

Participation in Indigenous Democracy: Voter Turnout in Sámi Parliamentary Elections in Norway and Sweden

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This article compares and analyzes voter turnout in the 2013 elections to the Sámi parliaments in Norway and Sweden, using data from voter surveys. Is voting in these elections motivated by the same factors that explain turnout in national parliamentary elections? First, the study showed that a common election day for national and Sámi elections is an important reason for the higher turnout in Norway. Second, involvement in Sámi society was the most important factor for explaining turnout in both countries. General political resources and motivation had some explanatory power in Norway, but not in Sweden. This possibly reflects a more far-reaching difference between Sámi politics in Norway and Sweden. In Norway, the Sámi electorate seems to be more politically integrated in the national polity, and the institutional ties between Sámi and national politics are stronger. This may be explained in part by the historical legacy of each state's policy.

Introduction

In the last four decades, indigenous peoples living in the territorial jurisdictions of already existing states have mobilized to claim their rights in their capacity as peoples, especially the right to self-determination, to ownership of their traditional land and to their own culture (see, e.g., Brysk 2000; Anaya 2009). The development in international law has supported these rights claims, manifested most strongly in the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP; see, e.g., Allen & Xanthaki 2011; Åhrén 2016). The UNDRIP recognizes indigenous peoples' right to self-determination: 'By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development' (UN 2007, Article 3). However, the meaning of indigenous self-determination in political practice is still under debate,

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and different states have responded differently to indigenous demands for self-determination (see, e.g., Vinding & Mikkelsen 2016).

There is considerable institutional variation in states' responses to indigenous demands (if they have responded at all). Some have created institutions for local or regional self-government; others have chosen to establish reserved seats in national parliaments. The three Nordic states (Finland in 1995, Norway in 1989 and Sweden in 1993) have established popularly elected assemblies for their indigenous Sámi minorities – namely the Sámi parliaments (Robbins 2015; Stepien et al. 2015). In the international debate, the Sámi parliaments are often referred to as important models 'for indigenous self-governance and participation in decision-making that could inspire the development of similar institutions elsewhere in the world' (UN 2011, Article 37).

Although the establishment of the parliaments introduced a new representative body into the democratic systems of the Nordic states, they were in many ways modelled on the already existing electoral system in each country, as well as on existing national, regional and municipal bodies. Elections to the Sámi parliaments differ from the national elections in these countries (and elsewhere) in two important ways. First, the parliaments have little independent political power. Thus, the label 'parliament' may be misleading, since these assemblies have no legislative authority and no independent financial resources, for instance, through taxation. Second, unlike other national and local elections in the Nordic countries, voters have to register in a Sámi electoral roll to vote in the Sámi parliament elections.

The Sámi parliaments have only recently become subjects of electoral research. Our knowledge of how they function as democratic institutions is limited. The relationship between the institution and its voters is at the core of how any democratic institution operates, and this relationship mainly comes to fruition through elections. By studying voter participation, we may enhance our understanding of the Sámi parliaments as democratic institutions. Thus, this article addresses the extent to which people vote in these elections, as well as possible explanations for voting/abstention.

The purpose of this article is to explain voter turnout in the elections to two of these Sámi parliaments – the Norwegian and Swedish ones – using data from two voter surveys carried out in 2013.¹ Is voting in Sámi parliamentary elections motivated by the same factors that explain turnout in national parliamentary elections, or do we need new models and new lines of thinking to explain Sámi electoral participation? Do the same factors explain voter turnout in the Norwegian and Swedish Sámi parliamentary elections? If not, how can such differences be explained? Finally, what can our analysis of voter turnout in Sámi parliamentary elections tell us in general about representative indigenous institutions for self-determination?

In the next section, we present our theoretical framework for explaining voter turnout in Sámi parliamentary elections. We discuss individual and institutional explanatory factors. Regarding individual factors, we distinguish between variables from the general participation literature and factors specific to Sámi parliament elections. Thereafter, we describe how turnout and the number of registered voters have developed since the two parliaments were established. Following this, the surveys are presented, and these are subsequently used to analyze turnout in the two Sámi political systems. We conclude our analysis by briefly relating our findings to the contemporary debate on institutions for indigenous self-determination.

Theoretical Framework: Explaining Turnout in Sámi Elections

Our theoretical starting point is in the general literature on voter turnout, and the distinction between individual and institutional factors. However, we discuss these theories in the context of Sámi parliamentary elections.

Individual Factors

In Sámi parliamentary elections, individual factors affecting voter participation can be analyzed from two different perspectives. First, we may turn to the international literature on voter turnout – what we call the ‘political participation’ perspective. This literature discusses two different explanations at the individual level: resources and motivation (see, e.g., Wolfinger & Rosenstone 1980; Franklin 1996). The former category includes factors like high social status with regard to gender, class, occupation, education, income, knowledge and health (Verba et al. 1995; Söderlund et al. 2011; Mattila et al. 2017). Strong social inclusion is another aspect of this category, and this relates to age, marital status, cohabitation and gainful employment (Stoker & Jennings 1995; Franklin 2004). Motivational explanations usually include party identification, political interest, media consumption and a sense of civic duty (Campbell et al. 1960; Popkin 1991; Sniderman & Stiglitz 2012). With this literature as our starting point, we expect people who are prone to being politically active in general to vote in Sámi parliamentary elections as well. We also expect to find a strong relationship between social background and personal resources (such as education and income), on the one hand, and turnout, on the other.

