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### Regulating Multilingualism in the North Calotte: The Case of Kven, Meänkieli and Sámi Languages

Sari Pietikäinen<sup>a</sup>, Leena Huss<sup>b</sup>, Sirkka Laihiala-Kankainen<sup>a</sup>, Ulla Aikio-Puoskari<sup>c</sup> & Pia Lane<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Languages, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

<sup>b</sup> University of Uppsala, Uppsala, Sweden

<sup>c</sup> University of Oulu, Oulu, Finland

<sup>d</sup> University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

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# Regulating Multilingualism in the North Calotte: The Case of Kven, Meänkieli and Sámi Languages

SARI PIETIKÄINEN\*, LEENA HUSS<sup>†</sup>,  
SIRKKA LAIHIALA-KANKAINEN\*,  
ULLA AIKIO-PUOSKARI<sup>‡</sup> & PIA LANE<sup>§</sup>

\*Department of Languages, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland; <sup>†</sup>University of Uppsala, Uppsala, Sweden; <sup>‡</sup>University of Oulu, Oulu, Finland & <sup>§</sup>University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

**ABSTRACT** *This article examines the dynamics of language relations by investigating the historical, political and ideological processes at play in the minoritization and revitalization of Kven, Meänkieli and Sámi languages in the North Calotte region. We focus particularly on language political and legal instruments developed and used to alter and regulate language relations in this area, and aim at providing a state-of-the-art overview of this quickly changing landscape.*

*When looking at the minoritized languages in this region, we can see that developments in their status are linked to the creation of modernist nation states and their borders. More recent processes are related to new global cooperation and international policy efforts, resulting in the present synchronic variation. When reflecting on the considerable changes in both international and national language policies all the way from the beginning of the post-WWII period to the strengthening of pluralism in the 1970s to today, we can see that at least some of the minority languages of the North find themselves in a considerably better societal situation than ever before. At the same time, however, multilingual practices in the form of modern communication technologies, world-wide youth culture, international migration and tourism, intertwined with language revitalization efforts, make the terrain even more complex and varied.*

**KEY WORDS:** Language relations, Minorities, Minority policies, Ethnic revitalization, Finns, Sámi, Kvens, Cultural pluralism

The concept of a minority language, as Cronin (1995) argues, is an expression of a relation, not an essence, and with respect to relationships between languages, it sees them as dynamic rather than static or given. This article<sup>1</sup> examines the dynamics of language relations by investigating historical, political and ideological processes at play in the minoritization and revitalization of Kven, Meänkieli and Sámi languages in the North Calotte region. While focusing on these macro-level dynamics and instruments in this article, we fully recognize the vital importance of the micro-level choices and

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*Correspondence Address:* Sari Pietikäinen, Department of Languages, University of Jyväskylä, pl 35, Fin-40014, Finland. E-mail: sari.pietikainen@jyu.fi

decisions made by individual language users. However, the micro-level language usage and choices are not isolated from macro-level processes, as they afford and regulate everyday language use. The examination of the diachronic developments of language relations and their situational variation combined with an investigation of regulative instruments highlights the multiple layers and actors involved in the Northern minority language situation. These dynamics are of particular importance, given the recent developments towards creating more binding legal instruments to protect indigenous and minority languages in the North Calotte region. At the same time, however – and despite the numerous language revitalization activities – these languages are endangered, in terms of the number of speakers, variety of domains of language use and skills in using them.<sup>2</sup>

Due to its geo-political history and multilingual character, the North Calotte is an interesting region in which to examine how language relations are established and managed. The region spans the northernmost parts of four states: Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. This region, known also as *Lappland*, *Finnmark*, *Sámiland*, *Sápmi* and *Lapponia*, might at first glance seem remote and rural from the point of view of Southern centres, but it is, in fact, an important and active contact zone of different languages and ways of speaking (cf. Pratt, 1987) within which disparate cultures and languages encounter, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of power. The area is a multilayered and multilingual space, with continuously changing economic, social and sociolinguistic profiles (cf. Pietikäinen, 2010).

The minority and indigenous languages in this area have undergone, and continue to undergo, major changes as to their societal positions, as well as to their role and value in everyday life. Historical, social, political and economic processes have altered the function and conditions, as well as the perception of value, of the minority and indigenous languages of the area. These include the 10 Sámi languages spoken in the region, Meänkieli in Swedish Torneadalen and the Kven language in Northern Norway. Moreover, new opportunities and challenges brought by globalization in the forms of, for example, increased international cooperation, new kinds of economic and cultural commodification of regional and local resources, and increased mobility of people, products and languages, have all resulted in new forms of multilingualism and hierarchies between the languages present in the North Calotte.

As in many other multilingual and peripheral regions influenced by the ‘modernization’ of the nation state (Busch, 2003; Heller, 2007; Jaffe, 2007), all minority and indigenous languages in the North Calotte are presently endangered, and thus subject to various kinds of language maintenance, revitalization and documentation activities. One central tool – and a particular focus in this article – for the protection and further development of minority and indigenous languages is legal recognition and support, with the hope of pressuring the fostering state to invest in and to give voice to these languages and their speakers. Formal instruments, such as laws, recommendations, and declarations afford individual languages particular positions and resources – legal recognition and language rights, financial aid, enhanced

status in society – varying accordingly between states, regions, places and time. At the same time, these legal and political instruments and their applications are sites for language ideological debates: they construct a particular view of the nation and its language relations, convey an idea of the value and function of particular languages, and position them in a hierarchical order (Blommaert, 1999).

This article is an attempt to examine these wider historical, ideological and political processes affecting multilingualism in this area through an analysis of local conditions and consequences related to the minoritization and revitalization of minority and indigenous languages in the North Calotte. Our aim is to offer a review of national and international language policy efforts and provide a state-of-the-art overview of this quickly changing topic. Our goal here is twofold: we will first compare four national frameworks concerning Kven, Meänkieli and the Sámi languages in the North Calotte area. We will then move on to examine how these local and national conditions are linked to the overarching supranational legal and political frameworks concerning the above-mentioned languages. In what follows we will first discuss the macro-level processes related to both minoritization and revitalization of minority and indigenous languages in the North Calotte. After this, we will focus on legal and political frameworks adopted to regulate and fix some of the language relations in the area. In our conclusion, we discuss how the existing legal and political frameworks facilitate or hinder the possibilities of using and developing these languages.

