, 37-38; Berg-Nordlie 2024). Very basically Berg-Nordlie (2024, 41) describes the *siida* as "an ordering of society where re-

21 It is called *sijte* in South Sami, *sijdda* in Lule Sami, *sijjda* in Pite Sami and *sijdda* in Ume Sami.

22 The structure of the *siida* may also have worked against the Sámi in retrospect - instead of choosing to fight for each acre of land, they just moved to a different area, because they could (Finbog 2020, 38).

sources are managed and used in a community by a group of people – who, at the same time, also have their own, marked off private resources” (my translation). This system is based on traditional knowledge and informal rights (Kalstad 1997, 110) and still exists today (ibid., 116). It reflects a different understanding of the land that is based on an equal relationship with and deep respect for it. In the following subchapter, Indigenous People’s understanding of land will be discussed in greater detail.

2.3 Indigenous understandings of the land

Many Indigenous Peoples are dependent on natural resources and have a close spiritual and symbolic connection to the land and water (Schackt & Wæhle 2021) which is often also the basis for much language and culture that is lost when land is lost (Gaski 1997). As noted above, land plays a vital role both in international legislations that attempt to define and secure Indigenous rights as well as Indigenous ontologies. Land in Indigenous ontologies is inextricably entwined with Indigenous identity and existence and is not separable from the people living on, with and from it. This understanding differs greatly from many ‘western’ understandings that consider the land as something to be differentiated from other living entities, such as humans, and something to then be owned, used, sold and exploited for monetary value. In such ontologies, humans – especially *white*, male ones – are considered hierarchically superior to the land and all its other inhabitants, including Indigenous Peoples and women who have been more closely associated with nature than culture, civilisation, science and other domains that are considered superior.

Indigenous Peoples see themselves as part of the land. As Casey (1996, 19 in Styres 2019, 27) says: “we are not only *in* places but *of* them”. This underlines a relational and holistic understanding of the world (Helander 1996, 1). As emphasised by Stavenhagen (1997, 76 in Helander 1996, 1-2): “[l]and is habitat, territory, the basis for social organization, cultural identification and political viability [...]” It is thus central to Indigenous everyday life and identity in a profound way. Styres (2019, 27) defines land as something that both refers to “a physical geographic space but also to the underlying conceptual principles, philosophies, and ontologies of that space.” Styres (ibid.) thus suggest that „[l]and as an Indigenous philosophical construct is both space (abstract) and place/land (concrete); it is also conceptual, experiential, relational, and embodied.” Central to bridging these interrelated dimensions of land is through storytelling, dreaming, memories, song and other cultural traditions such as yoik or duodji in the Sámi context.

Land is thus considered to be a living space. The Sámi writer and historian Aage Solbakk clarifies this by saying: “Here in Sápmi, all of nature is alive. Everything has a soul, whether it is a birch or a rock, a lake or a creek” (as cited in Kuhn 2020, 19). This is also connected to the land being one’s ancestors. Styres (2019, 28) explains that:

[f]rom the time we are born our stories intersect and connect with other stories as we walk this earth. The tracks of all our ancestors can be traced at varying levels, with the most recent ones evident on and near the surface of this land. Buried deeply are the first tracks—those of Indigenous people who have and continue to exist on this land since time immemorial [...].

Styres speaks here of layers that intersect both literally in terms of getting buried in the earth when we die, but also metaphorically in the ways that experiences, stories, beliefs and feelings of belonging that are connected to our ancestors and their understandings of the land and how we live are held by the land and the people that live on, from and through it. Also Schackt & Wæhle (2021) see the land as the connection between the living and the dead. They clarify that conflicts about land are never only about economic or political issues in the strictest sense, but frankly and fundamentally the survival of culture, language, the connection with ancestry, future possibilities, existence and identity.

The understanding of land as an ancestor is closely connected with the awareness of land as knowledgeable and a great teacher. Armstrong (1998, 178 in Styres 2019, 26) tells us that, “all my Elders say that it is land that holds all knowledge of life and death and is a constant teacher [...]”. Settler colonialism and the dispossession of Indigenous lands ruptures this relationship which Indigenous activists seek to repair. Especially considering the escalating climate crisis, it seems more vital than ever to learn from Indigenous understandings of the land (cf. Helander 1996, 2). Aaju Peters – a Kallaalit lawyer and activist – sums this up by saying: “If you protect Indigenous rights, we will protect the land that we depend on. We are the keepers of the Earth” (n.d.). The land gives and we should give back by caring for and protecting it. Styres quotes a Haida teaching that summarises well the generational component of land being both connected to present and future ancestry. It says “we do not inherit the land from our ancestors—we borrow it from our children” (Styres 2019, 28). Such an understanding of the land allows for a more sustainable, future-oriented and respectful treatment of it, as it emphasises the relationship we and our ancestors have with it.

Similar to Peters, Gaski (1997, 24) believes that the Sámi could and should be viewed “as communicators between an ever more estranged ‘Western’ conception of Nature and

the indigenous peoples' preferred holistic view [...] that all creatures are fundamentally dependent on each other [...].” As will be discussed below in greater detail, Indigenous feminist theories are similarly “concerned with the health and care of our territories and *all our relations*, not only human ones” (Starblanket & Green 2024, 14), encouraging the maintenance and strengthening thereof. Keeping in mind such an Indigenous understanding of the land enables a critical rethinking of existing values attached to ideas of development, growth, modernity and resources that often have their roots in colonial and capitalist structures. As the protests against the continued land grabbing by the Norwegian state below shows, Sámi and other activists have stood up and spoken not only for themselves and their relationship with the land, but the land itself – thus illustrating its relevance not only as an economic and material resource, but as being fundamental to the relationships with ancestry, futurity, knowledge, culture, language and identity.

3. Case study context

After having given a first general introduction of the Sámi and Indigenous People above, the following chapter will introduce the case study context of this thesis. First, a brief history of the most relevant aspects of Sámi history on the Norwegian side will be given, with a particular focus on the history of the land rights conflict and Sámi organising. Following that, the main historic developments of the Norwegian state will be described insofar as they are relevant to be able to follow the analysis and discussion below.

3.1. The Sámi on the Norwegian side of Sápmi

As noted above, the colonial pressures and policies increased in Sápmi in the 19th century. A number of legal decisions were made from the 1840s onwards that impacted the Sámi's relationship to their traditionally used land areas. A 1848 court case refuted the Sámi's traditional right of fishing in the Neiden river by allowing everyone to do so which marked a clear shift in state attitudes towards the Sámi (Berg-Nordli 2024, 70; Andresen et al. 2021, 118).²³ In the same year the state claimed that Finnmark had always been owned by the crown, referring to it as a “colony” (Andresen et al. 2021, 145; Berg-Nordlie 2024, 67).²⁴ In 1851 the first reindeer herding law was passed, which split the land into several reindeer herding districts irrespective of existing Sámi siida regulations (Andresen et al. 2021, 195) and in 1852 the law that had allowed the Sámi to cross the borders to Sweden

²³ This also made the Sámi a minority in the village (Niemi 1997, 71).

²⁴ In 1863 this was made official Norwegian law (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 68).

and Russia was withdrawn which led to a reduction of the number of nomadic Sámi and thus also their herding grounds (ibid., 138-141).

Reasons for these developments lie in the newly more independent Norwegian state feeling the need to define its ‘Norwegianness’ (ibid., 131-132; cf. 3.2.).²⁵ According to Andresen et al. (ibid., 154) by the end of the 1840s Norway considered itself one nation with one history, culture, language and “the Sami population was not recognized as a rights-holding entity within the state system” (Eidheim 1997, 31; Berg-Nordlie 2024, 55). Their way of life was not recognised, Sápmi was considered a ‘terra nullius’ and history was being actively rewritten by declaring that Finnmark – Norway’s greatest district that was historically almost exclusively inhabited by Sámi – had always been a Norwegian colony. This claim of no one having lived there before the arrival of Norwegians (Andresen et al. 2021, 133) is not only a classic settler colonialist claim, but was also backed up by academics such as Rudolf Keyser who claimed that the Sámi had migrated to the North only after Norwegians had already settled there (Andresen et al. 2021, 133). State officials also based their claims on racist and Social Darwinist theories claiming that the Sámi were of a lower ‘race’ and thus ‘deserving’ displacement (ibid.; cf. 6.1.).

These nationalist and racist theories combined with state security concerns as the Sámi had been a nomadic People (Andresen et al. 2021, 157; Niemi 1997, 73), led to a state-led assimilation policy beginning in 1851 (Andresen et al. 2021, 130) that lasted until the 1970s (Krömer & Allemann 2016, 104; Magga 2015, 299; Andresen et al. 2021, 157). The specific assimilation policies were mostly aimed at the Sámi and Kven in North Romsa (Troms) and Finnmark (Andresen et al. 2021, 57). A central aspect of the Norwegianisation policies was the disruption and destruction of local Sámi community structures and preventing a continuation of their usage of and belonging to the land through peasant settlements, agricultural projects, industrial development, infrastructure and education in Norwegian only (Andresen et al. 2021, 160, 167, 174-175, 216; Gaski 1997, 19; Berg-Nordlie 2024, 79; Niemi 1997, 73; Minde 2003; Kuokkanen 2003; Krömer & Allemann 2016; Hirvonen 2008, 100-101).

In the beginning of the 20th century the Norwegianisation policies intensified in the form of employment bans, military measures, surveillance (Niemi 1997, 73) and the build-

²⁵ In 1814 Norway gained independence from Denmark and its own constitution and after the border to Sweden had been established in 1751, the border to Russia was finalised in 1826. While it was now in a union with Sweden, aside from a shared foreign policy they were now able to act independently in domestic matters.

ing of the first boarding schools (Andresen et al. 2021, 159).²⁶ Niemi (1997, 75) speaks of an “unprecedented economic and demographic expansion” in Northern Norway that led to the social and political marginalisation of the Sámi. One grave change was also a law in 1902 that only allowed people with enough Norwegian competence to buy land in Finnmark (Schweitzer 2016, 61).²⁷ While this law was especially aimed at Fins and Swedes, and was presumably not rigidly followed (Andresen et al. 2021, 200) it was a clearly racist law as it affected the Sámi and their land areas (Schweitzer 2016, 61; Andresen et al. 2021, 200).

At the same time as the Norwegianisation policies were intensified in the beginning of the 20th century, the Sámi also started to organise themselves. During this time both independent Sámi organisations and existing parties, especially the Labour Party, provided possibilities for the Sámi to gain a political voice (Andresen et al. 2021, 206, 220; Berg-Nordlie 2024, 77). After a slack period in the years between the wars and the Second World War, after the Second World War Sámi organisations resumed their work. Sámi organisations, including the Norwegian Reindeer herding Sámi’s national association (NRL) in 1947, and Sámi collaborations within state structures such as the Sámi Council for Finnmark in 1953 were established (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 112).²⁸ In 1968 the Norwegian Sámi association (NSR) was established, a national Sámi organisation for all Sámi, regardless of occupation (Andresen et al. 2021, 361). From 1959 onwards, Sami languages have been allowed to be used in schools again. However, as stated in the Truth and Reconciliation Report (Høybråten et al., 2023), the Norwegian school system was still reproducing Norwegianisation measures until the 1980s (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 118). Aside from the difficulty of overturning centuries long anti-Sámi sentiments, there was also simply a lack of Sámi teachers and educational material. While Sámi organisations were essential in this development, Eidheim (1997, 35) clarifies that the Norwegian state did not suddenly believe that the Sámi had rights as a People, but that the emerging welfare ideology contributed to such developments (cf. 3.2.). While there were concessions with relation to Sámi education and culture, land remained off-limits (Eidheim 1997, 48).

26 They were located near the border to Russia (now Finland) – as a “border fortress” (Andresen et al. 2021, 252-253).

27 It said that the person has to be a Norwegian citizen who “can speak, read and write the Norwegian language and use it on a daily basis” (Andresen et al. 2021, 199).

28 There was a clear focus on Inner Finnmark and a lack of visibility of Sámi living on the coast which gave impression that Sáminess was almost synonymous with reindeer herding and inland living Sámi (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 114).

After the Máze/Áltá conflict (cf. 4.1.), more substantial legal and political changes were introduced in Norway. The Sami Act in 1987 “legalized the organization of an assembly, democratically elected by the Sami – the Sámediggi” (Eidheim 1997, 57; Skogvang 2024). The aim of the Sámediggi (Sámi Parliament)²⁹ was also to avoid any similar conflicts in the future (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 150). It was followed by a constitutional amendment in 1988 (§ 108 the “Sámi paragraph”) that clearly states that the state has “to create conditions enabling the Sami people to preserve and develop its language, culture and way of life” (Semb 2015, 353). King Harald’s speech at opening of the third Sámediggi in 1997 proved also an important symbolic turning point when he clarified that “the Norwegian state is built on the land of two peoples – Norwegians and Sámi. The Norwegian history is closely entwined with the Norwegian” (Det norske kongehuset 1997). He also apologised for the injustice the Norwegian state had committed against the Sámi.

Norway was one of the first nations to establish an Indigenous political institution like the Sámediggi.³⁰ It is a consultative and democratically elected body that administers money for linguistic, cultural and educational programs and policies and has a consultation agreement with the government, as well as “the sole authority over Sámi cultural heritage, including responsibility for sacred sites” (Kuokkanen 2019, 79).³¹ It also maintains contact with other Indigenous People around the world (Persen as cited in Kuhn 2020). However, many criticise the Sámediggi for its lack of autonomy from the Norwegian state and political power. According to Kuokkanen (2019, 111) the Sámediggi is an example of “self-administration” rather than “self-government” as it depends on funding from the Norwegian government³² and has no “decision-making authority”.³³ This issue is key in the two land rights conflicts discussed below.

29 The Sámi Parliament is called Sámediggi in North Sami, Sámedigge in Lule and Pite Sami, Sámediggi in Ume Sami, Saemiedigkie in South Sami and Sää'mte'gğ in Skolt Sami.

30 Sweden and Finland also have Sámi Parliaments, established in 1993 and 1996 respectively (Andresen et al. 2021, 407).

31 However, reindeer husbandry is still located within the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, even though it is a profession restricted to the Sámi in Norway (Andresen et al. 2021, 431).

32 The budget bill is made without Sámediggi consultation (Mörkenstam et al. 2016, 24) and “[i]n comparison to the state budget as a whole, the budget for Sámi issues and initiatives has not had any real growth over the last few years (Fjellheim 2016).”

33 Kuokkanen (2019, 111) clarifies the difference between self-government and self-administration by saying: “in the former, an institution has decision-making authority over its own affairs, including resource use, civil affairs, and economic development. In self-government, the governance structure is designed by Indigenous people themselves while in self-administration it is “typically shaped or imposed by outsiders,” usually the state.”

McGuire (2022) and Kuokkanen (2019) even go so far as considering the Sámediggi as a way to maintain “relations of domination” as it “entrench[es] and incorporat[es] Indigenous peoples more extensively and intricately into the state structures” (Kuokkanen 2019, 95) which McGuire calls “a unique Nordic model of continued colonization” (2022, 7) that stands in the way of Indigenous self-determination (see also Somby in Kuhn 2020). McGuire’s critique is linked to the fundamental issue of decolonisation in settler colonial contexts where “empire, settlement, and internal colony have no spatial separation” (Tuck & Yang 2012, 7). In the relationship between the Sámediggi and the Norwegian government the division of power remains imbalanced (McGuire 2022, 8). Sámi scholar Harald Gaski (as cited in Kuhn 2020) agrees with McGuire, saying “[d]espite having our own parliaments, we remain fully in the pockets of our nation-state governments. They control the courts, allocate the money, and so on.”³⁴ In order to have a better understanding of the Norwegian state and how it relates to the Sámediggi and the Sámi as a whole, the following chapter will give an overview of its central components and developments.

3.2. The Norwegian nation-state

Norway reached formal independence from Sweden in 1905 and is a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy and today the role of the royal family is mostly symbolic. The official languages are Norwegian and North Sami, Lule Sami and South Sami in the Northern districts of Trööndelage (South Sami for Trøndelag, where Fovsen is located), Nordlánnda/Nordlaante/ Nordlánda (Nordland), Romsa (Troms)³⁵ and Finnmarku (Finnmark, where Áltá and Máze are located) (Thuesen et al. 2026). In the 1930s, the Norwegian social democracy was strengthened by “the adaption of a Keynesian macroeconomic politics” that has laid the basis for Norway’s welfare state (Kamali & Jönsson 2018, 5; Berg-Nordlie 2024, 116). The Labour Party has been central in this process, first becoming the strongest party in the 1930s (Orning 2025)³⁶ and again dominating Norwegian politics after World War II from 1945-1970.³⁷ Even when the Centre Party took over in

34 Gaski (as cited in Kuhn 2020) evaluates the Sámi’s situation with regards to Sámi institutions, administration and politics as follows: “our situation is not desperate and we’ve kind of settled into what we have, even if it is far from just. And we are overwhelmed with legal and bureaucratic hurdles forced upon us by the government. This is part of what Graham Hingangaroa Smith has called the “politics of distraction.”

35 Tromssa in Kven.

36 Both Sámi and Kven people were on their list for the Parliament in Finnmarku in 1933 and 1936 (Andresen et al. 2021, 240).

37 It gained over 45% of the votes in the years 1949, 1953, 1957 and 1961 before a downhill trend started from the mid 1960s onwards (Nyhamar 1990, 10). This was partly also due to the establishment of a new left wing party, the Sosialistisk Venstreparti (SV) in 1961. 1945-1961 was a period of political sta-

1965 they still continued with welfare state policies (ibid.) indicating that welfare state ideals were not limited to specific parties and their politics, just like later neoliberal developments were endorsed by parties on either side of the spectrum.

The state's focus on equality and social democracy has also been referred to more critically as a "difference-blind liberalism" (Kuokkanen 2019, 115). By this Kuokkanen means a lack of respect and awareness of differences, which has resulted in Indigenous People being treated "like any other members of the mainstream society [...]" (ibid.). Their status and rights as Indigenous People are thus not recognised. While the Sámi have also benefitted from welfare state policies, this 'blindness' has also led to a greater distance to traditional Sámi ways of life, work and community structures that have existed besides other jobs (Andresen et al. 2021, 452). The increasing integration of Sámi in the Norwegian economy has led to a higher living standard and possibilities for many. However, it has also resulted in a dependence on the state (Kuokkanen 2019, 115). Kuokkanen (ibid.) analyses that the power of "the difference-blind liberalism" makes Sámi worry about receiving "a backlash in the form of increased racism and repercussions from the state that may include losing funding and good relations with the authorities." But she also notes that especially younger Sámi have increasingly started to question this "Sámi conciliatory approach" (cf. Magga 2015) as they "increasingly regard it as co-optation" (Kuokkanen 2019, 115).

The reason for the "difference-blind liberalism" (Kuokkanen 2019, 115) can be traced back to the phenomenon of "Nordic exceptionalism". According to Stoltz (2021, 26-27) Nordic exceptionalism refers to the existence of "national myths about democratization and egalitarianism in the Nordic region" as well as a "claim of innocence in relation to colonialism" which Andersen et al. (2015, 240) liken to "a collective amnesia". It means a conscious choice not to take responsibility of previous colonial structures which allows their continuation in the present. At the same time, the highlighting of certain aspects of the nation and its politics, such as binary gender equality politics and the support of Indigenous rights elsewhere, seeks to conceal the unwillingness about addressing structures of inequality 'at home', which allows their continuation. While Norway is well known for its "strong (binary) gender equality policies" and "state feminism" (Keskinen et al. 2021, 7), according to a health care professional (as cited in Kuokkanen 2019, 150) in the current

bility in Norway (ibid. 11).

social democracy “equality refers not only [to] gender but to all other forms [of vulnerability], it’s not only women but they’ve clumped everything together”.

The strengthening of the welfare state in the 20th century coincided with industrial developments and the Norwegian state’s ownership of them. The energy sector has been central to Norwegian politics and its economy in the 20th century (Sejersted 2003, 103). With the existence of many waterfalls that could be regulated, Norway’s trade and industry were strongly “linked to the exploitation of hydroelectric power, Scandinavia’s ‘white coal’” – “the new form of energy for the modern age” (Sejersted 2003, 105). The Norwegian energy sector was strongly regulated and owned by the state – it was all about “national control over the industrialisation process” (Sejersted 2003, 107). This was also due to Norway being a newly independent nation, which made “nationalization and national sovereignty over the natural resources” a top priority of Norwegian policy (Heiret 2020, 54). At the same time, it can also be linked to a more general scepticism towards “large concentrations of private economic power” in Norway that has been in part due to its formerly highly decentralised political structure (Sejersted 2003, 101).

In the 1980s and 90s Norway’s strong state policy was weakened following a time of political and economic crises, doubt about the state and social democracy (Orning 2025). The conservative government that was elected in 1981 started with the deregulation of banks, media, housing, trade and industries that were further exacerbated in the 1990s (ibid.; Heiret 2024; Heiret 2020; Innset 2025). However, while initiated by the Conservative party, both the Labour and Conservative party supported these changes³⁸ which have been called a ‘neoliberal turn’ in Norwegian politics (Heiret 2020; Innset 2025; Kamali & Jönsson 2018). Berge Furre (1992, 425 in Heiret 2024, 51) goes so far as to call it a “system shift” that has shaken the foundations of Norway’s social democracy. Innset (2020, 185 as cited in Heiret 2024, 52), however, prefers to think of Norway’s ‘neoliberal’ or ‘market turn’ as a “historical layer on top of social democracy” as it does not completely erase it, but rather changes it towards a neoliberalised welfare state.

Heiret (2024, 48) draws on Innset (2020) when speaking of a “neoliberalization of the Norwegian welfare state” through the often partial privatisation and internationalisation of formerly fully state-owned companies which has led to the full integration of Norway

³⁸ The privatisation of Statoil (today Equinor) for instance happened under the Labour Government in the beginning of the 2000s (Heiret 2024, 60).

“into the neoliberal world economy”, especially in the 1990s and 2000s (Innset 2025, 496).³⁹ Heiret (2020, 64) prefers to speak of “re-regulations” instead of the more commonly used term “deregulations” when it comes to the neoliberalisation of Norwegian industry as, unlike other contexts, the Norwegian state often remains the largest shareholder of firms like Statoil (now Equinor) and the sole owner of Statkraft, which is the owner of the Alta hydropower plant and 52,1% owner of Fovsen wind park (Statkraft). Innset (2025, 497) discusses the combination of a strong state and simultaneous neoliberalisation in the Norwegian context, clarifying that in Norway “binding the state to behave as if it were a capitalist was arguably taken the furthest” with “ideals of market efficiency” having become central to both business and politics – all the while “remain[ing] committed to state ownership”. This has exposed tensions between market-orientation, profit-maximisation and development and ideas of democratic state responsibilities vis-à-vis its citizens which will be further discussed in chapter 7.

4. The embedded cases

In this chapter the two embedded cases of this thesis will be briefly introduced. The first embedded case is the Máze/Áltá conflict surrounding the building of the hydroelectric power station on the Áltá-Guovdageidnu (Alta-Kautokeino) river network in Finnmark. The second embedded case is the more recent Fovsen conflict that erupted after the building of “Europe's largest onshore wind power project” (Statkraft) in Tröndelage, without consent by the reindeer herding Sámi on whose grazing pastures the wind park was built. While both cases affect Sámi lands and were met with the two greatest civil disobedience actions by the Sámi in Norway so far, a great difference between the two cases is their legal and political context. While the Norwegian Supreme Court's verdict allowed the building of the Áltá power station, in the Fovsen case it declared the building of the wind park a clear violation of Human Rights as it affects the Sámi's abilities to practice their culture. Even though Sámi rights improved after the Máze/Áltá conflict, the Fovsen conflict has shown, that Sámi rights are still not respected enough in Norway. As summed up

39 Central to this was also Norway's “internationalization of public hydropower companies” (Heiret 2024, 56) and investment in foreign industrial projects, especially in ‘developing’ countries, thus benefitting from exploitation elsewhere (Heiret 2020; Heiret 2024, 56-57). This has been justified by the idea that the profit maximisation of (partly) state owned companies and subsidiaries ensures the continued existence of the Norwegian welfare state (Heiret 2024, 56). However, this is not only based on the exploitation of other countries and their resources, but also makes the welfare state more dependent on the market as well as increasing inequalities. As Kamali & Jönsson (2018, 6) point out, neoliberal changes of the welfare state in Norway and the other Nordic countries has “increased socio-economic, political and cultural gaps amongst their respective populations.”

by Anders Heger – a protester both during both conflicts: “This [Fovsen conflict] is not a parallel to the Áltá-case, this is one and the same case” (Undheim & Molde 2023, my translation). In the following chapter I will give an overview of the two cases by focusing on the Sámi and the Norwegian state as the main actors involved.

4.1. Máze/Áltá-conflict (1968-1982)

What is today mostly known as “Altasaken” (the Altacase) started out as the government’s project to not only build a dam on the Áltá river, but in doing so putting the Sámi village of Mazé under water. The first plans of 1968 still included the damming of Máze before the village was put under protection in 1973 after local protests (Andresen et al. 2021, 372).⁴⁰ According to Andresen et al. (ibid.; my translation) “it was in many ways that resistance came first about in Máze”⁴¹ – with one of the most prominent images of the protests including a banner that said: “We were here first”; other paroles included “We came first”, “We don’t evacuate again”,⁴² and “Here are we born and here we will remain” (ibid., 371). In the course of the development of the conflict – which consisted of civil disobedience, hunger strikes but also much dialogue between the political representatives of each side (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 125) – the argument of the Sámi as Indigenous People increasingly gained relevance, inspired by the emerging global Indigenous Rights movement. According to Eidheim (1997, 46), the conflict and demonstrations were “a megahappening which accentuated all the vital aspects of the Sami situation as a *people*, as an *ethnic minority population* in Norway, and as an *indigenous people* in a global perspective.” While dramatic, the conflict proved important in the Sámi’s public and political collective identity formation.

The building of the dam was justified by Labour Party with the claim that Finnmark’s energy needs would be increasing (Andresen et al. 2021, 371). The government did not want to prolong energy contracts with Sweden and the hydropower station was portrayed as the only solution to ensure energy to Finnmark and for it to not lag behind the rest of the country.⁴³ This disrespected the fact that the dam would have negative consequences

40 The first ideas of regulation were already talked about in 1912, before studies were done in the area in the 1950s and 60s (Guttormsen et al. 2023, 24).

41 Máze was an important centre for Sámi resistance, with the arts group having been located there out of which Synnøve Persen created the first Sámi flag, Mikkel Eira – a central figure of the protest was from Máze, as well as most of the women at Gro Harlem Brundtland’s office.

42 This was a reference to the forced evacuations by the Nazi during the Second World War when Russian troops invaded Norway from the North.

43 A central line of discussion within the ruling Labour Party at the time were questions of growth or conservation (Nyhamer 1990; Lepperød 2023; Melbye 2015).

on salmon, wildlife and vegetation (Eidheim 1997, 47) and be a threat to the grazing areas and calving places of reindeer (ibid., 46) and, thus, “an infringement of the Sami right to land and water in Sapmi” (ibid., 47). According to Eidheim, while both nationally and internationally the Máze/Áltá case gained more attention than previous conflicts due to the strong organised resistance against it, it can be seen as one of many state-led provocations and violences against the Sámi and their land.⁴⁴

Towards the end of the 1970s the conflict became more serious after the Finnmark Labour Party county government voted for the construction of the dam, disregarding the resistance and disagreement of the plans amongst the Sámi and the Áltá and Guovdageidnu municipalities (Andresen et al. 2021, 373). As a result of this, on 12 July 1978 the “People’s Action Group against the Development of the Alta-Kautokeino River Network” (Folkeaksjonen mot utbygging av Alta-Kautokeinovassdraget) was established and quickly gained many followers. While Sámi were involved in the organisation from the beginning – two of the most prominent figures of the “People’s Action Group” were the Sámi Tore Bongo and Ruth Rye Josefsen – it was not only focussed on Sámi rights. Their arguments against the building of the dam were “nature conservation, salmon, poor proceedings, a demand for local administration and Sámi rights” (Andresen et al. 2021, 374; my translation). Especially the Norwegian Water and Energy Directorate (NVE) was a target of the protests as it was accused of having influenced local and national politicians (ibid.) and of having lied in energy prognoses.

