

***Friluftsliv and olggonastin – multiple and complex nature cultures***

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## **Abstract**

The Scandinavian concept of *friluftsliv* has become established in the international literature on outdoor life. However, when emphasising *friluftsliv* as a recreational way of outdoor life, other understandings and nuances are disguised. With a post-colonial and Indigenous methodological perspective, the authors argue that the Sámi words *olggonastin*, *meahcástallan* and *olggustállan* are often more useful and purposive than *friluftsliv*. We show how *friluftsliv* both assimilates and suppresses Sámi nature culture while also integrating and including Sámi and Norwegians into shared rural cultures—especially in northern Norway.

## **Key words**

*meahcástallan*, *olggustállan*, *friluftsliv*, Sámi, nature, culture, outdoor, Indigenous methodology, post-colonial theory

‘The Norwegian state is founded upon the territory two peoples, Sámi and Norwegian.’ These were the words of the Norwegian King Harald V at the opening ceremony of the Sámi parliament in 1997 (Kongehuset, 1997). The King emphasized the intertwining of Sámi and Norwegian history and apologized for the wrongdoings that the Norwegian state had inflicted on the Sámi. The Sámi are the Indigenous people of Norway. The cultures of the Sámi and Norwegians are strongly connected to the land, to nature and to each other. Despite geographic and cultural overlaps, especially in rural northern Norway, differences in the two peoples are reflected in the ways they express their relations to nature and outdoor life. In this paper, we scrutinise the similarities and differences between Sámi and Norwegian ‘nature cultures’ by investigating core concepts that reflect larger cultural features and interdependencies between cultures; we thus add nuances to the English language research on *friluftsliv* (e.g. Andkjær, 2008, 2012). Moreover, we discuss the reasons for and implications of the focus on the Norwegian term *friluftsliv* on the cost of Sámi concepts.

*Friluftsliv* (used in Danish, Swedish and Norwegian) has gained popularity among international scholars, who apparently consider it unique and uniting (e.g. Green et al., 2015); resembling numerous English terms: outdoor life, open-air activities, outdoor education or outdoor adventure (Hofmann et al., 2018), adventure tourism (Andersen & Rolland, 2018; Rantala et al., 2018; Varley & Semple, 2015), outdoor education (Andkjær, 2012; Potter & Dymont, 2016) and adventure sport (Howe, 2019). Although international scholars have developed an understanding of *friluftsliv*, the mainstreaming process of the Norwegian concept of it disguises variations and contentions (Gurholt & Haukeland, 2019). For example, ‘Norwegian narrations on heroic male adventures and *friluftsliv* as central ideals of what is associated with becoming an “educated man”’, where ‘the hegemonic discourse of *friluftsliv* and outdoor adventure has been characterised through the symbolic representation of gender relations ... that perceived women as qualitatively different from, and subordinate, to men’

(Gurholt, 2008, pp. 61–62). There are also nuances when it comes to social class. Both historical and recent research has indicated that *friluftsliv* is primarily conducted by a resourceful middle class (Gurholt, 2015; Slagstad, 2008); hence, it is discussed to what extent *friluftsliv* is uniting for the general public of Norway.

The apparently united, uniting and morally good phenomenon of *friluftsliv* comprises power relations aligning with overarching societal and cultural structures. Moreover, *friluftsliv* has Western life as its point of departure. Despite Cohn (2011) acknowledges ‘the diversity of indigenous peoples and hence the problem of grouping them together’ (p. 16), he still tries ‘to describe the wholeness of the indigenous world-view’ (p. 16). While *friluftsliv* developed throughout the 1970s (Breivik, 1978; Faarlund, 1973), the founding fathers were inspired by the Sherpas of the Himalaya (Leirhaug, 2007). We believe that context-dependent knowledge about the phenomenon is important, also to understand wholeness. To our knowledge, the Sámi people were until recently neglected in the *friluftsliv* discourse.<sup>1</sup> We scrutinise the relationship between Sámi and Norwegian ways of nature life and follow the main research question, which is: What is the Sámi equivalent(s) of *friluftsliv*? If there are discrepancies between *friluftsliv* and the Sámi equivalents, and a power relation based on historical conditions in Sápmi (the land of the Sámi), we pose a second research question, which is: What are the reasons for and implications of the dominance of *friluftsliv* over the Sámi equivalents?

