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ACTIVISM THROUGH ART
The Indigenous Narratives of Suohpanterror

Faculty of Social Sciences
Master's Thesis
May 2019

ABSTRACT

Cassandra Lydia Taylerson: Activism Through Art: The Indigenous Narratives of Suohpanterror
Master's Thesis
Tampere University
MDP in Peace, Mediation and Conflict Research
May 2019

The Finnish state and the Sámi have a somewhat strained relationship. While the Sámi enjoy a fair amount of indigenous rights, there are certain areas and issues that cause tension due to what some might argue are democratic deficits. In the face of such shortfalls, this thesis explores the alternative tool of indigenous activism. The purpose of this research is to examine, through the works of art collective Suohpanterror, the Sámi perspectives on current issues affecting Finland's indigenous community. This is done by critically analysing four Suohpanterror illustrations, each of which provide a doorway into various themes affecting the Sámi today.

The methods employed for the analysis of this research include textual and aesthetic analysis which rely on individual interpretations of visual material, and are both placed within the approaches of narrative analysis. The methodology is also supported by techniques presented by Schirato and Webb, who emphasize the value of context in visual materials.

The results of my research demonstrate that Suohpanterror's artworks portray a balance between critique and celebration; critiquing the Finnish state and the colonial practices the group claim it employs, and a celebration of the Sámi culture and identity. The group's artwork attempts to reclaim Sámi narratives from mainstream perceptions where they are riddled with decades worth of stigma and stereotypes. While it may or may not be an aim of Suohpanterror, the group's art also plays a significant role as a decolonisation tool, affecting change in spheres where the state cannot.

Furthermore, it is imperative that the Sámi are not simply heard out of obligation, but rather collaborated on with issues regarding their culture. The state of Finland has had a large role in hindering Sámi development from its utmost potential, for example in Sápmi land rights, and thus should take responsibility in forming a more sustainable relationship with its indigenous people.

Keywords: Sámi, Finland, colonialism, indigenous people, activism, art

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indigenous people can be defined as “having a historical existence and identity that is separate and independent of the states now enveloping them. Lands located in a specific geographic area form a central element in their history and identity, and are central regarding their contemporary political demands.”¹ International law however has declined to force a formal definition to respect the flexibility and fluidity of indigenous nations. In numbers, indigenous people total approximately 370 million, amounting to five percent of the global population, and span 90 countries.² Whilst indigenous nations are formed of a vast mosaic of various cultures and traditions, they remain connected by a common thread made up of a respect for their environment, which oftentimes plays a large role in the community’s livelihood, language and identity. History and what are passed down through traditional knowledge also form the foundations of an indigenous culture.

Through a constantly expanding international network, indigenous nations have made strides in the last century to solidify their human rights. In 1989 the International Labour Organization put forward the Indigenous and Tribal People Convention, number 169 (ILO-169), which stands as an international treaty for indigenous rights. Another step forward was announced in 2007 with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People which assembled “the rights [to] constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world.”³ Unfortunately, sometimes similarities shared by indigenous nations also stem from muddled histories of a heritage riddled with stolen land and dominated cultures, with ongoing discriminations reaching into the present day.

Majority cultures and states have long cast a heavy shadow over indigenous nations, oftentimes promoting government-sanctioned assimilation policies or illegal land grabs in attempts to silence an alternative culture. While this narrative is often believed to live predominantly in history books, the fact remains that indigenous nations are more often than not still paying the price of colonial efforts to keep them vulnerable. For instance, in the northernmost region of Canada only

¹ General definition of indigenous peoples, Arctic Centre, University of Lapland, [website].

² Andy Gargett. ‘The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: A Manual for National Human Rights Institutions’, *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, 2013, p.3.

³ General Assembly resolution 61/295, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2 October 2007.

40 percent of Inuit children attend full time education.⁴ In Australia the prison rate among Aboriginals is 13 times higher than that of non-indigenous,⁵ while Aboriginals also account for 30 percent of the nation's suicides among youths aged 17 and under.⁶ The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, IWGIA, reported that 2017 witnessed escalated figures of violent conflicts, especially in cases of consumption demands by big business. In Brazil 37 million hectares of indigenous land was reserved for exploration and exploitation.⁷ In Nepal forced evictions, torture and the destruction of sacred sites affects 150,000 in the way of a national road expansion project, and in the Philippines 229 mining applications were approved in 2017 on traditional indigenous lands.⁸ Despite amounting to five percent of the Earth's population, according to the International Fund for Agricultural Development indigenous people make up 15 percent of the world's poor and one third of the world's extremely poor.⁹ These statistics lend evidence to a consistent pattern of adversity placed on indigenous people.

Whilst no one nation's past is a mirror image of another, the progress of indigenous societies often echo similar conditions. In the past century the indigenous narrative has begun to see daylight as ever more indigenous people take steps to promote their way of life through academic research, politics or activism. Though faced with the hurdles of a minority position, indigenous nations are increasingly demanding states to acknowledge and support their indigenous rights, and the same can be said about the Sámi in Finland. While the Finnish Sámi have been saved from the more sinister sides of recent history, their position in the Finnish state is that of a minority society, and as some argue, a colonised one. Indigenous languages of the region remain hindered from assimilation policies of the 1940s, traditional trades continue to be curbed by state legislation, and the definition of who is a Sámi, a matter that affects voting and indigenous rights' status, continues to be a source of discontent between the politicians in the South and the Sámi Parliament, not to mention among the Sámi themselves.¹⁰

⁴ 'United Nations marks International Day of Indigenous Peoples with call to promote their right to education', United Nation press release, [website], 2016.

⁵ Pamela Jacquelin-Andersen (ed.). 'The Indigenous World 2018', *International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs*, 2018, p.226.

⁶ Katrine Broch Hansen, Kathe Jepsen and Pamela Leiva Jaquelin (ed.). 'The Indigenous World 2017', *International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs*, 2017, p.277.

⁷ Jacquelin-Andersen (ed.), 2018. p.10.

⁸ Jacquelin-Andersen (ed.), 2018. pp.8-12.

⁹ Gargett, 2013, p.3.

¹⁰ Pirita Näkkäläjärvi and Klemetti Näkkäläjärvi. 'Saamelaismääritelmä on ratkaiseva saamen kansalle', *Kaleva*, [website], 25 January 2018.

This thesis will seek to explore some of the issues that affect the Sámi community today through the perspective of Sámi art and activism. As is the case with numerous high-profile indigenous nations such as Canada and Australia, political discussions are increasingly shifting into the realm of art where activists have further freedom to lend their voice to the discussion. While the additional freedom enjoyed by activists is a positive idea, the shift itself is perhaps a cause for concern since it indicates the original sphere of dialogue is reserved for only certain individuals rather than a conversation open to all, regardless of social or political status. Considering Sámi activism, art has provided a forum which urges participants to air their own interpretations, a move which inevitably invites a variety of perspectives yet nevertheless has people discussing the issues at hand. The art in question are products of the anonymous Sámi art collective known as Suohpanterror, who in the last five years have grown to prominence within the online sphere as vocal critics of Finnish state practices towards the Sámi. Splitting opinions between a fan favourite and farce, Suohpanterror nevertheless use their work to spur conversation on thorny topics.

It is important to note at this point that while the focus of this thesis is on the Sámi in Finland and the issues affecting them, it is impossible to put forth a single conclusion that might seemingly represent an entire people. As is the instance with any community, the Sámi in Finland are made up of different people and groups and thus for the case of this project, when I speak of the Sámi, I speak of opinions frequented in the public forum. Part of the difficulty that surrounds Sámi dialogue stems from the abundance of participating voices, which carries the danger of muffling those of the Sámi, who should be front and centre. My place in this discussion is not to speak on behalf of anybody except myself as I put forth my own interpretations and understandings based on the research presented.

When pondering where to begin with this project, the inspiration began from the popular notion that the Nordic countries have long been hailed as a haven for equality and good living, supported by consistently topping lists of happiest countries in the world year after year. Yet in a contradictory stance, they also stand as nations who, some would argue, colonized a people and thrust assimilation policies upon them in order to extinguish their culture. Whilst such policies took place in the past, the Sámi still live with the fallout to this day and deal with various degrees of stigma in their respective countries. As Dr. Battiste notes, “in the name of culture, colonialism does its work and dignifies its meaning as duty and improvement and the exhilarating march of progress. And so there is the need, so urgent and ubiquitous today, for cultural restoration of the colonized.

There is the further need, for those who have the most say about what counts as culture, to use their knowledge and professional and institutional status to help change the dominant definition and understanding of Aboriginal knowledge.”¹¹

Within the following chapters I will explore the role of art as a gateway to further political and cultural dialogue on Sámi issues in Finland, specifically through what Suohpanterror put forth in their artwork. As this research does not limit itself to a singular subject, exploring it also entails wading into the murky waters of identity narratives, reviewing a brief history of the Sámi, and taking a closer look at the concept of colonialism and postcolonial theory. Through all of this, the driving aim is to answer the central question; what indigenous narratives are portrayed in the works of Suohpanterror? The question acts as a pillar around which the relevant issues that affect the Sámi today are explored and evaluated by critically analysing visual material, and are hopefully highlighted as issues deserving of necessary and constructive national dialogue. The following chapter will lay out the land of Nordic and indigenous history, as well as the role of activism, all the while providing a sufficient knowledge-base relevant to the analysis of this research.

¹¹ Marie Ann Battiste. *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, 2009, p.x.

2. HISTORY, ACTIVISM AND THE SÁMI

THE NORDIC SÁMI

The focus of this thesis is on the Sámi who are one of the indigenous Arctic nations. Unlike most other indigenous nations, the Sámi population live across nation-state borders in an area called Sápmi, made up of the Northern regions of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. The Sámi are descendants of those who lived in the same Nordic region close to 10,000 years ago, yet today they number approximately 75,000 in total, with the majority residing in Norway.¹² Traditional trades of the Sámi include fishing, reindeer husbandry, and handicrafts. Whilst all trades have experienced some form of transformation over the years, it can be argued that the Sámi practice of reindeer husbandry has felt it the most. Before Sápmi was divided by political borders, the Sámi practiced a nomadic form of reindeer herding that entailed seasonal migrations over great distances. However, once national borders were drawn, and later closed in 1852¹³, the nomadic reindeer trade became an impossibility as herders were forced to pick a country and stick to those internal regions. This drastically transformed the reindeer practice into the settler trade that it is reminiscent of today.

The Sámi share a lot in common, such as a cross-border Saami Council, a national flag and an assortment of dialects. The national Sámi day across the Nordics is February 6th, celebrating the day in 1917 when Sámi activist and politician, Elsa Laula Renberg, amassed the first cross-border Sámi assembly with the intention of awakening Sámi political activism.¹⁴ Nowadays Norway, Sweden and Finland all have Sámi parliaments and certain forms of societal structures in place to maintain Sámi interests. However, the development of Sámi rights over recent years has experienced varied measures of progress; with the smallest community in Russia, the Sámi based there enjoy very little indigenous rights and are the worst-off compared to their Sámi neighbours. Meanwhile Norway, being home to the largest group of Sámi, also stands as the country securing the most progressive rights for them. For instance, in 1990 Norway was, and still remains, the only Sámi country to ratify the International Labour Organisation's convention number 169 (ILO-169)¹⁵, a treaty that secures the "right of indigenous peoples to further develop their culture and the

¹² 'The Sámi in Finland', Sámi Parliament Publication, 2008.

¹³ Veli-Pekka Lehtola. *Saamelaiskiista: Sortaako Suomi Alkuperäiskansaansa?*, 2015, p.136.

¹⁴ Veli-Pekka Lehtola. *Saamelaiset: Historia, Yhteiskunta, Taide*, 2015, pp.75-76.

¹⁵ Lehtola. *Saamelaiskiista: Sortaako Suomi Alkuperäiskansaansa?*, 2015, p.38.

authorities' obligation to initiate measures to support this work."¹⁶ Norway's position in the progressive first place however was not always the case.

During much of the 20th century, the Sámi, like many other indigenous nations, faced harsh treatment from the states they resided in. In efforts to assimilate Sámi into the mainstream culture, missionaries were sent into Sápmi encouraging Sámi to abandon their cultural traditions in favour of Christianity. Similarly, children were sent to boarding schools where for most of the year they were only allowed to speak the dominant society language as any indigenous languages were strictly forbidden. These approaches inevitably made children feel shame about their culture, and oftentimes the state's policies were a success as Sámi buried their indigenous identity.¹⁷ Other assimilation policies, especially in Norway, included forced sterilisation and the government's right to seize fertile land from Sámi ownership.¹⁸

While each country followed similar paths in their policies towards the Sámi, the path diverged for Norway during the Alta Dispute of the late 1970s, a moment which turned out to be one of the most pivotal points in Sámi activist history. The Alta Dispute originated from a series of projected dam constructions by the Norwegian government, that ran from planned stages in the 1970s to construction in early 1980s.¹⁹ A preliminary proposal involved submerging a small Sámi village, Masi, under a reservoir to harness water resources.²⁰ Such plans became widely disputed and sparked a series of organised protests in Oslo and Stilla, a town by the Alta Fjord and site of a dam construction. The protests, which included hunger strikes, blockades and impromptu Sámi education lessons, gained prominence to the point of halting construction while discussions were held.

The prominence of the protests was in part amplified due to a successful collaboration between several Sámi individuals and members of the press. This collaboration brought Sámi issues to the forefront, breaking the previous practice in which Sámi rights were predominantly discussed

¹⁶ The ILO Convention on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Norwegian Government Security and Service Organisation, [website], 20 August 2018.

¹⁷ Jouni Aikio, *69, Losing The Language*, dir. Katri Koivula, Say It In Saami, [online video], 2016.

¹⁸ Omkar Mahajan. 'The Sami: A Disappearing Indigenous Minority in Scandinavia', *Prospect: Journal of International Affairs at UCSD*, 31 October 2016, [website].

