Research Article

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Skolt Sami Reindeer Ownership: Structural Changes as the Triggers of a New Era

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Abstract: This article combines views of economic and legal anthropology in its exploration of Skolt Sami reindeer ownership. The Skolt Sami culture and its key form of livelihood, reindeer herding, have adjusted to the modern industrial society fairly well so far, but it is getting more obvious that the aims and practices of a modern industrial economy endanger the continuity of Skolt Sami reindeer ownership. This article presents accounts of Skolt Sami reindeer ownership in different time points, which indicates that we are witnessing a historical turning point in Skolt Sami culture. The centralization of reindeer ownership changes Skolt Sami culture in many ways, for example, by shrinking the traditional way of combining different forms of livelihood as a means of survival. The vulnerability of Skolt Sami reindeer herding has increased as a result of the changes. Therefore, this article develops questions and reasoning that could make it possible to increase the protection of Skolt Sami reindeer ownership. Anthropological researchers have stressed the importance of the social cultural whole of the community next to the economic features of culture. The emphasis on cultural continuity places sustainability before profitability in economic aims of reindeer husbandry.

Keywords: Sami, reindeer herding; Arctic; Economic anthropology; Legal anthropology

1 Introduction

Reindeer ownership is an essential element of the Skolt Sami culture in northern Finland, but the Skolt Sami reindeer herders cannot take it for granted in today's competitive conditions. One possible threat is that they would lose

their reindeer to representatives of other ethnic groups, like to the majority population, the Finns.

In Sweden and Norway, the majority population does not present this kind of threat, because only the Sami are allowed to own reindeer in these countries. In Finland, also other inhabitants of the Reindeer Herding District have the right to reindeer ownership, next to the Sami. Historical reasons are behind this arrangement, as Finns have owned reindeer for a long time especially in central and southern parts of the Reindeer Herding District.

This article explores reasoning and possibilities for increasing the protection of Skolt Sami reindeer ownership. Such an increase could support the continuity of Skolt Sami culture, because it would add security to its traditional form of livelihood. Reindeer herding is clearly the most common form of entrepreneurship among the Skolt Sami (Itkonen 2018: 20).

The theoretical approach of this article relies firstly on economic anthropology, which, among other things, puts into perspective the mainstream economic formulations of the state policy of reindeer husbandry. Secondly, legal anthropology, with the emphasis on social and cultural sustainability, helps to analyze reindeer ownership in its context.

In anthropological studies of local traditional communities, the formal economic model has in many cases given room to a more "substantivist" approach that stresses the meaning of social relations and natural environment (for ex. Polanyi 1968: 122–123). Studies of indigenous peoples have shown fusions of economic and social institutions, where social obligations rely on social ties and social situations (Dalton 1968: 165), and kinship relations play important parts (Firth 1968: 79). Social relations, including kinship relations, form central elements in the Skolt Sami culture and in the reindeer herding community of Sevettijärvi. In the community, skills and knowledge transfer from one generation to another.

Karl Polanyi has looked at the institutional side of economic processes (Polanyi 1968: 148), i.e. how the local community depends on unity and stability and how economy is embedded in social relations and cultural features. An indigenous economy is based on exchange

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relations, such as reciprocity, redistribution, and market exchange.

The modern economic aim of maximal profits is misleading in traditional communities where reciprocity relations between people are important. Substantivist rationality relies on the construction of culture rather than the maximization of benefits. Culture offers means of survival for its members. Besides balanced social and cultural relations, people have to find balance in their relation to nature. In conditions where natural resources are limited, maximal profits are not the first thing in mind. It is sufficient to get by. In modern circumstances, traditional communities can combine modern economic features and traditional economic forms, like reciprocity (Sahlins 2004: 81–94, 97).

Some representatives of economic anthropology have claimed that we should recognize the current actual life of indigenous people instead of talking about a historical world that does not exist anymore (Clammer 1987: 5). In any case, the culture of the Sevetijärvi Skolt Sami reindeer herding community is a combination of traditional features, for instance various forms of reciprocity, and modern factors, like snowmobiles (Itkonen 2012: 264–265).

The current economic dilemma of reindeer husbandry deals with the confrontation between its two different dimensions. Firstly, the reindeer economy is part of an overall economic system that can be characterized by such words as mainstream, global, international, capitalist, industrial, anonymity, and profitability. This kind of state driven economic system has modified reindeer economy in many ways. Secondly, the reindeer economy is part of a local economic system where it matters who the actors are and how they can secure continuity in their livelihood. In the case of the Skolt Sami, the local social level consists for example of kinship relations and of the cultural dimension, for example forms of collaboration. (Itkonen 2012: 201–204)

This article questions the role of profitability as the main objective of reindeer husbandry in Finland. In the everyday reality of reindeer herders, continuity of the livelihood is more important than the strive for maximal profits. This article claims that this large-scale official economic approach, based mainly on numbers, may threaten people and their culture.

The economic system of reindeer husbandry of today relies on corresponding legal arrangements. If we want to take a novel look at the economy of reindeer husbandry, we should re-examine some of its regulations as well. The stress on social and cultural dimensions of reindeer husbandry leads to the notion that it makes a difference who practices reindeer husbandry and how. Therefore, we can

ask: Could social and cultural reasoning be implanted into legislation or its guidelines in a stronger way than today? This article intends to develop this question further so that answering it becomes easier.