Based on observations during everyday life in Sápmi, Sámi and Norwegian cultures’ reciprocal influence, we scrutinise the meaning-making processes of social phenomena (Alexander & Smith, 2001), guided by post-colonial theory and Indigenous methodology. While scholarly understanding develops in the aftermath of colonial understanding, we decolonise today by acknowledging that the effects of colonialism are still at work. We ‘let the subaltern speak’ (Go, 2013, p. 10), and analyse the term *friluftsliv* as it has been diffused in Western outdoor study literature by comparing and contrasting it with the Northern Sámi

terms *olggostallan* and *meahcástallan* to highlight how these terms differently engage human–environment relations and support the post-colonial project of cultural revitalisation, Indigenisation and diversification of perspectives. Following a section on context and definitions, the paper follows a typical structure with the method and materials before the two main parts, which correspond to the research questions. The first takes a linguistic approach in which we describe Northern Sámi words concerning outdoor life. The second main section compares *friluftsliv* with Northern Sámi concepts along the lines of Norwegian nation-building, the assimilation of the Sámi people and bicultural interdependence.

### **Context and definitions**

We see limitations in studies focusing ‘upon what the imperialists and colonisers do without reference to their embeddedness in interactive local environments’ (Go, 2013, p. 13). The history of Sámi ethnicity is estimated to be 2000–3000 years old (Hansen and Olsen, 2004, p. 41), according to the earliest archaeological findings following direct lines with what is today’s Sámi culture. The same counts for Norwegians, Swedes, Finns, Russians and other peoples of the North Calotte. Sápmi covers the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola peninsula of Russia. We focus on the Northern Sápmi of Finnmark county (Norway’s northernmost) because our observations stem from this area, which is usually referred to as the core Sámi area. Due to the lack of roads and modern means of communication, Sámi culture was maintained here even after other districts were assimilated. And due to different nature cultures across Sápmi, the Sámi population developed into various cultural groups, such as a nomadic reindeer culture, in which the Sámi move with the reindeer according to the grazing seasons; a coast and fjord Sámi culture specialising in harvesting from the sea; and a forest Sámi culture focusing upon hunting, gathering and husbandry combinations (Vorren & Manker, 1958).

Being aware of the risk of contributing to colonial thought by mentioning this categorisation, we emphasise that numerous combinations of the ideal types exist in the empirical world (e.g. the river Sámi culture, of which the authors have some experience). The point is that subcultures specialise in a human–nature relationship for survival and identity reasons, which have changed throughout history. Nevertheless, nature appears to be a common denominator for Sámi culture. An acknowledged definition of Sámi culture is that of Helander (1991), who emphasised that it is historically founded on the use of natural resources and applied the term ‘Sámi industries’ concerning the use of nature (p. 75). Two notes regarding the use of the term industry should be added. First, it indicates that Sámi use of nature is purposeful, beneficial and with an outcome. Second, it does not necessarily involve anything commercial and most often refers to activities with direct benefit for the family, such as catching meat, fishing, gathering wood, etc.

A short historical sketch suggests that during pre-war times, Sámi families normally dwelt during the winter in a *goahti* (hut of wood, bark and turf) or in a *lavvu* (tent) as movable housing during periods of herding. Family members were mainly together all year round, changing residence when following family’s activities (with reindeer or changing fisheries). After the Second World War, Sápmi became better connected with roads and motorised vehicles; thus, the main family home could be reached by car within hours, and even from the highlands or sea, the homes of both herders and fishermen were in reach through modern mobility. These social changes have radically modified life and culture in Sápmi, and they provide the basis for the further explanations and discussions below.

In addition to their divergent relationship with nature, the Sámi people’s relationship with other people and state authorities have changed. Most significantly, any analysis of Sámi culture must consider the Norwegian state’s assimilation policy from the 19th century until after the Second World War; nationalism was a political program for the independent and

centralised nation state that aimed to unite people with Norwegian culture and traditions. However, it served to divide and offend everybody outside the Norwegian community, such as the Sámi. There was a strong ideological credence that a nation state should possess one people with shared language, culture and lifestyle; thus, the Indigenous Sámi people did not fit into the narrative of Norwegian togetherness (Pedersen, 2021; Vestgården & Aas, 2014). In this nation-building, *friluftsliv* had its place (Slagstad, 2008).

A more open-minded policy towards the Sámi developed during the post war era. This was confirmed by the government's appointment of a committee to investigate the situation for the Sámi people (working from 1956 and reporting in 1959), and it has developed more quickly since the 1970s (Andresen et al., 2021, Ch. 9). Although it is difficult to define an exact time when changes began in terms of Sámi self-understanding (Selle et al., 2015, p. 62), Minde (1996) pointed out that the Swedish journal *Samefolket* ('The Sámi people') referred to the Sámi as 'Sweden's Indians' in 1963. After representatives of the Nordic Sámi Council established contact with an American Indian chief in 1972, by 1974, some Sámis had been 'putting themselves forward as an Indigenous people' (Minde, 1996, p. 237). Nevertheless, considering the Sámi as an Indigenous people according to international law was still far-fetched until the time of the Alta case (Selle et al., 2015, p. 62), when the state authorities decided to build a hydro-electric plant on Sámi land. The Alta case of 1979–1981 stands out as an expression of the creation of a new Sámi self-consciousness (Olstad, 2017), which also influenced Norwegian politics. The Alta case resulted in several legal and institutional arrangements (Somby, 2021): a Sámi clause in the Norwegian constitution, a Sámi language law, the ratification of the International Labor Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention and the establishment of the Sámi Parliament. When the Sámi Parliament was declared open in 1989 by the Norwegian King Olav V, it was an important day for Sápmi *and* for Norway (Olstad, 2017, p. 311); it symbolised acknowledged multiculturalism (Olstad,

2017, p. 342). Thus, our examination of nature life supports decolonisation and the cultural revitalisation of Sámi culture and understanding (Somby, 2021).