¹⁹ Ulla-Maija Kulonen, Risto Pulkkinen, and Irja Seurujärvi-Kari. (ed.), *The Saami: A Cultural Encyclopedia*, 2005, pp.11-12.

²⁰ Øystein Dalland. 'The Last Big Dam in Norway: Whose Victory?', in Ann Danaiya Usher, (ed.), *Dams As Aid: A Political Anatomy of Nordic Development Thinking*, 2005, pp.41-43.

through the state's perspective as either a welfare or economic matter.²¹ The Alta Dispute became even more noteworthy when combined with the real-time protests in Stilla and Oslo, involving the notorious incident which saw 600 police officers arrest approximately 1100 peaceful protesters.²² The Alta Dispute became a significant event in Sámi history due to its far-reaching nature and ability to mobilise activists and participants across borders. The event acted as a turning point in Norway's policy towards their Sámi population and resulted in a legislative overhaul of the state's assimilation policies following an international outcry aimed at Norway's treatment of its indigenous people. As a result, a series of indigenous rights were granted to the Sámi in Norway which also paved the way for the formation of the Norwegian Sámi Parliament.

Whilst the majority of the reformative aftermath was limited to the borders within Norway, the Sámi in Sweden and Finland have also seen their fair share of activism in recent years as an indigenous means to be heard. Activism among the Sámi has always been around from the likes of Sámi artist Nils-Aslak Valkeapää who was a pioneer in bringing national awareness on Sámi crafts, however in recent years the nature of activism has shifted into the online sphere. Not too long ago Sweden saw Sámi activists go up against a British mining company, Beowulf, in a plight set amongst the rolling fells of Sápmi's Kallak, a small region outside Jokkmokk.²³ Ahead of plans to mine iron ore, opinions were split in Kallak, igniting large-scale protests by activists cautious of the potential harmful environmental effects a mine could have on the area.

A combined online presence as well as on-site protesters made a collaborative effort to boost coverage of the events. This exposure was then intensified when the very core of the issue was marketed as both a broader environmental issue as well as an indigenous one. Researchers Dahlberg-Grundberg and Örestig, who followed the events with a critical eye, found that "the coming together of these different activist roles and the different uses of social media added a translocal dimension to the peripheral and physically remote political conflict in Kallak. Media users were able to extend a local and physically situated protest by linking it to a global contentious issue such as the mining boom and its consequences for indigenous populations."²⁴ Coming from a minority position, coupled with the fact that Sámi are often located in remote regions, the use of

²¹ Kulonen, Pulkkinen, and Seurujärvi-Kari, 2005, p.11.

²² Kulonen, Pulkkinen, and Seurujärvi-Kari, 2005, p.11.

²³ Michael Dahlberg-Grundberg and Johan Örestig. 'Extending the Local: Activist Types and Forms of Social Media Use in the Case of an Anti-Mining Struggle', *Social Movement Studies*, 2017, pp.310-311.

²⁴ Dahlberg-Grundberg and Örestig, 2017, p.309.

online platforms to transform localised occurrences into noteworthy transnational news has become a revolutionary tool in indigenous activism, opening the door for a wide international audience and indigenous network.

Whilst investigating the same phenomenon surrounding the Kallak protests, Lindgren and Cocq noted the transnational effects such a social media campaign can produce, especially with an issue that various indigenous groups can identify with. Regarding their work on the topic, Lindgren and Cocq stated that “indigenous perspectives were largely marginalized, but social media was one of the few channels that enabled reindeer herders, other locals and environmentalists to campaign and inform the public. This mode of communication also contributed to further develop relationships and collaborations with other indigenous and environmental movements.”²⁵ Similar uses of online platforms can be witnessed in the current activist sphere of the Finnish Sámi where the activists themselves are increasingly able to participate, and be heard, with their own voice.

FINLAND

Finland is home to approximately 10,000 Sámi, 60 percent of whom live outside of their Sápmi homeland.²⁶ The Sámi in Finland have had a representative body in place since 1973, which became the current governing Sámi Parliament in 1996, a year after their indigenous status was written into the Finnish constitution, enabling them the right to “maintain and develop their own language, culture and traditional livelihoods.”²⁷ While there are a variety of spoken Sámi languages, three are used in Finland; North Sámi, Inari Sámi and Skolt Sámi. North Sámi is by far the most common in Sápmi, whereas Inari Sámi and Skolt Sámi both have close to 300 speakers each in Finland and are considered severely endangered by UNESCO.²⁸ However, as part of the language revitalization projects that sparked up in the 1960s, efforts have been made to ensure the vitality of Sámi languages in the modern day setting, such as the establishment of a North Sámi play group in the suburbs of Helsinki.

²⁵ Simon Lindgren and Coppélie Cocq. ‘Turning the Inside Out: Social Media and the Broadcasting of Indigenous Discourse’, *European Journal of Communication*, 2017, p.132.

²⁶ ‘The Sámi in Finland’, Sámi Parliament Publication, 2008.

²⁷ ‘The Sámi in Finland’, Sámi Parliament Publication, 2008.

²⁸ Christopher Moseley, (ed.). *Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger*, UNESCO Publishing, [website], 2010.

Such projects have managed to ease the integration of Sámi culture into spheres outside of their Northern homeland. Art is another, more visible, way Sámi identities are bridging the gap between Finnish and Sámi consciousness. Sámi art by the likes of Outi Pieski, whose work has also been on display in London's Southbank Centre, works towards bringing Sámi matters into the norm, instead of a topic recognised only once a year on the Sámi national day. Likewise the Sámi film festival Skábmagovat with directors such as Suvi West, poetry written by Niillas Holmberg, and music from Wimme Saari all do their part, little by little, to pierce the dividing veil in the Finnish dominant society. However, whilst Sámi culture is gradually drifting into mainstream awareness, there are still ways to go in correcting the stigma that surrounds Sámi today.

As Sámi issues step into the media spotlight, oftentimes they are followed by a barrage of criticism that echoes the stigma and negative stereotypes that have surrounded the Sámi for decades. No doubt assimilation policies played a part in pushing the Sámi culture as something to be snuffed out or hidden, but the media has maintained the narrative whether intentional or not. A prominent example of perpetuated stereotypes can be found in the 1987 sketch comedy television show 'Hymyhuulet' in which two men are dressed in gaktis, the traditional Sámi clothing. The men, shown as dirty drunkards with missing teeth, created a caricature that is still remembered and used, most recently through a hip-hop song in 2015, the title of which shares the same chant of the duo; 'Nunnuka-lai-laa'.²⁹

While Hymyhuulet was a straight forward instance of perpetuating negative narratives, news outlets have been party to a more subtle, but perhaps unwitting, course. Common misconceptions about Sámi issues revolve around notions that 'it is all too complicated', 'the Sámi are so argumentative, nothing can be done', and fears that 'that Sámi will get angry'.³⁰ These are sentiments that have been challenged by the likes of the young Sámi activist Petra Laiti, who holds news outlets responsible of biased journalism through newswriting which consistently associates Sámi headlines with negative terms. She says "when an outside reader subconsciously draws negative contexts about the Sámi, headline after headline, they are naturally left with a negative image of them. It is therefore easy for those ignorant to wonder, and even get irritated, with Sámi reactions to different issues. Because of this irritation some might flock to forums writing comments

²⁹ Pirita Näkkäljärvi and Martta Alajärvi. 'Saamelaisnuorten vastaisku: Nunnuka-lai-laa-kappaleesta oma versio Ailu Vallen esittämänä', *Yle*, [website], 2 June 2015.

³⁰ Kukka Ranta. 'Miksi suomalaiset leimaavat saamelaisia?', *Kukka Ranta* [web blog], 9 August 2017.

such as ‘what’s wrong with them now?’ or ‘they’re throwing a hissy fit again’. The cycle is complete.”³¹

It is perhaps in response to this narrative, that Sámi activists are increasingly stepping up their efforts to be heard, and working to reclaim the perception of their culture. There has been a variety of Sámi activism in recent years such as civil disobedience by the Ellos Deatnu group to protest the 2017 Teno river fishing regulations, blog writing by Petra Laiti, demonstrations by the likes of Niillas Holmberg alongside Greenpeace, and projects such as Jenni Laiti’s Red Line which saw a series of red banners with the words ‘No Consent, No Access’ line the path of the proposed Arctic Ocean Railway.³² The ratification of ILO-169 is also a frequent subject as every few years the Finnish governing body drum up talks on the convention, yet every time discussions fall apart on legal technicalities or disagreements, and the convention remains unratified. The Sámi today face adversary from multiple sources, but part of the problem also lies in the failure of democratic means, as while Finland’s Sámi have a parliament in place, it does not wield a great deal of power and its perspectives are not always heard.³³ As a result, Sámi are increasingly turning to activism to force a spotlight on relevant issues that demand discussion.

A wider conversation that is currently taking place within Finland’s activist spheres also focuses on the arguments around Finland’s colonialist past. While Sweden and Norway have both had colonies overseas, Finland stands in the unique position among its neighbours as a nation who has never had any. Thus, when colonialism is considered in Finland, it is often accompanied by thoughts of other countries, rarely entwined with an introspective direction. As Veli-Pekka Lehtola puts it, “the fact that Finns have usually been subjugated to superpowers, as have the Sámi, has strengthened the notion of Finns about themselves as representatives of democracy and tolerance, who also treated the Sámi on an equal basis already in history.”³⁴ Certain Sámi however hold an alternative perspective, as Lehtola highlights “colonialism can also manifest itself as state internal control of indigenous peoples.”³⁵ The topic often generates a torrent of opinions, with equally large camps on either side of the argument. Part of this may lie in the notion of what Elina Helander calls

³¹ Petra Laiti. ‘Aina vihaiset saamelaiset ja muita mediamyyttejä’, *Petra Laiti*, [web blog], 4 October 2016.

³² Greenpeace International, ‘Industrial railway line and logging threaten the Sámi homeland’, *Greenpeace*, [website], 5 September 2018.

³³ Leena Heinämäk, et al. ‘Saamelaisten oikeuksien toteutuminen: kansainvälinen oikeusvertaileva tutkimus’, *Valtioneuvoston kanslia*, 2017, pp.505-508.

³⁴ Veli-Pekka Lehtola. ‘Sámi Histories, Colonialism, and Finland’, *Arctic Anthropology*, 2015, p.23.

³⁵ Lehtola. ‘Sámi Histories, Colonialism, and Finland’, 2015, p.23.

‘soft moss-covered discrimination’, whereby state policies are not outright racist, but rather manoeuvred in a subtle manner, lending credence to those who argue against its existence.³⁶

A few of the Sámi who subscribe to the colonialism perspective include those belonging to the anonymous Sámi art collective Suohpanterror. The group, who produce artwork that heavily criticizes the Finnish government on what they consider colonial policies, do not hold back in their ‘artivism’ on issues that combine Sámi matters with politics, the environment, identity and fair amount of humour. The works of Suohpanterror and the narratives they portray will be explored more thoroughly as the primary source of this research, and as a doorway into the wider issues affecting the Sámi community today.

INDIGENOUS ACTIVISM

Whilst the Alta Dispute was an integral part of Sámi activist history, it nevertheless remains a snippet of the wider network of indigenous activism that has been employed around the world. Indigenous activism has been a part of numerous momentous movements that have shaped the indigenous nations into what we know them as today, and thus it is valuable to understand the extent and reach that activism can hold. As already established, the environment and nature are a powerful connecting force among indigenous people around the world. The surrounding land can play a key role in the formation of an indigenous language, the livelihood upon which indigenous communities rely, and the setting within which members pass down their traditional knowledge to future generations. Needless to say, it is key to indigenous culture. However, the downside to the environment’s monumental role is that it can also make indigenous people vulnerable to state politics, economic greed or even climate change, as is the case with hardships currently faced by the Inuit in Arctic regions.

Of course environmental issues are only one among many causes of conflict that affect indigenous nations, from detrimental government policies and denied indigenous rights to collateral damage of a growing nation. To sum this, a UN working group on indigenous conflict resolution found that there are four consistent causes of conflict that mirror the findings of Anne-Marie Gardner, which are insecurity, inequality, private incentives, and the perceptions of history, identity,

³⁶ Elina Helander and Kaarina Kailo. *Ei Alkua, Ei Loppua: Saamelaisten Puheenvuoro*, 1999, p.220.

and discrimination.³⁷ An inevitable question that arises following these circumstances, is what can be done?

In almost every instance, indigenous communities come from a minority position in their respective countries and as such wield little legislative or governmental power. This often means that in the face of a threat, indigenous communities cannot rely solely on official channels to protect their rights, but instead must turn to another avenue of action in the form of activism. This alternative tool has been used for hundreds of years in a multitude of ways. Activism is a broad term but, in its essence, it is the practice of using public or direct action to bring about social or political change. While activism has been used by a wide spectrum of individuals worldwide, indigenous people have been employing activism more and more often through staged sit-ins, protest marches, sabotage, campaigns, as well as art, music and film festivals. The scope of activism is wide and far-reaching, which is perhaps exactly the reason it is such a popular tool among indigenous activists, and sometimes the only one.

With the growth of indigenous activism, so has the power and reach behind it expanded, and in many cases it has proven worthy, reaching all the way into the sphere of successful political change. The role of art in indigenous activism has also become a monumental instrument where artists can increasingly voice their opinions in the manner of their choosing, not just in forms deemed correct by dominant societies. The inclusion of art, and the freedom that it brings with it, has also opened the door to include relationships with non-indigenous artists alike as the domain of indigenous issues continues to have more dealings with societies and institutions outside its community. The role of a non-indigenous artist however comes with the precarious position of doing indigenous justice without falling into the Western trope of patronising acts or a 'saviour' narrative.