The second perspective analyzes Sámi elections as something different from other national arenas for political participation. Given this ‘Sami society’ perspective, the turnout in Sámi elections is more of an expression of involvement in and engagement with Sámi society. Thus, we analyze factors specific to elections to the Sámi parliaments. First, we provide explanations

concerning social integration in the Sámi society, including, for instance, knowledge of any of the Sámi languages. Second, since the right to vote in Sámi elections is conditional on being registered on the Sámi electoral roll, we analyze specific motivational factors: What was the motive for registering in the electoral roll in the first place? In this perspective we would, for instance, expect a strong relationship between social integration in Sámi society and voter turnout.

An important question is whether the ‘political participation’ or ‘Sámi society’ perspective has more explanatory power. Due to the lack of previous research on elections to indigenous assemblies, we will not present any expectations.

Institutional Factors

From an institutional perspective, there are two differences from other national elections in Norway and Sweden, as briefly mentioned above. First, the parliaments’ actual political powers have been delegated to them from the respective states. Due to the lack of legislative power, especially on the issues most salient to the Sámi electorate, Sámi parliament elections may be perceived as less important. Second, the Sámi parliaments have dual roles: they are government agencies, and at the same time, popularly elected representative bodies of the Sámi people in their country (Josefsen et al. 2015; 2016; Lawrence & Mörkenstam 2016). Together, these dual roles and the parliaments’ relative lack of power may reduce the (perceived) importance of the parliament, which in turn, is likely to decrease the willingness to vote.²

Second, other national elections in Norway and Sweden require no active registration on the voter’s part. All eligible voters are automatically registered by the government. For Sámi parliamentary elections, voter registration in the Sámi electoral roll is required. There is no official registration of Sámi ethnicity in the two states, and thus, potential voters must take the initiative. The electoral rolls of the two countries are based on the same principles (see Pettersen 2015a; 2017). In both cases, registration is both a matter of self-identification and an objective, language-based criterion. Persons above the age of 18 can register as voters if they fulfil two criteria: a voter must declare that he or she identifies as Sámi, and the voter or one of his or her parents or grandparents (in Norway, great-grandparents are included) must have used Sámi as a home language. Alternatively, one of the parents must be (or have been) registered on the electoral roll. Below, we discuss how this registering procedure may affect the interpretation of turnout in Sámi parliament elections.

There are also several important institutional *differences* between the two countries (Josefsen et al. 2017). First, although both parliaments share the awkward position of combining the roles of a democratically elected

assembly and government agency, the balance differs. The Sámi parliament in Sweden is more of an administrative authority under the Swedish government, whereas the legal basis of its Norwegian counterpart gives it a more autonomous position *vis-à-vis* the Norwegian authorities (Josefsen et al. 2015). The Sámi parliament in Norway has gradually assumed a certain amount of influence as a mandatory consultative body for Norwegian government agencies in matters concerning Sámi affairs (see, e.g., Josefsen 2014; Falch et al. 2016). These factors will presumably lead to a higher turnout in Norway.

Second, elections to the Sámi parliament in Norway are held on the same day as the elections to the national parliament, and in the same polling stations. In Sweden, they are separated, taking place in a different year and a different month. For these reasons, higher turnout rates may be expected in Norway.

Third, the electoral systems are different. Both Sámi parliaments use proportional representation, but the whole country makes up a single constituency in Sweden (with 31 seats) while Norway is divided into seven multi-member constituencies, with 39 seats elected from these constituencies. Political campaigns on a local level (in each constituency) could have a positive impact on turnout. Moreover, in Norway, voting for individual candidates has no effect, whereas personal votes are important for the election of candidates in Sweden, and three out of four voters cast a personal vote (Fjellström et al. 2016). On the one hand, it is more demanding for voters to stay informed on individual candidates compared with parties. Thus, candidate-centred systems may lead to lower turnout (Söderlund 2017). On the other hand, the Swedish system gives the voters more influence without *requiring* that voters cast a preference vote.³ This may potentially increase turnout.

Fourth, the party systems are different. In Norway, both the traditional Norwegian parties and a number of Sámi organizations, parties and candidate lists participate in Sámi elections. In Sweden, only Sámi parties compete. The traditional Swedish parties stay out of Sámi elections. If Norwegian parties are able to mobilize their supporters to vote in Sámi parliamentary elections, this may also influence turnout positively.

Fifth, the parliamentary situation of the Sámi parliament in Sweden has often been described as turbulent and in terms of a political deadlock, and – in contrast to its Norwegian counterpart – it has been heavily criticized by the Swedish media (Mörkenstam et al. 2012). This type of negative publicity may also affect turnout.

In short, the institutional contexts of the two countries differ in several ways. It is not possible to separate the effect of each of these institutional factors. Taken together, however, these institutional differences lead us to expect a higher turnout in Norway than Sweden. This expectation is borne

out, as the next section shows. However, another issue is whether these institutional differences also affect the relationship between individual-level variables and turnout. We will return to this in the analysis of survey data.

Voter Turnout in Sámi Parliamentary Elections: An Overview

Electoral turnout is a central issue in political science, as well as in the public debate on the state of democracy. The interpretation of high or low turnout, however, is not self-evident. High turnout is often seen as a sign of support for the political system (see, e.g., Holmberg & Oscarsson 2004). However, the opposite may also be the case: political dissatisfaction can mobilize voters who seek political change (Ezrow & Xezonakis 2016). Likewise, low turnout may be interpreted as a result of political alienation, but it may also be considered a result of satisfaction: If people are satisfied with the way the country is governed, why bother to engage? Nevertheless, low and declining turnout is usually discussed as a problem in public debate. This is also the case in media coverage of Sámi elections, especially in Sweden (Gottardis 2016).