Here we come across the key confrontation, where the possible preference of Sami peoples' rights in their home grounds meet requirements for equal rights between all citizens. The same dilemma is central in the general discussion about Sami peoples' rights to land and natural resources, which involve also other traditional nature linked forms of livelihood, such as fishing, hunting, and gathering.

Anthropology of Law has been concerned about the cultural significance of law, linking legal conceptions with cultural structures. The power of law can transform sociocultural systems (Merry 2000: 17). Colonialism, i.e. Euro-American expansion, into the home grounds of indigenous peoples often led to the taking of land, water, minerals, and labor (Mattei and Nader 2008: 2). As part of the industrialization process, the distribution of resources usually favors strong individuals in society (Mattei and Nader 2008: 196).

Éva Jakab (2015: 111–114, 118) has questioned our understanding of ownership as an absolute, exclusive, and unbounded individual right, which would have had its roots in classical Roman law. According to Jakab, “property is a social fact”, and contents of property rights can change under the influence of social, political, and economic factors. Laws of rural properties are influenced by social and economic changes.

Anthropologists have studied ownership rights in various circumstances. Paul Bohannan (1970: 31) has shown how land ownership has been shared within agricultural family groups among the Tiv in Nigeria, Africa, and how rights have come with corresponding obligations. For example, as part of rights to specific land, a woman has owned and controlled most of the products, which she has grown on the farmland, but she also has had a duty to feed her husband and children with these products. Besides, her husband and the head of the village (compound) have had rights to the farming land as well. The husband has made the farm for her wife. The village head has made final decisions about farmland sizes. In addition, each adult village inhabitant has had rights to sufficient land in order to survive. The Tiv rights to specific land and sufficient land have been protected by ritual and mystical sanctions. A curse could have been placed on someone who had violated land rights.

The Skolt Sami had a somewhat similar relation to land in their old living grounds, for example, in the old *Suenjel sijd* (village). According to Tanner (1929: 338–340)

the Skolt Sami peoples *sijd* consisted of two elements: *sijd* land and *sijd* people. Land and nature were the fundamental elements of the *sijd*. They determined the continuity of the *sijd* by carrying its population over the decades and generations. Moreover, the environmental conditions were prerequisites for Skolt Sami social organization and forms of livelihood.

In the Suenjel *sijd*, each family had their own family areas where they practiced their traditional nature bound forms of livelihood: reindeer herding, fishing, hunting, gathering, and sheep husbandry. Within families, men and women had their own obligations. The village meeting (*sobbbar*), led by the head of the village, made final decisions about the sizes of family areas. The areas had to be sufficient for people's needs. The village meeting also gave sanctions, if someone acted against its decisions (Nickul 1948, Tanner 2000). The Skolt Sami exclusive land rights in the Suenjel *sijd* area were protected by the state of Finland between the First and the Second World War, and before that by the state of Russia. The other two Skolt Sami *sijds* of the Petsamo area had to adjust more to competing land use interest of other ethnic groups.

These examples show how the rights to land and natural resources have formed the basis of indigenous cultures through times. Combining features are the following: (a) shared right within households to use or own land, (b) sufficient areas for families' needs, (c) sizes of areas determined by village authority, and (d) protection of land rights. Similar factors are still relevant in the lives of Skolt Sami reindeer herders, but in today's context, they have taken modern formulations.

As consequences of the modernization process, the rights and duties have altered considerably among indigenous peoples, including the Skolt Sami. Today, the Sami people's rights to land and water still form the basis of Sami culture in northern Europe (Allard 2011: 1). Reindeer herding plays a central part in Skolt Sami rights to the natural environment. The state owns most of the lands and waters in the area and through ownership of reindeer, a considerable part of the Skolt Sami can practice their right to use the land. The reindeer have the right to roam free on the lands in the Reindeer Herding District of Finland. This article explores how the old types of indigenous land rights come through in today's conditions of the Skolt Sami in Finland.

Several times in the past, state borders created new splits between the Skolt Sami. As the states began to spread their power to the northern most parts of Europe, the Skolt Sami came under Russian rule five hundred years ago. The Orthodox religion has belonged to the Skolt Sami culture ever since. When the Norwegian influence as part

of Denmark had spread towards the east, along Barents Sea coast, Denmark-Norway ruled parts of Skolt Sami home grounds at the shores of the Barents Sea, together with Russia. After the time of shared rule, western parts of Skolt Sami home grounds, core areas of *Neiden sijd* (Skolt Sami village) and northern parts of *Paacjok sijd* became part of Denmark-Norway. Later on, in the 19th century, the boarder was closed between Norway and Finland (then part of Russia), and the boarder split the Neiden *sijd* into two parts. After the First World War, in the Tarto Treaty of 1920, the areas of the three Skolt Sami *sijds*, *Paacjok*, *Peaccam*, and *Suenjel*, were attached to the independent state of Finland. As a result of the Second World War, the areas of these three *sijds* became part of Soviet Union, and most of their Skolt Sami inhabitants migrated to Finland. Today the strongest community of Skolt Sami exists in Finland. In Russia and Norway, the Skolt Sami are more assimilated into the majority society (Linkola and Linkola 2000: 2–6, 9, 17). During the last six decades, the mechanization of reindeer herding, and the structural state policies of reindeer herding have promoted new splits between Skolt Sami people in Finland, based on reindeer ownership (Itkonen 2012: 31–34).

