

Chapter Nine

Who Shall Represent the Sámi? Indigenous Governance in Murmansk Region and the Nordic Sámi Parliament Model

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The Sámi are the indigenous people of northern and central Norway and Sweden, northern Finland, and Russia's north-western Murmansk Region. While this volume's other chapters on the Sámi deal with the representative institutions of the Swedish and Norwegian Sámi, the chapter at hand will focus on Russian Sámi politics.

The Russian Sámi are a minority within the border-transcending Sámi nation, since most Sámi live in the Nordic countries (Berg-Nordlie 2013: 389), as well as a minority in their corner of Russia, and one of the more small-numbered among Russia's indigenous minorities (*korennyye maločislennyye narody*, 'native, small-numbered-peoples').² In Norway, Sweden and Finland, the Sámi have long been able to participate in border-transcending activities through international networks that involve both civil society and state-based actors. The Russian Sámi were, until the late 1980s, isolated from these processes of increased international integration that took place on the Nordic side of the border. Even today, the Russian Sámi are less than fully included in pan-Sámi structures (Berg-Nordlie 2011: 27–9, 2013: 370–1, 374). The roots of the organisations and institutions of the Russian Sámi are also to be found in the late 1980s. This ethno-political landscape has come to be markedly different from that of the Nordic Sámi (Berg-Nordlie 2015a).

This chapter explores how modes of indigenous governance changed in Murmansk Region during the period from the fall of the USSR to the time of writing (1992–2014)³ and whether the Russian Sámi can be said to have

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1. This chapter is partly based on 'Striving to unite. The Russian Sámi and the Nordic Sámi Parliament model' (*Arctic Review on Law and Politics* 2011, 2.1:52–76) by the same author. The data from that article has been updated and subjected to new analysis. The former article was written as part of the research project 'Russia in Pan-Sámi Politics', financed by the Norwegian Research Council's Programme for Sámi Research. The chapter at hand has also been finished partly through support from that research programme.
 2. While the largest group (Nenec) is 44,640 people, only 1,771 Russians consider themselves Sámi (2010 Census). Note that census data is not exact since people can only write one ethnicity and people with multiple ethnic identities may hence choose to write something other than Sámi (Stepanov 2012). Note also that there are many more people in Russia that are of Sámi heritage. Due to assimilation, the numbers of the Russian Sámi have remained relatively constant since the 1800s (Alymov 2006; Overland and Berg-Nordlie 2012: 113–15).
 3. The chapter was written before November 2014 and its content does not reflect subsequent changes in Russian Sámi politics.

gained better political representation during this period. Representation is here defined as becoming ‘better’ if more mechanisms are established to include representatives of the group in policy-making and policy-implementation; and if representatives are, to an increasing extent, formally dependent on support from the group they claim to represent in order to continue their political activity. The chapter also accounts for how inspiration from the Nordic model for indigenous governance, the *Sámedikkit* or Sámi Parliaments, has coloured local Russian Sámi politics.

The chapter begins with a presentation of key theoretical concepts. Following this, it accounts for how the idea of a Russian Sámi Parliament emerged and introduces the major actors in Russian Sámi civil society. This is followed by an overview of mechanisms to include Sámi representation in Murmansk Region indigenous politics in the periods 1991–2003, 2004–8, and 2009–14. Methods utilised have been document studies, non-participating observation at political meetings, and semi-structured interviews. Interviews have been performed individually and in groups, with both civil-society- and state-based political actors. Interviewees have always been informed about the research project and its expected output. Documents studied include Russian and Nordic media, project/programme documents, meeting reports, official declarations and websites. All studied documents are either openly accessible to the general public or have been supplied freely by the documents’ owners. Interviews have taken place in eight localities in Norway and Russia, as well as over the internet, during the period 2009–2014.

A list of abbreviations and shorthand names for NGOs, committees and other relevant actors can be found at the back of the article.

Network governance: Influence and representativeness

Modes of governance

During the last decades, new arrangements to include indigenous people in policy-making and policy-execution have been created across the world. Such arrangements can be examined with the analytical concept of *network governance* in mind. One may subdivide modes of governance into three ideal types or ‘modes’: *hierarchical*, *market* and *network* governance. The *hierarchical mode* is when the policy field in question is considered the exclusive domain of state structures and input from non-state actors is absent or extremely limited. In a *market mode*, the state has left market-based actors to regulate the field through free interaction and competition. Finally, *network governance* is when actors from civil society and/or business participate in policy-formation or -implementation through *ad hoc* or more institutionalised inclusion structures – governance networks. These are ideal types and, in the real world, mixtures of the three will often be observed (Winsvold *et al.* 2009: 408–21). In the Russian context, we must also be aware of a fourth ‘mode of governance’, what Ledeneva (2013: 4, 11, 13–17, 19–26, 32, 247–55) refers to as *Sistema*, ‘the System’, an all-pervasive

culture of informal networking based on mutual support, hidden hierarchies and (often illegal) forms of utility exchange. This political culture operates in addition to openly declared, legal governance mechanisms, as actors based in the official state hierarchy make use of informal networking to govern. Informal networks may utilise the institutions of the other, legal governance modes to enforce their will – for example, through selective law enforcement; private firms engaging in politically motivated behaviour; formal governance networks being staffed with selected individuals in order to ‘whitewash’ pre-existing informal networks; and so on (Bækken 2009: 22–9, 32–8). In this chapter, when ‘governance networks’ are referred to, this means *formal, legal* governance networks – not informal networks.

Potential for political influence through participation in networks

When governance approaches the network mode, non-state actors gain opportunities to influence policy-making in formally regulated, legal and open ways. Inclusion structures such as councils, boards, hearings and round tables give non-state actors the opportunity to advise the state structures. In some cases, the included actors also achieve *de facto* or formalised negotiation-partner status *vis-à-vis* state structures. Under network governance, non-state actors (or the inclusion structures in which they participate) may even be delegated the authority to make political decisions and take part in implementation. Ideally, network governance gives marginalised groups and user-groups influence over decision-making processes that concern them. In practice, state-based or economically powerful actors, or constellations of these, may prevail anyway – for example, by deciding on matters in informal networks ‘on the side’, networks in which representatives of marginalised groups are not included.

The state structures may also control governance networks through formal, legal mechanisms for ‘network management’. The latter is often referred to as *metagovernance*. Different types of metagovernance can, for example, be issue-framing (authorities define the scope of non-state actors’ activities in the governance network); economic framing (authorities regulate the economic means available); participant-selection (authorities choose who participates in the governance network); and direct participation by authorities in the governance network (*cf.* Davies 2011: 62–4; Røiseland and Vabo 2012: 62–3, 80; Sørensen and Torfing 2009: 246–7, 251). Metagovernance is usually discussed as a way of safeguarding the power of representative democracy, a set of tools to prevent non-elected actors from taking over politics completely. However, this presupposes a functioning representative democracy, which is not always the case (*cf.* Tarasenko *et al.* 2011: 11–16) and certainly not the case when it comes to Russia. When representative democracy has failed, or is not fully developed, the involvement of civil society in governance networks may be a rare opportunity to achieve real grassroots input into political decision-making. Furthermore, also in states where representative democracy functions well, the inclusion of subaltern groups in decision-making processes to make sure they

are heard can still be considered a democratising element, particularly when the subaltern groups are particularly affected by the decisions to be made. Hence, metagovernance can also be a *counterweight* to democracy – working against the democratisation implied by the inclusion of marginalised groups through network governance.

In addition to metagovernance, there are less refined and less legal ways for dominant groups to control non-dominant groups' representatives in network governance – such as bribes, blackmail, threats or softer forms of 'hinting' about what the included should or should not say and do. This is hardly an unknown phenomenon in Russia, where the use of illegal means of exerting power – such as, for example, the production of *kompromat* (compromising material, falsified or real) or the harassment of family and friends (Lebedeva 2013: 36) – is, unfortunately, widespread.

Finally, unless veto-rights or decision-making powers have been formally granted to non-state actors or the governance network in which they participate, the authorities may simply choose to ignore entirely all signals given.

The power granted to marginalised groups through network governance clearly has its limits but, within these limits, network governance arrangements may result in a wide array of outcomes – on a sliding scale from manipulative or symbolic-only inclusion (the status of the included is heightened but they are still not being heard); through effective consultancy (actors' advice is taken into account in policy-making to a lesser or greater extent, so the included leave a detectable 'footprint' on policy); via *de facto* or formalised negotiating position; to the bestowment of limited decision-making authority on the included actors or the governance network of which they form part (*cf.* Arnstein 1969; Schmidt *et al.* 2011: 51).

When actors representing the groups that would be most affected by the decisions taken are given delegated authority or involved as negotiation partner, we can talk about a measure of *self-determination* for the included group – at least in the sense that 'self-determination' is most often used in the context of indigenous politics, that is, not full sovereignty but, rather, co-determination under the ultimate control of the state (*cf.* Robbins' chapter in this book). Indigenous groups are in a special position since conventions, declarations and laws give them the right to certain levels of self-determination. The Russian Federation has, however, not ratified ILO 169 and abstained from voting on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Representativeness and the proxy demos

All talk about 'self-determination' is empty rhetoric if the actors included to speak for the affected group are not ultimately dependent on the group's approval. In order to ensure genuine representativeness, certain demands can be made of representatives in governance networks: for example that they are identified by the groups in question as part of their collective 'Us'; that they do not participate as individuals but as envoys from organisations; that the represented groups are

able to critically evaluate their representatives' activities; or that representatives are 'sensitive to criticism from the represented' (Røiseland and Vabo 2012: 63–4; Sørensen and Torfing 2009: 244–5; Torfing, Sørensen and Fotel 2009: 6–7). The chapter at hand applies the following criteria to determine if there is any detectable 'chain of popular sovereignty' (Törnquist 2009: 6–8) from the 'mass' of Russian Sámi to their representatives:

1. Are the representatives elected by and do they depend on the continued support of an organised body of people identified with the mass whose interests are said to be represented?
2. Can this organised body be convincingly stated to constitute an adequate 'proxy' for the mass whose interests are said to be represented?

A social group is, in itself, just a mass of individuals who share some objective traits or have a common identity. An unorganised mass in itself is not capable of choosing representatives. It cannot even reach a democratic decision on what its political goals should be, much less who should work for those goals. In order for democratic decision-making to take place, an organised group is needed to act on behalf of the mass. To apply a neologism, we can call this a 'proxy demos' – an approximation of the mass discursively constructed as represented (*cf.* Berg-Nordlie 2015a).

