

Chapter 7: The Sámediggi electoral roll in Norway – framework, growth and geographical shifts 1989—2009

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Introduction

In recent decades, indigenous peoples all over the world have mobilised to improve their social conditions and their cultural and political rights. This is also the case for the Sámi, whose traditional settlement area, often referred to as Sápmi, covers what is known as the middle and northern parts of Norway, Sweden and Finland, and the Kola Peninsula in northwest Russia. As a result of Sámi political mobilisation, among other things, a separate Sámi popularly elected body – *Sámediggi* in Northern Sámi, *Sameting* in Scandinavian – has been established in Norway, Sweden and Finland respectively. Each Sámediggi is a complement to the political system of the state, and the Sámi can still participate in all other elections. Due to significant variations in Sámi history and present situation within the respective states, the three Sámediggi differ with respect to voting requirements, scope of authority, available resources and organisational structures (Smith ed. 2005, Henriksen 2008, Lantto 2010). Also, although the Sámi consider themselves as one people, there is no pan-Sámi definition of who 'is' Sámi (Smith ed. 2005). Hence, despite the identical designation, analysis and descriptions of a given Sámediggi must always take as a starting point the circumstances of the state in question.

This chapter deals with the Sámediggi in Norway. Here, the decision to establish a Sámediggi was made in 1987 when the Norwegian parliament, the Storting, passed a separate Sámi act; *Act concerning the Sameting (the Sámi parliament) and other Sámi legal matters*. Based on preparatory work between 1980 and 1984 by the government appointed Sámi Rights Commission, this act stated that the Sámi in Norway shall have a national assembly – a Sámediggi – whose main purpose is to be a forum for Sámi deliberation and formulation of Sámi policy in matters concerning the Sámi as a people (NOU 1984: 18; Ot.prp. nr 33 (1986-87)).

Sámi ethnicity is not registered in Norway's national censuses. Therefore, the establishment of the Sámediggi introduced a need for some kind of delimitation: who are entitled to vote, and who are not? This chapter thus expands on the theme discussed in de Costa's contribution to this volume – the definition of indigenous peoples – in the context of elections to the Norwegian Sámediggi. In this case, the definition was drawn up in a process that included both state representatives and the Sámi themselves.

The outcome of this process was that those Sámi who according to certain criteria have chosen to join an electoral roll established for this purpose, are eligible and entitled to vote in the Sámediggi elections. Other main elements of

the election system are that thirty nine representatives shall be directly elected from a given number of constituencies – originally thirteen, reduced to seven from and including the 2009 election. The Sámediggi elections shall be held every four years; simultaneously with elections to the Storting.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the framework for the Sámediggi electoral roll in Norway and to provide an overview of how this electoral roll developed from the first Sámediggi election in 1989 and up to and including the sixth election in 2009. The main aim is to present the roll's development at various geographical levels through these twenty years. Some explanatory factors for the outcomes are also suggested. The chapter starts with a review of the ideas behind having a separate Sámediggi electoral roll, and a description of its main features. It continues with an outline of the roll's overall development, followed by more detailed presentations of distributions at the constituency and municipality level respectively. The subsequent section provides a summary discussion of the two main tendencies observed in the material, namely overall growth and geographical shifts. The chapter concludes with a commentary on representativeness and the need for further research.

A separate electoral roll – purpose and framework

The idea of having a central assembly for the Sámi in Norway was not new, nor was it in itself controversial. Established in 1964, *The Norwegian Sámi Council* had already, in varying forms, functioned as an advisory body for regional and national authorities in matters of special concern for and to the Sámi population. The council members were appointed by the Government on the basis of proposals from selected organisations. Gradually, however, Sámi stakeholders started to question the mode of appointment of members, and hence the representativeness of the council as a Sámi body. Consequently, when the question concerning establishment of a central Sámi assembly was included in the mandate given to the Sámi Rights Commission in 1980, the main controversy turned out to be not the need for a Sámi body, but how the selection of members should be organised to achieve a composition that could best represent Sámi views on Sámi matters (NOU 1984: 18).

The Sámi Rights Commission comprised both Norwegian and Sámi experts and interest group representatives. In its preparatory work, the Commission described the purpose of a Sámi representative body as to provide a forum for discussion of Sámi matters and for formulation of Sámi policy in fields where the Sámi collective wishes to make its voice heard. It was emphasised that in '[...] a sufficiently representative Sámi Assembly, contentious issues can be voted over, and thereby achieve an outcome which is in conformity with generally accepted democratic principles [...]' which in turn could lead to '[...] a more legitimate and often more rapid solution to some Sámi matters' (NOU 1984: 18: 497). In retrospect, the ethno-political mobilisation that preceded the establishment of the Sámediggi has been especially linked to the struggle for a right to Sámi internal disagreement and individual differences. That is, the mobilisation surrounding Sámi policy concerned the right to diverge as Sámi and

the right to be diverse as Sámi. The establishment of a Sámediggi represented an institutionalisation of this political right (Oskal 2003). Nevertheless, the main basis for the Sámediggi rests on the fact that it is an assembly elected by and for the Sámi people, and as a popularly elected Sámi body, the Sámi population in Norway constitutes its source of political legitimacy (Broderstad 1999).

Controversies and complications

Members of the Sámi Rights Commission as well as stakeholders consulted during the hearing round in 1984-1986, were strongly divided with regard to the establishment of a separate electoral roll (NOU 1984: 18; Ot.prp. nr 33 (1986-87)). The *supporters* argued that the use of such a register is the common practice when holding direct elections and is intended to produce the best representativeness. Additionally, a separate electoral roll was also perceived as a potential means for Sámi cultural mobilisation; an opportunity to register on an electoral roll could induce individuals to (re)assess their ethnic affiliation and the existence of such a roll could thereby generate stronger Sámi awareness and self-confidence and enhance the status of the Sámi as a distinct people. The *opponents* of a separate electoral roll argued that matters of ethnic identity and ethnic boundaries were too highly emotionally laden and that a separate roll would have the potential to cause harmful antagonism in local communities as well as personal distress for individuals. In fact, it was claimed that '[...] in reality, the ethnic boundaries are so fluid that any attempt to establish fair and applicable criteria for the enfranchisement is doomed to fail from the start' (Ot.prp. nr 33 (1986-87): 505).

The controversies and complications regarding the Sámediggi electoral roll can be linked to two issues that are partly interrelated. The first issue is the one of assimilation policy. At the time when the Sámi Rights Commission started its work in 1980, a systematic policy of assimilation had been in effect in Norway for more than a century, involving the use of governmental instruments to persuade the Sámi to give up the Sámi language, change the basic values of their culture and replace their ethnic identity (Minde 2003). This so-called Norwegianisation policy was by and large successful – especially in coastal areas – and gradually, many who could have identified themselves as Sámi and/or as Sámi speakers, no longer wished to or chose to do so (see e.g. Hirsti 1967; Homme ed. 1969; Eidheim 1971; Nielsen 1986; Minde 2005).

