

# Introduction

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This volume contributes to the discussion on Indigenous research methodologies and doing Indigenous research, drawing from perspectives on Sámi and global Indigenous studies. Sámi studies focus on Sámi society, while Indigenous studies have a more global approach, albeit drawing from local contexts. The rationale behind this book is the fact that in addition to the progression of Indigenous and Sámi rights and important previous contributions in the field of Indigenous research from a pan-Sámi perspective, there is an ongoing need to discuss (1) the starting point and meaning of Sámi research and research methodologies, (2) how Indigenous and Sámi studies academic discussions on the regional and local level are connected to the practical level of doing Indigenous research today in different contexts, as well as (3) how ideas from practitioners connect to global debates in Indigenous studies. The chapters offer a broad view of the articulation, conceptualization, and practice of Indigenous research methodologies locally, and in our case, especially in Sámi academic contexts.

By ‘Sámi context’ we refer to a pan-Sámi view, as the Sámi live in a wide area of mid Sweden and Norway up until the Kola Peninsula with nine different Sámi languages and diverse cultural and area features. There are between 75,000–100,000 Sámi people estimated to live in the four countries, about 45,000 in Norway, around 25,000 in Sweden, about 10,000 in Finland, and 2,000 in Russia. North Sámi is the largest of the Sámi languages, followed by Lule, Skolt, Inari, Southern, Skolt, Kildin, Ume, and Pite Sámi languages. They are all differently threatened languages. Some Sámi languages are no longer spoken (Salminen 2007). The Sámi people are the only Indigenous peoples in the European Union. The authors of this book come from the universities that conduct Sámi or Indigenous studies programmes in Norway, Finland, and Sweden, but not all the universities with these studies are included in this volume.

Who are the Sámi as Indigenous peoples is related to ethnic and political questions concerning the origin and background of this particular Indigenous group. The concept is related to political rights and to individual identity and is intertwined with questions about one’s belonging and identity in the context of human rights and Indigenous self-determination (see e.g. Valkonen 2019). Overall, the understanding of this issue has been complex and is still open to debate. Obviously, due to the history of assimilation and the trajectory of the

cultural colonial impact, the call for an inclusive way of understanding Indigeneity is a way to nurture the wellbeing and future of Indigenous peoples.

Likewise, a clear-cut definition of those who count as Indigenous is problematic, as it stretches from tribal peoples living in the rainforests of Borneo, to reindeer herders living in Siberia, to the Sámi living in both traditional and urban areas, or to Pacific Indigenous peoples who have migrated to other islands, not to mention the peoples of North and South America or Africa. The official categories of Indigenous peoples vary greatly. In Russia, a population of 50,000 is the limit for official recognition as Indigenous people. Africa and Asia also have their own state recognitions for Indigenous peoples. What unites different Indigenous peoples are their experiences of colonialism, as well as coloniality and modernity projects (Battiste 2000; Virtanen et al. 2013). In this context Indigenous peoples' aspirations to tell their own stories and use and advance their knowledges in academia can be understood.

There are about 370 million Indigenous peoples worldwide in over 90 countries. Despite the fact that they represent up to 5 percent of the global population, they account for about 15 percent of the extreme poor (World Bank Group 2018). Needless to say, it takes a broad approach to be able to study issues related to such a huge diversity of people within one field. Moreover, indigeneity is constantly reconceptualized by Indigenous people themselves (see e.g. de la Cadena & Starn 2007).

The diversity of Indigenous people (also referred to as First peoples, Aboriginal peoples, Native peoples, or autochthonous peoples), points to an enormous variety of Indigenous localities and historicities (Sanders 1999). There is no single definition or explanation of Indigenous peoples. There is, however, a set of characteristics concerning "Indigenous people" found in international conventions and declarations (such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) (UNDRIP), ILO-Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 1989 (No. 169) and Martínez Cobo's study (1981), which have in part grown out of the success of the international Indigenist political struggle of the last four decades (Dahl 2012).