An example of someone who falls into the niche of non-indigenous artists working on indigenous issues is Finnish photographer Jorma Puranen, who in 1999 published a photography project in which he displayed 19th century photographs of Sámi in the Nordic setting of Lapland. Puranen sought to invoke discussions of memory, history and marginalisation, all the while careful

³⁷ Anne-Marie Gardner. 'Diagnosing Conflict: What Do We Know?' in Fen Osler Hampson & David M. Malone, (ed.), *From Reaction to Conflict Prevention*, 2002 pp.15-16.

to maintain conversation about the Sámi, rather than for them.³⁸ In Canada, projects between indigenous and non-indigenous have also seen success for example amongst the founders of Idle No More, one of the most popular movements the country has seen in recent years. A central ingredient in both cases seems to lie in setting up a space for dialogue, instead of a monologue that has previously been a frequent trait of non-indigenous participation.

AUSTRALIA

To give a little insight into how indigenous activism has been used in past years and the social change it has the power to produce, Australia provides an interesting example as its indigenous populations are among the most visible and well-known in the world. In Australia, activism has played a crucial role in not only legislative change, but a change in the mindset of people, where activists advocating for the rights of aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders have a history spanning decades of tumultuous times. The 1960s were a decade when attention was drawn to indigenous rights, culminating in the 1967 referendum on the citizenship of the indigenous people in Australia.³⁹ Just years prior to this landmark moment, Charles Perkins, the country's first indigenous student to graduate from university, and president of the group Student Action for Aborigines, SAFA, led aboriginals on what came to be known as the 'Freedom Rides'. Riding through a series of towns at which Perkins and his growing troupe stopped to advocate for the rights, equality and justice of Australia's indigenous people, with national news coverage not far behind, they ousted thriving racism in small rural towns, which were otherwise mostly unnoteworthy.⁴⁰ In a documentary produced years later, Charles Perkins mulled over his motivations saying "the whole freedom ride [was] not so much for the white people, in my mind, my deeper objective was for aboriginal people to realise 'hey listen, second class is not good enough'."⁴¹

Jim Spigelman, the group's former secretary, notes that the Freedom Rides had a great effect in raising awareness in a time when it was sorely needed. They placed Perkins, an aboriginal, front and centre of the movement, a perspective which had largely been omitted from the common social

³⁸ Frank Möller. "Wild Weirdness?" "Gross Humbugs!" Memory-Images of the North and Finnish Photography', *Journal of Northern Studies*, 2011, pp.39-40.

³⁹ Danny Larkin. 'Still fighting for our rights 50 years after the referendum', *Eureka Street*, May 2017, pp.74-76.

⁴⁰ Jessica Campion. 'How Aboriginal activism brought about change'. *Australian Geographic*, [website], 14 July 2011.

⁴¹ *Australian Biography: Charles Perkins*, dir. Robin Hughes, National Interest Program of Film Australia, [online video], 1999.

narrative as previously aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders had only ever been highlighted in the news when it was related to sports. With the focus of the public also came the focus of the government, and thus it can be argued the Freedom Rides had a momentous effect on the outcome of the 1967 referendum, considering up until then the indigenous of Australia were not counted as regular people in the national census.

CANADA

Canada provides another example where indigenous nations recognised worldwide have used activism time and time again as a megaphone for change. Amongst a variety of cultures and a colourful history, Canada plays home to a notable size of indigenous people making up 4.8% of the entire population in 2016 with an estimated 1.6 million individuals.⁴² With a group of such size, the indigenous in Canada are no strangers to marginalisation, but neither are they to activism as a means to forward their stance. Canadian indigenous movements have encompassed the arts in their activism through features in films and music that tour international festivals, as well as innumerable rallies and protests, all to raise awareness and spark change. However, even with its long history, indigenous activism in Canada is still in stride, and still equally necessary.

Launching from the early Royal Proclamation of 1763, which was one of the first official recognitions of indigenous nations in Canada, began a spate of initiatives in which the Canadian state sought to keep indigenous nations under tight control. Over the next two hundred years the initiatives increased in potency and variety, including effective assimilation policies such as residential schools, the traumas of which are still alive today. A significant point in Canadian indigenous history occurred in 1969 when the government published the 'White Paper', a proposal that would erase all prior legal documents pertaining to indigenous people as well as their Indian status, all under the guise of making all Canadians equal. The response that followed came to be known as Red Power.

A wave of rejection flood through indigenous nations as a conference held over 140 communities developed into the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, who were one of many to publish alternative documents such as the 'Red Paper' produced by Harold Cardinal, a Cree leader

⁴² Aboriginal Peoples Highlights Table, 2016 Census, *Statistics Canada*, [website], 25 October 2017.

of the Indian Association of Alberta.⁴³ The National Indian Brotherhood, which still stands today as the Assembly of First Nations, was also formed out of the furore against the White Paper. Following public demonstrations and marches led by the likes Cardinal, amended laws began to roll out, pulling back on the more discriminatory policies such as the White Paper, and collaborations among indigenous nations continued to work on issues that arose from this time.⁴⁴ Ironically it was, among other things, the government's policies designed to strip away their traditional culture that urged indigenous communities to embrace in a collective consciousness towards nationwide cooperation.

Despite the milestones indigenous activism has achieved in Canada, to this day there are many who still call for indigenous equality to be achieved. In the past decade activism has stepped into the technical age with movements such as the Idle No More campaign as well as #Resistance150 which both aim to shed light on mistreated indigenous affairs through social media.⁴⁵ By using online networks, such campaigns have gained traction and formed a very visible part of Canada's indigenous activism to the point of reaching the top brass of the government. In the summer of 2017, 13-year-old member of the Wiikwemkoong First Nation, Autumn Peltier, exchanged words with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at the Assembly of First Nations' annual winter meeting over the protection of the land's water, specifically, the lack of such protection. In 2018 Peltier addressed the United Nations General Assembly on similar advocations over sustainable development.⁴⁶ Both feats were undoubtedly helped in both traction and volume by Peltier's social media spotlight. These examples of indigenous activism in Canada showcase the value and reach that can be whipped up from the grassroots supporters to those amongst the highest levels of policymakers.

THE ONLINE PLATFORM

The history of activism, not only in the indigenous spheres, has trodden a path of wavering visibility and method, as a tactic that relies heavily on the tides of popularity. In recent decades, the development of activism and indigenous dialogue has shifted into the online sphere where issues

⁴³ Naithan Lagace and Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair. 'The White Paper, 1969', *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, [website], 21 March 2018.

⁴⁴ Dale Turner. *This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy*, 2014, pp.12-13.

⁴⁵ Jackie Dunham. 'Resistance 150: Why Canada's Birthday Celebrations Aren't for Everyone', *CTV News*, [website], 28 June 2017.

⁴⁶ 'Teen activist Autumn Peltier who scolded Trudeau to address UN', *BBC*, [website], 31 December 2017.

are often fought on the battlegrounds of social media platforms and online media. While activism with an online presence has both merits and hindrances, a fact is that it relies on the attention span of people. As recent surveys find, the average human attention span is steadily decreasing to eventually match that of a goldfish.⁴⁷ This means media outlets will often match their content in accordance with consumer needs, and as a result, coverage of a topic will inevitably be limited. In the world of indigenous activism this can be a high hurdle to overcome.

An additional issue faced by the reliance on online media lies in the fact that popular media is oftentimes a selective business in which certain issues are chosen to be spotlighted while others are left in the dark. As Wilson, Carlson and Sciascia acknowledge, “mainstream media cannot necessarily be counted upon to take interest in issues specific to or of concern to Indigenous peoples. Social media however, is providing the means whereby Indigenous people can ‘reterritorialise’ and ‘Indigenise’ the information and communication space. The ability to create international solidarity as well as elevating Indigenous issues to a global platform remain key strengths for Indigenous activism. The level of visibility social media has given Indigenous issues is unprecedented.”⁴⁸ Online media content already plays a large role in modern day activism, and it can only be expected to grow in coming years.

As Petra Laiti already mentioned, there is a need for more diverse perspectives in mass media which venture outside the views of mainstream perceptions. As the role of the vast media sphere, especially online, grows more significant in indigenous activism, and its visibility, there is also growing concern among the Sámi of narrow media lenses.⁴⁹ However, online platforms have also proven useful for Finland’s Sámi activism as it is precisely there where Suohpanterror have taken their stand. Founded predominantly on Facebook, Suohpanterror took advantage of a platform from which they could display their ideas on the same level as their audience, and directly to them, all the while providing an open space for discussion.

⁴⁷ Attention Spans, *Microsoft Canada*, [website], 2015, p.46.

⁴⁸ Alex Wilson, Bronwyn Carlson & Acushla Sciascia. ‘Reterritorialising Social Media: Indigenous People Rise Up’, *Australasian Journal of Information Systems*, 2017, p.2.

⁴⁹ Petra Laiti. ‘Aina vihaiset saamelaiset ja muita mediamyyttejä’, *Petra Laiti*, [web blog], 4 October 2016.

3. FACTORS AND FOUNDATIONS

SETTING THE PARAMETERS

In the following section I will provide a walk-through of the boundaries I chose to help focus my research, and will also discuss the theoretical foundations and previous work that were used to direct the exploration and analysis of this research. By explaining the justification behind each methodological step I hope to illuminate a clear path stemming from the early steps of my research, to the conclusions reached by the end. Researching a topic as complex as a people and culture, often means dealing with mass amounts of material and oftentimes conflicting ideas. When considering a place to start, there are innumerable avenues that could be examined, each from a variety of perspectives. For the case of a master's thesis however, the scope of the research had to remain focused to balance the reality of time and resources. When considering how to set the limits, first and foremost I considered what parameters would best suit the research question and simultaneously spotlight the necessary material for answering it.

I knew in the early stages I wanted to focus my thesis on Sámi issues. This was partly because I learnt nothing of the Sámi or the Nordic countries' practices towards them in school, but rather in later years through films such as *Sámi Blood* and *Northern Great Mountain* by Amanda Kernell which focused on highlighting issues of the indigenous people. As a result, I wanted to look further into those issues and how they are addressed in the present day, and thus my thesis became focused on the Sámi community today. While the Sámi are a people spread across multiple borders, I chose to narrow the focus on the Sámi communities based in Finland. This would allow me to draw attention to the public dialogue and nation-state relationship within one country. Another value in focusing solely on Finland meant that I could rely on my own translation skills regarding published material written in both Finnish and English.

The timeline of my research focuses on the current state of the Sámi society in Finland. As previously noted, indigenous activism has gradually shifted into the sphere of online media, proving to be a valuable tool in Sámi activism too. This evolution largely occurred after the turn of the century and has only progressed therein. With these factors in mind, I wanted to focus my attention no further back than a decade from 2010 onwards. In 2012 the artist collective Suohpanterror established themselves with a notable online presence. Including a few years before their online

introduction allowed for a small timeframe to note the state of the Sámi activist scene prior to Suohpanterror's introduction.

The primary source material consists of Suohpanterror's online visual archives spanning back several years and covering numerous ongoing central issues that Sámi in Finland face today. I chose to focus on Suohpanterror due to their unique position as artistic provocateurs within the Finnish Sámi community, who have also amassed a public following amongst the media realm. To avoid a superficial analysis of many works, I focused on a small handful which each illustrated a certain aspect of a counter culture narrative, whether through critique on the Sápmi land use, indigenous rights or the Sámi identity question.

A potential drawback in choosing Suohpanterror's work as the basis of the research is the fact that the artist collective is an anonymous one, thus there is no absolute way to know for certain what the intended statement are in each work. However, while I remain careful not to assume certain knowledge of the intent behind each work, the contribution of each artwork to the wider conversation remains valid, as the interpretation of art is almost always subjective. As Jenni Laiti, one of the only public members and spokesman for the group, says "we want to talk about the issues, not the people behind them."⁵⁰ The anonymity of Suohpanterror ensures that conversations are not subverted by personal agendas or critique aimed at the individuals behind the art.

A common theme amongst the majority of Suohpanterror works echoes the use of détournement. An artistic practice born from social revolutionaries of the 1950s, détournement subverts the mainstream discourse against itself while often employing the use of familiar mass media signature logos. As founders Debord and Wolman stated, "[détournement] cannot fail to be a powerful cultural weapon in the service of a real class struggle. The cheapness of its products is the heavy artillery that breaks through all the Chinese walls of understanding."⁵¹ The technique was evolved into the 1980s phenomenon of culture jamming, and in the context of this research offers a technique that clearly illustrates the points of a Sámi counter narrative that are explored further in the analysis.

⁵⁰ Siskotuulikki Toijonen. 'Suohpanterror ampuu tahallaan yli', *Kansan Uutiset*, 15 May 2016.

⁵¹ Guy Debord and Gil J. Wolman. 'A User's Guide to Détournement', trans. Ken Knabb, *Les Lèvres Nues*, 1956.

The decision to study modern Sámi narratives specifically through visual mediums was an intentional one. The role of art poses a proposition to an audience with a chance to blend both their own perspective with a wider consensus. This creates a forum for conversation, and in the case of Suohpanterror and Sámi issues, it has managed to do just that. However, the use of visual mediums in this context is not a new phenomenon in Finland as in 1999 Finnish photographer Jorma Puranen published *Imaginary Homecomings*, a project which looked at 19th century photographs of Sámi, but focused on the historical and anthropological implications behind them. The project came about as Puranen found the photographs in the archives of the Musée de l'Homme, taken for Prince Roland Bonaparte's exhibition, which seemed to portray Sámi individuals as objects in an anthropological light.⁵² Following his find, Puranen decided to reimagine this narrative whilst considering the combined elements of 'cultural appropriation, visual fracture and historical intersection', and produced an exhibition where the images of the photographs were placed in the raw wilderness of Lapland.

Similarly to the Suohpanterror case in hand, Puranen's work used visual mediums as a doorway for viewers to enter the present-day conversations whilst acknowledging the relevance of the past. History found an important place in his work as Puranen proposed through the photographs for viewers to consider the past, and what is considered fact, through new lenses which offered an alternative narrative to the same events; one shifted from scientific intention to human experience. The relevance of Puranen's work in relation to this thesis lies in the shared value placed on past experiences. Suohpanterror's artworks often link to past events or practices but nevertheless focus on the effects of today. When considering themes which relate to societal and identity narratives, oftentimes memory plays a large role in understanding the modern-day significance and extent.

