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OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND: THE INDIGENOUS SÁMI,
THE SWEDISH NATION-STATE AND ISLAM

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Abstract: Both in a European and global context, Norway and Sweden are seen as being among the most tolerant and accepting nations in terms of different world views, ideologies and cultures, evidenced by their willingness to voluntarily accept large numbers of refugees and to create a welcoming and multicultural environment. What receives less attention is the fact that they are the home of an indigenous group of people, the Sámi, whose traditional lands cross both nations. This paper seeks to actualize the Sámi both in a historical and contemporary context and show how their voice and their position have become relatively muffled in a contemporary discourse that is mainly focused on how nation-states should avoid conflict with new alien social norms and values, particularly those associated with Muslim immigrants. It argues that the Sámi have become 'out of sight and out of mind' and at the peripheries of society within contemporary debates and literature concerned with multiculturalism and identity despite their longstanding claims as an indigenous people whose rights have yet to be functionally recognised.

Key words: Sámi, indigenous, multiculturalism, Sweden, Islam, religion, politics.

1. Introduction

Contemporary public discourse in Europe abounds with various accounts of conflicting social norms, with religious and ethnic struggles for acceptance, and with political ideologies that fuel the currently thriving multicultural discussion. The master narrative in Sweden and other European states consists of multiculturalists forcefully insisting that 'ethnic' belonging and the synthesis of 'I' and 'we' is paramount for social stability and future adherence. Scholars such as Aje Carlbom, for example, proclaim that Sweden practices a kind of 'banal nationalism' that needs to be uprooted, further arguing that the state should implement a stronger multiculturalist ideology (Carlbom 2003). Although Carlbom (2003) and others zealously criticize the state for its perceived inability to welcome radically different social norms, they at the same time ignore other groups, such as the indigenous Sámi, who exist in the counter narrative and are largely ignored and positioned on the peripheries of societal debate in northern Europe. In this consistently endorsed national but simultaneously envisaged multicultural context, Sámi people inevitably struggle for self-identification because multiculturalism becomes ambiguous for indigenous and linguistic minority groups in at least two aspects. At an individual level, multiculturalism becomes a conflation of identities that hinge on affiliations with other linguistic, cultural and social groups. Although such a concept is encouraged under the Swedish administration, this is generally held to only be to the point beyond which there could be a threat to 'allegiance' to the nation-state. At a societal level, the existence of conflicting groups within the nation-state may be perceived as ominous for the politics of nationality, as it rests on a unified nationhood (Smith 1991). Thus identity is firmly associated not only with the individual, but also the national. As Malcolm Anderson (1996, 2-3) has argued, national borders have several functions and most important in terms of this discussion is how they affect identity, and how they operate as instruments for markers of identity. This paper seeks to address this comparatively neglected issue of Sámi identity-making and the challenges it holds in the current political and academic climate.

2. The Sámi at a glance

The Sámi are the only indigenous people of Northern Europe, estimated to be 80,000-100,000 in number, even if this is only a rough guess, and living in a territory referred to as Sápmi, divided by four nation-states – Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. The Sámi have historically been a somewhat fragmented ethnic group with diverse

customs, livelihood and languages. They were colonised over many centuries, something which has often been presented as them being incorporated into other social groups and nation-states in a linear trajectory. However, this process of colonisation, or rather multitude of different colonisations, which with some accuracy can be traced to have started around the Late Middle Ages, was a manifold and dynamic process of contact and confrontation. However, the Sámi and the colonizing peoples lived in a relatively harmonious relationship, a balance between settlement borders and the indigenous land of Sápmi, and perhaps this was a reflection of the reciprocity and cooperation needed for survival in this geographical territory during this period in time.

This gradually changed to a discourse infected with a sense of ‘us’ and ‘them’ when the national border between Norway and Sweden was fundamentally re-drawn in the mid eighteenth century, and questions of national taxation of the Sámi stirred animosity between the two nation-states. With the new borders in place and the implications of separation being enforced, Sámi relations both with the major societies and within their own communities became polarised. As Anssi Paasi (2003, 464) appropriately points out, state borders “give expression to power relations since they inevitably order and shape the social relations of the peoples affected by them”. State borders are often perceived as peripheries from the perspective of core players and populations in a nation-state; however it is in these ‘peripheries’ where definitions of what is separate, unique and what should be preserved is defended. Borders defend interests, culture and rights in the separation of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ in a geographical manifestation of a mental image (Anderson 1996, 1-3). Subdued in these state peripheries the Sámi were, later in the 19th and 20th centuries, subjected to sentiments concerned with racial biology and theories of eugenics in the public discourse, where they were portrayed as sub-human. Following World War II, a forced ‘assimilation’ process followed in Norway, while a dichotomization of reindeer herding Sámi (seen as pure Sámi) and non-reindeer herding Sámi (perceived as ‘Swedenized’), ensued in Sweden, leading to further disintegration and ethnocentrism within the Sámi community.