According to Paulette Steeves (2018), the term 'Indigenous' was not used to identify human groups until recently. According to Martínez Cobo (1981), Indigenous people form communities or nations as groups that have a "historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies" within the territories they developed, and as communities that "consider themselves distinct from other sectors of societies" now in their territories. Cobo further stresses that Indigenous people and communities are normally minorities within contemporary populations that work to preserve their ethnic identities and ancestral territories for future generations. Yet, it should be noted that Indigenous peoples are not always minorities, and in Bolivia and Guatemala Indigenous

peoples form a majority. According to Steeves, the category should include so-called displaced people who prior to colonization identified themselves with specific lands and regions, as well as Indigenous communities that have for decades sought safer places and moved away from their original homeland areas. Furthermore, many descendants of Indigenous people were forced to hide their identities for their own safety due to colonization and genocidal policies that focused on physical and cultural erasure. This does not make them non-Indigenous, rather it makes them survivors of genocide, erasure and forced acculturation. The term First People came into use in the 1990s and as a concept refers to Indigeneity as an identity. Indigenous people are usually identified as the First People of a specific regional area (Steeves 2018).

Even if the concept 'Indigenous' can be contested, there is a shared understanding of what Indigenous studies covers and how it emerged. Likewise, in neighbouring disciplines like anthropology, religious studies, art history, sociology and gender studies, it is difficult to find a univocal definition of 'religion', or 'art', for instance, but the centre of attention is commonly understood.

The authors of this volume represent four countries where Sámi live. Most of them are involved with Sámi research and education and some with global Indigenous research. The authors represent mostly the humanities, and address the processes and research conducted in the participant tertiary institutions involved with Sámi and Indigenous studies and research. Sámi studies have for a long time been linked to global Indigenous research contexts. The authors are interested in discussing theoretical and practical implications when conducting research in the Sámi context and global Indigenous contexts, involving North European academic spaces. They engage with their experiences of doing research and reflect on the use of Indigenous research methodologies.

The chapters view Sámi and Indigenous studies through the lens of theoretical and practical research-based case solutions in the Sámi academic context. They arise from today's situation in Sámi and Indigenous research and studies in participative higher education institutions, where both researchers coming from different backgrounds are involved in research and teaching. The first three chapters provide theoretical insights about the research field, and from the fourth chapter onwards more case-based research examples are discussed. They all problematize and discuss methodological solutions in engaging in Indigenous knowledge in academia.

In Chapter 1, the editors of this book present the genealogy of Indigenous studies in Sámi and Nordic contexts, and the theoretical and practical implications in elevating Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in academia. The chapter also shows how as a consequence Sámi and Indigenous research emerged in Northern Europe. It also draws from central concepts,

decolonization and Indigenization, in Indigenous studies as a discipline, and revisits them in its current research and teaching. Chapter 1 then reflects on the importance of Indigenous research methodologies, and what kind of challenges they may pose, taking into account both local and global contexts.

Chapter 2, by Jelena Porsanger and Irja Seurujärvi-Kari, focuses on early influential thinkers and their methodological choices, offering a deep history of Sámi research. It shows how holistic approaches concerning Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies have been present in Sámi intellectuals' thinking for centuries, and how it is practically present in the so-called *lávvu* method.

In Chapter 3, Pigga Keskitalo, Torkel Rasmussen, Rauna Rahko-Ravantti, and Rauni Äärelä-Vihriälä discuss the state of Sámi research and the authors' ideas on, and actions towards, the research paradigm shift based on the previous literature and their experiences when teaching and researching in the field. They present their ideas based on the *gáfestallan* talking circles and the research process inspired by making a traditional weaving band (*ruvdet* in North Sámi language).

In Chapter 4, Hanna Outakoski looks at the development of literacy research in Sápmi (Sámi land) through the implementation of Indigenous methodologies. She sees an awareness of Indigenous research principles as an example of what kinds of issues she has faced during her research and how she has solved them.