When it comes to *friluftsliv*, we present two definitions that will help us discuss the Sámi linguistic counterparts and practical interpretations. First, *friluftsliv*, as it was defined in the government's white paper, emphasises a break from everyday life aimed at relaxation and experiencing nature (Meld. St. 18, 2015–2016). This definition is in line with Faarlund et al.'s (2007) emphasis on *friluftsliv* as a product of the European Romantic movement, in which values of free nature and free humans were strong. While Faarlund et al. (2007) aimed to defend the simple *friluftsliv* from competition with 'commercial interests', 'influence in clubs, schools and universities' and 'marketing and media efforts [that] are increasing in volume and in hard-hitting approaches' (p. 395), there was no reference to the Indigenous people of Norway. Anyhow, *friluftsliv* emphasises Norwegian identity, while Sámi use of nature—as with that of other Indigenous people (Cohn, 2011)—is context dependent and strongly related to place identity. Second, we lean on Breivik's (1978) division of *friluftsliv* into city and the rural areas. This rural version focuses upon and includes more purposeful and beneficial activities, such as hunting, fishing and berry picking. It thus resembles Sámi ways of nature life to some degree.

### **Materials and methods - Indigenous methodology and authors**

Social science's suppression of colonised peoples' agency and one-sided conceptualisation parallel the development of the nation state as the dominant organisation of power because both share an 'underlying variable': namely modernity (Skille, 2021; Smith, 2012). Citing Māori scholar Linda T. Smith while reflecting upon Sámi research, Skille (2021) stated:



In the first sentence of *Decolonizing methodologies*, Smith holds that the word “research” is tightly associated with imperialism and colonization. She continues: “The word itself, ‘research’, is one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary” (2012: 1) because research understood as how “knowledge about Indigenous people was collected, classified and then presented” relates directly to a “collective memory of imperialism” (2012: 1). In Sámi-Norwegian history, government authorities exploited science to depress the Sámi population when state assimilation policy was rationalized by “scientific evidence” that “proved” Sámi subordination. (Skille, 2021, p. 6, original italics)

Moreover, the ‘historical legacy of oppression’ works in mysterious ways (Pedersen & Høgmo, 2012, p. 297), indicating how imperialism has impacted the current relationship between Sámi and Norwegian (Broch & Skille, 2019).

In this conceptual and reflective paper on Sámi and Norwegian nature cultures and outdoor life, we follow an Indigenous methodology on two points in particular (Smith, 2012; Porsanger, 2004); we employ Indigenous knowledge actively and directly, and we work as a team of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers. The section ‘Sámi concepts ...’ is primarily based on written sources, official documents and specific literature on Northern Sámi language (Nickel, 1990; Nielsen, 1926; Ruong, 1970) and draws upon the personal and professional knowledge of the second and third authors. The section ‘Sámi meanings ...’ comprises reflections on the reasons for and implications of *friluftsliv* and its dominance over Sámi concepts. It draws on the second author’s competence as both an academic and an outdoor practitioner, and on the third author’s readings of texts. As a result of the way we have worked and of the composition of the author team, we aim to contrast and supplement a

Western, Eurocentric and ‘White’ mindset that dominates academic work and expression (Skille, 2021; Smith, 2012).

The first author is a professor of sport sociology who identified the term *friluftsliv* in English-language outdoor literature and pointed out how Indigenous language concerning nature and outdoor life is apparently overlooked. The first author thus proposed the idea for the article, selected the cases for discussion and drafted the text before finishing it, following input, elaborations and explanations from and discussions with the other authors.

The second author is a historian with extensive research (including his PhD) on the border constructions of Sápmi (Pedersen, 2006). He has been rector at Sámi Allaskuvlla (the Sámi university of applied sciences), a state secretary in the Norwegian government, and a representative at the Sámi parliament. He has Northern Sámi language as his mother tongue and is an active practitioner of salmon fishing, berry gathering, etc. Thus, the second author is primarily responsible for practical explanations of the use of different concepts, including reflections about how the Sámi language and culture relate to *friluftsliv*.