As with such other groups across the world, it has “become increasingly common for ordinary Sámi people to view their existence and cultural survival in terms of an indigenous people’s perspective” (Eidheim 1997, 37). This developing point of view has created a notion of indigenous identity at its very core – something that becomes expressed politically when transcending national borders, but which is fundamentally a social construct. Being indigenous, or likewise subscribing to any other ethnic identity, is not something essential, but constructed. The social construction of ‘indigeniety’ is made because it suits a purpose. However, this is not to say that constructed identities are false identities, and similarly the feelings people adhering to a certain ethnic group may have, is

certainly 'real'. The process of shaping an ethnic identity is one of positioning, an attempt to establish a unique 'otherness,' which will ease definitions of borders, albeit more or less successfully, between ethnic groups. This positioning of ethnic identity-shaping can also be perceived as a multi-layered construct, where a specific layer surfaces in a given context, while another emerges when the individual enters a new context to adapt to.

For the Sámi to succeed in their political struggle to re-structure a fragmented ethnicity, and thus identity, a unified front has to be advocated by all Sámi regardless of national allegiance. This endeavour has gained momentum through the rise of folk movements, which later manifested in a contemporary strive for a Pan-identity as 'just Sámi' without a national prefix before the self-identifiable endonym. This is something that has proven to be very successful internationally, confirmed by the establishment of the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues within the United Nations in 2000. Although the channelling of indigenous concerns has, to a great extent, retracted to a dichotomization of Sámi identity vis-à-vis being Swedish or Norwegian from a political perspective, this can be seen in a new-found global platform, where the Sámi mediate a discourse of 'indigenism' as straightforward and unproblematic. Such discourse of 'indigenism' as a global notion is filtered through a complex web of social-regional realities – in the words of Carina Green, it stops "being a mere idea, and becomes something that is to be filled with a substance; it becomes real." (Green 2008, 30). This reality however, entails a change in the power structure within the nation-state in question, which is a process that is never uncontested, straightforward or simple. It can be argued, furthermore, that the cases of Norway and Sweden are not compatible with many other international indigenous movements, as there is no 'official' Sámi ownership of land, and very few attempts at the management of the hypothetical land claim. In the Sámi context, issues of language and the organization of the Sámi cooperative (*siida*) are generally the concerns voiced, issues that have limited benefits, if any, from a 'common international terminology' perspective used by many of the international indigenous movements. The disparity between the greater international indigenous context, and that of the Sámi, makes local claims of increased self-determination, clearer identification 'norms' and stronger influence on management issues often seem exaggerated by the local authorities, and even to some extent within the local Sámi populace itself (Green 2008).

In summary of this section, it is held that the unique position of the Sámi has been largely ignored at a national level, with somewhat patronising signals of recognition in terms of traditional dress and stereotypical portrayals that are at best superficial and in reality can be seen as an expectation of assimilation. Internationally, the position is compromised within a rather binary definition of which groups are and which are not

indigenous people. In this regard an interesting account/review is provided by Will Kymlicka of theories and international law relating to indigenous and minority national groups and some distinctions are made, for example between stateless nations such as the Scots and the Catalans and national minorities, between the latter and indigenous people and between those that are indigenous who were colonised from overseas and those who were internally colonised. This latter point is relevant with regard to two articles of international law, which are Article 1 of the United Nations Charter and Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The former (Article 1) states that 'all people have the right to self-determination,' but has been interpreted as only being applicable to indigenous people who have been colonised from overseas, while the latter (Article 27) states that 'members of minorities' have the right to 'enjoy their own culture . . . in community with other members of their group' (Kymlicka 2001, 123). As Kymlicka points out, the reality of this is that under international law "the indigenous peoples of Scandinavia do not have a right of self-determination, according to the salt-water thesis, since their colonizers came by land not by sea" and the rights they may be granted (under article 27) in effect "simply reaffirms that members of national minorities must be free to exercise their standard rights of freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of assembly, and freedom of conscience." (Kymlicka 2001, 123).