The second issue concerning the separate Sámediggi electoral roll is the absence of an up-to-date nationwide demographic register of the Sámi population. While information on Sámi affiliation in various ways was included in most Norwegian censuses up till 1930, this practice was abandoned after World War II (Lie 2002) and replaced with a normative census policy of not collecting data on the citizens' ethnicity, be that Sámi or other. In this matter Norway does thus not belong to those countries where recording of ethnicity data is a conventional part of the census (Morning 2008). Rather, Norway holds the

widespread European position where collection of such data is not only contested but rejected (Simon 2011).¹

One minor exception to the Norwegian post-war census practice has however occurred. This was in 1970 when the census came to include four questions about whether the respondent and his/her parents and grandparents used Sámi as their home language, and whether the respondent self-identified as Sámi (Aubert 1978). The background for this exception was that even though the Sámi data in the pre-World War II censuses were characterised by a number of inconsistencies due to varying criteria used for ethnic categorisations (Evjen and Hansen 2009), the total absence of up-to-date Sámi demographic data had given rise to new challenges. In 1959, a resolution by the Third Nordic Sámi Conference stated that Sámi organisations as well as Norwegian authorities needed '[...] better statistical information on the size and distribution of the Sámi population and data on its living conditions' (Aubert 1978: 16). In the subsequent years, the data issue was repeatedly put on the agenda by Sámi stakeholders (NOU 1984: 18, Ch. 10.2.2), resulting in the above mentioned inclusion of four questions about Sámi affiliation in the 1970 Census. But while Sámi stakeholders had argued that the 'Sámi questions' should be treated as standard census questions, the questions were instead printed on a separate questionnaire for use in a number of preselected census tracts in Norway's three northernmost counties. The argument was that an inclusion of the four Sámi questions on the regular census form would be too expensive (Thorsen 1972). As the tracts where at least one Sámi census form was completed corresponded to 2.9 per cent of the country's population, the result was, of course, that the Sámi 1970 Census data had little potential to reveal the geographical and demographic distribution of Norway's Sámi population at the time.

The exact outcomes of the Sámi questions were that 9,175 persons identified themselves as Sámi, another 10,535 reported Sámi as their first language, while 16,808 and 19,635 respondents reported to have at least one parent or grandparent respectively whose first language was Sámi. However, at the time of the 1970 Census (the effects of) the assimilation policy was still in operation. This means that many people were not only hesitant to acknowledge Sámi affiliation (Eidheim 1971); some may have been even more reluctant to have their ethnic affiliation recorded in a public register (Aubert 1978). In addition, the atrocities committed against ethnic community members during World War II were still fresh in memory and it is highly probably many Sami will have been unwilling to record themselves as 'Others' (Seltzner and Anderson 2001; Sjøby 2001).² Furthermore, overall opposition to official recording of information about ethnicity (Kertzner and Arel 2002), might be found among all citizens, also Sámi. The outcomes of the Sámi questions in the 1970 Census must thus be interpreted with all these reservations in mind.

¹ Neither the complex and contentious issue of the recording of ethnicity data for administrative purposes nor the ethnicity concept itself is further elaborated in this chapter.

² The title of the Statistics Norway's 1930 Census publication containing the Sámi data was *Sámi and Kven. – Other countries' citizens. Blinds, Deaf mutes, Retards and Lunatics* (Statistics Norway 1933).

Sociologist Vilhelm Aubert, who had a central role in the census planning, suggested in his analysis of the census data that when taking all known restrictions and possible unintended sources of error in the material into account, '[t]here are in Norway probably some 40 000 persons whose life is in one way or another affected by their Sámi [Lappish] ancestry' (Aubert 1978: 118f).

To sum up: As only historical demographic data were available about the Sámi population in Norway, the development of an electoral system for a representative Sámi assembly was carried out against a backdrop of assimilation policy intertwined with absence of census data on ethnic affiliation. Consequently, the Sámi Rights Commission had a fragile basis for predicting the number of persons who could be qualified to enrol on a future Sámediggi electoral roll – in total and particularly per proposed constituency.

Change of term – from Sámi census to Sámediggi electoral roll

The Sami Act did originally refer to the Sámediggi electoral roll as the Sámi census; *samemanttallet* in Norwegian. The use of the word census did probably stem from a blending of two issues; claims about the need for a Sámi demographic register and the discussions about having a separate Sámi electoral register for use in elections to a Sámi assembly. However, it turned out that the term Sámi census gave rise to confusion. Indeed, quite often the electoral register was perceived as a register of the total Sámi population, instead of what it was explicitly stated to be, namely an electoral roll for use for Sámediggi elections. To clarify this, the term was in 2007 changed to the Sámediggi electoral roll; *Sametingets valgmanntall* in Norwegian (Sametinget 2007).

Inclusion criteria

The right to enrol on the Sámediggi electoral roll is set out in Section 2, subsection 6 of the Sámi Act:

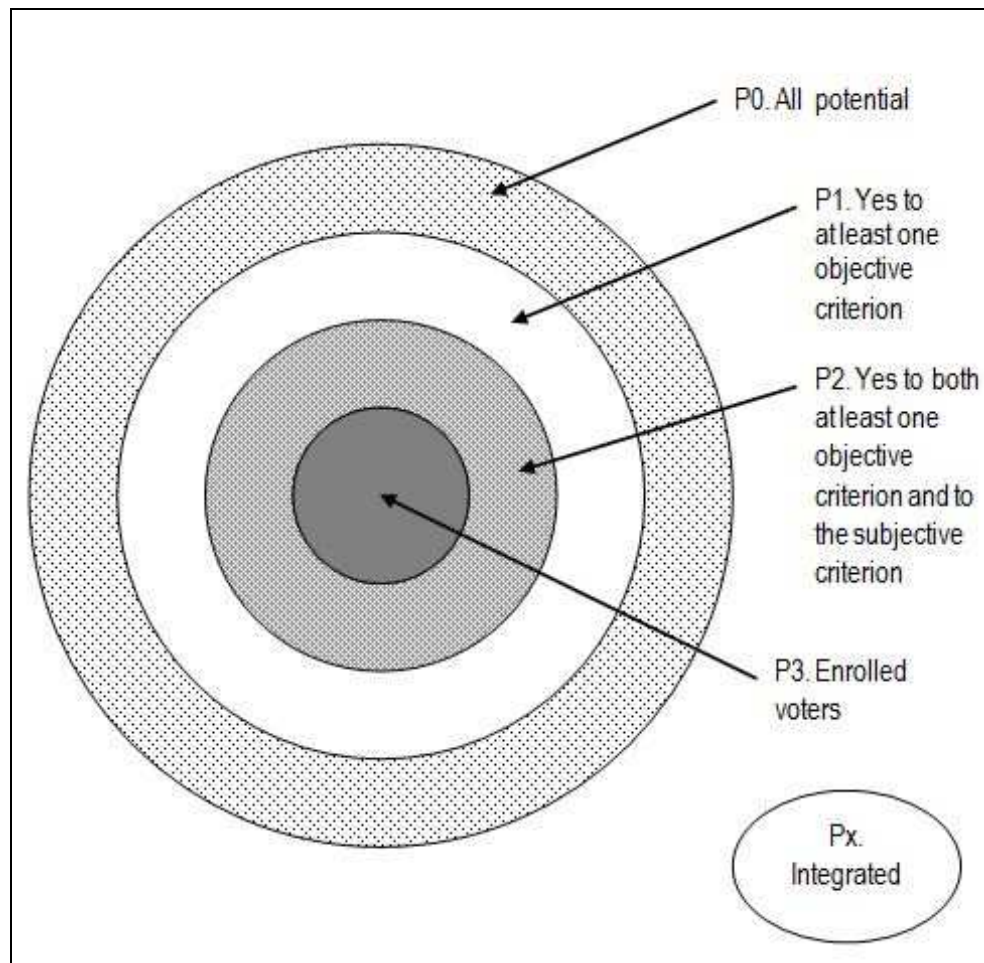
All persons who make a declaration to the effect that they consider themselves to be Sámi, and who either a) have Sámi as their domestic language, or b) have or have had a parent, grandparent or great-grandparent with Sámi as his or her domestic language, or c) are the child of a person who is or has been registered on the Sámediggi electoral roll may demand to be included on a separate register of Sámi electors in their municipality of residence.