As an introduction to its main themes, this article presents an overview of Skolt Sami history including Skolt Sami adaptation to the current system of reindeer husbandry in Finland.

2 Subjects, materials, and methods

This article is not based on one specific research project. Therefore, it does not rely on detailed methodological design. The article's empirical material comes partly from recent anthropological research projects (Itkonen 2012 and 2018) among the Skolt Sami people in Inari municipality Lapland Finland. Part of the material comes from other earlier studies (for example Nickul 1948, Pelto 1962 and 1973) and official statistics.

The recent anthropological research projects (Itkonen 2012 and 2018) utilized anthropological methodology, including participant observation in addition to qualitative and quantitative methods, such as thematic interviews and surveys (see Bernard 1994). The overall comprehension of the culture has helped to interpret the answers in these projects.

The anthropological study of the Skolt Sami reindeer herding community of Sevetijärvi Inari municipality (Itkonen 2012) explores patterns of collaboration and reciprocity in relation to actions of the state administration.

One of its main objectives was to analyze how the centralization of reindeer ownership connected to changes in forms of collaboration and reciprocity. One result of the study was the notion that balanced reciprocity relations, based on equality, between separate households were declining in work groups of some work situations of reindeer herding, whereas work groups based on single households and authoritarian structures were becoming more common.

The recent anthropological research project (Itkonen 2018) explored Skolt Sami forms of livelihood, especially the traditional ones, and their relation to nature and natural resources in the Skolt Sami Area in Inari municipality. Reindeer herding was an important part of the study, and the ownership of reindeer formed a portion of it. This study shows that the Skolt Sami reindeer herders have adjusted fairly well to requirements of an industrial economy, even though this has reduced multiplicity in their additional forms of livelihood.

The article at hand does not go through research problems of these recent anthropological research projects (Itkonen 2012 and 2018), and it does not present their research results as such. Instead, the article uses certain parts of the results of these projects in order to serve objectives of this article. This means that research materials are interpreted in the context of this article. Other materials, such materials as written documents based on earlier studies of other researchers, were used the same way. Several anthropologist and other academic researchers have produced data that serve aims of this article.

The article focuses on reindeer ownership of the Skolt Sami reindeer herding community that consists of two reindeer herding cooperatives, Näätämö and Vätsäri, located in Sevetijärvi area Inari municipality Northern Finland. Both these reindeer herding cooperatives have borders with Norway on their northern sides and also on the eastern side for Vätsäri.

Näätämö and Vätsäri reindeer herding cooperatives lie side by side. The area is altogether around 65 kilometers long and 50 kilometers wide. It is a combination of high lands with no trees or swamps, and forests, mainly of pines and birch, in lower lands. Numerous lakes throughout the area are hindering movements of reindeer. Unpredictable weather conditions can be challenging for reindeer. If, for example, the snow melts in winter because of occasional warm weather conditions and freezes over again, the snow gets an icy cover and makes it harder for reindeer to dig nutrition from the ground. The number of active reindeer herders was round 32 in the Sevetijärvi Skolt Sami Reindeer herding community in 2016, and the

number of all reindeer owners was round double that number. (Itkonen 2012: 6–7, 161; Itkonen 2018: 33)

Beside these two reindeer herding cooperatives, Näätämö and Vätsäri, there are some remarkable Skolt Sami reindeer herders also in other reindeer herding cooperatives of Inari municipality, but their reindeer ownership is not analyzed here. Nevertheless, they too can be seen as representatives of Skolt Sami reindeer herding on the basis of their roots.

3 History of Skolt Sami reindeer herding

The original home grounds of the Skolt Sami were located in northern Europe in areas of three present countries: Russia, Finland, and Norway. The Skolt Sami lived in village areas called *sijds*. There were seven *sijds*: *Njauddam*, *Paaccjok*, *Peäccam*, *Suenjel*, *Muotke*, *Nuetjaur*, and *Saarves*. In the 16th century the Skolt Sami paid taxes as products of reindeer herding, fishing, and hunting.

Figure 1: Location of the two contemporary Skolt Sami reindeer herding cooperatives, Näätämö and Vätsäri, in the Sevetijärvi area, in the Reindeer Herding District of Finland. The original living grounds of the Skolt Sami were located for the most part in areas that belong today to Russia and for minor parts to areas of today's Norway and Finland.

Between World War I and World War II, 1920–1944, three of the Skolt Sami sijd areas were part of the Petsamo area of the state of Finland, namely *Paaccjok*, *Peäccam*, and *Suenjel*. The state of Finland protected the traditional Skolt Sami culture in *Suenjel*, whereas the other two sijds had to adjust to the arrival of Finnish settlements and industry, especially mining and fisheries (Linkola and Linkola 2000: 6,9, 10–11, Tanner 2000: 66–67, 70, Itkonen 1948, 121, Nickul 1935: 10, Mikkola 1941).