3. Multiculturalism at a glance

It is emphasised that although a number of indications have been highlighted with regard to an awakening of Sámi identity, it is important that these and other aspects are appropriately contextualised. Such a contextualisation sees both a historical and even contemporary picture of presumed assimilation by the minority involved. It is one of assumed acceptance of nation-building with relatively little regard for the Sámi people either culturally or in terms of their unique geographic position. In this sense, the Sámi are not included within the current, and comprehensive discourse concerned with how societies in Northern Europe should respond to migrants, and particularly the role of multiculturalism. In order that such a contention may be justified, it is necessary to explore some of that existing discourse.

One starting point is with the work of Will Kymlicka (2001, 3) and three central themes around which it is based. The first concerns state nation-building and that minority rights should be seen as a justified and legitimate response to this inbuilt proclivity that inevitably exists rather than as any granting of special privileges or rights. Accepting more and more of such claims would be an indication of integrative multiculturalism by western states and strongly contributes towards successes achieved in

areas such as “immigrant multiculturalism and multi-nation federalism” (the second theme). The third central theme is that there is a need for a firmer connection between theory and practice, particularly in shifting from the application of minority rights in an ad hoc manner and towards an international and codified understanding, based in a unified theory, that they should be standardised and accepted as matters of fundamental rights, even to the extent of intervention where necessary.

A number of points emerge from this with regard to contemporary views of multiculturalism as it may be applied to recent immigrants and the realities of these views as they are interpreted through international law despite the apparent increase in interest for the rights of indigenous people over recent decades. One is that while such attention has been given to the rights of indigenous people, the main attention has been on those that are in nations that were former colonies of European powers and, in a similar vein, while attention has been on minority rights, the main focus of attention has been on recently arrived migrants from dissimilar cultures who have arrived in relatively large numbers. In this sense, while it may be appealing to suggest that indigenous people should be treated as having *sui generis* rights, this has not been the case for those that were not colonised from overseas (Kymlicka 2001, 119). A second and related point is an implication that the greater the cultural difference that is perceived in the minority group in question, the stronger and deeper the rights they should gain. Some support for this can be seen in the work of Karin Borevi (2014), who contrasts recent immigration policies of Sweden with those of previous decades, where the present model has goals that can be described as being radically multicultural, while previous efforts were based on an “ethnic ‘Swedifying’” that was particularly directed at the Sámi. These recent immigration policies coincide with the type of migrants coming to Sweden, which since 2000 have been predominantly family and asylum immigration (as opposed to the labour migrants of previous decades). The places of origin as well as numbers of recent migrants is reflected in the fact that Sweden has received the largest relative number of asylum seekers to Europe in recent years and that two of the largest four groups of immigrants, that account for 15% of the Swedish population, are Iraqis and Iranians (Borevi 2014). Borevi (2014) usefully traces the evolution of Swedish immigration policy from the 1970’s to the present, suggesting that the policy changed from one that was very affirmative in supporting ethnic identities to one that was more in line with integration as seen across Europe. However, such a change was relative and clearly did not significantly compromise the earlier policy direction as Sweden, in contrast with other nations, set no language requirements, no societal knowledge test or even a requirement to finish and pass a civic education course in order that citizenship can be attained. Indeed, the only stipulation is five years of residency to become a Swedish citizen, with the further right of retaining dual nationality.

However, the debate concerning minority and immigrant rights clearly goes beyond the potential granting of universal equality in terms of benefits and one strand is positioned in terms of what citizenship should mean with regard to multiculturalism. Tim Soutphommasane (2005) argues that the rights of immigrants cannot be separated from those of national minorities if liberal principles are to be upheld because to make a differentiation would effectively mean discriminating against one culture in favour of another. Based on such an understanding of rights, the argument extends to one that proposes a “civic pluralist model of multicultural citizenship,” (Soutphommasane 2005, 402) one where existing institutions and practices are scrutinised and reinterpreted, where assumed norms based on the beliefs and values of the majority culture are changed so that it is less about shared political values and more about having shared experiences and negotiation with regard to differences (Soutphommasane 2005, 413). In a somewhat similar if more prescriptive vein, Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos (1997, 276) calls for a required commitment by all citizens to recognise diversity, a form of multiculturalism that formally recognises respect for cultures as a fundamental principle.