The third author is a retired dean with linguistic interests. Although not a native Sámi, he speaks, reads and writes the Northern Sámi language; and have conducted university studies of Finnish and Sámi and propaedeutic courses to Hungarian and Russian languages. He was among the contributors to the section ‘Lappisch’ in the *Bibliographie der Uralischen Sprachwissenschaft 1830-1970* (Schlachter et al., 1974). Between 2002 and 2012, he acted as a translator and headed ‘Davvi’—the North Sámi Bible project—resulting in *Biibbal 2019*. Thus, the third author is primarily responsible for the philological explanation of concepts.

Our personal interests in the topic developed at various times and from complementary backgrounds. Although the authors have complementary competencies regarding *friluftsliv* and its Northern Sámi counterparts, this paper presents and represents only one narrative. There are nuances across contexts because there are ten different Sámi languages (Aikio-Puoskari, 2018).

We employ Northern Sámi language only, which is a limitation, but simultaneously, it is the most common Sámi language, measured by everyday users and written publications.

### **Sámi concepts for expressing outdoor life**

While *friluftsliv* is relatively well-established in the international literature (e.g. Andkjær, 2008, 2012; Gurholt, 2008), it is a multifaceted concept in Norway and Scandinavia (Gurholt, 2014; Jørgensen, 2016). Breivik (1978) presented two traditions of Norwegian *friluftsliv*, namely the city *friluftsliv* and the countryside *friluftsliv*. While the city *friluftsliv* is a leisure time activity devoted to the search for quietness and relaxation before returning to city life's stressful everyday requirements, the countryside *friluftsliv* is about harvesting from the wilderness (food, wood, fur, etc.). To put it in a nutshell, urban people conduct *friluftsliv* for joy and pleasure, while rural people do it for necessity. However, such a broad-brush painting and dichotomous exhibition of the phenomenon disguises nuances, for example – as mentioned – regarding gender and class (Gurholt, 2015; Pedersen, 1999; Slagstad, 2008). However, this study focuses on the ethnic dimension exemplified by Sámi terms and relationship to outdoor life.

First, we investigate how *friluftsliv* is translated in official documents, which are published in both Sámi and Norwegian languages. In the 'Regional action plan for sport, physical activity and *friluftsliv*' published by the Finnmark county administration, *friluftsliv* is translated as *olggonastin* in the Sámi version. This word is rather neutral and descriptive, referring to being outside in nature and independent of purpose or objective.<sup>2</sup> The term is easy to combine with other translations related to *friluftsliv*, such as *olgunastinberostupmi* (*friluftsliv* interest), *olgunastindoaibma* (*friluftsliv* activity), etc. However, the term does not equate to everyday use and usefulness in the Sámi language, to put it mildly. Rather, it is a term suited to official documents more than it is for useful purposes for those conducting specific activities in nature or outdoor life. Traditionally, the Sámi cultures have been orientated towards doing

something useful or profitable when being in nature. Some would claim that the very definition of Sámi culture depends solely on the people's relationship with nature industries; for example, Helander (1991) held that Sámi culture since old times has been built on the use of natural resources and from what nature livelihoods offer (cf. Fredriksen, 2022).

Cultural features regarding nature are reflected in Sámi language and immanent in the meanings of words for activities that resemble *friluftsliv*. We therefore investigate two Northern Sámi words resembling *friluftsliv*, namely *meahcástallan* and *olggostallan*, which are both generic and partly overlapping terms and slightly differentiating conceptualisations referring to useful activities. While *meahcástallan* primarily refers to activities such as harvesting, gathering, fishing and hunting, *olggostallan* is more about outdoor activity and sometimes combined with work, such as collecting wood for fuel, making handicrafts, and so forth. Hence, the focus is on doing something useful whenever one is in nature; it thus stands in stark contrast to the recreational Norwegian *friluftsliv*. In other words, the concept of *friluftsliv* does not cover very well Sámi activities in nature. There is no Sámi equivalent of *friluftsliv* because the Norwegian term today primarily refers to activity with a focus on recreation, immediate experience and aesthetics (Faarlund et al., 2007). Let us elaborate by analysing the Sámi concepts.

The Northern Sámi concept of *olggostallan* is based on the word *olggos*, which means outside and literally refers to relaxing or doing activities outdoors. Regarding activities in nature, *meahcástallan* is a more useful and commonly used word. *Meahcci* refers to the 'extended homeland'; that is, an outdoor area where one is out of sight from where one lives and where 'Sámi industries' can be conducted. This differs from 'wilderness', which is referred to by sojourners and settlers as areas out of 'civilised control' or residential sight. Although out of sight from the house or the farm, *meahcci* is not necessarily remote; rather, it refers to an area that is already known and where people find what they need. It is nature available for useful

activities, such as harvesting, berry picking, gathering, fishing, hunting, collecting wood (for fire), collecting drinking water, etc., whether that is on mountains or in forests, swamps, lakes, etc. In some respect, the relationship with *meahcci* is of a personal kind, linked to an understanding and interpretation of life that has spiritual and religious roots (Johnsen, 2022).