### **Multilayered multilingualism in the North Calotte**

The North Calotte has a long tradition of being a multilingual region, not only because of the languages of the people inhabiting the area, but also because of trade, cultural practices and family ties across language borders (Lehtola, 2000, 2002; Lindgren, 2000). Historically, due to the geo-political position and abundance of natural resources, the North Calotte area has been an area of political and legal struggles manifested, for example, in changing national borders, divided communities and disrupted cultural practices. More recently, the area has witnessed global flows of tourism, technology and small-scale labour-related immigration, such as mushroom and berry pickers from Thailand, fish-factory workers from Russia, or tourist guides from Japan and Spain.

This multilingual region comes with different layers of multilingualism. To begin with, the region is part of the transnational Sámiland (*Sápmi*) in which nine indigenous Sámi languages are used by speakers across the borders of four states. The region also features two minority languages: Kven in northern Norway, formerly referred to as Finnish or Finnish dialect, and Meänkieli, formerly called ‘Torne Valley Finnish’ or Finnish dialect, spoken around the river Tornio/Torne älv on the northernmost part of the Swedish–Finnish border. Secondly, the national layer adds up to multilingualism in The North Calotte. The majority languages of the four states, i.e. Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish and Russian, are very much present in the region; for

example, in the context of administration, education, media, business and everyday life. In many parts of the region, national majority languages are almost the sole languages used. Thirdly, as the North is a popular destination for international tourism, several other languages – English, Russian, French, German, Italian, Japanese – are regularly used at least in some parts of the area in the context of tourist activities and services.

In all situations of language contact and language change, and with language users with multilingual linguistic repertoires, counting languages and their speakers proposes numerous difficulties and complexities, deeply rooted in historical, political and ideological frameworks as well as counting practices. As a result, it is also difficult to gain exact numbers of the speakers of minority and indigenous languages in the North Calotte. Furthermore, there is a lack of recent sociolinguistic research on numbers and competences of minority-language speakers and, in addition, the people themselves see their languages and competences differently and report on them in various ways. Some of these complexities and the situational nature of seemingly objective numbers related to languages and speakers are illustrated in existing figures given to languages and their speakers in the North Calotte. Approximately half of the Sami people (c. 70,000–100,000) speak one or several of the nine Sami languages (Aikio-Puoskari & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2007), and none of those speaking Sámi language are monolingual. As related to more specific numbers of Sámi languages, for example, the *Saami Encyclopaedia* (2004) gives the following numbers: 30,000 speakers for Northern Sámi and an estimated 350 for Inari Sámi and 300 for Skolt Sámi. Furthermore, according to the Encyclopaedia, there are over 1800 Sámi people in Russia (although not necessarily speakers), out of whom about 1600 live in the Kola Peninsula (Tishkov, 2004: 23). The estimations given to numbers of speakers of Meänkieli and Kven vary considerably as well. For example, according to the Minority Committee Reports, the estimated number of Meänkieli speakers is 50,000 (SOU, 2008: 192, 193). According to the national Kven association in Norway, the estimated number of Kven speakers is 5000–7000 (Huss & Lindgren, 2005: 270).

#### **Regimenting indigenous and minority languages in the North**

The perceived value and role of Meänkieli, Kven and Sámi languages have changed as a result of political and social developments over time and continue to do so. From a historical perspective, the indigenous and minority languages of the North Calotte have been destabilized, particularly due to the creation of nation states, with the wars and alliances between these states resulting in marginalization and endangerment.

From the point of view of majority communities, the North Calotte area was a politically undefined region until the early nineteenth century. The borders between Norway and Sweden, and Norway and Russia, were not laid down until 1751 and 1826, respectively. The common history of Sweden and Finland ended in 1809 when a new Russo-Swedish border was drawn between Sweden and the Grand Duchy of Finland, a part of the Russian Empire.

At this point in time, the north-eastern parishes of Swedish Lapland became part of the autonomous Grand Duchy and ‘Finland got a Lapland of its own’ (Lähteenmäki & Pihlaja, 2005: 74). For indigenous and minority people living in the North Calotte area, the consequences of these redefinitions were drastic, as the new borders did not follow the settled, long-existing divisions of language communities or local livelihoods. Closing the boundaries between Norway, Sweden and the Grand Duchy of Finland in 1852 and 1889 was followed by a migration of the nomadic reindeer herders and a breakdown of traditional Sámi communities (Aikio-Puoskari, 2002: 95). As a result, the speakers of these languages found themselves in a changed, even more minoritized and marginalized position.

An illustrative example of the consequences of the redrawing of national borders to minority-language speakers is given by Meänkieli. It is a language which can be seen linguistically close to the Finnish language and is, more or less, understandable to speakers of standard Finnish. Meänkieli is spoken in a relatively small region, on both sides of the river Tornio. Until 1808 the whole region belonged to Sweden, after that the river marks the border between Sweden and the Grand Duchy of Finland (1809–1917) and later between Sweden and the independent state of Finland (since 1917). On the Swedish side of the border, Meänkieli was long considered a ‘foreign language’, a devalued and stigmatized resource (Huss, 1999: 96). Following a decade of work on upscaling the value and function of Meänkieli and shifting its ideological framing, the language’s position changed: in 2000, Sweden ratified two Council of Europe conventions (see below) and Meänkieli gained the status of a national minority language in Sweden. A similar process in Norway led in 2005 to the recognition of Kven as a language in its own right. As for the Meänkieli language, it is also spoken on the Finnish side of the border, where it is commonly regarded as a northern Finnish dialect, not a language in its own right. Hence, it does not have any particular minority-language status there. At present, this language and its speakers have very different positions and status in the two neighbouring countries.