The old form of Sami reindeer herding has been called “traditional pastoralism” (Ingold 1976: 17). In the case of the Skolt Sami, the old lifestyle was semi pastoralism, where families moved from one dwelling place to another according to their yearly cycle and they had a close relationship to their reindeer (Nickul 1948, Sverloff 2003).

Before Second World War, the Skolt Sami culture was “natural” in the sense that it depended mainly on natural resources. Machines were not used much, and people were largely self-sufficient. Men built houses, boats and other tools and the women made clothes. Food came from reindeer, fish and other surrounding natural resources. Towards the end of the natural period, the Skolt Sami developed commercial contacts to neighboring populations, Russians, Norwegians, Finns, and Sami. They could sell reindeer carcasses and sizes of their family herds could grow. The ownership of reindeer was at this point somewhat uneven among households and individuals in *Suenjel* sijd, but all households still had reindeer. The combinations of livelihood were symmetrical in the *Suenjel* community, i.e. all households practiced similar nature bound forms of livelihood. (Nickul 1948, Peltö 1962: 25).

In the “Braking period” (Itkonen 2012: 29–31) after the Second World War, the Skolt Sami experienced fundamental changes. As result of the war, Finland lost the Petsamo area to the Soviet Union, and the Skolt Sami of the three Petsamo sijds migrated into Finland. They got new home grounds in the eastern parts of Inari municipality. Most of the people from *Suenjel* Sijd moved to *Sevettijärvi* area on the northern side of Lake Inari, and most inhabitants of *Paaccjok* and *Peäccam* to the southern side of Lake Inari. In the southern side of Lake Inari, reindeer herding became important for part of the Skolt Sami households but not for all (Linkola and Linkola 2000: 17–18, Sverloff 1953: 13–14). Today, there is still remarkable Skolt Sami reindeer ownership in the southern side of Lake Inari, but this article focuses on reindeer ownership relations and continuities among the Skolt Sami of *Sevettijärvi* who have their family roots mainly in *Suenjel*.

In *Sevettijärvi*, all Skolt Sami households got reindeer as the settlement was founded in 1949. *Sevettijärvi*

resettlement was placed partly on the old territory of the *Njauddam* sijd. The state of Finland donated altogether 550 reindeer to the Skolt Sami of *Sevettijärvi* (Sipilä 1988: 10,12, 13–17). A special law, the Skolt Act (1955), was established to support Skolt Sami culture in the Skolt Sami Area, i.e. on their new home grounds in Inari. This law has supported the development of Skolt Sami reindeer husbandry ever since, for example, through state subsidies to investments of reindeer husbandry and through subsidies to house constructions of reindeer herders.

Anthropologist Pertti J. Peltö begun his studies in the 1950s among the Skolt Sami of *Sevettijärvi*. He described the meaning of reindeer herding as follows. “*As already noted, reindeer herding has been increasing in importance among the Skolts during the past one hundred years, until it now occupies first place in the subsistence economy. Besides being the chief source of income for the Sevettijärvi people, the reindeer is a focus of Skolt emotional values, particularly for the men.*” (Peltö 1962: 32)

In Inari, the Skolt Sami reindeer herders became part of the reindeer herding cooperatives where Inari Sami, Northern Sami, and Finns had strong positions. The Skolt Sami proved their skills and potential in reindeer herding in these competitive circumstances. Later, they formed two reindeer herding cooperatives, *Näätämö* (Peltö 1973: 126) and *Vätsäri*, where they themselves have held central positions.

In their new home grounds, in the *Sevettijärvi* area, the Skolt Sami tried to keep some of their old forms of reindeer herding, like strap calving, in which reindeer cows were roped to trees, and traditional herding groups, where separate households could combine their forces (Peltö 1962: 33–43, 169, Sverloff 2003: 2). According to Peltö, the *Sevettijärvi* reindeer herders still had an intensive relationship with their reindeer in the 1950s, before the time of snowmobiles, as a kind of reminder of the old times: “*Reindeer are much talked about in conversations, many of the reindeer are named, ideally an individual knows all his reindeer by their appearance, and reindeer are the most frequent form of gift.*” (Peltö 1962: 32)

Yet, the Skolt Sami reindeer herding was influenced by the overall transformations of reindeer herding habits, for example by the snowmobile revolution in mid-1960s (Peltö 1973), building of reindeer fences, use of helicopters, the state’s policy advancing the centralization of reindeer ownership from 1995 on, increasing use of all-terrain vehicles. Despite these cultural novelties, traditional winter herding groups have kept their position and form still an important feature of Skolt Sami reindeer herding. In the early stages of the 21st century, the Skolt Sami reindeer herders still talked about their reindeer but now less

than 50 years before, because snowmobiles were also a common subject of discussions (Itkonen 2012: 148).

4 Recent developments of reindeer husbandry

As Finland became a member of the European Union in 1995, new formulations crept into the state policy of reindeer husbandry. This policy has since aimed at improving profitability in reindeer husbandry, using the centralization of reindeer ownership as its main method for achieving this aim. A minimum of 80 individually owned reindeer became the prerequisite for state subsidies of reindeer husbandry. The ones who owned less reindeer than 80 were left without state subsidies. The maximum number of individually owned reindeer is 500 (Työryhmämuistio 1999: 23-24, 74-75, 93). Among the Skolt Sami reindeer herders in 2002, 85% considered the minimum requirement of 80 reindeer for state subsidies too high and 70% held the highest number of individually owned reindeer, 500 (Itkonen 2012: 214-215). These critical views can be seen as objections of the policy of centralization.