Demonstrations against the building of the dam were both held near the construction site as well as in Oslo.⁴⁵ A central turning point emerged when, in October 1979, seven young Sámi activists – the “Sámi Action Group” – travelled to Oslo to go on a hunger strike (Schweitzer 2016, 62; Andresen et al. 2021, 376).⁴⁶ Their demand of “a stop of the

44 One reporter covering the conflict described the situation straightforwardly as: “Nothing other than an example in a series of innumerable attacks against an indigenous people in the heart of their own territory, staged and directed by authorities far away. The same authorities who, outside the country’s borders, were supposedly to be known for representing one of the most progressive and civilized democracies in the world” (in Solbakk 1997, 173). This observation emphasises the discrepancy – one might also call it hypocrisy – between the diverging national and international political conduct of the Norwegian state. International support of marginalised groups strongly contradicted the national treatment of the country’s own Indigenous population.

45 When the construction started in July 1979, a protest camp was established in Stilla on the road to where the dam would be constructed where, over the summer, circa 8000 people gather (Andresen et al. 2021, 374-475). It was also here that the first version of the Sámi flag, created by Synnøve Persen, was always hoisted (Person as cited in Kuhn 2020).

46 The seven hunger strikers were Jorunn Eikjok, Synnøve Persen, Ingar Boine, Ante Gaup, Mikkel Anders Gaup, Nils Gaup, Niillas A. Somby. They considered the “People’s Action Group’s” doings as being too timid and not leading to desired results (Andresen et al. 2021, 375-376).

construction along the river and an investigation into Sámi rights” (Persen as cited in Kuhn 2020) clearly established that this conflict was fundamentally about Sámi rights. While the civil disobedience was seen by many members of the Labour Party and government as a threat to democracy and also disrespectful to decisions made by the parliament (Lepperød 2023, 39), then prime minister Odvar Nordli (Labour Party) agreed to a reopening of the case in the Norwegian Parliament. In November 1979, meetings were held between Sámi organisations and the government, demanding an inclusion of the Sámi in the constitution, a representative institution and a committee defining and discussing Sámi rights to language and natural resources (Andresen et al. 2021, 376-377). The hunger strike thus set in motion the legal and political developments that led to a strengthening of Sámi rights as Indigenous Peoples in Norway (cf. 3.1.). It cannot be overstated how seminal this hunger strike was in putting the Sámi’s point of view centre stage.⁴⁷ As one of the hunger strikers, Synnøve Persen, emphasises before the hunger strike “[m]any Norwegians hardly knew that Sámi existed outside of museums; they had no concept of us as living people” (as cited in Kuhn 2020).

When the parliament voted for the construction again and the verdict of the Alta district court announced that while the case management was faulty, the building of the dam was nonetheless lawful (Andresen et al. 2021, 378), a new demonstration camp was constructed near the construction site in the winter of 1980-1981 which was met with the greatest police force in Norwegian history. There had even been discussions about using the military, which the then minister of defence, Thorvald Stoltenberg, refused (ibid., 376).⁴⁸ When construction was taken up again shortly after the removal of the protesters, a second hun-

47 However, not everyone appreciated the hunger strikers’ contribution to the Sámi rights struggle and not all Sámi were unequivocally against the building of the dam and the power plant. Some high ranking Sámi, and others considered them to be merely attention seekers (Andresen et al. 2021, 376) and the value of their protest setting the spotlight on Sámi rights was long ignored. They were not invited to the opening of the Sámediggi in 1989 and none of the speakers and performers were allowed to mention them – even though, according to one of the hunger strikers, Mikkel Eira, the Sámediggi would not even exist without them (ibid., 390). In 2002 they and the Sámi women who occupied the prime minister’s office were finally honoured for their contribution during a ceremony at the Sámediggi, even though not all chose to participate and some representatives left the hall during the ceremony (ibid.), which illustrates that opinions within Sápmi about the Máze/Áltá conflict and demonstrations against it remain diverse.

48 Years after the dam had been built it was also unveiled that Sámi activists had been surveyed by the state from the mid 1970s to the 1980s, due to fears of Sámi connections with the Soviet Union (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 136; Andresen et al. 2021, 385). This may be seen as a continuation of national security fears and nation-building strategies that were already in the 19th and beginning of the 20th century used as a justification for the repression of the Sámi and their traditional right to move on their land that had only recently become divided by nation-state borders.

ger strike was held in Oslo.⁴⁹ On 6 February 1981 thirteen Sámi women and one Sámi girl occupied then prime minister's Gro Harlem Brundtland's office in the hopes of being able to convince Brundtland of protecting the land by speaking 'from woman to woman'.⁵⁰ When Brundtland had to leave the meeting and the Sámi women did not feel like they had achieved what they had come for, they remained in the office before being carried out of the building by the police in the middle of the night (Andresen et al. 2021, 381).

Two of the Sámi women, Ellen Marit Gaup Dunfjeld and Inger Anne Gaup, continued with their activism internationally after this occupation, trying to gain as much attention as they could for this conflict, travelling to the pope, visiting the Danish social affairs minister and meeting with UN politicians in the US and Canada (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 141; Andresen et al. 2021, 381-382). Nonetheless, while a new protest camp was established and construction briefly halted due to unresolved questions of cultural heritage at the construction site, on February 26, 1982, the Supreme Court of Norway announced that the building of the hydroelectric power station was lawful (Andresen et al. 2021, 386). The "People's Action Group" disbanded shortly thereafter and in 1987 the power plant was activated.⁵¹ It is fully owned by the state-owned energy company Statkraft until this day.

The conflict led to a rift not only within Sápmi between the different groups who were for or against the building of the dam or did not support the civil disobedience that was employed as a form of protest, but also in the relationship between the Sámi and the Labour Party which for many came to be a symbol of Norwegian power (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 143). While the dam was eventually built, as a result of the conflict "most remaining watercourses" were protected (Heiret 2024, 55) and Sámi politics entered into a new era that has resulted in more rights and a greater visibility and platform in the form of the Sámediggi among other things (cf. 3.1.). The focus of Sámi politics after this conflict has

49 The hunger strikers claimed that the state had broken its promises by starting the building before Sámi rights had been clarified. This second hunger strike was not supported by the main Sámi organisations as they felt the government had, in fact, fulfilled its promises they had made after the first one (Andresen et al. 2021, 380).

50 The group of women was very varied. The spokesperson was Ellen Marit Gaup Dunfjeld, the youngest participant was 5-year-old Ellen Kristine Saba and one of the oldest was Risten Pentha. The other women were, among others, one of the hunger striker's – Mikkel Eira – mother, Inga Sara Nango, and Britta Gaup, mother of hunger striker Ante Gaup (Andresen et al. 2021, 380).

51 As a last form of protest, Niillas Aslaksen Somby, John-Reier Martinsen and another person tried to sabotage the road to the power plant, with Somby losing an arm and eye when the bomb detonated earlier than it should. After a brief prison sentence, he was able to flee to the US and received asylum with Native Americans. He recalls that they were called a "terrorists" – a label that is not used any more he says, because after Anders Behring Breivik's attack in 2011, "people understand [...] what terrorism really is" (Somby as cited in Kuhn 2020).

very much been on dialogue and trust in the relationship between the Sámi and the state (Eidheim 1997, 51). As the following description of the Fovsen conflict will show, the trust in dialogue has been critically reduced in recent years with activists feeling the need to resort back to civil disobedience in order to be heard and taken seriously.

4.2. Fovsen conflict (2010-2024)

The Fovsen conflict was the biggest open conflict between the Sámi and the Norwegian state since the Máze/Áltá conflict (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 176). The conflicts were in part very similar but also different (ibid., 186). While a similarity was the ongoing state intrusion into Sámi lands, a big difference was the Supreme Court's decision in 2021 supporting Sámi rights and condemning the state for denying them basic human rights, as well as the existence of an institutionalised Sámi political infrastructure (ibid., 186-187). Regardless of these differences, Fjellheim (2024, 2) notes that “[t]he parallels to the protests against the construction of a hydropower dam in the Áltá-Guovdageaidnu river fifty years back, are striking.” The conflict has shown that the fundamentally ontological, but equally material and highly political conflict about land between the Sámi and the state have not yet been resolved.⁵² It is also noteworthy that while the Máze/Áltá conflict concerned North Sámi areas, Fovsen is located in South Sápmi – a part of Sápmi that is considered a minority within Sápmi.

The Fovsen area on which the wind park has been built has been used as a grazing area for centuries. In 2006 Statkraft uttered the interest of building a wind park there which was granted in 2010 (Undheim & Molde, 2023). Even though this was legally contested, demonstrations against it were held and the Sámediggi stated its discontent with the responsible Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate (NVE) for allowing the building of the wind park without Sámi consent (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 188), in 2013 the Petroleum- and Energy department granted a licence to it (Fjellheim 2023a, 144). In 2014 the case was taken to court with both South and North Fovsen siidas stating that the building of such a wind park would ruin the area as a grazing ground, thus interfering with their right to practice their culture (Fjellheim 2024). While the state has claimed that reindeer and wind energy can coexist, Sámi reindeer herders disagree as reindeer have been shown

⁵² The “ontological conflicts concerning land use” (Kramvig & Avango 2021, 1) are not limited to these two embedded cases here, as Kramvig & Avango’s focus on mining for instance show. Already in 1997 Niemi observed that “questions of land and water rights remain unresolved” (Niemi 1997, 77). This seems to remain true until today.

to be afraid of the wind turbines, let alone the noise and other disturbance during construction (Kuokkanen 2023, 20-21; Sánchez Contreras et al. 2023, 9).

Regardless of the criticism against the building and lack of a final court decision, in 2016 the construction of the wind park commenced (Fjellheim 2023a, 144).⁵³ Both the Sámediggi and the Fovsen siidas criticised this as neither “had given their free, prior, and informed consent [...]” (ibid.). In 2018, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) asked for a stop of the construction until the adjudication of the case, which the Norwegian government refused (ibid.; Sánchez Contreras et al. 2023, 9). The wind park was activated in 2020 and in 2021 the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the wind park violates the Sámi’s right to practice their culture. This was the first time that “the Supreme Court came to the conclusion that industrial encroachments on Saami reindeer herding lands in Norway constitute a human rights violation” (Fjellheim 2023a, 158). The Fovsen siidas, as a result, called for a dismantling of the existing wind park and associated infrastructure which the Petroleum- and Energy department refused, instead “call[ing] for further impact assessment” (ibid.). Considering the extensive criticism of the project from the beginning, it seems striking that the state continued to defend its interests so strongly by refusing to act on the Supreme Court verdict.

When 500 days had passed and the government had still not acted on the verdict, in 2023 the conflict reached a new level. Having realised that legal and democratic state structures and a trust in dialogue had not led to action, young activists occupied the Petroleum- and energy department on 23 February.⁵⁴ This demonstration was organised by the youth divisions of the Norwegian Sámi Association (NSR Nuorat) and the Norwegian Friends of the Earth (Nature and Youth) and resulted in an increase in political and media attention both nationally and internationally. While central actors have reappeared during demonstrations and in contact with the press, there has been profound support from both Sámi and non-Sámi in the demonstrations, including the president of the Sámediggi.

53 In terms of financing, Sánchez Contreras et al. (2023, 8) state that “[m]ore than half of the investments come from Norwegian state and regional companies, while the rest mainly comes from German and Swiss pension funds.”

54 The activists occupying the Petroleum- and Energy department were Ella Maria Hætta Isaksen, Márjá Karlsen, Elina Ijäs, Aina Madelén Nordsletta Aslaksen, Ingá Mikkelsdatter Utsi Boine, Elle Risten Eira, Sara Marielle Gaup Beaska, Petra Laiti, Niillas Holmberg, Ingke Jåma, Mihkkal Hætta, Ida Helene Benonisen, Elle Rávdna Näkkäljärvi, Maajja-Krihke Bransfjell, Kátjá Rávdna Broch Einebakken (Fjellheim 2024, 3).

Central paroles that were used during the protests were written in three languages – Sami, Norwegian and English – with different messages depending on the audiences. As observed by Fjellheim (2023c), banners during the occupation of the Petroleum- and Energy department for instance said “Let the mountain live” in Sami, “The state breaks the law” in Norwegian and “Land back” in English. The difference in the slogans depending on the language used suggests that different traditions and discourses are evoked with each of them. “Let the mountain live” is reminiscent of “Let the river live” that was used during the Máze/Áltá conflict, while the Norwegian parole seems to appeal to Norwegians as strongly identifying with being citizens of a constitutional democracy. Lastly, “land back” has been used internationally by Indigenous Peoples which sets this conflict in context with a great number of similar land rights conflicts in settler colonial situations the world over. While only a preliminary version of the Sámi flag was used during the Máze/Áltá conflict, the Sámi flag was a staple during the Fovsen demonstrations as well as the chant “ČŠV”. This term that is made up of the three most used letters of the Sami alphabet and was established as a form of protest call during the Máze/Áltá conflict, used to reflect Sámi pride and resistance (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 131).

After months of demonstrations, at the end of 2023 and beginning of 2024 the two siidas on whose grazing area the wind park had been built accepted offers by the energy companies owning the wind park (Ministry of Petroleum and Energy 2023, 2024). However, the original wish for the wind park to be dismantled and the land returned was not granted (Fjellheim 2024, 111). The siidas received restitutions, new land areas and have a veto power to decide what will happen with the wind park once the concession period ends (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 189). The wind park is owned to 52.1% by Statkraft, 40% by Nordic Wind Power DA and 7% by Aneo (also a state-owned enterprise (Fjellheim 2023a, 159) and might be seen – in comparison to the fully state-owned Alta hydropower plant – as an example of “settler colonial states increasingly transfer[ring] their power to transnational corporations, which enable corporate interventions on Indigenous land” (Knoblock 2024, 138). However, as will be discussed below (5.1.) neoliberalisation has also had a severe impact on state structures.

Aside from the Sámediggi and Sámi, environmentalist and many other activists supporting the demonstrations, also within the Labour Party – which was in power both in 2023 and from 2005-2013 when the commission to building the park was granted – there

was criticism, especially against the lack of action following the Supreme Court verdict. A main point of critique coming from within the party and others was that the “missing follow-up of the Supreme Court verdict was considered to potentially threaten the Norwegian state of law and respect for Human Rights” (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 188). As was already seen during the Máze/Áltá case, central structures and procedures of a democracy, such as parliamentary decisions and Supreme Court rulings are considered central for the workings of a democracy – even though the foundations of a democracy with origins in settler colonialism may be fundamentally challenged (cf. 5.1. and 7.3.). That the state suddenly did not seem in a hurry to follow its most central tenets of a constitutional state made this conflict arguably even more dramatic than the Máze/Áltá case where many legal and political foundations had not yet been established (Berg-Nordlie 2024). The Fovsen conflict has seemed like a rupture in relations between the Sámi and the Norwegian state.

This perceived rupture has happened after a period of seeming stagnation in Sámi politics in Norway and a worsening of Sámi rights and the relationship between them and the state. Mörkenstam et al. (2016, 40) have wondered whether the Norwegian state’s attitude towards the Sámi was turning “dismissive”, with the state permitting Indigenous People’s rights “so far, but no further.” Gaski even goes so far as calling the Fovsen conflict an example of how “we’re going through a process of recolonization rather than decolonization” (as cited in Kuhn 2020). The Truth and Reconciliation Report, which was published during the conflict in 2023, agrees, seeing it as an example of “encroachments that worsen the conditions for Sámi reindeer herding that have a ‘Norwegianising effect’ [...]” (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 190). As a result, the conflict has prompted questions about what the previous Máze/Áltá conflict had actually achieved.

One of the achievements of post-Máze/Áltá is the amendment of 2005 that requires the state to consult the Sámi when projects arise that affect them or their land (Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion 2018). However, Fjellheim (2023b, 27) explains that while consultations have to be held with Sámi when projects that affect them and their lands are planned, they need not give their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) for any projects to be executed. This has led Fjellheim (2023a, 160) and others to question the effectiveness of dialogue, giving the impression of simply constituting a more subtle form of colonialism. Fjellheim quotes Sámi poet Nils Aslak Vålkepää who said that “really highly ad-

vanced states carry out genocide without blood, without physical violence” (ibid.).⁵⁵ Also Anders – a South Sámi interviewed by Normann (2021, 87) – has said that the time for dialogue has been too short to fully explain “what we have learned through generations of experience”, recounting a meeting where the present NVE bureaucrats had no “previous knowledge about reindeer herding”.⁵⁶ Such experiences do not give the impression of the state or its representatives as respecting the Sámi, their knowledge and existence and taking these conversations seriously as a meeting of equals, but rather as wanting to get dialogue sessions and consultations over with as part of the protocol. The resulting displacement of the Sámi from their land is perceived as a continuation of settler colonial violence that seeks their elimination (Fjellheim 2023c). One difference between the recent Fovsen conflict versus Máze/Áltá is that the displacement has been justified by the need for green energy.

Consequently, compared to the Máze/Áltá conflict, the concepts of “green growth”, “green industry” and “green energy” have gained more prominence both in mainstream and academic responses to the Fovsen case. Scholars such as Rauna Kuokkanen (2023), Susanne Normann (2021) and Eva Maria Fjellheim (2023a,b, 2024) have questioned how ‘green’ and ‘clean’ green energy developments such as the Fovsen wind park can be when they lead to the ongoing dispossession of the Sámi by a settler colonial state. According to a report by Lund, Gaup & Somby (2020, 3 as cited in Kuokkanen 2023, 19) “wind energy construction represents the biggest ever encroachment into the environment in [Norway’s] history” with a great number of wind energy being constructed in reindeer herding areas and “largely without the free, prior, and informed consent of the Sámi people [...]” (ibid.). Fundamentally, there seems to exist a paradox of ‘green’ growth that remains embedded within a capitalist expansion and growth logic that merely substitutes non-renewable with renewable energy sources, in both cases disregarding Indigenous voices against it and their rights to the land that is today being exploited for the alleged ‘good’ of the world (cf. Sánchez Contreras et al. 2023, 5; Fjellheim 2024, 155; Kuokkanen 2023).

Former Sámediggi president Aili Keskitalo has also called these developments “green colonialist” (The Arctic Circle 2018). During a panel discussion she explained that climate

55 This form of indirect genocide was also observed by Normann (2021). One South Sámi interviewee said: “Without herding, ‘Who are we then?’ We will disappear. And that is exactly what it is about, that thought of genocide” (ibid., 86).

56 Normann (2021, 87) quotes another South Sámi reindeer herder who said of a previous meeting with NVE: “I was taken as a hostage in dialogue sessions with lunches.”

change and the need for green energy is being used as an excuse to continue the colonial exploitation of Indigenous lands: “colonialism has dressed up in nice green finery and we are told that we must give up our territories and our livelihoods to save the world, because of climate change” (ibid.). Also Sámi youth organisations have stated that land dispossession that are being justified with the need for green energy are “just Nordic colonialism hiding behind a new kind of mask” (as cited in Fjellheim 2023a).⁵⁷ The Sámi Council had already in 2017 drafted a declaration in which they included a brief paragraph on “Green colonialism” where they addressed the paradox that exists between the Sámi “using their traditional areas in an ecologically responsible sustainable manner” while at the same time being exploited and forced to give up their livelihoods as a result of green energy developments (Sami Council 2017, 5). Keskitalo elaborated at a later point on the strangeness of people wanting to follow the moral deed of saving the planet without asking “who will pay the price” (as cited in Tømmerbakke 2019). She wondered how it can be morally justifiable to contribute to saving the planet when this means the slow destruction of Indigenous People’s livelihoods in the process (ibid.).⁵⁸

Fjellheim (2024, 34) has similarly discussed how climate change is used as a justification for “land grabs” and has criticised Norway’s goals of wanting to pioneer the European green energy shift, doing so within an unquestioned colonial and capitalist extractivist and discriminatory framework (ibid., 84). She considers the ongoing land grabbing as a form of epistemic violence that fundamentally disrupts the Sámi’s relationship with their land. Similar to Kuokkanen, she does not believe in the state’s actual ignorance about the Sámi and the importance of reindeer herding, but rather a “strategic” employment of ignorance (Fjellheim 2023a, 160), which Kuokkanen (2023, 27) poignantly calls “the basic premise of settler colonialism: the dispossession of Indigenous peoples in the pursuit of access to land.” She sees the problem of why these colonial structures remain in “a combination of refusal and incapability to tackle and engage with settler colonialism and the ways in which it informs the basic premises of contemporary societies and economies” (ibid., 28). Similarly, one of the most vocal and well-known activists Ella Maria Hætta Isaksen clari-

57 The situation in Norway is similar to Sweden, where Lawrence (2014, 1049) has observed “long-standing discourses that argue that reindeer herding must necessarily ‘give way’ to progress and other (read ‘civilised’) forms of land use.”

58 Reindeer herding is, in fact doubly threatened by climate change. On the one hand due to climate change affecting the arctic region more than other regions, but also due to green energy pressures such as the Fovsen and other examples show (Kuokkanen 2023, 16). And, as emphasised by Fjellheim: “Saami and other Indigenous peoples’ land-use practices leave small ecological and climate footprints but are among the most exposed to climate change” (Fjellheim 2023b, 26).

fied during the demonstrations against the wind park: “We cannot talk about the future before one recognises the past and the ongoing human rights abuse that is happening right now” (NRK 2023).

The Fovsen conflict has shown that while a number of political, legal, social and cultural goals have been reached since Máze/Áltá, “Indigenous knowledges and worldviews are [still] marginalized in planning and decision-making processes” (Fjellheim 2023a, 160). As this chapter has illustrated, the conflict between the Norwegian state and the Sámi has very material consequences that threaten Sámi culture, language, economies and identities. The arguments by the state and energy companies often unveil a simplistic binary between progress-stagnation, modernity-tradition, growth-regression that fundamentally contradict Sámi understandings of the land and their relationship with it. The following chapter on feminist theories will uncover how these stem from a capitalist and heteropatriarchal worldview to which they offer a number of alternatives.

5. Theory

The conflict between the Sámi and the Norwegian state is fundamentally a queer feminist issue regardless of the individuals and groups involved as the theory below on neoliberal critical feminist and Sámi feminist theories will show.⁵⁹ These theoretical strands create an understanding of how colonial, heteropatriarchal, nation-state, racist and gendered structures are dependent on each other and, consequently, need to be analysed together. The systematic devaluation of Indigenous People and their land cannot be limited to a seemingly gender-neutral analysis of the colonial-capitalist endeavour, as colonial policies have different effects on different people. As a result, Sámi feminist scholar Rauna Kuokkanen (2019, 2) calls for a need to restructure “all relations of domination premised on inequality and injustice [which] include relations of settler colonialism, neoliberal capitalism, paternalism, misogyny, sexism, homophobia, and gender violence.” In the following subchapters, these “relations of domination” will be further described by first focusing on the relation between (neoliberal) capitalism and colonialism from a feminist perspective, before then focusing on Sámi feminist theories.

⁵⁹ The terminology ‘Sámi feminist theories’ is used here instead of ‘Indigenous’ or ‘Sámi feminism’ following Arvin et al. (2013, 11) to emphasise that Indigenous feminist theories are not limited to Indigenous feminists. They write: “By placing an emphasis on theories, we seek to [...] draw attention to the intellectual and political contributions of this activism and scholarship for a wide Indigenous and non-Indigenous audience” (ibid., 18). Most scholars quoted here are, however, Indigenous scholars.

Neoliberal-critical feminist theories, especially by feminist political scholar Wendy Brown (2015), will be discussed to better understand how neoliberalism has fundamentally changed democracies not only by political and policy measures, but in terms of the introduction of a neoliberal mindset that taints everything in economic terms. It will show how land claims have been fundamental to both colonialism and capitalism and that these two systems of oppression cannot be thought of separately or in genderless terms. The subchapter will also introduce Indigenous feminist alternatives that directly respond to and offer additional dimensions for understanding the various gendered systems of oppression Indigenous Peoples are faced with within the colonial-capitalist system.

Indigenous feminist theories are always necessarily intersectional and analyse how capitalism, colonialism, and heteropatriarchy influence and support each other. They are highly context-dependent as the gendered relationship between Indigenous Peoples and settler colonialism and capitalism is very diverse – even within existing nation-states such as Norway or across the vast land mass that is Sápmi. Indigenous feminist theories are not a new subcategory of feminist theories but can be traced back to the beginnings of colonialism and beyond.⁶⁰ As Pauline Stoltz (2021, 38) emphasises: feminism is “a transnational movement with diverse genealogies and socio-historical roots.” Indigenous feminist practices and understandings have existed the world over independently from each other and other forms of feminism, even though they may not have used the terminology of ‘feminism’ or ‘theory’ – both of which are concepts that stem from Eurocentric academic traditions. By writing themselves into ‘western’ academia, appropriating existing terms and showing the existence of a long feminist history and tradition that goes way beyond the written word and ‘western’ academic institutions, Indigenous feminist theories expose the Eurocentrism of much of feminist theories and practices. It can also be seen as part of a wider struggle for recognition and decolonisation and against “epistemic ignorance” (cf. 6.1.).

Indigenous feminist theories not only challenge other feminisms but share a number of goals with them such as “seeking social and economic justice, freedom from male violence, personal autonomy, and measures of social, economic, and political equality and op-

⁶⁰ In the US-context for instance, the feminist group INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence state that they have been “[f]eminist since 1492” – with 1492 being the year of Columbus’ arrival on Turtle Island. For Alvin et al. (2013, 14) “[t]his slogan succinctly rejects the Eurocentric, Global North–hegemonic notion of first, second, and third waves of feminism” and offers a more extensive, comprehensive and inclusive understanding of feminism that includes Indigenous perspectives and practices.”

portunity” (Starblanket & Green 2024, 14). At the same time, Indigenous feminist theories emphasise that the continued colonial pressure they experience is highly gendered and that decolonial objectives such as land back, Indigenous governance and reparations are always also feminist issues (ibid.). Sámi and Tornedalian feminist scholar, Ina Knobbloch, and Sámi feminist scholar, Rauna Kuokkanen (2015, 275) sum this up by describing Indigenous feminism as being “located at the intersection of Indigenous peoples’ political struggles for decolonization and self-determination, and Indigenous women’s engagement in issues of gender equality and social justice, in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous contexts.” Thus, Indigenous feminist theories illustrate that gender and Indigeneity cannot be analysed separately (Arvin et al. 2013, 15; Starblanket & Green 2024, 12).

Considering that “Saami-State relations are influenced by neoliberal capitalism” (Fjellheim 2024, 84; cf. Fjellheim 2023b, 2023c) and the collaboration between the settler colonial state and global corporate interests is today greater than ever (Kuokkanen 2019, 3), the following subchapter will give insights into a feminist critique of (neoliberal) capitalism and Indigenous feminist counter-strategies, before then offering Sámi feminist theoretical input.

5.1. Feminist critiques of (neoliberal) capitalism

As the settler colonial endeavour has been tightly interwoven with capitalist ones, this chapter will focus on feminist criticism of (neoliberal) capitalism in order to better understand the economic context within which gendered struggles for land rights take place. Since a critique of the nation-state as a settler colonial state is central to Indigenous feminist theories – as it is considered a violent entity from which they seek independence as part of a decolonising struggle (Arvin et al. 2013, 10) – Indigenous feminist critiques will be added here in order to offer a more substantial critique of (neoliberal) capitalism.

Before focusing on neoliberal capitalism, a general overview of the impact of capitalism and colonialism on land and gendered relations is needed. Capitalism cannot be disconnected from colonialism (Brown 2015, 44; Tuck & Yang 2012; Arvin et al. 2013) as capital accumulation was only made possible through the mass exploitation of colonial lands and people (Brown 2015, 44; Federici 2014). Silvia Federici (2014) has shown that the capitalist grabbing of communal lands, its enclosures and exploitation as part of the ‘primitive accumulation’ in the first stages of capitalism was closely entwined with restricting the movement of and subjugating gendered bodies, especially those of women.