Another example of the consequences of territorial division in destabilizing language relations is the history of the Skolt Sámi people. Several redrawing of the national borders between Finland, Russia/the Soviet Union and Norway have forced this community to move and to be re-rooted several times (see e.g. Aikio-Puoskari, 2002; Linkola & Linkola, 2005). The most western Skolt Sámi became Norwegian citizens as early as in the 1820s. In the period from 1917 to the 1940s, the majority of the Skolt Sámi population became Finnish citizens, while the rest have been citizens of Russia, later the Soviet Union, and nowadays the Russian Federation (Porsanger, 2004: 107).

The major force in play in destabilizing and marginalization of indigenous and minority languages in Nordic countries has been the modernist ideology of the homogeneous nation state (cf. Lindgren, 1999; Jaffe, 2007; Pietikäinen, 2008; Aikio-Puoskari, 2009).

Consequently, from the nineteenth century onwards, assimilation policies were the leading way of dealing with minority issues in the North. The assimilation policy was particularly severe in Norway, where the official

political goal in 1840–1940 was to Norwegianize the minorities of the North (Eriksen & Niemi, 1981). From the point of view of the nationalist ideology, the Kvens – people of Finnish origin, settled along the coast, in the fjords and the river valleys in the inland of Northern Norway – were particularly seen as potential agents of Russian aggression, coming largely from the then Grand Duchy of Finland (Ryymin, 2005: 60). The Sámi, whose herds had scant regard for state borders, were also seen as problematic by authorities of nation states and difficult to ‘manage’ according to the logics of nation states.

In the Kola Peninsula, Sámi have had to adjust to changing conditions, which has meant, among other things, the arrival of other nomadic groups, the Komi and the Nenets, in the same area at the end of the nineteenth century, as well as the political and economic changes during the Soviet era (see, e.g. Ruotsala, 2005). Early language policies of the Soviet regime were based on the assumption that the new rule would be best understood and accepted by various national and minority groups if it functioned in their own languages (Pavlenko, 2008: 6). Therefore, instead of trying to russify ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples in the North, the goal of the policy known as *korenizatsiia* (nativization or indigenization) was to bring them to a higher level of development in both economy and culture. For the Sámi, the period of the New Economic Policy, from the beginning of the 1920s to the early 1930s, can be characterized as a time of cultural development and self-determination. It was not until the end of the 1930s, when the strengthening totalitarian system began to work, that the attitude towards national and ethnic minorities in the USSR totally changed. The Sámi living in the Kola Peninsula were accused of anti-Soviet actions and of fraternizing with Finnish people and many of them were punished in various ways or executed (see, e.g. Stepanenko, 2002).

In short, one of the most drastic changes to the region’s sociolinguistic situation in the three Nordic countries was brought about by the processes of modernization, most notably manifested in the construction of homogeneous nation states. As elsewhere, in the North Calotte the consequences of these modernization processes to minority and indigenous communities and their languages were also complex, conflicting and, to an extent, paradoxical (Jaffe, 2007; Pietikäinen, 2008; Aikio-Puoskari, 2009; Kelly-Holmes et al., 2009). The most blatant consequence was the marginalization, stigmatization and endangerment of indigenous and minority languages. In the Kola Peninsula, radical changes in the sociolinguistic situation were followed by ‘the great turn’ in national and language policy of the new Soviet Regime. According to Pavlenko (2008: 7), Soviet russification was more pervasive than tsarist russification before the Revolution, because it was not only people who were russified but also languages, their lexicons, grammars, and orthographies (see, e.g., Laihiala-Kankainen & Potinkara, 2009).

### **Managing language choices and diversity in the North**

Multilingual repertoires have been the norm for people living in the North Calotte area: until the Second World War, indigenous and minority languages

were regularly learned as a mother tongue and widely used as a primary means of daily interaction in the communities. At the same time, however, many people knew at least fragments of national and other neighbouring minority or majority languages, depending on where they lived and how they earned their living (cf. Lehtola, 2000; Lindgren, 2000). This kind of unregulated, everyday functional multilingualism was interrupted by modernist projects of building new nation states in Nordic countries. Also in the USSR, multilingualism was suppressed as the socialist system became established (cf. Kryashkov, 2004).

Construction of homogeneous, linguistically unified states and citizenship resulted in assimilation policies in the North Calotte area, where majority languages were favoured and strengthened at the cost of minority and indigenous languages. Majority languages were used in all new official domains which were introduced when modernization reached the far North (cf. Pietikäinen & Dufva, 2006; Lindgren & Huss, in press). In schooling, media and administration, majority languages were dominant and were often the only languages allowed to be used. The consequences for minority and indigenous language speakers were drastic: in a new situation with changing economic and cultural structures, the need to know the majority language became urgent, while the competence in minority languages seemed to carry less value. A 'modern', linguistically and culturally homogenous state became the ideal resulting in the devaluation of minority languages such as Sámi, Meänkieli and Kven. Furthermore, and in particular among Norwegians and Swedes, ideas of the primitiveness of Finnish and Sámi speakers strengthened the stigmatization of the northern minorities during the early decades of the twentieth century (see Lundborg & Linders, 1926; Broberg, 1995).

In this new regime, minority and indigenous languages started to be perceived as losing their instrumental and symbolic value. As majority languages were both official languages and typically the only languages used in education and administration, the knowledge of them among the minorities gradually became more common and ultimately, the minority languages, to a great extent, either disappeared from official life or never entered the new domains of state, even when they remained as the languages used in the private domains of homes and interpersonal communication. Consequently, a change in people's linguistic repertoire began.

