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7 Sami identity and traditional livelihood practices

From non-Indigenous to Indigenous food frameworks

Corinna Casi

Introduction

This chapter explores the importance of the traditional food system in Indigenous cultures, particularly in Sami Indigenous communities living in the European High North. Instead of focusing on food culture, this study will investigate the relationship between traditional Sami livelihood practices, their identity, and self-determination as Indigenous People. Food ethics (Zwart 2000; Scrinis 2008; Siipi 2015; Thompson 2015), food sovereignty (Menser 2008; Schanbacher 2010; Werkheiser 2016; Glennie and Alkon 2018), and food security (ICESCR 1966; Legat et al. 1995; FAO 2003; Pimbert 2008; Pinstруп-Andersen 2009; Conway 2012; Murdock and Noll 2015) are the initial frameworks used in this chapter. The study will be further guided by the following research questions:

- 1 Why are the traditional livelihood practices of reindeer herding and salmon fishing of primary importance in Sami communities?
- 2 What roles do the frameworks of food security, food ethics, and food sovereignty play in highlighting the relationship between food systems, identity, and self-determination in Sami communities?
- 3 Why it is important to move from non-Indigenous to Indigenous frameworks?

In response to these questions, this study will briefly explore the general features of the Sami way of living, the significance of reindeer herding and salmon fishing as traditional livelihood practices, and the ties between these practices and traditional food systems. Then, the non-Indigenous theoretical frameworks used in this study will be employed to develop the philosophical reflection about the importance of traditional food systems in Sami culture and the link between food systems and Indigenous identity.

This chapter will also argue that traditional Sami food choices are part of the Sami way of life and therefore interlinked with their integrity, dignity, wellbeing, and self-determination as Indigenous People. The role of food in

traditional Sami culture is not different to its role in many other Indigenous cultures; many Indigenous People perceive the same connection between food and identity. Therefore, this chapter will also compare traditional Sami way of living to those of Native American tribes who engage in similar traditional livelihood practices such as salmon fishing. This comparison will help broaden our understanding of the Sami way of life. Because of their pivotal role in Sami culture, traditional dietary habits fall under the category of ‘overriding values’, which, according to a deontological perspective, are values so meaningful that they cannot be disregarded nor overlooked. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the importance of moving from non-Indigenous to Indigenous frameworks to pragmatically empower the Sami people.

Sami traditional livelihoods and Sami Indigenous awareness

The Sami are the Indigenous People situated in the Northernmost Europe, also called the European High North. Sami society is generally organised into small communities spread all over Sapmi, the Sami land, commonly known as Lapland. This region extends across Northern Norway, Sweden, and Finland and the north-western part of the Russian Federation (UNRIC 2019).

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Sami people were vulnerable to the oppressive racial policies instigated by the national governments of the countries enveloping their territories. This situation remained largely unchanged until around the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the Sami became involved in activism (Nyyssönen 2016, 284). In the period following World War II, the Sami people gradually became more active in defending their own rights and their lands. They also started to demand greater autonomy. Prominent achievements included the establishment of Sami Parliaments in Norway, Finland, and Sweden in the 1980s and 1990s (Greaves 2016, 469; Pedersen 2016, 282). Essential to these struggles are the aims of self-determination and the responsibility to protect Sami lands from exploitation, pollution, and uncontrolled development.

Reindeer herding, also known as reindeer husbandry, is the most common traditional livelihood practice in Sami communities (Åhrén 2016, 281). This activity is combined with and complemented by other livelihood activities: hunting game, such as fox and elk; and fishing, mainly for salmon, whitefish, char, and salmon trout. Other traditional activities include gathering mushrooms, berries such as cloudberries, lingonberries, and bilberries, and a variety of wild herbs, including sorrel, *Angelica archangelica*, and *Mulgedium alpinum* (Nilsson et al. 2011, 307–309; Samer 2019). Traditional Sami knowledge of food systems ensures a sustainable supply of nutritious food through harsh winters. These activities are important for private consumption and subsistence but also for trade. This chapter examines the Indigenous community’s food system as a whole. A food system is a multidimensional chain of food production; in the case of Indigenous communities, such as the

Sami, it includes all aspects of food hunting, harvesting and gathering, distribution, preparation, storing, consumption, and recycling or disposing of food waste (Whyte 2016, 6, 16).