Persons who want to join the roll must also comply with the general criteria for the right to vote in local elections in Norway, including age (18 years or older in the election year) and place of residence. Those who have joined the Sámediggi electoral roll can later request to be deleted. Declaring oneself as Sámi is often referred to as the *subjective* criterion of enrolment while the other conditions are referred to as *objective* criteria. As the Sámi Act states that persons *may* demand to be included in the electoral roll, this emphasises that

enrolment is voluntary; an voluntariness which was repeatedly stressed in the preparatory work of the act (NOU 1984: 18; Ot.prp. nr 33 (1986-87)).

Basically, to enrol on the Sámediggi electoral roll requires compliance with two legally defined criteria, while at the same time, those who fulfil the criteria must decide for themselves whether they want to join or not. In Figure 1 this situation is captured by the schematic populations P0-P3.

Figure 1: Schematic populations related to the inclusion criteria for enrolment on the Sámediggi electoral roll.



Source: own design

P0 represents a population of persons who *de facto* fulfil at least one of the objective criteria for enrolment. Those persons within P0, who are familiar with and acknowledge this, constitute the population P1. The population P2 comprises those persons within P1 who self-identify as Sámi, be that as mainly Sámi, mostly Sámi, sufficiently Sámi and/or Sámi in combination with another ethnic identity. Finally, P3 comprises those persons within P2 who actually choose to enrol on the Sámediggi electoral roll.

Figure 1 also comprises a population Px, placed outside the figure's main structure. Px has been added to illustrate that ever since the initial work on establishing a Sámi assembly, there have been discussions on whether the

Sámediggi electoral roll should be open to non-Sámi persons who are married to Sámi and/or are integrated into a Sámi environment by place of residence (NOU 1984: 18; Sametinget 2007). The population Px thereby represents persons who are considered – by themselves and/or others – to affiliate with a Sámi family or community, but who do not comply with the current criteria for joining the Sámediggi electoral roll. Proposals to expand the inclusion criteria to encompass one or more groups within Px have so far been rejected. The fact that this has been a recurring issue for more than three decades indicates that the enrolment criteria is not regarded as written in stone. Actually, the criteria have been slightly adjusted once since their adoption in 1987. This happened when the language criterion prior to the 1997 elections was extended from the grandparents to the great-grandparents generation.

Data challenges

Requests for inclusion to the Sámediggi electoral roll can be made at any time. An enrolment is valid as long as no active request for deletion is made. The electoral roll is made available for public inspection prior to each election. While the registration procedure until 2004 was undertaken in each municipality, the responsibility for record-keeping was transferred to the Sámediggi administration in 2005. In retrospect, the methods and principles of registration have varied considerably between municipalities and over time, leading to partly incomplete and partly uncertain data about the four first Sámediggi elections (Sametinget 2007). For example, when a name disappeared from the electoral roll of a given municipality, it was not clear whether this was due to deletion, relocation or death. Nor are complete figures available for the roll's age and gender distribution. From 2001, however, the Sámediggi electoral roll has been directly linked to the Norwegian National Population Register, making the procedures for inclusions and deletions more straightforward and secure. Use of the roll for other purposes than election related ones requires special permission from the Sámediggi.

Following each of the first four elections, the Sámediggi published a booklet containing election statistics for all constituencies and some selected municipalities (Hætta 1992, 1994, 1998, 2002). The figures had however not been subject to systematic quality control and these statistics must therefore be utilised with some reservations. In 2005, some Sámediggi electoral statistics were included in Statistics Norway's regular portfolio of election statistics at www.ssb.no/valg. This information is however provided only at the constituency level. To obtain the number of enrolments per municipality for the 2005 and 2009 elections it was necessary to consult the Sámediggi website; www.sametinget.no/valg.

In total, this rather complex data situation implies that a number of sources might be utilised to fulfil even modest data requirements. It also implies that some reservations are in order with respect to the data quality. The following analyses are thus preliminary observations using the available data.

Development and status – main features

During the first twenty years of its existence, the Sámediggi electoral roll increased by 152.3 per cent; from 5,505 enrolled voters in 1989 to 13,890 in 2009 (Table 1).

Table 1 The Sámediggi electoral roll 1989–2009. Number of enrolments per election and the nominal and relative change from one election to the next

Election year	Number of enrolments	Nominal change from the former election (n)	Relative change from the former election (%)
1989	5,505	-	-
1993	7,236	1,731	31.4
1997	8,665	1,429	19.7
2001	9,921	1,256	14.5
2005	12,538	2,617	26.4
2009	13,890	1,352	10.8

Source: www.samediggi.no

The largest relative growth took place between the first to the second election (31.4 per cent), and the smallest between the elections in 2005 and 2009 (10.8 per cent). The largest nominal increase is the one prior to the elections in 2005, when more than 2,600 new voters were registered; approximately twice as many as during the preceding and the subsequent elections. The 2005 election was however a special case as it involved an expanding of the thirty-nine ordinary Sámediggi seats with four compensatory seats to be distributed among the four constituencies with the highest numbers of registered voters. The new seats were introduced as part of a process aiming at counteracting the gradually decreasing proportion of female Sámediggi representatives. However, the four compensatory seats also became an incentive for voter enrolment, as they introduced an element of competition for seats between the constituencies (Pettersen 2005, 2010).

Majority of males, but increased proportion of women among the young³

No reliable figures are available about the electoral roll's age and gender distribution at the first four Sámediggi elections. At the 2005 and 2009 elections the proportion of women was 46.1 and 46.9 per cent respectively. The proportion of voters under 25 years was 11.0 and 8.4 per cent respectively. With respect to age distribution, the proportion of first-time voters – those aged 18 to 21 years,

³ The estimations of the gender and age distributions were undertaken by Yngve Johansen at Sámi University College on behalf of The Analysis Group for Sámi Statistics (*Faglig analysegruppe for samisk statistikk*). These issues are more elaborated in Pettersen 2010.

decreased from 5 to 3 per cent between 2005 and 2009, while the proportion of those aged 60 and above increased from 21 to 24 per cent. There was thus a minor shift in the electoral roll's age profile in favour of the oldest group. At the 2009 election, persons younger than 30 years accounted for 15 per cent of the electoral roll. In this group there was a majority of women (55 per cent). Women made up 48 per cent of the 30–49 age group, while the proportion of women among voters aged 50 and above was 43 per cent. These figures indicate that a generational replacement may lead to a future higher proportion of women on the Sámediggi electoral roll.