Furthermore, the homogeneous language ideology reinforced active measures to secure and strengthen majority-only language practices in the area. The methods used for 'implanting' the majority language were manifold. In Norway, for example, in addition to a Norwegian-only school education (the only exception being that Sámi could be used as a supporting language in some districts), Norwegian newspapers and books were distributed for free among the minorities of the North (Eriksen & Niemi, 1981). Importantly, the linguistic citizenship was linked to other rights too. One of the most extreme cases of assimilation measures was where a person who did not use Norwegian daily at home was not allowed to buy land, although the law was not always enforced. This particular law was abolished in 1965 (Lane, in press). In Sweden and Finland, similar efforts were also

taken to convert the Sámi and Meänkieli speakers into speakers of the majority language and, thus, to manipulate people's linguistic repertoires explicitly. One example of repressive language policies in Sweden dates back to the late 1800s, when all Finnish books were taken away from the libraries of northern Sweden.

The most powerful tool for assimilation and an instrument for minority-language endangerment was school education. Since the late 1800s, with few exceptions, Sámi in the three Nordic countries and Arctic Finnish (nowadays called Kven in Norway and Meänkieli or Tornedalian Finnish in Sweden) were forbidden in schools and boarding schools. Many Sámi and Kven children received their education removed from their families, living in boarding schools and being punished and ridiculed when speaking their mother tongue (Minde, 2005). From 1850, the official Norwegian goal was to make the local population shift to Norwegian. In 1880, new guidelines for the schools were issued, and the use of Finnish and Saami was forbidden. This remained the official Norwegian policy until 1959, when the ban on the use of Finnish and Sámi in schools was lifted (Lov om folkeskolen 10.4.1959).

In the Swedish Tornedalen, the state started financing the schools in the North from 1888 onwards on the condition that the language of instruction was Swedish only. Before that, some schools had used Finnish as a medium of instruction. Typical of Swedish Tornedalen were the so-called *arbetsstugor* ('work houses') founded to promote welfare in the poor areas in the North. They functioned as boarding schools for the poorest children, providing food and shelter, school instruction and training in useful household work, such as handicrafts for the girls and carpentry for the boys (Klockare, 1982: 31–32). Pekkari (1997: 163) mentions that some of the leading persons in the work house foundation had decided that only Swedish was to be used during both work and leisure time. As children lived in the work houses for long periods of time without contact with their families, the work houses became efficient instruments for linguistic assimilation (Lundemark, 1980).

In Finland, the policy of assimilating the Sámi was not as overt, nor as harsh as in Norway. Nevertheless, it was based on a similar logic. The objective of 'civilizing the primitive Sámi' through assimilation became visible in many conflicts, e.g. when the minister of Inari parish, Tuomo Itkonen, demanded that Sámi children be taught their own language in compulsory schooling in the 1930s and was faced by strong opposition (Itkonen, 1970). The Swedish policy towards the Sámi from the nineteenth century to the first decades of the twentieth century has been called *protective segregationist*, segregating the reindeer-herding Sámi from the rest of the Sámi population and from ethnic Swedes. According to this policy, the reindeer-herding Sámi were 'the real Sámi' whose culture was to be protected, whereas the other Sámi, the majority of the Sámi population, were to be assimilated into the Swedish population (e.g. Svonni, 1997). This division is still visible in the linguistic and political situation of Sámi in Sweden.

In the USSR, the assimilation policy started later, at the end of the 1930s. The first schools in Sámi villages with Russian as the medium of instruction were organized by the Orthodox Church at the end of the nineteenth century

(Bolshakova, 2005: 231; Rantala, 2006). Since the majority of the Sámi people were illiterate, one of the main tasks of the new Soviet regime was to introduce new schools for both children and adults. The first 'reading corner' in Lovozero was founded in 1921, and a year later a school for adults began to work. While there were no schoolbooks in Sámi languages, the language of teaching was Russian, and it was not until the 1930s that the first Sámi primers were published and the Sámi language could be studied in the Pedagogical Institutes in Murmansk and Leningrad. The year 1937, again, was a turning point in the national and language policy of the Soviet regime. As a result of a new ideology based on Soviet patriotism, Sámi, among the other 'small Northern indigenous peoples', were to be russified (see e.g. Vakhtin & Lyarskaya, 2004).

By the 1950s, education in the majority language only had become systematized by the state and reached all children under 16 all over the North Calotte. It was at this time that the language shift from the minority and indigenous languages to majority truly began (cf. e.g. Aikio-Puoskari, 2002). The majority-language-medium school was a cultural shock and trauma to many minority children. In forcing them to speak a majority language, the school also influenced the language skills of the children in another way: as they had to leave their minority-language-speaking home to spend the weekdays, and even longer period of times, in the dormitories, the development of their minority-language skills was disrupted. Thus, the school came to be a two-edged sword; it offered an opportunity for education, but it did so in the majority language only, which resulted in subtractive bilingualism, a suffocation of one's own language (Aikio, 1988). Many Sámi, Kven and Tornedalians who experienced the stigma of these years started to use the majority language with their own children, as it was perceived to be in the best interests of the child (Aikio, 1988; Gutsol & Patsiya, 2000; Lindgren, 2000; Olthuis, 2000; also Haugen, 1953). In all countries in the North Calotte, the post-war generation was educated through the medium of the majority language, and often they were also trained in jobs and professions where only skills in the majority language were needed and valued. For many individuals, this resulted in a total language shift: the Kven, Meänkieli and Sámi languages vanished, or were pushed into the background and stigmatized in their linguistic repertoires.

To reverse these processes and to strengthen the value and position of minority and indigenous languages, a new type of language awareness and loyalty was developed and called upon by the various actors within minority and indigenous communities. Consequently, concurrently with the strong assimilation policies adopted in these regimes in the North Calotte area, the linguistic, cultural and political activism among the minorities grew and developed into today's well-organized and influential actors in minority and indigenous rights. Alongside the prevailing homogeneous language ideology, an idea of linguistic human rights started to develop and to be applied. From the latter ideological perspective, indigenous and minority languages carry and are invested with social, historical and political, as well as personal, values and therefore they need special attention and protection. The deep

concern about endangerment of minority and indigenous languages was one of the driving forces behind mobilizing people to take action and participate in minority and indigenous peoples' movements, associations, etc.