For Sami communities living in coastal areas or close to waterways, salmon fishing is a vital livelihood practice (Pedersen 2016, 281), as significant as reindeer herding. However, in recent years, the introduction of trading fishing quotas and the creation of the modern salmon farming industry have greatly reduced the incomes of Sami traditional salmon anglers (Pedersen 2016, 282). Understandably, food obtained through traditional Sami livelihood activities is contingent on various conditions and circumstances in the natural environment. Natural factors such as seasons, the weather, and the climate affect the natural environment and thereby directly impact the traditional livelihood practices of hunting, fishing, and gathering.

In many societies, including that of the Sami, 'longstanding social relations are brought together through the production, preparation, and consumption of food' (Thompson 2015, 75). This means that the Sami peoples' livelihood practices are vital elements of their culture. As such, those practices are not only a means of subsistence; they are parts of complex food systems that form their identity as a community.

Ethics of food and the value of food

In this section, a food ethics framework will be used to outline the value of food in a society and specifically in Sami communities.

Food ethics is a philosophical academic discipline established at the end of the twentieth century. As one branch of applied ethics, it offers a moral analysis and guidance for human behaviour related to food (Mephram 2000, 610). Although this field of study is relatively young, ethical discussions about food and dietary conduct have taken place throughout history. In Ancient Greece, for instance, ethical considerations around food focused on fair measures and temperatures. Contemporary reflections on food ethics examine its production, distribution, preparation, and consumption (Zwart 2000, 113). Several fields of study acknowledge the meaning of food; considerable scholarly works on food ethics have come out of various fields, including anthropology, economics, environmental sciences, and law (Barnhill et al. 2018, 1). The present study examines the value of food and its connections to other ethical questions such as human dignity, identity, and wellbeing. It also points out that traditional livelihood practices in Sami culture are an overriding value.

The value of food can be considered from multiple perspectives: from the standpoint of knowledge values, cultural values, spiritual values, or health values, among others. The value of food includes its social, cultural, and aesthetic aspects and the symbolic meanings of food, all of which significantly impact human wellbeing. Examples include sharing a meal with family and friends to celebrate a happy event (Siipi 2015, 194). Food has the power to

create identity and perpetuate culture in a community, as discussed by the renowned food ethics scholar, Paul B. Thompson (2015). The entire process of food production, preparation, and consumption builds connections in local communities (Thompson 2015, 75–76). This view follows the idea that direct contact with and individual commitments to food production create a special bond between people and food. It also promotes a particular value of care for the food in question, as suggested by the food scholar Ian Werkheiser when claiming that ‘the experiences of producing food – working with the land, cooperating with one another by necessity, watching something grow and caring for it [...] – encourage particular type of values and culture practices for many who works as producers’ (2016, 381).

Therefore, the methods used in food production as well as food ‘distribution and consumption affect us indirectly through their social and environmental impacts’ (Thompson and MacDonald 2013; Siipi 2015, 194). Evidently, food, and particularly traditional Sami food, is profoundly linked to important spheres of life such as identity, culture, and wellbeing, since the value of food for humans goes beyond its nutritional content (Scrinis 2008; Whyte 2016).

Reindeer herding and Sami identity

The Sami Indigenous People and other local non-Sami communities living in the European High North have been practicing reindeer husbandry for centuries. However, in recent decades, this traditional livelihood activity has come under increased threat due to the deterioration of grazing land and lichen pastures, the main food for reindeers. This gradual diminishing of resources has been triggered by modern forms of land use. Forestry, especially the clear cutting of old-growth forests rich in arboreal lichens, is a major culprit, along with tourism, hydropower generation, nature conservation policies (Kyllönen et. al. 2006, 695–697), mining, and changes due to the climate crisis. For example, recent plans to construct an Arctic railway across northern Norway and Finland could worsen the situation for reindeer herders as the railway could disrupt traditional reindeer migratory paths (Gertz 2017; Staalesen 2018).

