DON'T THEY WANT TO - OR DON'T THEY GET TO? A Study of the low Number of Female Representatives at the Sameting in Norway

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1. Introduction

This paper is based on a short study from 2002 about the female representation in the Sameting in Norway. The Sameting is the national elected body for the Sami people, the only indigenous population in Norway. The purpose with the study was to try to find some possible explanations on why the percentage of women in the Sameting has declined more and more for each of the four elections that have been held. In total, the women's percentage has namely dropped from 33% to 18% from the first election in 1989 to the fourth election in 2001.

However, before I begin to present the study itself, I shall start this paper with giving some information about the Sami and Sápmi in general, and about the Sameting and its election system in special. I have chosen to do this because I know - from my own and others' experiences - that many "outsiders" who read or hear about Sami related issues, have a need for this kind of basic "facts" in order to be able to follow the reasoning in the actual issue that is dealt with.

And let me emphasize: This is necessary not only when a Sami issue is to be presented for an international audience outside a Nordic setting. Both in Norway and in the other Nordic countries, there is a longstanding tradition for having little knowledge about Sami related issues in general. This lack of knowledge has lately been pointed at in a volume published by the Norwegian Makt- og demokratiutredningen - i.e. "Power and democracy committee - in February 2003, namely Samer, makt og demokrati. Sametinget og den nye samiske offentligheten - i.e. "Sami, power and democracy. The Sameting and the new Sami public sphere" (Bjerklie and Selle 2003). Actually, the two editors characterize the fact that the Sameting gets so little attention as well in the public sphere in general as in the research community in special, as both incomprehensible and discouraging: Attention is given to Sami issues only when they can be seen as exotic or connected with some sort of conflict. Otherwise "the Sami" is as good as invisible. One consequence of this situation is that limited and limiting stereotypes regarding the Sami, have especially good conditions - first and foremost externally, but also inside the Sami society itself. This can though not be elaborated in this text.

1.1 About Sápmi, the Sameting and the Sameting elections

Sápmi - borders and belongings

What then, is Sápmi? Well, Sápmi - or Samiland which is the corresponding term in English - is the name that the Sami themselves use about their traditional living areas on the northern part of the Scandinavian peninsula, in Finland and on the Kola peninsula. Sámpi is not a country or a nation state at its own, but a continuous geographic area that spreads through four nation states. As a people the Sami can be defined as a national minority in the countries where they live, but it is an important point that the Sami (also) is an indigenous people in the area that Sápmi covers.

On the map in Fig. 1, Sápmi is sketched out in broad lines. The colors and the pattern that are used in the marked area on the map, is by the way taken from the common Sami flag which was accepted of The 13th Nordic Sami Conference in 1986. Another issue is that it must be emphasized that today many Sami of course live outside the traditional Sami living areas.
For they who are familiar with the geographical area that is shown on the map in Fig. 1, it is easy to see that Sápmi crosses the borders of the four nation states Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. The border crossings are though much more easy to see on the next map which has more details - and which actually is a map over the many Sami language or main dialect areas (Fig. 2).\footnote{St.meld. nr. 55 (2000-2001) Om samepolitikken http://odin.dep.no/krd/norsk/publ/stmeld/016091-040002/index-hov007-b-n-a.html}
The reason why this map is presented here, is that (at least some of) the original Sami language/main dialect borders, also can be seen upon as borders between different Sami regions, both as a whole and inside each country. In addition to the language, these areas have namely traditionally more or less been characterized by different cultural and economic life and conditions. During the history the regions also have been affected of having different circumstances for their development. And not at least: This map shows clearly that the borders between the Sami regions or language/main dialect areas, mainly go across the nation state borders. The map thereby also tells something about how traditional Sami communities are broken up by the states' border linings.

The regional Sami differences are nowadays often referred to as one side of the Sami multiplicity. This conception is used in many contexts to point out that both Sápmi and the Sami population are far more varied and complex than what often have been expressed in presentations given in different kind of "public tales" from and about the area and the people (conf. e.g. Andersen 2003, Stordahl 1997). However, on the few pages that this paper consists of, it is not possible to give broad descriptions of Sámpi as a whole or of different variations in time and space. Some few points must still be mentioned:

One question that often is raised is the following: How many Sami are there - as a total, and in each of the countries where they live? To this question there is no clear answer - no one actually knows! Some estimates are though given. These vary between 50.000 and 100.000 Sami as a whole, but always with figures of or a comment on that most of the Sami live on the Norwegian side of Sápmi. More specific numbers that some times can be seen, are as follows: 40-50.000 of the Sami live in Norway, 17-20.000 live in Sweden, about 7.000 in Finland, and about 2.000 in Russia (conf. e.g. samediggi.se, samediggi.fi, and also comment on sources in Zorgdrager 1999).

There are different reasons for why it isn't possible to give a clear number of Sami. One main reason is the general phenomenon that it is problematic to make unambiguous criteria for which persons that belong to which ethic groups in an area. This phenomenon can in its turn be both a reason for and a result of the fact that the citizens' ethnic belonging and/or their first/home language, are not registrat-ed in the four states with Sami population (e.g. in censuses). But maybe the more indirect reasons for why the size of the Sami population can't be figured out, are as important as the reason mentioned above. One such reason is that until around 1970/80, Sami cultural expressions and ways of life were under strong pressure from the national authorities. For example, it was forbidden to speak Sami in the schools, and many parents chose to not actively speak Sami with their children. The idea was that if the children didn't learn Sami, they would more easily be integrated in the surrounding society. In total, there were also other motives for why many individuals wanted to and had strategies for how to "get rid of" their Sami ways of living and their Sami identity (conf. e.g. Bjørklund 1986). One of them was, especially in some local societies, social stigmatization of persons that showed any kind of Sami affiliation (Eidheim 1971).