In Chapter 5, Hanna Guttorm, Lea Kantonen, Britt Kramvig, and Aili Pyhälä engage with the decolonial writing process in the context of Sámi and global Indigenous societies. They take the land, Eana, as an actor in the co-writing, and give the reader novel ideas about creating different ways of research writing.

In Chapter 6, Jelena Porsanger, Irja Seurujärvi-Kari, and Ragnhild Nystad present a conversational method, *muittašit ovttas*, literally translated "shared remembering", in the Sámi context. They also show how they have used the Sámi *solju*, breastpin, both as a methodological and a theoretical tool.

In Chapter 7, Marja-Liisa Olthuis, Trond Trosterud, Erika Katjaana Sarivaara, Petter Morottaja, and Eljas Niskanen present project-based writing strategies and methodologies in the Aanaar Saami (Inari Sámi) language community. They describe the measures taken to recreate and activate the missing writers' generations in their personal and communal writing processes. The authors preferred to use the spelling 'Aanaar Saami', because 'Sámi' actually comes from north Sámi writing, even if it is already commonly used in English. The language community itself uses 'anarâškielâ' for Aanaar Saami (Inari Sámi).

Chapter 8, by Attila Paksi and Ilona Kivinen, reflect on practical experiences of doing research with Indigenous communities in two different contexts, in

Southern Africa and Sápmi. They provide personal stories and reflections on their research practices, especially reciprocal relationships.

Along similar lines, Pirjo Kristiina Virtanen in Chapter 9 reflects on cultural protocols and research agendas in Amazonian research, and how different localities accommodate the values often pointed out in Indigenous research methodologies literature. Lastly, this edited volume includes a concluding epilogue.

This edited volume is a result of the scientific workshops of the network *Indigenous Research Methodologies in Academia*. In 2017–2019, the network gathered together scholars from interdisciplinary scientific fields from the Sámi allaskuvla/Sámi University of Applied Sciences, the University of Helsinki, UiT-the Arctic University of Norway, the University of Oulu, the University of Lapland, Umeå University, and the University of the Arts Helsinki. The network was based on the practical need to create connections between institutions and scholars working with Indigenous and Sámi studies and research. The participants contributed with their thoughts and writing, drawing from their own efforts and practical work related to Indigenous and Sámi research as well as with the Indigenous societies from where this volume emerges. Their contributions reflect a broad approach in human, social, and environmental sciences, as well as cross-disciplinary and applied perspectives.

As such, the network became an important place for interdisciplinary collaboration connecting researchers. The network's scientific workshops addressed diverse topics, identifying the different Indigenous research, research methodologies, and theoretical approaches involved when working with jointly identified topics. The topics included: 'Indigenous epistemologies in dialogue with Euro-American academia', 'Evaluations of Indigenous research methods used in teaching', 'How to write about methodology' and fourthly, the final workshop in the Sajos Sámi cultural centre in Anár/Aanaar (Inari), Finland, 'Re-searching Indigenous methodologies and engaging communities'. Based on these topics, network members with similar interests examined the topics in their work. This volume presents the results of different working groups based on the writings of those groups which were created based on their agreement to cooperate. They also had similar interests in developing Indigenous research methods in the Sámi context. The workshops also hosted invited guests who gave their opening ideas and presentations. During the workshops, a common feature of the contributions was scholars working on decolonial projects, sharing methodological discussions through network building, and creating new relationships and reflections by researchers working in Sámi and Indigenous research contexts. Although the meetings were primarily directed at doctoral and senior researchers, they were open and gained wide attention. The workshops

took place in Guovdageaidnu (Kautokeino), Romsa (Tromsø), and Kárášjohka (Karásjok), Ubmi (Umeå), and Helsset (Helsinki) and Inari (Anár) in Finland.

The book is aimed at those interested in research methodologies, Indigenous studies and Sámi research in particular, as well as all those interested in research concerned with Indigenous societies and how to implement decolonial approaches into research.

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