The land grabs that are happening today can be seen as a continuation of these original capitalist structures that have happened both in settler and other colonial contexts. Indigenous feminist theories have also analysed how this colonial and capitalist exploitation of land has been gendered (Starblanket & Green 2024, 11; Kuokkanen 2019). Kuokkanen (2019, 17) notes, “[t]he encroachment on Indigenous lands is always connected to the assault on Indigenous bodies, especially those of women [and 2SLGBTQIA+⁶¹ people].” Similarly, Indigenous scholars Arvin et al. (2013, 15) see a direct link between “the enforcement of ‘proper’ [heteronormative and binary] gender roles [and] [...] settler nations’ attempts to limit and manage Indigenous peoples’ claims to land” (see also Knoblock 2024, 149). This is not to conflate the violence against Indigenous bodies and gendered violence with violence against the land, but to show that colonial and capitalist heteropatriarchal structures work in a similar way, which is fundamentally at odds with Indigenous ontologies that consider humans, land and other non-human bodies to be in relationship with each other (cf. 2.3. and 5.2.).

Capitalism’s divisive logic has not only had a fundamental impact on the relationship between land and people, but also labour and place. Capitalist thought strictly differentiates between genders reproductive and productive work, with the former being associated with women, of no monetary value and the private sphere, while the latter has been associated with men, the public sphere and is generally paid and thus considered more valuable. In this ideal version that revolves around a heteronormative nuclear family model of a *white* middle-class father-mother-child constellation, the man is considered to be the breadwinner, earning enough money to care for his entire family, while the woman does the unpaid care work that includes child rearing, housework and emotional work. Feminist political scholar Wendy Brown calls this the “entrench[ment of] privileges for a bourgeois white heterosexual male subject” (2015, 44). Most families have not been able to live in this way, with many women having to do both productive and reproductive work.

It is also a very Eurocentric model, as Indigenous gender relations have worked differently (cf. 2.2.). Indigenous feminist scholars have noted that this form of capitalist heterosexuality, especially in the form of nuclear family structures, has been central to the definition of settler colonial citizenship (Arvin et al. 2013, 14; Smith 2010, 61; Kuokkanen

61 This stands for two spirit people, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersexual, and asexual with the “+”-symbol offering the possibility to add further genders.

2021, 312), while “other configurations are perceived as abnormal, aberrant, and abhorrent” (Arvin et al. 2013, 13). Heteropatriarchy is closely entwined with heteropaternalism by which Arvin et al. (ibid.) understand the male dominance of a father figure in private and public – the family and state structures (cf. Kuokkanen 2021, 312). This paternalist model has not only been applied within colonial and capitalist ‘centres’, but also in their relationships to Indigenous Peoples. It is still effective today as Fjellheim (2024, 34) has observed “a paternalist moral imperative to save the planet from global warming” that is used to justify the colonial and capitalist pressures put on the Sámi and their lands in the context of ‘green energy’ projects (cf. 4.2.). Heteropaternalism is always based on a hierarchy that deems one group of people to know better than the other. By masking this gendered and hierarchical relationship between colonial state and capitalist interests and the Sámi in moral terms, ongoing capitalist and colonial dispossessions against the Sámi are being concealed.

Indigenous feminist theories criticise this colonial and capitalist heteropatriarchal and -paternal system that is based on a rigid gender binary that have substantially affected and restructured Indigenous communities. In the binary system of ‘man’ and ‘woman’, Indigenous women are considered “inferior, deviation, or sexual prey” (Kuokkanen 2019, 217). They are most often located below Indigenous men, *white* women and *white* men while other genders are not being acknowledged. Cree and Saulteaux scholar Gina Starblanket & Joyce Green (2024, 11) argue that Indigenous feminist theories emerge from activist and advocacy practices and are fundamentally committed to fighting for 2SLGBTQIA+ people’s rights that are often even more blatantly ignored than Indigenous women’s rights. Rauna Kuokkanen (2019, 143) agrees when she clarifies that, in order to dismantle the imposed gendered binary structures of capitalism, colonialism and Christianity, Indigenous feminisms need to be inclusive of 2SLGBTQIA+ people’s rights, as it otherwise would miss its point. Smith (2010, 59) agrees, noting how Indigenous feminist theories can learn from queer theory’s “strong critiques of the heteronormativity of the nation-state as well as the heteronormativity of the citizen” which has been applied both in capitalist-colonial centres and its colonies.

In the course of the 20th century, capitalism underwent a serious change towards what has been termed ‘neoliberal capitalism’ or ‘neoliberalism’ for short. “Neoliberalism” is a highly contested term that is mostly used by its critics and applies to fundamental political

and economic changes everywhere that, at the same time, differ vastly, depending on time and place. Brown (2015, 21) sums this up by defining neoliberalism as being “globally ubiquitous yet disunified and nonidentical with itself in space and over time.” While it is different everywhere, some similarities can nonetheless be discerned. Policy measures such as deregulations of trade restrictions, labour conditions, trade union work, and the privatisation of formerly state-owned domains such as public transport, social services or educational institutions are considered typical neoliberal developments (cf. Brown 2015, 28). They were first experimented with in Chile in the 1970s, before “structural adjustment” programs by the International Monetary Fund were employed in ‘the Global South’ and Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher restructured the national economies of the US and UK fundamentally in the 1970s and 80s and, as central economic and political players, thus impacted the global economic system permanently (ibid., 20). The idea was creating a “world economy” (Narr/Schubert 1994 as cited in Michalitsch 2004, 158; my translation) that is structured by a ‘fair’ market in which supply and demand lead to a ‘fair’ and ‘natural’ equilibrium. This idea – while still being taught in microeconomics at universities – has been refuted, as the reality is a lot more complex than this model would suggest.

While these political and economic changes are central to the neoliberal turn, Brown (2015) observes an even more fundamental change, namely in how we think, due to neoliberalism. She calls this “a particular form of reason that configures all aspects of existence in economic terms [...]” (ibid., 17). She considers it a “governing rationality” (ibid.) that permeates all aspects of human life. By thinking of everything in economic terms, the relationships we have with the land and each other are further ruptured, as everything is thought of as distinct from oneself and as having to be used to increase one’s symbolic or material profit. The severe negative impact of neoliberalism is also exemplified by the International Indigenous Women’s Forum (FIMI) who name “neoliberalism and development aggression” as the first of six categories of violence against Indigenous Women (Kuokkanen 2019, 182).⁶² While Kuokkanen (ibid.) critiques these categories as conflating the general and the specific, it is nonetheless telling that neoliberal capitalism has been named as the primary form of violence experienced by Indigenous women, as it has so fundamentally changed Indigenous ways of life and still does, especially in the form of extractivism (Kuokkanen 2011; Arvin et al. 2013; cf. 5.2.).

⁶² It is followed by “violence in the name of tradition” and third, “state and domestic violence” (Kuokkanen 2019, 182).

Neoliberal reason as a “governing rationality” is predominantly focused on the individual and a depoliticisation of what are structural and political problems. An inability to care for all members of the family, earn enough money or have secure housing are individualised and severed from structural inequalities that emerge, among others, by “hollowing out the nation state” (Michalitsch 2004, 159; my translation) and an underfunding of the welfare state (Keskinen 2021, 204-205). They are construed as an individual’s responsibility, not the community’s or the state’s. This individualisation of structural inequalities includes “race, gender, and class-based inequalities” which are being portrayed “as individual failures, resulting in the depoliticising of social and economic powers” (ibid., 201; Brown 2015). Neoliberal-critical and Indigenous feminist theories illustrate how political and economic changes lead to an individualistic and depoliticised mentality that needs to be reimagined by not only emphasising community, solidarity and relationality, but a concomitant political and economic awareness of the continuity of colonial exploitation, and a commitment to change.

What makes changing the neoliberal capitalist system more difficult is what Brown has called the “neoliberal reason” which has fundamentally permeated the state, turning it into a “modern firm” (2015, 27) with economic justifications guiding political decision making. Brown (ibid., 24) gives the example of a speech made by former US president Barack Obama in which he framed every political measure in economic terms. A shift towards clean energy for instance was not argued for in terms of morality, sustainability or care for the planet, but an increase in competitiveness (ibid., 24-25) – not dissimilar to the Norwegian state’s arguments for the construction of the Fovsen windpark and Áltá-Kautokeino hydropower plant (cf. chapter 7). In such a framing, political measures by a state are portrayed as being done for the benefit of economic growth, not the benefit of its citizens, thus subordinating “democratic state commitments to equality, liberty, inclusion, and constitutionalism [...] to the project of economic growth, competitive positioning, and capital enhancement” (ibid., 26). This leads Brown to wonder “[w]hat happens to rule by and for the people [...]” – the most fundamental basis of democracy (ibid., 27) and “the constituent elements of democracy – its culture, subjects, principles, and institutions – when neoliberal rationality saturates political life?” In a settler colonial context these questions are further complicated, as Indigenous Peoples did not choose to be part of the democracy they are living in and that has been established on their lands, which reveals a highly unstable basis of democracy. This foundational instability is further enhanced through neo-

liberal changes both in policy and mentality which come to light especially in conflicts surrounding land rights as will be seen below.

A positive change for the future of current democracies and economies requires a look back in order to move forward. Traditional economies, for instance, offer a more holistic and sustainable alternative to the one-sided and exploitative neoliberal capitalist system. They have never only been about economics and profit maximisation but were a subsistence system that strengthened social relationships (Kuokkanen 2011, 218).⁶³ The main goal of traditional economies have been “the sustenance of individuals, families, and the community” (ibid., 219) through an “endless circulation of goods, services, and other products” (ibid., 218). As a subsistence based economic system, it is dependent on the different seasons – which is why it is also called “seasonal, integrated economy” (ibid., 219) – thus requiring a good understanding of the workings of nature and our relationships with it. According to Kuokkanen (ibid.), “[t]he key principles of indigenous economies [are] sustainability and reciprocity [which] reflect land-based worldviews founded on active recognition of kinship relations that extend beyond the human domain.” Such a respectful recognition of our relationship with the land is very different to colonial and capitalist understandings thereof. Traditional Indigenous economies are based on not taking too much, giving back and providing for each other – including generations yet to come. It has a future aspect to it that exploitative extractivist industries do not have.

As this chapter has shown, colonial and capitalist structures have been closely entwined in the dispossession of Indigenous lands and Peoples by imposing heteropatriarchal binary systems. Neoliberal capitalism has resulted in a hollowing out of the state and the dominance of a “neoliberal reason” mentality that increasingly governs all areas and relationships of life. These developments illustrate the need for a substantial critique and alternatives which Indigenous feminisms offer, especially in light of the continued land claims and associated (neoliberal) capitalist logic, which includes more pressures by transnational firms, in addition to state pressures. As has been noted in this chapter, as Indigenous feminist theories stem from grassroots movements and practices, they are as diverse as the individuals and groups partaking in them. While Indigenous feminist theories share some central points of critique, they always need to be contextualised. In the following, the fo-

⁶³ Kuokkanen is speaking about the context of traditional economies in Turtle Island. While these Indigenous and traditional economies have looked differently depending on time and place, they often share fundamental similarities.

cus will be on Sámi feminist theories. The plural “theories” is used in order to show awareness that a multitude of feminist theories, experiences and practices exist in Sápmi.

5.2. Sámi feminist theories

As mentioned in 3.1. the origins of the Norwegian state are settler colonial: nation-state borders have disrupted Sápmi, Norwegian national identity is predominantly perceived as being white, Christian and heteronormative, much like many settler colonial states today. The colonial endeavour has led to the destruction of Sámi knowledge systems and relationships. Due to this colonial history, “everyone living in the country is not only racialized and gendered but also has a relationship to settler colonialism” (Arvin et al. 2013, 9).⁶⁴ Decolonisation is thus, much like feminism, relevant to everyone. As established in the chapter above, it is vital to be conscious of the interwoven dynamics and structures of settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy within present nation-states and their previous and current discourses on race, gender and nationality. Scholars such as Astri Dankertsen (2021), Rauna Kuokkanen (2019, 2021), Ina Knobbloch (2024), Jorunn Eikjok (1989), and Liisa-Rávná Finbog (2020) examine how these colonial and patriarchal structures are also always gendered in Sápmi. The following paragraphs focus on Sámi feminisms in relation to Nordic feminisms, pioneers of Sámi feminisms and the strengthening of an organised Sámi feminist movement in the mid-20th century as well as the myth of the ‘strong Sámi woman’ before concluding with Sámi feminist views on their relationship with the land.

Sámi feminist theories have – similar to other Indigenous feminist theories – existed long in practice while theoretical conceptualisations thereof have only recently started to emerge in greater numbers. Even though anti-racist, decolonial and postcolonial theories and concepts have been part of Nordic academia, Sámi feminist perspectives remain few and are not integrated into the mainstream academic (feminist) discourse (Dankertsen 2021, 135). According to Dahl (2021, 129), “Nordic feminism” refers to the “naturalisation of reproductive [white] heterosexuality, able-bodiedness, binary gender, and middle-class tastes and manners” which lead to a very restrictive feminism that excludes many bodies.⁶⁵ Kuokkanen (as cited in Knobbloch & Kuokkanen 2015, 277) agrees and thinks it

64 Arvin et al. speak here about the settler colonialism of the area of Turtle Island that is today known as the US. However, I believe this is also applicable to the Norwegian context.

65 Keskinen et al. (2021, 5) add that (neoliberal) capitalism has also played a key role in “Nordic feminism” which, according to them adheres to “capitalist market logics”. This refers to the common neoliberal feminist belief that an integration of women into the capitalist market leads to feminist independence and empowerment. This idea is not only limited to a binary gender system but lacks a fundamental critique of how capitalism has led to the continued marginalisation of Indigenous women, women of colour, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

clearly lacks an intersectional analysis of structural colonial violence that is committed by both the state and transnational corporations (ibid.). She gives the examples of “reindeer herding laws, global capital encroaching on their traditional territories, or the ability to teach the Sámi language to their children [...] [that] are not seen or understood as feminist concerns” (ibid.). Sámi feminisms illustrate how such Indigenous rights issues are also always gendered – something that tends to be overlooked both within Indigenous and mainstream feminist points of view.

Keskinen et al. (2021, 5) see the reason for the “epistemic whiteness of Nordic feminism” in Nordic exceptionalism which is something Sámi feminisms explicitly address. It seeks to expose both Nordic and Sámi exceptionalism, the latter of which attempts to idealise and mystify a peaceful Sámi existence that silences gendered violence and women’s and 2SLGBTQIA+ people’s voices and does not take responsibility for discrimination within Indigenous communities (Kuokkanen 2007a). Sámi feminist theories try to illuminate “the complex ways through which colonialism and racism have shaped and continue to shape gender relations within the community, as well as the positions and social realities of Indigenous women in the Nordic countries today” (Knoblock & Kuokkanen 2015, 275; Dankertsen 2021, 136). They strive not only for a decolonisation of feminism and gender relations within the academic realm but more so beyond that “a complete transformation of how Sámi society defines itself” (Dankertsen 2021, 145). The aim can thus be summarised as collecting and analysing the diversity of gendered experiences and knowledge in Sápmi, illustrating how they are related to colonial, economic, cultural, spiritual, and other structures while simultaneously offering alternatives to the status quo.

Already at the beginning of the 20th century, the first seeds of an organised Sámi feminist movement were sown and documented in written text. Elsa Laula Renberg’s book *Inför Lif eller Död?* (1904) was not only the first text published by a Sámi woman but also addressed many issues that still pertain to the Sámi today. According to Svendsen (2021, 168), “a decolonial perspective can be traced back to both Laula’s and Stenberg’s critiques of colonial land theft and racism, as well as their insistence on an actual future for the Saami people.” They wrote about the violence that followed “the ideological dehumanization of their people” by which they very explicitly included violence against Indigenous land (Svendsen 2021, 167-168). In *Inför Lif eller Död?* Laula Renberg shows how colonial and racialised violence is complex and multidimensional, as it encompasses both the “ma-

terial, physical, symbolic, and psychological” dimension (ibid.). The fact that both Stenberg and Renberg’s texts illustrate how “race, ethnicity, class, and gender have become co-constituted in Nordic countries” (Svendsen 2021, 158), easily allows us to consider them early Sámi feminist thinkers.

Next to analysing the colonial situation they were living in, Laula Renberg particularly focused on “the collective consciousness of the Sámi” (Hirvonen 2008, 176), seeking to unite them beyond the nation-states. She is considered a Sámi icon for having organised the first transnational Sámi conference in 1917 in the invitation to which she explicitly invited Sámi women to participate (Bremmer 2012, 50 as cited in Dankertsen 2021, 139; Svendsen 2021, 160). She was well aware of the suffragist movement at the time and formed alliances with a women’s rights organisation (Svendsen 2021, 161). This not only illustrates her feminist awareness but is also an early example of feminist collaboration transcending racialised and colonially imposed lines of separation in times when restrictive policies were still a lot more explicitly practised in Sápmi than they are today.

After a quieter period in terms of an organised Sámi feminist movement – caused by the deaths of central leaders, the Second World War and following increase in assimilatory policies in Norway – the Sámi women’s movement re-emerged in the 1970s – a time of decolonisation, civil rights, anti-war movements and increasing gender awareness. However, due to the assumption that Sámi women were equal to men, Sámi women who criticised existing discriminatory gender relations were strongly criticised from within Sápmi (Eikjok 2004, 54). Kuokkanen recalls that they “have been accused of being divisive and of breaking the unity of the community if they push for rights specific to them, including gendered violence” (Knoblock & Kuokkanen 2015, 277). Eikjok (2004, 57) speaks about having been “unpopular” to both Sámi men, Sámi women as well as Norwegian women, noting the struggle of trying “to fight for our rights both in relation to indigenous and feminist issues.” Even though there was an increasing focus on Indigenous identity and rights during the 1970s and 1980s, according to Dankertsen (2021, 139) this “made it difficult to mobilise around feminist struggles” (see also Halsaa 2020). Nonetheless, women were centrally involved both in demonstrations, as authors and artists and the beginnings of more formalised women’s organising were taking form and executed with the establishment of the Sáráhká Sámi women’s organisation in 1988 (Halsaa 2020, 132).

Even though Sámi women were central during the protests against the Áltá dam and they established a number of Sámi organisations in the following decades, they were often reduced to a “mother earth” figure that emphasised their presumed strength compared to the ‘weakness’ of Nordic women (ibid.). The fact that this understanding of the ‘strong Sámi woman’ is based on a comparison to Nordic women as weaker is very restrictive. It subsumes all Sámi and Nordic women within these two – seemingly opposed – binary categories. This comparison not only disregards the complexity and heterogeneity of either category but also negates the existence of other gender expressions while putting unfair pressures on Sámi women (Dankertsen 2021). Consequently, Kuokkanen (2007a, 73) calls for a need to revisit the myth of the strong Sami woman as it “had to do with a desired ideal of Sami society rather than the everyday reality of Sami women”. Kuokkanen (2019, 172-173) elaborates on this, saying that “[b]ecause Sámi women are imbued with influence and economic authority within their kinship relations” they are assumed to be immune to patriarchal oppression. Such an assumption restricts feminist resistance and organising as it assumes that there is no discrimination happening. It is thus a concept that, rather than celebrating Sámi women’s strengths, can be used to continue to silence them while also excluding the voices of 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

The narrow gendered binary system and related heteropatriarchal and -paternal system not only excludes genders and marginalises non-heteronormative ways of being but fundamentally restructures and destroys existing “intimate relationships” (Kuokkanen 2019, 53). The heteropatriarchal colonial system that is based on the binary of man-woman is entwined with the similarly often gendered and hierarchical dialectical system of culture-nature, city-countryside, ‘civilisation’-‘savagery’, Christian-‘heathen’, modernity-tradition, human-animal and so forth. Consequently, Rauna Kuokkanen (ibid.) argues that the heteropatriarchal binary system fundamentally changes our relationships not only with humans, but animals, the land, waters and all of the environment that we are in relation with. For Smith (2010, 61) this destruction is essential to the colonial endeavour since it does not only seek “to kill colonized peoples but to destroy their sense of being people”, which is strongly based on relationships with human and non-human bodies. The destruction of “intimate relationships” and “their sense of being people” is, according to Kuokkanen (2019, 53) a central reason for gendered, environmental and other violence which makes an understanding thereof a crucial aspect of Indigenous feminist theories and decolonisation. As emphasised by Starblanket & Green (2024, 14), Indigenous feminist theories are

“concerned with the health and care of our territories and *all our relations*, not only human ones”.

One of the most central relationships is with the land which has been severely impacted in the course of colonial and capitalist demands and pressures. As indicated above, Sámi feminists have always been active in land rights struggles, much like other Indigenous feminists.⁶⁶ While most of all *white* men are positioned on the superior cultural, and economical level in settler colonial states, members of Indigenous Peoples such as the Sámi are ‘othered’ and denigrated as belonging to nature, tradition, and the past. By contrast, Sámi and other Indigenous feminists emphasise the relationality, interwovenness and plurality of these supposedly opposed poles (Knoblock 2024, 133). Sámi women’s strong identification with the land has even led to some feeling closer affiliated to the environmental than the feminist movement (Knoblock & Kuokkanen 2015, 280). Just like Indigenous feminist theories, land intrusions correspond within Sámi epistemologies to a “fracturing [of] the relational web of connection” (Knoblock 2024, 133). Because of this, Knoblock (ibid.) states that intrusions such as “mining represents a multigenerational threat against the survival of Sámi body lands and lifeworlds.”

Feminist relationality is a counter-strategy that focuses on the interwovenness of body and land as an alternative to the disruption of relationships (ibid., 137). Relationality, according to Kuokkanen (2025, 4) “encompasses both the active processes of forming, sustaining, and nurturing relationships, and the wider cultural or philosophical framework that regards relationships as foundational.” It does not only refer to “an interpersonal activity” but should be seen as “a worldview or an episteme in which relationships – between individuals, communities, and the environment – are essential to understanding existence and social organisation” (ibid.). She emphasises that feminist relationality focuses on how the “interconnected relationships between humans, land, water, animals, and spirits” are gendered (ibid., 5). Kuokkanen (ibid.) notes that “[i]t recognises that colonialism and environmental degradation often impact women and gender-diverse individuals dispropor-

66 One prominent example would for instance be Altamirano-Jiménez’s (2021) concept of “body land”. “Body land” refers to “an ontological relation, a continuum that does not separate human beings from territory and other beings” (ibid., 218). As such, it is a concept that emphasises the relationship between all beings as embodied and interrelated with each other. She elaborates further that Indigenous feminist resistance against colonial and capitalist exploitation fundamentally “critiques separations of mind and body, land and body, life and non-life, and centers the web of relationships that constitutes Indigenous life” (ibid., 215). According to Altamirano-Jiménez, Indigenous land exploitation is possible due to the violence of the rupturing of relationships and “everyday violent practices perpetrated by the state and other actors on human and nonhuman bodies” (ibid., 215).

tionately, such as through gender-based violence near extraction sites or marginalisation in decision-making processes.” Kuokkanen (2019, 231) offers as an alternative, the requirement of “the norm of free, prior, and informed consent” (FPIC) that should be applied to both human and non-human Indigenous bodies – including the land – as a respectful and relationship-aware practice.⁶⁷

In her article, Knobbloch (2024) discusses her research on a mining project in Sábmme for which she interviewed a number of Sámi women, all of whose resistance against it stemmed from their relationship with the land. They simply consider the land as part of their identity, with one participant explaining: “There are so many connections to it, all the stories the land in my area carries and the knowledge and things I’ve learned that have made me who I am” (ibid., 140). Another interviewee even goes as far as describing the planned mining project as “a rape of the earth. Of us. Because we are all one with everything [...]” (ibid., 145). She is unable to differentiate between herself and the land. Such an entwined understanding of oneself as indistinguishable from the land is very different to colonial and capitalist thinking that require a strict differentiation in order to exploit it. This ontological difference is also what makes dialogue between colonial/capital and Indigenous representatives often challenging as their fundamental understanding of the world differ so vastly.

In recent years developments such as the Sápmi Pride (since 2014) and the publication *Queering Sápmi* (2013) have focused on decolonising the colonially imposed gender binaries, focussing on showing that being queer and Sámi is not a contradiction. The authors of the publication describe that they were overwhelmed by the many contributions they received, which highlights not only the existence of many queer Sámi, but also their wish to be seen and heard (Lindquist & Bergman 2013). The stories featured in this book and on many other platforms are part of a greater movement to fundamentally reform Sámi society and its relationship to the colonial settler state from a queer Sámi feminist perspective.

67 The concept of “free, prior and informed consent” originally refers to the need to obtain Indigenous consent regarding decisions that affect them. This consent should be free from “coercion, intimidation or manipulation”, should be done in time – before contracts for projects, etc. are signed and they should obtain all the information necessary – “including the nature, size, pace, reversibility and scope of any proposed project or activity”, including its purpose, duration, locality and “a preliminary assessment of the likely economic, social, cultural and environmental impact, including potential risks [...]” (United Nations 2018) to make an informed decision. Kuokkanen discusses the need to include the gendered dimensions of projects, legislations, activities. She clarifies that “[p]art of Indigenous gender justice [...] entails that women [and 2SQ individuals], their concerns for, interests of, and activities on the land are included in any consideration of Indigenous land and resource rights [...]” (2019, 231).

As the collaboration between the settler colonial state and global corporate interests is today greater than ever (Kuokkanen 2019, 3), such a critique is urgently needed.

Both Indigenous feminist and neoliberal-critical feminist theories offer crucial analyses of the status quo in both political and economic terms. These theoretical critiques simultaneously require a methodological critique of how we do research. According to Dahl (2021, 129), we need “more than critique; we need a different set of epistemic habits [...] [which] begin with a different set of citations, orientations, narrations and collaborations”. Thus, before offering a definition of the case study, the following methodological chapter will begin with a discussion of decolonial methodologies.

6. Methodology and material

As my research topic is a feminist one that focuses on a case within a colonial context, it has been important to reflect on my positionality and situatedness and draw on insights from decolonial and Indigenous methodologies.⁶⁸ Feminist, decolonial and Indigenous methodologies unveil the fact that research cannot be objective or neutral, but that it always stems from a certain time, place and understanding of the world. They also show how the university and its methods, theories and practices have been entangled with colonial and capitalist endeavours that have promoted a Eurocentric, *white*, heteropatriarchal understanding of science and knowledge that still persists today in the texts that are being read, quoted, and produced. The material foundation of universities is also intricately entwined with colonialism and capitalism in the resources and labour that has been used for the construction of university buildings and is still required for the maintenance today.⁶⁹ Universities were established in order to both symbolically and materially safeguard and promote some knowledge as opposed to others and have played a central part in ‘academically’ justifying racist and sexist ideologies that are still maintained today as will be described in greater detail below.

While the decolonisation of existing colonial and capitalist structures has to include a critique of the methods, theories, and material used in academic research and an awareness of how they are embedded in and reflective of wider power imbalances, it is crucial not to mistake such theoretical, methodological and academic decolonisation processes from ur-

68 As Smith (2021, 164) notes, “[m]ethodology is important because it frames the questions being asked, determines the set of instruments and methods to be employed, and shapes the analyses.” It fundamentally includes a critical engagement and reflection of the surrounding political, social and economic context within which research is produced (ibid.).

69 Digital technologies for instance require lithium and other resources that are being sourced in violent and dangerous ways in many former colonies.

gent material ones that need to happen through legal, political, social and cultural measures that directly affect and improve Indigenous Peoples' lives (cf. Tuck & Yang 2012). As Gopal (2021, 883, 888) says, a decolonisation of the university without a societal, political, economical one is impossible (cf. Kapoor 2023, 353). Academic decolonisation is necessary but cannot happen independently of other forms of decolonisation. Nonetheless, Kuokkanen (2000; 2010, 66) considers a decolonisation of the university and its paradigms a crucial component of decolonisation, which can be considered a part of the "long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power" that is needed to decolonise remaining colonial structures (Smith 2021, 112).

The first subchapter of this section will give a brief overview of central tenets of decolonial and Indigenous methodologies and illustrate how this has impacted this thesis. Following that, a brief description of the case study is given (6.2.), as well as a critical insight into archival work (6.2.1.) and document analysis (6.2.2.) before, lastly, presenting the material used for the analysis below (6.2.3.).