In the case of the Sámi, movements have grown strongly from the sporadic and local attempts into globally connected Sámi organizations and bodies, including Sámi parliaments in Norway, Sweden and Finland, the Sámi council, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in all four North Calotte countries. The first Nordic meeting of the Sámi was held as early as 6 February 1917 in Trondheim, Norway, and that day is now celebrated as the Sámi National Day. The Alta Dispute, i.e. the project to dam the Alta-Kautokeino River in 1979–1981 in Norway, marks a turning point in Sámi activism resulting in, for example, pan-Sámi activism, increased cooperation across national borders and a heightened sense of a redefined 'Sáminess' (cf. Lehtola, 2002; Kulonen et al., 2005; Valkonen, 2009). Indeed, one of the main tasks of various Sámi organizations and movements has been to overcome the previous divisions and borders and to promote Sámi rights and identity through the means of legislation and recognition, as well as language and cultural revitalization.

In comparison to the Nordic countries, the Russian Sámi started to get organized relatively late, during the years of Perestroika. After the Second World War, the Kola Peninsula region was almost totally closed for foreign tourists and the contacts of the Russian Sámi people with the Scandinavian Sámi were established as late as at the end of the 1980s. Since 1992, Russian Sámi participated in the work of the Sámi council. At present, there are two Kola Sámi organizations: both have local branches around the Kola Peninsula and their mission is to watch over the interests of the Sámi at various levels. Nowadays, Sámi organizations actively participate in the work of Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON). The central place of Sámi culture in the Kola Peninsula is the village Lovozero, the site of the most important Sámi institutions, such as the Centre for National Cultures, the Sámi museum and Kola Sámi radio (cf. Laihiala-Kankainen & Potinkara, 2009), which are currently in a precarious position.

For the two minority languages in the North Calotte, Kven and Meänkieli, the renaissance started later than for indigenous languages in the area: for the former Torneodalian Finnish language in the early 1980s, and for Kven towards the end of the 1980s. This coincides with the above-mentioned Sámi organization in Russia. A major ideological shift took place right at the turn of the twenty-first century: as mentioned earlier, the former dialects of Finnish were recognized as languages in their own right: Meänkieli in 2000 in Sweden, and Kven in 2005 in Norway. This shift has led to a virtual explosion of cultural activities and manifestations as well as legal and economic changes. The Tornedalians now have a research and culture institute of their own, *Nordkalottens Kultur- och Forskningscentrum*; several Tornedalian cultural festivals have been held in Stockholm and the award-winning novel *Popular Music from Vittula*, depicting life in Tornedalen and originally written in Swedish in 2000, was in 2002 published in Meänkieli by a large

Swedish publishing house – this was generally seen as a gesture of thanks to the successful novelist and his region.

There are some similar developments with regard to the situation of Kven. The first novel ever written in Kven, *Elämän jatko. Kuosvaaran takana*, was published in 2004 and its second part, *Aittiruto*, in 2008. The film *Det tause folkets stille død* ('The silent death of a mute people'), a documentary on the Kven produced by the Kven, was shown in the Tromsø Film Festival in 2004; a pop/rap-CD has been released; Kven is to some extent used in a Kven monthly newspaper; and several festivals and cultural Kven centres have been established in northern Norway, the most important being the Kven Institute which receives annual support from the Norwegian government.

The historical trajectories and political, economic and social scales have at times downgraded, and at other times uplifted, the values and functions of indigenous and minority languages in the North Calotte. This mobility has altered – and continues to alter – people's linguistic repertoires and the place of Kven, Meänkieli or Sámi languages within it. However, while fully recognizing how important the everyday, individual and personal choice of using a particular language is for any language to survive, we want to emphasize that the legal frameworks (which by necessity are also political and ideological) are powerful instruments in regulating language relations and altering their position, reach and resources. Next, we will turn our attention to such instruments, relevant for languages in The North Calotte.

#### **Fixing language relations in the North: international regulating instruments**

Over the last decades, the unfinished business between states and indigenous and minority-language communities have moved to a new domain of international laws and regulations. Minority issues were long seen as internal questions for the states concerned, but this view has gradually been replaced by a new one: minority issues concern everybody, as they are issues of democracy, and the protection of the rights of minorities is part of the development towards fewer conflicts and to more peace and harmony in Europe<sup>3</sup> and the world at large. In addition, globalization processes in the forms of new political and economic areas and alliances simultaneously both presuppose harmonization in certain aspects, while also opening up new possibilities for different types of actors and activism.

In this new domain, novel language ideologies have also come into play with the previous ones: languages began to be perceived as basic human rights which called for equal treatment for all languages and special attention to endangered languages and their speakers (cf. e.g. Heller & Duchene, 2007). This, in turn, mobilized actions, often legal, to secure, promote and develop minority and indigenous languages. However, all this can happen only with the agreement of the states. Thus various legal frameworks, created and used to fix language relations, are simultaneously sites for language ideological debates, negotiations and innovations between various actors, including states, minority organizations and NGOs and supranational bodies.

One of the consequences of these more recent developments has been that a number of international regulations concerning the political and cultural rights of minorities and indigenous peoples have been created. In many of these, emphasis has been put on cultural rights, including the right to maintain, develop and use the minority language. Examples of such international instruments are: the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976), the ILO Convention No. 169 Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (1989), the United Nations International Convention of the Rights of the Child (1990), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities (1992), and the United Nations Universal Declaration on Indigenous Peoples (2007). However, in this article we focus on three conventions which have proved to be especially significant in the context of the North Calotte minorities, namely the *European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages*, the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* and the United Nations *International Convention of the Rights of the Child*.