The literature and the debates within it concerning multiculturalism and the ways in which it should be applied and upheld are cross-disciplinary (Wieviorka 1998) and range across a spectrum that includes the dismantling of current political and institutional structures (Soutphommasane 2005) to a contention that multiculturalism is a misleading concept and fears that directions being taken will lead to either a “tyranny of the majority” or a tyranny of the minorities” (Wieviorka 1998, 881). One strand of the debate is concerned with cultural relativism and a belief, expressed by Dennis Wrong (1997), that contradictory values and moralities inherent in different cultures should not be morally evaluated. This belief is based on the fact that moral standards, even if they are contradictory between cultures, are relative to the culture that established them, and any judgments made amount, effectively, to ethnocentrism. In contrast with this view, Matthew Johnson (2014, 145) advances the notion of an objective, universal theory of cultural evaluation grounded in a “eudaemonistic account of human wellbeing”. This fundamentally suggests that cultures should be evaluated based on the extent to which they allow society to “promote the wellbeing of individuals through provision of needs and capabilities within their given, determinate circumstances” (Johnson 2014, 145). The problem, perhaps, in suggesting such an evaluation is that personal wellbeing may be defined in cultural terms and such an evaluation may be assumed to be associated with a hegemonic liberalism and therefore to be ethnocentric. On the other hand, it can also be argued that the extent to which a religion and the culture that represents it can be aligned with multiculturalism and multicultural values may necessarily be evaluated if a ‘tyranny of the

minorities' is to be avoided.

4. Multicultural Sweden, religion and Islam

A distinction in definitions of culture is noted by Rhys Williams (2015) and these are the expressive side, represented by objects and types of behaviour and the anthropological side that sees culture as a shared existence. It is clear that religion can be seen in both of these aspects of culture but, with regard to multiculturalism, it is the latter that may be seen as being of most interest because a serious consideration and evaluation of it (multiculturalism) in terms of accommodation within institutional settings must include religion, something that is unavoidable if people with different religious and other traditions are to exist within one state (Williams 2015). The scholarly debate concerning religion and potential issues between host and migrant cultures generally leans towards a single view and that is a multiculturalist one. Indeed, in some cases this goes to the point of on one hand rewriting, or at least providing a nuanced view, of history and on the other of avoiding a clear issue that must exist between one culture and society that is traditionally liberal and secular and another that is traditionally non-secular and illiberal. Alar Kilp and Andres Saumets (2009), for example, provide a historical overview of religion in Europe that praises the Ottoman Empire for treating non-Muslim religious minorities as subordinate and second-class citizens and contrasts this with the intolerance of European Christian traditions, a tradition that is equated with "genocide and racial extermination" (Kilp and Saumets 2009, 15). The notion of Western European nations being secular is questioned, it is suggested that this is relative and that religion continues to be a "political tool," although how it is used for such purposes is not enlarged upon (Kilp and Saumets 2009, 21-2). Discussions questioning the wisdom of a radical version of multiculturalism can be identified in much of the relevant literature. Susanne Olsson (2009), for instance, also makes a number of claims in a discussion concerned with religion in the public space in Sweden, one being that there has been a religious resurgence in modern nations and societies and a decline in secularization, an argument based not on empirical evidence but on the statement that "religion is present in societies" (Olsson 2009, 278). Despite this contention, Olsson (2009) suggests that a significant problem for Muslim immigrants in Europe is how they can live in secular societies and still retain their Islamic authenticity and, while highlighting that there are different versions of Islam, makes the notable point that a "Muslim with religious conviction" may argue that "there is only one true Islam" (Olsson 2009, 279-280). However, the potentially important implications that may be seen in such a contention are effectively ignored because the stated

focus of her paper is only on those Muslims in favour of integration and not on those who are hostile towards it.