The fact that turnout is measured differently in Sámi and national elections is not necessarily considered in these debates. As described above, taking part in Sámi elections is a two-step process of first registering and then voting. Therefore, at least in theory, one can measure voter turnout either as the share of registered voters who took part in the election or the share of all eligible voters who voted. The first measure can easily be applied to Sámi parliamentary elections since data on registration and voting are available. However, we do not have data on all potentially eligible voters – that is, the number of people who could register as Sámi voters. There are no census data or any other form of authoritative recording of ethnicity in the Norwegian or Swedish populations (see Pettersen (2015b) for the Norwegian case). Hence, we cannot measure voter turnout, as is often done in the United States, as the share of all eligible voters who voted.

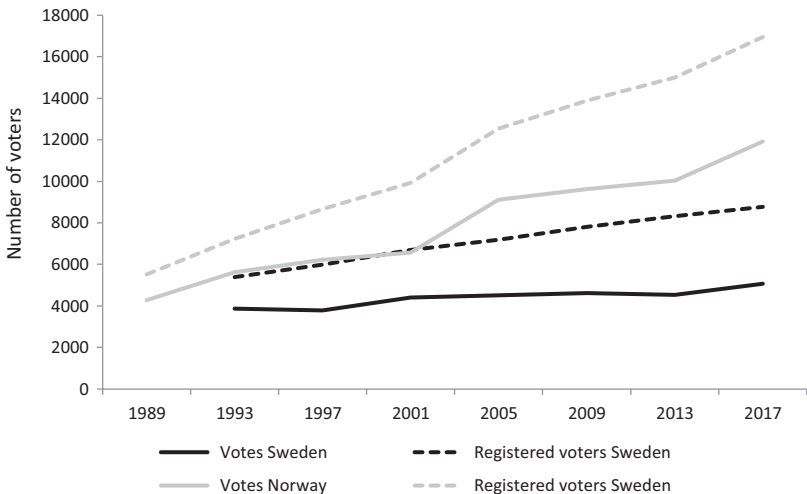
This two-step process may also affect the influence of individual variables. Sámi who lack political resources and political motivation will presumably be less inclined to register as voters, even if they fulfil the registration criteria. If that is the case, the impact of individual-level factors may be depressed compared with findings from national election surveys. Some of those who are counted as non-voters in national election surveys will probably not bother to register in the Sámi electoral roll, and consequently, they will be excluded from the Sámi election surveys. Thus, we should keep in mind that the registered voters constitute a self-selected subgroup of the potential electorate. Since the potential electorate is unknown, we do

not know the extent to which this subgroup is skewed with regard to our explanatory variables. In the figures most often mentioned, however, the number of Sámi in Norway is estimated to be 50,000–65,000 and in Sweden 20,000–40,000 (Sápmi 2016).

Figure 1 displays the absolute numbers for voter registration and actual voting in all Norwegian and Swedish Sámi parliamentary elections. The first such election was held in Norway in 1989, while the Sámi parliament in Sweden opened four years later. Since then, the two parliaments have had elections with four-year intervals. The survey data analyzed in this article were collected after the 2013 elections (but we also include figures from the 2017 elections). Throughout this period, Norway has had the most registered voters and highest number of votes cast. This reflects, and seems to confirm, the common estimate that Norway has a larger Sámi population than Sweden.

Figure 1 shows that the increase in the number of registered voters has been considerably stronger in Norway. Here, the number of registered voters increased from 5,505 in 1989 to 16,958 in 2017 (a 208 percent increase). In Sweden, the number increased from 5,390 in 1993 to 8,766 in 2017 (a 63 percent increase). A partial explanation of this difference may be that the criteria for registration changed in Norway in 1997, when the language criterion was extended from the grandparents' to the great-grandparents' generation, thereby expanding the potential electorate. Another possible explanation is that the stronger increase in Norway may reflect the more positive development of the Norwegian institution in terms of actual political influence, as discussed above. However, it may also be the case that more

Figure 1. Voter Registration and Voter Turnout in All Swedish and Norwegian Sámi Parliamentary Elections (Number of Voters).



Swedish Sámi who were eligible and interested in registering did so from the start, while the Sámi of Norway have been mobilized more gradually. The estimated number of Sámi in each state supports such an interpretation.

More votes have been cast in every new election in Norway and most of the Swedish elections, as shown in Figure 1. Thus, turnout as a percentage of the (unknown) potential electorate may have increased. However, the growth rates in registration are generally higher than the growth rates in voting, leading to a general trend of declining turnout measured as a percentage of the registered voters as shown in Table 1 (although the turnout has increased at some points in time, like in Sweden in 2017). Towards the end of the period, turnouts as a percentage of registered voters have become fairly low compared with those in the national parliamentary elections for both Norway and Sweden. The low turnout level is conspicuous when we consider that the least interested voters probably do not bother to register. Clearly, a number of people register in the electoral roll without having a strong intent to cast a vote. It is likely that some people have ‘expressive’ motivations for registering, such as to express a Sámi identity, rather than ‘instrumental’ motivations related to political influence. This is at least a potential explanation for the low turnout percentage shown in Table 1. We consider this in more detail below.