In other words, *meahcci* is ‘where we live’ or ‘where we get (what we need for) life’. The word shares its etymological origin with the word for ‘mother’ (Fredriksen, 2022); thus, it associates life-giving traits. To function in *meahcci* requires personal experience, knowledge and skills (Fredriksen, 2022) through a merger of practical and existential elements. This merger is learned through family socialisation, referred to as *árbemáhttu*—which is literally ‘inherited skills’. In sum, *meahcástallan* refers to traditional and purposeful activity conducted in nature. Thus, in Sámi language and culture, nature is as much a ‘culture landscape’ (meaning partly treated—or treatable—by humans, but to lesser degree than a field for harvesting) as it is a ‘wilderness’ (Jørgensen, 2016). Hence, the Northern Sámi word *meahcástallan* is a verbal noun of the verb *meahcástallat* that refers to something an active agent does. The ending variants ‘-stit’ and ‘-allat’ are both active (productive) forms of the modern Northern Sámi language.<sup>3</sup> The same applies to the compound variant ‘-stallat’. In practical terms, this leads to the following versions. *Meahcástit* is the most common word for hunting, a de-nominalised verb created by ‘meahcci’ plus the ending ‘-stit’.

Usually, the frequentative ending ‘-allat’—for example when applied in the full word *meahcástallat*—indicates that this activity is conducted repeatedly or regularly. The focus on regularity that is immanent in the concept of *meahcástallan* distinguishes the Sámi term from the Norwegian concept of *friluftsliv*, which associates an exemption from everyday life. However, in line with *friluftsliv*, *meahcástallan* consists of different specific activities. Traditionally, it is a contradiction when applying the term *meahcástallan* to describe recreational activities but today, with most Sámi living modern and relatively urbanised lives,

their outdoor activities have turned into being leisure-time orientated. Thus, when *meahcástallat* includes a reference to conducting activities traditionally associated with *meahcci* (such as fishing, gathering and hunting), the term *meahccástallan* has evolved into a salutation or a ‘phrase of honour’ among modern Sámi because it associates a relationship with traditional Indigenous culture.

Another point regarding Sámi languages concerning nature and outdoor life is that they comprise many and specific words for nature elements that are always intertwined with information concerning the use of nature. In the Northern Sámi language, over 300 words for snow often refer to conditions for conducting traditional Sámi industry, such as hunting and reindeer husbandry. Each specific word for snow comprises several layers of information, for example regarding possibilities for reindeer to graze or to move. Regarding grazing, each word includes information about how accessible food is under the snow (reindeer prefer to eat lichen) and describes attributes of the snow (light, hard, packed, icy, etc.) and ‘snow scientific’ attributes (such as the shape of the snow crystals). Opportunities for the reindeer to move on the snow depend on similar sets of information. For example, the word *seañáš* refers to dry, soft snow that does not carry but makes it easy for reindeer to graze (Eira, 2012).

Snow is one major example that places the concepts of *olggostallan* and *meahcástallan* into a wider context of how the Sami language can teach us about human–environment relations and ways of life. Another example that can probably be more easily related to *friluftsliv* (because it refers to an outdoor activity also common among Norwegians) is how there are unique words for different kinds of fishing, and even different kinds of net fishing. *Sáimmastit* refers to fishing with a net in a lake under normal and bare summer conditions. *Juonastit* is to fish with a net under the ice during wintertime. *Golgadit* refers to fishing with a net from a boat while following the stream down a river (*drivgarn* in Norwegian). The latter is a typical example of a very specific phrase only being meaningful in the context by which nature makes

it possible, and tradition and culture have made it a custom to conduct this specific activity. The river (or a part of the river) is a specific *meahcci*, so to speak. These Sámi words therefore differ in various respects from their Norwegian equivalents.

The point is that the Sámi words for natural phenomena and outdoor activities, compared with words in the Norwegian language (and English, for that matter), apparently comprise much latent information. The specific or detailed information is only apparently latent because an active user of the terms understands the intrinsic information and applies it in their conductance of the specific domain to which the term belongs (i.e. reindeer herding or fishing). Moreover, the detailed information that is intrinsic in a specific Sámi word would need several adjectives to provide the same information in Norwegian or English. Why is Sámi knowledge about nature and Sámi languages' specific and precise terms about natural phenomena and outdoor activities apparently overlooked in Norwegian *friluftsliv*? While it is not our contention to teach the language rules here, we discuss potential answers and propose some explanations in the next section.