In a similar if more pragmatic vein, Richard Lagervall (2013) relates a case in Sweden where two Arabic-speaking female investigative television reporters who were dressed in niqabs and who carried hidden cameras went to imams at ten mosques and one pretended that she was having problems in her marriage because her husband had taken a second wife. She told them that this was affecting their relations and that she did not wish to have sex with her husband, with the result that he was violent towards her. Most of the imams told her that it was her husband's right to have a second wife, that she should patiently hope that he would change and if not "she should await reward for her virtue in the next life" (Lagervall 2013, 529). They further told her that it was her duty to have carnal relations with her husband and that his violence must not be reported by her to authorities. Lagervall (2013) states a view that the difficulty the imams faced in seeking to solve the case was due to "the fragile institutionalization of Islam in Sweden" and that the really important issue was that imams and Islam were the exclusive subjects of the report. Any concerns with regard to the use of Sharia law by Muslims is dismissed by Lagervall (2013) on the grounds that although questions connected with this law may be raised, and although they represent the imposition of a foreign law, they are locally interpreted. Of some further relevance is that a report ordered by the Minister of Education that considered the provision of education for imams in Sweden found that while this would be acceptable in principle by them, this was only on condition that the education took place within Islamic organisations, that non-Muslims could not be involved and that there were suspicions that the state wanted to influence the ways in which they interpreted Sharia law. It is of further relevance to note that the report was strongly motivated by a belief that as there was some dependency on Saudi imams coming to the country to teach, there existed a "pervasive and noxious influence of Saudi Wahhabism on some Muslims" (Lagervall 2013, 530).

In research that is concerned with how Muslims in Sweden select different strategies in order that they can express their faith, Ingemar Elander, Charlotte Fridolfsson and Eva Gustafsson (2015) set out their stall by describing the environment that has to be endured by Islamic immigrants in terms of "an aggressively negative Islamophobic stance" that is "expressed both in words and in physical violence in parts of Swedish society" which means Muslims are "facing antagonistic interpretations of Islam, and an ignorant, sometimes Islamophobic, environment" (Elander et al. 2015, 145). The relative objectivity of the research can also be gleaned through the statement that the work sought to adopt a "non-antagonistic, engaged stance" by seeking such attitudes in selecting the data for the research, which is interviews, published newspapers and the internet. The conclusion is of a group of people

(Muslims) who display an “emotionally strong, faith-based engagement in favour of improving the life situation either for Muslim women or for young people, irrespective of religion, in the neighbourhood and the city” (Elander et al. 2015, 157). However, it is notable that one brief section, which deals with Muslim responses to the results of the investigative journalism and the secretly recorded views of imams (see above), is headed “speaking with forked tongue” (Elander et al. 2015, 150).

Political perspectives of culture are considered by Jens-Martin Eriksen and Frederik Stjernfelt (2009) and the point is made that the issue of multiculturalism has become a political one, with the only real division between the left and right wings being one where the former holds that different cultures can harmoniously co-exist, while the latter holds that the right to self-autonomy is undeniable but that each culture should remain territorially separated. But there is a dilemma for the left because the Marxist view of culture is that it is a created structure of society that has little or no real relevance, particularly in comparison with the economic exploitation of one group by another. Another issue is that the left has traditionally been anti-totalitarian (which may suggest that it should have difficulties in supporting Islam) but both dilemmas have been overcome or sidestepped by adopting the banner of ‘Islamophobia.’ Even though racism based on skin colour, eugenics etc. have long since disappeared from any serious political movement, the term at least implies racism. As Eriksen and Stjernfelt (2009) point out, this is despite the fact that Islam distinctly is not a race but is, rather “a set of beliefs exactly like other sets of beliefs such as Christianity, communism, liberalism, conservatism, Nazism, Hinduism and many other widely divergent intellectual doctrines of a religious, political or philosophical nature” (Eriksen and Stjernfelt 2009, 8). These beliefs are, for many Muslims, beyond debate, beyond being questioned and are not potentially subject to being developed or revised to facilitate any form of cultural accommodation. Unlike other totalitarian ‘isms,’ however, and because it is defined in cultural terms, Islam gains a sort of protected status that is embodied in the often used word that is ‘Islamophobia.’ It provides an assumed right to be respected, to be left alone, even to have privileges granted – a “claim to protection and to the right to continue living in an unchanging way” (Eriksen and Stjernfelt 2009, 8). But this is a ‘culture’ that is by definition political and a political force that is undemocratic, that does not allow debate concerning its core principles, that believes its code of law should be in force and that even has its own version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that contrasts with the one adopted by the United Nations in 1948 in some very important respects. For example, that conversion from Islam to another religion or to atheism is prohibited (implicitly encouraging persecution based on religious beliefs), that men and women have different rights and responsibilities and that “all the rights and freedoms stipulated in this Declaration are

subject to the Islamic Shari'ah" (Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, 1990, 5). As Eriksen and Stjernfelt (2009, 10) argue, once the political domain is entered, "neither priests, imams nor clerics – of any faith – have an ounce more right to respect than any other individual simply because they make use of divine rhetoric in their political demands".