Survey Data

Our analysis of individual voter turnout is based on the Swedish and Norwegian Sámi election studies of 2013 (Josefsen et al. 2017). The Swedish study (Nilsson et al. 2016) was the first of its kind, whereas the Norwegian study was a follow up to the 2009 Sámi election study (Josefsen & Saglie 2011). Both election studies are based on random samples of registered voters, drawn from the electoral roll. The data collection started immediately after the elections, which were held in May in Sweden and September in

Table 1. Voter Turnout in Swedish and Norwegian Sámi Parliamentary Elections and General Elections (%)

	1989	1993	1997	2001	2005	2009	2013	2017
<i>Sweden</i>								
Sámi election	–	71.7	63.0	65.8	62.9	59.2	54.4	57.7
National election*	86.7	86.8	81.4	80.1	80.4	84.6	85.8	87.2
<i>Norway</i>								
Sámi election	77.7	77.6	71.8	66.1	72.6	69.3	66.9	70.3
National election	83.2	75.8	78.3	75.5	77.4	76.3	78.2	78.2

Note: *The Swedish national elections were held in 1991, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014 and 2018.

Norway. The Swedish study included postal and web questionnaires in four different languages (Swedish and Northern, Southern and Lule Sámi) with up to nine reminders for non-respondents (via postcards, telephone calls and messages). This led to a response rate of 53.8 percent. The Norwegian study was conducted through a combination of postal and web questionnaires, as well as a follow-up phone call to non-respondents who were given the option of responding over the phone. Despite having the additional option of replying to the questionnaire over the phone, the Norwegian sample responded at a rate of only 29 percent. Both datasets have an over-representation of (self-reported) voters in their samples.⁴ Since non-voters are under-represented, we weight the data to reflect actual turnout levels in both countries.⁵ The purpose of the weighting is to provide reasonable estimates of turnout in individual groups; it does not necessarily remove other types of sampling biases.

Who Votes in Sámi Parliamentary Elections?

As outlined above, voter participation in Sámi parliamentary elections can be studied from both what we call a ‘political participation’ and a ‘Sámi society’ perspective. We test both of these perspectives below via bivariate and multivariate analyses. In the following tables, the first row shows the overall turnout from official statistics. Below, participation in subgroups is calculated based on the weighted voter survey. In the columns to the right, we present the differences between the turnout in each group and overall turnout. A positive number means that the group has a higher turnout than the total electorate, while a negative number represents a lower turnout.

We start by looking at turnout by social background in the Swedish and Norwegian Sámi elections in 2013. It is well known from national elections that turnout varies between social groups. The pattern is the same in the national Norwegian and Swedish elections. In both countries, for instance, women are more likely to vote than men; the middle-aged are active voters; as are those with resources like higher education and high income (Oscarsson & Holmberg 2008, 2013 ; Bergh 2015; Bergh & Christensen 2017).

Table 2 shows that there are differences between the two countries when it comes to Sámi parliamentary elections. The correlation between social background and voting is stronger in Norway than it is in Sweden. The Norwegian findings closely match analyses of turnout in national Norwegian elections. This is not the case on the Swedish side of the border, where turnout is high among young people, education has no effect and the effect of income is the opposite of what is generally expected. This finding gives credence to the ‘political participation’ perspective in the Norwegian

Table 2. Voter turnout in the Swedish and Norwegian Sámi Parliamentary Elections in 2013, by Social Background

		Sweden		Norway		Deviation from overall turnout	
		%	N	%	N	Sweden	Norway
All		54.4		66.9			
Gender	Men	56	867	64	704	2	-3
	Women	54	917	70	687	0	3
Age	18–30 years	57	207	64	147	3	-3
	31–50 years	51	542	65	489	-3	-2
	51–70 years	58	795	71	623	3	4
	71 years or older	54	272	62	132	0	-5
Education	Primary	54	375	62	194	0	-5
	Secondary	56	623	59	364	2	-8
	Tertiary	55	713	73	801	1	6
Employment	Employed	51	776	68	755	-3	1
	Self-employed	64	776	66	134	10	-1
	Unemployed	59	42	70	20	5	3
	Retired	56	442	65	340	2	-2
	Student	59	76	64	61	5	-3
Income*	Low	57	467	60	425	3	-7
	Medium	55	588	69	428	1	2
	High	49	361	75	392	-5	8

Note: *In Sweden, income refers to *household income*. Low, medium and high incomes are defined as 0–300,000 SEK/year, 301,000–600,000 SEK/year and 601,000+ SEK/year, respectively. About 30 percent of the respondents are placed in the low and the high income groups, and the remaining 40 percent in the medium income group. The Norwegian income variable is divided in a similar way, but it refers to *personal income*. Thus, the income categories in the two countries are thus not directly comparable. $\text{Chi}^2 > 0.05$ for gender and education (Sweden). $\text{Chi}^2 > 0.01$ for income and education (Norway).

case and may suggest that the ‘Sámi society’ perspective is more relevant in Sweden.

This pattern – that the Sámi electorate resembles the national electorate to a larger extent in Norway than it does in Sweden – is strengthened when we study the importance of general political interest in Table 3. General

Table 3. Voter Turnout in the Swedish and Norwegian Sámi Parliamentary Elections in 2013, by Interest and Turnout in National Politics

		Sweden		Norway		Deviation from overall turnout	
		%	N	%	N	Sweden	Norway
All		54.4		66.9			
Turnout*	Voted in national election	57	1,643	77	1,271	3	10
	Did not vote in national election	43	107	7	89	-11	-60
General political interest	Very interested in politics	68	264	82	322	14	15
	Somewhat interested in politics	58	899	67	763	4	0
	Not very interested in politics	49	599	56	253	-5	-11
	Not at all interested in politics	36	61	25	18	-18	-42

Note: *Refers to the national parliamentary elections of Sweden in 2010 and Norway in 2013. In Norway, the national and Sámi parliamentary elections were held on the same day, and most voters could vote in both elections in the same polling stations. $\chi^2 > 0.01$ for both turnout and general political interest (both countries).

political interest is strongly and positively related to voting in the Sámi elections in both countries, but the relationship is especially strong in Norway.