### **Sámi meanings of outdoor life in the Norwegian context**

To analyse reasons for and implications of an asymmetric relationships between *friluftsliv* and the Sámi equivalents, we begin by looking into Norwegian nation-building and the historical assimilation of the Sámi population before we move on to the current situation with a focus on Finnmark. Finnmark is the northernmost county of Norway and historically cohabited by Sámi, Norwegians and Kvens. Kvens (in Northern Sámi language: *kveanat*) are the successors of peasants and fishermen who migrated from today's Finland and Sweden during the 18th and 19th centuries (Olsen, 2021; Ryymin, 2001). Thus, Finnmark comprises several cultures that have influenced each other for centuries and is the county with highest density of Sámi

population. To specify, we focus on the Northern Sámi and Norwegian cultures, a relationship that leads to tensions and nuances and also to shared interests.

The establishment and development of *friluftsliv* as a concept must be understood in terms of Norwegian identity and cultural legacy. The term was coined in the middle of the 19th century during the nation-building period of Norway. The Norwegian *friluftsliv* evolved from farmers' instrumental use of nature into a more national romantic view on nature (Slagstad, 2008). Slagstad (2008) demonstrated this point by sketching how a massive mountain in the inland centre of Norway, surrounded by farms and farmers, was named after creatures from Norse mythology and thereby given cultural meaning. By naming the massive mountain Jotunheimen, which refers to the home of the Giants (beings of Norse mythology),<sup>4</sup> the young Norwegian nation appeared ancient through a metahistorical anchoring resembling the myth of Rome's founding. An educated bourgeois population and a folk educational elite went together in the cultural construction of the mountaineering individual as the Indigenous Norwegian. Although this way of using the mountain stemmed from British aristocracy, it subsequently—by making the mountain accessible to the public—became part of the Norwegian national identity (Slagstad, 2008, pp. 74–75).

This national romantic approach includes an aesthetic view on and recreational use of nature, where the power and normative view of nature was transformed to an urban elite, representing the roots of today's view as addressed by state authorities and *friluftsliv* organisations (Meld. St. 18, 2015–2016; Norwegian Association for Outdoor Organizations, n.d.). In retrospect, we can speculate whether the detailed and specific language about nature and outdoor life of the Sámi languages would work against the goal proclaimed by the Norwegian nation state and major *friluftsliv* organisations, namely, to lower the threshold for participation in *friluftsliv*. Although it is impossible to evaluate whether Sámi knowledge was



omitted in the development of the key symbol of Norwegian-ness called *friluftsliv*, the history makes it appropriate to speculate about imperialist motives being part of the reason.

Following Go's (2013) suggestion to 'go beyond economic determinism and unearth various types of discourses, epistemes, cultural schemas, representations and ideologies' (p. 6), we turn to the Norwegian state's mission to disseminate the nation's tradition and culture among its population. In addition to family upbringing (still standing strong in Sámi contexts), the main instrument for a state to conduct such cultural dissemination is through the education system. Historical research has revealed how the Sámi people and culture were literally 'written out of the history' by simply not being mentioned in history books during the 19th century, which aimed to turn Sámi individuals into Norwegians as part of the rise of the new nation state (Pedersen, 2021, p. 137). When the Sámi people were denominated as being a 'nature people', it was not done from a romantic viewpoint but rather in terms of them being dirty and lazy savages (Andresen et al., 2021; Lidström, 2019). Moreover, recent research has revealed how Sámi issues in general are still overlooked or treated very superficially in Norwegian school curricula and textbooks (e.g. Olsen, 2019).

Overall, the aesthetic, romantic and relaxing use of nature as part of the narrative formed to strengthen the consciousness of Norway as a (new) nation makes *friluftsliv* an obvious topic in Norwegian school curricula. However, the Norwegian curriculum indeed holds that knowledge about Sámi should be part of the education (Udir, 2020). Investigating Sámi activities in physical education in Norwegian schools, Engstad (2020) found the concept of *friluftsliv* inappropriate for describing Sámi outdoor activities. There is a discrepancy between the formulations in the curriculum and the experiences of the pupils and their families; thus, teachers reflect upon how Sámi language does not originally include the term *friluftsliv* and how the Norwegian school curriculum has an insufficient vocabulary to cover Sámi outdoor activities. Given that Sámi people have a purposeful attitude towards nature, (unsurprisingly)

the terms *olggostallan* and *meahcástallan* came up as potential phrases to be introduced to teach Sámi outdoor life, or simply use terms like ‘touring in nature’ or ‘staying in nature’ would be better than *friluftsliv* (see also Jørgensen, 2016).