The deep connection of the Sami people to their food traditions has been explored by Sami scholar Jon Petter A. Stoor. Stoor et al. (2015) highlight and strengthen the link between ‘food production’ and Sami identity, focusing on the meaning of reindeer herding. This study investigated the cause of high suicide rates in the Sami community by interviewing Sami people living in Northern Sweden. In Sami culture, life as a herder is ‘understood as the best way to preserve Sami identity and to be able to pass the legacy on to the new generation’ (Stoor et al. 2015, 3). For the Sami, salmon fishing and the reindeer herding are traditional practices that are as meaningful as their own lives and identities. Stoor’s article shows how threats to reindeer husbandry have disrupted the balance between the traditional Sami

food system and Sami identity. Some negative impacts of this disruption are disconnection from one's own past and traditions, a loss of the sense of community belonging and, in certain cases, high suicide rates in the Sami community (Stoor et al. 2015). Some Sami who lose their reindeer herds or the right to fish can see no reason to continue living. In this light, the suicide might represent a way to elude the existential void (Stoor et al. 2015, 1, 4). The article clearly demonstrates the importance of reindeer herding to the Sami community, both as a primary source of food and as a source of cultural identity. Moreover, this livelihood activity helps maintain intergenerational links, connecting Sami culture to past, present, and future generations.

Dignity, identity, overriding values, and negative duties

Deontology is a traditional philosophical theory concerned with moral actions and its ethical motivations. According to deontology, human beings have rights, duties, and responsibilities toward their fellow humans. The word 'duty' comes from the Greek word *deon*, from which this theory took its name. Human communities create human rights to 'ensure a certain baseline level of decent treatment for all persons' (Orend 2002, 142). One of the first advocates of deontology was the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who argued that people are not solely means or tools to our personal goals but rather 'ends in themselves' (Kant 1983, 1996, 210). The theory presents individuals as rational, unique, and therefore deserving of rights and due respect as autonomous individuals (Kant 1996, 210–211) who are free to choose their own identity and way of life. Human life, dignity, and integrity are key values that cannot be ignored or overridden; as such they should be protected. These values cannot be disregarded or usurped as they play a crucial role in ensuring a decent human life.

Following this argument, the professor of philosophy Gary Comstock (2013) defines 'overriding values' as interests, beliefs, and aspects of life that are vital to an individual's identity and worldview. Based on our understanding of the Sami identity and way of life, it is reasonable to opine that their food traditions belong to the sphere of 'overriding values'. Traditional Sami methods of food production are of utmost importance to decisions regarding the kind of life a Sami wants and chooses to live. Therefore, these activities are essential to the Sami's self-determination as Indigenous communities, as Stoor et al.'s article also demonstrates (2015).

If Sami food traditions are overriding values, they can generate negative duties under a decolonial approach. A negative duty is 'a duty not to inflict grievous and unjust harm on another' (Orend 2002, 143). In this context, Nordic states have a negative duty not to pollute the natural environment and not to overuse natural resources in Sami lands.

In summation, Sami food traditions represent a set of overriding values. As such, those values should generate negative duties for the governments of Nordic states to prevent pollution of the Sapmi natural environment in

order to provide the best opportunities for the Sami people to continue their traditional livelihood practices of reindeer herding, salmon fishing, berry gathering, hunting, and harvesting.

Food sovereignty and food security as theoretical frameworks

The concept of food ethics has been used to explain the general features of the value and importance of food in Sami culture. In this section, the theoretical frameworks of food security and food sovereignty will be used to stress the connection between food systems, policies, justice, and wellbeing in society.