The importance of national politics for turnout in Norwegian Sámi elections is also evident. In Norway, there is a positive relationship between voting in national and Sami parliamentary elections. The strength of this relationship is not surprising since the two elections are held on the same day, and voting takes place in the same polling stations. Neither is it a surprise that the relationship between voting in the two elections is weaker in Sweden, where we compare elections that took place three years apart – the last national election in 2010 and the Sami election in 2013. Nevertheless, those who voted in the national Swedish election are more prone to voting in the Sámi election than those who abstained in the 2010 national election. However, memory-based measures of voting behaviour are less reliable since memory often fails and responses suffer from social desirability bias (Karp & Brockington 2005).

Overall, the results in Table 3 support the perspective that Sámi election turnout is an expression of political interest and participation in national politics more generally – but this is more the case in Norway than in Sweden. Next, we turn to the ‘Sámi society’ perspective. Table 4 displays the relationship between five indicators of social integration in Sámi society and turnout in the 2013 Sámi elections.

It is perhaps not surprising that people who are interested in Sámi politics are also the most likely to vote in the Sámi parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, this relationship’s strength is striking. Interest in Sámi politics seems to be a better predictor of turnout than general political interest is (cf. Tables 3 and 4).⁶ The other variables in Table 4 are also clearly related to turnout. We see that those who are fluent speakers of any of the Sámi languages, who grew up in a Sámi community and whose friends are mostly registered voters have high rates of turnout. Looking at the reasons people give for registering in the electoral roll, we see that those who have instrumental motivations (to influence Sámi politics) are most likely to vote. Nevertheless, even those who have expressive motivations for registering (expressing their Sámi identity) have a fairly high turnout rate – close to that of the average voter. This also suggests that identification with and involvement in Sámi society are features that positively affect turnout. Those who provide other reasons for registering are less likely to vote. These findings suggest that variables specific to Sámi parliamentary elections are more important than the standard variables from international research on turnout, and this is especially so in the Swedish case.

As discussed above, political trust may potentially have positive or negative effects on turnout. People may go to the polls because they support the system or want to change it. However, the general pattern in cross-country studies is a clear positive relationship between satisfaction and turnout. A negative effect of political satisfaction is found in studies of change in turnout within countries, where decreasing trust can lead to increasing turnout (Ezrow & Xezonakis 2016). Since our data were collected at one point in time, we expected to find a positive relationship between trust and turnout.

Our surveys comprised several questions about institutional trust, and clear differences between the two countries emerged. The Sámi electorate in Sweden clearly has less trust in political institutions in general compared with the Sámi in Norway (Nilsson & Möller 2017, 226).⁷ If we look at the percentage with ‘very high’ or ‘quite high’ trust, the difference between the two countries varies between 21 and 26 percentage points. When it comes to trust in the country’s Sámi parliament, the difference is even greater, at 33 percentage points.⁸ Now, the question becomes how institutional trust affects turnout. In Table 5, we have created an index for trust in three different institutions: the national government, national parliament and local council. Trust in the Sámi parliaments is analyzed separately.

Table 4. Voter Turnout in in the Swedish and Norwegian Sámi Parliamentary Elections in 2013, by Involvement in Sámi Society

		Sweden		Norway		Deviation from overall turnout	
		%	N	%	N	Sweden	Norway
All		54.4		66.9			
Interest in Sámi politics	Very interested in Sámi politics	84	331	91	234	30	24
	Somewhat interested	65	912	79	624	11	12
	Not very interested	41	538	53	428	-13	-14
	Not at all interested	18	40	21	68	-36	-46
Reasons for registering as a Sámi voter	To influence Sámi politics	74	655	83	518	20	16
	To express Sámi identity	53	736	71	536	-1	4
	To give my children voting rights	49	103	63	66	-5	-4
	Other reasons	46	43	45	155	-8	-22
Knowledge of the Sámi language (scale)	4: Fluent (speaks, understands and writes)*	68	249	82	303	14	15
	3	63	254	67	197	9	0
	2	61	568	67	368	7	0
	1: Not a user of the Sámi language	46	750	57	483	-8	-10
Grew up in a Sámi community	Yes	64	644	75	618	10	8
	To some extent	56	745	66	332	2	-1
	No	45	389	57	410	-9	-10
Are friends registered Sámi voters?	Most of them are registered voters	67	248	82	269	13	15
	Quite a few	65	593	75	372	11	8
	Very few	50	726	59	694	-4	-8

Note: *The index is constructed from three items asking whether the respondents speak, understand and write Sámi. The items are measured on a four-point scale spanning from fluency to nothing at all. We have constructed an additive index from these three items rescaled into 1–4. Cronbach's alpha (Sweden): (0.94). $\chi^2 > 0.01$ for all variables (both countries).