Visual peace scholar Frank Möller has noted that similarly, authors "have also explored the relationship between memory and art and the political functions of artistic engagements with memory and identity [as] identity cannot be thought of without memory; it serves as glue with which to connect with one another otherwise disconnected points in time so as to form a seemingly coherent narrative."⁵³ This reasoning can be witnessed in the Sámi throughout the Nordic countries as they face issues of stigma and stereotypes, in part, due to injustices of the past which in turn take

⁵² Elizabeth Edwards. 'Jorma Puranen -Imaginary homecoming', *Social Identities*, 1995, pp.317-332.

⁵³ Frank Möller, *Politics and Art*, Oxford Handbooks Online, [website], June 2016, p.32.

a toll on the modern day attitudes of Sámi identities, as viewed by themselves as well as others. The provocative works of Suohpanterror pose an alternative perspective to common narratives that surround the indigenous people, and as such form an appropriate basis for the research of this thesis.

CONCEPT OF COLONIALISM

One of the foremost researchers on Sámi issues in Finland, Veli-Pekka Lehtola, starts his article on the Sámi with a Dirks' quote that states "colonialism may be dead, yet it is everywhere to be seen."⁵⁴ In a few short words the quote speaks multitudes on the debate surrounding colonialism in the Nordic countries. The reason why the concept colonialism requires defining within this research is because its place within Sámi research is highly contested. Part of the difficulty in using the term depends on which definition the user applies. In some cases such as the colonisation of most of the African continent, the term and understanding of colonialism is fairly clear-cut, however even then it can be separated into sub-sections of colonialism such as surrogate or exploitation. Within the Nordic states the term colonialism is usually accompanied by thoughts of far-away lands, as history professor Fur notes "seemingly untainted by colonialism's heritage, the Scandinavian countries throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty first successfully maintained positions as champions of minority rights and mediators in global politics."⁵⁵ It is when the looking glass is inverted and turned towards the Sámi that use of the term colonialism is challenged, especially in Finland.

Norway and Sweden have both had at one time or another clear mission statements towards the Sámi in their countries, with notable objectives written into state legislation. Norway pushed the *Norwegianization* policy upon the Sámi which saw a crushed language landscape, meanwhile the Swedish state chose to protect their version of a Sámi, being reindeer husbandry workers, while neglecting the rest.⁵⁶ Finland however, differs from this narrative as Lehtola notes there has never been one straightforward policy towards the Sámi, and occasionally, not even a visible one. One of the biggest arguments against colonialism in Finland is that because of Finland's unique stance with

⁵⁴ Lehtola. 'Sámi Histories, Colonialism, and Finland', 2015, p.22.

⁵⁵ Gunlög Fur. 'Colonialism and Swedish History: Unthinkable Connections?' in Magdalena Naum and Jonas M. Nordin, (ed.), *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity: Small Time Agents in a Global Arena*, 2013, p.18.

⁵⁶ Lehtola. Sámi Histories, Colonialism, and Finland, 2015, p.27.

their Sámi community, the Sámi were treated no differently than others in Northern Lapland. Finnish historians such as Jouko Vahtola and Maria Lähteenmäki argue that Finland's approach to the Sámi was based on equality and not as a distinct group. Additionally, a research group on land-ownership rights commissioned by the Finnish Ministry of Justice under Vahtola's lead found that historically, in the eyes of the courts, "the Sámi had not been in any lesser position than their Finnish counterparts" and that "especially in land policy the inhabitants of Lapland have been treated equally, without any ethnic distinction."⁵⁷

Offering counter points, Lehtola argues that the Sámi were in fact a distinct group, and seen that way, since while they inhabited land alongside Finns in Lapland, the Sámi spoke a different language and had a different way of life and culture. However, when the Sámi were encompassed into Finnish society, Lehtola notes it was done by a foreign culture and government in a foreign language with foreign values.⁵⁸ The state planned initiatives which would aid in the development of Sámi culture and languages whilst also securing special privileges for Sámi, and they were possible in theory, however the implementation of the initiatives fell short.⁵⁹

Sámi reindeer herding has also felt the heavy hand of state intervention. The Sámi's nomadic culture of reindeer herding, which formed an integral part of the traditional way of life, was cut short in 1852 as the national borders were closed between Finland, then under Russia's rule, and Norway.⁶⁰ For many years, reindeer herding Sámi used their homeland Sápmi, the northern region of the Nordic countries, for seasonal migration routes, travelling vast distances between the East boundaries to the Western limits of the Sámi land. When the Nordic countries drew vertical borders and divided the northern region between themselves, the Sámi were granted the right to continue free, unobstructed movement over the borders. However, as 1852 rolled around, state disagreements lead to closed borders and as a result the East-West cultural routes were severed by the state lines, bringing the emigrational Sámi reindeer lifestyle to an end.

As the Finnish state's realm of influence reached further into the Northern regions, it began to support settled trades over the traditional hunting lifestyle that required seasonal migration. This was done by enacting legislation that favoured settlers all the while making the traditional trades

⁵⁷ Jouko Vahtola. 'Lapin maa-oikeustutkimus 2003–2006' in Jouko Vahtola, et al., *Yhteenveto ja tiivistelmä Lapinmaan maa-oikeudet -tutkimuksesta*, 2006, pp.4-10.

⁵⁸ Lehtola. *Sámi Histories, Colonialism, and Finland*, 2015, p.27.

⁵⁹ Veli-Pekka Lehtola. *Saamelaiset suomalaiset. Kohtaamisia 1896– 1953*, 2012, pp.453-457.

⁶⁰ Lehtola. *Saamelaiset: Historia, Yhteiskunta, Taide*, 2015, p.59.

like fishing more difficult. The reasoning was that it was the most effective means of exploiting the land, but the state saw that it would simultaneously be better for Sámi and help them out of poverty.⁶¹ This exemplifies a typical characteristic of colonialism where decisions affecting those colonized are made and implemented by a distant, more powerful authority. As a result, the societies in which the Sámi settled into were Finnish and upon the move the Sámi would take up the Finnish customs, language and clothes. Overtime the Sámi identity would be often hidden entirely from future generations as it became a token of shame upon widespread stigma that spread through such communities into the Finnish population.⁶²

According to a general definition, colonialism is the “establishment, exploitation, maintenance, acquisition, and expansion of colonies in one territory by people from another territory. It is a set of unequal relationships between the colonial power and the colony and often between the colonists and the indigenous population.”⁶³ When faced with the power relations between the Finnish state and the Sámi, aspects of colonialist practices can be witnessed in various actions from the obstructions on the Sámi languages to the forceful change in Sámi territory and way of life, to name a few. A conclusion that various individuals such as Lehtola stand behind can thus be found that “Finnish colonialism was therefore not a history of apparent repression or subjugation; it was a governing practice based on silencing.”⁶⁴ In the course of this research it is not my place to argue whether or not colonialist practices are used against the Sámi, however, as the concept remains fundamental to the artworks of Suohpanterror, as well as the wider conversation on Sámi issues, it is necessary to map out its role in the current Sámi context.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Indigenous research has been a rising phenomenon in the past century as shifting perspectives of both the researchers and the subjects have been encompassed into the academic debate. As a result, there exists a solid framework within indigenous research. For the context of this thesis I drew upon two main theories that emphasise the central themes and relevant research questions. The theories that form the foundations and facilitate the discussion are peace research’s

⁶¹ Vahtola, 2006, p.6.

⁶² Lehtola. Sámi Histories, Colonialism, and Finland, 2015, p.28.

⁶³ Lehtola. Sámi Histories, Colonialism, and Finland, 2015, p.25.

⁶⁴ Lehtola. Sámi Histories, Colonialism, and Finland, 2015, p.29.

forefather Johan Galtung's theory on structural violence and the postcolonial theory amassed by scholars such as Michael Foucault, Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak. Both theories revolve around the ideas of nation state relationships and their effects on society and additionally, both can be neatly placed into the context of Sámi narratives in Finland.

JOHAN GALTUNG

Johan Galtung's theory of structural violence stems from his published work in 1969 which sought to challenge the way violence is perceived. In his article *Violence, Peace, and Peace Research*, Galtung set out a series of distinctions that offer a different viewpoint of violence forms. Those distinctions were classified as the physical versus psychological violence, negative versus positive influences, whether an object is hurt, whether a subject is acting, intended versus unintended violence, and finally the manifest versus latent levels of violence. Through these distinctions Galtung found the definition of violence not to be a rigid concept, but rather one with multiple facets that can be understood in fluid ideas. Each distinction produces a form of violence, some of which Galtung said can be separated into two distinct parameters of personal or structural violence, personal typically being the visible and dynamic form. An assembly reviewing the theory of structural violence summed that "structural violence, as theorized by Johan Galtung, consists of a de-personalized form of violence that is built into particular structures 'and shows up as unequal power', even if it cannot be traced back to 'concrete persons as actors'."⁶⁵

Galtung's structural violence can be considered a silent form of violence wherein citizens within a society may not even register its presence due to its ingrained nature within the state system. The central idea of structural violence states that people's basic needs are neglected due to the actions within a state's social structure. Such actions, whether intended or not, form an uneven power relation which sets the stage for inequality between districts in a nation which can be especially spurred by the invisible nature of structural violence. The form of inequality that Galtung poses may have different results, but the inequality itself becomes apparent as individuals and districts "are deprived because the structure deprives them of chances to organize and bring their power to bear against the topdogs, as voting power, bargaining power, striking power, violent

⁶⁵ Dilts, Andrew, et al., 'Revisiting Johan Galtung's Concept of Structural Violence', *New Political Science*, 2012, p.214.

power - partly because they are atomized and disintegrated, partly because they are overawed by all the authority the topdogs present. Thus, the net result may be bodily harm [...] but structural violence will probably just as often be recorded as psychological violence.”⁶⁶ While Galtung highlights the wide differences between personal and structural violence, he also notes that the severity of each may be equally high.

The notions of Galtung’s theory from 1969 were further elaborated on in 1990 when he published his theory on cultural violence, an extension of structural violence. His theory was essentially the legitimization behind personal violence and the fact of structural violence. Cultural violence works through changing the moral perspectives of an act, or at least making them vaguer. Galtung offered the example of “changing the moral color of an act from red/wrong to green/right [...]: murder on behalf of the country as right, on behalf of oneself wrong.”⁶⁷ These notions can be viewed for example in the context of Sámi rights in Finland whereby certain Sámi might argue that the unratified ILO-169 is a continued hindrance on their rights, while the state would likely hold an alternative perspective. If you consider Galtung’s idea of violence which he states as “avoidable insults to basic human needs, and more generally to life, lowering the real level of needs satisfaction below what is potentially possible,”⁶⁸ then the notion of structural violence is applicable to the Sámi since it is the gap between reality and reaching their highest potential that is significant. A large part of Suohpanterror’s aim is to make visible what they consider colonialist, but more importantly, harmful practices. These practices are exactly the forms of structural violence that Galtung’s theory lends credibility to, where even though they are silent and invisible in nature, their role and influence in Suohpanterror’s work are essential for their art to be interpreted to its fullest extent.

POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

The second framework that lays groundwork for this thesis is the postcolonial theory that has contributions from various scholars but can be said to have sprung from philosopher Michael Foucault’s work on power relations and Edward Said’s famed work *Orientalism*. The term postcolonialism refers to the combination of various academic spheres which are concerned with

⁶⁶ Johan Galtung. ‘Violence, Peace, and Peace Research’, *Journal of Peace Research*, 1969, p.177.

⁶⁷ Johan Galtung. ‘Cultural Violence’, *Journal of Peace Research*, 1990, p.292.

⁶⁸ Galtung, 1990, p.292.

the lasting impacts on the political or cultural conditions of those colonised. Postcolonial theory then further encompasses various avenues of postcolonial types and addresses the power dynamics between the colonisers and those colonised. Factors such as identity, culture and history often play significant roles in postcolonial research where the aftermath is highlighted. Modern-day research is “not only relevant to colonial encounters in the more traditional meaning, but to a constructivist understanding of social identities and societies in general and, in particular, to the deconstruction of the hegemony of certain voices in written history. A main purpose is to identify and explore alternative histories, including that of the voiceless ‘subaltern’.”⁶⁹ In this regard, postcolonialism is not simply what follows after colonialism, but rather a response that addresses the colonialism.

A pocket of postcolonial theory is made up by feminist scholar Gayatri Spivak’s theory of the subaltern. What Spivak calls the subaltern refers to members separated from the dominant society, however, she has been careful to emphasize that it is not an umbrella term for all those oppressed, but rather a term specifically for those who are unequivocally denied a seat at the table, not just those unheard. The theory is embodied in the famous title ‘can the subaltern speak?’, under which Spivak first published her work, as it explores the existence, or lack thereof, of opportunities for oppressed groups to enact action within society structures.⁷⁰ One notion she puts forward theorises that some people are not heard because they voice their opinions in a manner different to what the mainstream society understands as normal or correct.⁷¹ As a result, the subaltern may be speaking yet it remains unheard, and thus no dialogue is formed.

While the proportions to which Spivak first wrote of the subaltern in the 1980s may have morphed over the last thirty years or so, there exists a space in modern day Finland for the theory to take place. When this line of thinking is placed within the context of Sámi-Finland relations today, there is a hurdle of one form or another which seems to obstruct Sámi from being able to carry out their own social change, whether legislative or otherwise, when it comes to issues pertaining to their communities. Placed in the realm of postcolonialism, it is worth baring this in mind when considering not only Suohpanterror’s message, but the fact that they have amassed such a platform to spread their messages from.

⁶⁹ Marte Spangen, Anna-Kaisa Salmi, and Tiina Äikäs. 'Sámi Archaeology and Postcolonial Theory-An Introduction', *Arctic Anthropology*, 2015, p.3.

⁷⁰ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. 'Can the subaltern speak?', in Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams, (ed.), *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory: a reader*, 1994, pp.66-111.