In representative democracies, the approximation of the 'nation' claimed to rule itself through its elected representatives is the registry of inhabitants with voting rights. Inclusion in the electoral register is granted or denied based on objective criteria such as citizenship, age, or the number of years a person has been settled in the country. In more restrictive cases, we find criteria based on gender, income level, property, conviction of criminal offence and so on. Electoral registries never include the entire population of a country, or the entire populace that considers itself part of the 'nation' in question. They are approximations. It is difficult to set an exact threshold for when a proxy demos should be considered an adequate approximation of the mass that is claimed to be represented. Ideally, such a proxy should be defined liberally enough that all members of the group to be represented are allowed entry – and yet restrictively enough to prevent the inclusion of group-external individuals. One could argue that it is impossible to find criteria that create a perfect equilibrium between restrictiveness and liberality – not least because there might not be any broad agreement on who should be considered a member of the group that is to be represented, and who should not.

The question of how to define the proxy demos for the Sámi causes much debate in the Nordic countries. Sámi electoral registries function as proxies for the population that self-identifies as Sámi (*cf.* Pettersen's chapter in this book) but the three states have ended up applying different criteria for who shall be allowed to enter the Sámi proxy demos (Berg-Nordlie 2015; Nyssönen 2015). In Russia there is no Sámi electoral registry. Instead, regimes for political representation rely on civil-society formations that claim to act on behalf of the indigenous group. The proxy demos of the Russian Sámi is, hence, constituted by the members of the organisations from which 'Sámi representatives' are drawn

into political processes. When determining if these approximations are adequate, the relevant questions are whether or not the organisations in question are open to all individuals self-defining as Sámi or if a significant number of Sámi are barred from participating in them.

Indigenous governance in Sápmi

Sápmi is the area traditionally inhabited by the Sámi. Four states have absorbed parts of this territory: Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden. These states have different approaches to indigenous governance but there are structural similarities between the Nordic countries: they all have Sámi Parliaments (North Sámi *Sámedikkit*, sing. *Sámediggi*), advisory and participatory institutions that are based around assemblies of elected Sámi and have their own employed staff. The institutions are established by the states and financially dependent on them but their legitimacy as indigenous representatives rest on democratic elections within a proxy demos for the country's Sámi population. Hence, while the *Sámedikkit* are state-organised bodies, they simultaneously represent a non-state interest, that of an indigenous minority (Berg-Nordlie 2015a; Falch and Selle 2015).

The Sámi Parliaments have the right to give advice and speak on behalf of the Sámi of their states and are consulted or even negotiated with (*cf.* Josefsen 2008: 102, 107, 115). They are also given some decision-making authority, for example, through managing funds and/or specific policy sectors seen as highly relevant to the Sámi, or through inclusion into governance networks (boards, councils, committees and so on) that have been given decision-making authority. An example of the latter is the Board of the Finnmark Estate, an institution that governs natural resources in Norway's northernmost county. Representatives of state structures do not participate directly in the Sámi Parliaments' internal decision-making processes and the *Sámedikkit* enjoy (although to different degrees) great autonomy to set their own agenda and act politically. Nevertheless, they are subject to some metagovernance measures: though liberally defined, the Sámi Parliaments' freedom of action is still ultimately framed by state laws and regulations. Furthermore, they are financially dependent on the states and there is also a high degree of earmarking of the funds shared out to Sámi civil society through the *Sámedikkit*. Also, much of the Sámi Parliaments' potential for influence lies in their participation in governance networks in which the state *does* participate directly (Anaya 2011: 8; Berg-Nordlie 2015a; Broderstad *et al* 2015; Falch and Selle 2015; Josefsen, Mörkenstam and Saglie 2015: 37–39; Semb 2015; Selle 2011: 14–15).

Ideally, a Sámi Parliament will serve as a unifying political organ for all the Sámi of a country. Sámi civil society will need to relate to the institution, since it serves as the central political link between authority and minority and thus can voice indigenous civil society's concerns *vis-à-vis* the state. Another factor that 'pulls' Sámi civil society towards the *Sámediggi* is its role as 'ambassador', that is, the institution that makes contact with foreign actors (such as the Sámi institutions of other countries) on behalf of the state's Sámi population. Furthermore, the

Sámediggi may receive devolved powers that make it necessary for NGOs to relate to it, such as the power to channel funding (Bjerkli and Selle 2003: 83–5; Berg-Nordlie 2013: 374–86; Broderstad 2003: 164–74; Selle & Strømsnes 2015; SPR 2008: 2,8). Apart from these more practical-political concerns, a Sámediggi is also unifying for a country's Sámi population at the symbolic level – a common parliament is a symbol of, and evidence of, the existence of the nation. In order to be perceived by the Sámi populace as a unifying entity, it is important that the Sámi Parliament is generally regarded as representative. The *Sámedikkitt* attempt to achieve representativeness by giving voting rights to individuals self-enrolled on the Sámi electoral registers. Through contested, democratic elections, enrolled Sámi voters elect representatives every four years, ideally ensuring that the politics of the assembly's majority are in line with popular opinion and that various internal groups are represented (Berg-Nordlie 2015a; Bjerkli and Selle 2003: 49, 81–3; Bergh and Saglie 2015).

In Russia, contrariwise, there is no officially established central organ that speaks for the indigenous peoples. Russia has the non-governmental umbrella organisation RAIPON – the Association of Native, Small-Numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East of the Russian Federation. It has been suggested, at times with explicit reference to the Sámi Parliament model, that RAIPON could be legally defined as the 'authorised representative' of the Russian indigenous peoples (Mikkelsen 2010: 43; Wessendorf 2005: 24–5, 64–7). So far, this has not happened but RAIPON has, over time, come to work closely with the authorities at the federal level. As the name implies, RAIPON does not speak for *all* indigenous people in Russia. There is a geographical specification, albeit one that includes most of Russia's vast territory, and a population limitation that excludes major groups. Russia has many peoples that would be considered indigenous by other states, such as the Komi or Sakha, but federal indigenous legislation, and RAIPON, has a narrower focus on 'native, small-numbered peoples' – groups that (among other things) number less than 50,000 individuals (*cf.* de Costa, in this volume). RAIPON also limits itself to including one NGO per people: an understandable practical limitation but one that obviously reduces RAIPON's overall representativeness since there are competing NGOs among some indigenous groups. The Russian Sámi are represented through the organisation AKS (Association of the Kola Sámi). RAIPON has an accountability system through its leadership being elected at a congress of member organisations every four years. However, the last chair election (2013) ended with the incumbent pulling out of the race, allowing a candidate affiliated with the party in power (United Russia) and the conference-hosting province (Jamalo-Nenec Autonomous Area) to take over. This happened after RAIPON had gone through a prolonged struggle to ensure its survival against threats of closure from the federal Ministry of Justice. Some consider the election to have signalled the informal subjugation of the organisation to state structures (BarentsObserver.com A, B). It remains to be seen how RAIPON will function in the future.

In any case, RAIPON's focus is on the federal level, whereas, at the provincial level, indigenous governance structures are different from place to place. When we go deeper into Russian indigenous politics, we find various kinds of civil-society

formations (RAIPON-affiliated or not), state-based institutions and organs of the executive power, which are engaged in different constellations of conflict and co-operation. This chapter takes us to Murmansk Region, which is isomorphic with the Kola Peninsula, the home of the Russian Sámi. The Russian Sámi have the distinction of being the only Sámi community without a Sámi Parliament. Some local indigenous activists have long worked to get one; others are lukewarm to the idea or opposed to it. The authorities of Murmansk Region, for their part, have built on other models than *Sámedikki* when establishing structures for Sámi representation.

The idea of a Sámi Parliament in Russia

The Sámi Parliament (*Sámediggi*) model for indigenous inclusion and empowerment grew during the period 1971–1996 as a result of indigenous demands for improved representation and influence, the states’ needs for ordered and controlled forms of dialogue with Sámi representatives and inter-Nordic learning (Berg-Nordlie 2013: 442; Falch and Selle 2015).⁴ In this section we will study how the Sámi Parliament model as an ideal for indigenous governance spread in Murmansk Region following the collapse of the USSR.

The beginning of the Russian Sámi Parliament movement

In 1992, the Soviet Union had given way to the Russian Federation and for the first time a Russian Sámi NGO – AKS – participated in an international Sámi Conference. The fifteenth Sámi Conference, in Helsinki, was an historic pan-Sámi event in many ways. Most significantly, it accepted AKS as a member organisation of the Nordic Sámi Council. This international NGO network was now for the first time truly pan-Sámi, since it included NGOs from all the four countries that had divided Sápmi. It now dropped the word ‘Nordic’ from its name (Berg-Nordlie 2013: 370–3).⁵ The 1992 Sámi Conference also established an international Sámi People’s Day (6 February, commemorating the first international Sámi conference, in 1917) and agreed on a common national anthem (Rantala 2004: 10–11; SR 1994: 85–94).⁶

4. Milestone years: 1971, the establishment of the Sámi Delegation in Finland; 1989, Sámi Parliament of Norway; 1992, Sámi Parliament of Sweden; 1996, Sámi Delegation reorganised to Sámi Parliament of Finland.

5. The Sámi Council is an international NGO network that unites Sámi NGOs. The Sámi Conferences serve as the basis for the Council’s internal democracy. The first NGO to become truly pan-Sámi was not the Sámi Council, but the Sámi women’s group *Sáhráhkka*, in 1991 (Hætta 2003: 49). The importance of international women’s networking in post-Soviet Russian Sámi politics could be an interesting study in itself. Sámi politics in Russia have been characterised by female dominance and several central Russian Sámi activists have been active in the international Sámi women’s networks *Sáhráhkka* and *Sámi Nissonforum* (Lindi 2005; Overland and Berg-Nordlie 2012).

6. To be precise, it was the melody that was agreed upon. The 1986 Conference had already agreed that Isak Saba’s poem *Song of the Sámi People* should serve as the lyrics. The 1986 conference had also agreed on a common Sámi flag (SR 1987: 99–100, 133–40).

It was thus in keeping with the spirit of the conference that the Russian delegation concluded that the Sámi are ‘one people and ought to attempt having the same systems’, and embarked upon a course towards a Russian Sámi Parliament (Interviews A and B). AKS held discussions on the matter and presented it for a broader audience in a 1995 letter to the newspaper *Poljarnaja Pravda* (Kal’te 1995).⁷ The 1996 international Sámi Conference was held in Russia and its resulting ‘Murmansk Declaration’ underscored the need to consider a ‘popularly elected Sámi organ on the Russian side [of the border]’. In her closing speech, AKS leader Nina Afanas’jeva stated that the Russian Sámi would work towards this goal but ‘may have to wait long for results to manifest’ (SR 1997: 84, 87, cf. Šaršina and Jakovleva 2010; OOSMO Y.N.G). These words proved prophetic.