But there have also been parallel processes going on. As early as around 1900 the first Sami organizations were established. Their aim and purpose were to strengthen Sami culture and ways of living, and in different ways work for Sami rights - for example regarding use of Sami language and Sami economic life. In many decades the work of the Sami movement(s) varied in intensity and success. But from around 1970, it has been a more and more strong and widespread Sami linguistic and cultural revitalization. The reasons for this development are various. Not at least it is due to an active Sami ethno-political movement, which also has been part of a contemporary international indigenous peoples movement. Changes in the nation states' internal political agendas, may also have contributed to the development (conf. e.g. Minde 1995, Eidheim 1997). One concrete expression of this "renewed" Sami situation, is that many individuals have found - or reestablished - their personal or their family's earlier denied Sami belonging. Another expression is the establishing of various kinds of Sami institutions in different areas of society. And one of these institution is the Sameting.
1.2 The Sameting elections and the Sami electoral register

The last three decades it has been a positive development regarding Sami issues in all of the four nation states with Sami population. The development has though had different tempo and got different expressions in the four countries in question. In Norway - which will be focused upon in the rest of the paper - 1987 was a special year in this matter. This was namely the year when the Storting (Norways national parliament) adopted The Act concerning the Sameting (the Sami parliament) and other Sami legal matters (the Sami Act). With the Sami act the Storting decided - among other things - that the political system in Norway should be widened with a fourth popularly elected body - the Sameting. The Sami Act marked a clear break with earlier times harsh assimilation policy (so-called "fornorskning" - i.e. norwegianization), for example in the issue of language use. In this paper it is however, first and foremost those paragraphs in the Sami Act which deal with the Sameting and its elections, that are of interest. Let me give some few facts about these things:

The Sami Act's § 1-2. The Sameting says: "The Sami people are to have their own nationwide Sameting elected by and among the Sami population". In § 2-1. The business and authority of the Sameting it says among other things that "The business of the Sameting is any matter that in the view of the parliament particularly affects the Sami people". The right to vote in the Sameting elections is regulated by the following paragraphs:

"§ 2-5. The right to vote. All persons having the right to vote in local government elections in the constituency and who on polling day are included in the Sami electoral register in the constituency (cf § 2-6) have the right to vote at elections to the Sameting.

§ 2-6. The Sami electoral register. All persons who make a declaration to the effect that they consider themselves to be Sami, and who either
a. have Sami as their domestic language, or
b. have or have had a parent, grandparent or great-grandparent with Sami as his or her domestic language, or
c. are the child of a person who is or has been registered in the Sami electoral register may demand to be included in a separate register of Sami electors in their municipality of residence".

These paragraphs about the Sami electoral register - which in Sami has the corresponding term sámi jienastuslohku, but in Norwegian is entitled with the to some extent confusing concept samemanntall - i.e. "Sami register" - contains to some degree a sort of definition of which individuals that are - or can be - Sami. And as it appears in the paragraph quoted above, it is two criteria for such ethnic affiliation: One subjective criterion - that one considers oneself to be Sami, and one objective criterion - tied up to a person's own or hers/his near ancestors' use of Sami language

The language is thereby considered as a central aspect of (original) Sami belonging. But as shown above, the longstanding assimilation policy resulted in that many Sami during many decades had to - or "choose" to - put away their Sami language and their Sami identity. As a result of this, many of those who satisfy the objective criterion for registration in the Sami electoral register, do not register. The statement that this concerns many persons is put forward from individuals who have knowledge about relevant family relations and local communities, and also from researchers in for example anthropology and history (conf. e.g. Bjerkli and Selle 2003, Thuen 2003). This insight is the reason why - in spite of the fact that the Sami electoral register has grown steadily over the years since the Sameting was established - there are constant activities that aim to increase the number of enrolled even more. From the Sameting, focus is especially on how to get a more even distribution of the age and gender "structure" of the register; today it consists of too few young people and women.

To sum up: The Sami electoral register is a register which is to be used in connection with elections for the Sameting. The register must not be mistaken as a register over all Sami. The register thereby
tells how many Sami (over 18 year, which is the age limit for voting in Norway) who at any given time have chosen to be/stay registrated.

About the Sameting's election system and organization, the following other facts can be mentioned:

- Election to the Sameting is by direct ballot
- Elections are to be held every fourth year, and on the same day as elections to the Storting
- The Sameting consists of 39 representatives
- Four to five times a year, the Sameting meets to plenary session of about one weeks length
- In the periods between the plenary sessions, the Sameting Council acts as the Sameting's "government", which deals with the daily political activities. This council has five members.
- Norway is divided into 13 constituencies, and from each of these three members are to be elected
- The constituencies cover the whole country. This indicates that the Sameting is a national body for the whole Sami population in Norway
- The constituencies varies in their geographic size from one municipality ("kommune") to several counties ("fylke")

### 1.3 The Sameting's constituencies

On the next map (Fig. 3) one can clearly see the big variation in the constituencies' geographical size. Each of the 13 constituencies is marked with a distinct color and a digit that is the constituency's number. The names of the constituencies and which areas they include, are listed in a frame below.

*Figure 3. Map over the constituencies that are made up for the Sameting elections*

Source: [www.samediggi.no](http://www.samediggi.no)
The constituencies full names (and the areas each of them include):

1. Varanger (Sør-Varanger, Nesseby, Vadsø, Vardø og Båtsfjord kommuner)
2. Tana (Tana, Berlevåg og Gamvik kommuner)
3. Karasjok (Karasjok kommune)
4. Kautokeino (Kautokeino kommune),
5. Porsanger (Porsanger, Lebesby, Nordkapp og Måsøy kommuner),
6. Alta/Kvalsund (Kvalsund, Hammerfest, Alta, Hasvik og Loppa kommuner)
7. Nord-Troms (Kvænangen, Nordreisa, Skjervøy, Kåfjord, Storfjord og Lyngen kommuner)
8. Midt-Troms (Karlsoy, Tromsø, Balsfjord, Måløy, Bardu, Lenvik, Berg, Torsken og Tranøy kommuner)
9. Sør-Troms (Sørreisa, Dyrøy, Salangen, Lavangen, Gratangen, Skånland, Ibestad, Harstad, Bjarkøy og Kvæfjord kommuner)
11. Midtre Nordland (Ballangen, Tysfjord, Hamarøy, Steigen, Sørfold, Bodø, Fauske, Skjerstad, Saltdal, Gildeskål, Beiarn, og Meløy kommuner)
12. Sørsameområdet (kommunene i Nordland fylke fra og med Rana og Rødøy og sørover, Nord-Trøndelag og Sør-Trøndelag fylker og Engerdal kommune i Hedmark fylke)
13. Sør-Norge (fylkene i Sør-Norge (med unntak av Engerdal kommune i Hedmark) og Oslo)

Among other things the list and the map show that two of the constituencies in the northern part of Norway - 3. Karasjok and 4. Kautokeino - consist of only one municipality each. On the oposite end of the scale, two other constituencies in the south - 12. Sorsameområdet and 13. Sør-Norge - consist of two or more counties. But the map also emphasizes another - sometimes overlooked/forgotten - aspect, namely that the Sameting actually consists of representatives from the whole of Norway, not only from the Sami traditional living areas, especially in the north. The reason for this distribution of constituencies is that many Sami today, as mentioned, live outside the Sápmi area.