⁷¹ Spivak, 1994, pp.96-98.

With the rise of postcolonial theory so rose postcolonial literature as both went hand in hand with the former focusing a large portion of research on the latter. However I believe art and visual methods also hold a place in the theory as they can be used in a similar manner to explore postcolonial narratives from the colonised perspective, as could be argued is the case for Suohpanterror's work. Postcolonial theory is also relevant to this research as it is a growing forum for the colonized voice, whether it be indigenous or minority voices. Whilst as the researcher, I have no personal connection to the Sámi, the focus of this thesis nevertheless is to analyse, explore and elaborate on the narratives of the Sámi and as such, a framework focused on such dialogue helps facilitate the discussions put forth.

Another facet of postcolonial theory that is relevant to this research lies in the concept of a 'colonial mindset'. As researcher Markus Nyström defines it "one has a colonial mindset if one's actions and rhetoric (or narratives) have colonial outcomes and/or origins without explicitly using a colonial vocabulary."⁷² Nyström goes on to explain that the use of such colonial mindsets are often found in the rhetoric of politicians today, as it is also what is left unsaid that proves equally significant. Nyström's use of colonial mindsets are explored further in the following chapter, however the concept adequately links the points of postcolonial theory in a modern-day context of the Nordic states. Veli-Pekka Lehtola adds to the notion of colonial mindsets, stating "in the postcolonial discourse, the colonization of the mind is a more diverse concept for analysing, for example, how the colonial structures are replacing the indigenous ways of land use, social order, and knowledge systems, and how the indigenous peoples are taught to approve this development as something natural through 'institutional forgetting'."⁷³ Lehtola unifies the thread from Galtung's structural violence through to colonial mindsets within the postcolonial theory, all of which form the solid framework upon which this thesis builds on.

⁷² Markus Nyström. 'Narratives of Truth: An Exploration of Narrative Theory as a Tool in Decolonising Research' in Gerald Roche, Hiroshi Maruyama, and Åsa Viridi Kroik, (ed.), *Indigenous Efflorescence: Beyond Revitalisation in Sapmi and Ainu Mosir*, 2018, p.34.

⁷³ Lehtola. *Sámi Histories, Colonialism, and Finland*, 2015, p.26.

4. HOW TO EXPLORE VISUALS AND A CULTURE?

METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed for the use of this research is narrative analysis as well as aesthetic and textual analysis, as the subject of this thesis is qualitative in nature and focuses on visual material with Sámi themes. Narrative analysis supports the exploration of content from the initial, surface findings, to the latent content that requires further theory. As Braun and Clarke explain, “the analytic process involves a progression from description, where the data [has] simply been organised to show patterns in semantic content, and summarised, to interpretation, where there is an attempt to theorise the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications.”⁷⁴ With Suohpanterror’s art in mind, this approach takes into account both the preliminary interpretation as well as the sub-level meanings, acknowledging the multiple dimensions that indigenous art can contain.

When approaching the primary material of my research I opted to follow the steps put forth in Douglas Ezzy’s work on qualitative analysis, as outlined by Amanda Barusch. The process was made up of seven steps which essentially outlined gathering the material, observing initial findings and comparing them to those which require in-depth knowledge, the addition of relevant and background awareness, and finally bringing all these factors together in an analysis.⁷⁵ This method takes into account the multiple facets of a narrative from the apparent, as well as the more concealed, meanings within the works whilst also keeping in mind the wider context behind the works, that context being indigenous activism, societal norms and ongoing causes of conflict.

Where narrative analysis is based on the subjects being analysed, this research is also located in both aesthetic and textual analysis, as the *methods* in which the subjects are analysed. In its essence, aesthetic analysis acknowledges that every analysis is an interpretation, and further places a value on that interpretation in terms of knowledge production. The architect of aesthetic analysis, Roland Bleiker, emphasises the analysis in terms of visual material, stating “images do not speak for themselves. They need to be interpreted. And this interpretation contains values that inevitably have as much to do with the values of the interpreter than the content of the image itself.”⁷⁶ Bleiker

⁷⁴ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke. 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 2006, p.84.

⁷⁵ Amanda Barusch. Step-by-Step Approach to Narrative Analysis, [website], 2015.

⁷⁶ Roland Bleiker. 'Pluralist Methods for Visual Global Politics', *Millenium: Journal of International Studies*, 2015, p.875.

notes the necessity of employing numerous methods in the analysis of visual materials since they do not subscribe to a single discipline. Mirroring the work of Gillian Rose, Bleiker maps out different method sections such as the production of an image, the image itself and how it is seen by various audiences, and in addition, he also includes compositional and social approaches.⁷⁷

Textual analysis works hand-in-hand with aesthetic analysis in that it enforces the role of interpretation in academic contexts. However, rather than approaching an issue from a social perspective in which assumptions are based on social attitudes thus resulting in social interpretations, textual analysis places the emphasis on the individual. The principle of textual analysis claims that the interpretation is purely from an individual perspective. With both aesthetic and textual analysis in mind, the research and analysis of Suohpanterror's artwork, as well as the myriad of factors and themes that link to it, is firmly based in my personal interpretation. While societal context and social attitudes play a large role in the analysis of the visual material, the interpretation itself is not assumed to be shared by any audience, but rather remains entirely my own.

The works of Tony Schirato and Jen Webb have also put forth the value and uses of visual texts through which elaborate narratives can be divulged. Where colour schemes and content play a part, Schirato and Webb discuss the roles that genre and intertextuality all have in directing the viewer towards the narrative a visual text has to offer. In the case of this thesis, the narratives that Suohpanterror seek to portray through their art, to an extent, can be further explored when there exists prior knowledge of the Sámi situation in Finland. As Schirato and Webb note, "because no social practice can operate in isolation from its social context, any spoken, written or visual text will either connote or cite other texts and, by recalling these known stories, they will propel our reading in a particular direction."⁷⁸ Through allusions to a familiar context, the authors outline a tactic that happens subconsciously in a viewer, yet holds relevance when applied consciously in an analysis.

Contributions from Markus Nyström's narrative theory also play a central role in the exploration of narratives. Considering the analysis of Suohpanterror and the context in which it takes place, it is important to keep in mind the varying and at times opposing narratives that are present. In his work on the use of narrative theory as a method of research, Nyström highlights the value for young Sámi in both creating new narratives whilst holding onto old ones, especially in a

⁷⁷ Bleiker, 2015, p.877.

⁷⁸ Tony Schirato and Jen Webb. *Reading the Visual*, 2004, p.91.

revitalisation process.⁷⁹ In this assumption, he also focuses on the presence of colonial mindsets, which often prove problematic to researchers due to the lack of concrete evidence. However, just because they are not present in the vocabulary of actors does not mean they are not present in the practices, and in extension, the mainstream narratives. As an example Nyström explains that the ongoing ratification process of the ILO-169 convention is perceived as an act of generosity by the Swedish state, however an alternative narrative finds the presence of ongoing stalling as a continued theft of the rights that Sámi would otherwise have if the state had not taken away their land in the first place.⁸⁰ While Nyström's work regards the Sámi in Sweden, his theories can be equally applied to those in Finland.

The presence of colonial mindsets is important to bear in mind when considering the background, history and the content of the visual material. It is also a factor that sets narrative analysis apart from the more general practice of discourse analysis as it helps "ask and critically examine what is excluded from descriptions of reality (narratives) instead of looking only at what is included."⁸¹ In essence, it also considers that which was left unsaid, and in a research where notions of invisible or structural violence, and societal stigmas play a significant role, this concept is incredibly useful.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The role of a central research question is to form the core of the thesis around which the surrounding theories and enquiry take place. Within my research it provides a direction and link between each step of the work as a finishing line to have answered by the end of the enquiry. The main research question, as in this case, can also be used to map out the various relevant spheres and themes of the research in one sentence. The research question in my thesis is: *What indigenous narratives are portrayed in the works of Suohpanterror?* It lays out the research's relevant concepts of identity narratives and indigenous discourse within the realm of art.

When considering a research question, I wanted one which would both, provide a solid question to be answered, as well as present a gateway into exploring current Sámi issues. As the

⁷⁹ Nyström, 2018, p.30.

⁸⁰ Nyström, 2018, pp.43-44.

⁸¹ Nyström, 2018, p.49.

question is based on analysing Suohpanterror's visual materials, the ensuing societal issues they put forth become an essential element of the research. As the issues surrounding the Sámi are numerous and multifaceted, art is a useful tool to access them as it can combine an abundance of content, and thus issues, into a single poster. The incorporation of indigenous narratives into the question also opens the door for examining the position of Finland's Sámi within the wider context and experiences of indigenous nations in general.

SUOHPANTERROR

As previously mentioned, Suohpanterror is an anonymous Sámi collective based in Finland who deal in art and activism, 'artivism' so to speak. The name alludes to their Sámi identity as suohpan is North Sámi for lasso, creating the group's name 'lasso terror'. One of the only public members, and spokesperson of the group, Jenni Laiti has said their mission statement is to comment on the colonialism and racism suffered by Sámi. A common trademark in Suohpanterror's work is their ability to provoke a wide range of opinions, some more favourable than others. However, as Laiti has stated, "provocation and overkill are our forms of expression and ways to bring issues to the forefront. Powerful statements are needed so that those with power will hear those who have been given none."⁸²

The group was established in 2012 and since then has produced installations, performance action as well as a steady stream of artworks published online and on their various social media platforms. The group has also acquired growing recognition within their field of activism and decolonial art, as recipients of the 2016 'Kritiikin kannukset' award from the Finnish Critics' Association SARV. Suohpanterror was awarded this recognition due to its "innovative use of public space [which] has given them a clear voice also outside of traditional art institutions," giving a nod of acknowledgement that the group has a degree of legitimacy outside of being a mere fringe art collective.⁸³

The images chosen for this thesis were all picked from the group's online presence, predominantly from www.suohpanterror.com and their equivalent Facebook page

⁸² Toijonen, 2016, [website].

⁸³ Laura Junka-Aikio. 'Indigenous Culture Jamming: Suohpanterror and the articulation of Sami political community', *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, 2018, p.4.

www.facebook.com/suohpanterror. The posters have no consistent official names, thus for the sake of this research they go by the titles under which they were uploaded, with a brief description of when and where they were first published.

FIG. 1. Suohpangiehta, published on Facebook on 17th of June 2013.



Figure 1. Suohpangiehta

FIG. 2. Skrik, published on Facebook on the 29th of July 2014.



Figure 2. Skrik

FIG. 3. Raja, published on Facebook on the 21st of March 2017.



Figure 3. Raja

FIG. 4. Golbma, published on Facebook on the 7th of November 2015.



Figure 4. Golbma

5. DEDUCTIONS AND DISCUSSION

THE FINDINGS

The following chapter takes a critical look at Suohpanterror's artworks, employing foundations and methodologies from previous chapters to assemble a thorough examination followed by a discussion on the findings and their place in the larger context of the Sámi today. Each of the four images are explored individually alongside interpretations that can be drawn from the material. As noted by Bleiker's method of aesthetic analysis as well as Schirato and Webb, Suohpanterror's posters are examined both by their artistic choices, as well as other means such as how they might be perceived by viewers and the social context behind them. Throughout the analysis, the research question of portrayed narratives remains a driving force in examining what exactly each artwork has to offer.

FIG.1 SUOHPANGIEHTA

The first poster (fig.1) labelled *Suohpangiehta* is an early work from Suohpanterror, published on Facebook in 2013. The artwork is a play on the classic poster named 'We can do it!', or sometimes 'Rosie the Riveter', by J. Howard Miller. The original poster is often associated with feminism which can also be gained from Suohpanterror's version where it showcases a woman against a yellow backdrop, dressed in a *gákti*, the traditional dress of the Sámi. The woman is showing her bicep under the word 'suohpangiehta', which roughly translates to 'lasso arm'. The initial themes emanating from the work are combined ideas of feminism and identity, both encompassed by the woman's essence in a mirror image of the 'we can do it!' original. It is a perfect example of Suohpanterror's use of culture jamming to reinvent a prior image for their own cause. A tool usually used by anti-consumerists, culture jamming seeks to "criticize assumptions underlying the prevailing commercial, capitalist culture through the subversion and distortion of images and messages disseminated by corporate actors and the world of advertisement."⁸⁴

Previously, culture jamming almost solely targeted the corporate world and consumerism, however Junka-Aikio notes that there has been a gradual shift into the political sphere where it has

⁸⁴ Junka-Aikio, 2018, p.4.

been used as a critical voice towards states, institutions and government policies.⁸⁵ As such, it feels natural that Suohpanterror would take on such a practice to enhance their critical voice. In the case of *Suohpangiehta*, the tool has the straightforward effect of morphing the woman into one who is wearing the gákti and emanating feminism, however there is also another significance to it which takes on a slightly darker tone.

While the popularity of Miller's poster only began in the 1980s, the artwork itself was created during the Second World War as a call for women to do their part in the war effort by entering the workforce. With this in mind, *Suohpangiehta* can also be understood as a modern-day Sámi equivalent call to arms, with the 'we can do it' motto expanded to call upon Sámi in general, not just Sámi women. While there is no physical war being waged, the proverbial battle cry could refer to the invisible war Suohpanterror view is being waged on the Sámi, as identified and stated by Jenni Laiti; "we've had everything taken from us: our language, our land, and our history. That poster [*Suohpangiehta*] is saying 'it's payback time'."⁸⁶ The fact that the only text of the poster is written in Northern Sámi can also be interpreted to mean that Sámi are in-fact the primary intended audience since Suohpanterror have stated in various interviews that some of their work is aimed at different audiences, internationally, nationally and within Sámi communities.⁸⁷

The feminist element drawn directly from the original poster is also highly significant as feminism itself is an ideology and social movement that seems to constantly be expanding over regions, classes, and age groups. However, when a poster such as *Suohpangiehta* is published with such a feminist-heavy theme, it is worth asking whether the ideology is representative of Sámi women, or merely the artists themselves. Since Suohpanterror's works are meant to comment and spur conversation, it is impossible to say what the exact thought behind the poster is, but a few speculations can be drawn from it.