Pro-Parliament activists encountered resistance to their idea from regional officials, including accusations that the Sámi ultimately wanted a state of their own (Interview C).⁸ Then Governor of Murmansk Region, Jevgenij Komarov (1991–1996), also opposed the idea of a Russian Sámi Parliament (IWGIA 1996: 37). In addition, there was little active support at the grassroots level among the Russian Sámi.

...people just weren’t ready. They didn’t understand what a Sámi Parliament was, they didn’t get enough information about what functions it would have. So it ended up as just an internal discussion in AKS (Interview D).

Nevertheless, the idea had taken root. Since the early 1990s, the notion that indigenous governance in Murmansk Region should be modelled after that of the Nordic countries has re-surfaced several times.

The Sámi Parliament as pan-Sámi ideology and practice

Modern Sámi politics has long been characterised by a discourse of ‘pan-Sámism’, which frames as natural the existence of common national symbols, border-transcending co-operation and equal rights for Sámi of different countries (Berg-Nordlie 2011: 20–1; 2013: 437). This discourse of pan-Sámi unity can be summed up in an oft-quoted ‘political creed’: ‘*We Sámi are one people, and state borders shall not divide us*’. A good example of such discourse articulation is the Sámi Political Program of 1980, a joint statement from Nordic Sámi activists that called for states to implement similar Sámi political reforms. Among these, that ‘in each state a representative Sámi assembly or other representative Sámi

7. The letter was written by Zinaida Kal’te, who headed AKS’ working group for a Russian Sámi Parliament and was also a member of the Sámi Council legal committee during the early 1990s. The latter committee debated an envisioned pan-Sámi rights convention (SR 1997: 78), which evolved into the Nordic Sámi Convention project (Berg-Nordlie 2013: 377–8). Kal’te later wrote a dissertation on Russian Sámi politics (Ka’lte 2003).

8. False accusations of separatism against the Russian Sámi are nothing new. Such allegations were also made during the Stalinist purges (Larsson-Kalvemo 1995: 32–4).

organ shall be recognised by law' (SR 1980: 11), a demand eventually answered by the creation of the *Sámedikkit*. Another example is the 2005 Draft Nordic Sámi Convention, which aimed to standardise Sámi rights – including the right to representation through *Sámedikkit* (FNSSE 2005: Art. 15). Although the Sámi Parliaments are organs under the states and predominantly focused on domestic matters, they have a pan-Sámi symbolic aspect in that their existence constitutes a border-transcending similarity between different states' Sámi communities and an international standardisation of Sámi politics. They are also active in practical pan-Sámi politics: The Sámi Parliamentary Council (est. 2000) constitutes, together with the Sámi Council, the symbolic 'heart' of institutionalised pan-Sámism (Berg-Nordlie 2013: 369, 374–86).

Both the symbolic and practical pan-Sámi aspects of the Sámi Parliament model increase its attractiveness. The absence of a *Sámediggi* in Russia symbolically underscores the group's deviation from the majority, and constitutes a practical problem for participation in pan-Sámi politics. While the Russian Sámi are represented fully in the NGO-based Sámi Council through the organisations AKS and OOSMO, the group only has participating observer status in the *Sámediggi*-based Sámi Parliamentary Council (Berg-Nordlie 2013: 443). In the words of AKS ex-leader Nina Afanas'jeva:

We have no parliament, no president.⁹ Of course this [the creation of the Sámi Parliamentary Council] meant that a Sámi Parliament of our own became even more important (Interview B).

However, no local interviewees other than the above emphasised the pan-Sámi aspect of having a Russian Sámi Parliament as being particularly important. Interviewees talked more about what a Russian Sámi Parliament could do locally. The central pro-Parliament activist, Valentina Sovkina, even explicitly downplayed the importance of the pan-Sámi function.

We mainly want Russia to notice us, not the West. We need our own Sámi laws and help from our own government. That's why we want a Sámi Parliament (Interview E).

The Sámi Parliament as an answer to local needs

When asked to define a Sámi Parliament, interviewees tended to highlight its role as an organ connecting 'the authorities and the Sámi leaders' (Interview F), and carrying a level of political influence that would enable it to address major issues such as language revival and protection of the resource base for traditional economic activities. Both pro-Parliament interviewees and sceptics referred to perceptions among the Russian Sámi that the *Sámedikkit* had been successful in this regard.

9. The heads of the *Sámedikkit* are called presidents.

We consider the Sámi Parliaments to be organisations that radically changed the life of the Sámi. Like the Norwegian example (Interview G).

I think this idea of a Russian Sámi Parliament originated abroad. In any case, the roots of the idea lie in the West. People go there and see how good everything is, and ask how this has happened, and they are told ‘we have a Sámi Parliament’ (Interview H).

Another local problem that the Sámi Parliament model was seen as capable of addressing was the lack of a universally acknowledged common political organ for the Russian Sámi. As we will return to below, Russian Sámi politics fragmented in 1998 and several interviewees expressed hope that an elected organ could unite them.

[a Sámi Parliament] can unite us, all the organisations, the entire people ... Now there are all these councils and all these [NGOs] ... There’s too little unity among us (Interview I).

Rooting the Sámi Parliament discursively in local soil

Finally, new discourses on local history have also, to an extent, fuelled desires for a Russian Sámi Parliament. At the 2002 conference ‘People and Land,’ Sámi-Norwegian researcher Johan A. Kalstad held a lecture called ‘The *Sijt*¹⁰ and the Sámi Parliament in old Russia’ (Bol’šakova 2005: 226; Interviews D and J). The ‘Sámi Parliament’ in question was the *Koladak Sobbar* of the late 1800s, an institution that, according to Kalstad, met annually in Kola town¹¹ on February 6, which Kalstad notes was later (for unrelated reasons) made the Sámi national day. Kalstad furthermore describes the Sobbar as an ‘independent’ organ that united Sámi representatives and Russian bureaucrats to debate and decide on issues of importance to the Sámi (Kalstad 2009: 20–8). This presentation of the *Koladak Sobbar* is discussed critically in Berg-Nordlie 2015b. Although Tanner (1929: 332–8) had discussed memories of the Sobbar seventy years earlier, it was not generally remembered among today’s Russian Sámi. This take on Russian Sámi history inspired some of the local activists; it ‘rooted’ the Sámi Parliament model in local governance traditions and it added an element of ‘returning to a better past’ to the pro-Parliament activism.

That Kalstad found this out clearly had an influence on us. I know it had on me. We didn’t know that there had been such an assembly earlier. Sometimes history is silent about the good things ... So we ask ourselves, why shouldn’t we return to that which we had before? (Interview E).

10. *Sijt* – traditional Sámi social unit – a collective that jointly owned and used specific resources.

11. South of modern-day Murmansk City.

Russian Sámi civil society: An overview

Before investigating how Russian Sámi civil society is included – or not included – in indigenous governance, we need to have a reasonable overview over what that civil society is. This section briefly introduces some key actors and organisation types.

AKS (1989–present) and OOSMO (1998–present)

Russian Sámi civil society has its roots in the 1980s, when an intelligentsia began working to revitalise Sámi culture and language and connect with Nordic kin (Kalstad 2009: 51–2; Overland and Berg-Nordlie 2012; Utvik 1985: 15). This pre-organisational phase culminated and ended in 1989, with the formation of the Association of the Kola Sámi (*Associjacija kol'skikh saamov*). AKS dominated Russian Sámi politics until 1998. This was a 'unipolar' phase of Russian Sámi organisational history, characterised by a unitary and region-wide NGO with local chapters and a democratic structure. AKS proclaimed itself 'the unitary organ of Soviet Sámi society' and set out to connect with both the Murmansk Region authorities and the Nordic Sámi (LP 1989). During the early *Perestrojka* period, activists on both sides of the Iron Curtain had already managed to establish some border-transcending ties (Berg-Nordlie 2013: 370–1) and several AKS activists now had contacts in Western Sápmi. AKS were to have less success with the regional authorities.

A political schism within AKS led to the founding of OOSMO (*Obščestvennaja organizacija saamov Murmanskoi oblasti*, the Civil Society Organisation of the Murmansk Region Sámi) in 1998. OOSMO was centred on Lovozero, the major settlement area of the Russian Sámi, instead of Murmansk City (Overland and Berg-Nordlie 2012: 101).¹² AKS now lost its position as the only catch-all Russian Sámi organisation. OOSMO also began representing the Russian Sámi abroad, becoming Sámi Council members in 2000 (Rantala 2004: 12). A 'multipolar' phase of Russian Sámi organisational history began. Yet more Sámi organisations were created, none of which were catch-all oriented like AKS and OOSMO – rather, they were geographically or sectorally specific. It became increasingly obvious that a central point of orientation for Russian Sámi civil society was lacking; the question of who could legitimately parlay with the authorities on behalf of the Sámi became increasingly difficult to answer.

The Obščiny (2002–present)

The *Obščiny* (Russian, sing. *obščina*, 'community' or 'commune') are non-commercial kin- or community-based membership organisations aimed at the 'defence of ancient habitats, traditional ways of life, rights and legal interests' of indigenous groups (Obščina Law: Introduction, Arts. 1 and 5). In 2000 a federal

12. AKS had considered basing their organisation in Lovozero but, in the end, chose Murmansk City, because the offices of the regional authorities were there (Overland and Berg-Nordlie 2012: 101).

law to regulate the establishment of such organisations was enacted. They have, according to Stammer (2005: 111), become ‘the leading institutional structure employed in the post-Soviet reorganisation of indigenous tundra and taiga dwellers’. Their effectiveness varies from place to place and case to case. *Obščina*-activist (and from 2010, AKS leader) Jelena Jakovleva stated in 2003 that although AKS had done much, that NGO consisted of ‘people with higher educations and stable incomes’. She argued that most Russian Sámi were not part of this social class and would benefit from a return to traditional activities – like kin-based reindeer-herding – which *obščiny* could provide (Kalstad 2009: 56, 64–6).

Murmansk Region *obščiny* have, as a rule, only been registered in ‘places of traditional inhabitation and traditional economic activities’ (*mesta tradicionnogo proživanija i tradicionnoj khozjajstvennoj dejatel'nosti*). This is not a demand in the *Obščina* Law but a practice that has developed in Murmansk Region.¹³ The ‘traditional places’ are designated on a federal list from 2009 (Krjažkov 2012: 29–31; Federal list of Traditional Places). While the entire Kola Peninsula is traditional Sámi land, the federal list only contains the districts Lovozero, Ter, Kola and Kovdor – that is, most of Murmansk Region’s territory but excluding municipalities with larger, urban settlements. Urban Sámi therefore have no opportunity to form *obščiny*. Exceptions were ‘Kil’din’, the first Murmansk Region *obščina*, which was based in Murmansk City (founded in 2002, now closed), and ‘Jokan’ga’ in Ostrovnoj. The Indigenous Centre (*see below*) is trying to include Ostrovnoj on the federal list but has so far not succeeded, likely because Ostrovnoj is a closed military city. As will be explained below, the limitations on *obščina*-formation has become a democratic problem in Murmansk Region’s contemporary indigenous governance system.