The use of terms referring to a specific activity (hunting grouse, fishing, picking cloudberries, etc.) makes an interesting transition to and interrelation between Indigenous and Norwegian rural use of nature. As Pedersen (1999) showed, descriptive phrases regarding useful nature activities dominated the way local rural inhabitants talked about their relationship with nature. Approximately three decades ago, the term *friluftsliv* was slowly introduced in Finnmark, where Sámi and Norwegian cultures have been and are integrated with each other; thus, it is difficult to say where to draw the line between cultures in local multi-ethnic communities due to other geo-political dimensions, namely centre–periphery, rural–urban and north–south. These dimensions reinforce each other because the local communities in Sápmi often have a ‘common enemy’ (the nation state’s political power in the capital city in the south). Rural Norway in general and north Norway in particular, with many Sámi inhabitants and mixed local communities, often differ from the state authorities in the urban south. The inhabitants of Finnmark have historically perceived a top-down approach from politicians and organisations in Oslo, the capital city of Norway, for example, when it comes to the administration of nature (Pedersen, 1999).

This is the case when it comes to the use of motorised vehicles in a discussion about *friluftsliv*. On many occasions, the integration of technology is non-problematic because Sámi use of nature is purposeful. It is a logical continuation of technological development to exploit any available instrument. A common argument is that preventing a Sámi reindeer herder from using a snowmobile equals denying a farmer the use of their tractor, and the use of motor vehicles for conducting reindeer husbandry is not considered a problem. However, useless driving is referred to as idling (*joavdelastin* in Northern Sámi, or simply the Norwegian phrase

for ‘motorised *friluftsliv*’ to distinguish it from useful and productive concepts such as *olggostallan* or *meahcástallan*). Motor vehicles most often become problematic when used recreationally.

Both the Norwegian government (Meld St. 18, 2015-2016) and the umbrella organisation for *friluftsliv* organisations (Norsk Friluftsliv/Norgga Olgunastinsearvi, the Norwegian Association for Outdoor Organizations, n.d.), exclude motor technology from their definitions of *friluftsliv*. The ministry explicates that motorised traffic is *not* covered by the conceptualisation of *friluftsliv* as per the state’s *friluftsliv* policy (Meld. St. 18, 2015–2016, p. 10). Likewise, the Norwegian Association for Outdoor Organizations underscores that motorised traffic in nature needs strict regulations and should be limited only to purposeful commercial driving (Norwegian Association for Outdoor Organizations, n.d.). We therefore speculate about Norway’s official understanding of Sámi nature culture (which is perhaps best covered by *meahcci*). While there is little doubt that the Norwegian state, represented by several ministries (NOU, 1978, 1984, 2001), has aimed to integrate Sámi rights and customs for nature use, it has simultaneously a tendency towards defining the nature of Finnmark as wilderness suited for *friluftsliv* and tourism.

An individual fishing on a lake for adding to the family’s food surplus cannot use a motor vehicle to bring home their catch, while a company can bring tourists to the same lake for the same activity (fishing) because it is a registered commercial actor that fulfils the criteria for the exemption of the strict regulations. Another related issue is when the state protects nature areas for *friluftsliv*, and locals feel that the nature is stolen from them and given to the tourists. If the locals protest, they may be considered as an unruly Sámi public. It is a paradox that the harsh policy towards Sámi continues, while the state simultaneously has had an ongoing commission for truth and reconciliation (Stortinget, 2023). One interpretation of these examples is that the state politicians do not know or do not care about the cultural basis of *meahcástallan*.

To many *friluftsliv* enthusiasts, motorised traffic is the typical symbol employed to draw the definition line; that is, motors in nature are what *friluftsliv* is *not*.<sup>5</sup> In that respect, the umbrella association Norsk Friluftsliv/Norgga Olgunastinsearvi, the Norwegian Association for Outdoor Organizations, covering 18 different *friluftsliv* organisations and accumulating close to a million members (the Norwegian population of approximately 5.5 million), offers a power base in the unifying process of the understanding of *friluftsliv*. One interpretation is that *friluftsliv* is the non-motorised and recreational use of nature, while the Sámi use of nature is purposeful and may include motorisation. However, this conclusion is indeed too simplistic, due to several intertwined reasons. The temporary conclusion disguises ethnic nuances; the point is that Norwegians as well as Sámis use snowmobiles and ATVs.<sup>6</sup> There are organisations advocating snowmobiling as *friluftsliv* (Snøscooter er også friluftsliv, n.d.), while the above mentioned *friluftsliv* organisations are the main opponents (post 25th March 2022), and the distance between the authorities and the people is a main argument (post 24th January 2022). Moreover, both Sámi and Norwegians use motor vehicles in nature for both instrumental and recreational purposes. This complexity reflects the cultural reality in many areas in Sápmi.