Firstly it is important to note that every indigenous state is unique and while these communities share a moniker, they nonetheless operate in customs specific to their own community. Having said this, there are various statistics that report shared trends amongst indigenous experiences, one of which is a high rate of gender violence. Speaking at a United Nations conference on violence against women, alongside representatives of the Norwegian Sámi

⁸⁵ Junka-Aikio, 2018, pp.4-5.

⁸⁶ Silja Kudel. 'Fight or Fade Away', *Blue Wings*, [website], November 2017, pp.36-37.

⁸⁷ Junka-Aikio, 2018, p.5.

Parliament, Minister Solveig Horne shed light on the issue of indigenous gender violence in Norway by stating “it is a sad fact that indigenous women are more at risk when it comes to violence, harmful practices, labour exploitation and harassment, and are more vulnerable to sexual violence in armed conflicts.” She went on to explain that specifically “violence against indigenous women is, for instance, linked to: - gender inequality and discrimination - poverty, exclusion and limited access to services - and the dispossession of lands.”⁸⁸

The same higher figures of gender violence can also be applied to the Sámi in the Nordic countries.⁸⁹ The topic has received relatively little attention both nationally and within Sámi communities themselves due to the taboo nature of the issue. In societies like those of the Sámi, the issue of gender violence may perhaps be quietly acknowledged, yet further steps such as public discussions on the issue have remained at bay. Professor Rauna Kuokkanen has suggested that “family ties are strong, and the ostracism can be strong in your local community if you talk in public about violence you have experienced, or want to do something about it. As a result, people are generally reluctant to tackle the problem. The political institutions and Sámi representative bodies such as the Sámi Parliaments have not prioritized gendered violence as an issue until recently.”⁹⁰ However, even though the subject matter remains widely taboo among Sámi, the wheels are gradually turning in favour of tackling the issue, and with good reason. A report by Weldon and Htun mapped out 70 countries and found that feminism was the most ‘important and consistent’ driving factor for policy change. Further, “countries with the strongest feminist movements tend, other things being equal, to have more comprehensive policies on violence against women.”⁹¹

Bearing this in mind, the lady spearheading *Suohpangiehta* can also be representative of the real feminist movement that is gradually burgeoning amongst the Sámi in the Nordic countries. Feminism has continued to rise in recent years, also among the Sámi as women are increasingly taking on leading roles, however a challenge that it faces when emerging from an indigenous origin, is that oftentimes it either gets lost amongst the indigeneity, or is brushed off all together by

⁸⁸ Solveig Horne. 'Statement by Minister Solveig Horne on the CSW60 side-event on Violence Against Indigenous Women, with the Sami Parliament, 14 March 2016', [speech].

⁸⁹ Monica Burman. 'Men's intimate partner violence against Sami women - a Swedish blind spot', *Nordic Journal on Law and Society*, 2017, p.197.

⁹⁰ Ina Knoblock & Rauna Kuokkanen. 'Decolonizing Feminism in the North: A Conversation with Rauna Kuokkanen', *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 2015, p.277.

⁹¹ S. Laurel Weldon & Mala Htun. 'Feminist mobilisation and progressive policy change: why governments take action to combat violence against women', *Gender & Development*, 2013, p.236.

mainstream acceptance. A forerunner leading the dialogue in the Finnish sphere of indigenous feminism is professor Kuokkanen, who believes a large part of indigenous feminism is wrapped up in self-determination, where the two are not mutually exclusive, but rather “categories lived and experienced simultaneously.”⁹² Kuokkanen notes that Sámi feminism does not have a sole focus on gender equality, but an expanded intersectional concept which ranges from grassroots engagement and aims at issues of social justice, community-building, language rights and heritage.

This form of Sámi feminism is often left out of the mainstream Nordic feminist movements due to the fact that it does not solely support traditional concepts of feminist agendas such as gender discrimination. Kuokkanen notes that while the dismissiveness of the ‘white liberal feminism’ is not openly resistant to Sámi feminism, it is a matter of indifference or plain ignorance.⁹³ In the end Kuokkanen sums up what it comes down to by stating “there’s a need to decolonize feminism in the Nordic countries. A common critique by Indigenous women of white liberal feminism is that the exclusive focus on gender discrimination neglects to address the impact of structural violence on women’s lives. In the Nordic context, this means that when Sámi women talk about reindeer herding laws, global capital encroaching on their traditional territories, or the ability to teach the Sámi language to their children, these are not seen or understood as feminist concerns.”⁹⁴

FIG.2 SKRIK

The second poster (fig.2) under the name *Skrik* is another example of culture jamming where perhaps one of the most recognisable paintings in recent history has been morphed to comment on land use in Sápmi. The title of Suohpanterror’s work is the Norwegian title of Edvard Munch’s famous 19th century composition, commonly known as ‘The Scream’. The iconic picture has been edited to impose presumably Sápmi scenery into the background alongside a mining area with wind turbines looming in the backdrop. Front and centre stands the original character from Munch’s work, only now clad in the traditional gákti next to a notice board that states in Finnish, ‘mining area, no trespassing’. With *Skrik*, Suohpanterror seem to take direct aim at environmental policies

⁹² Knoblock & Kuokkanen, 2015, p.279.

⁹³ Knoblock & Kuokkanen, 2015, p.278.

⁹⁴ Knoblock & Kuokkanen, 2015, p.278.

towards Sápmi land use, noting also the ecological and cultural effects such endeavours inevitably bring with them. Considering the main character, clearly a Sámi and in anguish, a precise critique might be directed at non-indigenous use of Sápmi land.

The specific target that *Skrik* highlights is mining as shown in the artwork's setting, however the topic could equally be tourism, fishing rights, forest-cutting, or more recently, the Arctic Ocean Railway. The central issue remains land rights, which is the hot potato of Sámi issues that has been tossed around and debated on since the 1980s. The traditional livelihoods such as reindeer herding, fishing, and hunting are no longer the main sources of income for the majority of Sámi, however the significance of land remains integral to the Sámi way of life. As Laiti succinctly puts it "land rights are a key issue for us, because without our land, there is no us."⁹⁵ Similar sentiments have been echoed among international indigenous dialogue when discussing the rights, such as land and self-determination, that the ILO-169 convention, being the only international law designed to protect indigenous rights, could grant. While Norway has ratified the convention, the Finnish state remains unconvinced as conversations slip into arguments over Sámi identity laws that need to be decided first.

The topic of land rights is a complex thorn in the Finnish state's and Sámi relationship. Alongside disagreements on the definition of a Sámi, the issue of land rights has formed a hurdle past which further legislation has proven difficult to manoeuvre, hindering any progress on conventions such as ILO-169. As Laiti mentions, the reason why it holds such a central role in Sámi discussion in Finland is that language and lands are among the vital ingredients for an indigenous nation's sustainability. In Finland this notion is made more difficult by the fact that the state owns approximately 90 percent of the traditional Sámi lands, and as a result, land disputes are a common source of tension.⁹⁶ Spurred by the Finnish language used in the artwork's 'no entry' sign, *Skrik* then raises the interesting question that frequently plagues indigenous dialogue; is the state's ownership of traditional indigenous land constitutional?

In many cases indigenous communities that have had societal structures in place for centuries, are swept over by dominant populations that do not recognise the indigenous land claims as legitimate. Both the Sámi Parliament as well as the Finnish state have both spent considerable

⁹⁵ Kudel, 2017, pp.36-37.

⁹⁶ Margret Carstens. 'Sami land rights: the Anaya Report and the Nordic Sami Convention', *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, 2016, p.81.

resources investigating with whom the legitimate ownerships of the Sámi lands lie. According to a report published by the Sámi Parliament in 2006, the lands in Finland's Sápmi were "without any public or constitutional grounds, transferred from their previous owners to the official ownership of the state."⁹⁷ Meanwhile the state's report, published the same year, found that in their 45 investigations there was no proof that the Sámi had owned their lands.⁹⁸ Opposing narratives such as these are not uncommon in discussions on Sámi issues, and understandably cause frustrations across the board. However, it is exactly in the tricky situations such as this, that Suohpanterror's artworks find their value as conversational spring boards where consistent dialogue may hold the potential for eventual progress.

The intimate anxiety produced in *Skrik* is the second and more latent theme which works almost as a continuation from the initial environmentalism impact that is more inherently observed from the artwork. By choosing specifically to adapt Munch's *The Scream*, Suohpanterror sheds light on the current anxiety faced by indigenous in both Finland and worldwide as it envisions here what many claim Munch himself envisioned while making his work; our own image wracked with anxiety and uncertainty, not to mention a dose of insanity that crept in from his own familial relations.⁹⁹ Thinking back to Galtung for a moment, his theory of structural violence is worth considering as an invisible practice by a state's social structure leading to psychological violence. There is an argument to be made that the state's hold over lands in Sápmi are detrimental to the Sámi's basic needs in their traditional lifestyle and its sustainability, causing avoidable harm to Sámi communities' well-being as well as their mental health.

The anxiety personified in *Skrik* from the uncertain survival of an indigenous culture is an undisputable phenomenon that has long been witnessed in heightened suicide rates among indigenous people. A report by Survival International found that a major factor associated with suicides among indigenous children "is the psychological trauma of dispossession and the sense of loss, dislocation and confusion that accompanies separation from land and traditional livelihoods."¹⁰⁰ In Canada a direct link was found between suicides and land rights where "groups

⁹⁷ Lehtola. *Saamelaiskiista: Sortaako Suomi Alkuperäiskansaansa?*, 2015, p.43.

⁹⁸ Lehtola. *Saamelaiskiista: Sortaako Suomi Alkuperäiskansaansa?*, 2015, pp.44-45.

⁹⁹ 'How Edvard Munch Expressed the Anxiety of the Modern World', *Artsy*, [website], 10 July 2017.

¹⁰⁰ Jo Woodman and Sophie Grig (ed.). 'Progress Can Kill: How imposed development destroys the health of tribal peoples', *Survival International*, [website], 2007, p.24.

with strong links to their land and culture reported no suicides, while those with no continuity to their land and culture reported rates up to 10 times the national average.”¹⁰¹

Among the Nordic region, the Sámi in Finland, and specifically men, consistently have the highest rates of suicide compared to the neighbouring countries’ majority populations.¹⁰² This is a topic which alongside Suohpanterror, the Finnish Sámi parliament, Sámediggi, have also brought attention to within the Finnish spheres. While the Finnish state has acknowledged that the Sámi in Finland have the right to self-determination, the Sámi youth group, Suoma Sámi Nuorat, detail that these rights are superficial as issues such as fishing rights or reindeer herding are decided by those other than Sámi.¹⁰³ An apt example of this occurred in 2015 when Finland’s Supreme Administrative Court added 93 individuals into the Sámi electoral register against the objections of the Sámi parliament who did not consider the individuals to be Sámi.¹⁰⁴ This was in direct violation of the Sámi’s right to self-determination, a move the UN Human Rights Committee condemned. The lone Sámi figure standing in the centre of Suohpanterror’s *Skrik* could be understood as the externalised personification of the complex and multifaceted anxiety that lies within indigenous cultures today.

FIG.3 RAJA

The third poster (fig.3) called *Raja*, ‘border’ in Finnish, is a monochrome depiction of an ambiguous landscape setting surrounding a concrete wall separating various Sámi figures on each side. This poster diverges from the previous works as it does not possess the immediately recognisable characteristics used in culture jamming. However, the practice of blending together images from different sources is still present as shown by the varying artistic styles of the wall, the figures, and the landscape. An additional aspect of the artwork that is not shown in the poster itself is the hashtag under which Suohpanterror have published *Raja*. Whether it was Facebook or Instagram, *Raja* was published accompanied by the hashtag #1852 which immediately adds a

¹⁰¹ Woodman & Grig, 2007, p.27.

¹⁰² Plan for Suicide Among the Sami People in Norway, Sweden, and Finland, *Sami Norwegian National Advisory Unit on Mental Health and Substance Abuse (SANKS) & Saami Council*, 2017.

¹⁰³ Lehtola. *Saamelaiskiista: Sortaako Suomi Alkuperäiskansaansa?*, 2015, pp.28-29.

¹⁰⁴ Salla Varpula. 'YK:n ihmis-oikeus-komitea: Suomi loukkasi saamelaisten oikeuksia hyväksymällä äänestäjä saamelais-käräjien vaaleihin', *Helsingin Sanomat*, February 1, 2019.

multitude of layers to the image and highlights the notion of history, which is also supported by the characters of the image dressed in old-fashioned attire.

The year 1852 is a meaningful date in Sámi history as it marks the year during which the border between Norway and Finland, at the time an autonomous Grand Duchy of Russia, was closed. As briefly mentioned earlier, the northern region of the Nordic countries that makes up the traditional Sámi homelands, Sápmi, was already divided between the ruling countries in 1751, however at the time Sámi were given the right to free movement over the borders.¹⁰⁵ In essence, this meant that reindeer herding Sámi could continue to practice their centuries-old nomadic livelihood which took them from vast distances inland up to the Arctic ocean border. Once the decision to close the borders came down through the Vaasa Court of Appeal, the culture of reindeer herding went through a large-scale remodel which caused mass migrations as reindeer herding Sámi were forced to choose one country inside the borders of which they would have to permanently settle.