Table 5. Voter Turnout in in the Swedish and Norwegian Sámi Parliamentary Elections in 2013, by Trust in Political Institutions

		Sweden		Norway		Deviation from overall turnout	
		%	N	%	N	Sweden	Norway
All		54.4		66.9			
General institutional trust (index)	Very/quite high	55	424	70	600	1	3
	Neither high nor low	56	894	70	532	2	3
	Very/quite low	58	381	57	231	4	-10
Trust in the country's Sámi parliament	Very/quite high	67	328	79	469	13	12
	Neither high nor low	58	651	75	500	4	8
	Very/quite low	55	724	51	343	1	-16

Notes: Trust in the Sámi parliament and other political institutions is measured on a five-point scale in Sweden and an 11-point scale in Norway. The general institutional trust index is based on three survey questions about trust in parliament, government and the municipal council. $\chi^2 > 0.05$ for general institutional trust (both countries). $\chi^2 > 0.01$ for trust in the Sámi parliament (both countries).

Again, we see that Sámi voters in Norway follow the expected pattern: those who have high or medium institutional trust are more likely to vote in Sámi parliamentary elections. This applies to trust in both the Sámi parliament and Norwegian institutions. The results are more complex on the Swedish side of the border. Those who have trust in the Sámi parliament are more likely to vote in its elections, but there is no positive relationship between trust in Swedish political institutions and voting in Swedish Sámi elections. In other words, while trust in Norwegian institutions has a positive effect on turnout in Sámi elections in Norway, the opposite is true in Sweden. Instead, higher trust in Swedish institutions appears to have a negative influence on participation in the Sámi parliamentary election in Sweden, although the effect is small. One way to understand this is that low trust in the Swedish institutions can be viewed as an expression of a more critical attitude towards the Swedish state and its politics, which makes it more important to vote in Sámi elections.

Multivariate Analysis

Finally, we look at voter turnout using a multivariate analysis. The purpose of the analysis is twofold. First, we wish to perform statistical controls for

spurious or indirect effects of individual variables. The second purpose of the multivariate analysis is comparing our two overarching perspectives. The first perspective sees political participation in these elections as an effect of socioeconomic resources and an expression of political activism more generally. From this perspective, we expect to find a high correlation between political involvement and participation in national politics, on the one hand, and turnout in Sámi elections, on the other. The second perspective sees Sámi elections as a unique feature of Sámi society. If this is the case, the strongest explanatory power should be found with respect to variables that measure involvement and engagement in Sámi society.

In this analysis, we introduce two geographic variables that have not been explored in the previous tables. These are only relevant to the Norwegian Sámi election: election district and a dummy for whether election day voting was available. In Norway, people who live in a municipality with less than 30 registered Sámi voters cannot vote on election day; they must vote in advance. This rule was introduced in 2009 to speed up the counting of votes while maintaining ballot secrecy. This affects turnout: in 2009, turnout declined in these municipalities and remained stable in the rest of the country (Bergh & Saglie 2011). Thus, the availability of election day voting is included. We also include constituency, since official election statistics show that turnout varies between the seven constituencies. This variable is not relevant in the Swedish case, where the whole country is one constituency.

The logistic regression analysis in Table 6 and corresponding changes in the predicted probabilities in Table 7 confirm the findings from the bivariate analyses regarding differences between the two countries. First, we see that social background variables – income and education – have an effect on turnout in Norway in model 1. In contrast, we do not find any significant effect of the socioeconomic background variables in the Swedish case. General political interest has a strong effect in both countries, but this disappears after controlling for involvement in Sámi society. Trust in the national parliament has an effect in model 2 in the Norwegian analysis, but this disappears after controlling for involvement in Sámi society.

Second, we see that although the variables that tap involvement and engagement in Sámi society are correlated, some of them have strong effects in both countries also in the multivariate analysis. All in all, the variables that measure involvement in Sámi politics and Sámi society have more explanatory power than those reflecting a general political participation perspective. In fact, most of the significant effects in models 1 and 2 disappear after the inclusion of the ‘Sámi society’ variables. While both perspectives help explain variation in participation in Sámi elections in Norway, it is the Sámi society perspective that seems most useful for this purpose. In Sweden, only the Sámi society perspective seems important.

Table 6. Binominal Logistic Regression of Voter Turnout in the Swedish and Norwegian Sámi Parliamentary Elections in 2013

	Sweden			Norway			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Gender (Male = 1)	0.018 (0.126)	0.073 (0.127)	0.072 (0.135)	-0.138 (0.188)	-0.197 (0.192)	-0.266 (0.199)	-0.221 (0.206)
Age (continuous)	0.137 (0.216)	0.165 (0.217)	0.140 (0.230)	-0.020 (0.037)	-0.026 (0.038)	-0.021 (0.040)	-0.017 (0.042)
Age ²	-0.015 (0.024)	-0.021 (0.024)	-0.016 (0.025)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Tertiary education (= 1)	0.140 (0.092)	0.069 (0.095)	0.115 (0.101)	0.528*** (0.194)	0.321 (0.200)	0.325 (0.209)	0.320 (0.217)
Annual income (logarithm)	-0.220 (0.122)	-0.199 (0.124)	-0.010 (0.132)	0.054* (0.033)	0.057* (0.033)	0.061* (0.034)	0.049 (0.036)
General political interest (1-4)		0.342*** (0.089)	-0.074 (0.107)		0.464*** (0.136)	-0.107 (0.160)	-0.122 (0.162)
Trust in national parliament (1-5)		-0.082 (0.057)	-0.086 (0.061)		0.178 (0.113)	0.106 (0.127)	0.107 (0.126)
Interest in Sámi politics (1-4)			0.835*** (0.111)			0.875*** (0.170)	0.907*** (0.175)
Grew up in a Sámi community (= 1)			-0.018 (0.152)			0.179 (0.236)	0.123 (0.245)
Most friends are registered Sámi voters (= 1)			0.197 (0.212)			0.720* (0.374)	0.715 (0.441)
Registered to vote to influence Sámi politics (= 1)			0.745*** (0.148)			0.616** (0.241)	0.577** (0.248)
Trust in Sámi parliament (1-5)			0.101 (0.069)			0.241** (0.118)	0.259** (0.123)