But it is not only the constituencies' geographical size that varies. Also the number of persons who have enrolled in the Sameting electoral register, varies strongly. This is the case whether the persons who are registered are counted in nominal or as a percentage of the total number of persons qualified to vote in "ordinary" elections in the same area. It also varies how much and how quickly the number of persons registrated in the Sameting electoral register changes in each of the constituencies. And not to forget: There is no connection between the constituencies' geographical sizes and their sizes of the number of persons enrolled in the electoral register.

Let us have a brief look on some figures concerning the Sameting electoral register. The figures in the table below (Tab. 1), show how the number for the register as a whole have been in each of the year when there has been an election for the Sameting:

Table 1. The Sameting elections 1989 - 2001. Total number of persons enrolled in the Sami electoral register

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of enrolled</td>
<td>5,497</td>
<td>7,236</td>
<td>8,668</td>
<td>9,923</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: www.samediggi.no

The table shows that the number of Sami registrated as potential voters increased from 5,500 to more than 9,900 in the actual period - a growth of about 80%. However, Figure 4 below shows that there are big variations from constituency to constituency, regarding both the nominal number of enrolled and in the relative increase from election year to election year:
### Figur 4. The Sameting elections 1989 -2001. Number of persons enrolled in the Sami electoral register in each constituency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Var</th>
<th>Tan</th>
<th>Kar</th>
<th>Kau</th>
<th>Por</th>
<th>ARK</th>
<th>NTr</th>
<th>MTr</th>
<th>Str</th>
<th>STr</th>
<th>NNo</th>
<th>MNo</th>
<th>Sso</th>
<th>SNo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>1003</td>
<td>1152</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>320</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>1115</td>
<td>1375</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>428</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>866</td>
<td>889</td>
<td>1155</td>
<td>1461</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>581</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>899</td>
<td>1228</td>
<td>1503</td>
<td>866</td>
<td>782</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>599</td>
<td>908</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Valgregelutvalgets rapport

This figure could have been commented upon from a wide range of angles, but again: there is not room for that in this paper. It has to be emphasized, though, that in order to evaluate and understand the conditions for and within the Sameting elections as so, it is important to have knowledge about these aspects regarding the Sameting election register - namely the different kinds of variations between the constituencies, and the open question of how big the register could have been if everyone who is entitled to enroll according to the objective criteria, had enrolled.

1.4 The Sameting and representativity

Let me then return to the maybe most basic question in this context: *What is, actually, the purpose with having a Sameting?* This question can most likely be answered in many and complex ways. In short, it says though at the Sameting's web site:

"The Sameting is a representative popularly elected body which purpose is to strengthen the Sami political situation and contribute to a more fair treatment of the Sami people in Norway. […] One important part in the arguments for establishing a Sameting, is that the Sami minority situation makes it difficult to have influence in ordinary democratic bodies based on majority democracy" (samediggi.no, my translation/adaption)

Another concise way of answering the question above, is with the words of political scientist Else Grete Broderstad: "The Sameting is a body that acts on behalf of the Sami community in Norway, and makes decisions which are meant to be the front/main expression of "the Sami people's will" (Broderstad 1995:4, my translation). At the same time the establishment of the Sameting implies what philosopher Nils Oskal has called the institutionalization of "…the right to political disagreements as Sami and the right to be different as Sami", i.e. an institutionalized right to Sami internal disagreement and to individual difference (Oskal 2003:336, my translation).

In this perspective - namely that the Sameting shall act on behalf of a "polyphonic" Sami community in Norway - it is not unlikely that questions concerning the body's representativity and legitimacy have been a constant recurring theme. Among other things, it is in this perspective that it has to be understood why the focus upon the size of the Sami electoral register, is so intense - i.e. upon how many of those who are entitled to enroll, that actually have done so, and upon which conditions and efforts that can contribute to make the number of enrolled to increase. As Bjerkli and Selle (2003:31, my translati-
on) formulates it: "If the Sameting is to achieve legitimacy as a representative body, it is necessary that a sufficient number of the Sami population identify with and support/back up the institution". According to this, the question of Sami identity is not only a question which matters for each person at an individual level, but also for the Sameting's potential for being seen upon as The Sami representative body.

Accordingly, it is in this kind of perspective it must bee understood why there hasn't been any obvious solution concerning the geographical composition of the Sameting's constituencies and the distribution of representatives among them. For example, when the Sami Act was adopted in 1987, it was taken into consideration that it should be made sure that both Northern Sami, Lule Sami and Southern Sami should be represented in the body (conf. the map showing the Sami languages/main dialects in Fig. 2). At the same time, it was not agreed upon that the reindeer herding group of Sami should be ensured formal representation as a group. In the later years, it has been some focus especially on whether it is right to maintain all of the constituencies as separate entities when some of them still have quite few persons enrolled in the Sami electoral register. Likewise it is asked whether it is right to have the same number of representatives from constituencies with respectively few and many persons enrolled in the register.

The gender distribution at the Sameting was originally not seen upon as problematic. In the Odelsting proposition which was a part of the treatment of the Sami act proposal in the Storting (Ot prp nr 33 (1986-87)), the gender distribution is only shortly mentioned. It says in one section that it would be possible to establish "equalization representatives" ("utjevningsmandater") in order to ensure an even distribution of men and women. In the same section it is though concluded that it would be better that this - if needed - was done by rules connected to the nomination process rather than to rules about equalization representatives. But in the last years the gender balance at the Sameting has become more and more focused upon. And as the title of this paper tells: It is this gender balance - or rather: lack of gender balance - that is the specific theme in this text.

2. Approaches and main methods

When the first Sameting election in Norway was held in 1989, 13 of 39 representatives were women. The first Sameting thereby had a women percentage of 33 %. On that time, i.e. at the end of the 1980s, it had been both a longstanding focus at, and a quite steep increase in, female representation in the "traditional" popularly elected bodies in Norway. The increase had led to an average women percentage of about 30 - 40 % in these bodies (conf. e.g. Raum 1995). The Sameting's percentage of women - 33 % - was actually 5 % below the women percentage at the Storting election the same year, and 8 % lower than at the Fylkesting election in 1987. But it was also 2 % higher than at the Kommunestyre election in 1987. In this perspective, the women percentage at the first Sameting was hardly neither higher nor lower than what was reasonable to expect when considering the tendencies in the Sameting's surroundings.