During the early new millennium, several Sámi *obščiny* were founded. Today there are 23 but many have an uncertain future (<http://gov.murman.ru> A). Creating and running an *obščina* is hard work, due both to the nature of the traditional activities and the bureaucracy (Interviews J and K). Furthermore, in order to practise reindeer-herding, *obščiny* need land, which, in practice, they often have to lease from the authorities (Interviews K and L; Stammer 2005: 116–17). Currently, four *obščiny* have been granted land-leases by the regional authorities: *Puaz* in Kola district; *Voavskhèss*, *Sám’syjt* and *Šèntèmbal’* in Lovozero district (<http://gov.murman.ru> A).

The NCAs: National Cultural Autonomies (2007–present)

The National Cultural Autonomies are inspired by Austro-Marxist ideas from around the turn of the century 1800/1900. The end of the Soviet era saw renewed interest in and discussion of the concept of non-geographical autonomy. A federal

13. These should not be confused with ‘Territories of Traditional Nature-Use’ (*territorii tradicionnogo prirodopol’zovanija*), designated areas preserved for traditional indigenous nature usage. Sámi activists have worked to get such territories on the Kola Peninsula but this has encountered problems all over Russia (Interview U; Krjažkov 2010: 243–59 and 2012: 28–9, 31).

law on the formation of such entities came in 1996 (Osipov 2010: 33–5). The ‘autonomies’ are not state structures and do not have formal powers over territory (NCA Law: Arts 1, 4). They are civil-society organisations meant to enable ethnic minorities to ‘decide on issues linked to the conservation of their heritage, language development, education and national culture’. NCAs can, ostensibly, still play the role of political representative of their constituencies but are generally more involved with the promotion of minority culture. NCAs are not limited to indigenous peoples and, in fact, are more often associated with diaspora groups, such as Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Yet, in Murmansk Region, the Sámi have also created NCAs, a phenomenon that originated in a pro-Parliament project.

After OOSMO was formed, it launched the project ‘White Reindeer’ to ‘create structures for self-government and coordination’, in co-operation with the Jona village AKS chapter and the Danish indigenous-oriented aid organisation Infonor (Interviews M and C). The project hired a law firm to investigate the legal possibilities for a Russian Sámi Parliament. The firm concluded that ‘it will not be possible to copy the Sámi Parliament completely under Russian conditions. It is, however, fully realistic to form an analogous structure, taking into account Russian specifics.’ They pointed to NCAs as a realistic alternative (Infonor Y.N.G.). White Reindeer decided on this option. Since 2007, Sámi NCAs have been established in the urban districts Mončegorsk and Apatity and the rural district Lovozero (Infonor 2008). The NCAs have also united in a regional autonomy.

Hypothetically, the regional NCA could serve as a unifying representative structure for the Russian Sámi. The NCAs have democratic structures and bridge organisational gaps. The Lovozero newspaper *Lovozerskaja Pravda* expressly introduced the NCAs to the public as intended to ‘protect the interests and rights of all Sámi: be they members of AKS or OOSMO’ (LP 2007). A challenge to the NCAs’ potential to unify all the Sámi is that, like a mirror image of the rural-exclusive *obščiny*, the NCAs are based in urban areas. NCA activists themselves described their activity as an urban form of indigenous organisation:

..it works well here, where there are few Sámi, but in Lovozero there are organisations, *sovkhoses*,¹⁴ they are living compactly ... Here we are spread among many others. This is our way of uniting (Interview N).

The NCAs could thus encounter difficulties achieving legitimacy among the rural majority of the Sámi if they tried to position themselves as *the* Sámi representative structures of Murmansk Region. But they do not. They mostly restrict their activities to the preservation of identity and culture in urban contexts and do not claim to represent the entire Russian Sámi community.

Having introduced the main actors in Russian Sámi civil society, we will now turn our attention to how Murmansk Region has included that civil society in indigenous governance since the fall of the USSR.

14. *Sovkhoz*: state farm. The large Kola reindeer-herding companies are still often referred to as such, despite post-Soviet restructuring.

1992–2004: Rapid reorganisation and haphazard inclusion

The Indigenous Issues Committee (1992–7)

In 1992 the regional government established a Committee on the Issues of Native, Small-Numbered Peoples of the North (*Komitet po voprosam korennykh maločislennykh narodov Severa*, henceforth ‘the Indigenous Issues Committee’) (<http://docs.pravo.ru> A; Kal’te 2004: 103–4; <http://murmansk.news-city.info> A and B; <http://www.regnum.ru>). According to Gutsol and Riabova (2002: 329) the Indigenous Issues Committee dealt mainly with requests for financial support from NGOs, individuals and local self-government organs. It was headed by the Sámi Sergej Semjaškin. Also taking part in the committee was non-Sámi Nikolaj Bogdanov, who was to become a prominent figure in Russian Sámi politics through his constant involvement in the official structures and his frequent writing on the subject.

It was AKS that, in 1991, had asked the Government to establish the Indigenous Issues Committee (Kal’te 2003: 103). According to the head of AKS at the time, they had even been invited by the authorities to suggest committee staff members, and Semjaškin had been one of their suggestions (Interview B). Furthermore, Indigenous Issues Committee statutes from 1994, and other formal documents, specified that the committee should work with AKS. The committee was also charged to work with a number of other organisations, national and international, including ‘organisations (movements) of the Nordic Sámi’ (<http://murmansk.news-city.info> B and C). For AKS, being specifically named as a partner of the committee promised well. By proclaiming themselves to be ‘the unitary organ of Soviet Sámi society’ and claiming a right to work with the authorities on issues affecting their people (*LP* 1989), they had positioned themselves as a potential partner in governance arrangements with the state structures. The latter now seemed to reply positively.

The promise of what AKS could be likely contributed to the above mentioned lack of grassroots’ enthusiasm for the idea of a Russian Sámi Parliament: AKS already aimed to fulfil some core functions of a *Sámediggi*: unifying the Sámi around a common structure, working for them on the pan-Sámi arena and representing them in domestic politics. But being a civil-society formation and not a body set up by the state, AKS’ chances of being given delegated decision-making authority were meagre, to say the least. The regional government did, indeed, reserve all decision-making power for itself, committing only to including AKS in policy deliberation. Furthermore, the inclusion of AKS in decision-making processes was never strongly institutionalised. There were meetings, there was dialogue, but there was no formalised system for representation. Still, the committee was formally obliged to work with AKS, a proxy demos the statutes of which made membership obtainable for all the Sámi of Murmansk region (*LP* 1989). However, during the 1990s, many Sámi activists began to question whether or not AKS’ internal democracy was functioning adequately and major internal conflicts erupted, conflicts that further muddled the internal democratic processes of AKS. The chain of representation broke and the members of AKS lost the power to control who represented them (Overland and Berg-Nordlie 2012: 94–102).

Returning to the Indigenous Issues Committee, its number of employees and working capacity was progressively reduced. Listed as having five employees at first, in 1993 it already had just three and, by the end of its existence, only had two (<http://docs.pravo.ru> A and B; Gutsol and Riabova 2002: 329; <http://www.regnum.ru>). In 1997, the Indigenous Issues Committee was reorganised into the Sector for Northern Native Peoples' Affairs (*Otdel po delam korenykh narodov Severa*, 'Indigenous Sector') under the Committee on Governance of the Agricultural-Industrial Complex, Trade, Connections at the Inter-Provincial Level and with Former Soviet States (*Komitet po upravleniju agropromyšlennym kompleksom, togorvle, svjazjam na mežregional'nom urovne i so stranami SNG*) (<http://murmansk.news-city.info> D). Judging by the name, Sámi issues were not highly placed on the agenda of that committee. Furthermore, when Semjaškin left his post he was not replaced so that, until 2001, the Indigenous Sector only employed one person, who was not ethnically Sámi (Nikolaj Bogdanov).

In sum, the Sámi were given the possibility of cultivating dialogue with the authorities, but in a weakly institutionalised way and through an NGO whose representativeness increasingly suffered under its own internal conflicts. Furthermore, the branch of the government designated to indigenous politics was given low priority and did not pack much of a political punch.

The Indigenous Advisor (1997–2009)

In the same year in which the Indigenous Issues Committee was downgraded, the leader of AKS was given the position of Advisor (*sovetnik*) to the Governor on indigenous issues (Gutsol and Riabova 2002: 329). While placed close to the top of the formal hierarchy, this was still only an advisory position, carrying no decision-making power or veto rights. As for representativeness, the position was a personal one, bestowed by Governor Jurij Jevdokimov (1996–2009). The Advisor was not dependent on approval from her organisation, or any other Sámi proxy demos. In any case, AKS was at this point undergoing a crisis and, in 1998, split in two. The section of Russian Sámi civil society that supported the new organisation OOSMO had no organisational connection whatsoever to the Advisor. The Advisor would, in a later interview (2009) argue that the AKS/OOSMO schism was caused by people in the regional administration fomenting discord as part of a divide-and-rule strategy against the Sámi, and with the specific target of undermining the Advisor's attempts to have the Governor disband the Indigenous Sector. Nevertheless, a main cause of the schism appears to have been AKS' poorly functioning internal democracy which led many members to feel it was impossible to change the leadership of AKS through democratic means. This discontent was fertile ground for the idea of founding a new Sámi civil-society organisation.

The position of Advisor apparently remained in existence until in 2009. The degree to which it was based on personal connections is evidenced by the fact that it was discontinued when a new Governor took over Murmansk Region (Dmitrij Dmitrijenko, 2009–12). Since then, there has been no Advisor to the governor on indigenous issues.

The Indigenous Problems' Committee and Sector (2000–4)

In 2000, indigenous governance was reorganised again. The Indigenous Sector was renamed the Committee for Native Small-Numbered Peoples' Problems (*Komitet po problemam korenykh maločislennykh narodov Severa*; 'Indigenous Problems Committee') and hence placed higher up in the hierarchy as it was now a committee in its own right. Like its predecessor, the Indigenous Problems Committee was also charged with working with Sámi civil society – both Russian and Nordic. Its reinstatement as a higher-level structure did not, however, result in more human resources: there were still only two employees: a Sámi leader, Anna Prakhova, and a non-Sámi consultant, Nikolaj Bogdanov (<http://2004.murman.ru>; <http://docs.pravo.ru> C; Interview O; <http://murmansk.news-city.info> E, F, G and H).