The term ‘food security’ was coined during reconstruction after World War II. At that time, it was applied with the aim of making nations food secure. The meaning of the phrase ‘making nations food secure’ is not an easy one to explain because it has taken on different connotations over time. Initially it was used to discuss issues of food supply and availability. It meant ensuring that people would have enough food for a long period of time at the national and international scale (FAO 2003). Gradually, the term has expanded and been applied to cities, communities, households, and individuals (Pinstrup-Andersen 2009; Conway 2012). Due to ecological, social, and political changes, the term ‘food security’ has been used in various ways and for a range of functions. Therefore, Indigenous Peoples, including the Sami, may have an understanding of ‘food security’ that differs to that of the settlers. Herein lies the significance of ‘indigenising’ the discourse around food security (discussed later in this chapter). At the World Food Summit in 1996, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) defined the term in this way: food security exists ‘when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life’ (FAO 1996). Earlier in 1994, the United Nations Development Program had already identified food security as one significant aspect of human security (UNDP 1994). Therefore, the FAO (1996) definition is significant as it acknowledges food as a human right, as stated in Article 11 of the United Nations’ International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR 1966, 7).

However, in this context, a ‘lack of food security is largely understood as an “access” issue’ (Murdock and Noll 2015, 328). Nonetheless, this is not always the case; an example is the contamination of Columbia River salmon. Like many Sami communities, a number of Native American tribes, including the Warm Springs Tribe, the Yakama Nation, the Umatilla Confederated Tribes, and the Nez Perce Tribe, have based their livelihoods on salmon fishing from the Columbia River in the Pacific Northwest (USA) for many generations. However, in the late 1950s, an increase in farming, timber industries, and mining activities played a role in the contamination of the Columbia River, as described by the Indigenous scholar Lori Lambert (2008).

As a consequence, large amounts of toxins contaminated the salmon in the river, making it unfit for human consumption. To mitigate this predicament, the federal government offered food replacements to the Native American tribes in the form of processed canned fish. However, they continued to practice traditional fishing activities and to consume fish from the polluted Columbia River, disregarding governmental health warnings.

It is a good strategy to meet the dietary needs of Indigenous Peoples by ensuring adequate distribution of and access to safe, nutritional food, as per the 1996 FAO definition of food security. However, in this case, the governmental solution was put forward without consulting Native Americans about their food. Therefore, this solution failed to acknowledge the deep connection between traditional salmon fishing and Indigenous identity. This scenario shows how an ‘access-focused’ solution can easily fail to acknowledge the cultural and social value of salmon for Indigenous People such as the Sami or the Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest. Replacing fished salmon with canned fish assumes a culturally universal interpretation of food practices that, obviously, proved unsatisfactory in this case. It is now clear that both the Native tribes and the Sami people possess a special food culture which is deeply connected to their way of life and to their natural environment, including the non-human world of animals, plants, and inanimate nature (Legat et al. 1995). These food cultures are therefore deeply connected to their Indigenous identity.

In response to disillusionment with food security, understood as the dominant global discourse on food policy, some scholars claim that, when based only on economic growth and market strategies, food security may not be the most suitable political tool for eradicating poverty and inequality (Pimbert 2008; Schanbacher 2010; Wittman et al. 2010). To create a fairer food system, they rather support the idea of food sovereignty, which is based on values such as sustainability, environmental impacts, equal access to lands, and the protection of traditional livelihood activities. Food sovereignty discourses are part of the debate on food justice, a field that examines how injustices and inequalities in the current food system are patterns connected to gender, class, and race (Glennie and Alkon 2018, 7). The term ‘food sovereignty’ was established internationally in 1996 during the FAO World Food Summit by La Via Campesina, a self-managed organisation working with matters of food, justice, and identity (Patel 2009). Over the years, the term ‘food sovereignty’ has attracted varied interpretations. According to community activists, the concept indicates ‘how people and communities should have sovereignty over their food systems’ (Werkheiser 2016, 378). Food sovereignty advocates for the right of local communities to practice full control over their food. Sami communities, for example, should be free to identify their own food policies that do not necessarily follow market mechanisms and mass production. Thus, food sovereignty focuses on the needs of local people and highlights the significance and implications of local food production (Menser 2008; Schanbacher 2010). From a food sovereignty perspective, the

Sami people have the right to control the Sapmi natural environment, which is the source of most of their traditional food.