There are a few different points that Suohpanterror could be trying to highlight with *Raja*. One point could refer to the consequences of the border closure that are debated to this day. There exists a substantial group within the academic and political spheres who argue that the reindeer herding Sámi were illegal immigrants who caused quite a ruckus in northern communities with their arrival. This school of thought, and the adjoining narrative of reindeer herding Sámi as ‘others’, is not merely limited to Finns, but shared by Sámi individuals alike. Most notably perhaps is long-time Sámi politician and previous Sámi parliament member, Jouni Kitti, who argues that the majority of Sámi in Finland are descendants of Norwegian reindeer herding Sámi who emigrated to Finland in search of better prospects. He goes on to state that “the infiltration of Sámi into Finnish borders, predominantly by Norwegian and Swedish reindeer herding Sámi, was accompanied by a lot of negative and sometimes questionable and destructive features to indigenous culture” and of the legality, “if things were not dealt through official agreements, then the case was of illegal intrusion into foreign territory.”¹⁰⁶

Sámi academic Lehtola has sought to contest this account by drawing on the idea that the migrations of the reindeer herding Sámi were forced by state policy which, once the borders were

¹⁰⁵ Lehtola. *Saamelaiskiista: Sortaako Suomi Alkuperäiskansaansa?*, 2015, p.136.

¹⁰⁶ Jouni Kitti. ‘Porolappalaisten tulo Suomeen’, Jouni Kitti [web blog], April 2013.

closed, left those Sámi high and dry, without a chance of ‘official agreements’. However, this is not the only argument from Lehtola’s side of the aisle as the Sámi youth group, Suoma Sámi Nuorat, have stated that those reindeer herding Sámi could not possibly be immigrants since there was no Finnish state until 1917. They go on to explain that “talk of [Sámi as] immigrants is deliberately constructed propaganda which aims to deny Sámi their ancestral rights to their current land. The idea of ‘Sámi coming from elsewhere’ is based on Finnish historical narratives which do not take into account Sámi’s own history and nomadic lifestyle.”¹⁰⁷ While there are many takes on Sámi history, the relevance of an issue that happened over 150 years ago lies in how that event is used today in a variety of policies and purposes.

Raja can be used as an example of contrasting narratives which is no rare phenomenon among Sámi issues in Finland. If we jump back to Nyström’s narrative analysis, the notion of opposing narratives, which are also often present in postcolonial research, can be witnessed here as the border closure is regarded differently depending on the perspective. To some, the closure was simply the consequence of a political dispute, while to others, it was the downfall of emigrational reindeer herding. As noted earlier, the events stemming from the border closure have also spawned diverging accounts which are used for example in arguments to question the current legitimacy of the Sámi in Finland. *Raja* works as an important nod to the relevance and great power that such narratives can wield when they work their way into the collective consciousness and are regarded by many as fact, rather than a perspective.

In this case there remains no concise agreement on exactly how history unfolded in northern Finland, but while 1852 was a long time ago, the effects of this uncertainty are very much alive today. One could easily argue that border crossings have not been a significant problem for Sámi in a very long time, and they would not be wrong, but it would be hard to argue that the stigma stemming, in part, from over a century ago is not still at large. *Raja* builds upon the theme of history to comment on its presence today where, while a concrete wall separates the characters of the work, at times it feels like a similar wall exists in Sámi dialogue, impeding possibilities of constructive conversations on Sámi questions. This is an issue especially in the realm of social media where articles or blog posts written on Sámi issues will oftentimes be frequented by comments which resort to old-fashioned discriminatory and demeaning terms and comments that seek to belittle or

¹⁰⁷ Lehtola. *Saamelaiskiista: Sortaako Suomi Alkuperäiskansaansa?*, 2015, p.139.

even reject Sámi opinions. These comments then end up perpetuating the harmful narratives where the Sámi are painted as a lower social class with false claims to land in Lapland.

Another point that Suohpanterror might be putting forth with *Raja* alludes to the cement wall placed front and centre of the artwork. Due to its positioning, it would seem that the wall is there to play an important part of the artwork, thus what follows is my best attempt to interpret it. While the wall is not an instantly recognizable, it does bear a notable similarity to the border wall separating the eastern border of Israel and Palestine's West Bank. When comparing images of Israel's border wall and the wall in *Raja*, it would not be a huge leap to assume they could indeed be one and the same. Another component that leads me to believe the same wall is in question is the similar circumstance under which the border wall was put up.

As briefly described earlier, the decision to close the border between Norway and modern-day Finland was made unanimously by the Russian state when relations between Russia and Norway broke down. This was done without any previous discussions with the Sámi, despite the fact that it was going to have an immense effect of the nomadic Sámi traversing across Sápmi. The border wall that stands along the West Bank border was, and continues to be, made solely by the state of Israel. While it was meant to run along the border between the two states, 85 percent of the wall runs in West Bank territory where Human Rights Watch report it isolates approximately 11,000 Palestinians from both their agricultural lands to the East and travel to the West into Israel.¹⁰⁸ The wall itself is a highly contentious issue where Israel claims it to be a necessary security measure whereas Palestinians in West Bank see it as a segregation wall cutting them off from Jerusalem.¹⁰⁹

There are of course a myriad of complex reasons and issues behind the Israeli-West Bank barrier, and the points mentioned here are very simplified notions of them, however at the very core of the matter there lies a similarity to the border closure in Lapland. While Russia did not build a concrete wall along its Norwegian border, in both cases a powerful state imposed a border on a more vulnerable people, and in both cases that border forcibly divided a people from their land. Considering the viewpoints of Suohpanterror and the placement of the wall in *Raja*, it could be argued that while only the West Bank barrier has received widespread international attention and

¹⁰⁸ 'Israel and Palestine Events of 2018', *Human Rights Watch* [website].

¹⁰⁹ Netta Ahituv. '15 Years of Separation: The Palestinians Cut Off From Jerusalem by the Wall', *Haaretz*, 10 March 2018.

is seen by many to be unlawful, including the International Court of Justice, the two borders are equally unjust. With *Raja*, Suohpanterror might seek to cast a critical eye over the 1852 border closure that, while it was enacted without bloodshed, had a huge, lasting impact on the Sámi which is still relevant almost 200 years later.

FIG.4 GOLBMA

The fourth poster I have chosen to analyse by Suohpanterror is called *Golbma*, 'three' in Northern Sámi. The name directly links to the image itself, which depicts three women. Another name under which the image has been published in Facebook is 'Les Trois Mousquetaires', which again refers to the three characters of the image, but adds an element of combativeness to the mix as it is French for 'the three musketeers'. The musketeers were a trio of mostly fictional characters whose name resounds universally as warriors who famously fought to save good and defeat evil. The poster is an indigenised take on Danny Galieote's *Femme Fatale* series, where the signature bold colours of the Sámi have also been added. With the vivid colours and three figures, *Golbma* is also reminiscent of old Western movies that used the similar bold colours and often featured cowboys armed with their trusty revolvers. While the women of *Golbma* brandish knuckle-dusters and a shotgun instead of small pistols, it is interesting to consider whether the lawless mentality of the Wild West is meant to be applied in a Sápmi context, but instead of cowboys in the protagonist role, it's Sámi women.

The two instant themes that jump out from *Golbma* are feminism and violence: feminism exemplified by the three women in the image, and violence by the weapons they wield. Each woman holds a weapon behind her back, one of which is a shotgun while the other two brandish brass knuckles. The violence theme is also emphasised by the posture of the three main characters as each is shown to be leaning in and looking around, in an almost anticipatory stance. In accordance with Suohpanterror views, these stances and the weapons could be interpreted as symbolic manifestations of how far these Sámi are willing to go to fight for their rights. The anticipatory stance could also be a challenge: in *Golbma*, a challenge to a physical altercation, while symbolically, it is a challenge against Sámi stereotypes, state legislation, or any number of conceived wrongdoings against the Sámi. The colour scheme throughout *Golbma* nevertheless highlights the image as a

Sámi work of art, flying the signature red, yellow and blue colours of Sámi culture. This inevitably forces the audience to question the link, or perhaps significance, between indigeneity and violence.

The combined themes of women and violence echo the sentiments put forth in *Suohpangiehta*, where both posters depict a heavy dose of female empowerment, and where questions of gender violence and Sámi feminism are raised. However, where *Suohpangiehta* leans solely on feminist imagery, *Golbma* adds the presence of violence, and perhaps more importantly, women as the perpetrators behind the violence. While there are surely several ways to interpret this formation, mine is that *Golbma* is Suohpanterror's take on reversed indigenous tropes. Indigenous people have long been the subject of specific stereotypes, often cast in stock character roles such as 'the noble savage', or 'the ecological Indian', as portrayed in film and literature.¹¹⁰ In an effort to avoid these oversimplified misconceptions, Suohpanterror could be challenging such stereotypes by illustrating alternative narrative possibilities where the Sámi women, front and centre, are depicted simultaneously calm by their posture, yet provocative in their clear readiness for violence.

Another theory is that *Golbma's* notion of violence plays on the perceptions critics often have of artists when their products feature such themes. Suohpanterror is a group whose art occasionally ventures into the provocative murky waters of violent imagery and as a result are no strangers to the accompanying furore. One such artwork takes a promotional poster for the television series *Sons of Anarchy* and morphs it to carry the title *Sons of Sápmi*, with the words ILO-169 heavily emphasised.¹¹¹ The artwork itself contains no violent themes, yet the television show from which the source material originates features a constant parade of heavy violence throughout the series. Another, perhaps more obvious, instance when Suohpanterror raised eyebrows was through a site-specific installation in which two mannequins made to look like a pair of real-life Sámi were hanged by their neck off a bridge running over the Teno river.¹¹² This was in reference to a recent legislation change which saw Teno river fishing rights revoked from the Sámi of the area. A poster based on a photograph of the hanging Sámi had the text 'will you aid in the execution of the Sámi culture?' written across it.

¹¹⁰ Dina Gilio-Whitaker. 'The Problem With The Ecological Indian Stereotype', *KCET*, [website], 7 February, 2017.

¹¹¹ Suohpanterror, 'Sons of Sápmi', 2015, [online image].

¹¹² Suohpanterror, 'hanging Sami', 2016, [online image].

It is unlikely that Suohpanterror are advocating physical violence with *Golbma* and the group's spokesman, Laiti, has distinctly stated, "we do not condone violence, instead we encourage civil disobedience."¹¹³ Nevertheless critics of the group have used such examples to label Suohpanterror as a dangerous collective. In 2017 Anu Avaskari, a politician in the Sámi Parliament, used her authority as the representative of the municipality of Inari to block Suohpanterror's participation in a large Sámi art and research event that was being held in Paris.¹¹⁴ Avaskari had previously aired her concerns of radicalization among the Sámi community due to the group's use of "a terrorist title and symbols," who "disseminate[...] violent armed images especially in the social media "and thus "increase[...] insecurity."¹¹⁵

Clearly opinion on Suohpanterror is highly divided, but it also begs the question whether the use of controversial imagery in their artwork is more a hindrance than a help in the Sámi discussion. This would be somewhat difficult to measure, but regardless of the outcome, Suohpanterror's role does not seem to be that of an actor but rather an instigator. The fact that some of their artworks have sparked controversy is not necessarily a negative factor since this too generates discussion, which seems to be the group's main motive. Of course there is the possibility that Suohpanterror's artworks may be used by some to reinforce their own adverse views or to perpetuate negative stereotypes, however this is always the risk in art which invites viewers to draw their own conclusions.

The use of extreme images, such as the weapons in *Golbma* and the visualisation of hanged Sámi, may also be understood to an extent. The focus of a 2018 doctoral research by Juha Guttorm found that following the establishment of the Sámi Parliament in 1996, progress in Sámi legislation has come to a virtual standstill. In his findings Guttorm sums up that "the government treats the Sámi governing body as mostly a static organisation. During the time under review [of the doctoral research], the autonomous self-governing Sámi Parliament has not developed into a continuous dynamic process and neither have the Sámi been secured sufficiently effective legal rights to hone such progress."¹¹⁶ Guttorm refers to the 2016 revocation of river Teno fishing rights, the still un-

¹¹³ 'Suohpanterror: Kannustamme saamelaisia kansalaistottelemattomuuteen', *Turun Sanomat*, [website], 1 October 2016.

¹¹⁴ Junka-Aikio, 2018, p.4.

¹¹⁵ Anu Avaskari. 'Anu Avaskarin Itsenäisyyspäivän juhlapuhe', Jouni Kitti [web blog], 6 December 2016.

¹¹⁶ Juha Guttorm. Saamelaisten Itsehallinto Suomessa - Dynaaminen Vai Staattinen?: Tutkimus Perustuslaissa Turvaton Saamelaisten Itsehallinnon Kehittymisestä Lainsäädännössä Vuosina 1996-2015, 2018, p.VI.

ratified ILO-169 convention, and the decision by Finland's Supreme Administrative Court to add 93 people into the Sámi electoral roll against the Sámi Parliament's objections.¹¹⁷

Considering these instances, it is not too surprising that some Sámi youth have grown frustrated and disillusioned with the current state of Sámi progress, or rather the lack thereof. It is also not too far a stretch to see these frustrations morph into the form of works such as *Golbma* which use extreme themes and visuals to make a point. Laiti has addressed Suohpanterror's over-the-top style by saying "posters that force you to think are sharp political satire, cries for help, even though the themes are serious. They work well since satire and exaggeration are more effective declarations than public statements."¹¹⁸ As a result, when images with controversial content whip up a public furore, they may in fact be playing exactly into Suohpanterror's hands as the conversation scope is widened and, in the end, people are inevitably forced to address the core issues.

DISCUSSION

Each artwork of Suohpanterror has a story to tell, usually one that takes a critical stance on a tricky issue faced by the Sámi. The ones chosen for the sake of this research vary in themes to provide several examples of conflicts the Sámi deal with, whether societal, political or environmental in nature. With each project Suohpanterror seem to have a message in mind, using the medium of art as a communicative tool. It sets the conversation topic with themes highlighted in each artwork, all the while letting viewers provide their own input and interpretations. As a result, Suohpanterror's modus operandi seems to be a conversational springboard, but instead of using straightforward language, they provide the issues and insights, and let the audience do the rest.

It is worth noting, however, that the dialogue Suohpanterror put forth is far from impartial. While the collective has the aim of spurring conversation on relevant topics, there exists the inevitable consequence that the resulting discussion will be biased, coloured by Suohpanterror's ideals. On the other hand, the conversations Suohpanterror seek to instigate through their artworks are perhaps not intended for the neutral academic sphere, but rather the general public, where

¹¹⁷ Jyri Tynkkynen. 'YK:n ihmisoikeuskomitea moittii Suomea saamelaisten oikeuksien loukkaamisesta', *Yle*, [website], 1 February 2019.