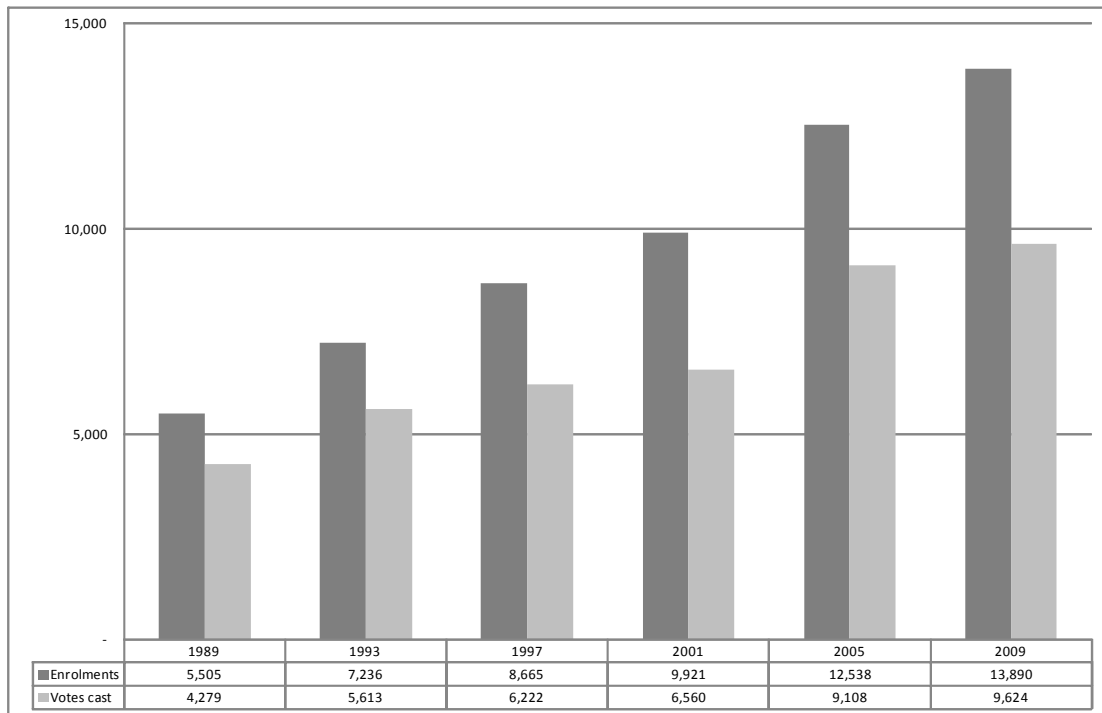
Few active deletions

A person on the Sámediggi electoral roll can at any time request to be deleted. Statements about having an intention to resign in order to demonstrate disagreement with the Sámediggi's doings and/or specific decisions are from time to time publicly set forward. However, since the available data between 2004 and the summer of 2010 show a total of 65 deletions, this can hardly be regarded as a noteworthy defection when related to the roll's growth over these years. There is nothing to indicate any geographical concentration of the deletions, and also, they have a close to even gender distribution and no clustering with respect to age. Some minor concentrations of deletions during the election years 2005 and 2009, comprising 17 and 19 persons respectively, are probably due to more attention towards the electoral roll during election years.

Electoral participation

Participation in the Sámediggi elections is not a topic of this chapter. But as the explicit purpose of the Sámediggi electoral roll is to be a tool for elections, it is suitable to briefly mention how the electoral participation has developed. While the overall trend has been a steady increase in the number of persons entitled to vote, there has been a gradual decline in the relative voter turnout per election; from 77.8 per cent in 1989 to 69.3 in 2009 (Pettersen 2010). However, as Figure 2 illustrates, the noticeable growth in enrolments implies that the number of votes cast at the 2009 election nevertheless had more than doubled since the first Sámediggi election in 1989. Hence, measured in per cent of the 'true', but unknown, Sámi population, the turnout has increased.

Figure 2 The Sámediggi elections 1989-2009. Number of enrolments and number of votes cast* per election



Sources: Hætta 1992, 1994, 2002, Statistics Norway 2006, 2010

* As the available sources lack information on votes cast in 1997 and 2001, these are the valid votes.

Geographical distributions

Geographical representativeness can be built into election systems by the distribution of seats among a number of constituencies. The Sámediggi election system follows this model. Technically, the Sámediggi constituencies are composed of a number of municipalities, which also perform the practical tasks of holding an election. This relationship calls for attention to how the Sámediggi electoral roll develops at both levels.

In a European scale Norway is an outstretched country (1,800 km from north to south) with low population density (5 million inhabitants in 2013; 15 per km²). These characteristics may explain that overall attention towards settlement patterns, regional conditions and centre-periphery cleavages are more common in Norway than in most other European countries (Sørliie 2010), and also, that the geographical distribution has been a recurring theme in discussions about the Storting electoral system and its revisions (Aardal 2011). This tradition of emphasising the geographical dimension was also present when the Norwegian Sámediggi's constituencies were constructed. The issue emerged first and foremost because the Norwegian part of Sápmi traditionally included various Sámi linguistic groups – Northern, Eastern, Lule, Pite and Southern, each associated with a geographical core area with more or less different climatic,

cultural and economic characteristics. While the Northern Sámi for a long time has been the dominant group in both the numerical and institutional sense, the Eastern Sámi in Norway has always been few in numbers (NOU 1984:18, Ch. 3.2.1) and the Pite Sámi was until recently widely considered as practically assimilated (St.meld. nr. 28 (2007-2008)). The main geographical concern was thus to ensure the representation of the Lule and Southern Sámi populations (Ot.prp.nr 33 (1986-87), Ch. 5.4.4). A second 'geographical' aspect was if and how the interests of an assumed noticeable group of Sámi settled south of the traditional Sápmi area, should be weighted. Thirdly, the Sámediggi electoral system was also expected to take into account that since the assimilation pressure had varied across the Sápmi area, this had likely given rise to geographical differences in individual inclinations to join a Sámediggi electoral roll (NOU 1984: 18). Proposals to include a separate constituency for Sámi reindeer husbandry representatives were also set forth, but these were rejected.⁴

Changing constituencies

The Sámi Rights Commission's proposal on the Sámediggi constituencies was based on a combination of concerns with respect to Sámi-internal geographical representativeness and rather fragile knowledge about the contemporary Sámi settlement in Norway (NOU 1984: 18, Ch. 11.11). When the Sami Act was adopted in 1987 the election system was designed to have thirteen constituencies, each returning three seats. The constituencies differed widely in terms of geographical area, cf. Map 1 for their locations and names (in Norwegian only). At the extremes were two constituencies (3 and 4) consisting of one single municipality, whereas the southernmost constituency (13) covered all the municipalities located to the south of the Sápmi area.