Our own experiences confirm Breivik's (1978) idea of a distinction of traditions, which can create culture meetings. We specifically refer to the third author's reflections on being a church official in Sápmi. When many offices were poorly staffed during August and September, it could generate some frustration. It took some years to realise that for some people—especially (but not exclusively) locals with Sámi heritage—the harvesting generated family income. The same activity, which for a city boy was fun (*friluftsliv*), was for others a necessity (Skille, 2022). This unawareness of local Sámi customs functioned as passive assimilation and silent discrimination. Combining the Sápmi experience with the first author's experience as an academic in the south of Norway (for example enjoying Jotunheimen), it feels legitimate to speculate about whether to use the word *friluftsliv* would help justify the absence of work and

might have propelled the integration of it in inherited Sámi culture and activity and also in Sámi speaking contexts.

## Conclusion

In this paper, we have presented Sámi words for outdoor life in comparison with the Norwegian and Scandinavian term *friluftsliv*. Through an approach combining post-colonial theory and Indigenous methodology, we contribute to an understanding of the Sámi as an Indigenous people with high precision in terms of outdoor life, which should create awareness when teaching, researching, engaging in politics, talking and writing about *friluftsliv*. In this article, we have outlined the meanings of the concepts *olgunastin*, *meahcástallan* and *olggostallan*, argued that they express a Sámi understanding and interpretation of life through the use of nature and reveal a native culture that is benevolent and adjusted for livelihoods in their environment—that is, with outcomes from *meahcci*. Second, we have discussed selected issues or cases in which the Sámi and Norwegian terms can be interpreted differently and also shown how some parts of the Norwegian *friluftsliv*—the rural version focusing on purposeful gathering activities—is closer to the Sámi way of nature life (than are the city’s more exclusive and recreational *friluftsliv*).

Since the beginning of the article claimed post-colonial and Indigenous methodological hopes, we believe this will add a contribution to the reflection and discussion of the concept of *friluftsliv*. For the Norwegian state’s decision-makers and public sector practitioners, it is important to add the perspectives of the Indigenous people of Norway and offer them the right to be their own decision-makers. To the international literature and its associates, we have added nuances to a suspected mainstream understanding of *friluftsliv* as a coherent or united phenomenon. While this paper hopefully increases awareness and acknowledgement of Norway’s (and Sweden, Finland and Russia’s) Indigenous people and outdoor life cultures,

there are obviously more variations of Sámi culture and language details than we have covered here. Social divisions and societal change include younger Sámis adhering to a modern lifestyle with fixed office hours and leisure time. Thus, individuals can—and do—choose to conduct the Norwegian *friluftsliv* and/or activities stemming from Sámi traditions. In that respect, future research should consider hierarchies within the Sámi people regarding impacts on how we understand outdoor life (in Sámi, Norwegian and mixed contexts). As a final self-critical note, the very fact that we—due to our author team’s competence—have used and presented only Northern Sámi calls for research into other Sámi languages’ concepts for outdoor life.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> It should be mentioned that Sámis participated in polar expeditions, due to their skills in skiing and dog sledding (Karlsen, 2016). Nevertheless, the Sámi people’s role in the history of *friluftsliv* is toned down.

<sup>2</sup> *Olggonastin* is formed in parallel to the Finnish word *ulkoilla* and is probably chosen because it simply refers to being outside (unlike the later Sámi words we present, which have intentional and inherent meanings connected to them).

<sup>3</sup> Verbal nouns, or words in which the verb is intact while the term is syntactically treated as a noun, are possible and common. As an agglutinative language, Sámi can glue endings to the root word to express different nuances through one basic word. Hence, from the same word root, several specific meanings can be created; for example, some approximately resemble *friluftsliv*: *olggonastit* ≈ conduct *friluftsliv* activity (verb) and *olgunastindoaima* or *olgunastineallin* ≈ *friluftsliv* activity (noun). Similarly, based on the word root *meahcci*: *meahcástit* ≈ be able to manage (at *meahcci*), *meahcástallan* ≈ industry conducted (at *meahcci*), *meahccevázzi* ≈ a person wandering or working (at *meahcci*), and *meahccegeavaheaddji* ≈ a user of the area/*meahcci*. A general explanation as to why Sámi language is more detailed, compared with Norwegian, is their belonging to broader patterns of languages, such as through groups and families. The Sámi languages belong to the Fenno-Ugric (or Uralic) language family, which is so-called agglutinating with an infinite number of derivative endings.

<sup>4</sup> In Norwegian, the giant creature is *jotne*; Jotunheimen literally translates to ‘the home of the *jotne*’. The giants in Norse mythology are sometimes portrayed as the gods’ enemies and at other times as the gods’ lovers. Thus, the giants could (in some respect) be equal to gods and have a high mythic standing.

<sup>5</sup> The Act on Motor Traffic in Wilderness and Water Courses is under constant negotiation with regard to several dimensions, such as Sámi industry versus recreational interests and local and peripheric (northern) democracy versus state authorities.

<sup>6</sup> In Norway, we do not measure ethnicity in household surveys (or others); thus, it is impossible to provide numbers regarding Sámi or Norwegian motor users in nature.

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