¹¹⁸ Toijonen, 2016, [website].

conversations can be entirely subjective and personal. Founding a platform on Facebook suggests their primary intended audience may be ordinary citizens who likewise use the same platform, and are thus on the same societal level.

The similar notion of approaching Sámi matters from the grassroots upwards appears frequently in Suohpanterror's works. It is a notion that reflects the practice of current day proceedings between the Finnish state and the Sámi, as oftentimes official channels of democracy prove to fall short for Sámi interests. In *Suohpangiehta*, Jenni Laiti stated the leading woman signifies payback for stolen languages and history. *Skrik* follows this path as an illustration of real-life failed land rights where traditional Sámi lands are exploited for their riches. Most recently, referring to the plans for the Arctic Ocean Railway that would run through Sápmi, the Regional Council of Lapland said that while the law requires the Sámi to be consulted on matters related to them, the Council are nevertheless under no obligation to reach any agreements or recommendations.¹¹⁹ Suohpanterror's posters seemingly personify what they consider to be the ineffectual and superficial nature of Finland's legislation in place to protect Sámi interest. Petra Laiti, a young activist and Sámi, addressed these failings, stating "I would say the reason Sámi have such distrust towards the Finnish state is that we have rarely been in the position where things have turned out well for us."¹²⁰

While Suohpanterror's works contain a wide variety of narratives, statements and opinions, it is also worth noting what is absent from their work. A great deal of their art takes aim at the failings of the Finnish state, yet very little of it illustrates notions of cooperation or collaboration with the state. In the context of Sámi-Finnish relations, you would think such teamwork would be an important factor in Suohpanterror's artworks. However, an explanation for its absence may be found in what seems to be the group's central aim. Although sustainability of the Sámi, necessarily through cooperation with the Finnish state, is the goal, Suohpanterror's role appears to be in setting the stage for that goal to become a possibility. Building bridges is vital in forming a strong union between the Sámi and the Finnish state, but first the Sámi themselves need to have effective rights and a strong foundation in place, and that is precisely where Suohpanterror's activism through empowerment and illumination plays its part.

¹¹⁹ Jyri Tynkkynen. 'Lapin liitto pitää kiinni Jäämerenradan pohjoisesta reittivaihtoehdosta', *Yle*, [website], 29 April 2019.

¹²⁰ Jari Tamminen. 'Sadon Vuoden Epäluottamus', *Voima*, [website], 7 April 2018.

It is worth clarifying at this point that whilst a lot of the viewpoints discussed through Suohpanterror's art are felt by numerous Sámi, they are by no means shared by all, and nor do they have to be. Much like any group of people, the Sámi have differing opinions, which can also diverge on indigenous issues too, and when a unison voice is required, the Sámi have a representative parliament. In a study on a people and culture it is easy to make broad assumptions, however it remains important to bear in mind the distinction of viewpoints and perspectives. An example of a distinction where perspective holds relevance is colonialism, because often when colonialist practices were imposed in past times, their intent was not necessarily bad, but simply the common belief at the time that they would help those in need. This was not always the case, but it is nevertheless worth noting.

The shortcomings of the Finnish state's Sámi legislation and the subsequent lack of faith in the system among Sámi communities, speaks to Spivak's theory on the voiceless subaltern in which the Sámi and the Finnish state do not effectively communicate on the same level. Spivak's subaltern theory accounts this, in part, to a group's minority status, as well as to the communication manner. In the case of the Sámi, their minority stance could mean their input is not regarded as significant enough, or it may be that it is simply ignored. In either case, while it is difficult to say exactly why or where the communication between relevant Sámi and Finnish state representatives breaks down, a fact is that it does.

The Sámi youth group, Suoma Sámi Nuorat, use the right of self-determination as an example of superficial legislation as, though the right exists in Finland, the decisions on matters such as fishing rights, reindeer herding, or education are still made by those other than the Sámi themselves.¹²¹ The theory of colonial mindsets that was discussed earlier in this thesis bears relevance here, as even though the state does not practice discrimination in its dialogue towards the Sámi, it is the actions and that which is left unsaid that, ironically, speak volumes. For example, Finland has not refused to ratify ILO-169, but rather has continuously postponed it. As a result, it is understandable that Sámi activists turn to alternative means of change in the face of consistent democratic let-downs. It could be argued that the democratic deficits mentioned are part of a wider system that Suohpanterror seek to make visible.

¹²¹ Lehtola. *Saamelaiskiista: Sortaako Suomi Alkuperäiskansaansa?*, 2015, pp.28-29.

While each artwork that Suohpanterror produces highlights a different theme or issue, throughout most of their work a consistent narrative can be found. Earlier in this thesis I mentioned a quote by Dirks which questioned the nature of colonialism, supposing that it may be dead, yet it is everywhere to be seen.¹²² Suohpanterror flips this notion, and through their artwork seem to argue that colonialism is in fact alive and well in Finland, just operating as an invisible force. Each poster analysed here refers to a facet of colonialism, whether it is through the historic displacement of Sámi in 1852, the ongoing exploitation of indigenous land without legitimate Sámi input on the matter, the disregard of Sámi feminism because Sámi women's fights against structural violence are not considered a gender conflict, or finally the colonial mindsets that spur the Sámi stigma of today.

The notions of colonialism fit hand-in-hand with Galtung's theory of structural violence in which invisible structures built within the state hinder the development and well-being of the Sámi. Whilst its presence in Finland is contested, the works of Suohpanterror point to an alternative reality, supported by a growing number of indigenous accounts, where the state, whether intended or not, perpetuates policies that harm Sámi rights and their culture's sustainability. This speaks to the essence of postcolonial theory which highlights alternative histories, and regards the current-day implications. An example of this can be found in the revised fishing rights in the Teno river which revoked the rights of Sámi fishers, who were indigenous inhabitants of the region, to just about the same level of seasonal tourists.¹²³ The revision was done in the name of preserving salmon stocks, yet the rights of indigenous Sámi were violated. In the case of Finland, professor Rauna Kuokkanen argues that the Teno case falls under the state's practice of 'settler colonialism', a form of colonialism which involves the gradual elimination of indigenous people for the purpose of land ownership.¹²⁴

Considering the nature of Galtung's structural violence theory and certain state practices, Suohpanterror's role of bringing such instances to light and spurring conversation on the topics becomes increasingly valuable. Part of what makes structural violence effective lies in the inevitable victims of minority groups, similar to Spivak's case of subaltern theory. Due to the minority status of the people most likely to be affected, in this case the Sámi, the implementation and ramifications are mostly invisible to the awareness of the dominant population. Coming from a minority position

¹²² Lehtola. 'Sámi Histories, Colonialism, and Finland', 2015, p.22.

¹²³ Rauna Kuokkanen. 'Suomellakin on oma kolonisointihistoriansa – Saamenmaan kolonialismi on asuttajakolonialismia', *Fáktalávvu*, [website], 8 February 2018.

¹²⁴ Kuokkanen, 2018, [website].

in society inevitably means that issues pertaining solely to minorities remain under the radar, and not widely reported on in the scale that they would be if the effects were to relate to the mainstream population. As a result, Suohpanterror's method of raising a ruckus is an effective counter-measure, which works to illuminate otherwise invisible practices.

Suohpanterror's narrative, which brings colonialism and its effects to the forefront of the discussion, is what Kuokkanen calls decolonisation efforts, which she deems necessary in the current context of Finland. Kuokkanen defines decolonisation as processes that "illuminate and disassemble colonial administrations, structures, practices and discourses. This dismantling also applies to invisible institutional and cultural aspects that have maintained colonial power after political independence."¹²⁵ Although, on the vast scale of decolonisation efforts that are needed in Finland Suohpanterror's endeavours are unlikely to make significant headway, but they may, however, affect a degree of change where the state cannot, by operating from an independent platform. The state, which mainly works through top-down approaches, would probably make little progress through institutionally driven attempts to include indigenous voices, but Suohpanterror, operating outside of the official political sphere and wielding an independent, indigenous legitimacy, has the capacity for genuine decolonisation.¹²⁶

As Suohpanterror is an anonymous collective, it is impossible to say whether decolonisation is an actual aim of theirs. If, however, we only consider the merit of their artworks, then it could be argued that they have value as decolonisation tools. In either case, the narratives that Suohpanterror put forth are clear; they portray an indigenous perspective of the Sámi in Finland, taking aim at causes of conflict and harm that the Sámi face today. To answer the research question, when combined, Suohpanterror's artworks form an indigenous counter-narrative that challenges both social and structural systems, all the while balancing the criticism to include a celebration of the Sámi culture.

The specific topics that Suohpanterror portray have already been explored, yet through these topics Suohpanterror are taking back some of the narratives and perceptions that exist amongst the mainstream population, and just as they do to posters from popular culture imagery, they are converting the content. The use of popular culture images and the practice of culture-

¹²⁵ Kuokkanen, 2018, [website].

¹²⁶ Laura Junka-Aikio. 'Can the Sámi speak now? Deconstructive Research Ethos and the debate on who is a Sámi in Finland', *Cultural Studies*, 2014, p.206.

jamming may in fact play a role of communication in which, for audiences of the dominant population, the subjects are more easily interpreted and received through familiar imagery, whereas for indigenous audiences, culture-jamming might signify the possibility of belonging and a space of indigeneity within the mainstream. Suohpanterror's art without a doubt belongs in the realm of Sámi activism, but as previously seen, it has a variety of uses. Some are to criticise, some to praise, some to challenge perspectives, and some to kick up a fuss, in which case the dramatic flair sometimes employed by the group becomes a useful tool.

6. CONCLUSION

Sámi activism is a growing force to be reckoned with, expanding and spilling over into political discourse, media spotlights and couch conversations in the homes of everyday people. This was not always the case as Sámi individuals have put tremendous time and effort into achieving the visibility and relevance that they possess today, shifting the perception away from outdated misinformation towards notions of a modern people. However, as this thesis has shown, there is still a great deal to be done on both the perception front as well as the issue of indigenous rights, and as such, the value of Sámi activism and continued conversations on such topics remain vital.

This thesis focused on four posters created by the anonymous art collective Suohpanterror, each of which highlighted a specific theme relevant to Sámi issues today. Throughout their topical subjects of feminism, land rights, history and violence, the artworks also displayed a common narrative of a wronged indigenous people. Suohpanterror pose that the Finnish state continue to enact a policy of discrimination against the Sámi which affects issues such as Sámi mental health, the Sámi parliament's legislative power, cultural definitions, as well as self-determination and indigenous rights. A combination of these factors, which keep the Sámi hindered from reaching their fullest potential, fall under a system ingrained in the Finnish state that Galtung would call structural violence. As a result, the indigenous narratives put forth by Suohpanterror depict both a celebration of indigenous pride, as expressed through the moxie of *Suohpangiehta*, as well as harsh criticism towards forces impeding the Sámi, as illustrated in the land use of *Skrik* and the border closure of *Raja*.

The presence of Sámi activism by the likes of Suohpanterror's art, Jenni Laiti's Red Line protest, blog posts by Petra Laiti, or Ellos Deatnu's civil disobedience, all contribute towards an effort to enforce Sámi rights by making worrisome issues visible, concerning, and conversed about. In the current climate of Finland, various Sámi actors are employing precisely these tactics to halt the production of a planned Arctic Ocean Railway that would run through traditional reindeer herding areas in Sápmi. Similar means have also been used to advocate for the ratification of ILO-169. In addition to these cases, a planned truth and reconciliation commission also has the potential to become an influential, landmark moment in Finnish-Sámi relations.

Standing on the steps of a possible turning point, the upcoming commission would investigate past injustices that have affected the Sámi in an effort to avoid their reoccurrence, all the while aiming towards a process of reconciliation.¹²⁷ The Finnish state now finds itself in a prominent position, where following the commission's readiness to explore, and even acknowledge, possible past wrongdoings, the state could take advantage of the momentum and re-evaluate its approach to Sámi matters. While the specifics can be debated, evidence seems to suggest that on the general level there exists a shortfall in the Finnish government's policy towards their indigenous people. Now would be an appropriate time for the state to prioritize legitimate cooperation and sustainability, which have previously been missing from the state's actions, whilst simultaneously providing a genuine show of faith in their mission for reconciliation.

As continued debates, research, and the commission demonstrate, Sámi matters are not going anywhere soon, as interest and opinion remain animated on the topic. The small corner in which this research takes place is in the realm of Sámi activism through art, and specifically, on Suohpanterror's creations and the societal issues they confront. If someone were to continue this avenue of research, it would be interesting to examine the correlation between Suohpanterror's activism, and Sámi activists in general, and the traction of legislative and political change within Finland, such as the progression of ILO-169. In light of growing awareness, a look at the role of online media in these cases could also provide some much-needed insight into how dialogue on Sámi issues within social media platforms affect perceptions of the Sámi and Sámi-related issues. Such an enquiry could also consist of both non-indigenous and Sámi points of view.

The value of this thesis lies in providing a small dose of illumination on issues the Sámi face in Finland today. Part of the reason that drove me to conduct my research on this topic was the sorry fact that many in Finland simply do not know much about the country's indigenous people or their culture. As is the case in numerous instances, a little bit of knowledge can go a long way in cultivating a basic understanding of the Sámi. As such, the situation in Finland would be vastly improved if even one lesson in early education was dedicated to learning about the indigenous people in the North. Knowledge, visibility and action are all key components in creating a sustainable future for the Sámi, and in the context of Finland, everybody can play a small part by talking about

¹²⁷ Anni-Kristiina Juuso. 'Truth and Reconciliation Process Concerning Sámi Issues: Report on Hearings', *Prime Minister's Office Publications*, 2018, p.3.

the issues, learning about Sámi culture, and pushing the state towards a more collaborative direction with the Sámi people.

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