6.1. Decolonial and Indigenous methodologies

As Indigenous scholars have emphasised, academia is embedded within greater socio-political power structures (Berg-Nordlie 2024, 15), making "[a]ll of academia [...] political" (May-Britt Öhmann as cited in Kuhn 2020; cf. Jaworsky 2019, 2). Colonialism has permeated all aspects of life, including the university – both as institutions that may have directly been built with money that stems from the exploitation of colonies and its land and people, and as places of power in terms of knowledge creation and consolidation (Smith 2021, 67; Kuokkanen 2000, 412-413).⁷⁰ As Gopal (2021, 892) emphasises: "[t]he university was not, and is not, separable from endeavours of 'discovery' and control" (cf. Kapoor 2023; Smith 2021). "[S]ettler perspectives and worldviews" (Tuck & Yang 2012, 2) have been classified as 'real', 'objective', and self-evident knowledge, focussing on "[t]he individual, as the basic social unit from which other social organizations and social relations form [...]" – a 'western' idea that was part of the 'enlightenment' and that has been further entrenched in the course of capitalism replacing feudal and Indigenous society structures (Smith 2021, 55-56).

⁷⁰ As Smith (2021, 67) notes: "knowledge and culture were as much part of imperialism as raw materials and military strength. Knowledge was also there to be discovered, extracted, appropriated and distributed." Smith (2021, 73), Kuokkanen (2000, 412-413), and others also note the relevance of the colonial educational system as part of the economic, political, and cultural colonisation of Indigenous Peoples.

The concomitant prevalence of binaries that value ‘modernity’ and ‘the west’ more highly than other forms of existence and thinking (Kuokkanen 2000, 412) can be seen as part of the colonisation of the mind that has led to a sidelining and devaluation of Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies (cf. Mbembe 2016, 36; Gopal 2021, 878; Kuokkanen 2010, 2000). Similar to feminist critiques of the status quo, decolonial methodologies unveil that power structures lie behind the presumed ‘naturalness’ and ‘self-evidence’ of what ‘true’, ‘factual’, ‘academic’ and ‘scientific’ knowledge is. Smith (2021, 9) further explains that colonial research is gendered with most accounts and research having been done by *white* men and from their point of view. Views of Indigenous women were compared and contrasted to idealised views of *white* women, with Indigenous women’s and other voices often being excluded as colonists, researchers and travellers tended to stem from patriarchal societies with strict rules of conduct dividing the binary gender categories (ibid.).

Kuokkanen (2007b) has called the systematic exclusion of Indigenous knowledges for the benefit of the dominance of colonial and ‘western’ ones “epistemic ignorance”. According to Kuokkanen (2017, 317), it is a “form of subtle violence” that leads to the “disappearance of marginalized worldviews” (cf. Santos 2016). Part of the colonial project and “epistemic ignorance” has been establishing ‘scientific’ justifications for racism and a narrative about other cultures and peoples from a colonial point of view. Also in Sápmi “research has been used as a tool of conquest by dehumanizing Indigenous peoples and their lifeworlds and extracting their knowledges without consent” (Fjellheim 2024, 9; cf. Fjellheim 2020). Racist science in Norway and elsewhere interacted with each other to support colonial and capitalist interests that required the objectifications and dehumanisation of ‘Others’ in order to justify the exploitation of their lands and its inhabitants (Smith 2021; Höglund & Burnett 2019). By focusing on ‘science’ that promoted and supported colonial and capitalist interests, the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples was not considered to be valuable, as they were classified as being ‘inferior’ (Fjellheim 2020; Smith 2021). Fjellheim (2024, 11) observed that also during the land rights conflicts “different knowledges systems and worldviews collide” which illustrates that “colonial difference is at once manifested in epistemological, ontological and political conflicts”. Thus, decolonisation needs to happen on all these levels, making it indispensable to draw on Indigenous epistemes and recognise their importance, especially when discussing topics pertaining to Indigenous Peoples.

Decolonial and Indigenous methodologies offer alternatives to “epistemic ignorance” by asking us to fundamentally reconsider what we think to know as ‘research’ and what knowledge, people and worldviews that in- and excludes (Smith 2021, 22). Indigenous methodologies accentuate that a holistic understanding of the world needs to be reflected in research and academia (Kuokkanen 2000, 411; Guttorm et al. 2021). They do so by “‘re-centring’ Indigenous values and cultural practices and placing Indigenous peoples and their issues into dominant, mainstream discourses [...]” (Kuokkanen 2000, 411), “striv[ing] towards a balance between different areas of life and which does not separate intellectual, social, political, economic, psychological and spiritual forms of human life from each other” (ibid., 417). The scholars do not propose to replace ‘western’ methodologies with Indigenous ones but rather advocate for an “epistemic pluralism” that includes a variety of knowledge systems, values, and perspectives (Guttorm et al. 2021, 136).

Considering the ongoing “epistemic ignorance” in academia, researchers need to be critical about the methods and theories they use, what research questions they formulate and how they plan to answer them. Research does not happen in an apolitical space, but is embedded within economic, political, cultural and social structures that are being reflected in how we do research (cf. Smith 2021, 22). As noted above, decolonisation is an ongoing and arduous process (cf. Simonds & Christopher 2013, 2189) and as highlighted by Styres (2019) it is also rather “uncomfortable” to critically examine how past and present colonial structures have impacted not only our academic experiences, but our entire epistemological development. Yet, Kuokkanen (2010, 61) sees it as part of the responsibility of researchers to do their homework and become more aware of Indigenous epistemes. She states that “one of the first and most pressing responsibilities of the academy is that of doing homework” (ibid., 62). Doing homework implies not only reflecting on the power structures the university and oneself is embedded in, but also researching well what one chooses to focus on in one’s research (Spivak 1996 as cited in Kuokkanen 2010, 68). As there is no neutral position from which to do research (ibid.), with research always happening within a specific historical, political, social, cultural and economic context (Smith 2021, 5-6), researchers need to be critical of their work and positionality in order to not reproduce colonial power structures.

Jaworsky (2019, 2) emphasises that “who we are as researchers and as people will inform and influence the work that we do and the knowledge that we produce. Our position-

ality dictates the questions that we ask, the methods that we use, the way we interpret our findings and what we do with our findings once the knowledge has been generated.” As a non-Sámi scholar and former Norwegian teacher who has studied Scandinavian Studies in Vienna and Bergen, it was clear from the start that I had to read up on Sámi history, theory and methodology in order to gain a sufficient understanding of the cases and their contexts. I first learned of the “Alta case” during my Erasmus stay in Bergen and have also tried to incorporate information about the Sámi during my Norwegian classes as a way to de-romanticise perceptions of Norway.⁷¹ Thanks to Gertrude Saxinger I was able to get in contact with Sámi researchers whose responses were extremely helpful in the early stages of this project when I was still considered doing interviews. With the help of their responses and my reading of decolonial methodologies and the Charter of Decolonial Research (2013), it quickly became clear that a document analysis is the better way to go in order to not continue the exploitation of Sámi (cf. Fjellheim 2024, 51; Virtanen et al. 2021, 9). At the same time, a conversation with a Sámi scholar was invaluable in confirming that the direction of my – at that stage very early stages of my research – seemed sensible to them. It was also a very conscious choice to write this thesis in English in order for everyone that I have been in contact with to be able to read what I have written if they wish to do so.

Particular care was taken in choosing literature and documents by Sámi and Indigenous scholars in order to counteract “epistemic ignorance” on a very minor level. The possibility of doing a research trip to Norway including to Romsa (Tromsø), Áltá (Alta) and Guovdageidnu (Kautokeino) also proved invaluable not only for gathering archival material, but in order to gain a better understanding of the diversity of Sámi culture by talking to locals, consuming Sámi literature and media (in Norwegian or English or with subtitles) and simply being surrounded by it. Wilson (2008) has said that “if research hasn’t changed you as a person, then you haven’t done it correctly” (as cited in Thambinathan & Kinsella 2021, 6). The experience of writing this thesis by trying to be respectful and, as a result, reproducing colonial violence by asking Sámi scholars about their advice, sitting with that uncomfortableness and learning from it by discarding the idea to do interviews and instead solely focussing on text-based material as well as trying to mostly use Sámi and Indigen-

⁷¹ During my stay in Bergen, I also attended a discussion at university by leading scholars on international aid, some of whom spoke very critically of Norway’s role in international aid and development strategies. My focus on postcolonial literatures during my previous studies (English and American Studies and Anglophone Literatures and Cultures) also endowed me with a general understanding of colonialism and imperialism and interest in Indigenous Peoples and Norway as a settler colonial state.

ous scholars' work and other non-Indigenous scholars who are very reflective of their work has taught me more than words could say. The choice to do a case study was also in part informed by decolonial research as it requires the use of a great number of diverse material which allows for a comprehensive understanding of the conflict.

6.2. Case study

Case studies are an empirical research method that are particularly suitable for investigating contemporary complex social phenomena in their real-life contexts (Yin 2018; see also Gerring 2004). As mentioned in the introduction, in order to understand the dynamics and effects of the conflict between the Norwegian state and the Sámi in terms of land rights, I have chosen to do an embedded single-case study. I will compare my two embedded units of analysis (Yin 2018, 48) – the Máze/Áltá-conflict with the Fovsen-conflict – to understand and illustrate how the conflict between the Norwegian state and the Sámi is an example for an “extreme”, complex and longitudinal single-case (ibid., 49, 51). Yin defines a longitudinal case as one where “the same single case [is studied] at two [...] different points in time” (ibid., 51). As illustrated in chapter four, the conflict between the Norwegian state and the Sámi is ongoing.

Yin mentions four central characteristics a good research design for a case study should have, namely “construct validity”, which is ensured by using multiple sources of evidence, “internal validity”, which is done by pattern matching, “external validity”, which refers to basing one's work on existing theory in single-case studies, and, lastly, “reliability”, which is ensured by compiling a well-structured case study database as well as maintaining a chain of evidence (2018, 20). When compiling material for this case study attention has been paid, especially by consulting a number of different sources – ranging from articles to speeches, press statements and correspondence – of which the most relevant ones have been chosen, as will be further explained below (6.2.3.). Most of the material that is used for the Máze/Áltá case has been collected during a three month stay in Norway as part of a short-term grant by the University of Vienna, while the material for the Fovsen case has been collected online.

The original plan of doing interviews as well which, according to Yin (ibid., 118) is “[o]ne of the most important sources of case study evidence [...]”, was dismissed in the course of preparing for my short-term grant, getting in touch with Sámi scholars and doing more research on decolonial methodologies. I realised that doing interviews would not

correspond with my understanding of doing ethical and decolonial research. As Sámi scholars not only expressed to me directly in e-mail conversations, but also during a 2024 panel on Indigeneity in Europe and in academic publications, there has been a “research fatigue” (cf. Fjellheim 2024; Porsanger 2004, 108; Smith 2021, 56). Because of this, it seemed better to not do any interviews but focus on the already existing material.

6.2.1. Archival work

In line with the above chapter on decolonising methodologies and with archives playing a central role in my research it seems necessary to be critically aware of how the archive is not a neutral or objective collection of material but entwined within political, societal and economic power structures, which requires researchers to always keep in mind who has been able to document and save material and for what purposes this was done. Archives need to be critically consulted as they can be a part of colonial knowledge documentation, maintenance and consolidation – exactly because they, just like libraries and universities, are often seen as ‘objective’ and ‘neutral’ places (Hartman in Powles 2021, 233).⁷² Considering that most Indigenous cultures have had oral traditions, the great value that has been attributed to written documentation as opposed to oral storytelling can be seen as reflecting a colonial mindset. At the same time, archives such as the Sámi Archives in Guovadueignu can be seen as constituting a counter strategy.

Diana Taylor states that “the archival, from the beginning, sustains power” (2003, 19). They are not “unmediated”, neutral and objective (ibid.). The meaning of the objects contained in archives is not given but each object is “selected, classified, and presented for analysis” (ibid.). Hartman (2019, xiii) points out that archives and the documents within them also reflect ideas about who has been considered to be a “historical actor” and who not, reflecting epistemological and ontological understandings of the dominant political, social and cultural groups both at the time of the archive’s origin and today. At the same time, Taylor (ibid.) also highlights that meaning can never be fixed – it is always being created in the encounter between “the source of ‘knowledge’” and “the knower” in different moments in time and space. This is similar to Indigenous epistemologies that tend to highlight the existence of contested stories, alternative knowledges, different versions of stories, and the emphasis on relationships in our understanding of the world.

⁷² Saidiya Hartman (as cited in Nina Mingya Powles 2021, 233) states that “[l]ibraries and archives may intend to exist outside of politics, with purely academic or research-related aims, but the archive is an institution and is therefore political.”

I have been to four different archives during my research trip to Norway to collect material for the Máze/Áltá case: the National Archives and Norwegian Labour Movement Archives in Oslo, the archives of the People's Action Against the Development of the Alta-Kautokeino River Network at the Alta Museum and, lastly, the Sámi Archives in Guovadeignu. In Oslo, I was able to examine Nature and Youth material as well as the vast amount of correspondence, legal and other material at the Labour Movement's Archives. The latter of which was particularly interesting in order to get a greater understanding of the point of view of the state. The archive in Áltá proved to be the most comprehensive collection. In addition to a great number of correspondence and newspaper articles, protocols of their yearly conferences gave a great insight into the timeline and their view of the conflict until their dismantlement in 1982. Finally, the Sámi Archives had a considerable collection of photographs of the conflict as well as additional magazines and correspondence that have proven useful for the analysis.

6.2.2. Document analysis

As my case study is based on documents, my main method is a document analysis (Thompson 2015; Noetzel et al. 2018).⁷³ Noetzel et al. (2018, 370) very generally define a document as being “the entirety of a data structure in which information is transmitted from a producer to a recipient” – the main function of a document is to communicate (ibid.). The most central question of any document analysis is, according to Noetzel et al. (2018, 373): “Who shares what with whom in what form and why?” There is always a need to contextualise documents and clarify who they are written by and for whom in order to be aware of potential hidden interests and goals that may have been communicated in the document.

Noetzel et al. (2018, 371) differentiate between episodic and periodic documents – with episodic documents being published once and periodic documents repeatedly which consequently have a higher level of institutionalisation (ibid.). Episodic and periodic documents may appear in different formats and have different functions, yet often one may observe a correspondence between the design and the linguistic style of a document (Noetzel et al. 2018, 371). In the case of the documents of this thesis mostly periodic documents, such as speeches, newspaper articles, and press statements, will be used.

⁷³ The following quotations from Noetzel et al. are all my translations.

They give a step-by-step overview of how to do a document analysis where they differentiate between the formal and content-related analytical and interpretative dimensions (Noetzel et al. 2018, 376). The formal analysis includes clarifying the text type, its integrity and public accessibility, as well as gathering information about the origin of the text, including the time, place and reason for publication as well as a clarification of its authenticity. As a last step of the formal criteria, the text's producer should be defined as well as both its intended and actual recipient(s) (ibid. 376). The subsequent analysis and interpretation of the document focuses on the structure and the content, which includes a focus on the line of argumentation, clarity, main message, central arguments, conclusions and key concepts (ibid.). The language of the text should also be analysed, including spelling, grammar, abbreviations, style and use of rhetoric (ibid.). Since the focus of the document analysis of this thesis is content-related, the language of the documents analysed below have been left to a bare minimum in order to be able to focus on the documents' contents. Finally, the last part of analysing a document requires a critical evaluation of it, which includes addressing possible contradictions, intentions and the text's appropriateness within its context as well as its relevance for answering the research question (ibid., 376).

In order to sufficiently contextualise documents and do such a detailed analysis, Noetzel et al. (2018, 373) suggest using few documents and carefully selecting them. When choosing the documents for this thesis, I have focussed on texts that seem to be central within the respective conflicts and were written by key actors or groups and can be seen as reflecting their standpoints. Considering my research question, I have also tried to focus on texts that explicitly discuss land rights and gender. I have collected all of my material in a Libre Office Spreadsheet and marked relevant documents in colour and commented on their relevance when collecting them and reviewing them at a later stage. As I was writing the theory chapter simultaneously and before starting the 'actual' analysis of my documents, the theoretical arguments and concepts have proved a useful framework for the analysis below.

6.2.3. Material

The material was chosen to reflect the points of view of the respective actors – the Norwegian state and the Sámi – in the two embedded cases. As noted above, the focus will be on the main lines of argumentation of the official government and Sámi representatives. For the Máze/Áltá case mostly archival material and for the Fovsen conflict only online avail-

able material was used. Most texts were written in Norwegian; however a number of them – such as some press statements and official letters were also published in English.

In order to find the relevant material for the Máze/Áltá case, the *Arkivportalen* website, which is a database of all archives in Norway, was used. When looking through the archival material on-site, the focus was on documents by official representatives, where the document type and author is clear and the date and place of production clearly stated. Similarly, for the Fovsen conflict, relevant material was searched for online on the websites of the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK), the Sámediggi and the Norwegian government. As a result of only using documents from official websites, the documents can be considered to be authentic with a clear indication of the author and date of publication. After having collected all the seemingly relevant material, documents with an explicit mention of the Sámi, land and, ideally, gender were singled out for the analysis.

The material for the Máze/Áltá conflict comprises official statements by the Norwegian Reindeer herders National Association (NRL), Norwegian Sámi National Association (NSR), the Reindeer Association and the Nordic Sámi Council as well as the People's Action Group Against the Development of the Alta-Kautokeino River System. In addition to that, letters by Sámi representatives and allies, such as the Sámi women occupying Gro Harlem Brundtland's office are used as well as relevant articles by Liv Ostmø (NSR) in the online available activist newspaper "Charta 79: Newspaper for Indigenous Peoples" and an edition of "Folkevelt: Magazine for a humane society, new lifestyle and interpersonal solidarity" with a focus on the conflict.⁷⁴ Considering the intended audience and origin of these two publications, it can be assumed that both are clearly positioned on the side of the activists which is also reflected in the publications' content. For the state's point of view documents analysed include excerpts from a parliamentary debate, letters and interviews, in particular with the Petroleum and Energy minister (1980-1981) Arvid Johanson (Labour Party) that was recorded as part of an Oral History project by the National Archives of Norway. An interview with the leader of the NSR Ole Henrik Magga who later became the first president of the Sámidiggi was also recorded in the same project that was also used for the analysis below.

The documents were clearly intended for the public as they are press statements, official letters or newspaper articles. Aside from the general public, the audience of most doc-

⁷⁴ The Charta 79 was established by the activists fighting against the construction of the hydroelectric power station, inspired by the Czechoslovak Charta 77. Both subtitles here are my translations.

uments by the Sámi representatives is the Norwegian government, the Agricultural department or the prime minister's office. Structurally many documents commence with a brief summary of what has happened before then continuing with demands by the Sámi towards the government, clarifying why what they are doing is disrespectful or disadvantageous to, for instance, reindeer herding. Most are written in fairly formal language, adhering to the formalities of a press statement or letter, with the exception of the letter by the Sámi women which is more informal. However, it can be considered to fit the purpose, as it seems as if it was written in a heated state that reflects the tension, frustration and anger that they felt at being continually disrespected by the government. One can assume that the intended addressees – women in all of Norway – would respond well to such a letter. Even within formal press statements the frustration at the lack of action following promises and “empty words” is discernible, even though the language remains polite and formal.

For the Fovsen case mostly press statements and speeches by the president of the Sámediggi and the Petroleum and Energy Department were used, as well as articles and interviews by the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK). The NRK is fully state-owned and structured as a state-owned stock company that is financed by taxes and should, thus, reflect the citizen's interests. In the coverage of the Fovsen conflict voice has been given to the Sámi and others that criticise the state. Similar to the documents used for the Máze/Áltá conflict, the Fovsen documents were intended for the public as they are online available. Similar to the Máze/Áltá conflict, most official documents by the Sámediggi were written in formal language and used a polite tone even when strongly criticising the state's conduct. However, in some more emotive language was used that seems to emphasise the outrage at the state's conduct. In state documents it was striking that the tone remained extremely formal, distant and the language at times repetitive – which could be interpreted as attempting to indicate a rationality and objectivity that did not correspond with the state's conduct. As the analysis below will show, the language used can rather be seen as veiling alleged facts, as it has been repeatedly noted both during the Máze/Áltá and Fovsen conflict that state representatives are uttering “empty words” that lack any corresponding action that could indicate that they mean what they say.

7. Analysis

In this section, the research question of this thesis – How can the land rights conflict between the Norwegian state and the Sámi be analysed from a theoretical Indigenous (Sámi) feminist and (neoliberal) capitalist-critical feminist perspective? – will be dis-

cussed by analysing the above-mentioned documents. The following analysis is guided by the main arguments of the theory chapters and will be partly inspired by Kuokkanen's analysis of how the Ellos Deatnu (Long Live Deatnu)⁷⁵ movement's "motivation, core principles, activities, and efforts attest to an ethos of Indigenous feminist theory and practice [...]" (2021, 311). Kuokkanen focused particularly on what she calls "central Indigenous feminist ideas of (1) challenging particularly the normativity of the settler state but also unsettling conventional Sámi politics as usual; and (2) articulating and embodying explicitly anti-oppressive alternatives for Indigenous governance" (ibid.). The analytical chapters below will show how these two central ideas tend to go hand in hand with the Sámi's and their allies' resistance against the hydroelectric power station and wind park by embodying and representing a more holistic, relationship-based, and respectful view of the land.

Both the Máze/Áltá and Fovsen cases have challenged settler state normativity by refusing to accept the ongoing colonisation of Sápmi. As noted above, the settler colonial endeavour has included the enforcement of hierarchical and gendered binary categories between for instance nature–culture, the countryside–cities, civilisation–‘savagery’, Norwegians–Sámi, and so forth. These categories have been tightly interwoven with capitalist ones, especially in terms of dominating and subjugating Indigenous lands and people as part of the capitalist accumulation and functioning of the system that depends on the gendered division of labour that is contrary to traditional Indigenous economies, collective ownership of land, and non-binary labour organisation. Indigenous feminisms shed light on the gendered nature of the settler colonial capitalist complex of the nation state, thus challenging the disruptions of relationships it continues to cause. This includes the relationships to non-human bodies, such as the land and the value it has – not only as an integral part of Indigenous economies, but as part of identity, body, ancestry, spirituality, culture, language, and community. Threats to land areas are always threats to the Sámi themselves and pose additional pressure on Sámi communities and minorities within these communities. As noted above (5.2.), questions of land rights are thus always also a Sámi (and Indigenous) feminist issue.

The first chapter of this analysis will focus on the ontological conflict between the Sámi's and the Norwegian state's understanding of landownership, development, and the

⁷⁵ The Deatnu is a river in Sápmi, flowing between what is today Norway and Finland.

value of the land (7.1.). Following that, the subchapter on epistemic violence and decolonisation illustrates how the above-mentioned epistemic ignorance can be observed during both conflicts, as well as how the Sámi counteract this (7.2.). It will show how epistemic ignorance is not merely clearly related to an ontological conflict, but more so a colonial strategy of sidelining and silencing Indigenous voices that is still employed today. Sámi and Indigenous feminist theories have a great emphasis on illustrating that different ontologies and epistemologies not only exist, but that they have been repressed by gendered colonial and capitalist structures. The last chapter, “democratic values” (7.3.) discusses how implicit and explicit violence has been used by the state in both conflicts and how opponents express Indigenous feminist concepts such as relationality in their exposure of the entwinement of settler colonial and capitalist structures within contemporary democracies. As Kuokkanen (2021, 311) has pointed out, “Indigenous feminism [...] critically interrogates and exposes [...] the hypocrisy of the supposedly just and fair ‘democratic’, patriarchal settler colonial state that is predicated on the elimination and dispossession of Indigenous peoples.” During both conflicts, the opponent’s critique and actions that are focussed on here reflect Sámi and Indigenous feminist theories and practices by dismantling simplistic and hierarchical binary structures that make up the basis of the patriarchal colonial system that has been colonising Sápmi for centuries. Instead, they offer and practice a more holistic, sustainable and relationship-centric understanding of the land.

7.1. Ontological conflict and decolonisation

As noted above (6.1.), decolonisation must not only happen as political and economic changes in the form of rights and restitutions, but also ontologically and epistemologically by not only allowing the co-existence of different understandings of the world, but increasing awareness of the politically and economically motivated mechanisms behind the fragmentation of lands and their dispossession in order to dismantle the hierarchical structures that exist between Indigenous Peoples and settler colonial nation-states. Ontological conflict in terms of land rights in Sápmi refers primarily to the fundamentally different understandings of land that the Norwegian state and the Sámi representatives have. As noted above (2.3. and 5.2.), in Indigenous thought, the land is more than simply a resource. It is considered as a living body that is part of Indigenous identity. Such an understanding of land is fundamentally different to colonial and capitalist ones that seek to disrupt relationships by considering the land as inanimate and a resource to be exploited for monetary and

political gain, and prestige. ‘Uncultured’ land or vast land areas that are considered to be ‘wild’ or a ‘terra nullius’ are also often gendered as female and to be dominated, cultured and ‘civilised’ and thus made more acceptable as an inferior (cf. Arvin et al. 2013, 15). While as part of the colonial and capitalist project formerly collectively owned land has been privatised, Indigenous understandings of land do not claim ownership but rather a traditional right of usage in collectively organised structures – a stark contrast that often seems to be beyond the conceptual grasp of government officials. In this subchapter, these aspects of an ontological conflict about the understanding of the land in terms of ownership, development, resource, value, and employment will be given by drawing on material of the Máze/Áltá and Fovsen conflicts.

7.1.1. Landownership

While several changes in the political representation of the Sámi in Norway have happened – many as a consequence to the Máze/Áltá conflict – there still appears to be a fundamentally different understanding of landownership at the basis of the conflicts. While the Norwegian state generally follows the contemporary, capitalist, individualised, and privatised understanding of landownership, the Sámi representatives tend to consider land as something that is and has been collectively used by them. The Norwegian state’s assumptions about landownership can be illustrated by the current Petroleum and Energy minister Terjee Aasland’s statement during his speech in front of the Parliament that “[t]he Sámi reindeer herding is done within areas that encompass significant parts of Norway’s land area” (2023b; my translation).⁷⁶ While especially today an acknowledgement of the Sámi as Norway’s Indigenous People exists, this has not changed the underlying logic of settler colonialism that assumes land to be owned either by individuals or the state and that does not allow for a collective, historic, and respectful understanding of the land as being an entity of its own that is equal to humans. The following examples of Sámi and their allies’ responses to the common state’s ownership claims can be seen as examples of Indigenous feminist relationality that focus on the interwovenness of bodies, including the land, that reflects an alternative to the disruption of relationships and Sámi worldviews (cf. Knobbloch 2024, 137). The explanations of ontological differences in terms of landownership can simultaneously be seen as examples of attempts at counteracting epistemic ignorance.

⁷⁶ All direct quotations by Terjee Aasland and Silje Karine Muotka are my translations.

Henriksen & Johansen (1979) – representing the Alta committee and the People’s Action Group for the preservation for the Alta/Kautokeino river system – try to clarify in a letter to the Norwegian Government, the parliament, and its political parties that “[e]ven though the state owns the ground that shall be regulated, they do not have the right to use it. It is the Sami that have that” (my translation). While they do not discuss the settler colonial past that has led to the fact that the state owns these territories where the power station is supposed to be built, they nonetheless highlight that this land area – regardless of landownership – is the Sámi’s to use. While this statement may evoke a conflict in thought – as ownership tends to be equated with right to use – they refuse such a simplistic binary thinking and instead appeal to the Norwegian state to understand this difference and acknowledge the Sámi’s right to land usage. In the following sentence they clarify even more that the state simply does not have the right to decide about what happens to land that is not theirs, but that belongs to the Sámi. They draw attention to “the question about to what grade the state can expropriate the right to use of a whole ethnic group”, stating that “[i]n reality this is a question about minority rights to business activity in their own territory” (ibid.). In this elaboration, the Sámi’s right to usage of territories they have used for centuries – long before the existence of a Norwegian state – is equated with being “their own territory”. This does not mean ownership in terms of an individualised, capitalist and nation-state understanding of ownership, but a collective, historic, traditional, and Indigenous understanding thereof. Such an understanding rejects capitalist-colonial binary distinctions, instead emphasising the entanglement and self-evidence of the Sámi’s continued right to use and collectively decide about the territories that they have been using for centuries.