It is then, quite remarkable that in the next three Sameting elections, the women percentage decreased more and more for each election: The 1993 election resulted in one woman less than in 1989. In 1997 the decrease was two women, and in 2001 it was elected three fewer women than in 1997. Totally, the number of female representatives is almost halved during the period. In nominal, the number has dropped from 13 to seven - while the percentage has gone down from 33 to 18 %. This is remarkable even though the female percentage in some of the other elections in Norway also dropped or varied (slightly) in the 1990s. This is shown in the next figure (Fig. 5):
During the 1990s, this situation gave rise to both wondering and concern - inside as well as outside the Sameting's circles. The wondering was probably due to that it was unexpected that the Sameting didn't follow the same tendency to relatively high and stable female representation as was seen in the other elected bodies in the country. The concern was probably due to the same ways of thinking as in other situations where female representation is a theme: A) It is not fair if both sexes doesn't have equal opportunity to participate (in politics), and/or B) The consequence of no or low female representation is that the body's decisions become poorer because the basis for the decisions are to narrow. The latter approach is based on an understanding that implies that women and men have different (life)experiences, and different - and to some extent also contradictory - interests.10

Thus, for the many who considered the decrease in women representation as an unwanted development, a lot of questions raised. These were connected to two main dimensions:

- **Why** has it become such a decrease in the women percentage at the Sameting?
- **What can be done** to achieve the aim described as "… equal gender distribution among the Sameting's representatives" - as it is formulated in the Sameting's own plan for gender equality?

It was this kind of main questions that made the Sameting Council to call for a survey or study on the subject. The task of conducting the study was in the winter of 2002 given as a joint project to the two Sami institutions Sámi allaskuvla/Sami University College and Sámi Instituhtta/Nordic Sami Institute.11

The project group's aim with the study was to find at least some indicating answers to the first main question mentioned above. We did though emphasize from the very moment we were asked to conduct the study, that a brief and limited project like this, couldn't be more than a first approach to an issue which is both complex, and not least: little explored. The fact is namely that neither the Sameting elections nor gender equality or understandings of gender in today's Sami society, have been objects of systematic studies or research. Even to find basic figures and other data from and about the Sameting elections, can be difficult. This is because there isn't established any system(s) for collection and distribution of such data in the same way(s) that it is for the other three kind of political elections in Norway.
Another challenge is that there is no distinct data on the "borderless" Sami society as such - for example about the population, the living conditions and/or about economic life. As a result of this situation, it is not possible to find such kinds of quantitative data about women and men which often are used as indicator(s) on the degree of gender equality in a society, and which nowadays seem to be more and more focused upon both at national and at international levels (conf. for example the UNECE Gender Activities’ web site).

In praxis, the study consisted of different parts. First, we had to use the actual available sources to put together different kinds of figures and other data concerning the four Sameting elections that have been conducted. Second, we had to do a thorough mapping of what has been written about the modern Sami society in a gender perspective. And thirdly, we conducted interviews with some persons that in different ways had participated in one or more Sameting elections. The main analysis is thereby based on all three approaches to the theme. In sum, it might be said that our study ended up with as many new questions and proposals for further studies, as it gave answers. It must also be said that we did not consider that explicit suggestions to what can be done to improve the female representation at the Sameting, was a part of just this study.

The rest of this paper will focus on some of the main findings and conclusions in the study. There will be no specific section on theories or methods in addition to what is already mentioned above. Such aspects will however, to some degree be commented on in relevant contexts in the text as such.

3. The gender distribution at the Sameting - an overview

A central point in the study is that the decline in the percentage of women elected as representatives for the Sameting, do not correspond with a decline in the percentage of women nominated as candidates on the election lists made up before the Sameting elections. This can be illustrated with the following figure, based upon numbers from the Sameting's Valgrelutvalg's main report (Fig. 6):

![Bar chart showing the gender distribution at the Sameting elections 1989-2001.](chart)

Source: Valgrelutvalgets rapport. Vedlegget

In this bar chart the blue pillars show data from the 1989 election, the red ones from the 1993 election and so on.

The left bar illustrates the decline in percentage of elected women from election to election. Here it can easily be seen how the decline has increased during the period.
The next bar shows the total percentage of women nominated on the election lists as a whole - and we can see that this percentage has been quite stable at some 40 % plus at every election.

The third bar tells us that the percentage of women who have been nominated on top of an election list, has been considerable lower. This percentage has also varied a bit more, namely between 23 and 30 %. It must still be noticed that the percentage of lists with women on top, was nearly the same in 2001 as in 1989 - respectively 26 and 27 %.

The last bar shows that the percentage of lists with women nominated on the second place, have varied a bit, but this percentage has at every election been at least 45 %.

These relative stable features regarding the Sameting's election lists, indicates that the decline in the number of female representatives at the Sameting, hardly can be explained with a tendency towards that women at fewer and fewer occasions want to be - and also become - nominated on the election list in general - or on the top two places in special. But then - when the over all picture of the gender distribution on the election lists before the Sameting elections, seems to be as stable as this, what can be the reasons(s) for the remarkable decline in the number of women who after the elections, actually have been elected as representatives?

To put it simple: In this study, our conclusion was that the declining percentage of women representatives at the Sameting is due to a combination of three circumstances:

- **The Sameting's election system gives few representatives from each constituency**
  In the section about the formalities regarding the Sameting and its elections, it was mentioned that in Norway, the election system gives three representatives from each of 13 constituencies. This number of representatives must be considered as quite low compared with the number of representatives that are elected in other elections in Norway. It is also known from comparative studies that election systems that give a relative high number of representatives from the constituencies, are the better ones when it is an aim to increase the female representation in an elected body. This is because the parties' own considerations regarding the distribution of features as gender, geography and age when candidates at the election lists are ranged, then might have real consequences for the distribution of such features in the elected body (conf. e.g. Matland 1995, 2002).

- **Few lists have a woman on top**
  Earlier in this section it was shown that the women percentage on top of the election lists, at every Sameting election has been noticeable and stable lower than the women percentage on the lists as such (about 25 % versus some 40 % plus).

- **The participation in and the representation after the Sameting elections, have become wider**
  In the report from our study, we have put together presentations of a number of figures regarding the Sameting elections. Among other things, we show how the number of persons registrated in the Sameting electoral register, have been almost doubled during the twelve year period when the four first elections have been held - from about 5,500 to about almost 10,000. However - even though actual participation in elections not necessarily is the motive for every one that chooses to register in the Sameting electoral register, and even though the total election participation have declined from 78 to 68 %, it was more than about 2.500 who voted in the 2001 election compared with the 1989 election.

The increased interest in participating at the Sameting elections, have among other things contributed to that more election lists are established. The biggest "jump" was from 1989 to 1993, when the number of lists increased from 48 to 60. At the two latest elections, the number of lists has been respectively 63 and 62. At the same time, there has also become a more widespread distribution of elected representatives among the lists: There are now more lists/groups that actually get at least one of their nominated candidates elected. It is, by the way, though noticeable that all the female represen-
tatives on the Sameting have come from one of its two big political parties/groups, namely Norske Samers Riksforbund and Det norske Arbeiderparti.