Ultimately, the frameworks of food ethics, food security, and food sovereignty emphasise the relationship between the Sami peoples' livelihood activities and their dignity, self-determination, and identity as the Sami Indigenous community, even though the discourses around these topics remain in the settler's realm and language.

Moving beyond non-Indigenous frameworks: the connection between self-determination and Sami traditional livelihood practices

The anthropologist Elaine Gerber suggests that 'food and eating serve as important and symbolically laden sites through which people contest their identity and mark their independence' (Gerber 2014, 516). The value of food as a symbol of self-determination and identity for the Sami people is crucial and deserves further investigation to move this debate into a context that considers Indigenous perspectives. From this perspective, the substitution of salmon with canned fish, in the Columbia River's case, reinforces a structure of subordination (Plumwood 2000; Cohoon 2014) of Indigenous People. Under the framework of food sovereignty, this substitution seriously hinders the Native tribes' freedom and self-determination as Indigenous People. Equally, from a food ethics perspective, controlling the Sami's food harvesting, gathering, and production affects their self-determination as Indigenous People who want to preserve their traditional way of living. Yet, in recent decades, national governments of regions the Sami people inhabit have established regulations that limit the salmon fishing and reindeer herding practices of Sami communities. These restrictions on their livelihood practices eliminate the Sami's traditional means of support, strip them of their autonomy to make free choices about their traditional livelihoods, deny their right to self-determination, and force them to depend on external market-based supplies for their daily subsistence.

In struggles over food sovereignty, the connections between questions of food and other matters such as land use and political, economic, ecological, and social issues emerge quite clearly (Werkheiser 2016, 378). In food security discourses within Indigenous communities – also called Indigenous food security – all these aspects are not only connected but also tightly interrelated. For instance, in Indigenous communities, ecological problems can have repercussions at multiple levels: cultural, nutritional, political, and economic. In a more practical sense, issues such as pollution, climate crises, and the overuse of natural resources can directly affect fisheries; the lives and food supplies of reindeer, including lichens; and the food supplies of other wildlife in the European High North (Kyllönen et al. 2006, 696–697). As a consequence, Sami people have suffered food insecurity, defined as insufficient access to and availability of food for an active and healthy life

(FAO 2015). Moreover, we can infer that food insecurity and environmental instability have the potential to shake the delicate political equilibrium of this region and disrupt the Sami's political autonomy on several fronts. Food scarcity in Sami lands presents serious challenges to the Indigenous population, especially by severely limiting their social and physical freedom. The Sami people are not able to exercise free choice and are pressured into buying food in supermarkets to compensate for their food insecurity. This scenario directly threatens Indigenous People's self-determination, dislocating them from food self-sufficiency, food independence, and forcing them to depend on food markets. Therefore, to empower Sami people, significant attempts should be made to decrease their dependence on global food markets and revitalise Indigenous Sami food traditions. Scholars such as Delormier et al. (2017) and Coté (2016) have suggested similar solutions to help other Indigenous communities regain their autonomy and sovereignty over their food systems.

According to Kyle Powys Whyte (2016), a Potawatomi Indigenous scholar and activist, food motivates Indigenous Peoples' collective capacities. The term 'collective capacities' refers to a complex ecological system, or ecology, of interrelations among humans, non-human animals, plants, spiritual creatures, and landscapes based on their own origins, cultural narratives, religion, ways of life, political and economic systems. The Australian feminist philosopher Val Plumwood, for instance, calls Indigenous Peoples' wisdom and respect for food 'sacred eating' (Plumwood 2000, 298–303). Applying Whyte's notion of 'ecology' to Sami communities highlights the interconnections between their livelihood practices, wise resource use, traditional ecological knowledge, and worldview. This is also linked to past, present, and future generations; to natural cycles of life and death; and to animate and inanimate elements of nature (Helander-Renvall 2016; Casi 2019). This view is shared by scholars who depict the value of food as a hub or force 'pulling certain people, nonhumans, and ecosystems together in ways that promote collective action' (Werkheiser 2016, 383; Whyte 2016, 10).