⁴ In Norway, Sámi reindeer husbandry is a (nomadic) primary industry legally restricted to individuals of Sámi descent.

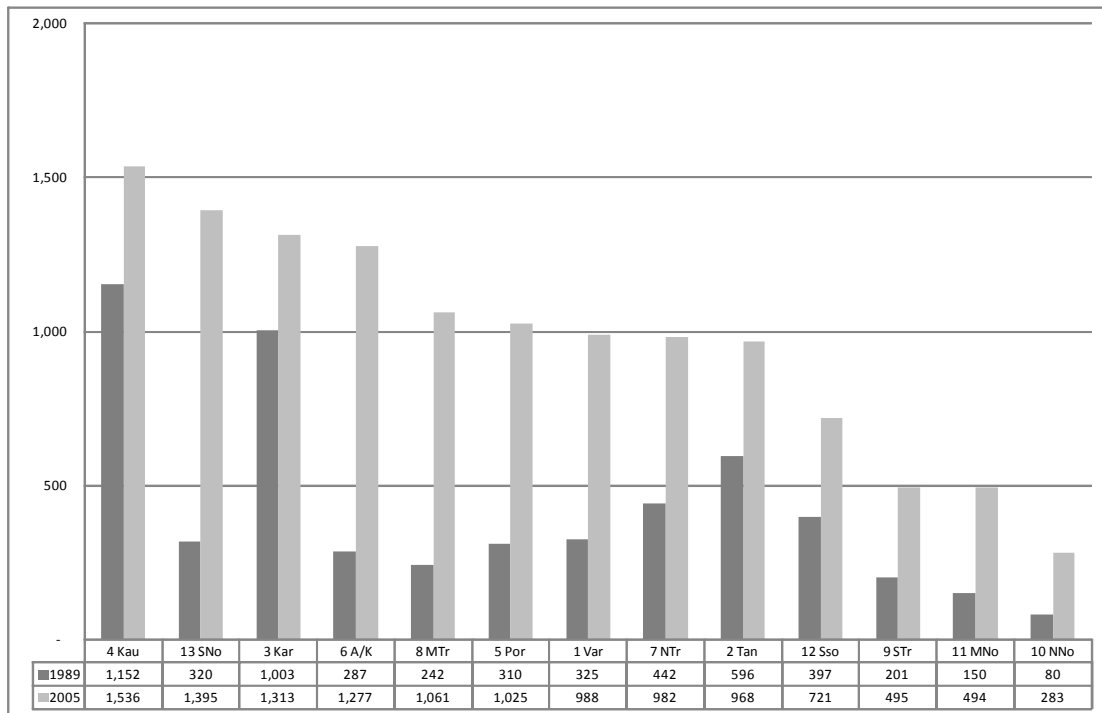
Map 1 The original Sámediggi constituencies per 1989



Source: The Sámediggi

It was commonly expected that at the first Sámediggi election in 1989, the number of enrolled Sámi would vary among the constituencies. And this proved to be the case; the lowest number of enrolments was 80 and the highest was 1,152. A more even population distribution over time was expected, but did not eventuate. On the contrary, by the fifth Sámediggi election in 2005 it seemed obvious that the number of enrolled per constituency was unlikely to converge. At this election the number of enrolled varied between 203 and 1,536 and even though the relative difference between the smallest and the largest constituency had decreased since 1989, the differences remained glaring, cf. Figure 3.

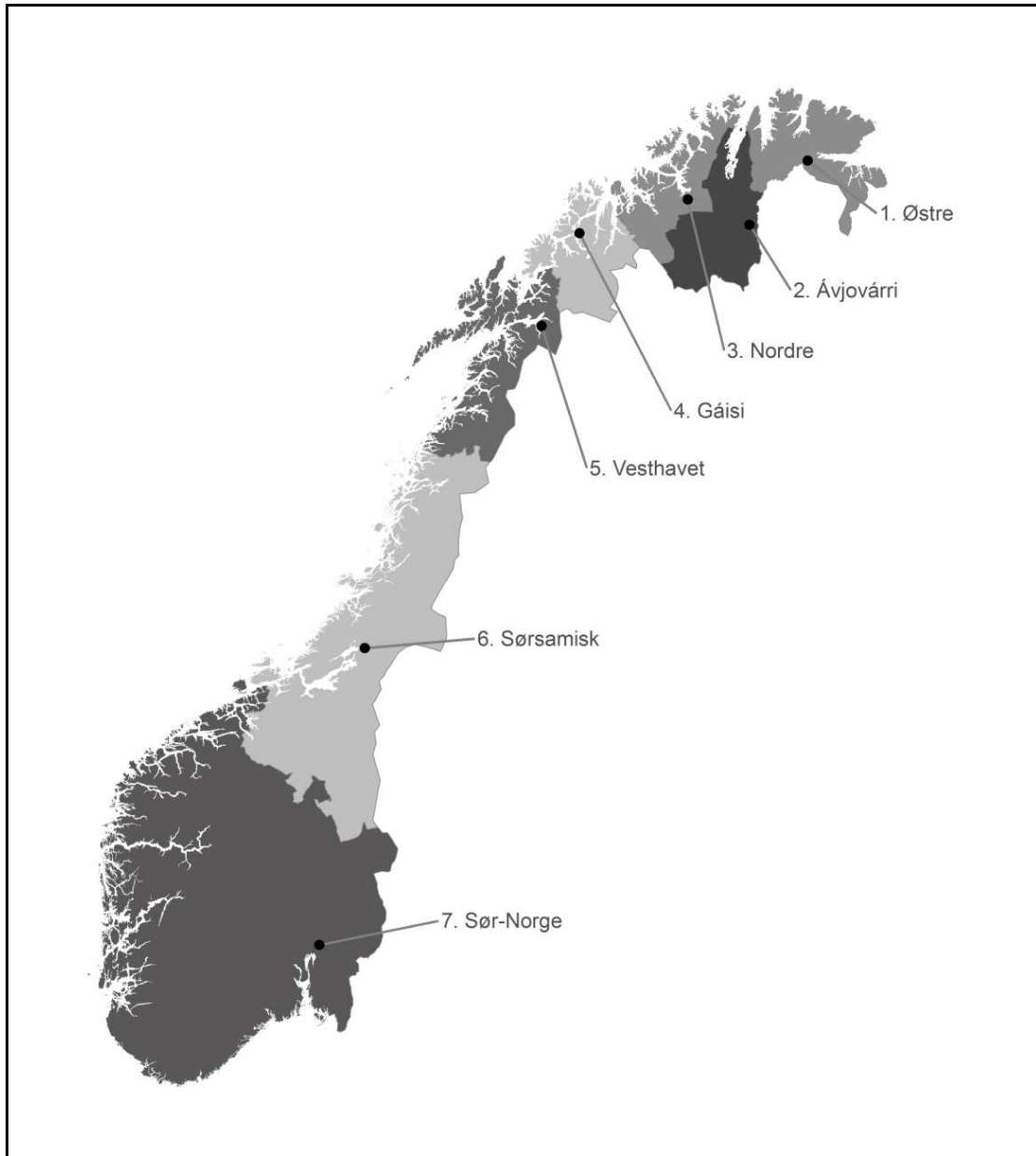
Figure 3 The Sámediggi electoral roll in 1989 and 2005. Number of enrolments per constituency. By enrolments in 2005



