

## **SESSION: Arctic Indigenous Politics in Transformation**

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### **Session Description:**

Out of nearly 4 million inhabitants of the Arctic, approximately 500,000 belong to a number of different Indigenous peoples. The Arctic is undergoing substantial and accelerating transformation. Besides global climate change, cultural, social, political, and economic changes are also affecting the region and especially its Indigenous peoples, including their political participation, political institutions, traditional governance and grassroots activism. This session will examine these changes specifically in the Sámi context in Scandinavia.

### **Papers:**

#### **Post-State Indigenous Feminist Sovereignities?**

**Rauna Kuokkanen, Research Professor, University of Lapland**

My paper considers the Ellos Deatnu (Long Live Deatnu) camp and moratorium in Sápmi on the border of Norway and Finland, a recent Indigenous resistance and resurgence movement as an embodiment of what I call post-state Indigenous feminist sovereignties. Although the camp was discontinued in August 2017, the movement behind it continues as struggles for Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty and as a challenge to the legitimacy of the colonial state. In addition, I consider what kind of alternative sovereignties this movement presents and proposes. I suggest that although not explicitly identified as Indigenous feminist, the two movements are characterized by the intent and aspirations of critical Indigenous feminism. Instead of imitating the organizational principles, structures and leadership of the nation-state which characterized early Indigenous organizations, Indigenous feminist activism and critique seek to disrupt and unsettle normative conceptions of nations and nation-state. Similarly, Ellos Deatnu and other recent Indigenous movements not only resist the colonial state but centre the resurgence of Indigenous concepts and practice of nationhood at the intersection of eliminating colonial and patriarchal institutions, laws and practices.

#### **Sámi Siida Governance: Reindeer Herding in an Era of Finnish Colonialism**

**Anne-Maria Magga, PhD Student, University of Lapland**

How can Indigenous peoples' governance models exist or even function in a colonial state that does not recognize them as such? In my paper, I will explore this question by examining Sámi reindeer herding governance in Finland. The Sámi society was organized according to siida system before colonization, during which they were gradually eroded and replaced by state-centered governance institutions. However, siidas did not disappear altogether but they continue to govern and organize Sámi livelihoods to some extent even today. In my research, I am particularly interested in what siida is in reindeer herding and how Finnish colonialism has affected Sámi reindeer herding. On the basis of 19 interviews with Sámi reindeer herders and my fieldwork within reindeer herding, I will argue that siida is a form of Sámi governance that is premised on a deep and ongoing ethical, political, legal and practical relationship with the reindeer. However, the ways in which Finnish state ignores and discriminates Sámi reindeer herding perpetuate settler colonialism, which allows the dispossession of Sámi of their lands, reindeer and self-

determination. I will suggest that in order to dismantle the ongoing colonialism, there is a need for resurgence of *siidas* on every level of reindeer herding governance – from the lichen level to the official governing structures.

### **Contested Nation: Demanding and Dismantling Sámi Nationhood**

**Saara Tervaniemi, PhD Student, University of Lapland**

My paper examines Sámi nationhood from the viewpoint of critical Indigenous studies. Since the beginning of the institutionalization of Sámi politics there has been more or less successful attempts to build the Sámi nation influenced by the western nationalism. Sámi people have, for example, adopted their own national symbols such as a flag, an anthem and a national day. However these are only one dimension of Sámi nationhood. My paper examines the different dimensions of the Sámi as a nation while questioning the current understanding of how the Sámi people has become and what it means to be a nation.

### **Everybody's Sámi Research: Institutionalisation, Neo-politicisation and the problem of defining a research field ethico-politically**

**Laura Junka-Aikio, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Tromsø University Museum, UiT**

This paper brings forth problems that may arise when a research field - in this case, Sámi Research - seeks to define itself in ethico-political terms. The rise of contemporary Sámi research is usually narrated as a gradual transition away from Lappologist or state-initiated research orientations, towards Sámi or Indigenous research, which places the Sámi and their own interests and concerns at the centre of academic research. This paradigmatic change is associated with the Sámi ethno-political movement and with broader efforts to decolonize knowledge especially since the 1970s onwards. Aware of this background, I will examine critically the ways in which this ethico-political definition of Sámi research operates in relation to contemporary societal and political conjuncture in Finland, where Sámi research is being strongly institutionalized, at the same time as questions regarding "Sáminess" have become particularly central. I argue that in this new strategic context of *institutionalisation* and *neo-politicisation*, definitions of Sámi research which put the emphasis on its political and ethical qualities ("Sámi research" as research done from the "Sámi perspective" or which "takes the needs of the Sámi into account") might actually end up hiding a variety of interests and political desires that are projected towards this field currently, and hence depoliticize understandings of Sámi research and its complex interdependence with the state and the society. Accordingly, I call for renewed attention to a number of tensions and power-struggles that are currently taking place in the name of, and through research on the Sámi.