The *European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages* was adopted by the Council of Europe in 1992. Following the ideology of language as a human right, its overarching aim is also to protect and promote minority languages as part of the common European cultural heritage and to make it possible for speakers to use their languages in both private and public life. The important domains where the use of these languages is to be promoted are already familiar from language assimilation and revitalization projects, where the central domains for language planning and prestige also need to be occupied: education, the media, judicial matters, administration, economic, cultural as well as social life, and transfrontier contacts, that is, minority cooperation over national borders (*Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*). However, the power of independent states to decide upon their issues was accommodated: after deciding whether or not to ratify the Charter, the ratifying states may choose which minority languages are to be included (and which are not), as well as what level of support is to be applied. Within the North Calotte area, Norway, Sweden and Finland have ratified the Charter, in 1993, 2000, and 1994, respectively. The Russian Federation signed the Charter in 2001 but has not yet ratified it. This means that the process of adopting the Charter by laws or other nationally binding documents is not completed, and therefore the obligations of the Charter do not apply in Russia.

Furthermore, the Charter has two levels of support and status – the so-called Parts II and III of the Charter – that can be given to particular minority languages. Among the minoritized languages of the North, Sámi is included in all these ratifications under Part III, which implies the strongest support within the Charter. In Sweden, Meänkieli is also included in Part III, whereas Kven in Norway receives support according to Part II, which in practice means weaker support. This is due, among other things, to the fact that, under Part III, the obligations included in the ratifications

are very concrete and detailed, which makes the implementation more pressing and monitoring much more efficient than in the more general, less detailed Part II. Not surprisingly, the Kven aspire for Part III rather than Part II. The classification of the individual languages by the governments of the ratifying states into these two categories and consequently, into different positions with different resources, is a highly ideological and powerful tool to regulate multilingualism and language relations. This process can also be heated and complex, as the decisions made by the governments may be brought under negotiation and ultimately altered depending on discussions between the minority, the government and the Council of Europe.

Another important convention with significant impact on the minoritized languages of the North Calotte is the Council of Europe *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*. It also serves as an example of a site where legal, political and previous language ideologies collide. The Convention was opened for signatures in 1995 and came into force on 1 February 1998. While having a wider and more general view on minority rights than the Charter, the Framework Convention also includes paragraphs on language, such as the right of every person belonging to a national minority to learn his or her minority language and the right to set up and to manage private schools for minorities. Also here, the states choose which minorities will be covered by the convention which can lead to clashes. With regard to the states of the North Calotte, Finland ratified the Framework Convention in 1997, Russia in 1998 and Norway in 1999. The Swedish ratification followed in 2000. The Tornedalians in Sweden and the Kven in Norway are both included in the ratifications of their respective governments, which means that they have been recognized as national minorities. However, the situation as regards the Sámi languages is more complicated and varies from country to country due to their historically, legally and politically different position in comparison to other linguistic communities. The Swedish and Finnish ratifications include the Sámi, while this is not the case in Norway. The reason for this, as quoted in the Second Opinion on Norway by the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee, is the view of the Norwegian Sámi that 'government policy on national minorities should not be applied to them [as an indigenous people]' (AC/FC/OPII 2006: 4). In other words, the view of the Norwegian Sámi is that a status as an indigenous people is higher than that of a national minority and therefore there is no need to strive for a national minority status. Norway is the only state among the four under scrutiny here which as ratified the ILO convention no. 169, in 1990.

As far as Russia is concerned, the issue is even more complicated. As stated in the Opinion on the Russian Federation by the Advisory Committee (AC/FC/OPI 2002: 6), '[t]he Russian Federation has not established a list of national minorities and takes no firm position as to which groups are to be covered by the Framework Convention or what kind of definition of the term national minority should be applied', although the Advisory Committee does mention the Sámi in its own evaluation reports. The Council of Europe

monitoring system may, in this way, open the way to some further development among the Russian Sámi.<sup>4</sup>

Apart from the two instruments directly related to positions of languages in the North, yet another important tool, coming from a different trajectory, has a role in this situation. This is the UN *International Convention of the Rights of the Child*. In the context of language endangerment – which is a reality in the North Calotte – it supports the linguistic and cultural rights of minorities, albeit sometimes indirectly. The convention has been in force since 1990 and has been ratified by Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Russian Federation. In this convention, support is given both with respect to the right of the children to their own languages and cultures and to the right to embrace the language and culture of the majority. In Article 29, it is stated that the education given to all children should ensure '(c) the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate and for civilizations different from his or her own'. As is apparent in the text above, the Convention does not differentiate between national minorities and immigrant minorities, but applies equally to both categories. In the context of language endangerment in the North Calotte, the Convention is significant because it emphasizes the need of respect for the language of the child and his or her parents, this meaning that the child has the right to maintain and develop the language (as well as his or her own multilingualism and multiculturalism).

The cultural and linguistic minority rights proposed by the macro-level international agreements and conventions mentioned above are, in several cases, both detailed and far-reaching, and provide a good starting point for altering language relations, for example within the linguistic and cultural revitalization of minoritized languages in the North Calotte area. At the same time, however, when moving towards the complexities and 'messiness' of the micro-level of national and local actors and particular language situations, the synchronic variations are obvious. The multilayered aspects of a particular situation and the range of actors involved means that these official language-policy documents have proved to be challenging and the shared wider legal and political processes are applied in various local conditions by various actors with diverse consequences. Furthermore, the power of the states to choose the level of support for each language in the context of the Minority Language Charter, for instance, has led to very different situations for Meänkieli in Sweden and Kven in Norway, in spite of the fact that these languages can, in many ways, be regarded as varieties of the same language (Finnish) in the two countries. Another difficulty with the Charter and the Framework convention is that the monitoring and implementation procedures needed are scattered and fragmented between a large number of organizations and different bodies within these organizations – various ministries, county councils, municipal authorities, and the like (cf. Alfredsson, 1996: 54). Despite numerous measures, including the requirement of successive follow-up reports from the ratifying states, a setting-up of special expert committees engaged in the inspection work, and shadow reports being

welcomed from NGOs, etc., the implementation of these agreements still leaves much to be desired.