Source: Sametinget 2007

The imbalance between the fixed number of three seats per constituency and the significant and enduring differences in the number of enrolled per constituency invoked more and more negative attention. Hence, after the 2005 election the Sámediggi initiated activities to amend the electoral system (Sametinget 2007). This resulted in, among other things, that the number of constituencies was changed from thirteen to seven at the 2009 election. Also, the fixed number of three seats per constituency was replaced by a system where the number of seats allocated to each constituency is revised between each election, on the basis of the number of enrolled voters. Geographically, the two southernmost of the seven new constituencies stayed practically identical to the original ones. The other five comprised new compositions of the municipalities which previously made up the eleven northern constituencies, cf. Map 2.

Map 2 The Sámediggi constituencies as of the 2009 election



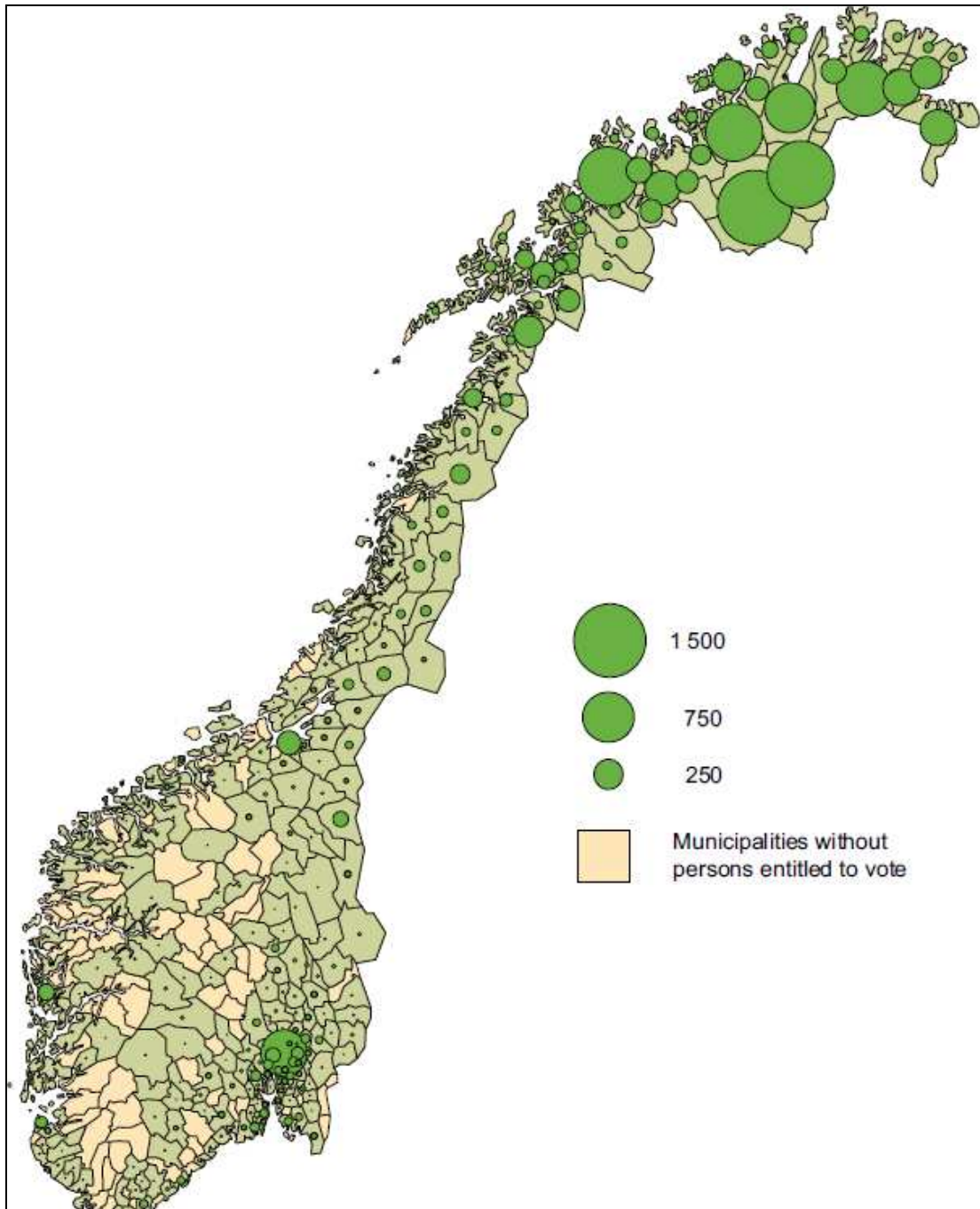
Source: The Sámediggi

Noticeable differences at the municipal level

While the constituencies represent the main framework for the Sámediggi elections, the municipality level characteristics of the electoral roll provide opportunities for more detailed analyses of how the Sámediggi electoral roll develops. The reason for this is the possibility to relate the municipal figures to characteristics of the respective local communities, including (former) assimilation experiences and (more recent) Sámi mobilisation. An informative starting point in this matter is a map provided by Statistics Norway, which –

based on figures released by the Sámediggi – gives a snapshot of how the Sámediggi's electoral roll was distributed at the municipality level in 2009 (Statistics Norway 2010: 32).

Map 3 Persons on the Sámediggi electoral roll 2009, by municipality



Source: Statistics Norway 2010: 32

The map clearly demonstrates that enrolled Sámi were found across the entire country and in a majority of the municipalities. But it is also obvious that most of the municipalities with high numbers on the electoral roll were

concentrated in the north. An examination of the corresponding figures (www.sametinget.no/valg) reveals that 109 of Norway's 430 municipalities were without enrolments on the Sámediggi electoral roll in 2009, while another 148 had either one, two or three persons enrolled. In the remaining 173 municipalities the number of enrolments were at least four; 26 municipalities had more than 100 enrolments. While the latter 26 made up 6 per cent of all Norway's municipalities, they accounted for 78 per cent of all voters on the Sámediggi electoral roll in 2009. Geographically, 24 of the 26 are located in one of Norway's three northernmost counties; 11 in Finnmark, 9 in Troms and 4 in Nordland. The two municipalities further south are Trondheim; the largest city in the Southern Sámi area, and Norway's capital Oslo, located south of Sápmi. Nine of the northern municipalities had by 2009 either awarded or self-declared city status.