(Continued)

Table 6. (Continued)

	Sweden			Norway			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constituencies (Norway) [†]							
1 Nuortaguovlu							0.407 (0.413)
3 Davveguovlu							0.130 (0.463)
4 Gáissaguovlu							0.215 (0.398)
5 Viesttarmearra							0.051 (0.448)
6 Lulli-Sápmi							0.463 (0.487)
7 Lulli-Norga							0.543 (0.466)
Election day voting available (Norway)							1.093 ^{**} (0.298)
Constant	0.199 (0.485)	-0.376 (0.537)	2.367 ^{***} (0.614)	0.138 (0.863)	-1.572 (0.930)	-3.104 (1.021)	-4.256 ^{***} (1.127)
McFadden's pseudo R^2	0.00	0.01	0.09	0.02	0.04	0.17	0.20

Notes: Coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. ^{*}Significant at the 5 percent level; ^{**}significant at the 1 percent level; ^{***}significant at the 0.1 percent level. [†]Reference category: 2 Ávjovárri. N: Sweden = 1,256; Norway = 1,064. Data are weighted to reflect actual turnout levels in both countries.

Table 7. Marginal Effects: Change in Predicted Probabilities (cf. Table 6)

	Sweden			Norway			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Gender (Male = 1)	0.004	0.017	0.016	-0.029	-0.040	-0.046	-0.037
Age (continuous)	0.032	0.039	0.032	-0.004	-0.005	-0.004	-0.003
Age ²	-0.003	-0.005	-0.004	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Tertiary education (= 1)	0.033	0.016	0.026	0.113	0.067	0.056	0.055
Annual income (logarithm)	-0.052	-0.047	-0.002	0.011	0.012	0.010	0.008
General political interest (1-4)		0.080	-0.017		0.095	-0.018	-0.020
Trust in national parliament (1-5)		-0.019	-0.020		0.036	0.018	0.018
Interest in Sámi politics (1-4)			0.190			0.151	0.151
Grew up in a Sámi community (= 1)			-0.004			0.031	0.020
Most friends are registered Sámi voters (= 1)			0.045			0.117	0.113
Registered to vote to influence Sámi politics (= 1)			0.169			0.105	0.096
Trust in Sámi parliament (1-5)			0.023			0.041	0.043

(Continued)

Table 7 (Continued)

	Sweden			Norway			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constituencies (Norway) ⁺							
1 Nuortaguovlu							0.066
3 Davveguovlu							0.021
4 Gáissaguovlu							0.035
5 Viesttarmearra							0.009
6 Lulli-Sápmi							0.073
7 Lulli-Norga							0.085
Election day voting available (Norway)							0.199

Note: ⁺Reference category: 2 Ávjovárri.

Third, the regression analysis indicates that the common election day for Sámi and national elections in Norway explains the difference in turnout between Norway and Sweden (54 and 67 percent, respectively) to a large extent. In Norway, there is a strong effect of having election day voting – that is, the possibility of casting votes in the Sámi and national elections on the same day and at the same polling station. When a voter has already gone to the polling station to cast a vote in the national election, it is easy to vote in the Sámi election as well – even if the voter is not especially interested in Sámi politics. The probability of voting is 20 percentage points higher in municipalities where it is possible to vote on election day than in municipalities where the voters have to vote in advance. This difference is close to the difference in turnout between Sweden and Norway.⁹

Concluding Remarks

In our analysis, we tested two different perspectives on voter turnout in Sámi parliamentary elections – the traditional ‘political participation’ perspective, where turnout is a function of individual resources and motivation, and the ‘Sámi society’ perspective, in which we analyzed factors specific to Sámi parliamentary elections. The results were unambiguous: the ‘Sámi society’ perspective has more explanatory power. Factors relating to the involvement in Sámi society were by far the most important for explaining turnout in both Norway and Sweden.

Although there are similarities between the two countries, there are also some striking differences regarding both the *level* of turnout and the factors that *explain* turnout. We would like to emphasize two findings. First, our study has shown that the common election day for national and Sámi elections in Norway is an important reason why turnout is higher in Norway than in Sweden. Thus, this institutional feature is important for understanding variations in turnout, both between the countries and within Norway.

Second, the fact that the ‘political participation’ perspective has more explanatory power in Norway than in Sweden means that the Sámi electorate in Norway is more similar to the Norwegian electorate as a whole. In Sweden, turnouts in Sámi and national elections are – to a greater extent – distinct phenomena. The common election day in Norway clearly contributes to this difference, but we believe that this is an indication of a more far-reaching difference between Sámi politics in Norway and Sweden. The Sámi electorate in Norway seems to be more politically integrated in the Norwegian polity, compared with the Swedish Sámi in the Swedish polity. Likewise, the institutional ties between Sámi and national politics are stronger in Norway. As mentioned previously, the established Norwegian political parties participate in Sámi politics, while their Swedish counterparts stay out of it. This makes it easier for the Norwegian parties to mobilize their

Sámi followers to vote in the Sámi elections. Sámi voters in Norway may find it easy to choose a party in Sámi elections, even if they are less interested in Sámi politics – since they can vote based on identification with a Norwegian party. Moreover, there seem to be differences between the countries that go beyond the participation of majority-based parties in Sámi politics. A more comprehensive study of the Sámi parliamentary elections in Norway and Sweden shows that there are several differences between the Sámi electorates in the two countries, for example, with regard to political cleavages and political trust (Josefsen et al. 2017).