However, in spite of these obvious shortcomings of international obligations, the European Charter, and the Framework Convention especially, have influenced the situation of the North Calotte language minorities in other ways. Ideologically, their very existence has brought along another perspective to language relations and their management and increased awareness among the minorities, as they have been made aware of their own standing in the eyes of a wider community than the state in which they are living. A realization of other minorities, all over Europe and even globally, sharing the same conditions and experiences, together with the added potential to join forces in voicing minority and indigenous issues, has resulted in an increased level of cooperation between the minorities of the world. This can be seen as one of the most important results deriving from the existing international minority-rights instruments.

In addition, these international obligations have impacted on the awareness of the authorities and the general public of the rights of minorities within their own states. They may also force the ratifying states to develop an official minority and minority-language policy or update it. For example, before the ratifications of the European Charter and the Framework Convention, Sweden did not have any national minority policy at all, only an immigrant policy (see Huss, 2008a). An official policy to regulate the positions of the different languages within a state may bring about beneficial improvements for minority languages, although this is by no means guaranteed. At least it opens up a possibility – a site – for negotiation and debates over the relationships between languages and the rights of their speakers. As the Council of Europe requires that the ratifying countries establish a continuing dialogue between the government and the NGOs – and acts itself as a third party in this otherwise very asymmetric negotiation constellation – a professionalization in minority politics and thereby a kind of minority emancipation becomes possible. This has clearly been seen in recent minority-political developments, especially among the Tornedalians in Sweden and the Kven in Norway (Huss, 2008a).

#### **National dynamics in regulating language relations**

Apart from dynamics related to international regulating instruments, each state has a variety of means to regulate and manage multilingualism on its soil. There is considerable synchronic variation, as the four states in The North Calotte differ in their ways of legally regulating multilingualism within their respective territories (see, e.g. Malakhov & Osipov, 2006; Huss, 2008a). Differences exist in their ways of treating the languages and cultures of various domestic minority populations and, ultimately, in treating subgroups within one and the same population. We could mention the linguo-political situation of the Sámi in Norway vs. other Nordic countries and Russia, the status differences between the Sámi vs. the status of national minorities in Norway, or status differences between the Norwegian North Sámi on the one

hand and the Lule and South Sámi languages in the same country on the other. As with any other languages, there are also status hierarchies between the minoritized languages.

One indication of the status of a language within a nation is its visibility in the *constitution*, because it states the basic rules pertaining to the governing a country and the rights of its citizens. Again, the four states differ in this respect in terms of Northern minoritized languages. In the Norwegian and Finnish constitutions, Sámi is mentioned by name, giving the indigenous languages a recognized position. However, in the Norwegian context, this sets the Kven further apart, as there is no particular mention of Kven in the Norwegian constitution. The present Swedish constitution<sup>5</sup> only refers generally to ‘ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities’ and their possibilities ‘to maintain and develop their own cultural and societal life’. In a governmental committee report (SOU, 2008: 125), however, a new wording is proposed, reading: ‘The possibilities of the Sámi and other ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities to maintain and develop their own cultural and societal life shall be promoted.’ The Russian constitution (1993) states equality of all languages without any particular mention of the names of the languages.

The existence of specific (minority) *language laws* in a country is among the most powerful tools to regulate and manage multilingualism within a nation. They are essentially linked to national politics and ideologies related to the rights, resources, and positions distributed and granted to linguistically defined communities. Although the laws may vary from symbolic to instrumental, and their implementation is often dependent on economic and other resources, and although they are even in best cases difficult to monitor, they do represent a will on the part of the authorities to guarantee a certain position to a specific minority language that otherwise would be less visible in society and less likely to be promoted.

Again, the Northern minoritized languages have very different positions in terms of national language laws. Entering into force in the 1990s and 2000s, the existing language laws in Norway, Finland (1991, 2003) and Sweden (2000; reformed laws in effect since 2009 and 2010, see below) concern Sámi languages in each state and Meänkieli in Sweden. However, echoing the language ideologies of the modernist era (cf. Jaffe, 2007), they primarily concern the official use of the languages in contact with authorities and in other public domains. Moreover, these laws are presently effective only in the traditional areas of the populations in question, mainly in the North Calotte area, even though a significant part of the language speakers have moved to southern centres. Thus, these laws continue to convey the people–language–land link even in the contemporary situation, which is characterized by migration and diasporic conditions. This calls for new reforms in the Sámi language laws in Finland and Sweden. Indeed, a new language law in Sweden entered into force in July 2009, covering both Swedish, national minority languages, the Swedish Sign Language and the other mother tongues spoken in Sweden. According to its §14 (see Government bill 2008/09:153), members of national minorities ‘have the right to learn, develop and use their

languages'. This general right is not tied to a certain geographical area. In addition, a special law on minorities and minority languages (Government Bill 2008/09:158) replacing the former minority language laws was also passed by the parliament in 2009 and is now in force since January 2010. According to it, the Sámi administrative area in Sweden will be widened to cover 13 new municipalities in the traditional South Sámi areas, in addition to the former five municipalities covering North and Lule Sámi areas. Still, no new municipalities *outside* the traditional Sámi municipalities were proposed to be included in the administrative areas where the linguistic rights are strongest, despite the fact that relatively numerous Sámi have left Sápmi to live permanently in other parts of Sweden. In Norway, new municipalities together with Southern Sámi and Luulean Sámi languages were included in the administrative area in 2006 and in 2008. There are no Norwegian language laws regulating the situation of the Kven language. A white paper issued in 2008 states that the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs has a particular responsibility for protecting the national minority languages, and further, that the Ministry is considering organizing a conference on the revitalization of the Kven language. The paper is also important because part of its purpose is to prepare for future legislation.

In Russia, the development has been different from the Nordic countries. The relevant clauses regulating the use of languages in the country are detailed in the special Law on Languages of the Peoples of the Russian Federation, adapted during the late Soviet times and amended in 1998. According to this law, each Republic-Member of the Russian Federation has right to establish its own state language. In addition, the Law on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (1999) formally supports usage of related languages but, unlike the Nordic states, Russian Sámi have no special Sámi Language Act.