Similar to Henriksen & Johansen (1979), Eira et al. (1981) emphasise that “[w]e reindeer-herding Samis who have used this area since time immemorial, can no longer sit with folded arms and see our pasture lands being steadily reduced.” The link between historic land usage and landownership was also emphasised by Ole Henrik Magga (as cited in Vik et al. 2014, 48), stating that “in some areas, some had used the areas more extensively, more than others” (my translation).⁷⁷ In one of the most prominent pictures of local protests in Máze for instance, when the plans of damming the village were still on the

⁷⁷ Ole Henrik Magga was the leader of the NSR, Norwegian Sámi national association, (1980-1985) during the Máze/Áltá conflict and the first president of the Sámediggi (1989-1997). All translations from this and Arvid Johanson’s interview are mine.

table, an enormous banner that read “We were here first” was held by protesters in Máze – emphasising their right to being and remaining on this land as they had been there first. Thus, they emphasise that their history of having had a relationship with the land should allow them to continue to use it. This relationship between the land exceeds simplistic, distanced, and objectified conceptualisations of the land, as it is considered to be intricately and continually entwined with Sámi bodies, life, and identities. It is thus not something that can simply be bought or sold and decided upon by those foreign to it.

In the NRL (the Norwegian Reindeer herding Sámi’s national association) press statement – written when the construction of the road to the power plant was taken up again without informing the affected Sámi and their representatives – they explain that “[a]s reindeer herding Sámi we consider us as landowner in the area until something else is ascertained by international law” (1981). By referring to international law they embed their struggle within the global discourse of Indigenous rights and the ongoing land dispossession experienced by Indigenous Peoples the world over. Stating that only a change in international law would make them relinquish their lands underlines both the lack of trust in the national legal and political and simultaneous belief in the international legal system. It could also be interpreted as a rhetoric choice that tries to appeal to the Norwegian democracy’s trust and belief in both national and international legal structures.

Calling themselves the “landowners” of the area could also be interpreted as an attempt to speak in a language that is understandable to the Norwegian state – a language of (private) ownership. Niilas Somby (as cited in Kuhn 2020) has said that “[w]e were forced to claim “our” land, when, in reality, no land is ours. The land doesn’t belong to us. We belong to the land, and it is our responsibility to take care of it.” Yet the “force” to claim landownership has been a way to try to speak in a way that the state understands. Their claim of ownership is also uttered as a protective measure as their desire “to protect our ancient area” (NRL, 1981). The expression of responsibility to protect the land and not only themselves and their existence that is being threatened, is illustrative of Indigenous feminist relationality (cf. Kuokkanen 2025, 4). This has also been emphasised by Silje Karin Muotka, president of the Sámediggi, who emphasised in her New Year’s speech in 2023 that the land and Sámi are inextricably connected – when one is attacked, so is the other (2023a). This is contrary to a settler colonial and capitalist understanding of owner-

ship, as it highlights the relationship between the land and its people. It rejects a hierarchy that positions humans above nature.

Muotka elaborates on this by stating in her speech at the annual meeting of Nature and Youth in January 2024 that the Sámi's way of thinking about nature is one that does not believe that "we humans are [...] on top of the hierarchy, but that we have to enter into a chain of reciprocal dependencies with other species and nature" in order to live in "greater balance with our own ecosystem" (2024). Such an understanding of equality and the related responsibility towards nature has also been expressed during the Fovsen demonstrations that underline the different understanding of landownership with regards to the state's understanding. During protests, slogans like "Land back" (in English) and "Let the mountain live" (in Sami) were used to, on the one hand, refer to international Indigenous movements that similarly emphasise that the land was originally the Indigenous People's to use, care for, and live on before it was taken from them. At the same time, the slogan in Sami emphasises even more their understanding of nature and land as a living entity that has to be respected. Similar to Somby's comment above, it is their responsibility to ensure that it remains intact for future generations – not merely for their own benefit as reindeer herding Sámi who need the land as a grazing ground, but more so as the land's advocates. The relationship between the Sámi and the land is one based on respect, reciprocity, relationship, and futurity.

Contrary to that, a basis of the colonial and capitalist idea of landownership, irrespective of historic usage and cultural, generational, spiritual, and linguistic relationship seems to be the belief that there exists a fundamental difference between the land and humans. This corresponds to one of the many colonial binaries of humans/culture/civilisation versus nature/wilderness/'savagery' that is highly gendered and racialised – with *white*, male, able-bodied, Christian, Norwegian-speaking, and wealthy individuals and groups being on top of the hierarchy that devalues Indigenous, non-Christian, Sámi-speaking, female, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people. This was also observed by Arvin et al. (2013, 15) who see a direct link between "the enforcement of "proper" [heteronormative and binary] gender roles [and] [...] settler nations' attempts to limit and manage Indigenous peoples' claims to land" (cf. also Knobbloch 2024, 149). It is also closely related to an 'Othering' that both the Sámi and their land experience in the course of settler colonial pressures that portray Sápmi as a 'terra nullius' that is free for the state to own. Colonial and capitalist

heteropatriarchal structures are thus fundamentally at odds with Indigenous ontologies that consider humans, land, and other non-human bodies to be in relationship with each other.

7.1.2. Development

Related to the different understandings of landownership is the idea of development. As summed up by Norwegian lawyer Nils Christie, who fought against the construction of the power station, one central argument for the construction of the hydroelectric power station was for “[t]he North of Norway [to] make one great leap forward and reach the same level of industrialization as the rest of the country” (1981). State representatives like the Petroleum and Energy minister from 1980-1981, Arvid Johanson, have emphasised the need to tackle the energy deficit in Finnmark. In an interview in 2007 he notes that the “moderate” construction of the hydroelectric power station – with a dam twice the size of the Norwegian town hall – was approved by taking into account the environmental consequences (as cited in Bergh et al. 2010, 33). He does not mention Sámi considerations and protests, or any concern regarding the decision of building a power station in Sápmi. Johanson – a member of the Labour Party – also notes the great loss of kilowatt that this moderate construction has resulted in. He may thus be included in representing the group within the Labour party that still promoted a strong development line, while in the 1970s an increasing conflict within the party between development and environmental preservation emerged (cf. 3.2.). Retrospectively, former Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland for instance agrees with her predecessor Odvar Nordli’s statement “that the Labour Party held on too long to a growth-mindset and took up environmental politics too late” (as cited in Rossavik 1993). According to Mikkelsen (1981, 58-59) especially in the Finnmark’s Labour Party – who were strongly in support of the development of the Alta/Kautokeino river system – the older Labour Party ideals of electricity equalling development and being the ‘white coal’ were still dominating.

Behind this idea of development lies also a devaluation of the Sámi’s life and rights, measuring development by external parameters that disregard the local population’s and Sámi’s resistance against such a power station. The concern with the colonial-capitalist idea of development is not one of why the material, energy, and infrastructural standards in the North are lower and different than in the South (cf. Christie 1981) – a development that is closely related to century long colonialism and racism – but more on a homogenising and centralist decision-making (cf. 7.3.1.), and colonial paternalism. It is an argu-

mentation that focuses on the development of the North of Norway compared with the South that can be seen as an example of the paternalist idea of ‘knowing it better’ than the Indigenous and local population themselves, as well as a self-righteous feeling of ‘responsibility’ to ‘improve’ Sápmi. Using the South as a more ‘developed’ example to the North also reflects a classic colonial imagery. The parameters of such an ‘improvement’ do not stem from within Sápmi and Sámi ontologies, but from outside and above and are guided by economic goals – the state is the sole owner of the Áltá hydroelectric power station and majority owner of the Fovsen wind park. It does not acknowledge the above-mentioned Sámi’s right to land in Sápmi as their consent is not a requirement for the construction of power station – neither in the 1970s, nor today.

Part of the paternalism and colonial violence deployed in the state’s argumentation for energy developments is also the demand for the Sámi to have to give up something in order to be able to keep up with imposed ideals of modernity and development. In terms of the Máze/Áltá conflict, Nils Christie writes that the government wondered why the Sámi should not “also lose something, they have social security as other Norwegians. And [they] also need electricity” (1981, 2). Before Máze was protected, the Labour Party borough mayor of Finnmark, Henry Karlsen, spoke of “offering” Máze (Mikkelsen 1981, 51). This is reminiscent of the ‘terra nullius’ idea of offering land that is not theirs to offer. It also assumes an equality between the Sámi and the Norwegians that does not exist – the Sámi are Norway’s Indigenous population, Sápmi has been the land they use and respect for centuries and which has been colonised by Norway for centuries. Similarly, also during the Fovsen conflict, the argumentation is that the Sámi also have to contribute to the greater good of humanity (cf. below). However, such an argumentation completely disregards the fact that the Sámi have been living sustainably for centuries and ignores their right to decide what should happen to these land areas. It is also striking that those who have been contributing the least to climate change are expected to give up these ways of life, while the Norwegian state – with its richness based on oil and gas extraction and exports – is not first thinking about how they can reduce such clearly unsustainable practices. This makes the state’s argumentation for ‘green’ energy projects seem insincere when they are based on continued settler colonial practices that threaten Indigenous lands rather than changing how they act.

The Sámi's understanding of development is different as it is traditionally based on a circular and sustainable economic system that seeks to protect and maintain the relationship one has with the land for future generations or even improve them. As one of the Sámi women occupying Brundtland's office states: "We want our kids to have it better" (Dunfjeld as cited in Eriksen 1981a, 5). Rather than a better future for their children being based on the development of the river, it is rather the opposite: a protection of the land for them to continue using it sustainably as they have been doing for centuries. Such an understanding of development focuses on the local people who are directly affected by such constructions, instead of a 'greater picture' and financial and energy prognoses – it highlights that "[r]eal people have to live with this every day" (Senel et al. 2023). It is not simply one of many development projects that are discussed in offices in Oslo, but a fundamental change to the everyday life of Sámi who were not included in the decision-making process (cf. 7.3.1.).

During Fovsen, the argumentation of a need for energy was combined with a need for decidedly 'green' energy. In the long justification speech/statement to the parliament regarding the Fovsen case, Petroleum and Energy minister Terje Aasland speaks of the problem and conflict of having "acceptable energy prices, new green energy, reduction in emissions [and having to consider] nature and the environment and Indigenous rights" (2023b). He further states that "[w]e want the Northern districts to have the same possibilities for settlement, business development and supply security of energy as everyone else does in this country" (ibid.). This line of argumentation is very similar to that of the government during the Máze/Áltá conflict. By stating that "[a]nything else is unacceptable", the government presents itself as having the society's best interests at heart when it comes to their development projects. While he claims that "[t]he department puts a great emphasis on the worth of renewable energy production" (ibid.) there is little talk about the worth of the Sámi and their traditional livelihoods, leading Muotka to state in a written commentary in the daily newspaper *Adresseavisen* that "the demands for green energy outweigh the disadvantages this will cause reindeer herding" (2023b). The need for green energy is used as a knockout argument, one that is repeatedly emphasised, together with the need for energy for the North of Norway throughout the speech. However, Silje Karine Muotka clarified that "from a human rights point of view it is irrelevant what energy needs a region has [...]" (2023c).

Aasland also stated that there will be an increasing need to discuss more green development projects in Sápmi, due to the great demand and in order to ensure the aforementioned energy security in the North of Norway (2023b). However, as noted in NRK radio (2023), one great reason for Norway's wish to build Europe's greatest on-land wind park was to be a trailblazer in the green energy development sector. Yet, "[t]he economic growth has an ecological limit. Decisions about nature, the diversity of nature and climate cannot only be decided upon in the market, where mainly economic considerations govern. Nature has a much higher worth than money. If we take care of nature, nature will take care of us" (Muotka 2024). At the same time, the Norwegian government has been criticised for the continued oil extraction and the concession given to open a copper mine and drop the waste in the Reppafjord (Wilhelms et al. 2026). Such developments clearly unveil the hypocrisy of the Norwegian state's claims of having the interests of the environment and its citizens at heart when continuing the colonisation of Sápmi, while simultaneously continuing their extraction of non-renewable resources.

The argumentation of 'green' development thus gives the impression of being the same argumentation only in a different cover. This has been called an example of "green colonialism" and "green washing [...] climate measures that hurt Indigenous People's interests and [...] rights [...]" by the Sámediggi (Muotka 2024). The Sámi's understanding of 'green' development is fundamentally different. As noted by Muotka, for the green shift to work it "would have to mean that we build our society within nature's endurance limits" and not a continued exploitation thereof", focussing on limiting "negative consequences for the climate and environment in a circular economy" (ibid.). This includes acknowledging the Sámi as rights holders of their land and for "green energy developments [to] happen in collaboration and after consent from the Sámediggi, as the Sámi's representative organ, and Sámi rights owners that are being directly affected by such developments that happen in the light of the green shift" (ibid.). Muotka further emphasises that "[t]his cannot happen at the cost of the Sámi culture but has to happen through strengthening and continuing with our knowledge of nature and way of living" (ibid.). They demand the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) that is based on the above-mentioned historic land rights. Already during the Máze/Áltá conflict, this was demanded when Liv Østmo (1980a, 18) explained that "we [Sámi] have a collective right to ownership to the land we

have lived on for thousands of years. [...] [this] means that the People themselves should be allowed to decide about the resources that exist in the area” (my translation).⁷⁸

This has also been supported by the publication following the country engagement mission to Norway (United Nations 2025). However, when the current Minister of Labour and Social Inclusion, Kjersti Stenseng (Labour Party), was confronted with this suggestion, she clarified – while stating that she had not had time to read the entire report – that “the expert’s suggestion that Sámi rights owners should have the right to stop development decision they do not agree to, so to say a veto right in development cases, is no relevant in Norwegian politics” (as cited in Bruun-Solbakk et al. 2025). She explains this by referring to International Law that “does not require that Sámi rights owners should have such a right to deny decisions” (ibid.). By outrightly refusing the suggestions by the UN’s expert group and the Sámi representatives, she seems to not want to jeopardize the Norwegian government’s idea of development by granting the Sámi the right to give FPIC.

As this chapter has shown, the Norwegian state has argued for the construction of both the hydroelectric power station on the Áltá/Guovdageidnu river and the Fovsen wind park in terms of development and equality while disregarding Sámi’s rights. While the local and national development goals dominated in the former conflict where the North of Norway should be as developed as the South, both national and international development ideas guided the decision to build the Fovsen wind park. The shift to ‘green’ energy and the energy demands of Europe were in focus as much as Norway’s wish to dominate this development (cf. 4.2.). However, in both cases, the idea of development was a settler colonial and capitalist one that demanded the continuation of land grabbing – taking away land that has been used for centuries by the Sámi, without their FPIC and a persistent not-listening of protests against it, both before and after the constructions. It has been shown that an economic mindset continues to guide political decisions and the wish of the Norwegian state to remain competitive in the energy sector. It seems as if Brown’s observation that “economic growth has become both the end and legitimation of government [...]” (2015, 26) is also true to the Norwegian state’s conduct. The Labour Party’s clear ‘no’ to FPIC exposes the fact that the state does not want to yield its power over development projects that is often hidden behind a paternalist discourse that continues to infantilise the Sámi.

78 All translations of citations from Østmo are mine.

The Norwegian state's understanding of progress and development is clearly a capitalist one that demands the dispossession of Indigenous land to produce development that can be measured in kilowatt, foreign investments, and other forms of quantifiable political and economic prestige. On the other hand, the Sámi's usage of the land that encompasses cultural, spiritual, linguistic, as well as economic and political dimensions are not part of the Norwegian state's understanding of 'development'. In fact, as this chapter has shown, Norway's development goals lead to a disruption and impediment of the Sámi's development – with traditional practices being made more difficult and a continuation of the rupture of their relationship to their land. Thus, the Norwegian state's understanding of development does not only disregard the Sámi and their understandings of development but actively disrupt it as a colonial settler state practice. As noted by Sámi and Indigenous feminist, such a disruption fundamentally impacts communities and their “intimate relationships” (Kuokkanen 2019, 53) and “sense of being people” (Smith 2010, 61).

7.1.3. Valuing land as a resource

While the land is considered a resource by both the Norwegian state and representatives for the Sámi, the underlying worldviews allow for different conceptualisations of the meaning of 'resource'. Corresponding with the above discussed understandings of landownership and development, an Indigenous feminist view of the land is more reciprocal and respectful, as it does not draw a strict binary between oneself and the land and considers the gendered implications of colonial land grabbing. Patriarchal settler colonialism and capitalism generally see land as a resource to be dominated and extracted. Such an understanding requires the need to consider the land as 'Other', lifeless, and objectified. In Indigenous ontologies, on the other hand, land is considered a resource in itself – spiritually, culturally, materially. It is thought of in more holistic and complex terms than colonial-capitalist understandings of lands that mostly reflect economic and political interests.

The monetarisation and economisation of political argumentation that also affect land rights issues and green energy developments were very apparent in the state's claims and defence of the Fovsen wind park. By thinking of everything in economic terms, the relationships we have with the land and each other are further ruptured, as everything is thought of as distinct from oneself and as having to increase one's symbolic or material profit. As already implied above, the focus in the argumentation for energy development lies more on “economic health” (Brown 2014, 26) than the Sámi's and people's health.

The Sámi's value of the land and how such disposessions and projects will negatively affect the Sámi have not been seriously taken into consideration.

While the agreements reached included compensations paid to the siidas affected by the construction, a promise of new grazing grounds and a veto right after the concession period where they can decide whether or not the wind park should remain, the underlying value of the land as being more than economic has not been challenged as the wind park was not torn down. Thus, while the belief that restitutions could compensate for land loss completely misunderstands the importance of land to Indigenous identities and practices, this belief seems to have prevailed from the side of the state. Shortly after the Fovsen conflict had been resolved, new plans for a wind park in Fovsen came to light (Stranden 2024; cf. Stranden 2025). While the Petroleum and Energy department has declined to comment and will only do so once the plans become more concrete, the lack of immediately expressing concern or referring to Sámi rights makes it seem like yet another repetition of history and perpetuation of colonial-capitalist structures.

In the context of the Máze/Áltá case, Østmo (1980b, 6) clarifies that the focus has been “more on ‘technical’ requirements for instance reindeer herding” without considering “[t]he cumulative social consequences such developments will have for the Sámi society in its entirety [...]” as well as “the international rights that set boundaries for the expropriation if the Sámi's collective right to traditional and cultural practices are undermined [...]”. The land is more than a place for reindeer to herd and travel; it is entwined with all of Sámi society and cannot be split from it (ibid.). As Rolf Hansen, environmental minister in 1980 stated, there is still more than enough nature left, so it really should not make a big difference that the area around the Alta/Kautokeino river will be developed (1980). According to him, Alta is not more special in terms of nature than other areas (ibid., 6). In this line of argumentation, land is considered merely as an almost disposable economic resource of which there still exists plenty. It does not consider the land as being part of the people who live on, from, and near it, and who have done so for centuries.

Colonial and capitalist exploitation of natural resources and the land is opposed to Indigenous conceptions of the land as a resource. As discussed in the two chapters above, land is conceived of fundamentally differently between the Norwegian settler-colonial state and Sámi representatives. While for the state, land is mostly thought of as monetary value, something to be developed in order to generate energy and money, the Sámi tend to think

about the land in more nuanced terms. During the Máze/Áltá conflict, in an open letter to the government and the Ministry of Agriculture, the reindeer herding association notes that probably a fairly high amount of monetary restitutions will be paid to them when the power station has been built (1981). However, they do not believe that their losses can “be repaid with money” and explain that they can, in fact, be “irretrievable if no consideration is taken in critical periods (ibid., my translation).⁷⁹ Land means more to them than money and money cannot fix all the losses that they will have to deal with, as the land is more than an economic source to them – it is part of their identity, culture, and “soul” (cf. Isaksen in Senel et al. 2023). Also Liv Østmo (1980b, 6) explains that “[t]he loss of a culture and possibilities to exist as a people cannot be compensated. A way of life cannot be compensated for and deleted with money”. This statement reflects the fact that land is of greater value than money in Indigenous terms.

To sum up, it can be said that the “conflict between the nation-state and the Indigenous People is to a large extent a fight about natural resources and the view of their worth” (Guttormsen et al. 2023, 24; my translation). While the worth of the land is mostly limited to being an economic resource in the state’s understanding, the Sámi’s understanding of worth is more diverse as it values the land not only as enabling their material existence, but as constituting an integral component of their identity, spirituality, language, and culture.

7.2. Epistemic violence and decolonisation

The ontological differences between the Norwegian state’s and Sámi’s understanding of the land are closely entwined with ongoing epistemic ignorance (cf. Kuokkanen 2017) and differing epistemologies. In both cases, Indigenous epistemes were mostly ignored by the state and its institutions in the decision-making process.

As stated by the People’s Action Group against the development of the Alta/Kautokeino river system: “[w]e have the public opinion on our side. That is our strength against the ‘expertise’, investigations, laws, police, military, fines and imprisonments” (1980). This clearly shows the lack of trust in alleged “expertise” as it is not neutral or objective but perceived as strongly biased on the side of the state. While it was hard to say “how big and what consequences exactly the road construction will have for reindeer herd-

⁷⁹ This letter was written when the construction was taken up without giving notice to the reindeer herders affected by it.

ing in the area [...]. That it will have negative consequences is easy to determine” (NRL, 1981). This statement illustrates that while the exact severity of the negative consequences cannot yet be determined, the fact alone that there will be negative consequences should suffice to encourage a halting of the planned development. When, in 1981 the NVE ignored the Sámi’s reindeer herding association’s request to delay the beginning of the construction due to the reindeer having to travel on the proposed days, the NVE refused, claiming they did not see any reindeer in the construction area (Riseth et al., 1981). Similarly, Ellen Marit Gaup Dunfjeld recalls that “[f]ormer minister of justice Oddvar Berrefjord had [claimed] more understanding about reindeer herding than us after a short trip to Finnmark” (as cited in Eriksen 1981a, 5). Such instances of what has also been termed state “arrogance” (Lund, 1982; Andenæs 1981, 133) where state institutions, such as the NVE, or members of the government themselves assume greater knowledge than those directly affected and living in the respective areas can be seen as one of many examples of epistemic ignorance and violence.

The state’s epistemic violence has been explicitly criticised a number of times, for instance in the letter of “Protest against the regulation of the Alta-Kautokeino watercourse” (Eira, 1981) where the people of Máze request an answer to the following question: “What is meant by claiming that the Alta-Kautokeino regulation is a very small encroachment into Sami interests? What sort of documentary evidence is this assertion based on?” These questions illustrate the scepticism towards the government’s alleged knowledge about the construction and its effect on the Sámi. As pointed out by the Sámi movement in a letter to the Norwegian Government, the construction would have a tremendous negative effect on families, stating that they “feel that the government is not aware enough of these sides of the conflict, and want in light of that to most sincerely ask the government to consider the human sides in this conflictual case” (1981; cf. Østmo 1980, 18). They thereby challenge the state’s understanding of the land as an uninhabited ‘terra nullius’ whereby they only focus on the monetary value it may have for them, thus completely disregarding the Sámi’s value of the land and their knowledge about it. By repeatedly informing the government of the negative consequences in terms of Sámi life, culture and existence, they tried to counteract the existing and ongoing epistemic ignorance by presenting information from their point of view, as Sámi who are located in the area that was to be fundamentally changed in the course of the construction of the power station.

The state has repeatedly tried to claim that it bases its decisions on the accumulated extensive knowledge. For the Máze/Áltá conflict, for instance, Paul Engstad of the Labour Party's government group stated that "[t]here are few development cases that are so thoroughly addressed as the development of the Alta river system" (1980). He also claims that the Alta hydroelectric power station is considered both "ecologically and economically the best choice to cover energy demands in Finnmark" (ibid.). However, as has been shown both during the Máze/Áltá conflict by the People's Action Group and others and afterwards, the NVE's numbers had exaggerated the energy needs (cf. Folkeaksjonen 1981). It was also pointed out by opponents that the hydroelectric power station on the Áltá/Guovdageidnu river would be inefficient as it could not provide energy in winter – when energy is most needed – due to ice (ibid.; Kværner 1981, 12). They suggested the restoration of existing power stations and line network instead (ibid.), which was ignored. Eventually, according to Magga (as cited in Vik et al. 2014, 33), the government was brought into "an embarrassing situation where they said that 'if we had known all this that is gradually revealed, we would never have agreed to the construction in the first place'. This unveils the lack of listening to the repeated attempts by the Sámi representatives to inform them.

Similar to Engstad claiming that there exist all the knowledge necessary to have responsibly come to the right conclusion in deciding for the construction of the hydroelectric power station on the Áltá/Guovdageidnu river, during the Fovsen conflict, Aasland emphasised on the one hand the existing knowledge, while also claiming a lack of knowledge and the requirement to gather more before they could react to the Supreme Court verdict and stop the continuation of the violation of human rights. According to Aasland, the choice for the wind park projects that were eventually built with illegal concessions was based on an examination of "the wind situation, local acceptance and consideration of the reindeer herding" (2023b). He claims that the effects on reindeer herding were thought to be "within what must be considered acceptable" (ibid.). These claims are strictly based on the government's thinking and interest – being the majority owner of the established wind park – as the Sámi representatives have opposed the construction from the beginning. However, the state simply put greater value on their own considerations and interests than the Sámi's knowledge about the area.

During the Fovsen case after the Supreme Court's verdict, the Petroleum and Energy department has repeatedly claimed that they need to gather enough evidence and knowledge in order to reach new decisions regarding the wind park. Already in March 2023

Terje Aasland said that “[t]he government actively works on gathering the necessary factual basis in order to pass new resolutions” while claiming that the continued operation of the wind park is not unlawful (2023a). This was reiterated in May 2023 when he claimed that “[t]he knowledge basis has to be updated [...] for an updated evaluation of how the current wind park affects reindeer herding on Fosen and what has to happen for a solution that is in line with the UN’s article 27” (2023c). However, while the Petroleum and Energy minister repeatedly emphasised the lack of sufficient knowledge for them to act on the Supreme Court decision that stated that the concession given was illegal, Sámediggi’s president Muotka has clarified that since “the Supreme Court has decided that the concession is invalid [...] the concession should be revoked. There is no need for more information on this question because the Supreme Court has stated that the concession is invalid” (2023c). Also a number of law professors have expressed criticism in the government’s claim that it needs more evidence and knowledge as it not only severely questions the Sámi’s knowledge and repeated explanations of how the wind park is a violation of their rights, but also questions the constitutional state and the verdicts that have been reached on the basis of already existing evidence (cf. 7.3.2.).

The extreme delay in reaction that also finally led to the demonstrations against it have been perceived as an attempt to not find a way to protect the Sámi’s rights – the first step of which would have been a switching off of the turbines – but rather “how the wind park should be able to continue” (ibid.). Aasland has repeatedly emphasised that they try to determine a way in which the area can be used both as a grazing ground and a wind park – disregarding that Sámi representatives had repeatedly clarified that that would be impossible. This attempt at co-existence also disregards the violent way in which the wind park had been established in the first place, by ignoring the Sámi’s use of the area and resistance against it. In a letter to the Sámediggi from 24 June 2022, the Petroleum- and energy department states “the aim of the process in the department is to ensure a solution that allows the operation of the wind park while reindeer herding rights are simultaneously protected” (Petroleum and Energy Department 2022). This idea of a coexistence not only ignores the repeatedly expressed incompatibility of reindeer herding and wind turbines, as reindeer are afraid of the constructions, but more so completely disregards the Sámi’s repeated wish for the wind park to be taken down as its construction constitutes a violation of their human rights to practice their culture.

Since the state is the majority owner of the wind park, they clearly have an economic interest in the wind park to remain intact and up and running. It is an example of a conflict of interests, not unlike the hydropower station in Áltá (cf. 7.3.1.). The Petroleum and Energy department clearly puts its own interests first and devalues Sámi knowledge to reach its goal. The alleged lack of knowledge is used by the state to undermine the expertise of the Sámi regarding their lands, the economic and cultural use, as well as the relationship they have with it. There is no lack of knowledge, but a lack of seeing and acknowledging that Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies are not less important or valuable, but equal or even more valuable in terms of examples of sustainable economical structures and a focus on respectful, reciprocal and future-oriented human-land relationships.

The claim of the state that it bases its decisions only on facts and a sufficient amount of knowledge while disregarding the Sámi's, thus allowing the continuation of the human rights violation via the wind park and the construction of a – retrospectively clearly unnecessary – hydroelectric power station, obfuscates the fact that the state is not a neutral actor in either case. It is the full owner of the Áltá hydroelectric power station and the majority owner of the Fovsen wind park. In both cases, the display of power, pushing through what they had decided on while disregarding the amount of opposition to it – both nationally as well as internationally – was a clear demonstration of power. While the Norwegian government consistently emphasised its reliance on facts and democratic measures and procedures, in the following section these democratic values in relation to both cases will be analysed.