However, the most remarkable development in this context is that in the 2001 election, only three of the 39 elected Sameting representatives had not been on top on the list they were elected from. At the three former elections, this number had been nine or 10. The two next tables illustrate this development:

**Table 2. Number of elected representatives from different political groups 1989 - 2001**

<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSR - Norske Samers Riksforbund (&quot;the group&quot;)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DnA - Det norske arbeiderparti</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP - Senterpartiet</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVL - Samenes Valgforbund</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local/&quot;free&quot; lists with one rep. elected</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Table 3. Number of lists with more than one representative elected from the same constituency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSR - Norske Samers Riksforbund (&quot;the group&quot;)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DnA - Det norske arbeiderparti</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


To sum up: It seems to be a combination of various factors which - to some extent indirectly - have contributed to the decline of the women percentage at the Sameting. These are:

1) The Sameting's election system gives few representatives from each constituency
2) Few lists have a woman on top
3) The (width in) the election participation has increased
4) The number of political groups and list lists represented at the Sameting has increased
5) The increase in participation and number of lists represented, has led to that fewer lists get more than one of a constituency's three representatives
6) When more of the representatives are elected from a list's top position, this results in fewer female representatives because the women percentage on top of the lists, always have been lower then on the lists as such.

Given that it really is this combination of various conditions that has led to the decline in the number of women at the Sameting - then we must take a closer look at all these development features and conditions in order to search for further explanations and basis for change.

One possibility then, is to focus on the election system. However, our choice in this study was to not do this. We did though comment on which features in election systems in general, that seem to be positive if it is an aim to increase a low women percentage. In addition, it must be mentioned, that at the time when we were working with the study, several aspects of the Sameting election system were debated. In the autumn of 2002 the Sameting agreed in a suggestion to introduce a system with four equalization representatives - "utjevningsmandater" - which are to be reserved the underrepresented gender until the Sameting has at least 40 % of each gender. Whether this proposal will be finally adopted by the Storting is not yet clear.

Another possibility is to focus on the stable fact mentioned above, namely that only about a fourth of the election lists has had female top candidate. And actually, this systematic underrepresentation of women on top of lists became a main focus in the study. This was among other things due to the fact
that when it is mainly candidates nominated on top of lists that get elected, it has few consequences for
the gender distribution at the Sameting that more than 40 % of the nominated on the lists in total are
women.

What then with the meaning of width in participation and political representation in the Sameting
elections? This theme is not gone thoroughly into in the project report, but some few points are
mentioned: The basis is a point made clear of political scientist Else Grete Broderstad (1995), namely
that Sami politics as phenomenon neither are tied up to specific fields in society or ways of economic
life, nor is it attached to a certain ideology. In this perspective it doesn't seem reasonable to expect that
the political width regarding the number of lists in the Sameting elections, are to be noticeable narrow-
er than in other kinds of political elections. Rather it can be expected that if we see a growth in the
Sameting's political agenda and decision power, this can contribute to that even more political groups
want to run lists at the Sameting elections. The total number of lists and number of persons who have
enrolled themselves in the Sameting electoral register in order to vote, is thereby likely to increase
even more.

On the contrary it can also be expected that the number of Sami that want to participate or run as
candidates in the Sameting elections, will be decreasing. This is especially likely to happen if the
Sameting in the future doesn't get the possibility to - or give priority to - the kinds of political (deci-
sion) activities that are seen upon as meaningful for regular people's everyday life. Probably, both the
degree of and the content of the body's actual influence are of importance for the development in the
support of the Sameting (conf. e.g. Bjerkli and Selle 2003).

These challenges are not lesser when they are seen in the light of tendencies in the Sameting's sur-
roundings, namely that the support for considerable more well established political bodies, now are
declining. The decline is seen both in election participation, in the number of party members and in
difficulties in recruiting candidates for election lists (NOU 2001: 3). At the same time it seems that
many - especially young people - often are deeply involved in concrete political issues. But instead of
working with these issues in traditional ways, i.e. through political parties and in connection with
elections, they choose other kinds of political activities. In this perspective the Sameting is established
in a time that is especially challenging when it comes to support for this kind of political work and
activity.

4. Variations between constituencies

Let me then return to the fact that so few women are on top of the lists in the Sameting elections. In
our study we chose to focus on this fact, and we also chose to give attention to a phenomenon which
isn't so often mentioned - at least not in the public sphere. This phenomenon is that even if the overall
picture of the women percentage at the Sameting is unambiguous negative, there are also remarkable
differences between the 13 constituencies when it comes to how many female representatives they
totally have had in the four elections that have been held. This is illustrated in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7 is based upon that in the four Sameting elections, it has totally been elected 12 representatives
from each constituency. The figure has one bar for each of the 13 constituencies, and the figure is sort-
ed after the constituencies' total number of female representatives. It is quite easy to see that two of the
constituencies are remarkable different from the others: In constituency 1. Varanger, eight out of 12
representatives have been women. On the contrary, not one of the Sameting representatives from
constituency 5. Porsanger, have been female!

In addition the figure shows that also two other constituencies - 8 and 9, Midt-Troms and Sør-Troms -
are positive examples because six of their 12 elected representatives have been women, i.e. 50 %. On
the negative end of the scale, we see that constituency 4. Kautokeino and constituency 10. Nordre
Nordland both have had only one women elected at the Sameting.
A main approach in our study was to take a closer look at these six constituencies which have had respectively best and poorest history when it comes to female representation - i.e. the constituencies Varanger, Midt-Troms and Sør-Troms, together with Porsanger, Kautokeino and Nordre Nordland. The inspiration for this approach came from political scientist Eli Raaum (1995). She has shown that national averages concerning gender distribution in elections hide huge regional variations. Among other things Raaum shows that in elections for the Kommunestyre in the more than 400 municipalities in Norway it can be three main kinds of local conditions that can contribute to women's political mobilization. These she calls structural, cultural and political factors.

This paper doesn't have room for going in depth about these factors. But inspired by Raaums approach, we set out to look for common features and/or differences also in the three respectively best and poorest constituencies in female representation at the Sameting. The purpose was to see if this would put us on track for finding more general conditions that can influence on whether or not women are elected as Sameting representatives.

To sum this up in brief it can be said that when it comes to the constituencies' more "formal" features, we couldn't find any systematic co variations between constituencies that have had respectively many or few female Sameting representatives. Among other things this concerns the constituencies' geographical location, size and degree of centrality measured in relation to closeness to a big city. Neither does the number of lists, the election participation or whether the constituency has few or many in the Sameting electoral register, seem to be of significance. Especially we noticed that both Kautokeino constituency which in 2001 was on top with 1.500 enrolled in the register, and Nordre Nordland, which electoral register in the same year consisted of only about 180 persons, has had only one female Sameting representative.