In 2002, reindeer herders still practiced round 20 remarkable additional forms of livelihood, such as meat manufacturing, restaurant services, tourist housing, forestry, hay growing, and carpentry in the Sevetijärvi area (Itkonen 2012: 85-101). These were practiced after commercial reindeer husbandry and other traditional forms of livelihood, such as fishing, hunting, and gathering, to directly address needs of their own households. However, since 2002, the centralization of reindeer ownership and the diminishing number of reindeer herders has been notable in Sevetijärvi. The meaning of the concept “specialization” grew in characterizations of reindeer husbandry, whereas combinations of livelihood, including the old additional forms of livelihood, started to decline rapidly among reindeer herders. Today, the young reindeer herders usually aim at full time reindeer herding without considerable additional income sources.

When we apply principles of absolute economic advantage (see Wonnacot 1990: 41-42) to reindeer husbandry, we notice that reindeer ownership brings this kind of economic advantage to reindeer herders in their own local meat manufacturing processes, i.e. their additional forms of livelihood, through securing the originality and availability of reindeer meat. In the refining process, the value of reindeer meat can be tripled (see Kemppainen et al. 2003: 16). Availability of reindeer meat is in the same way central for local restaurant businesses. The making of

handicrafts can benefit from reindeer ownership though the availability of raw materials. For tourist services, reindeer ownership can bring several advantages, such as using reindeer as draught animals and as examples in presentations of Skolt Sami reindeer herders' lifestyle. In addition, reindeer herders' additional forms of livelihood can help them in years when weather conditions cause exceptional difficulties for reindeer.

Today's fulltime reindeer herding lacks multiplicity of livelihood forms as a security structure (Itkonen 2018: 21-23), which increases vulnerability in reindeer herding, whereas multiple forms of livelihood and various combinations of livelihood would strengthen the Skolt Sami culture economically, and they would decrease economic vulnerability among the Skolt Sami reindeer herders (see also Soppela and Turunen 2017: 77).

Yet, the meaning of reindeer ownership as a constituent of Skolt Sami culture has not diminished but quite the opposite, its importance has increased. For example, in Sevetijärvi the overall number of Skolt Sami had decreased, but the 57 reindeer owners of 2017 (Poromies 2/2018: 40) still formed a considerable part of the Skolt Sami community, round 1/3 of the Skolt Sami of Sevetijärvi, and in southern parts of the Skolt Sami area, Skolt Sami reindeer ownership played an important part too, by being a central source of income in some households, where Skolt Sami roots were significant (Itkonen 2018: 27).

The active reindeer herders have been the ones that have stayed in their home grounds even when some others have decided to leave. Reindeer herding is the most important form of livelihood of the Skolt Sami. It forms the lifestyle and identity for many of them (Itkonen 2018: 26-28). Therefore, the ownership of reindeer is crucial for the survival of Skolt Sami culture. This calls for thinking about possibilities to protect Skolt Sami reindeer ownership.

In Finland, besides the Sami people, there are also other inhabitants of the Reindeer Herding District who can own reindeer. The Finns own most of the reindeer in central and southern parts of the district, whereas in its northern parts, the Sami, including the Skolt Sami, own most reindeer. From the Sami point of view, there is a threat that the portion of Finnish reindeer owners will increase in northern parts of the Reindeer Herding District, i.e. in the Sami District.

The diminishing number of reindeer herders makes the herders more dependent on machinery: snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, and helicopters. The growing usage of these machines increases the burden on nature, i.e. reduces environmental sustainability.

On the other hand, some new technical solutions open the way to another direction. The use of satellite

tracking based on collars round the necks of reindeer and the use of drones (small remote-controlled helicopters) are developing in relation to reindeer herding, and they can partly replace the use of older and bigger machinery in searching for and locating reindeer. This, in turn, can be good news for nature.

5 Changing reindeer ownership

The state policy for reindeer husbandry has aimed mainly at economic profitability, using centralization of reindeer ownership as its main method. The leading role of profitability is part of an industrial economic approach, favoring large unit sizes and specialization, and it has been the main force behind many official development attempts in rural areas (Scott 1998: 31–32). Next to the industrial model, based on mass consumption and centralization of markets, there have at times emerged approaches that have, in addition to monotonous and large-scale industrial interests of the agricultural economy, paid attention to local level self-sufficiency and diversity (for ex. Vihinen 1990: 15). Nevertheless, this orientation towards economic multiplicity has often remained marginal in conditions that favor large scale and only one kind of expertise per individual.

Continuity (i.e. sustainability) is the key element of the economy of Skolt Sami reindeer herders. In the United Nation's *UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (UN 2015:1), key dimensions of sustainability are combined: economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, and social sustainability. Anthropological theory connects different dimensions of sustainability as well and stresses such concepts as “constraints” and “diversity” (Brightman and Lewis 2017:1-2).