Finally, we think that some of our findings are most relevant to the contemporary debate on indigenous institutions for self-determination in an international perspective. First, several factors specific to Sámi parliamentary elections affect turnout, which makes turnout a complex issue to interpret in comparison with national parliamentary elections in general. For instance, the parliaments' lack of legislative power and influence on the most salient political issues in Sámi society is presumably a reason for non-voting, and in the Swedish case, it also presumably contributes to the low trust in the parliament (Nilsson & Möller 2016). Moreover, in contrast with representative assemblies on local, regional or national levels with decision-making power on issues affecting all voters (like taxation, health care or education), not all registered voters in the Sámi parliamentary elections are affected by the parliaments' decisions in the same way due to the parliaments' limited mandates. The all-affected principle in democratic theory states that all persons affected by political decisions ought to have a right to participate in politics (see, e.g., Dahl 1970; 1989; Goodin 2007), but this raises the following question: Should you actually vote if you are not affected (Saunders 2010, 74)? The limited mandate may also be one reason for not registering in the electoral roll in the first place. Our point here is that the legitimacy of representative indigenous institutions ought not to be evaluated in terms of voter turnout – at least not as the sole parameter. Low turnout in Sámi parliamentary elections, for instance, is not necessarily indicative of distrust in Sámi politicians and the institution as such; rather, it can be seen as a protest against the fact that the parliaments have too little influence on important matters. From this perspective, the legitimacy of representative indigenous institutions should be evaluated in terms of their true political power on the issues of importance to its constituency – that is, in terms of their autonomy and self-determination. However, such an evaluation would require further knowledge about the electorate's view of self-determination, for instance, what issues the electorate wants to have self-determination on and to what degree.

Second, the importance of factors specific to Sámi elections in explaining turnout points towards another problem for indigenous representative institutions – namely that voter turnout may be explained in part by the

historical legacy of state policies. Many indigenous peoples have historical (and contemporary) experiences of harsh assimilation and/or segregation policies that have divided the community by ‘fomenting divisions among subjugated groups by sowing mutual mistrust’ (Posner et al. 2010, 451). In cases where these policies have created dissimilar conditions for different groups in the indigenous community to maintain their traditional way of life or language – important for strong social integration – the historical legacy will affect turnout in contemporary elections (and in the Norwegian and Swedish cases, the motivation to register on the electoral roll).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Earlier versions of this article were presented at the ECPR General Conference, Montréal, 26–29 August 2015, and the Nordic Political Science Congress, Odense, 8–11 August 2017. We want to thank the conference participants and the journal’s referees for their valuable comments. The research was funded by the Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning (Formas) and the Sámi Parliament of Norway.

NOTES

1. There are no comparable election studies from the Finnish Sámi parliamentary elections.
2. An important aspect relating to the lack of political power is the decisiveness of an election. The ‘close race’ hypothesis states that the more uncertain the outcome of an election is, the more exciting will the election become, causing engagement and turnout to increase (Van Egmond 2003). Since the elections to the Sámi parliaments are usually not preceded by opinion polls triggering interest, this hypothesis is less applicable in this context.
3. The systems used in both Sweden (ordered lists) and Norway (closed lists in practice) are party-centred in Söderlund’s (2017) terms.
4. Turnout in our Swedish sample was 68.8 percent, compared with 54.4 percent in the electorate. The corresponding percentages for Norway are 86.3 and 66.9 percent, respectively. For the Swedish study, turnout is validated against the official register.
5. The weights adjust for turnout in each election district, and thus they also provide for an accurate estimate of turnout at the national level. We carried out multivariate analyses with unweighted data, and for all practical purposes, the results are identical to the weighted ones (see the Online Appendix).
6. It could be argued that the relationship between turnout and interest is endogenous and goes in both directions. If an individual is registered and starts to vote, he or she also tends to become more aware of Sámi-related news, and thus, more interested in Sámi politics. We do not have panel data, so we cannot properly estimate the causal direction. However, endogeneity is most often an omitted variable bias (Rosenstone & Hansen 1993), and we do control for political interest in our multivariate models. It has also been argued that politically interested people use a greater variety of information sources and are more politically aware (Hillygus 2005); in experimental settings, these factors have been shown to have a sizeable and statistically significant causal influence on the propensity to vote (Lassen 2005).
7. This difference between the Norwegian and Swedish Sámi is not found between Norwegian and Swedish citizens in general. Trust in parliaments, parties and politicians are similarly high in the two countries (Bengtsson et al. 2013, 16–17; Kroknes et al. 2015, 704).
8. These figures are not completely comparable as different scales were used in the two countries. In addition, the response rate was much lower in the Norwegian survey. Since dissatisfied people usually have a lower response rate in surveys (see, e.g., Dahlberg & Persson 2014), this may have affected the results.

9. The analysis of the Norwegian data shows that the turnout differences between the seven constituencies is small, after controlling for election day voting. Furthermore, the effects of the remaining variables do not change much when we exclude election day voting and constituency from the analysis. Accordingly, the differences we see between Norway and Sweden are not caused by the additional variables in the analysis of the Norwegian data.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's website:

Table A: Binominal logistic regression of voter turnout in the Swedish and Norwegian Sámi parliamentary elections in 2013 (coefficients; standard errors in parentheses). Unweighted data

Table B: Marginal effects; change in predicted probabilities (cf. table A). Unweighted data