For the kinds of constituency features that are mentioned above, data can be found in documents and statistics. However, in addition to analyzing the "formalities" we also wanted to gain some insight into how a selection of women and men in different constituencies themselves experience the Sameting and its elections, and especially in a gender perspective. We wanted to have conversations with participants who have been central in nominations and other phases of the election process, in order to get a picture of whether gender seems to be a factor of relevance for and in the nomination processes. Even though nomination processes not are easily grasped because of their casual and quick character, infor-
information about and from them might give some pictures of the gender related political traditions and interaction patterns that over time have developed in given local societies/constituencies.

The original selection of potential informants was made up as follows: We selected four of the six constituencies that were chosen for closer investigation because of their respectively god or bad history of female representation at the Sameting. The selected constituencies - two "good" and two "bad" - were located in three different counties. In each constituency we selected two political groups, emphasizing that it in the total selection should be informants from both small and big groups. From each group we planned to interview one woman and one man from the 2001 election list, and also the leaders in these groups' nomination committees. The two candidates from the political groups should be the woman and the man who had had the respectively highest place on the election list. Totally this made a selection of 24 persons.

In praxis, 13 interviews were conducted, six with women and seven with men. Due to different reasons, this was a bit fewer than we had expected. However, the persons that were interviewed gave us many interesting and meaningful point of views, which contributed to throw light on many of the specific questions in the project. It must also be emphasized that the geographical, the political and the gender balance that was emphasized in the original selection, also was acceptable in the informant group that actually was interviewed.

5. The meaning of gender in the nomination process

The purpose with the interviews was - as mentioned - to try to find explanations to why there is such a big difference between the constituencies regarding their percentage of women representatives at the Sameting. Especially we wanted to find out whether women who are engaged in society questions, really don't get to positions that can make them elected for the Sameting. And if the situation is like this, can it be due to direct or indirect resistance in the women's home or local environment, and/or in their political surroundings? Alternatively: If it isn't such resistance, is it then the women themselves who pure and simple don't want to become a representative at the Sameting?

As a whole, it must be emphasized that the interview material in this study is in no way enough comprehensive - neither in width nor in depth - as a basis for clear and unambiguous assertions. Another selection of informants could also had led to emphasizing of other issues - and other kinds of experiences could have been focused. For example, none of our informants were women who really have wanted - maybe even fought for - a place on the top of an election list for the Sameting election. There are namely public will known examples of such women in the Sameting elections history.

When conducting the interviews and analyzing the material, we also had a feeling that some statements might indicate that women and men some times have different understandings of how things "really" are. Maybe are men's descriptions of the difficulties in getting women to run as top candidates, slightly more powerful than women's descriptions? But the material is to small to be sure about this. However, our main impressions from the interviews can be summed up in the following points:

- In general, it is difficult to recruit (new) women into Sami politics. Many women can say yes to be listed as a candidate, but not to have the top position (so-called "certain position"). If women do run as top candidates, it is often a result of intensive support from her privat and political environment.

- When women refuse to run as top candidates, they give varied explanations. Some of them first and foremost point at the home and family situation. For others the main argument is their lack of political experiences. Another aspect can be that the political agenda that are emphasized by the political groups in connection with the Sameting elections, in to little extent give room for women's experiences and their priority of political issues.
Gender equality has traditionally to little degree - or not at all - been a theme in Sami or Sami political environments. Often women are tied up to traditional roles that might give little room for political activities of the kind that is required when someone is a candidate for and/or a representative in the Sameting. Women themselves give (or have to give?) priority to children and family. At the same time, women do often engage in local associations and activities, especially when these are in contexts that regard children and youngsters.

The female informants who themselves are or have been a Sameting representative, had different opinions about whether - and eventually how - it can be practical problems or negative experiences when participating in the Sameting's (plenary) sessions, and whether such experiences may influence on their own or others desire for (not) becoming or still be a Sameting representative.

In small Sami constituencies and/or political environments there are a basis of few potential candidates for each list. Even fewer of them are women. In addition, the situation in such areas, often will be that fighting for ones Sami existence takes most of the resources. This might contribute to lack of resources to work specific with female representation and gender distribution.

There are differences between areas where Sami represents respectively a minority or a majority of the total population. The Sameting representatives from "minority areas" say that they get little "payment" for their issues at the Sameting sessions. They also get few possibilities to reach their electorate through media. Both these circumstances can contribute to a lower motivation for everybody regarding participation in the Sameting election.

Some informants from small groups said that changes in the Sameting's internal organization in terms of reduced number of committees, boards and so on, have made it more difficult to find arenas for building up their group members' political knowledge and experiences.

When election lists are to be composed, gender is not the only factor that must be taken into consideration. A political group can (also) have formal or informal rules about list ranging in relation to for example the candidates' language skills, their occupation, where they live and to their age. This comes in addition to "standard" evaluations of the candidates' political competence/experience and expectations of how "popular" the candidate will be among the members of the electorate.

In constituencies with a good history regarding female representation at the Sameting, it is often found a local consciousness about the importance of such representation. Often there are also found active Sami and female political networks. It seems like in areas with a longer organized Sami political history, it is more likely to find active Sami political engaged women. This is due to that women through activity in Sami organizations have got to build up experiences, both locally and in Sami politics in general.

Changes in women's political status in Sami politics must be based upon mobilization from the bottom, and on a positive and active will in the political groups that participate in the Sameting elections. The organizations must have a conscious strategy for recruitment, and they must know what kind of barriers there can be for female participation.

According to our analysis, it actually seems to be true that there are few women who want to run as top candidate at a list in the Sameting elections. And when it is argued that this situation is due to the women's wish for - or necessity of - giving priority to the family/home environment, an/or to their uncertainty about their own political competency, these arguments can't be rejected as meaningless by "others". However, while this situation is quite well known also from other contexts regarding women's participation, there are in relation to the Sameting elections some additional circumstances that must be taken into consideration. A statement from one of the female informants in the interviews
that Jorunn Eikjok conducted, illustrates this. This informant reminded about a often heard point that a Sami family doesn't only consist of mother, father and two children:

"Sami women don't only give priority to the husband and children, but also to all the others. In Sami culture, the woman is the big "bautastein" which keeps it all together - she chooses to keep it all together".

The background for such a statement is probably that since the extended family and the relatives also often demands a share of Sami women's time and care, this can result in that many Sami women don't have surplus energy to Sami political involvement - especially if they have small children and/or may-be also a job where they deal with Sami related issues. Our material does namely indicate that many women are the ones who take responsibility for passing on the Sami cultural heritage to the children. This also corresponds with research that tells about how Sami mothers are under "double pressure" because they are given - or take - the responsibility for passing on values in the Sami society to the next generation(s) - often with little or varied support from the society (Eikjok 1989). In this way, Sami women (in Norway) have to carry a bigger burden than their Norwegian sisters.