Table 2 provides an overview of these 26 municipalities, sorted by their numerical share of the Sámediggi electoral roll. The relative increase per municipality from 1989 to 2009 is also presented. Additionally, the last column in Table 2 introduces a calculated value referred to as a municipality's *Sámi political density*. This value corresponds to a municipality's number of enrolled voters on the Sámediggi electoral roll, as a percentage of enrolled voters on the Storting electoral roll. The idea behind this concept is that in the absence of Sámi demographic data, it might serve as a proxy measure to indicate where (enrolled) Sámi in Norway cluster in a relative sense. For instance, while the numbers of enrolled voters in the Sámediggi electoral roll were practically similar in the municipalities of Nesseby (377) and Sør-Varanger (374), the Sámi political density in the former was ten times larger than in the latter; 53.9 versus 5.3.⁵

⁵ In 2009 the number entitled to vote in the Storting election was 3 531,000 (www.ssb.no/en/valg/). This implies a Sámi political density of 0.4 in Norway as a whole.

Table 2 The Sámediggi electoral roll 2009. Municipalities with more than 100 enrolments

Constituency (cf. Map 2)	Municipality (Norwegian name)	Number of enrolled 2009	Percentage in- crease between 1989 and 2009	Sámi political density 2009 #
2	Kautokeino	1,557	35	70.4
2	Karasjok	1,276	27	63.8
4	Tromsø *	994	481	2.1
3	Alta (*)	943	461	7.3
1	Tana	859	48	39.2
2	Porsanger	727	285	23.7
7	Oslo *	623	299	0.1
1	Nesseby	377	130	53.9
1	Sør-Varanger (*)	374	368	5.3
4	Kåfjord	347	41	20.0
3	Hammerfest *	295	502	4.3
1	Vadsø *	288	343	6.7
5	Tysfjord	272	263	17.1
4	Lyngen	186	417	7.8
3	Lebesby	175	187	17.9
5	Skånland	175	146	7.7
6	Trondheim *	167	318	0.1
3	Kvalsund	159	279	19.2
3	Nordreisa	151	372	4.2
4	Storfjord	148	97	10.6
5	Narvik *	147	444	1.1
3	Kvænangen	123	156	11.9
6	Rana (*)	114	322	0.6
5	Bodø *	113	352	0.3
5	Harstad *	105	556	0.6
5	Lavangen	102	20	11.0

Sources: Sametinget 2001, www.samediggi.no, www.ssb.no

* Municipalities with city status awarded by the authorities.

(*) Self-declared city status after 1996.

The Sámediggi electoral roll as a percentage of the Storting electoral roll in 2009.

Main tendencies: Overall growth – geographical shifts

By 1989 the Sámediggi electoral roll in Norway consisted of 5,505 persons aged 18 or older. At the 2009 election this number had increased to 13,890. Thus, the population P3 in Figure 1 had a growth of 152 per cent over the Sámediggi's first twenty years. The overall growth did however have an unequal geographic distribution, cf. Figure 3 and Table 2. Firstly, several municipalities with a high Sámi political density in 2009 experienced less increase in their Sámediggi electoral roll, measured in per cent, than many of the others. Secondly, the two municipalities with the largest Sámediggi electoral roll and the highest density of Sámi voters in 2009 had their combined proportion of the total Sámediggi electoral roll halved from 1989 to 2009; from 40 to 20 per cent. Thirdly, among municipalities with a high number of enrolled voters, the growth has been especially pronounced in some of those with city status. For example, the two city municipalities with the largest Sámediggi electoral roll in 2009 accounted for 14 per cent of total voters, compared to 6 per cent in 1989. And finally, the proportion of voters registered in the southernmost constituency increased to 13 per cent in 2009, up from 6 per cent in 1989. The main tendencies in the Sámediggi electoral roll between 1989 and 2009 can thus be summarised as overall growth and geographical shifts. The chapter's subsequent sections provide a summary discussion of these two tendencies.

Despite the Sámi movement's achievements during the last decades in getting rid of the (local) social stigma associated with being Sámi (Eidheim 1971, Stordal 1997), earlier generations' rather widespread denials of having Sámi affiliation can have caused many descendants to be unaware of their Sámi ancestor(s) (Nielsen 1986; Hegg 2000; Olsen 2010). While some of those in this position – included in P0 in Figure 1 – might be interested in obtaining information about the past but are without access to relevant sources, others may regard a quest for Sámi presence in their family history as irrelevant for their current life situation. And while some people who actually are familiar with having a Sámi family background still might be reluctant to acknowledge their ancestry and/or to announce it to others, a substantial number would probably currently consider this as unproblematic in most if not all contexts. In Figure 1, the latter group corresponds to the schematic population P1.

But to consider Sámi descent as a straightforward matter does not automatically lead to perceiving Sámi descent as relevant for ethnic (self-)identification today. In fact, dealing with the subjective criterion for enrolment on the Sámediggi electoral roll – a premise for becoming a part of population P2 in Figure 1, appears to be even more challenging than dealing with the objective criterion. At stake here is what it means to consider oneself to be Sámi; on what grounds and under what conditions do people self-identify as Sámi today? Or – as is commonly known in many local communities – why do people with comparable 'objective' Sámi background regard the question of Sámi self-identification differently? These type of questions are neither new nor unique to the Sámi. Rather, they represent typical ambiguities and controversies with respect to ethnic (self-)identification for indigenous individuals around the world

(for selected examples see Weaver 2001; Snipp 2002, Paradies 2006; Tsosie 2006; Pratt 2007; Friedman 2008; Callister, Didham and Kivi 2009; Rowse 2009; Gover 2010; Kukutai 2010; Gorringe, Ross & Fforde 2011).

In Norway, issues of Sámi affiliation and Sámi (self-)identification have been discussed over several decades; in everyday settings, in media, in fiction, and in scholarly texts (selected examples are Hirsti 1967; Jernsletten 1969; Høgmo 1986; Nielsen 1986; Stordahl 1996; Kramvig 1999; Paine 2003; Thuen 2003; Dankertsen 2006; Gaski 2008). A recurring theme is how to relate to Sámi ancestry, often intertwined with more or less critical explorations of (consequences of) stereotypical images of a 'real' Sámi. The main stereotypical elements are to be involved in reindeer husbandry, to be able to speak the Sámi language and/or to possess other 'typical' Sámi cultural skills, to be dressed in the traditional Sámi costume, and last but not least, to be resident in one of the local communities traditionally known to be Sámi (Andersen 2003; Andresen 2008). Another issue is whether a person can self-identify as Sámi if/when not recognised as Sámi by others, be that Sámi or non-Sámi. Besides, some persons' life histories might have resulted in a self-understanding of having left the Sámi identity behind; they used to be Sámi but have ceased to be (Agenda Utredning & Utvikling 2002). At the same time, an unknown number of persons in Norway have over time possessed a confident and undisputed Sámi identity – as primarily Sámi, a little Sámi, sufficiently Sámi and/or Sámi in combination with one or more other ethnic identity/-ies. Also, as more inclusive notions of what it means to be Sámi in contemporary Norway seems to be gradually developing (St.meld. nr. 28 (2007-2008)), this might over time motivate even more people of Sámi ancestry to self-identify as Sámi.