The literature concerned with multiculturalism abounds with definitions and critical analysis of what the term means, or should mean. In his work that argues for the necessity of economic democracy in order that multiculturalism can be usefully considered, C. Harris (2001) provides a range of interpretations of multiculturalism, from demographic to boutique and public/private to it being liberal, strong, based in social justice and being dialogical. Along with words such as 'inclusion,' 'accommodation' and 'identity' is 'democracy' and it is perhaps worth considering the intrinsic meaning and implications of European democracy and its foundations. Jonathan Israel (2011) describes the Enlightenment as something that shaped modernity, that it was "vastly ambitious," a "programme of secularism, humanity, cosmopolitanism, and above all freedom" – it was about "freedom from arbitrary power, freedom of speech, freedom of trade, freedom to realise one's talents, freedom of aesthetic response," freedom of "moral man to make his own way in the world" (Israel 2011, 3). This in turn led through waves of modernity, regardless of totalitarian setbacks, to values that include equality of races, of genders, of press freedom, fundamental human rights and, in a word, democracy and all it entails and implies. But despite some early promises, Islam did not have an Enlightenment, did not have a scientific revolution, "the interplay between religion and politics" created a "hostile environment to the general values of modernity" despite the "impressive developmental façade of rich Islamic nations" (Maziak 2017, 194). Despite some competing accounts, the view that Islam and modernity represents an "unsettled encounter" is quite uncontested and the fundamental issue is further explained by Fazlur Rahman (1984), who points out that interpretations of the Koran did not sufficiently understand the difference between general principles and particular situations, that these situations are based in the 7th century and that interpreting and teaching the Koran in this way has not allowed for any leeway for people living in modern times.

It may be argued that such a representation should not be made because of the diversity that exists within Islam, but such an argument ignores the point that at whatever level it may exist, there is considerable evidence that to belong to the Muslim community entails the surrender of at least some rights that may reasonably be taken for granted in a secular state. A further and well-rehearsed approach to the issue is to cast doubts on modernity and its influence on Europe and to suggest that the stage of secular development reached in Europe is questionable. Anna Triandafyllidou, Tariq Modood, and Ricard Zapata-Barrero (2006) for

example, suggest that politicians and intellectuals need to “rethink what is secularism, whether it has ever truly characterized modern European societies and most importantly why and in what versions it is still desirable” (Triandafyllidou et al. 2006, 3). With case studies from a range of European countries, and in a fashion that may be seen as representative of the dominant discourse, these authors set out to reveal how definitions of European values, standards and culture are used to “deny multicultural citizenship rights for immigrant communities” (Triandafyllidou et al. 2006, 13). With regard to a Scandinavian and specifically Danish context, the theme set out by Triandafyllidou et al. (2006) continues with a suggestion by Per Mouritsen (2006) that the responses to the murder of a film director because a film of his was critical of Islam (Danish Muslims had subsequently called for legislation banning religious blasphemy against Islam) represents a “polarised insistence” on the freedom of speech (Mouritsen 2006, 70). The controversy, furthermore, is described as being just the most recent of the “public agonies” suffered by Islam which stem from the “universalism of Danish political culture” (*ibid*).

4. Out of sight, out of mind

The religion of the Sámi is steeped in lives and how those lives are led, it fuses the people with their surroundings and their landscape, it represents a deeply cultural and societal belonging and it has been consigned, apart at best from the outer peripheries, to history. Essentially, the Sámi, or at least the vast majority of them, had to accept Modernity and secularity as these were interpreted through a North European lens. The argument in this paper is not that such enforcement should be similarly imposed on immigrants who have beliefs at odds with a mainstream perspective of society and the freedoms it allows, but that by largely ignoring the claims of the Sámi and by an almost fanatical desire to ensure equality for one group, those of another group may be unfairly and unjustly compromised – a group that is now out of sight and out of mind and outside interpretations of social justice as they are so selectively constructed.

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