There are 45 'small indigenous peoples' in the Russian Federation, the status of which is defined on the regional level (Kryashkov, 2004; Vakhtin & Lyarskaya, 2004). In the Murmansk region, the Sámi are recognized as the only aboriginal people, and in 1997, the regional Duma in Murmansk ratified a constitutional amendment granting the Sámi official status to that effect. Thus, at least in theory, this definition protects the traditional livelihoods of the Sámi, but without the protection of a special law they are – like other ethnic minorities in Russia – very dependent on those in power (Vakhtin, 1992: 58). There is a Committee for Indigenous Peoples in the Murmansk provincial administration whose task is to mediate between the Sámi and the authorities.

Yet another aspect in indigenous and minority language regulation dynamics is linked to the minority and indigenous actors, organizations and activists. A major difference in the minority-political situations of the minoritized populations of the North Calotte is the cultural self-determination of the Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish Sámi on the one hand, and the lack of it for the Russian Sámi, the Tornedalians in Sweden and the Kven in Norway. In practice, this difference manifests itself in different resources, opportunities and potential to participate in and actively direct language politics: the official, elected representatives and NGOs can participate in

language politics at local, national and international levels far more easily than individuals joined by a shared concern and passion for their language. All in all, the role of active minority organizations and individual activists has been extremely valuable as regards all minoritized languages in the North.

### **Conclusions**

Multilingualism in the North Calotte is multilayered and polycentric, developed over time and resulting from different rulings (cf. Pietikäinen, 2010). When looking at the minoritized languages in this region, we can see diachronic parallelisms linked to the rise of modernist nation states and their borders, later intertwined with new global cooperation and international regulation of language relations, resulting in the present synchronic variation. When reflecting on the considerable changes in both international and national language policies all the way from the beginning of the post-war period to the strengthening of pluralism in the 1970s to today, we can see that at least some of the minority languages of the North, especially North Sámi in its traditional core areas of Norway, find themselves in a considerably better societal situation than ever before. At the same time, multilingual practices in the spaces of modern communication technologies, global popular culture and international tourism and mobility, intertwined with language revitalization efforts, make the terrain even more complex and varied. This poses important questions to us: what is the impact of these changes to the ideologies, policies and practices affecting the minoritized languages in The North Calotte? What happens to minority languages when they are part of an individual's multilingual repertoires and their usage varies from an active communicative resource to emblematic use or even to marked absence of that language in the repertoire and is greatly dependent on the life phases of the person in question?

The relatively recent ideologically invested and politically linked developments in legal regulations and other measures have, at least to an extent, strengthened the position of the Kven, Meänkieli and Sámi languages in their respective countries. Specific language revitalization projects indicate positive developments in the role and function of these languages. Examples of such projects include the Inari Sámi and Skolt Sámi-speaking language nests in Inari and projects in the South Sámi areas in Norway (see e.g. Todal, 2002, 2006; Pasanen, 2005; Rasmussen, 2005; Olthuis, 2008), the Tornedalian preschool language reclamation project in Pajala (Huss, 2008b), the documentation and revitalization project in Lovozero (see e.g. Riessler & Wilbur, 2007; Scheller, 2007), Sámi-medium education in comprehensive schooling (see e.g. Aikio-Puoskari, 2005) and language innovations such as using Sami languages in rap, rock and pop lyrics (Pietikäinen, 2008). In addition, novel and renewed alliances, such as a new kind of transnational North Calotte or global networking among indigenous and minority language speakers, all suggest new ways for them to cooperate and find agency and voice within terrains of language regulation and management.

However, difficulties of implementation still remain. One crucial question is how much of the needs and practices of the speakers of these languages are actually met by the strengthened top-down support. For example, does the school really have the power to promote language maintenance in the long run, in spite of its perceived central importance in many language reclamation projects? In recent collections of experiences in a number of indigenous and minority language settings, the respondents voiced doubts and constraints about the limits of education in language revitalization and maintenance. (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008; Hornberger, 2008). Ways to move forward seem to involve rethinking of language and multilingualism in terms of, for example, heteroglossia and multimodality (see e.g. Busch et al., 2006; Pietikäinen, 2008; Dufva & Pietikäinen, 2009). In the three Nordic countries discussed in this article, language laws in force are giving minority language speakers the right to use their languages with authorities in designated geographical areas. However, many studies show that these rights have not actually increased the use of minority languages to the degree expected (e.g. Elenius, 2005; Näkkäläjärvi, 2008). For example, a new study by Rasmussen and Nolan (in press) reports on the difficulties in transmitting Sámi to children in Sámi families throughout the traditional Sámi area in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, and they argue that the main problem is the lack of implementation of nationally decided laws at the local level in some places, but also prejudice and neglect from other people, including family members. Without a strong reciprocity between top-down support and bottom-up language practices, languages risk disappearing in the long run, particularly when there are so few speakers to begin with. Furthermore, mobility of people and their languages, in this case the rapidly growing number of indigenous and minority language speakers who have permanently left their traditional areas for studies, work or other reasons, also calls for new and innovative measures to give those groups access to these languages and cultures. In most of the cases, these minority language speakers have very few opportunities to learn, maintain and develop their languages. In addition, nowadays the Kven, Meänkieli and Sámi languages are part of many people's multilingual repertoires: for some, they may be daily communicative resources, for others, languages learnt at school or used in an emblematic way. All these complexities and processes call for the development of more tolerant and less purist views on language and language competence.

## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> The last documented speaker of Akkala Sámi died 29 December 2003 (Rantala & Sergina, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> See High Commissioner on National Minorities, <http://www.osce.org/hcnm/>.

<sup>4</sup> For an analysis on discussions and developments in connection with the European Charter and the Framework convention around the Baltic sea area, see Spiliopoulou & Åkermark (2006).

<sup>5</sup> Instrument of Government Chapter 1, §2.

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