6. Summary - and some comments on future challenges

Let me now sum up: One main reason for the low and declining women percentage at the Sameting, seems to be that the election system together with changes in the Sameting elections' participation patterns, result in that fewer candidates are elected from lower placements at election lists than the top position. Indirectly this leads to that fewer women are elected as Sameting representatives because few women are nominated on top of the lists that are preferred by the voters. This finding also corresponds with theories that say that election systems based upon election of one or a few candidate(s) from each constituency, often result in that it takes long time to increase a low women percentage in the body.

Another main impression is that there actually are few women who want to run as top candidate at a list in the Sameting elections. The reasons for this seem to bee that many women themselves give priority to other tasks concerning (the extended) family life or the nearest environment, and/or they feel they have to little political competence and (thereby) have little faith in the value of their own experiences. But of course, sometimes there are women who really want to be a top candidate, but who don't get the position. It can be many factors that contribute to this result, and gender doesn't necessarily have to be one of them - at least not in a direct way.

Thus, the question in this paper's title about whether the low percentage of women representatives at the Sameting is due to that women don't want to or due to that they don't get to, must be given different answers: Often they do not want to (nor do they care). Sometimes they want to, but of different reasons they don't get to. Other times they get to and are really wanted by others, but they don't want to themselves. And occasionally they both want to and get to. Answers to how this situation can be changed in a way that makes more women to both want to and get to be a representative at the Sameting, lie outside this particular project.12

So - at this stage of the paper, answers to the main questions in the project are given. But even though I could have ended the text here, I will in this last section give a few comments on some methodological "Sami challenges" that we met in the project, and also on some questions that we originally wanted to work with in this project, but which hopefully can be dealt with in a future study.

In the report we have emphasized that it can be difficult to make meaningful comparisons when the entities are the Sameting's constituencies. I remind about the map in Fig. 3 where we could see both that the constituencies vary in geographical size, and that they don't correspond with entities that are used for comparisons in other contexts (i.e. municipalities/"kommuner", counties/"fylker" and part of the country/"landsdel"). In addition it is - as commented earlier - also other variations between the
constituencies. These variations contribute to that the Sameting constituencies are entities that are problematic/challenging both to investigate as units - and maybe even more challenging to compare.

At the same time it must be strongly emphasized that research concerning the Sameting elections - research that hopefully will be conducted in the future - among other things must ensure knowledge about all the 13 constituencies. For as we have seen in this study of the gender balance at the Sameting: Since the election system gives three representatives from each constituency, every one of the constituencies are of same importance when looking for mechanisms that may contribute to understand why the constituencies Sameting group ends up like they do. This point is emphasized because studies of Sami society, in most cases focus on a (small) selection of (local) communities in the north.

The methodological challenges are also tied up to the remarkable lack of quality secured data from and about the Sameting elections. And when such data are put together, they are not always easily accessible. Besides, as mention in Section 2, there are problems due to difficulties in making/choosing/finding data about the "borderless" Sami society as such - and to an almost total lack of both basic data and updated research about gender and gender equality aspects in today's Sami society.

But the future challenges are not only methodological ones. In the project report we used the last section to give a range of ideas and concrete suggestions for further studies. And I shall here comment on one basic theme for such studies - a theme we originally had planned to include in the study presented. The idea is to take a closer look on whether active and socially engaged Sami women choose other arenas for influence than direct political channels in general and the Sameting channel in special. And if they do so, can it be because they on these other arenas experience that they in more direct and immediate ways get to contribute in the shaping of the modern Sami society? Do they maybe feel that they play a more remarkable Sami political role if they work with Sami related issues for example in the education and research sectors, in the media, or in the bureaucracy - be that in the Sameting administration(s), in the central bureaucracy or at other levels?

One main reason for these questions is that official statistics show that in some of the Sameting constituencies, women have a much higher level of education than men. Correspondingly, public student statistics from Sami University College show that a distinct majority of the students are female. A third example is that simple counting on the Sameting's employee lists, show an overweight of women - at the time being also among the administrative leaders. The question is if this situation can be interpreted as a kind of "gender equality paradox" (conf. Raaum 2001) - i.e. that the Sami society has a low percentage of women in its popularly elected body, when it at the same time is a high tendency to that Sami women occupy job positions which - to different degrees - demand formal competences?

But this particular study should also focus systematically upon a sort of "parallel, but opposite" phenomenon, namely that some of the Sami women who choose to give priority to the home environment, might have this as a conscious (political) strategy for taking care of and bringing forward Sami values. For example, this can be by working actively with taking care of social relations and networks - and/or by bringing forward competences in material or immaterial cultural expressions such as language skills, duodji (i.e. Sami crafts), cooking, joik-music and storytelling. The question here is: If this really are conscious strategies, can such choises of more traditional ways of living, more or less, be a way of rejecting (some) kinds of modern ("western") female roles and dominating values in the so-called "new" knowledge society - at least in the ways these roles and values are expressed in the media?

However: The Sameting has put gender equality on the agenda and has also formulated an aim for its work with this issue: "Sami women and men shall have equal duties, rights and opportunities in every part of society" (Sametinget 1999, my translation). To succeed in this work, it is necessary to have basic knowledge for action. Such basic knowledge can only be developed by giving conscious and broad priority to research about women's and men's conditions in different contexts in the modern Sami society. Not at least is it necessary to conduct research about choices and conditions that give basis for the multiplicity of ways that Sami women - and men! - forme their lives in different parts of today's Sápmi.
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Saami societies. Leiden, Leiden University


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1 University college lecturer/researcher Jorunn Eikjok and project coordinator Aili Keskitalo, both working at Sámi allaskuvla/Sami University College, did also participate in the study.

2 I have specified that the paper deal with the Sameting in Norway because there are also Sameting in Finland and Sweden. See section 1 for a general description of Sami living areas and some political history. And please notice that the word Sami has replaced the words Lapp and Lappish - which have negative connotations, but still unfortunately are used in some English texts and dictionaries.

3 Conf. for example the definition of indigenous people in the ILO Convention No 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries in this quotation from Article 1: 

"1. This Convention applies to: [...] (b) peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions. 2. Self-identification as indigenous or tribal shall be regarded as a fundamental criterion for determining the groups to which the provisions of this Convention apply. [...] Among the four states with Sami population it is only Norway that up till now has ratified this convention. It must also be mentioned that in Norway, it is made a distinction between the Sami as an indigenous people and (other) national minorities as e.g. romani and kven. The basis for this distinction is a claim from the Sameting.