In 2002 there was yet another reorganisation. The Indigenous Problems Committee was now combined with two other down-graded committees into the Committee for Issues of Local Self-Government, Problems of Military Garrisons and the Affairs of Native, Small-Numbered Peoples (*Komitet po voprosam mestnogo samoupravlenija, problemam vojennykh garnizonov i delam korenykh maločislennykh narodov*). The administrative employees working with indigenous affairs once more constituted just a sector within a committee that had responsibilities for a broad range of topics. This committee was again nested under the Department for Legal Projects and Local Self-Government (*Departament zakonprojektnoj dejatel'nosti i mestnogo samoupravlenija*). The authorities' dialogue with activists from the (now increasingly complex and many-faceted) Russian Sámi civil society continued, but fixed, formal structures for dialogue were not established.

Murmansk indigenous governance 1992–2004 was characterised by being given generally low priority by the Murmansk regional government, and by being subject to frequent reorganising. Indeed, even people who participated in indigenous politics at the time have, in hindsight, during interviews, had difficulty reconstructing all the reorganisations that took place. Nevertheless, despite the profoundly unstable administrative situation, continuity was rather high in terms of which individuals were involved – both as employees in the committees/sectors and as representatives of the indigenous organisations. The personal networks were more stable than the formal ones. Another characteristic is the lack of formalised, permanent structures for indigenous grassroots representation in politics. Leader figures appear to have been contacted by the authorities on an *ad hoc* basis. Furthermore, taking into consideration that the internal democracy of the proxy demos was weakened during the 1990s, it becomes difficult to conclude that the Sámi were adequately represented in indigenous governance during this period.

2004–8: The Centre, the Council and the Congress

In 2004, there was a general reform of Murmansk Region's administrative structures (Vinogradova 2005: 3). There was now no separate committee or sector for indigenous governance. Instead, the regional government established a new

type of co-ordination organ for indigenous governance, at a lower level in the administrative hierarchy. In the years that followed, the regional authorities also created the Kola Peninsula's first formalised governance network, which included representatives of several Sámi civil-society organisations.

The Indigenous Centre (2004–present)

The regional authorities' new co-ordination organ for indigenous policy was called the State Regional Budgetary Institution 'Centre for Native, Small-Numbered Peoples of the North' (*Gosudarstvennoje oblastnoje bjužetnoe učreždenie 'Centr korennykh maločislennykh narodov Severa'*, 'Indigenous Centre'). At first, the Indigenous Centre was nested under the Department for Legal Projects and Reforms of Local Self-Government, which, again later, became a committee under the Justice Department of Murmansk Region (Interview P; <http://gov.murman.ru> B; <http://murman.city-news.info> I). In 2009, the Indigenous Centre was transferred to the Committee for Contacts with Civil Society Organisations and Youth Affairs (*Komitet po vzaimodejstvuju s obščestvennym organizacijam i delam molodjoži*, 'Civil Society Committee'). The Indigenous Centre's low placement in the hierarchy when compared to a committee or sector has led several Sámi activists to see its creation as a further marginalisation of the indigenous policy field. Nevertheless, in contrast to some of its predecessors, this organ works solely with indigenous affairs and has also proved to be more stable, having now existed for a decade.

According to its charter, the Centre is charged with representing Sámi interests at all levels of society, preparing and realising projects and programmes aimed at improving the group's social situation, defending their rights to 'historical and cultural, social and economic development' and their 'ancient area of habitat, traditional life and economy' (Indigenous Centre 2011). The Centre's charter opens for co-operation with foreign organisations – but in practice AKS and OOSMO have largely remained the 'ambassadors' of the Russian Sámi in pan-Sámi affairs (Berg-Nordlie 2013: 383–5; Indigenous Centre Charter, Art. 3.2).¹⁵ The Indigenous Centre's stated mission of voicing Sámi interests and its intended role in Sámi policy-creation and -execution would make it a natural point of orientation for Russian Sámi civil society. The institution did not, however, have any set mechanism that enabled the Sámi to give input. Its leader, Andrej Agejev, and some staff were Sámi, but the institution's legitimacy as an advocate of Sámi interests was not backed up by any form of democratic representation.

The Indigenous Co-ordination Council (2006–8)

The first real move towards a network governance model in Murmansk Region's indigenous politics came in 2006. That year, the Indigenous Centre established the Indigenous Co-ordination Council (*Koordinacionnyj sovet pri gosudarstvennom*

15. The Indigenous Centre did have one co-operative venture, with the Finnish Sámi Education Institute (Interview H).

oblastnom učreždenii ‘Murmanskij oblastnoj centr korennykh maločislennykh narodov Severa’). This council included representatives from all (at the time 18) Russian Sámi civil-society formations – ordinary NGOs, NCAs, and *obščiny* (Indigenous Centre 2006). The Co-ordination Council has been referred to as ‘the first common organ of the Sámi organisations [in Russia] – a bridge between the Sámi people and the official powers’ (Šaršina and Jakovleva 2010).

If we go back to the criteria for representativeness established above, we find the following. Concerning criterion (1), the statutes of the Co-ordination Council specified that the civil-society representatives had to be leaders or vice-leaders of Sámi civil society formations (<http://gov.murman.ru> C). The members of these organisations were formally able to elect new leaders if they were dissatisfied with their activities; hence, the representatives were dependent on the support of organised Sámi bodies. Of course, formalities aside, the practical possibility of members to evaluate and replace their leaders varied between organisations. Nevertheless, the system aimed to include Sámi individuals that were chosen by Sámi organisations. Concerning (2), the large number of participating organisations must be said to have laid the foundation for a rather decent proxy demos for the Sámi living in Murmansk Region. Most individuals considering themselves as Sámi would have at least one organisation on the list which they would be able to join in order to influence who was sent to the Co-ordination Council. A proxy demos constituted by members of civil-society organisations does favour the segment of the population that is already most politically/culturally active – but so does any proxy demos based on active self-enrolment, the Nordic Sámi electoral registers included.

Regarding practical influence over Sámi policy, the Co-ordination Council was placed very low in the hierarchy. The state structures had here ‘outsourced’ carefully framed political tasks to a self-managed but state-based structure (the Indigenous Centre), which again took on a group of NGO representatives to advise them. There was also a strong element of direct participation by the authorities in that advisory group: the Indigenous Centre’s leader co-ordinated their activities and took part in meetings (Indigenous Centre 2006). Nevertheless, the Indigenous Centre has some influence, and if the Sámi included in the Co-ordination Council had managed to get any decisive influence over that institution’s activity this would have given Russian Sámi civil society more political clout than it had had before. To what extent did the representatives perceive that this governance network gave them genuine influence? During fieldwork it became clear that many of them thought the network functioned poorly as a vehicle for Sámi influence. There were two discourses on why the representation structure had gone wrong – and they were polar opposites.

On the one hand, there were those who portrayed the basic problem as one of internal friction – particularly between AKS and OOSMO on the one hand, and certain *obščiny* on the other. Some *obščina* activists displayed a highly sceptical attitude towards AKS and OOSMO. One former *obščina* representative in the Co-ordination Council felt that the NGOs’ conduct caused ‘fighting and disorder [in the council], we just lost interest in going there’ (Interview Q) while another referred to the council as

full of ... the kind of Sámi that form the basis for the non-governmental organisations. They aren't interested in us and what we do, the traditional way of life. Fishing, reindeer, hunting, land. Those people who go over to you [Nordic Sámi] and say 'we are the Sámi' – they don't represent us. (Interview R)

The anti-AKS/OOSMO discourse articulated here seems related to a phenomenon noted by both Overland (1999) and Vladimirova (2006: 29–35): some Sámi perceive NGOs as self-enrichment tools for activists belonging to the urban and/or educated class. Vladimirova discusses such accusations of 'egoism' towards the *obščiny* from the general Sámi public; but it seems that similar attitudes are also found within some of the *obščiny*, directed towards the larger NGOs. Such attitudes to civil society are not unique to the Russian Sámi but rather generally prevalent in the Russian public (Overland and Berg-Nordlie 2012: 104–5). The interviewees who focused on internal frictions argued that the council could not 'solve problems constructively' (Interview H) because of them. Later on, the council experienced problems reaching a quorum, as certain *obščiny* representatives ceased to attend.

In the other discourse, the main problem was the council's low degree of influence. Interviewees focusing on this aspect argued both that the council was too far removed from those who would, in the end, make the decisions, and that there was a lack of will from the state structures to take council opinions into account:

Many decisions that the council made were not listened to by the regional authorities, important questions were not solved. As we know, the interests of the Sámi and the authorities do not always coincide (Sovkina 2008).

Interviewees belonging to this 'camp' tended to describe the organ as a purely symbolic or even manipulative form of indigenous representation.

One of the major issues that caused friction was that some members of the Co-ordination Council demanded a representation structure more like the *Sámedikkit*. In 2007, AKS and OOSMO signed a written agreement that they would work together for a Russian Sámi Parliament and, in March 2008, they institutionalised that co-operation through a joint Initiative Group (Interviews C and S).¹⁶ The existing governance structures fell short of the standards some activists expected, having long held the *Sámedikkit* as the model for Sámi representation.

The Co-ordination Council should have decided matters and [the Indigenous Centre] executed its decisions. That would have been a Sámi Parliament. Except that in the Council there were only the leaders of the organisations, not elected people (Interview S).

16. The Initiative Group had four members from AKS and four members from OOSMO. One of these also represented the Monchegorsk NCA and another headed an *obščina*, though was not listed as such. Six of the eight members were listed as members of the pan-Sámi women's network *Sámi Nissonforum* (Sovkina 2008).