7.3. Democratic values

The heading “democratic values” is chosen here as a broad category in order to discuss a variety of issues that have presented themselves when looking through the documents and secondary literature on the cases. For Brown (2015, 27), the most fundamental basis of a democracy is the “rule by and for the people [...]”. Yet, the “democratic state commitments to equality, liberty, inclusion, and constitutionalism” (ibid., 26) are shown to be less stable as one might assume in light of colonial heteropatriarchal and -paternalist structures. In addition to that, as already indicated above (5.1.), Brown illustrates how the democracy changes when political ways of thinking and being are transformed and exchanged with a “neoliberal reason” that coats and defines everything in economic terms and transforms the state into a “contemporary firm” (ibid.). Yet, in settler colonial contexts, such as Norway, the foundations of the democracy can already be considered as being unstable since

they have been built by the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples's lands. Consequently, as noted by Kuokkanen (2021, 311), a central part of Indigenous and Sámi feminisms is a critique of "the hypocrisy and supposedly just and fair 'democratic', patriarchal settler colonial state [...]." This critique will be discussed here by focussing on the decision-making processes and legal system as forms of implicit and explicit forms of state violence and, lastly, solidarity and collaboration as clear counterstrategies. This chapter seeks to discuss how the land rights conflicts expose the discrepancies between idealisations of democratic conduct and trust in the state and its ruling parties and ongoing colonial violence within democratic processes.

Both the Máze/Áltá and Fovsen conflict have been seen as fundamentally democratic conflicts. While the Máze/Áltá conflict exposed the lack of inclusion of the Sámi and their rights within the decision-making processes and constitutional state of Norway, the Fovsen conflict even more fundamentally exposed the deeply ingrained settler colonial political structures that continue to sideline and silence Sámi rights even in the light of Supreme Court verdicts that support the Sámi's arguments against continued colonial violence. As noted by Magga (as cited in Vik et al. 2014, 48), during the Máze/Áltá conflict many had an idealised view of Norway as a democratic and egalitarian society, with many being outraged at what was happening elsewhere, for instance in apartheid South Africa and the US. He sums up the general sentiment as being "[w]e Norwegians, we are democratic, we do not differ between people [...]" while noting that this was based on a general feeling and mindset that did not necessarily correspond to any action, as "one lived in one's own little, safe world" (ibid.).

While knowledge about the Sámi as Norway's Indigenous People had been very limited among Norwegian society until the Máze/Áltá conflict, Magga mentions that Thorvald Stoltenberg, minister of defence from 1979-1981, in fact had called the Sámi Norway's Indigenous People at the UN Racism Conference in 1978 – when the Áltá conflict was yet to become more serious (ibid., 44-45). At the same time, many Sámi did not think much about calling themselves Indigenous Peoples which was considered a new and academic term (ibid.). Stoltenberg's understanding of the Sámi as an Indigenous People before many Sámi themselves would have called themselves that is to Magga little surprising as it constitutes to him "normal thinking about human worth and ideals and social democratic thoughts about equality [...]" (ibid., 47). At the same time, both the Máze/Áltá and Fovsen

conflicts have shown the limits of such an idealisation when it does not correspond to political action and rights.

7.3.1. Decision-making

During the Máze/Áltá conflict, the decision of sticking to the construction of the hydro-electric power station despite national and international protests has repeatedly been justified by having to adhere to parliamentary and democratic protocols in order to maintain the workings of the state. The parliamentary vote had been repeatedly in favour of the construction and it was argued that succumbing to the demands of halting the construction would threaten democracy as it would lead to “domino-effects” (Christie 1981, 7). Arvid Johanson (as cited in Bergh et al. 2010, 33-34), Minister of Petroleum and Energy from 1980 to 1981, explains that he did not want to postpone the construction before all Sámi rights questions had been solved “because when a case was voted on by our political, lawful authorities, including two times in the parliament and by the government, [...] we cannot not execute it. To let us be forced by out-of parliamentary operators – it became a question of principle [...]”. This argumentation on the one hand refers to democratic procedures, the need to adhere to them and the law as essential pillars of a constitutional state, while at the same time implying a defiance of criticism, even when it was well-founded. It is questionable how this “question of principle” that seems to have been made to prove a point corresponds to the above-mentioned “democratic state commitments to equality, liberty, inclusion, and constitutionalism [...]” (Brown 2015, 26). While it certainly is a constitutional decision, it is one that is not based on equality and the inclusion of the Sámi, but rather the opposite. From an Indigenous feminist perspective, this leads to a further rupturing of relationships, it reflects an exploitation of power hierarchies and a continuation of colonial violence within democratic state structures rather than a rupturing thereof.

According to Magga (as cited in Vik et al. 2014, 31) “[t]he decision [to build the hydro-electric power station in Alta, including Máze] was surprising for most” as so many were against it. He argues that it was less about the salmon or climate or all the other negative consequences as such, but more a question of “principle” (ibid., 51), however in a very different way than Johanson has argued. Magga states that – in light of the many pressures experienced all over Sápmi due to energy constructions and other forms of settlement – they wanted “to set a standard for what the state and outsiders actually can do [in Sápmi]”

(ibid.). Instead of Johanson's wish to not let existing parliamentary and government protocol be disturbed by "out-of parliament operators" (as cited in Bergh et al. 2010, 33-34), they wanted to unsettle and question exactly this assumption of who is included in decision-making processes and who is not and why. Magga (as cited in Vik et al. 2014, 50) elaborates that while the "old teaching" until then had been that "it is the state, and the state does as it wants", also "in Finnmark [as it is] the state's private soil", the idea of flooding Máze and building the hydroelectric power station on the Áltá/Guovdageidnu river was for many Sámi the final straw of an ongoing Norwegianisation policy. They sought to put an end to this way of decision-making where "[t]he NVE could just ask, the department would say go ahead and that's it [...]" (ibid., 51). While it started out as a local issue, it was quickly politically and historically contextualised as a Sámi issue (ibid.). Thus, the decision-making processes and normativity of the state were, for the first time, fundamentally put into question and unveiled as not being as clear as they seemed.

While Johanson still believes that the decision of building the hydroelectric power station was the right thing to do at the time (as cited in Bergh et al. 2010, 33),⁸⁰ Odvar Nordli and Gro Harlem Brundtland – both prime ministers during the conflict – have said they regret it and that the building of it was, in fact, unnecessary (as cited in Rossavik, 1993). The lawyer Ketil Lund⁸¹ has also said that he "believes that the Alta decision is an example of the greatest misjudgement that the parliament has reached regarding the social situation in many, many years and definitely after the war" (1982, my translation). Lund does not consider the government's and parliament's decision-making rational. Instead, Lund observes that "the rational has given way to the dynamics in the power's prestige" (ibid.). This was also implied above by Johanson's explanation of sticking to "principles" and being able to do so as the more powerful party involved. According to Alfred Nilsen, leader of the People's Action Group, retrospectively it has been shown that they were right when they claimed during the protests that the construction would be a bad investment – the energy demands turned out to be not as high as the NVE alleged and Áltá energy was being cheaply exported to Finland (as cited in Aasen, 1993).

As noted by former Labour Party member and historian, Professor Edvard Bull "when we have a minority problem, the Norwegian majority democracy cannot decide where the

80 However, Johanson (as cited in Bergh 2010, 34) believes that if Gro had been prime minister the whole time, it all may have ended differently.

81 Lund is a lawyer who gave a speech about "The government authority's role in the Alta case" during the national conference of the People's Action Group against the development of the Alta/Kautokeino river system in 1982.

boundaries go, even when the minister of justice Berrefjord says that Alta development does not have consequences for the Sámi. What counts is that the Sámi themselves will fight for Alta” (as cited in Eriksen 1981b, 7). Also, the lawyer Nils Christie (1981, 8) has observed that “the State representatives cannot see that minority rights cannot be decided by majority voters and that so many values are more important than electricity” (cf. Østmo 1980b). As noted above (7.2.), there has been a lack of consideration for the implications the construction would have for Sámi in all of Sápmi as well as a fundamental difference in the value of the land. Magga (as cited in Vik et al. 2014, 65) similarly points to the simple fact that minorities will always remain minorities. However, this cannot mean that they always lose in decisions about their land, simply because they do not have the same amount of legal and political power as others. In the Fovsen case majority interests similarly dominated vis-à-vis those of the presumed Sámi minority. As noted by Muotka, it was assumed that “the demands for green energy outweigh the disadvantages this will cause reindeer herding” (2023b). In such a weighing of interests, the minority will necessarily always lose – especially when the counterweight is the alleged well-being of the planet.

While there have been many similarities between the Máze/Áltá and Fovsen cases as they are the result of a continuation of colonial structures, the Fovsen conflict has been different in terms of the existence of Sámi institutions such as the Sámediggi. However, while the Sámediggi has to be consulted during such decision-making processes, they do not have the right to FPIC regarding energy or other developments in Sápmi. Thus, the concession to the construction of the wind park on Fovsen was given in 2010 without having “reached an agreement with the Sametinget/Samediggi/Sámedigge/Saemiedigkie, Sør-Fosen sijte or Nord-Fosen siida” (Høybråten et al. 2023, 544). After the Supreme Court Verdict in 2021 supporting the affected Sámi siidas in their claim that this had been a human rights abuse, the state did not follow up on this until protesters forced them to do so in 2023. Jonas Gahr Støre’s utterances in March 2023 during a visit to the Sámediggi that “we are in the Sámi’s traditional settlement area. We will move here with respect” and that “[w]e have to take responsibility that the consultations happen in a tone that is respectful and that it is binding”, were considered to be hollow statements and acceptances of responsibility that did not fit with the lack of actions by the government (Muotka 2023d). Also, Terje Aasland repeatedly said that the following-up of the Supreme Court verdict and ensuring the Sámi’s rights is the government’s responsibility without any actions

proving the sincerity of these statements.⁸² To one of the most central activists, Ella Marie Hætta Isaksen, Aasland's promises are "only empty words" (in Senel et al. 2023). Statements by Støre and Aasland were perceived as being inauthentic as they did not lead to actual changes and an acceptance of responsibilities.

The trust in the political system has been shaken due to Fovsen and similar energy development cases in Sápmi. Muotka speaks of a "deep trust crisis between the state and the Sámi" that "involves the Fosen case, but also the way the state treats our rights and needs", drawing a direct line to the Norwegianisation policies (2023d). A similar trust crisis was also reported to the Truth & Reconciliation Committee in March 2023, that similarly expressed that "[t]he Fosen case can be read and understood as an expression of an ongoing Norwegianisation politics, where our culture is being ignored, steam-rolled and threatened" (Balto 2023). Muotka also draws a direct comparison to the Máze/Áltá conflict, seeing a similar "form of arrogance when it comes to forms of dialogue" in both conflicts (2023d). In her view, dialogue is non-existent and seem insincere (ibid.). She nonetheless believes that "[t]o build trust, work together and share decisions is challenging but necessary" (ibid.), thus evoking Sámi feminist practices that focus on the maintenance and (re-)establishment of relationships and collaboration.

Dialogue has also been used as a way to imply cooperation and equality without actually listening to what the Sámi representatives have to say. When the construction of the hydroelectric power station in Áltá began again in the fall of 1981 and those responsible said "no, we have of course not informed [the Sámi organisations]" for no one was to know about it, "[i]t was a slap in the face", Magga recalls (as cited in Vik et al. 2014, 41-42). While the Norwegian government offered to talk with affected Sámi reindeer herders in order to keep the damage and disadvantage caused by the construction to a minimum, this was not done. As the NSR notes in a statement, while "[t]hey requested our cooperation in order to avoid further unrest, but gave us no cooperation of this nature. To date there has been no cooperation; we have merely been totally disregarded." (1981).⁸³ They did not feel taken seriously as these promises seemed superficial and hollow, not unlike Terje Aasland's repeated promises of taking matters into his hands and follow-up on the

82 A speech in February 2023 by him was even called "A sincere desire to solve the Fosen case".

83 Also, the Sámi women meeting Gro Harlem Brundtland, were left disappointed, saying that the prime minister "did not have anything other than empty phrases to offer us" (as cited in Iversen 1981, 33). Henriksen, & Johansen also appealed to the parliament to have "a serious debate about these questions [of land rights and usage] and not bit by bit take the life basis away from the Indigenous population [...]" (1979).

Supreme Court verdict. Yet, Østmo (1980a, 18), similar to Muotka, explains that from the Sámi's representatives' point of view, the wish and willingness to work together remains; however, it has to be a serious and 'real' collaboration and not simply a pretence thereof. She states: "[w]e want to work together as equal partners", clarifying that "[c]ooperation does not mean that the one people's institutions are to decide over the others" (ibid.). They want a strengthening of relationships, not a further rupturing thereof by paternalist state measures and statements that do not respect them as equals and as being the superior knowledge-holders in matters concerning their land areas and livelihood.

Economic reasoning has been central in the decision-making process as the state sought to be a trailblazer in the green energy shift by way of building Europe's greatest on-land wind park. Already during the Máze/Áltá conflict, there was criticism of political decisions being influenced by economic ones. The Sámi movement wrote in a letter that they considered it problematic how the construction of the hydroelectric power station was encouraged so greatly by the Labour Party in Finnmark, pointing out that its chairman had "strong economic interest in that the construction takes place [...]", thus questioning "the political morale", "ask[ing] the government to be more vigilant regarding questions of conflicts of interest" (1981; my translation). Similarly, during the Fovsen conflict, the Truth & Reconciliation committee asked the Petroleum and Energy department in a letter in 2022 "how the department is going to be able to uphold the state's ownership interests and the state's human rights obligations in the Fosen case in particular and in future land conflicts regarding industry development in reindeer herding areas" (as cited in Høybråten et al. 2023, 545). Their response was that they "do not undertake a weighing of these interests" (ibid.). Thus, while the Sámi representatives and Truth and Reconciliation committee voice their critique of the entanglement of political and economic interests, the state seems to refuse to acknowledge this.

It seems as if political responsibility and an adherence to established democratic rules is giving more way to economic interests, which can also be interpreted from the ongoing running of the wind park. Brown (2015, 26) calls this a subordination of democratic values "to the project of economic growth, competitive positioning, and capital enhancement". It can be seen as an example of the 'hollowing out' of the state where those in power seem to forget the central "democratic state commitments to equality, liberty, inclusion, and constitutionalism [...]" (ibid.). Democratic decision-making has been economised by wanting to be competitive and heading the green energy shift with Europe's greatest energy park.

However, already in 1993, Brundtland observed that “[b]oth in Norway and in other lands in our cultural region there is too much capital power and too little democratic power”, stating that the government needs to work on regaining power lost to capitalism (as cited in Rossavik 1993). In the light of the Fovsen case it is questionable to what extent that has happened.

During the Áltá conflict, Sámi women occupied Gro’s office in an attempt to influence decision-making. They had a meeting with the prime minister and while they were eventually disappointed when Brundtland had to leave and did not return to talk to them, their active involvement in the struggle can be seen as a belief in relationships and dialogue as equals. They tried to appeal to Brundtland ‘from woman to woman’ with the hope of evoking feminist solidarity across societal and political divides (cf. Marit & Britta 1981). It can be seen as a direct refusal and exposure of the settler state’s heteropatriarchy and -paternalism by literally embodying female resistance in the centre of power – the prime minister’s office in Oslo. Symbolically, the fact that the women got involved so prominently can also be interpreted as an attempt to illustrate that Sámi society does not traditionally have a strict gender binary system as well as showing that Sámi women are just as politically active as men. As Ellen Marit Gaup Dunfjeld, the spokesperson of the Sámi women, explains, land rights conflicts are always a Sámi women’s issue. She clarifies: “[t]his affects us because we live in the heart of what remains of the Sámi areas, and this concerns reindeer herding and agriculture. [...] The intrusion is being trivialised as if it does not concern us” (as cited in Eriksen 1981a, 5). She also named alternatives to the Áltá/Guovdageidnu development, thus trying to resist the epistemic ignorance at play (cf. 7.2.).

In sum, the decision-making processes that led to the energy developments of the hydroelectric power station in Áltá and the wind park in Fovsen are based on obsolete and questionable understandings of democracy as they reveal a lack of “commitment to ‘equality, liberty, inclusion, and constitutionalism’” (Brown 2015, 26). Instead, it seems as if economic interests have guided decision-making processes that should have been of a political nature and beneficial to and inclusive of ‘the people’ (cf. *ibid.*, 27). However, ‘the people’ most centrally negatively affected were not listened to which exposes the ‘business as usual’ that is practised by the leading political parties in Norway as constituting a continuation of colonial structures. As the two conflicts have shown, the commitment to central democratic values requires constant work and an awareness of settler colonial con-

tinuities such as in the form of paternalism, ontological and epistemological ignorance, and the implicit violence that has very explicit and real negative consequences for the Sámi. In the following, the legal dimensions of the conflict will briefly be addressed.

7.3.2. Legal issues

Both during the Máze/Áltá and Fovsen conflicts, laws have been disregarded by the political parties in power, leading to much frustration and disbelief. A central example from the Máze/Áltá conflict is the disrespect of the reindeer herding law. It would have required the government to inform the reindeer herders of the beginning of construction (cf. Riseth et al., 1981). The previous promise by the agricultural department to respect the reindeer herding law Section 28 “in order to avoid unnecessary damage and difficulties for reindeer husbandry” was not upheld which leads the employees of the Reindeer Husbandry Administration in Alta to call this “merely empty words” (ibid.; cf. 7.3.1.). The wish to be informed of the date when construction begins is already a very minimal level of respect that was being asked and is a far cry from any demands of FPIC. Yet not even this was done. When there can be no trust that the words said by the government are meant truthfully and will lead to consequential actions, it prompts the question of where that leaves democracy as a whole. As noted by Sámi and Indigenous feminist, the colonial project leads to a rupturing of relationships. With that in mind, such a lack of adherence to laws and not following through on what one has said seems like a continuation thereof.

The National Association of Norwegian Sámi (NSR, 1981) in their official statement are similarly outraged by the Norwegian state’s conduct. They write that “[t]he procedure which has been followed in this case is in complete conflict with that normally followed by Norwegian authorities in contested cases.” They note that the Sámi are losing confidence in the Norwegian courts of law due to these actions. It has prompted the Nordic Sámi Council to observe that “[t]he previous Norwegian Government’s treatment of the Alta/Kautokeino case shows that the Sámis are in reality almost without rights in relation to the political, administrative and juridical authorities in Norway” (1981). They interpret this lack of lawfulness vis-à-vis the Sámi as a sign of “contempt for the Sámi society and the general principles of the Norwegian society” (ibid.). They end their statement by appealing to the government to enter into dialogue with the Sámi representatives (ibid.). When confronted with the state fracturing relationships by disregarding its own laws and acting disrespectfully towards the Sámi, the Nordic Sámi Council tries to keep up the democratic principles that the state is lacking by appealing to dialogue and relationality.

During the Fovsen conflict, the main reason for the protest in February 2023 and onwards was the lack of response by the government following the Supreme Court verdict that had clarified that the concessions given to the development of the wind park had been unlawful as they violate the Sámi's right to practice their culture. The above-mentioned repeated emphasis by the Petroleum and Energy department to have to need to establish a substantial basis of knowledge for them to be able to follow up on the Supreme Court verdict has been severely criticised by the president of the Sámediggi and legal experts as constituting a threat to the constitutional state. Muotka (2023b) stated that:

the government continues to work against the constitutional state by claiming that they are obliged to assess, and with that in reality review the Supreme Court's evidence assessment. This is against the general understanding of the distribution of power. With that the government alludes that the Supreme Court has come to a false assessment of the evidence in the case [...].

Thus, according to Muotka, the need to gather more evidence and knowledge implies a critique of the Supreme Court's decision which clearly contradicts one of the fundamental principles of the constitutional state, namely the distribution of power.

Another point of critique has been the continued running of the wind park even though the concession given had been proven to be unlawful. To Terje Aasland, the unlawfulness of the concession did not correspond to an unlawfulness of the running of the wind park. He believes that the Supreme Court's verdict "does not mean that the concessions given [...] have ceased to apply automatically" (2023a). However, the energy law clearly states that energy facilities "cannot be built, owned or operated without concession [...]" (Energy Law § 3-1). A number of law professors have expressed their concern and confusion over the energy department's handling of the case and interpretation of the verdict. Øyvind Ravna explains that it says in the verdict that the " 'concession decision is against the reindeer owners' rights' and it very clearly states that the decision is after that unlawful" (as cited in Aslaksen & Ballovara 2023). He also clarifies that Aaslands repeated claims that "there needs to be made a new decision in this case" is not what it actually says in the verdict (ibid.). Law Professor Laila Susanne Vars clearly sees the problems on a political level, as legally the Supreme Court verdict is clear. She understands that the Sámi are "los[ing] trust that the constitution state ensures Samis constitutional rights" (as cited in Buljo & Boine 2023). Finally, constitutional law professor Benedikte Moltumyr Høgberg emphasises that the state "is not above the Supreme Court, no one is", believing that the state's way of handling this case "will undermine the entire rights culture in Norway [...]", noting how important it is that "the state sets a good example" (ibid.).

Muotka similarly tries to appeal to all of Norway by pointing out how the government's lack of actions threatens the Norwegian democracy as a whole. She explains that "they are breaking the constitutional state's fundamental principles of protection of minorities, distribution of power and legal basis" which gives the impression that "the rules are accommodated to the government's interests [...]" which can "ruin the trust between citizens and authorities" (Muotka 2023b). The emphasis on trust and doing as one says is fundamental also in Sámi and Indigenous feminist understandings that value the maintenance of relationships through non-violence and collaboration.

7.3.3. State violence

The nation state as a settler colonial state that reflects and enacts heteropatriarchal structures and paternalist behaviour is considered violent from an Indigenous feminist perspective from which they seek independence as part of a decolonising struggle (e.g. Arvin et al. 2013, 10). In both cases the police have been employed to remove protesters from peaceful demonstrations.⁸⁴

In the case of the Máze/Áltá conflict, the most prominent police presence was at the camp near the construction site where a disproportional amount of police had been summoned to break up the peaceful camp of protesters. Out of 8000 police in Norway at the time – the number including "typists and all" – 600 were dispatched to the North of Norway to deal with the breaking up of the camp (Christie 1981, 4).⁸⁵ When "the authority of the State was re-established" after a day's work, the police remained to protect the construction work (ibid.). As there was such a large police force present, a ship was hired to house them. All in all, the entire project cost 40 million NOK (ibid.). The minister of justice Oddvar Berrefjord expressed his pride of the police and praised them for "the extremely difficult task" they carried out (as cited in *Politibladet* 1981, 40). However, it is unclear why the task was considered "extremely difficult", considering that the protesters were peaceful and no resistance was offered by them. He also thinks the task was done "so sympathetically and dignified" (ibid.) and hopes for it all to continue in such "soft lines" (ibid.), adding that "the police has acted in a way that is worthy of the police of a constitutional state", hoping the protesters will now finally cease their protesting – in the interest

84 Christie quotes "the most important local leader in Alta" who, according to him has said: "If we have to use violence to protect the river, let them then rather take the river" (1981, 9).

85 Not all supported the police action – the conservatives were also for it, but the left, liberals, and Christian democrats and Center party were against it (Christie 1981, 7).

of saving the Norwegian tax payers of further extraordinary payments for the police (ibid.).

Berrefjord's full support of the police action is little surprising considering they are under his command as the minister of justice. At the same time, it is striking how much the 'softness' and 'sympathy' of the police is underlined. Furthermore, the hope that the protesters will cease their protesting now in order to not be guilty of using up more tax money for police action transfers the responsibility to the peaceful Sámi who have tried to protect Sápmi and their existence with the protests when other ways of opposing it had failed. It completely disregards the reason why they were forced to such measures after everything else had failed and further supports a very divisive and colonial line of thinking between 'us' – the 'democratic', civil, rightful state – and 'them' – the 'undemocratic', 'uncivilised' and 'criminal' protesters. It is, after all, not 'them' that had asked the minister to dispatch such a great police force and a lot more money would have been saved, had the hydroelectric power station not been built at all. The police carrying the Sámi away from their land seems like just another violent act by the settler colonial state trying to repress the Indigenous People while claiming to do so to keep the order of society and democracy in place.

When the democratic system does not act as it should and disrespects Sámi rights, the last resort within democratic norms is to peacefully protest against the state's misconduct. During the demonstrations against the development of the Áltá/Guovdageidnu river, many claimed that what the protesters were doing was unlawful and disrespecting the democratic decision-making process, thus threatening democracy and the 'civilised' state. Then-environmental minister Rolf Hansen (Labour Party) for instance said that it "has gone well beyond what a democratic society can practice as action pattern" (1980). Former Labour Party member and leading historian Professor Bull criticises that the Labour Party has apparently forgotten that they have a history of civil disobedience as they are now calling it "illegitimate" when the Sámi do it (as cited in Eriksen 1981b, 7; my translation).⁸⁶ He calls the Nordli-government's treatment of the civil disobedience during the Alta case "clumsy" and "disappointing" (ibid.).

⁸⁶ He explains that "[p]olitically and morally is civil disobedience morally legitimate when it is done in solidarity with weak groups, who do not have appropriate possibilities to advance in any other way" (as cited in Eriksen 1981b, 7).

While a similar police force was not alerted during the Fovsen demonstrations, a similarity may be drawn between the removal of the 14 Sámi women occupying Gro Harlem Brundtland's office and the Fovsen activists' occupation of the Petroleum- and Energy department. In both instances, they were removed at night to avoid media attention; however, while the Sámi women only stayed for less than 24 hours before being removed, the protesters during Fovsen stayed there for almost a week (Halvari & Kemi 2023). The action by the protesters can be considered as a "challenge to the normativity of the settler state" (Kuokkanen 2021, 311) as it threw the spotlight on the lack of action following the Supreme Court verdict. By positioning themselves within the Petroleum- and Energy department they forced the politicians to look and listen. At the same time, it was also a challenge to "Sámi politics as usual" (ibid.) as the Sámi political institutions' forms of protest had not led to any changes.

Civil disobedience was in both cases the last resort, after having been unable to be heard in any other ways. Thus, it can be seen as a way of highlighting where the democracy is not working as it should. Mikkelsen (1981, 54) has argued that the civil disobedience was, in fact, "the continuation of democracy's form of expression contrary to the force in the formal parliamentary rulebook". There is a need for civil disobedience because "our democracy has proven to be unsuited to deal with conflicts between the minority and the majority in a satisfying way" (Andenæs 1981, 117). Thus, civil disobedience serves to highlight where democratic structures need to be changed and improved.

7.3.4. Solidarity and collaboration

Solidarity has been used as a counterstrategy in both conflicts. As noted above, during the Máze/Áltá conflict for instance, the Sámi women who occupied Gro Harlem Brundtland's office came to Oslo to show solidarity with their brothers and sons who were on a hunger strike, as well as to emphasise that Sámi women are also involved and affected by the proposed construction. These and other acts of solidarity and collaboration are not simply individual political acts but correspond to an underlying feminist relationality that emphasises not only the interwovenness of bodies and land (Kuokkanen 2024, 137), but resist and counteract colonial and capitalist disruptions and fragmentations of relationships by participating "the active processes of forming, sustaining, and nurturing relationships, and the wider cultural or philosophical framework that regards relationships as foundational" (Kuokkanen 2025, 4).

A number of explicitly feminist appeals were made during the Máze/Áltá conflict that emphasise the fact that the question of land rights is also always a feminist issue that should concern everyone – not only the Sámi. In an “Open letter to all the women in the North” (1981) for instance, Ellen Marit Gaup Dunfjeld and Marry Ailoneida Somby write that “the development of the Alta/Kautokeino river network is a threat to the life’s nerve in our age-old culture. A culture that we have been able to preserve so far, despite strong pressure from the majority society across several hundred years” (my translation). They emphasise that the destruction of the land equals the destruction of the Sámi’s existence and future, ending their letter with a plea for “all women and women’s organisations in the North to actively participate in the work to support the Sámi’s cause and against the construction of the Alta river” and to support the recognition and constitutionalisation of the Sámi as Indigenous Peoples” (ibid.). This is evocative of Laula Renberg’s forming alliances with women’s organisation in the beginning of the 20th century (cf. 5.2.). A number of women’s groups replied with supportive letters. The Women’s front in Verdal (1981) for instance expressed not only their support but inspiration, stating that the women’s movement should follow the Sámi women’s example.