4 Some facts about the Sami language: "Sami belongs to the Finno-Ugric language group. [...] The language area [...] can be divided into different language groups. Some language researchers choose to call the Sami language groups for Sami dialects. [...] Even though speakers of Sami language live on a quite widespread geographic area, especially in the south and west, the Sami language area is united in the way that the neighbour dialects always can be understood of the neighbours. The differences that have made some researchers to use the term "Sami languages" in stead of "Sami dialects" are not noticeable before one start to compare dialects that are geographically far away from each other, such as Northern and Southern Sami. It is not possible to understand these two dialects without having lots of practice, while neighbour dialects like e.g. Lule and Northern Sami are much closer" (samediggi.no 2003, my translation). The names of the main dialects are (from south towards north): 1. Southern Saami. 2. Ume Saami (near Ume river). 3. Pite Saami (near Pite river). 4. Lule Saami (near Lule river). 5. Northern Saami. 6. Enare Saami (near Enare lake). 7. Skolt Saami (Skolt Saami area). 8. Akkala and Kildin Saami. 9. Ter Saami. In Norway the Northern Sami is the Sami dialect that are used by most people, while Southern and Lule Sami have relatively few users.

5 Sami affiliation has though earlier, especially before 2nd world war - to different degrees and after different criteria - been registered in censuses in the northern parts of the nation states. The states census policies can't be described in depth in this text, but the last time questions regarding Sami affiliation was asked in a census in Norway, was in 1970. In Sweden it was in 1972 and in Finland in 1962. This was then done at request from Sami organization because they wanted information about how and where the Sami were living (Aubert 1978). It was thus not the state authorities that at this time wanted such Sami registration. But even though the figures from these countings are of interest, it is well known that they have many shortcomings, especially due to that the countings were conducted in limited geographical areas. It is also well known that many of the individuals who were asked, at that time either didn't want to give information about their ethnic affiliation, or they deliberately choose to answer No to questions they could have answered with Yes (ibid.). For the record, it has to be mentioned that there are no general visible differences between Sami and ethnic Scandinavians, Fins and Russians.
6 One of the pioneers in the work for Sami rights was the Southern Sami woman Elsa Laula Renberg. She also was central in the work for and with the first Sami nation wide meeting which took place in Trondheim at February 6th in 1917. This meeting is considered to be a very important event in Sami history, and the date was therefore in 1992 chosen as the date for the Sami national day. Since one of the Sami movement's pioneers was a woman, it can also be mentioned here that it has been and still is an organized Sami women's movement with different groups that have varying activity and number of members (see e.g. Eikjok 2000).

7 Also the next year, 1988, was important. The Norwegian Parliament did namely then adopt a new paragraph in the Norwegian Constitution, Article 110 a. This article says: "It is the responsibility of the authorities of the State to create conditions enabling the Sami people to preserve and develop its language, culture and way of life". For the record it can also be mentioned that in Norway the so-called Alta-affair is considered as a remarkable turning point regarding the work for Sami issues. The Alta-affair was a conflict about building a power-dam in Finnmark county at the end of the 1970s. As a direct consequence of this conflict, a committee called The Sami Rights Committee was set up. Establishing a Sameting was one of the results of the work in this committee. However, it still is a number of unresolved questions and conflicts regarding Sami rights. In Norway this has been seen very clearly in the strong reactions to the proposal to a new Finnmark Act this year. For the record it must also be mentioned that the Sami in Sweden got their Sameting in 1993. In Finland a Sameting was established in 1996, but this was then build upon a system called The Sami Delegation - Sameparlamentet - from 1973.

8 "Traditional" popularly elected bodies in Norway are: 1) Storting - the country's parliament, 2) fylkesting - the regional body for each of the 19 counties ("fylker"), and 3) kommunestyre - the local body for each of the 434 municipalities ("kommuner").

9 The basis for this proposal was that reindeer herding is a "typical" Sami primary industry/way of living. This does not imply that all or the majority of the Sami are directly involved in reindeer herding, but the persons who are involved have - according to the Reindeer herding Act - to be of Sami descendent. Without going into details about this phenomenon here in this text, I must though mention that reindeer herding often can bee a too dominating Sami "distinctive mark"/"icon" (conf. e.g. Andersen 2003). However, reindeer herding has though had - and has - a very central position in Sami cultural and economic life, both directly and indirectly.

10 Conf. also Stordahl 2002 for an analysis of the media debate about the female representation at the Sameting. I will also mention that in the report from our study, we have a chapter about political participation and gender in theory and praxis, included general theories about democracy, political participation and recruitment. In the same chapter we also present figures about the women percentage at the Sameting in Sweden and Finland. However, the Sameting election systems in the three countries differs so much that we haven't gone into details when it comes to comparing the figures.

11 The researcher group consisted of Jorunn Eikjok and myself. As a political scientist, my main responsibilities were the political-theoretical and quantitative parts of the study. Eikjok - who is an anthropologist - did especially work with the interview parts. In addition project coordinator Aili Keskitalo also participated in the mapping of literature regarding Sami women, and in the work with the analysis and the project report. A reference group consisting of researchers from the two institutions was also established. When working with the project, we emphasized to bear in mind how we ourselves are situated in general and regarding the study theme in speci-
al. This means that our personal histories and professional basises can be of significance both in the meeting with and in interpretations of informants and other types of data sources (Haraway 1987/1995). Thus, it can be mentioned that in addition to what is already said about professional background/tasks, Eikjok and Keskitalo has Sami cultural and linguistic background, and can therefore themselves participate in the Sameting elections. Both of them have in different ways and to different times been active in Sami and/or female political activities. Myself I am not a Sami and therefore I can't participate in the elections. I do though to some degree speak the Sami language since I've been living and working in the Sami local community Kautokeino for about 10-12 years. And since I've been working with Sami related issues in my professional life, I've also come to know a bit about these. For the record I will mention that both this paper and the presentation at the conference should have been prepared by Eikjok and myself together. But due to different circumstances Eikjok could unfortunately not participate in these activities.

12 It must though be emphasized that if top nomination of women shall have significant effect on the Sameting's gender distribution, the women's top nominations must be on lists that are preferred by the voters. This is because not all list get a candidate elected, and therefore neither top nominated candidate has any guarantee to actually become a Sameting representative - be the nominated candidate a woman or a man. However, which
lists that are preferred by the voters, is a question outside every kind of control in advance when free democratic elections are to be conducted.

13 On the other hand, it must be taken into consideration that it is well known that in some of the Sami areas, many men are occupied in the primary industries. These are industries where formal education traditionally not has been common or easily achieved. The men's relatively low formal competence/education level can therefore not be taken as an expression for that all of these men have low work/occupation competence.