Together, all persons who self-identify as Sámi account for population P2 in Figure 1. However, self-identification as Sámi does not equal joining the Sámediggi electoral roll and hence become a part of population P3. No wide-ranging systematic studies have so far been undertaken to investigate personal choices in this respect, but there is a widespread notion that a substantial number of persons who fulfil the subjective inclusion criteria choose not to enrol (Sametinget 2007, Ch. 2.9). One reason for this might be a lack of interest in politics in general or Sámi politics in particular. Some may regard the Sámediggi as an appropriate institution for others but irrelevant to their own life situation. Others might object strongly against the very existence of the Sámediggi as a separate Sámi political body. And finally, the same kind of arguments that made people desist from answering the 1970 Census questions about Sámi affiliation may also cause reluctance to join the Sámediggi electoral roll today, namely opposition to the idea of recording ethnicity information in a public register, and/or hesitation to publicly announce one's own Sámi self-identification. Nevertheless, the notable growth in the Sámediggi electoral roll might be seen as a result of increased recognition of the Sámediggi as a democratic idea and as an appropriate institution for the formulation of Sámi policy. Also, the growth might indicate that the initial resistance to a separate Sámediggi electoral roll is waning.

Based on the review above, the reasons for the growth of the Sámediggi electoral roll might be described as threefold; knowledge about factual existence of Sámi language speaker(s) in families, the issue of self-identification as Sámi, and the individual decisions of whether to register on the electoral roll. At the same time, these three elements may be influenced by a number of factors at different levels. Among such factors are global ethno-political discourses and national legislation at the macro level, historical and contemporary general and Sámi related circumstances at the meso level, and also, general and Sámi associated personal life experiences at the micro level. Thus, in order to understand how the electoral roll develops over time, it is essential to take into consideration the whole range of these intertwined conditions.

With respect to the roll's geographical shifts, the meso level is of particular interest. On the one hand, if significant changes take place in a local community's Sámi cultural and political 'climate', this may influence and/or alter an individual's decision whether to enroll on the Sámediggi electoral roll. For instance, an obvious hypothesis is that Sámi revitalisation in formerly heavily assimilated areas might explain most/much of the roll's growth in these municipalities. On the other hand, while an investigation of such issues is beyond the scope of this chapter, it may well be that some of the observed geographical shifts in the Sámediggi electoral roll are due to changes not *in*, but *of* local communities –understood as migration.

Over the last decades a major demographic trend in Norway has been migration from north to south and from rural to urban areas (Høydahl and Rustad 2009; Sørli 2010). Firstly, this migration has probably had an effect on where Sámi today are resident and thus, in which municipalities Sámi are recorded on the electoral roll. Secondly, when people migrate from one local community to another, this might trigger a desire to 'formalise' and 'display' a Sámi affiliation that otherwise may have been either taken for granted or perceived as less relevant in their everyday life. Hence, if an increasing proportion of enrolled persons have as their primary intention to demonstrate Sámi affiliation, not to influence Sámi politics, this could also explain some of the decreasing relative participation in Sámediggi elections. A related but unexplored question is whether some persons may join the electoral roll primarily to acknowledge, reveal and pay respect to the fact that they have Sámi ancestor(s), but without having further interest in being a part of the current Sámi political collective. If the latter kind of rationale for enrolment should turn out to be 'trendy', it would imply that the Sámediggi electoral roll to some degree does serve *also* as a kind of Sámi *census* – just as the supporters of a separate Sámediggi electoral roll once anticipated.

How then should the 150 per cent increase of the Sámediggi electoral roll over the first twenty years be assessed? On the one hand, in percentage this growth might be regarded as noticeable. On the other hand, based on what is known about the legacy of the prolonged Norwegian assimilation policy towards the Sámi, it might well be that if all persons with known or unknown Sami ancestry (P0 and P1 in Figure 1) had self-identified as Sámi (P2) and also decided to join the electoral roll, the growth of the Sámediggi electoral roll (P3)

could have been even larger. But as long as the numerical sizes of Figure 1's P0, P1 and P2 are unknown, it remains practically impossible to determine the potential size of population P3 and hence the optimal growth of the formally recorded Sámi electorate between 1989 and 2009.

One of the conclusions in the analysis of the 1970 Census was that '[r]egardless of how the concept of 'Sámi' ['Lapp'] is defined, it covers a peripherally located segment of the population, not only on a national scale, but also on the municipal and local level' (Aubert 1978: 118). Whatever the reasons for the geographical shifts within the Sámediggi electoral roll are, this study demonstrates that if the roll's geographical distribution is interpreted as an indicator on how Sámi settlement patterns develops, the perceptions of the Sámi as a primarily northern and rural population need to be somewhat modified (cf. also Sørli and Broderstad 2011). Political impacts of the geographical shifts remains to be seen, but an awareness of them has though been observed (cf. for example St.meld. nr. 28 (2007-2008)).

Concluding comments

Like other indigenous peoples, the Sámi has experienced prolonged assimilation policy and corresponding cultural and social marginalisation. Over the recent decades the establishment of the Sámediggi as a nationwide representative Sámi political body has, together with other Sámi achievements, improved the conditions for being Sámi in Norway (Stordahl 1997). Establishing the Sámediggi also entailed a structural change to the Norwegian political system because it expanded the concept of democracy and political governance in Norway (Broderstad 1999). The separate Sámediggi electoral roll was designed to ensure that the Sámediggi should be a representative assembly of the entire Sámi population in Norway. Whether individuals self-identify as Sámi and hence fulfil the subjective criterion to enrol on the Sámediggi electoral roll, is closely related to the Sámediggi's ability to claim that it represents all Sámi (Bjerkli and Selle 2003). Thus, Sámi identity issues have a direct impact on the legitimacy of the Sámediggi, given that this legitimacy depends on support from a sufficient proportion of the Sámi population.

The starting point of this chapter was the absence of an up-to-date Sámi demographic register intertwined with historically conditioned ambiguities on whether to self-identify as Sámi. As shown above, these factors make it impossible to determine to what degree those who actually have joined the Sámediggi electoral roll coincide with those who fulfil the criteria to enrol. Nevertheless, the Sámediggi might still be regarded as a representative Sámi body in the sense that it is elected by and among voters who fulfil Sámi inclusion criteria.

But the representativeness of the Sámediggi and its electoral roll also relates to internal Sámi affairs such as the representation of the Sámi geographical and/or cultural minorities, and to the representation in terms of gender, age and socio-economic characteristic. While there has been some interest in the gender distribution (Bjerkli and Selle 2003; Stordahl 2003) and the presence of young

Sami (Sametinget 2007), little scholarly attention has so far been devoted to the overall composition of the Sámi (potential) electorate. This may be due to a general lack of interest in contemporary Sámi demographics, perhaps intertwined with the limited amount of data available for such studies (Pettersen 2011) and also formal restrictions on using the electoral roll for other purposes than electoral matters. Nevertheless, stakeholders have stressed a need to expand the repertoire of analyses and descriptions of contemporary Sámi political, social and cultural affairs. One contribution in this direction could be to strengthen the knowledge about the Sámi electorate as it appears in the shape of the Sámediggi electoral roll.

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