In addition to support from within the North, there was also international support of the Sámi women and the Máze/Áltá conflict. A number of international feminist publications mention the Sámi women’s occupation of Gro Harlem Brundtland’s office, with headings such as: “Sami Women Defend their Land” (1981). Two Sámi women also reached out to the International Feminist Network in 1981 to “ask for the help of feminist groups all over the world to support the Sami women [...]” (Marit & Britta, 1981). They end their letter with their wish to support them by writing a letter to Brundtland, “[a]sking her to listen to Sami women, stop the construction works at Alta-Kautokeino [and] give the Sami people constitutional rights as indigenous people” (ibid.). These forms of international collaboration suggest thinking beyond the limits of the settler colonial nation-state towards a more fundamental critique of heteropatriarchy and (neoliberal) capitalism.

In both conflicts, the solidarity and collaboration exceeded any ethnic, class, gender or other colonial-capitalist lines of binary divisions. The People’s Action Group while having received criticism for various reasons, consisted of environmentalists, Sámi activists, and others. They emphasised collaboration in a press statement where it said that “Norwegians and Sami have the same interests in the fight against the construction. It is a fight about

what Finnmark should look like in the future” (Folkeaksjonen 1980, my translation). In 1981, they further emphasised during a national meeting that they support Sámi organisations and their demand for the construction to be stopped as well as the demand that “the right to water and land is made clear and that a democratically elected Sami organ is established that, among others, should manage these rights” (Folkeaksjonen 1981, my translation). Magga was little surprised by the support in all areas of Norwegian society, including within the parliament, for the Sámi cause, believing that “if people in the South would get to know why we want them [questions of Sámi rights] to change, they will agree” (as cited in Vik et al. 2014, 43). He explains that it was not only students that got involved, but all kinds of people who shared that what was happening “was against their feeling of right and wrong, as simple as that” (ibid.).

The demonstrations against the government’s lack of action after the Supreme Court verdict in 2023 emerged in a collaboration between the youth divisions of the Norwegian Nature Organisation and the NSR. The collaboration between environmentalist and Sámi groups was seemingly more established, with the leader of the Nature and Youth organisation clarifying that they are primarily there to support Sámi interests (Halvari & Kemi 2023). It seems that they share many similarities as colonial and capitalist interests tend to destroy the environment and an respect of Sámi rights also means a protection of their lands. Silje Karine Muotka even gave a speech at the Nature and Youth’s annual meeting in January 2024 where she thanked them for their work in supporting the Sámi during the Fovsen conflict, ending the speech with stating that she “is looking forward to good dialogue between the Sámi and the environmental movement also in the future” (Muotka 2024).

While during the Máze/Áltá demonstrations, only a first draft of the Sámi flag was used, this flag has not only become an established symbol of Sápmi by the time of the Fovsen conflict, but also been at times extended by the progress pride flag that has been merged with the Sámi flag. This may be interpreted as a subtle way to show the interconnection of all forms of oppression and need for collective resistance against it. Heteropatriarchal, settler colonial and capitalist structures are tightly entwined, making a concomitant critique and refusal thereof necessary which, as noted above necessarily has to include 2SLGBTQIA+ people (Kuokkanen 2019, 143; Smith 2010). The Máze/Áltá demonstrations happened during a different stage of the feminist and queer movements. As the above

paragraphs indicate, the discourse was a lot more binary then, whereas in the time between the 1980s and 2010s a lot of change had been made in terms of queer theories and practices, also in and from Sápmi. It could thus be argued that gender played less of an explicit role during the Fovsen conflict as the presence of various genders in public has reached a certain level of self-evidence and ‘normalcy’ – even though there have been a number of reactionary changes happening all over the world.

As the Fovsen conflict has shown, in Norway heteropaternalist and settler colonial political structures are maintained through a worldview that continues to disregard and disrespect the Sámi through a lack of participation and consent during the decision-making process regarding energy projects in Sápmi. By focusing on economic gain instead of political responsibility and rights as a democratic nation, the government betrays its commitment to “equality, liberty, inclusion, and constitutionalism [...]” (Brown 2015, 26). As the demonstrations and opposition against both constructions have shown, Sámi representatives and their allies’ continued resistance embodies Indigenous feminist strategies that focus on relationality and non-hierarchical relationships that strive to maintain “the health and care of our territories and *all our relations*, not only human ones” (Starblanket & Green 2024, 14).

8. Discussion

The above analysis has not only unveiled the perseverance of settler colonial and capitalist mechanisms and structures in the relationship between the Norwegian state and the Sámi, but has also shown how the resistance against them reflects Indigenous and Sámi feminist theories and practices. Faced with government argumentation that focuses on national and international energy needs and responsibility and (‘green’) energy developments, Sámi representatives and others critical of the state’s conduct have resisted this by emphasising the need for a more respectful view of the land and its people. Opposition to the two projects has not only focused on the planned power stations and their impact on nature as such, but has been a more fundamental critique of “the normativity of the settler state” (Kuokkanen 2021, 311). This includes not only a critique of the decision-making process that completely ignores the Sámi’s traditional ‘ownership’ of the land areas on which these developments were built and reflects the ongoing structure that is settler colonialism (cf. Tuck & Yang 2012, 25), but more fundamentally addresses the underlying ontological reasons and epistemic justifications that lead to it. Indigenous and (neoliberal) capitalist-

critical feminist theories and practices show how these processes, structures and ways of thinking are gendered. Settler colonial structures are informed by heteropatriarchy and -paternalism and based on gendered binaries and hierarchies. Counterstrategies observed in the ongoing land rights conflict “attest to an ethos of Indigenous feminist theory and practice” (Kuokkanen 2021, 311) as Indigenous feminisms focus on the (re)building of relationships and bridging of binaries created through colonialism and capitalism, which includes those established between gendered and racialised humans and the land.

Being listened to is central to Indigenous feminisms and land rights issues. As noted above, while knowledge about Indigenous lands and rights exists and is continually expressed and practiced by Sámi representatives and others, it has been ignored in both instances by the state in the decision-making process. Decision-making that deliberately ignores Indigenous voices and knowledge can be seen as an example of epistemic ignorance. While epistemic ignorance may seem abstract, it has occurred with and resulted in the very material violence of land disposessions and the various cultural, spiritual, generational, communal and personal losses associated with it. As pointed out by Sámi representatives, the Máze/Áltá and Fovsen conflicts can be considered two extreme cases of a great number of previous and current state infringements into Sápmi. The critique uttered from an Indigenous feminist perspective is especially aimed at the ignorance of Indigenous knowledges and rights that forms the foundation of the continuation of such land disposessions. Thus, the underlying settler colonial and capitalist structures that allow such a constant threat and violence to Indigenous lands and its people in the form of a systematic devaluation of knowledge by not-listening need to be dismantled. As Kuokkanen (2019, 95) clarifies, there needs to be a fundamental restructuring of relations.

In the course of the continued epistemic violence and resulting land disposessions, the Norwegian state is also partly acting against its own rules and laws. While already during the Máze/Áltá conflict critique was uttered when comparing it to Norway’s international commitments to Indigenous Rights, at the time of the Fovsen case more legal regulations were in place that should have safeguarded the area from the construction of windparks. As clarified in the ILO convention 169, in matters concerning Indigenous lands, Indigenous Peoples need to be consulted and allowed to participate. As Ravna (2020, 239) has emphasised, “[t]he right of participation ensured in ILO 169 Article 15 (1) extends beyond being consulted, which means that indigenous peoples must have a real influence on de-

cisions made in relation to the aforementioned resources.” At the same time, Ravna (2020, 236) notes that this right to influence decision-making processes “is still one of the main challenges in the relationship between indigenous peoples and the majority population in many nation states” which can clearly be affirmed by the analysis above. As illustrated in the examples of responses and opposition to the Máze/Áltá and Fovsen constructions, Sámi representatives and their allies have always tried to maintain a dialogue with state representatives. This can be traced to the concept of feminist relationality which “encompasses both the active processes of forming, sustaining, and nurturing relationships, and the wider cultural or philosophical framework that regards relationships as foundational” (Kuokkanen 2025, 4). Even when faced with the continued violence by the state, they still attempt to nurture the relationship with it.

While legal regulations are in place and a great focus during both conflicts has been on the legal aspects, as the lack of action by the government following the Supreme Court verdict in the Fovsen case has shown, the land rights conflict between the Norwegian state and the Sámi is fundamentally a political one. The Supreme Court had unanimously declared that the concessions given by the state were illegal. As noted by many, the lack of following up on verdicts is not only critical with regards to the Sámi but all Norwegian citizens as it destabilises the reliability of and trust in a constitutional state. It also unveils that while the Sámi have gained more rights, the state – legally and politically – still considers itself to be the owner of the land. While consultation and participation rights are included in the ILO 169, this is clearly not enough to unsettle the state’s following its own interests when it comes to the land and development projects. This can not only be linked to epistemic ignorance but an ontological difference in the state’s and majority’s understanding of the Sámi and their rights to Sápmi that has not yet been defined sufficiently in the legal and political foundations of the Norwegian state. It is still not established that the Sámi are the ‘original’ users and custodians of Sápmi and that that should give them the right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) to their lands. The continued destruction of the relationship between the land and its peoples is, according to Smith (2010, 61) essential to the colonial endeavour since it does not only seek “to kill colonized peoples but to destroy their sense of being people”. By resisting the continued destruction of “intimate relationships” (Kuokkanen 2019, 53) and “their sense of being people” (Smith 2010, 61) through environmental and other violence, the Sámi opposition to the land grabbing can be seen as an attempt to safeguard these relationships as part of Indigenous feminist practice

which, according to Starblanket & Green (2024, 14) is “concerned with the health and care of our territories and *all our relations*, not only human ones”.

As criticised by Kuokkanen (2019) and McGuire (2022), institutions such as the Sámediggi lack the decision-making power it should have in matters regarding Sápmi. The land rights conflict clearly illustrates that the Sámediggi fulfils mostly a self-administrative and not a self-governing function (cf. Kuokkanen 2019) which is why Sámi youth and environmentalists felt the need to “unsettl[e] conventional Sámi politics as usual” by protesting in the Petroleum and Energy department in February 2023. While primarily “challenging [...] the normativity of the settler state” by clarifying that they will not continue to watch the state disregard its own laws and be disrespectful and violent towards the Sámi, they thereby also showed that Sámi politics as usual is unable to achieve suitable solutions. The politics of assimilation “continues in silence” (Magga as cited in Vik et al. 2014, 66) and is highlighted by protesters during the Fovsen conflict. Thus, in line with Kuokkanen’s (2019) call for a restructuring of all relations, the land rights conflicts and the opposition to the perseverance of settler colonial structures not only demands a change in the relationship between the state and the Sámi, but also between the Sámi and their representatives. The protests by the Sámi and other other activists has revealed that Sámi politics as it is is not working because the government keeps all decision-power to itself, despite legal and political measures demanding a change thereof. The fundamental demand to challenge existing structures of domination is a key concept in Indigenous feminist theories.

The conflicts unveil the heteropatriarchal and -paternal structures of the settler colonial state that reveals itself in the epistemic violence, decision-making processes without Sámi participation and an ontological difference in conceiving existence not as relationships but a hierarchy of domination. Heteropaternalism is always based on a hierarchy that deems one group of people to know better than the other. As repeatedly mentioned by Sámi representatives during both conflicts, state representatives persistently claim to know when they do not actually do so. While making decisions that fundamentally affect Sámi lives both materially and culturally, the impacts on Sámi existence seem to not be considered as consultations and opposition to proposed plans are not taken seriously. Instead, arguments of national or international energy demands are presented as knockout arguments. While this is often related with the claim that these development will improve the lives of many,

the impacts on the Sámi are not considered or considered as a tolerable price to be paid. Such a line of argumentation not only illustrates the deeply rooted capitalist and, nowadays, neoliberal mindset that continues to permeate and perforate state structures, but a paternalist justification of settler colonial practices (cf. Fjellheim 2024, 34). Indigenous feminist theories help understand such mechanisms by illustrating how heteropatriarchy is closely entwined with heteropaternalism and that gendered binary hierarchies permeate not only familial but settler colonial state structures in fundamental ways (cf. Arin et al 2013, 13; Kuokkanen 2021, 312). By fighting for the protection of the mountain and the river by emphasising their aliveness (“Let the river/mountain live”), the activists illustrate that the maintenance of nature and our relationships to it may be the best way to improve lives.

The analysis has illustrated that (neoliberal) capitalism and colonialism continue to work well together in the dispossession of Indigenous lands. The hydroelectric power station is in full ownership of the state via Statkraft and it is the majority owner of the Fovsen windpark, thus benefitting economically from it. At the same time, the Sámi on whose lands they have been established do not. The recent developments have led Sánchez Contreras et al. (2023, 12) to call for “[a] decolonial approach to the current climate and ecological crisis [that] undoubtedly needs to be based on degrowth in the Global North by reducing consumption, as well as direct and indirect CO2 emission” as well as questioning “for whom”, “what” and “how” energy is being produced. The value of land as having primarily a monetary and political value to state representatives is very different to the more nuanced and “intimate relationship” (Kuokkanen 2019, 53) that Indigenous Peoples often have with it. This is also reflected in Indigenous economic structures where not taking too much, caring for the community and having just enough dominates as opposed to neoliberal profit maximisation and competitive values that often dominate today. As noted by Heiret (2024) and others, the Norwegian state has increasingly become dominated by “ideals of market efficiency” (Innset 2025, 497). This has been apparent in the Fovsen case and the desire to head the green shift by constructing the greatest on-land windpark in Europe which seems to have dominated the decision-making process vis-à-vis criticism and opposition from an Indigenous point of view. The disregard of international and national laws for the pursuit of economic progress and prestige shows how well entrenched neoliberal ideals of progress, development and competition have become.

While the argumentation for the construction of the hydroelectric power station in Máze/Áltá was also capitalist and nationalist in securing an allegedly increasing energy demand, the Fovsen conflict has had a greater international dimension. The development was not argued for the ‘good’ of the nation only, but the international energy market, with the state as majority owner also profiting from it. The Petroleum and Energy minister’s responses to the conflict have almost given the impression of him being a mediator between the Sámi and the developers of the windpark. This implies an impartiality which, considering the state’s part-ownership and responsibility towards its citizens, including the Sámi and their rights, is not given. He had to be repeatedly informed of his political responsibility of securing Indigenous rights by Sámi and environmentalist protesters. They have opposed the state’s economic justifications guiding political decision making and the continued dispossession of Sámi lands while emphasising their entwinedness with the land that also makes them guardians thereof (“Let the mountain/river live”). Indigenous thought includes ideas of fairness and equality in relationships between humans and the land. Choices about the land should not happen from a superior and entitled position but rather from one based on an awareness of reciprocity and sustainability which includes care and concern for future generations and the idea that “we borrow it from our children” (Haida teaching as cited in Styres 2019, 28). This reflects the Indigenous “land-based world-views” which are “founded on active recognition of kinship relations that extend beyond the human domain” (Kuokkanen 2011, 219).

The conflicts unveil the instability of democracy that has its origins in and shows continuities of settler colonialism and patriarchal and paternal structures with the subordination of “democratic state commitments to equality, liberty, inclusion, and constitutionalism [...] to the project of economic growth, competitive positioning, and capital enhancement” (Brown 2015, 26) that demands decolonisation. In the protests against the hydroelectric power station and the windpark, the state’s conduct and decision-making processes have been severely questioned. These criticisms reflect Indigenous feminist theories and practices that “critically interrogate[...] and expose[...] the hypocrisy of the supposedly just and fair ‘democratic’, patriarchal settler colonial state that is predicated on the elimination and dispossession of Indigenous peoples” (Kuokkanen 2021, 311). As noted by Simonds & Christopher (2013, 2189) just as much as settler colonialism is ongoing, so too must decolonisation be an ongoing process that requires more than singular admittances of wrongdoing or apologies. While even that often takes longer than expected, Styres (2019) ac-

knowledges that decolonisation is, of course, “uncomfortable” as it not only demands an admittance of guilt and responsibility, but a relinquishing of unwarranted power. The focus on the interlacing of heteropatriarchy, capitalism and colonialism as discussed by Indigenous feminist theories illustrates how, in order to achieve a more balanced, equal and respectful society, those who have been profiting from the exploitation of lands, peoples and gendered and racialised hierarchies, need to relinquish that. This fundamentally includes the land, as Tuck & Yang clarify: “[u]ntil stolen land is relinquished, critical consciousness does not translate into action that disrupts settler colonialism” (2012, 19).

As the Truth and Reconciliation report (2023) has stated, there has been too little critical insight, reflection and admittance of responsibility and the colonial past which has enabled a continuation of its structures into the present. However, such a reflection and commitment to decolonisation is necessary for more fundamental changes to be made. It remains questionable if Fovsen has changed the relationship between the state and the Sámi for the better. The affected reindeer herders have received restitutions and have a veto right once the concession period is over. They will also receive new land areas to use for grazing; however, while no decision has yet been made this has already proven difficult (Løberg et al. 2025). The local opposition against the Sámi using the area as a grazing ground illustrates some of the repercussions of settler colonialism in what is only one example of many. By making decisions about other people’s land, settler colonial mechanisms are being reproduced, even when done for the benefit of the Sámi who cannot use the Fovsen area any more. FPIC could ensure that such further land grabbing would not become necessary, as Sápmi would be further safeguarded and development projects only given concession to if it is in the interests of the Sámi also.

9. Conclusion

In this thesis the land rights conflict between the Sámi and the Norwegian state were analysed from a theoretical Indigenous and (neoliberal) capitalist-critical perspective by comparing the Máze/Áltá with the Fovsen case. After contextual chapters on Indigenous Peoples, and the case study context of the Sámi on the Norwegian side of Sápmi and the Norwegian nation-state, the two cases were briefly described. Even though approximately forty years have passed between the two embedded cases of this case study, and a number of political and legal changes have been made to improve Sámi rights in Norway, Sámi voices and rights are still being sidelined and silenced in decision-making processes in

Norway, which strongly suggest a continuation of settler colonial structures (cf. Høybråten et al. 2023). Drawing on Indigenous feminist theories allowed an analysis of the perseverance of these structures and how they are entwined with heteropatriarchal and hierarchical gendered binaries.

Especially in the light of the more recent pressures on Indigenous lands through ‘green’ energy demands, it seems crucial to look into the past to see how current issues seem to reproduce previous conflicts and repeat similar struggles and structures. As pointed out by Ella Marie Hætta Isaksen during the demonstrations against the wind park: “We cannot talk about the future before one recognises the past and the ongoing human rights abuse that is happening right now” (NRK 2023). Simplistic calls for green energy without considering its impacts on Indigenous Peoples and including them in the decision-making process raises the question of how ‘green’ such energy can be in light of the human rights violations happening in the course of establishing it. It leads to a destruction of “intimate relationships” (Kuokkanen 2019, 53) as pointed out by the protesters and Sámi representatives fighting against these intrusions.

The question posed in the title of “whose land is it?” seems to remain unresolved. As the analysis has shown, the Sámi still lack actual decision-making power in the form of a right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) even though politically and legally a number of changes were made after the Máze/Áltá conflict. In the light of the analysis above and the many other current threats to Sápmi, such as the opening of the mine and dumping of waste in Reppafjord (Wilhelms et al. 2026) and new wind park ideas for Fovsen (Stranden 2024; cf. Stranden 2025), it is clear that both the state and corporations continue to make territorial claims to land areas that have traditionally and sustainably been used by the Sámi for as long as can be remembered. There still exists a fundamental difference between the state’s and Sámi’s view of the land, landownership and the relationship with it where Sámi rights are not being respected as they should be. Yet, considering the rapidly accelerating climate crisis much can and should be learned from Indigenous understandings of the land and Sámi and Indigenous feminist theories and practices that focus on communal and sustainable land usage, collaboration and non-hierarchical respectful relationships that are not limited to humans but all living beings, including the land.

10. Bibliography

10.1. Archival sources

[Advertisement page, women's press]. (1981). *Sami Women Defend their Land*. Alta Museum (Arkivstykke 19, Gbg), Alta, Norway.

Aasen, S. (1993, June 6). "Brundtlands innrømmelse bør får følger." Norwegian National Archives (RA-PA-2018 - Natur og ungdom, L0003 – Altasaken, Mappe 2: Alta 1981-1985), Oslo, Norway.

Berrefjord, O. (1981, February). *Pressemelding*. Politibladet, Nr. 2., 40. Alta Museum (Arkivstykke 8, Dbe), Alta, Norway.

Christie, N. (1981, March 20). [Letter to I. And L.], 1-12. Alta Museum (Arkivstykke 8, Dbe), Alta, Norway.

Dunfjeld, E. M. G., & Somby, M. A. (1981, February). *Öppet brev till alla kvinnor i Norden*. Alta Museum (Arkivstykke 19, Gbg), Alta, Norway.

Eira, P. J., Hætta, O. M., Hætta, M. O., Gaup Jr., M. M., Gaup, I. A., Gaup J. a., Sara, J. J. (1981, October 5). *Declaration from the Sami Reindeer-Owners*. Sámi Archives (SAMI-PA-1042, PA 1022 – F0003), Guovdageidnu (Kautokeino), Norway.

Eira, P. J. (1981, October 11). [Letter from the administration of Masi District Assn. to the Norwegian Government and Norwegian Parliament]. *Protest against the regulation of the Alta-Kautokeino watercourse*. Sámi Archives (SAMI-PA-1042, PA 1022 – F0003), Guovdageidnu (Kautokeino), Norway.

Engstad, P. (1980, March 27). *Utbygging av Alta-Vassdraget. Sammendrag av St. meld. nr. 61 (1979-80) av Paul Engstad*. Norwegian Labour Movement's Archives (ARK-1006 - F - Fa - L0028 – Alta-saken, Mappe 2: St. meld 61. Gjennomføringen av Altautbyggingen. 30.5.80), Oslo, Norway.

Folkeaksjonen mot utbygging av Alta-Kautokeinovassdraget. (1980, April 27). *Pressemelding. Folkeaksjonen mot utbygging av Alta-Kautokeinovassdraget har på landsmøtet i Alta vedtatt følgende uttalelse: Vår rett vi tar*. [in Savco Landskonferansen i Alta 26.-27. April 80, p.59]. Alta Museum (Arkivstykke 1, Abab), Alta, Norway.

Folkeaksjonen mot utbygging av Alta-Kautokeinovassdraget. (1981, Mai 29-30). *Regjeringens egne tall tilsier: Kraftoverskudd i Nord Norge*. Alta Museum (Arkivstykke 2, Abag), Alta, Norway.

Hansen, R. (1980, May 29). *Statsråd Rolf Hansens innleg ved behandlingen av Alta-Saken den 30. Mai 1980*. Norwegian Labour Movement's Archives (ARK-1006 - F - Fa - L0028 – Alta-saken, Mappe 2: St. meld 61. Gjennomføringen av Altautbyggingen. 30.5.80), Oslo, Norway.

Henriksen, H., & Johansen, K. (1979, January 16). [Letter to the Norwegian Government] *Krav om ny behandling av Alta/Kautokeinovassdraget*. Alta Museum (Arkivstykke 3, Bab), Alta, Norway.

- Kvinnefronten i Verdal. (1981, February 11). [Letter to the Sámi women]. Alta Museum (Arkivstykke 8, Dbd), Alta, Norway.
- Lund, Ketil. (1982). *Myndighetenes rolle i Altasaken*. Norwegian National Archives (RA-PA-2018 - Natur og ungdom, L0003 – Altasaken, Mappe 2: Alta 1981-1985), Oslo, Norway.
- Rossavik, F. M. (1993, June 6). “Eks-statsministeren på ventelisten”, *Vårt Land*. Norwegian National Archives (RA-PA-2018 - Natur og ungdom, L0003 – Altasaken, Mappe 2: Alta 1981-1985), Oslo, Norway.
- Marit, & Britta. (1981, February 16). [Letter to Jane Cottinham, International Feminist Network] *Sami women of Norway ask for international assistance*. Alta Museum (Arkivstykke 20, Gbh), Alta, Norway.
- National Association of Norwegian Samis (NSR). (1981, October 30). *Official Statement Issued at the Extraordinary General Meeting of the National Association of Norwegian Samis (NSR), held at Eiby on 30 October, 1981*. Sámi Archives (SAMI-PA-1042, PA 1022 – F0003), Guovdageidnu (Kautokeino), Norway.
- Nordic Sami Council. (1981). *Statement from the Nordic Sami Council*. Sámi Archives (SAMI-PA-1042, PA 1022 – F0003), Guovdageidnu (Kautokeino), Norway.
- Norske Reindriftssamers Landsforbund. (1981, 6). *Pressemelding*. Alta Museum (Arkivstykke 11, Ek), Alta, Norway.
- Riseth, J. A., Persen, E., Joma, N., Rübberdt, S., Aarak, E. (1981, October 29). *Open letter to the government. What's happened to consideration for reindeer husbandry in the Alta case?* Sámi Archives (SAMI-PA-1042, PA 1022 – F0003), Guovdageidnu (Kautokeino), Norway.
- Samebevegelsen. (1981, January 1). [Letter to the Norwegian Government]. Alta Museum (Arkivstykke 8, Dbd), Alta, Norway.
- Østmo, L. (1980a). “NSR vil: Samarbeid bygd på likeverd.” Charta 79, Nr 2-3, p. 18. Alta Museum (Arkivstykke 38, Jcgc), Alta, Norway.
- Østmo, L. (1980b). “NSR melder seg som hjelpeintervenient: – Tap av en kultur og tap av mulighetene til å kunne eksitere som et folk, kan ikke erstattes.” Charta 79, Nr. 4-5, p. 6. Alta Museum (Arkivstykke 38, Jcgc), Alta, Norway.
- Østmo, L., Stordahl, V. (1980). “Vassdragsutbygginger – den samiske kvinnen.” Charta 79, Nr. 4-5, 10-11. Alta Museum (Arkivstykke 38, Jcgc), Alta, Norway.

10.2. List of references

Aanesland, S. M. (2020). *Altasaken: Fra likeverd mot selvstyre*. [Master's thesis] Universitet i Agder.

Altamirano-Jiménez, I. (2021). Indigenous women refusing the violence of resource extraction in Oaxaca. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 17(2), 215–223. <https://doi.org/10.1177/11771801211015316>

Andenæs, K. (1981). "Misbruk av Jus." In G. H. Gjenset (Ed.) *Samisk mot norsk hovmod* (117-136). Pax Forlag.

Andersen, A., Hvenegård-Lassen, K., & Knoblock, I. (2015). Feminism in Postcolonial Nordic Spaces. *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 23(4), 239–245. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2015.1104596>

Andresen, A., Evjen, B., & Ryymin, T. (2021). *Samenes historie fra 1751 til 2010* (1. utgave.). Cappelen Damm akademisk.

Arvin, M., Tuck, E., & Morrill, A. (2013). Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy. *Feminist Formations*, 25(1), 8–34. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2013.0006>

Barraclough, E. R., & Donecker, S. (2016). Europa und die Arktis vor 1800 Entdeckungen, Begegnungen und Kontakte. In G. Saxinger, P. Schweitzer, & S. Donecker (Eds.), *Arktis und Subarktis: Geschichte, Kultur, Gesellschaft* (24-45). nap - new academic press.

Barsh, R. L. (2015). The Inner Struggle of Indigenous Peoples. In R. Dunbar-Ortiz et al. (Eds.), *Indigenous peoples' rights in international law: Emergence and application: A book in honour of Asbjørn Eide at eighty* (88-97). Gáldu Cála.

Berg-Nordlie, M. (2024). *En kort introduksjon til samenes historie*. Cappelen Damm AS.

Bergh, T., Eriksen, K. E., & Lie, E. (2010, August). Muntlig historie intervju med Arvid Johanson 24 januar 2007. Forum for Samtidshistories intervjuprosjekt, Institutt for arkeologi, konservering og historie, Universitetet i Oslo.

