The Sami people in Norway: political strategies in indigenous-state interactions

Else Grete Broderstad,
Professor, Centre for Sami Studies,
Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education
The turning point: Alta-Kautokeino conflict. The late 1970’s: demonstrations, civil disobedience and hunger strike
“The Sámis lost the battle, but won the case”

Late 1970s, 1980: The Alta conflict

1980’s: setting the institutional structure

- 1980: The Sámi Rights Commission
- 1987: The Sámi Act
- 1988: The constitutional amendment
- 1989: The Sámi Parliament
- 1990: Norway ratifies ILO 169

1990’s: continued focus on rights to land and water

- 1997: Report concerning land rights and the use of natural resources in Finnmark County

2000’s: integration into Norwegian politics
The constitutional amendment on the state’s responsibility to ensure that conditions prevail to enable the Sámi people to maintain and develop its language, culture and way of life.

From the parliamentary debate preceding the adoption of the constitutional amendment 1988:

“One of the most important things that a people can do is to preserve its language and its culture. .....Regrettably, they have for years and years throughout earlier generations been subjected to treatment that has taken from them that sense of identity and pride which every people should feel in connection with its own special situation. I hope that this can be a small contribution towards redressing the injustice done by Norwegian mainstream society against this people over the centuries” (MP Harald U. Lied, Conservative).
The Sami Parliament, Norway
“When the Sámediggi wants to negotiate with Government authorities over future measures for the Sámi, we won’t negotiate ourselves out of Norway, but on the contrary, into Norway. Into the country’s governance, so that we can take more responsibility for our own future and future Sámi generations.”

(Former president of the Sami Parliament; Nystø, 2002).
Sami-state interactions and the development of consultations

2003/2005 Consultations on the Finnmark Act
2005 Consultation agreement between the Sámi Parliament and the government
  – Based on ILO 169, especially article 6
  – A duty on all state agencies
  – Framing principles: complete information on relevant issues; time to consider relevant issues and provide feedback; process continues as long as it is possible to reach an agreement

2007 Sami Rights Committee proposed a Consultation Act

2015-2018 Process on amending the Sami Act
  • The duty to consult includes municipalities and county municipalities
  • Improved guidelines
  • Relationship to existing laws and international law
References

• Broderstad, E. G., H-K. Hernes 2014: The Promises of Consultation? In Fossum, John Erik; Battarbee, Keith (eds.) *The Arctic Contested*. Canadian Studies. Peter Lang Publishing Group