In the kind of social cultural economy that gets promoted here, the anonymous principle of profitability has lost its leading position. Now culture is in a leading position instead and determines how its parts, with economy and profitability as constituents, serve requirements of the social cultural whole and nature. In this model, it matters who the actors are and how they advance social and cultural continuity and sustainable use of natural resources.

Skolt Sami reindeer ownership should connect to sustainability, for example to cultural sustainability and continuity, where economic sustainability belongs, including profitability. In this case, profitability should serve continuity instead of maximal profits. Reasonability is a value (Itkonen 2018: 133-134) that can set limits to profitability. This in turn can advance social cohesion. The drive for

maximal profits would enhance competition between reindeer herders.

On the original home grounds of the Skolt Sami, in the old Suenjel sijd in 1938, just before the Second World War, the Skolt Sami had a total of 3923 reindeer. There were 210 people, who were divided into 43 households. The number of listed reindeer owners was 47. That made an average of 91 reindeer per household, and 38 people with less than 80 reindeer. The rest of the reindeer owners had more than 80 reindeer. All households had reindeer and similar combinations of livelihood: reindeer herding, fishing, hunting, and gathering. Sheep husbandry was common too (Nickul 1948: 21–22, 61–62, Sverloff 2003).

In 1958, on the new home grounds of the Sevetijärvi area, the Skolt Sami, with origins mostly of the Suenjel sijd, formed 48 households altogether, with 307 people, including 66 reindeer owners, of whom 53 had less than 80 reindeer and 13 had 80–224 reindeer. The overall number of Skolt Sami owned reindeer was 3115. The average number of reindeer per household was 65. These numbers mean that all Skolt Sami households of Sevetijärvi area still had reindeer in 1958. Many households of reindeer herders gained additional seasonal incomes from fishing, hunting, or berry gathering, and part of the representatives of these households had begun to participate in practices of modern forms of livelihood. Next to the Skolt Sami reindeer herding households, there were 15 households of other people, Finns and other Sami, who practiced reindeer herding (Pelto 1962: 225-234). The Skolt Sami competed with representatives of other groups in reindeer herding.

The Snowmobile revolution round 1965 completely reformed figures of reindeer ownership. Nearly half of the Sevetijärvi Skolt Sami reindeer herders had to drop out of reindeer herding because of increased costs. The competition strengthened between reindeer owners, and the differences grew in numbers of individually owned reindeer. Uneven distribution of reindeer ownership was one result of the snowmobile revolution (Pelto 1973: 69–126). Competition intensified among Skolt Sami reindeer herders.

In 2002 there were 5948 reindeer living in the Sevetijärvi area (Poromies 2003). There were around 220 Skolt Sami in the area (Feodoroff 2002: 2). There were 43 active reindeer herding households of which 41 were Skolt Sami. In the statistics, the overall number of reindeer owners was nearly twice this number of active reindeer herders but nearly half of the owners were marginal without active roles. Of the Skolt Sami reindeer herding households 18 had less than 80 reindeer and 23 had more than 79 reindeer in 2002 (Itkonen 2012: 186, Itkonen 2018: 33). The average number of reindeer per active household was

round 135. The local community of Sevettijärvi Skolt Sami was divided into owners and non-owners of reindeer, and the reindeer herding community was divided into receivers (with more than 79 reindeer) and non-receives (with less than 80 reindeer) of subsidies (Itkonen 2017: 85).

Surprisingly, the numbers from 2002 have some similarities with those of Suenjel in 1938, like the overall number of local Skolt Sami 220 (of 2002) – 210 (of 1938), and the number of active households of Skolt Sami reindeer herders 41 (of 2002) – 43 (of 1938). However, some fundamental differences occurred as well. In 1938 all Skolt Sami people were connected to reindeer through their households, but in 2002 only a little more than 1/4 of the Sevettijärvi Skolt Sami had a strong connection to reindeer herding and the rest relied on other income sources. In 1938 all households practiced similar nature linked traditional livelihood forms, but in 2002, the active reindeer herding households had great variety in their combinations of livelihood, where altogether 20 modern additional forms of livelihood were represented. The size of the Sevettijärvi area was round 30% smaller than the Suenjel sijd area, but the Sevettijärvi overall number of reindeer exceeded the Suenjel number by 2000 reindeer, which tells about increased effectiveness in livelihood practices.

The centralization of reindeer ownership has continued in the Skolt Sami reindeer herding community. In 2016, the number of active reindeer herders was round 32, mainly Skolt Sami, in the Sevettijärvi area, i.e. those who took part in reindeer separations, where the reindeer which were to be slaughtered were separated from the ones that were allowed to live. The statistical average number of owned reindeer was round 190 in the active Skolt Sami reindeer herding households of Sevettijärvi, and in the community there was still a considerable portion of small reindeer owners (with less than 80 reindeer), who went

on with their traditional form of livelihood. Until 2016, round 25% of reindeer herders' modern additional forms of livelihood had finished since 2002 (Itkonen 2018: 22, 33, Poromies 2017).

Reindeer ownership is securing cultural continuity among the Skolt Sami. Most of the reindeer have remained in the hands of Skolt Sami in the Sevettijärvi area. The number of reindeer herders has declined, but the number of other Skolt Sami people have declined at least at the same pace in Sevettijärvi so that the meaning of reindeer herders has actually increased in the local Skolt Sami community of Sevettijärvi, and thereby the meaning of reindeer ownership for the future of Skolt Sami is even more crucial than before.