Bjerregaard, P., & Viskum Lytken Larsen, C. (2017). Health Aspects of Colonization and the Post-Colonial Period in Greenland 1721 to 2014. *Journal of Northern Studies*, 10(2), 85–106. <https://doi.org/10.36368/jns.v10i2.848>

Brown, W. (2015). *Undoing the demos: Neoliberalism's stealth revolution*. Zone books.

Charter of Decolonial Research Ethics. (2013). Decoloniality Europe. <https://decolonialityeurope.wixsite.com/decoloniality/charter-of-decolonial-research-ethics>

Dahl, U. (2021). Nordic Academic Feminism and Whiteness as Epistemic Habit. In S. Keskinen, P. Stoltz, & D. Mulinari (Eds.), *Feminisms in the Nordic Region: Neoliberalism, Nationalism and Decolonial Critique* (113-134). Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53464-6>

- Dankertsen, A. (2019). I Felt So White: Sámi Racialization, Indigeneity, and Shades of Whiteness. *Native American and Indigenous Studies*, 6(2), 110–137. <https://doi.org/10.5749/natiindistudj.6.2.0110>
- Dankertsen, A. (2021). Indigenising Nordic Feminism—A Sámi Decolonial Critique. In S. Keskinen, P. Stoltz, & D. Mulinari (Eds.), *Feminisms in the Nordic Region* (pp. 135–154). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53464-6_7
- Det norske kongehuset. (1997, October 7). *Sametinget 1997: Åpningstale*. <https://www.kongehuset.no/taler-og-budskap/kong-harald-v/sametinget-1997-apningstale>
- Eidheim, H. (1997). Ethno-Political Development among the Sami after World War II: The Invention of Selfhood. In H. Gaski (Ed.), *Sami culture in a new era: The Norwegian Sami experience* (29-61). Davvi Girji.
- Eikjok, J. (2004). Gender in Sápmi – Socio-cultural transformations and new challenges. *Indigenous Affairs: Indigenous Women*, 1-2, 52-57. International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs.
- Eriksen, B. (1981a). Fjorten kvinner fra hjertet av Sameland. *Folkevett: Magasin for et menneskelig samfunn, ny livsstil og mellomfolkelig solidaritet*, 3, 4-5. [Accessed via Nasjonalbiblioteket, 11.11.2024].
- Eriksen, B. (1981b). Arbeiderbevegelsen må ikke glemme sin historie. *Magasin for et menneskelig samfunn, ny livsstil og mellomfolkelig solidaritet*, 3, 7. [Accessed via Nasjonalbiblioteket, 11.11.2024].
- Federici, S. (2014). *Caliban and the witch* (Second, revised edition). Autonomedia.
- Finbog, L.-R. (2020). *It speaks to you: Making kin of people, duodji and stories in Sámi museums*. [Dissertation]. University of Oslo.
- Fjellheim, E. M. (2020). Through our stories we resist: Decolonial perspectives on south Saami history, indigeneity and rights. In *Indigenous Knowledges and the Sustainable Development Agenda*. Routledge.
- Fjellheim, E. M. (2023a). Wind Energy on Trial in Saepmie: Epistemic Controversies and Strategic Ignorance in Norway's Green Energy Transition. *Arctic Review on Law and Politics*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.23865/arctic.v14.5586>
- Fjellheim, E. M. (2023b). “You Can Kill Us with Dialogue:” Critical Perspectives on Wind Energy Development in a Nordic-Saami Green Colonial Context. *Human Rights Review*, 24(1), 25–51. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12142-023-00678-4>
- Fjellheim, E. M. (2023c, March 2). En forsoning mellom det samiske folk og den norske stat har kanskje aldri vært fjernere. *Adressa debatt*. Retrieved from <https://www.adressa.no/debatt/i/15Wpwq/samisk-folkeoppvoer-mot-en-kolonistat>
- Fjellheim, E. M. (2024). *Resisting unfinished colonial business in Southern Saami reindeer herding landscapes*. [Dissertation]. UiT The Arctic University of Norway.

- Gaski, H. (1997). *Sami culture in a new era: The Norwegian Sami experience*. Davvi Girji.
- Gerring, J. (2004). What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for? *American Political Science Review*, 98(2), 341–354. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055404001182>
- Gopal, P. (2021). On Decolonisation and the University. *Textual Practice*, 35(6), 873–899. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2021.1929561>
- Guttorm, H., Kantonen, L., Kramvig, B., & Pyhälä, A. (2021). *Indigenous Research Methodologies in Sámi and Global Contexts*. BRILL. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004463097>
- Guttormsen, A., Hætta, K. E., Nango, N. J., & Steinfjell, I. M. (2023). *Rapport: Referansegruppen for Máze dokumentasjonssenter Guovdageainnu Gilišillju / Kautokeino Bygdetun RiddoDuottarMuseat*. Retrieved from <https://sametinget.no/f/p1/i430cc266-2e52-46fe-9861-ff4dd37e49d5/rapport-referansegruppen-for-maze-dokumentasjonssenter.pdf>
- Halsaa, B. (2020). The (Trans)National Mobilisation of Sámi Women in Norway. *Moving the Social*, 119-145. <https://doi.org/10.13154/MTS.63.2020.119-145>
- Hartman, S. V. (2019). *Wayward lives, beautiful experiments: Intimate histories of riotous black girls, troublesome women, and queer radicals*. W.W. Norton & Company.
- Heiret, Y. S. (2020). *The Neoliberalization of the Norwegian Development Strategy*. [Dissertation]. University of Oslo.
- Heiret, Y. S. (2024). The Neoliberalization of the Norwegian Welfare State: Public Investments in a Privatized Global Economy. *Nordisk Velfärdsforskning | Nordic Welfare Research*, 9(1), 48–65. <https://doi.org/10.18261/nwr.9.1.4>
- Helander, Elina. (1996). Sustainability in the Sami area. In E. Helander (Ed.), *Awakened voice: The return of Sami knowledge* (1-6). Nordic Sami Institute.
- Hirvonen, V. (2008). *Voices from Sápmi: Sámi women's path to authorship*. DAT.
- Höglund, J., & Burnett, L. A. (2019). Introduction: Nordic Colonialisms and Scandinavian Studies. *Scandinavian Studies*, 91(1/2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.5406/scanstud.91.1-2.0001>
- Hætta, O. M. (1996). Archaeologz – a link between past and present? In E. Helander (Ed.), *Awakened voice: The return of Sami knowledge* (13-20) . Nordic Sami Institute.
- Høybråten, D., Bjørklund, I., Gurák, A. K., Hermanstrand, H., Kjøllass, P. O., Lane, P., Myrvoll, M., Niemi, E., Semb, A. J., Somby, Syse, A., & Zachariassen, K. (2023). *Sannhets- og forsoning – grunnlag for et oppgjør med fornorskingspolitikk og urett mot samer, kvener/norskfinner og skogfinner*. <https://www.stortinget.no/globalassets/pdf/sannhets--og-forsoningskommisjonen/rapport-til-stortinget-fra-sannhets--og-forsoningskommisjonen.pdf>
- Indigeneity in Europe: Possibilities, Challenges, and Alliances. (2024, November 12). *ThinkND*. Retrieved from <https://think.nd.edu/indigeneity-in-europe-possibilities-challenges-and-alliances/>

Innset, O. (2025). State-owned enterprises after the market turn: Hybridisation and the historical development of nested paradoxes in the case of Norway. *Business History*, 67(2), 496–520. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2024.2353661>

International Labour Organisation. (n.d.). *Convention C169—Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989* (No. 169). Retrieved 1 June 2025, from https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312314

Iversen, R. (1981). “Jeg søker etter min arv –.” In G. H. Gjenset (Ed.) *Samisk mot norsk hovmod* (29-44). Pax Forlag.

Jaworsky, D. (2019). An allied research paradigm for epidemiology research with Indigenous peoples. *Archives of Public Health*, 77(22), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13690-019-0353-1>

Jernsletten, N. (1997). Sami Traditional Terminology: Professional Terms Concerning Salmon, Reindeer and Snow. In H. Gaski (Ed.), *Sami culture in a new era: The Norwegian Sami experience* (86-108). Davvi Girji.

Kalstad, J. K. H. (1997). Aspects of Managing Renewable Resources in Sami Areas in Norway. In H. Gaski (Ed.), *Sami culture in a new era: The Norwegian Sami experience* (109-126). Davvi Girji.

Kamali, M., & Jönsson, J. H. (2018). *Neoliberalism, Nordic welfare states and social work: Current and future challenges*. Routledge.

Kapoor, I. (2023). Decolonising Development Studies. *Review of International Studies*, 49(3), 346–355. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021052300013X>

Keskinen, S., Stoltz, P., & Mulinari, D. (Eds.). (2021). *Feminisms in the Nordic Region: Neoliberalism, Nationalism and Decolonial Critique*. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53464-6>

Knobblock, I. (2024). “A Rape of the Earth”. *Meridians*, 23(1), 133–155. <https://doi.org/10.1215/15366936-10927016>

Knobblock, I., & Kuokkanen, R. (2015). Decolonizing Feminism in the North: A Conversation with Rauna Kuokkanen. *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 23(4), 275–281. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2015.1090480>

Kramvig, B., & Avango, D. (2021). The multiple landscapes of Biedjovággi: Ontological conflicts on indigenous land. *Polar Record*, 57, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247421000139>

Krömer, A., & Allemann, L. (2016). Arktische Assimilierungspolitiken Indigene Kinder in Internatsschulen des 20. Jahrhunderts. In G. Saxinger, P. Schweitzer, & S. Donecker (Eds.), *Arktis und Subarktis: Geschichte, Kultur, Gesellschaft* (103-120). nap - new academic press.

- Kuhn, G. (2020). *Liberating Sápmi: Indigenous resistance in Europe's far north*. PM Press.
- Kuokkanen, R. (2000). Towards an „indigenous paradigm“ from a Sámi perspective. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 2, 411–436.
- Kuokkanen, R. (2003). „Survivance“ in Sami and first nations boarding school narratives: Reading novels by Kerttu Vuolab and Shirley Sterling. *The American Indian Quarterly*, 27(3–4), 697–727.
- Kuokkanen, R. (2007a). Myths and realities of Sami women: A post-colonial Feminist Analysis for the Decolonization and Transformation of Sami Society. In J. Green (Ed.), *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* (72–92.). Fernwood Books.
- Kuokkanen, R. (2007b). *Reshaping the university: Responsibility, indigenous epistemes, and the logic of the gift*. UBC press.
- Kuokkanen, R. (2009). Indigenous Women in Traditional Economies: The Case of Sámi Reindeer Herding. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 34(3), 499–504. <https://doi.org/10.1086/593382>
- Kuokkanen, R. (2010). The Responsibility of the Academy: A Call for Doing Homework. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 26(3). <https://doi.org/10.63997/jct.v26i3.262>
- Kuokkanen, R. (2011). Indigenous economies, theories of subsistence, and women: Exploring the social economy model for indigenous governance. *The American Indian Quarterly*, 35(2), 215–241.
- Kuokkanen, R. (2017). Indigenous Epistemes. In I. Szeman, S. Blacker, & J. Sully (Eds.) *A Companion to Critical and Cultural Theory* (313–26). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Kuokkanen, R. (2019). *Restructuring relations: Indigenous self-determination, governance, and gender*. Oxford University Press.
- Kuokkanen, R. (2021). Ellos Deatnu and post-state Indigenous feminist sovereignty. In B. Hokowhitu et al. (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Critical Indigenous Studies* (310–323). Routledge.
- Kuokkanen, R. (2023). Are Reindeer the New Buffalo? *Meridians*, 22(1), 11–33. <https://doi.org/10.1215/15366936-10220458>
- Kuokkanen, R. (2025). It's about all relations: Indigenous feminist theory of relational freedom. *Review of International Studies*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210525100879>
- Kværner, S. H. (1981). Finnmark trenger ikke Alta-utbyggingen. *Magasin for et menneskelig samfunn, ny livsstil og mellomfolkelig solidaritet* (3), 12. Retrieved from: <https://www.nb.no/>
- Laframboise, L. (2024). Just Like Alta? A Comparative Study of the Alta and Fosen Cases as Critical Junctures for Sámi Rights in Norway. In Europäisches Zentrum für Föderalis-

mus-Forschung Tübingen (EZFF) (Ed.), *Jahrbuch des Föderalismus* 2024 (pp. 302–318). Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG. <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748944614-302>

Lawrence, R. (2014). Internal Colonisation and Indigenous Resource Sovereignty: Wind Power Developments on Traditional Saami Lands. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 32(6), 1036–1053. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d9012>

Lepperød, J. (2023). *Arbeiderpartiet og Alta-saken*. [Master's thesis]. UiT Norges arktiske universitet.

Lindquist, S., Persson, M., & Bergman, E. (2014). *Queering Sápmi: Indigenous stories beyond the norm*. Qub förlag.

Magga, O. H. (2015). Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Norway and the International Indigenous Movement. In R. Dunbar-Ortiz et al. (Eds.), *Indigenous peoples' rights in international law: Emergence and application: A book in honour of Asbjørn Eide at eighty* (296–305). Gáldu Cála.

Mbembe, A. J. (2016). Decolonizing the university: New directions. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 15(1), 29–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474022215618513>

McGuire, L. (2022). The Fragmentation of Sápmi: A Nordic Model of Settler Colonialism. *Scandinavian-Canadian Studies*, 29, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.29173/scancan225>

Melbye, C. F. (2015). *Vekst eller vern? Spørsmålet om utbygging av henholdsvis Veigvassdraget, Dagali-fallene og Altavassdraget i et komparativt perspektiv* [Master's thesis]. University of Oslo. <http://hdl.handle.net/10852/45147>

Michalitsch, G. (2004). Was ist Neoliberalismus? Genese und Anatomie einer Ideologie. In: D. Graf & K. Kaser (Eds.), *Vision Europa. Vom Nationalstaat zum europäischen Gemeinwesen* (144–163). Czernin.

Mikkelsen, Magnar. (1981). “Proletarenes uttogsmarsj.” In G. H. Gjenset (Ed.) *Samisk mot norsk hovmod* (49–62). Pax Forlag.

Minde, H. (2003). Assimilation of the Sami – Implementation and Consequences. *Acta Borealia*, 20(2), 121–146. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08003830310002877>

Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion. (2018, August 14). *Procedures for Consultations between State Authorities and The Sami Parliament [Norway]*. regjeringen.no. <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/indigenous-peoples-and-minorities/Sami-people/midtpalte/PROCEDURES-FOR-CONSULTATIONS-BETWEEN-STA/id450743/>

Ministry of Petroleum and Energy. (2023, December 19). *Agreement between Sør-Fosen Sijte and Fosen Vind* [Pressemelding]. regjeringen.no. Government.No. <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/whats-new/agreement-between-sor-fosen-sijte-and-fosen-vind/id3019277/>

Ministry of Petroleum and Energy. (2024, March 6). *Agreement between Nord-Fosen siida and Roan Vind* [Pressemelding]. regjeringen.no. Government.No.

<https://www.regjeringen.no/en/whats-new/agreement-between-nord-fosen-siida-and-roan-vind/id3028614/>

Mörkenstam, U., Josefsen, E., & Nilsson, R. (2016). *The Nordic Sámediggi and the Limits of Indigenous Self-Determination*. Gáldu – Resource Centre for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. <http://hdl.handle.net/10037/20660>

Niemi, E. (1997). Sami History and the Frontier Myth: A Perspective on the Northern Sami Spatial and Rights History. In H. Gaski (Ed.), *Sami culture in a new era: The Norwegian Sami experience* (62-85). Davvi Girji.

Noetzel, Krumm, & Westle. (2018). *Methoden der Politikwissenschaft*. Nomos.

Normann, S. (2021). Green colonialism in the Nordic context: Exploring Southern Saami representations of wind energy development. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 49(1), 77–94. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22422>

NRK. (2023, March 3). *Fosen-aksjonen: Samenes kamp mot staten—Oppdatert—NRK Radio*. Retrieved 17 September 2025, from https://radio.nrk.no/podkast/oppdateret/sesong/202303/1_3b7de66b-4fa6-4309-bde6-6b4fa6330987

Nyhamar, J. (1990). *Nye utfordringer: (1965-1990)* (Vol. 6). Tiden.

Olsen, I. S. M. (2019). *Vindmøller på bekostning av samisk reindrift? Utgjør FNs internasjonale konvensjon om sivile og politiske rettigheter artikkel 27 noen forskjell?* [Master's thesis]. UiT Norges arktiske universitet.

Orning, H. J. (2025). Norges historie. In *Store norske leksikon*. https://snl.no/Norges_historie

Peters, Aaju. *TWICE COLONIZED*. (n.d.). *TWICE COLONIZED*. Retrieved 29 January 2026, from <https://www.twicecolonized.com>

Petroleum and Energy Department. (2022, June 24). *Fosen-saken—Svar på henvendelser fra Sametinget* [Brev]. regjeringen.no. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/fosen/id2920849/>

Porsanger, J. (2004). An essay about indigenous methodology. *Nordlit* 15, 105-120 <https://doi.org/10.7557/13.1910>

Powles, N. M. (2021). *Small Bodies of Water*. Canongate Books Ltd.

Ravna, Ø. (2020). The Duty to Consult the Sámi in Norwegian Law. *Arctic Review on Law and Politics*, 11, 233–255. <https://doi.org/10.23865/arctic.v11.2582>

Ravna, Ø. (2022). The Fosen Case and the Protection of Sámi Culture in Norway Pursuant to Article 27 ICCPR. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, 30(1), 156–175. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15718115-bja10085>

Sami Council. (2017). *Tråante Declaration*. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5dfb35a66f00d54ab0729b75/t/>

[5e722293aee185235a084d70/1584538266490/TRA%CC%8AANTE_DECLARATION_english.pdf](https://doi.org/10.3390/land12061241)

Sánchez Contreras, J., Matarán Ruiz, A., Campos-Celador, A., & Fjellheim, E. M. (2023). Energy Colonialism: A Category to Analyse the Corporate Energy Transition in the Global South and North. *Land*, 12(6), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land12061241>

Santos, B. de S. (2016). *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against epistemicide*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315634876>

Sara, Máret. (1982). The Sami Woman: Equality or Suppression. In *Charta 79: The Sami People & Human Rights* (22-26). SPIDER WEB.

Schackt, J., & Wæhle, E. (2021). Urfolk. In *Store norske leksikon*. <https://snl.no/urfolk>

Schweitzer, P. (2016). Der hohe Norden als Teil des globalen Südens? Koloniale und postkoloniale Entwicklungen in der Arktis und Subarktis vom 19. bis ins 21. Jahrhundert. In G. Saxinger, P. Schweitzer, & S. Donecker (Eds), *Arktis und Subarktis: Geschichte, Kultur, Gesellschaft* (46-66). nap - new academic press.

Sejersted, F. (2003). Nationalism in the epoch of organised capitalism – Norway and Sweden choosing different paths. In *Nation, State and the Economy in History* (1st edn, pp. 96–112). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511497575.006>

Semb, A. J. (2015). The Unforeseen Consequences of Ratification: Norway and ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. In R. Dunbar-Ortiz et al. (Eds.), *Indigenous peoples' rights in international law: Emergence and application :A book in honour of Asbjørn Eide at eighty* (350-369). Gáldu Cála.

Senel, E., Ballovara, M., Aslaksen, E. A., & Myrskog, L. M. (2023, February 23). *500 dager siden Fosen-dommen: Demonstrerer i departementet*. NRK. <https://www.nrk.no/sapmi/500-dager-siden-fosen-dommen-na-aksjonerer-ella-marie-haetta-isaksen-departementet-1.16307645>

Simonds, V. W., & Christopher, S. (2013). Adapting Western Research Methods to Indigenous Ways of Knowing. *American Journal of Public Health*, 103(12), 2185–2192. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2012.301157>

Skogvang, S. F. (2024). Fornorskingspolitikk. In *Store norske leksikon*. <https://snl.no/fornorskingspolitikk>

Smith, A. (2010). QUEER THEORY AND NATIVE STUDIES: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 16(1–2), 41–68. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2009-012>

Smith, L. T. (2021). *Decolonizing Methodologies*. Zed Books.

Solbakk, J. T. (1997). Sami Mass Media – Their Role in a Minority Society. In H. Gaski (Ed.), *Sami culture in a new era: The Norwegian Sami experience* (172-198). Davvi Girji.

Starblanket, G., & Green, J. (2024). Extending our Accounts of Indigenous Feminism. In G. Starblanket (Ed.), *Making space for Indigenous feminism* (Third edition.). Fernwood Publishing.

Statkraft (n.d.). *Fosen vind*. Retrieved 27 January 2026, from <https://www.statkraft.com/about-statkraft/where-we-operate/norway/fosen-vind/>

Stoltz, P. (2021). Co-optation and Feminisms in the Nordic Region: ‘Gender-friendly’ Welfare States, ‘Nordic exceptionalism’ and Intersectionality. In S. Keskinen, P. Stoltz, & D. Mulinari (Eds.), *Feminisms in the Nordic Region: Neoliberalism, Nationalism and Decolonial Critique* (23-44). Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53464-6>

Stranden, I. L. (2024, June 30). *Nordic Wind kartlegger for mer vindkraft i Sør-Fosen sijtes beiteområder på Fosen*. NRK. <https://www.nrk.no/trondelag/nordic-wind-kartlegger-for-mer-vindkraft-i-sor-fosen-sijtes-beiteomrader-pa-fosen-1.16924341>

Stranden, I. L. (2025, October 1). *Føler seg ikke hørt—Ny rapport om kraftlinje mellom Trøndelag og Møre og Romsdal*. NRK. <https://www.nrk.no/trondelag/foeler-seg-ikke-hort---ny-rapport-om-kraftlinje-mellom-trondelag-og-more-og-romsdal-1.17567224>

Styres, S. (2019). Literacies of Land: Decolonizing Narratives, Storying, and Literature. In L. T. Smith, E. Tuck, & K. W. Yang (Eds.), *Indigenous and decolonizing studies in education: Mapping the long view* (24-37). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429505010>

Svendsen, S. H. B. (2021). Saami Women at the Threshold of Disappearance: Elsa Laula Renberg (1877-1931) and Karin Stenberg’s (1884-1969) Challenges to Nordic Feminism. In S. Keskinen, P. Stoltz, & D. Mulinari (Eds.), *Feminisms in the Nordic Region: Neoliberalism, Nationalism and Decolonial Critique* (155-176). Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53464-6>

Taylor, D. (2003). *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822385318>

Thambinathan, V., & Kinsella, E. A. (2021). Decolonizing Methodologies in Qualitative Research: Creating Spaces for Transformative Praxis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 20, 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211014766>

The Arctic Circle. (2018). *Arctic-Global Indigenous Dialogue on Indigenous Guardianship and Self-Governance* [Video recording]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dpbh4ED_NPA

The Indigenous World 2025: Sápmi—IWGIA - International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs. (n.d.). Retrieved 19 July 2025, from <https://iwgia.org/en/sapmi/5650-iw-2025-s%C3%A1pmi.html?highlight=WjZyYW1pIl0=>

Thompson, M. D. (2015). DOCUMENT ANALYSIS, ORAL HISTORY, AND HISTORICAL METHODS. In F. K. Stage, & K. Manning (Eds.), *Research in the College Context Approaches and Methods*. (128-140). Routledge.

- Thuesen, N. P., Thorsnæs, G., & Røvik, S. (2026). Norge. In *Store norske leksikon*. <https://snl.no/Norge>
- Tømmerbakke, S. G. (2019). Sametingspresidenten i strupen på «kjempesatsinger» i nord: - Beklager å være en festbrems. High North News. Retrieved from <https://www.highnorthnews.com/nb/sametingspresidenten-i-strupen-pa-kjempesatsinger-i-nord-beklager-vaere-en-festbrems>
- Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). *Decolonization is not a metaphor. Tabula rasa (Bogotá, Colombia)*, 38, 61–111. <https://doi.org/10.25058/20112742.n38.04>
- Undheim, I., & Molde, E. (2023, February 28). Alta-demonstrant Anders Heger om Fosen-aksjonen: – Som å bli kasta tilbake i tid. NRK. <https://www.nrk.no/norge/alta-demonstrant-anders-heger-om-fosen-aksjonen - -som-a-bli-kasta-tilbake-i-tid-1.16316355>
- United Nations. (2018). *Consultation and free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)*. OH-CHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/indigenous-peoples/consultation-and-free-prior-and-informed-consent-fpic>
- United Nations. (2025, March 18). Country engagement mission to Norway: Technical Advisory Note of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/indigenouspeoples/emrip/countryengagement/EMRIP-Norway-country-engagement-Advisory-note-19-03-2025.pdf>
- Vaivade, A. (2025). Claiming Indigeneity in Europe: Livonian activism for language protection. *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 56(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2024.2339875>
- Venne, S. (2015). Old Woman Bear sitting next to the Creator: A Short Story of Decolonization Efforts. In R. Dunbar-Ortiz et al. (Eds.), *Indigenous peoples' rights in international law: Emergence and application: A book in honour of Asbjørn Eide at eighty* (28-37). Gáldu Cála.
- Vik, H. H., Semb, A. J., & Pharo H. (2014, March). Muntlig historie intervju med Ole Henrik Magga 6 november 2013. Forum for Samtidshistorier intervjuprosjekt, Institutt for arkeologi, konservering og historie, Universitetet i Oslo.
- Virtanen, P. K., Keskitalo, P., & Olsen, T. *Indigenous Research Methodologies in Sámi and Global Contexts*. (2021). Brill. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctv1v7zbk4>
- Wilhelms, H., Hykkerud, E., & Grønnli, A. A. B. (2026, January 24). Storaksjon ved Nussir-gruve – aksjonister har tatt seg inn på anleggsområdet. NRK. <https://www.nrk.no/tromsogfinnmark/storaksjon-ved-nussir-gruve- -aksjonister-har-tatt-seg-inn-pa-anleggsområdet-1.17741225>
- World Population Review. (2026, January 19). *Suicide Rate by Country 2026*. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/suicide-rate-by-country>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research: Design and methods*. SAGE.

11. Appendix

11.1. Abstract (English)

In this thesis, the land rights conflict between the Norwegian state and the Sámi is discussed from a theoretical Indigenous (Sámi) and (neoliberal) capitalist-critical feminist perspective by doing a case study of the two most prominent conflicts: the Máze/Áltá (Masi/Alta) conflict revolving around the building of a hydroelectric power station in the 1970s and 80s and the Fovsen (Fosen) conflict concerning the construction of a windpark in the 2010s. The comparison is based on a document analysis and shows that a fundamental difference in the conception of land exists between the Sámi and the Norwegian state and that colonial structures are closely entwined with heteropatriarchal and (neoliberal) capitalist ones that persist until today. The opposition to the energy projects which were constructed without free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) embody central theories and practices of Indigenous and Sámi feminisms in its emphasis on maintaining and (re-)establishing non-hierarchical, reciprocal and sustainable relationships not only with human but also non-human bodies such as the land.

11.2. Abstract (Deutsch)

In der vorliegenden Masterarbeit wird der Landkonflikt zwischen dem norwegischen Staat und der indigenen Bevölkerung des Landes, den Sámi, aus feministischer Perspektive anhand einer Fallstudie mit Fokus auf zwei Konflikte analysiert. Der Bau des Wasserkraftwerks am Áltá/Guovdageidnu (Alta/Kautokeino) Fluss in den 1970er und 80er Jahren wird mit der widerrechtlichen Konstruktion des Windparks auf Fovsen (Fosen) in den 2010er Jahren verglichen. Dieser Vergleich zeigt, basierend auf einer Dokumentenanalyse, dass ein grundlegend unterschiedliches Landverständnis zwischen den Sámi und dem norwegischen Staat vorliegt und ausbeuterische Kolonialstrukturen eng mit heteropatriarchalen und (neoliberal) kapitalistischen verwoben sind, die bis heute vorherrschen. Der Widerstand gegen die Energieprojekte, die ohne Zustimmung („free, prior and informed consent“) errichtet wurden, verkörpert zentrale Theorien und Praktiken indigener und sami-scher Feminismen in der Hervorhebung und Verkörperung von nicht-hierarchischen, reziproken und nachhaltigen Beziehungen, die auch ‚nicht-menschliche‘ Körper wie das Land beinhalten.