The *Sámedikkit* were considered, by most interviewees, to have made practical improvements for the Nordic Sámi, and were seen as institutions capable of addressing major issues such as language revival and protection of natural resources for traditional usage. Nevertheless, some Sámi felt that the model could not be imported to Russia. Some of these held that the large number of indigenous peoples in Russia made individual ethnic parliaments for indigenous groups undesirable; others that the demographic specifics of the Russian Sámi (their small numbers) and Russian authorities' scepticism towards Western models made the idea unrealistic; and others again that RAIPON already served the function of 'a Sámi Parliament for all the native, small-numbered peoples of Russia' (Interview H). An interesting aspect of the Sámi Parliament debate was that many interviewees from different 'camps', presented the existing Sámi Parliaments as having more authority than what is actually the case, for example, referring to them as 'legislative organs' or having general 'veto-rights' over Sámi policy. Many were also of the opinion that Sámi Parliaments are 'independent from the state'. However, none of the actually-existing Sámi Parliaments have legislative powers or general veto-rights over Sámi policy and when the *Sámedikkit* are described as fully 'independent' this indicates little understanding of their legal position and the metagovernance to which they are subject (cf. Berg-Nordlie 2015a; Falch and Selle 2015; Josefsen *et al.* 2015). Rantala (2009) argues that such impressions of the *Sámedikkit* may stem, in part, from the term 'parliament', as this is 'perceived much more literally [in Russia] than in the Nordic states,' carrying strong connotations of a high level of authority that, for example, the Norwegian/Swedish term *Sameting* in Rantala's analysis does not. One interviewee similarly commented that 'the word "parliament" scares the bureaucrats. ... We need another kind of organ here. Another name, but working closely with the Murmansk government' (Interview Q).

The First Congress of the Murmansk Region Sámi (2008)

When the Initiative Group for a Sámi Parliament met with the counter-argument that all of Russia's indigenous groups could not each have their own parliament, they first discussed whether the arrangement could be offered only to *border-transcending* indigenous peoples like the Sámi. In the end, they suggested that the structure should not be on the federal level, but rather be an indigenous-elected second chamber of the regional parliament. They pointed to the Federal law on Guarantees for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that gave provinces the right to establish such entities (Sovkina 2008).¹⁷ When this position did not meet with support, they again reduced their ambitions, instead proposing a separate council of elected Sámi representatives, funded by the regional authorities, that would represent the group internationally and at the regional level (Initiative Group

17. KMNS Law, Art. 6.8, states that in order to defend traditional indigenous economic activities, ways of life and industries, provinces (regions, autonomous areas and so on) may create official councils of indigenous representatives.

2008; Interview E; Sovkina 2008). The authorities suggested a different model: a council of representatives, the members of which would first be suggested by a ‘Sámi Congress’ and subsequently approved by the governor (Interview H; <http://www.nrk.no> A; Šaršina and Jakovleva 2010).

It was proposed that in December 2008 a ‘First Congress of the Murmansk Region Sámi’ should gather to debate indigenous issues, including the Sámi Parliament issue, and give officials advice on Sámi policy (First Congress Document: Art. 1.1., 2.1., 3.3., 9.1). In April 2008 those present at a Co-ordination Council meeting gave their approval to the Initiative Group for a Russian Sámi Parliament and declared that the Co-ordination Council now constituted the ‘highest political authority’ of the Russian Sámi, until the First Congress (Sovkina 2008). Shortly after this, the Co-ordination Council was disbanded. The Indigenous Centre turned its attentions towards arranging the First Congress. Meanwhile, the Initiative Group also continued its work, hoping to have the First Congress decide on the necessity of a Russian Sámi Parliament. The scene now seemed set for a decisive meeting about the Sámi Parliament issue.

At the First Congress, the relationship between an indigenous assembly and the regional authorities was discussed. One of the Initiative Group faction’s main concerns was that the government should not be able to silence the assembly or to remove people from it. According to Initiative Group leader Valentina Sovkina, they wanted ‘a unitary, elected organ, and not just a new civil society organisation’, independent, but ‘not in the sense of a separate private institution’ (Interview E). Interviews indicate that there was some conceptual confusion about what ‘independence’ actually meant in practice, as well as disagreement about how much ‘independence’ could realistically be achieved while still retaining real political influence (*cf.* Robbins Chapter 3 in this book). The word ‘parliament’ did not help to clarify matters.

We do live in Russia, and we, the Russian citizens, already have a parliament. There can’t be two independent parliaments in one country. ... an independent parliament means separation from the authorities. ... I understand this as an [NGO], of which we have a few already.

The opposition to the Initiative Group was centred on activists from a number of *obščiny* and the Lovozero NCA. This camp supported the authorities’ suggested model of a Council that was not to be structurally independent, and subject to approval by the Governor.

The Congress majority eventually voted in favour of the Initiative Group’s model. It also elected a group of individuals – the Council of Authorised Representatives of the Sámi (*Sovet upolnomožjonnykh predstavitelej saamov Murmanskoj Oblasti*, henceforth referred to by its Russian acronym ‘SUPS’) – which was to represent the Sámi until the holding of an envisioned Second Congress, which, it was hoped, could establish an officially recognised representative organ (SUPS 2008). The SUPS members were elected not as representatives of organisations or institutions but on an individual basis. Still,

one can sum them up as people with backgrounds from AKS, OOSMO, one *obščina*, the Mončegorsk NCA and an individual who, at the time, worked for the Indigenous Centre. Valentina Sovkina was elected as their leader.

The regional authorities reacted negatively. Speaker Jevgenij Nikora of the regional parliament stated that ‘ethnic parliaments are not possible in Russia. You can call it a parliament, but it will not have any real power,’ (<http://www.finnmarken.no>) and Nikolay Šuškin of the Legal Projects’ Committee told journalists that:

violations of procedure – participation in the voting by citizens of Sámi ethnicity who were not original delegates [to the Congress], has forced the organs of the executive power to consider this Congress rather [just] a gathering of citizens ... we will work with them [SUPS] as we would with yet another civil society formation (*LP* 2008).

The First Congress had made its choice but the conflict was far from over.

The period 2004–8 begins with a ‘downgrading’ of the Sámi policy field: responsibility is delegated to a lower level of the Murmansk Region’s state structures. We might have expected this to result in less attention to Sámi affairs but, instead, 2004–8 saw an increase in Sámi political activity. Under the Indigenous Centre, the Russian Sámi received their most genuinely representative advisory organ to date: through the Co-ordination Council, representatives of Sámi civil society organisations were included in a common, institutionalised governance network for the first time. The Co-ordination Council had little political influence but apparently functioned as a catalyst for non-governmental action: it brought representatives of different Sámi civil society formations together in a common forum, kick-starting the first genuinely large-scale campaign for a Russian Sámi Parliament. This common forum also brought to the fore internal antagonisms, and it caused increased friction between the authorities and the emergent pro-Parliament movement. In the end, the Centre/Council network could not carry the conflicts, and this system for including Sámi representatives was discontinued by the authorities.

2009–2014: The Sobbar and the Sovet

As 2008 came to a close, the Indigenous Centre no longer had a civil-society-based Co-ordination Council but a large gathering of Sámi had recently elected a group of people to represent them. This group, SUPS, consisted of activists who wanted a Russian Sámi Parliament, an idea to which the Murmansk Region authorities had expressed open antipathy.

The Indigenous Council (2009–present)

In February 2009, the regional government established an official advisory and participatory body of Sámi representatives: the Council of Representatives of Native, Small-Numbered Peoples of the North under the Government of

Murmansk Region (*Sovet predstaviteley korennykh maločislennykh narodov Severa pri pravitelstve Murmanskoy Oblasti*, ‘Council of Representatives’) aimed at the ‘defence of rights and legal interests’ of the Sámi. The *obščiny* were given the right to suggest members of the Council of Representatives and the regional government subsequently chose representatives from among the nominated. Each Council of Representatives works for a two-year period. Those who support this system for Sámi civil society inclusion hold the Council of Representatives to be a natural reply to the request of the First Congress for a Sámi representative council (Jakovleva 2013). Those who do not support it are of the opinion that the authorities should rather have accepted as Sámi representatives those individuals elected by the First Congress – that is, the SUPS.

Let us analyse the Council of Representatives, applying the criteria for representativeness presented earlier in this chapter. Regarding (1), the representatives are indeed anchored in Sámi civil society organisations, since members must be nominated by *obščiny*. However, the *obščiny* do not actually decide who shall represent them. This power lies with the regional government. There are currently 23 *obščiny* so there can, potentially, be a very large number of candidates to choose from, when the government chooses the nine council members. Governmental power is limited only by whom the *obščiny* choose to nominate. If an *obščina* is dissatisfied with its representative, it is free not to re-nominate this person; and if you are not nominated you cannot be chosen. The actual capacity of the Sámi *obščiny* to evaluate and remove representatives will vary from case to case. Many of them are too small to have a functioning organisational democracy, in practice consisting only of a few individuals.

Regarding (2), the *obščiny* cannot be said to constitute an adequate proxy demos for the mass of people that the Council of Representatives, according to its own statutes, is set to represent – the Sámi of Murmansk Region (<http://gov.murman.ru> D: Art. 1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.5). The *obščiny* (a) are only of interest to Sámi who want to practise traditional economic activities; (b) take a lot of work to register and maintain; and (c) are, in practice, subject to a geographic limitation that excludes urban Sámi (*cf.* Berg-Nordlie 2015a). Most ethnic Sámi in Murmansk Region cannot and do not participate in the *obščina* sector of civil society. In sum, the Council of Representatives fulfils criterion (1) poorly and criterion (2) not at all.

However, this is not the entire ‘recipe’ for the Council of Representatives’ formation: there is a tenth member: an ethnic Sámi from the Regional Public Chamber (*Obščestvennaja palata Murmanskoy oblasti*) (<http://gov.murman.ru> D: Art 1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.5), which is another official structure for including civil society representatives in governance. The Public Chamber is constituted by 15 citizens selected by the governor; 15 representatives of regional civil-society formations, who are chosen on an individual basis by the regional parliament; and 15 representatives of local civil society formations who are selected by the 30 others (<http://uma.murman.ru>; Stuvøy 2013). The statutes of the Public Chamber do not, in fact, guarantee that there *are* any ethnic Sámi in this institution but in practice there have always been some – earlier three, presently two (Interviews

L and U). The presence of a Public Chamber-based Sámi increases the possibility for non-*obščina* Sámi to be represented. The first Sámi civil society representative chosen by the Public Chamber to the Council of Representatives (2009–11) was Julija Čuprova, associated with the Lovozero NCA that supported the authorities' model at the First Congress. The current (2011–present) is Andrej Jakovlev, who is associated with the *obščina* 'Puaz'. Jakovlev is currently the leader of the Council of Representatives.

The Council of Representatives' quarterly meetings are, in principle, open to the public. Making use of this opportunity, civil society activists from AKS and OOSMO have been present at many meetings. They are allowed to speak and to send in suggestions for items to be put on the meeting's agenda (Interviews K, V and W). The openness of the governance network is not limited to people who toe the line politically – for example, OOSMO's position is that the Council of Representatives should be expanded to include non-*obščina* representatives and that the representatives should be elected rather than selected, but they are allowed to participate nevertheless (Interview W). Even central pro-Parliament activists have been allowed to attend the council meetings. Furthermore, the council's working groups on fisheries (*rabočaja grupa po rybolovstvu*) and on language revitalisation (*rabočaja grupa po sokhraneniju saamskogo jazyka*) include members external to the *obščina* sector, among them pro-Parliament activists.