In the industrial revolution, the traditional kinship-based mode of production has met the capitalist form of production (Wolf 1982: 76, 91). This means that even today entrepreneurship can be embedded in social relations. This is still very much true in Skolt Sami reindeer husbandry, where social relations determine ownership relations for a great extent. In the industrialization process, capital has taken command of social labor (Wolf 1982: 21). In the Sevettijärvi reindeer herding community, this has meant, among other things, that the Skolt Sami reindeer owners have at times needed helping hands from outside because the traditional work community has diminished.

6 Regulations and the continuity of culture

Reindeer are officially owned by individuals, but they even now serve mostly needs of whole households and

Table 1: The division of Skolt Sami reindeer ownership in different times, first in Suenjel sijd and then in Sevettijärvi area (sources: Nickul 1948, Pelto 1962, Poromies 2003, Sverloff 2003, Itkonen 2012, Itkonen 2018).

time, place and total number of reindeer	80 or more reindeer	less than 80 reindeer	the total number of Skolt Sami reindeer owners or/and the number of households of reindeer owners
1938 Suenjel sijd 3923 reindeer	9 people	38 people	47 people, 43 households
1958 Sevettijärvi 3115 reindeer	13 people	53 people	66 people, 48 households
2002 Sevettijärvi 5948 reindeer	23 active households	18 active households	41 active Skolt Sami households + 2 other active households, total 43

their members (see also Bohannon 1970: 31), as part of a market economy. The Skolt Sami no longer have, like before (Nickul 1948, Tanner 2000), a practical mechanism or cognitive model that would take into consideration sufficiency to all members of the local Skolt Sami community as part of reindeer ownership. Today, only part of the Skolt Sami are involved with reindeer herding, and among reindeer owners, the numbers of individually owned reindeer varies considerable. Nearly half of the reindeer owners would have liked to increase their number of personally owned reindeer in 2017 (Itkonen 2018: 35).

In a household of reindeer herders, its members can compensate the possible sufficiency shortage, caused by a small number of reindeer, by practicing other forms of livelihood. Moreover, in relation to resources of other traditional forms of livelihood, fishing, hunting, and gathering, the local Skolt Sami rights come through more equally in the community of the Skolt Sami. They mainly use products of these other traditional forms of livelihood directly for the need of their own households without marketing the products, and in relation to them, they share the use of natural resources with representatives of other interest groups.

The village authorities no longer determine the sizes and scales in relation to reindeer herding, like in the days of the old Suenjel Sijd. Now the state decides geographical areas of reindeer herding cooperatives (and listens to opinions of reindeer herders about the areas). Furthermore, the state determines overall numbers of reindeer in each cooperative, and the highest numbers of individually allowed reindeer (500 in Sevettijärvi area).

The state protects the Skolt Sami rights to reindeer herding and land usage through the Law of Reindeer Herding (1990) and through the Skolt Act (1995). These laws do not exclude owners who come from other ethnic groups, like the majority population, the Finns, even though the regulations offer a possibility to make collaborative decisions to a certain extent within reindeer cooperatives concerning possible new reindeer owners (Law of Reindeer Herding 1990: 43 §). Because of the lack of protection of reindeer ownership, in the survey 2017, 92 percent of Skolt Sami reindeer owners wanted to increase legal protection for Skolt Sami reindeer ownership (Itkonen 2018: 35).

The Skolt Sami have adapted well to main stream reindeer husbandry where the ownership of reindeer is in the process of centralization. This means that there are ever fewer Skolt Sami reindeer herders, and they are not protected any better than before. If the Skolt Sami lose their reindeer to members of other groups, it could be a devastating blow to Skolt Sami culture. The reindeer are still as

important as they were a hundred years ago for the continuity of culture.

If the continuity of culture is a priority, it is possible to consider the existing social, political, and economic phenomena in relation to reindeer ownership. It is possible to evaluate the meaning of ownership relations as constituents of cultural continuity, i.e. cultural sustainability. The Constitution of Finland (1999: 17§) gives the Sami as indigenous peoples the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture.

Most Skolt Sami reindeer herders feel that more protection is needed for Skolt Sami reindeer ownership. They think that other interest groups, like the majority population, can threaten their position as reindeer owners. Demographics of Inari municipality make it easy to understand this fear. Total population of Inari municipality is round 7000 people, and the Skolt Sami make up a 7% minority of it. From the history of the Sami people in Finland, we know that the Finnish culture has spread step by step further north and the Sami culture has had to give it space (Nickul 1970 and 1977). Reindeer ownership forms a fundamental element of Skolt Sami culture in Inari. If it fell, the culture would be hit hard. In the reindeer herding community, reindeer ownership connects to power relations. Owners of big individual reindeer herds usually have strong positions in the community and each reindeer owner plays a part in determining how things are done. These reasons support the claim that more secure reindeer ownership would strengthen Skolt Sami cultural continuity (i.e. cultural sustainability).