All these mechanisms that bring in non-*obščina* participants improve the representativeness of the council somewhat, but voting rights are still only given to the council's full members. Recommendations and initiatives from the council are formally decided on solely by these full council members, and it is also these who, together with the Indigenous Centre, decide who participate in the working groups (Interview U).

The regional authorities exert a high degree of metagovernance over the council. They determine the council's composition and, through its statutes, frame its tasks. The Indigenous Centre is tasked with 'organisational and technical' management of the council, which includes preparing the meeting agendas. The authorities furthermore participate directly in the council, as a regional government representative is to be present at their meetings (<http://gov.murman.ru> D). In practice, a vice-governor has filled this role. In addition, representatives of various government committees can be and are invited to council meetings as speaking guests, for example, the Civil Society Committee and the Fisheries' Committee (<http://nord-news.ru>). Participants in network governance elsewhere in Russia have underscored the importance of involving high-ranking politicians directly, in order for a governance network to obtain actual political influence (Tarasenko *et al.* 2011: 31–2). The direct participation of authorities can hence be a two-edged sword: it deprives the indigenous representatives of the opportunity to discuss matters and decide on issues alone, but it may also reduce the chances of being ignored by decision-makers (*cf.* Robbins, in this volume).

The Council of Representatives is, formally, only an advisory organ. Among issues that it has worked with are strengthening of the *obščiny* through subsidies from the region, and challenges regarding mechanisms for distributing indigenous

fishing quotas to the Sámi. Much of their activity is oriented towards the funding programme ‘Economic and Social Development of the Native, Small-Numbered Peoples of the North in Murmansk Region’, which also funds the activities of the council (Jakovleva 2013). The council is entitled to advise the executive powers about who shall receive subsidies from this programme (Interviews L, U, V, W and X). As for the degree to which the council’s advice is listened to, different interviewees give different replies. Some of those critical of the council dismiss it as purely symbolic/manipulative. Others, not least those who participate in the council, claim that it does wield actual influence, albeit over limited matters. Several interviewees suggest that the council and the Centre indeed have a decisive influence over who gets subsidies from the funding programme. On the whole, it seems unfair to say that the Council of Representatives is an entirely symbolic/manipulative structure, but nor can its advisory-participatory influence be called ‘indigenous self-determination’. The Council of Representatives fulfils neither the ‘determination’ aspect (too little power) nor the ‘self’ aspect (not representative enough). The council is not actually *intended* to be an institution for self-determination – it is framed only as an advisory body, representing the interests of the Sámi community in political affairs – but it cannot be said to realise that ambition either, since it is not very representative.

The Sámi’ Sobbar (2010–present)

SUPS, the council elected at the First Congress, did not give up when the Council of Representatives was created. Immediately after the congress, its members began to seek recognition as the legitimate representatives of the Russian Sámi, both in Russia and in western Sápmi. They had some success in the West. In Nordic Sámi media, SUPS members made use of existing personal contacts to link up with pan-Sámi political networks and SUPS was from day one presented as an entity on its way to becoming a Russian Sámi Parliament. The Council of Representatives, on the other hand, initiated no cross-border co-operation with Nordic indigenous governance structures and received next to no Nordic media coverage. In Russia, SUPS was supported by RAIPON, who published an article after the First Congress that congratulated it for having ‘founded a national representative organ – the Sámi Parliament, officially called the Council of Authorised Representatives’ (Berg-Nordlie 2011: 27–8, 33–4 and 2014: 376, 383–5; <http://www.raipon.info>). In its relations with the regional authorities, SUPS fared much worse.

During the two years following the First Congress, SUPS did not succeed in convincing the regional government of the necessity of a Russian Sámi Parliament. When the time came for the Second Congress, the authorities did not organise any such event. In December 2010, SUPS instead organised their own ‘Second Congress’ in Murmansk City. Being organised by non-state actors, this congress could not establish any official representative body. Still, the participants elected what they would refer to in Russian as a *Saamskij parlament*, a Sámi Parliament. The term *Sámediggi* was not used for this assembly since that word is from North Sámi, a language not native to the Kola Peninsula. A Kildin Sámi (*cf.* Scheller

2011: 84, 86–8) name was instead chosen: *Kuèllnègknoark Sám' Sobbar*, which refers back to the Imperial-era '*Koladak Sobbar*' discussed above. This assembly of Sámi was intended to be active for four years and work towards recognition by the authorities (SUPS 2010). Continuity from SUPS may be observed in the Sobbar through the presence of activists associated with AKS, OOSMO and the Mončegorsk NCA. Three of the SUPS members continued, in leading roles: Nina Afanas'jeva, Andrej Danilov and Valentina Sovkina (leader). The *Sobbar* furthermore included people active in the Russian branch of the international Sámi Womens' Forum, the youth organisation Sám' Nuraš, the Lovozero-based '*sovkhoz*' 'Tundra' and the *obščina* 'Jona'. While SUPS included one member who worked in the Indigenous Centre and one who was simultaneously a full member of the Council of Representatives, there were no such overlaps in the case of the Sobbar.

If we are to speak about the representativeness of the Sobbar, the body has its democratic 'anchor' not in civil-society organisations but in the congress that elected it. The next opportunity for voters to replace it would be a 'Third Congress' that the Sobbar aimed to hold by the end of 2014 (Interview X). If we return to our criteria for representativeness, we observe that (1) the Sobbar was indeed elected by a body claiming to represent the Russian Sámi, but (2) the degree to which the 'Second Congress' was valid as a proxy demos is disputed. On the one hand, most Russian Sámi did not have the opportunity to participate in it. On the other hand, several AKS and OOSMO members describe the 'Second Congress' as involving a large number of Sámi activists from various organisations and, hence, that it at least reflected Sámi civil society well. Nevertheless, the current leader of AKS (Jelena Jakovleva) has expressed doubts about the extent to which this congress was representative of the Russian Sámi (<http://www.nrk.no> B and C). The Sobbar's legitimacy as a representative of the Sámi may be said to have received a 'boost' during the Twentieth International Sámi Conference (Murmansk City, 2013) when the Russian delegation to the conference unanimously voted for the Kuellnegk Nark Declaration, which included a statement of support for the Sobbar. The Declaration did not ask the authorities to recognise the Sobbar as a 'Sámi Parliament', or as the sole representative organ of the Russian Sámi, but it did request them to treat the entity as a relevant civil society actor.¹⁸ This was also backed by the AKS members of the Russian delegation, which included activists who were normally critical of the Sobbar, such as the AKS leader and the leader of the Council of Representatives.

In the period up to the fall of 2014 the Sobbar was not granted any formal political recognition. In fact, formally the Sobbar does not exist: there is no registered entity called *Kuèllnègknoark Sám' Sobbar*. Its members have not registered it as an NGO, partly because they wish for it to be accepted as an official body but also as a tactic to avoid harassment from authorities looking for 'foreign agents'

18. 'The Saami Conference supports the Kuellnegk Nark Sam Sobbar's efforts to build partnership with the regional government for sustainable cooperation between the Saami and the majority population in the Saami territory on Kola. The Saami Conference calls on the Governor of the Murmansk region to support the activity of Kuellnegk Nark Sam Sobbar' (SR 2013).

among critical NGOs. The Sobbar has established a legal leg to stand - the Fund for Sámi Heritage and Development (*Fond saamskogo nasledija i razvitija*), chaired by Sobbar member Andrej Danilov. This enables them to receive financial support and be formally involved in Sámi-oriented projects (Interview X). Apart from the fund, the Sobbar is an informal network of activists headed by Sovkina, Afanas'jeva and Danilov that works in opposition to the established system of indigenous governance in Murmansk Region. They criticise the indigenous politics of the region and the regional authorities treat them with relative disregard. There have been a few notable exceptions, for example, in August 2012, when a regional government media spokesperson accused the Sobbar of being foreign agents, financed and co-ordinated by the Norwegian Sámi Parliament (<http://www.7x7-journal.ru>). Sovkina, Afanas'jeva, Danilov and a fourth Sobbar member were explicitly named as facilitating conflict between the Sámi and the Russian state. These accusations fall in line with a general tendency in Russia for critical civil-society activists with ties to the West to be accused foreign agency (Aasland *et al.* 2013). In the Sobbar case there was no subsequent legal action, such as in the comparable Mosejev case in nearby Arkhangelsk Region (Barentsobserver.com C).

Despite this apparent rift between pro-Parliament activists and the authorities, when we apply a network governance perspective to the issue we observe that the wall between them is not entirely solid. Sobbar activists, either individually or representing the fund, attend the Council of Representatives' meetings as participating observers, just like AKS and OOSMO. While they cannot vote, this at least gives them the opportunity to speak in the governance network (Interviews V and X). According to Sovkina, representatives of the Civil Society Committee were invited to a conference arranged by Sobbar activists in Lovozero, and did indeed attend – even if this was right after the allegations of foreign agency (Interview X). Furthermore, Sobbar activists at times participate in arranging cultural events together with the Indigenous Centre and other state institutions. Most notable is still that Afanas'jeva and Danilov, who were accused of foreign agency by the Government's media spokesperson in 2012, were made respectively leader and secretary of the Council of Representatives' Working group on language preservation in 2013 (<http://www.lovozerocentre.ru>; <http://www.mvestnik.ru>). Naturally, since the Sobbar does not formally exist, this is all officially just the activities of two or three committed individuals. The Sobbar activists themselves, however, construct their political participation discursively as activities of the Sobbar.

In sum, despite there being some bursts of outright hostility in the relationship between the Sobbar and the different bodies under the region, the Sobbar activists are allowed to participate in policy-discussing and event-organising networks together with representatives of the state structures. It is difficult to call this 'manipulative inclusion', since the Sobbar activists appear entirely aware that the authorities do not take their opinions into account. Nor can it be called 'symbolic inclusion', since the authorities do not discuss the matter as 'including the Sobbar': quite the contrary, interviewees affiliated with the state structures underscore that, from their point of view, these are just individual Sámi activists and not representatives of any 'Sámi Parliament'. Perhaps it would be better to say that it

is the Sobbar activists who are performing a sort of ‘symbolic participation’ – they utilise the symbolic value of participating in a governance network together with the authorities, as part of their campaign to demonstrate that they exist and are ready to assume the role of representatives of the Sámi.

Conclusion: Sámi representation in Murmansk Region

This chapter has attempted to answer the questions of how indigenous governance has developed in Murmansk Region 1992–2014; how inspiration from the Nordic indigenous governance model has impacted the region’s indigenous politics; and if indigenous representation has improved.

The evolution of indigenous governance in Murmansk Region can be described as having undergone three distinct phases since the collapse of the USSR.

The first period (1992–2003) was characterised by indigenous governance structures that were unstable and understaffed and inclusion mechanisms for Sámi civil society that offered only poor representativeness. This was partly due to the authorities’ failure to develop a system for representation more sophisticated than simply inviting individual leader figures to participate – but also because internal problems within Sámi civil society made it difficult for the Sámi population to evaluate and recall their representatives. For most of this period, AKS served as the proxy demos for the Sámi population. AKS was open to all Sámi citizens of Murmansk Region to become active members and, as such, could have made a decent proxy demos, but its internal democracy did not function well enough to ensure that Sámi representatives were truly dependent on support from below. By the end of the period, Russian Sámi civil society had fragmented so much that AKS alone could not be considered as an adequate approximation of Murmansk Region’s Sámi population.

The second period (2004–8) saw the establishment of a new central institution for indigenous governance – placed at a lower level in the hierarchy but more stable in the sense that it was subject to less rapid reorganisation. This institution, the Indigenous Centre, created a system for indigenous inclusion that was fairly representative: it gathered the leaders of all Sámi civil-society formations in Murmansk Region into a Co-ordination Council. The combined memberships of all these organisations made for a rather broad and inclusive proxy demos, although the state of the internal democracy of each of the 18 participating organisations varied. While inclusive, the Coordination Council was not very politically influential. During this period, the future of Sámi governance in Russia came under explicit discussion, culminating in 2008 with a gathering called the First Congress of the Russian Sámi. That congress failed in the sense that no common solution was found between the authorities and the participants. The authorities also failed to perform effective metagovernance: they lost control over the proceedings at the congress, and the gathered non-state participants ended up demanding something that the authorities were not ready to give – a body of officially authorised Sámi representatives elected by Sámi citizens of Murmansk Region or, in other words, a Sámi Parliament for Murmansk Region.

The third period (2009–present) saw the establishment of a relatively stable indigenous inclusion structure that has more political influence than its predecessor but is weak in terms of representativeness. The Council of Representatives is chosen by the authorities and the only organisations allowed to nominate candidates are the *obščiny* – a far too narrow base to be considered an adequate proxy demos. Further arrangements allow other Sámi organisations the possibility of sending individuals to participate in the Sámi governance network but these are not given full rights.

Throughout all the three periods, a constant element of Murmansk Region's indigenous governance is active metagovernance from the side of the authorities. The authorities have always retained their freedom to select whom they should include in governance networks, except for 2004–8, when they bound themselves to include leaders or deputy leaders of Sámi civil society formations in the Co-ordination Council. Still, in both the Co-ordination Council and in today's Council of Representatives, the authorities framed the activities of the representation structures by controlling the means available to the councils, deciding their areas of activity, preserving their own power to set meeting agendas and participating directly.

Hence, while we observe a shift towards more of a network governance mode starting in 2004, the authorities still deal with included civil-society actors in a highly 'hands-on' manner. Therefore, while post-Soviet Sámi politics is elsewhere discussed in terms of 'AKS-unipolarity' (1989–98) and subsequent 'multipolarity' (1998–onwards) (Overland and Berg-Nordlie 2012: 102), we must recognise that this historical periodisation refers to conditions within Sámi *civil society*. In terms of official Sámi governance, the tendency has remained very 'unipolar' indeed, as the authorities hold the reins firmly. Nevertheless, we must conclude that the involvement of indigenous civil society that we see in 2014 is decidedly more broad and complex than what we observed at the outset of the period under analysis, when the mode of governance was even more strictly hierarchal and civil society inclusion rather weakly systemised.

Another constant element in Russian Sámi politics is the influence of the Sámi Parliament model. One notable consequence of the pro-Parliament activism is the creation of National Cultural Autonomies, cultural NGOs for urban Sámi, which evolved from a project aimed at founding a Russian Sámi Parliament. The Sámi Parliament model has also had a decisive impact on local conflict dynamics: Many Russian Sámi are inspired by the model and create political pressure from below to introduce it locally. This causes disagreements between Sámi activists – some of whom are more pragmatic and focused on 'Russian realities' in their discourse and outlook, whereas others have a more pronounced pan-Sámi and indigenous-rights-based ideological orientation. The disagreements are even more substantial between the latter activists and Murmansk Region's authorities, who have been very sceptical towards the Sámi Parliament model.

We observe an element of change in the degree of grassroots pressure for a Russian Sámi Parliament over time. While the idea had been present since the early 1990s, pressure from below peaked in 2008–10. Following this, a self-declared

‘Sámi Parliament’ has been operating without the authorities’ approval. The intensified pro-Sámi-Parliament activism seems, at least partially, to be a result of the Murmansk authorities’ establishment of the Co-ordination Council (2006–8). While this structure brought some internal disagreements to the fore, it also contributed to increased co-ordination between some civil society groups, particularly AKS and OOSMO, which facilitated the movement for a Russian Sámi Parliament. Despite the observed intensification of pro-Parliament activism, we must – if defining a Sámi Parliament as an official representative organ which is controlled by an assembly of Sámi who are elected by an adequate proxy demos – conclude that there still is no institution in Russia that could be considered a Sámi Parliament. If we look at some core functions of the *Sámedikkit*, we also find that there is no single institution in Russia that performs these. Representation of the Russian Sámi in international and particularly pan-Sámi affairs is mainly taken care of by AKS and OOSMO; the official voice of the Sámi minority *vis-à-vis* the authorities is the Council of Representatives; and as for a politically and symbolically unifying organ for the Murmansk Region Sámi, there exists at the time of writing no institution which is both democratically representative and politically relevant enough to fill this role.

On the whole, since the collapse of the USSR, the authorities of Murmansk Region have gradually created a more sophisticated system for indigenous participation in policy-making; but the political power of Sámi representatives is still low when compared to the other states that have indigenous Sámi populations, and there are no adequate mechanisms to ensure that the Sámi included in official indigenous governance networks are representative of Murmansk Region’s Sámi population.

Abbreviations and shorthand names

AKS: *Associjacija Kol’skikh Saamov* Association of Kola Sámi. Murmansk-City-centred NGO (est.1989). RAIPON member.

Co-ordination Council: *Koordinacjonnyj sovet pri gosudarstvennom oblastnom učreždenii ‘Murmanskij oblastnoj centr korennykh maločislennykh narodov Severa’*. Advisory council established by Indigenous Centre, 2006–8. Constituted by representatives of all Sámi civil-society organisations in Murmansk Region.

Congresses: *S’jezdy korenного maločislennogo naroda Rossijskoj Federatsii (Saamov) proživajuščego v Murmanskij oblasti*. Sámi congresses. First Congress of elected Sámi delegates held in Olenegorsk, 2008, organised by Indigenous Centre, selected SUPS. ‘Second Congress’ held in Murmansk City in 2010, organised by non-state actors, elected Sobbar.

Council of Representatives: *Sovet predstavitelej korennykh maločislennykh narodov Severa pri pravitelstve Murmanskij Oblasti*. Council of *obščina* representatives (est. 2009) by Governor to advise government on Sámi policy.

- Indigenous Centre: *Gosudarstvennoje Oblastnoje [Bjužetnoje] Učreždenije* 'Centr korennykh maločislennykh narodov Severa'. Institution (est. 2004) by regional authorities to assist in creation, co-ordination, and execution of Sámi policy.
- Indigenous Issues Committee: *Komitet po delam korennykh maločislennykh narodov Severa*. Committee for Sámi affairs under the government of Murmansk Region, 1992–1997. Replaced by Indigenous Sector.
- Indigenous Problems' Committee: *Komitet po problemam korennykh maločislennykh narodov Severa*. Responsible for indigenous governance 2000–2. Merged with other committees in 2002. From 2004, Indigenous Centre new central institution for indigenous governance.
- Indigenous Sector: *Otdel po delam korennykh narodov Severa*. Responsible for indigenous governance 1997–2000. Reorganised into Indigenous Problems' Committee.
- Initiative Group: *Iniciativnaja gruppа po sozdaniju Parlamenta saami Murmanskoj oblasti*. Initiative group for Russian Sámi Parliament (2008). Worked for realisation of Russian Sámi Parliament and suggested creation of SUPS.
- NCA ('Autonomies'): *Nacional'no-kul'turnye avtonomii*. National-cultural autonomies, City-based, non-territorial NGOs (Apatity, Lovozero, Mončegorsk) to protect Sámi culture and identity (first est. 2007).
- Obščiny*: Kin-/community-based non-commercial membership organisations for indigenous people, aimed at the preservation of traditional lifestyles. First Sámi *obščina* (est. 2002).
- OOSMO: *Obščestvennaja organizacija saamov Murmanskoj Oblasti*. NGO of Murmansk Region Sámi. Lovozero-centred NGO (est. 1998).
- RAIPON, Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North: *Associjatsija korennykh maločislennykh narodov Severa, Sibiri i Dal'nego Vostoka Rossijskoj Federatsii*. Indigenous NGO umbrella organisation (est. 1990) with headquarters in Moscow. AKS was founding member.
- Sám' Nuraš: Russian Sámi youth organisation, (est. 2009).
- Sobbar: *Saamskij parlament, Kuëllnègknjoark Sám' Sobbar*. Elected 2010 by 'Second Congress' to represent Russian Sámi.
- SUPS; *Sovet upolnomočjonnykh predstavitelej saamov Murmanskoj Oblasti*. Elected 2008 by First Congress to represent Sámi. Replaced by Sobbar 2010

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Interviews

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- B: Nina Afanas’jeva. Murmansk, 1 May 2010.
- C: Aleksandr Kobelev, OOSMO leader (1998–2008), member of Initiative Group and SUPS. Lovozero, 26 April 2010.
- D: Jelena Jakovleva, AKS leader (2010–present), Initiative Group member, former leader, *obščina* ‘Kil’din’. Murmansk, 3 May 2010.
- E: Valentina Sovkina, Leader of Initiative Group, SUPS and Sobbar. Lovozero, 26 April 2010.
- F: Anna Afanas’jeva, Leader of Sám’ Nuraš (2009–10). Murmansk, 22 April 2010.
- G: Natal’ja Gavrilova, Leader, Apatity and Regional Sámi NCA. Apatity, 23 April 2010.
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- I: Sámi civil-society activist, spring 2010.
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- V: Nadežda Čuprova, Leader of the Indigenous Centre. Murmansk, 25 April 2013.
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