The reasoning is there, and the justification is there for better protection of Skolt Sami reindeer ownership. Could the regulations be changed? Representatives of the Sami have claimed that the Sami should own all reindeer in the Sami District in Finland (Saamelaisoimikunnan mietintö 2001: 153). This would violate rights of the existing Finnish reindeer owners in the area though. Therefore, I think that this claim seems too harsh. From the Skolt Sami point of view, it would probably be enough, if the Skolt Sami peoples' overall share of the reindeer could be secured and maintained. This would be achieved by ruling that the reindeer of a Skolt Sami in the Skolt Sami Area could only be sold or given to another Skolt Sami. This principle could be part of a law or it could be part of an official way of interpreting the law, in this case of the Law of Reindeer Herding (1990: 43 §).

The legislator could consider the magnitude of the threat to the culture, which the possible loss of reindeer presents, as the reason for making the needed changes into legislation or its interpretation guidelines. The survival of Skolt Sami culture may require special treatment

in this case. The Ministry of Justice in Finland seems to understand this kind of reasoning (see Itkonen 2018: 111). Along these lines, the survival of Skolt Sami culture would be a generally accepted reason for the positive special treatment in the case of reindeer ownership of the Skolt Sami as indigenous peoples.

7 Conclusions

The focus has often been on old traditional cultures in anthropological studies, but modern social and cultural anthropology does not want to look too much to the past (Clammer 1987); however, many cultural features of today rely on cultural forms of the past. The Skolt Sami culture still depends on sustainable use of natural resources and on continuing social relations. Anthropologists have witnessed similar situations among other indigenous peoples. To understand the situation of indigenous peoples in modern states, we can look at contemporary practical examples, which show what is required for the survival of indigenous cultures, such as the Skolt Sami culture.

Today, the state's laws and administrative practices protect the Skolt Sami's rights to use of resources in a sustainable way. In the historical past of the Skolt Sami communities, the village meeting could decide how the use of land and waters was divided between households. In the decision-making process, the sufficiency of the resources had to be evaluated. In today's market economy of reindeer husbandry, sufficiency and shares of resources (reindeer) are modified by the state policy of reindeer husbandry and by the competition between reindeer owners. In the contemporary system, the continuity of the Skolt Sami culture does not determine the shares of natural resources per household nor the sufficiency of these resources, but according to this article, it should do so, if decision makers think that the continuity of this particular culture is important as part of the society.

It is hard to challenge the mainstream economic ideology. However, in the system that is modified mainly by modern industrial values, for the sake of cultural continuity, some traditional features of the Skolt Sami reindeer herding community could be considered. This would mean a new type of evaluation of some key factors of reindeer husbandry and a new order of these factors.

It seems that profitability based on the centralization of reindeer ownership determines many other aspects of economy, culture, and social relations in the world of reindeer herders. This order can be changed as a basis of eco-

nomic policy. This does not mean that we would have to abandon profitability as an economic aim. It only means that profitability moves into a proper place in our apparatus, and because profitability belongs to the economic approach, economy moves into a suitable place as well, into being part of culture (i.e. being part of a way of life).

In conditions of climate change, sustainability is a growing concern. Therefore, it could be possible to change the official aim of reindeer husbandry from profitability to sustainability. In this new model, profitability would serve the aim of sustainability instead of being the ultimate aim. This means that profitability would still be among economic aims of reindeer husbandry but in a less central position. In the anthropological approach, economic sustainability is part of cultural sustainability. In addition to this cultural dimension of sustainability, sustainability consists of social and environmental dimensions.

Reindeer husbandry already has several elements that support sustainability, including: limitations, regulations, and personal commitment as the motivation of action. The latter is supported by the fact that the workers are reindeer owners.

The right to use natural resources could be evaluated in relation to culture. Special arrangements may be needed in some cases to secure the continuity of culture. Does Skolt Sami reindeer ownership require better protection, if we want to secure the continuity of Skolt Sami culture? Yes. Does this threaten Finnish people's right to own reindeer as part of their own culture? No, because there are plenty of places where they can own reindeer.

The right to use natural resources, in this case the use of land through ownership of reindeer, can be evaluated in the light of the continuity of culture, if the culture is considered worth protecting. What kind of rights are needed, for example, to secure the continuity of Skolt Sami culture? How strong should these rights be, how many rights, and where? How should these rights be protected? In relation to reindeer herding, the reasoning of this article supports the claim that the Skolt Sami should in the Skolt Sami Area own at least as big portion of reindeer in the future as they own today. In addition, the Skolt Sami reindeer owners should follow rules and cultural behavior practices of the Skolt Sami reindeer herding community. In other words, being part of the Skolt Sami reindeer herding community is not only about origins but also about how one participates in work situations. The members of the reindeer herding cooperatives should have the right to evaluate these things, when they make decisions about possible new reindeer owners. The reindeer of the Skolt Sami should not be moved into the hands of Finns or representatives of other groups in the Skolt

Sami Area, if it is possible to find a Skolt Sami owner for those reindeer.

Today, in decision-making practices concerning the use of state-owned lands and waters in northern Finland, decision makers divide the rights to use natural resources and some other resources between different interest groups and individuals. The decisions are based on evaluations, where several kinds of justifications and reasoning are utilized, for example environmental, legal, economic, and political. The kind of cultural justification and reasoning that this article presents can be used as part of decision-making processes. They can help decision making in many cases, for instance in relation to Skolt Sami reindeer herding.

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