Using the dominance of their own culture, settlers try to transform Indigenous territories in their own homelands economically, politically, and culturally. Industrialisation, resource extraction, deforestation, and forced integration are all part of this process (Whyte 2016, 12–13). Whyte (2016), in agreement with anthropologist Tate A. Lefevre (2015) and other Indigenous, feminist, and environmental justice scholars (LaDuke 1993; Calhoun et al. 2007; Walker et al. 2013), calls this process 'settler colonialism', a structure of oppression by the dominant civilisation. In this gradual process, the settlers' overbearing attitude targets the natural environment for resource extraction and land use, polluting the air, soil, and water and destroying aquatic and terrestrial habitats that Indigenous Peoples use for food production (Agyeman et al. 2010). Consequently, the cultures of local Indigenous communities are erased as the adaptation capacities of their ecologies are removed. This limits traditional Indigenous ways of life and eradicates

their plans, possibilities, and hopes for the future (Walkers et al. 2013). From this perspective, the Sami people living according to their traditional Indigenous way of life experience intersectional coercions. This means that they experience deeper simultaneous social pressures than non-Sami residents in the same area. The term ‘intersectionality’ was first used by the civil rights advocate Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw to describe the coercions women of colour experience under the dominant culture (1989). The term describes the multiple concurrent factors that oppress black women in society; considering these pressures separately does not illustrate the full situation. Since then, the notion of intersectionality has expanded to other several social categories and fields of study. Hence, from an intersectional perspective, the Sami people face more interlinked, simultaneous social pressures than non-Sami in the same region. Some of those social pressures are due to race, class, and religion. However, in the specific case of Sami people, other pressures apply as well. Sami face oppression due to long-standing colonial attitudes, human rights violations done to those living according to Sami culture, racism and unequal treatment, forced integration, destruction of their social systems, disruption of intergenerational knowledge transmission, dispossession of their homelands, historic traumas, etc. In addition, colonial attitudes continue to affect the Indigenous Sami food systems on a greater scale than in the past (Sarche and Spicer 2008). To present a more complete picture, an intersectional viewpoint has led Indigenous activists to reformulate the links among nutrition, colonialism, and certain diseases (Whyte 2016).

‘Decolonising’ food security and ‘Indigenising’ food sovereignty

Food ethics, food security, and food sovereignty were useful frameworks for highlighting the relationships among food systems, livelihood practices, and identity in Sami communities. However, in order to bring those discourses closer to Indigenous matters, I suggest, in line with Indigenous scholars (Coté 2016; Greaves 2016), to engage in processes of ‘Indigenising’ food sovereignty and ‘decolonising’ food security when applying these frameworks to Sami communities.

When interviewing Sami living in the Norwegian High North, the political scientist Wilfrid Greaves (2016) found that Sami identified few significant factors that define security. In addition to traditional food and Indigenous ways of life, the Sami identified other priorities as follows: protection of the natural environment, autonomy, and self-determination within the settler Nordic states, and establishment of Sami identity through cultural practices (Greaves 2016, 473). Greaves points out that different communities define security – which also includes food security – in various ways depending on their history and social and political development. Although the Sami people identified several dangerous threats to their livelihood, they deliberately chose not to describe these priorities as security issues (Greaves 2016, 462). In their view, language about ‘security’ only refers to hard security and

military interventions by nation-states (Greaves 2016, 472–473). This term therefore remains in the realm of the dominant society.

To develop comprehensive food security policies in Sami communities, it would be helpful if the Nordic states employed a more inclusive, respectful approach that heeds the core needs of Indigenous Peoples as well as their own viewpoints. Along these lines, Greaves emphasises the need for Nordic states to decolonise their ideas of security from their political agendas by allowing affected Sami populations to define security from their own Indigenous perspectives (Greaves 2016, 463). In addition, Indigenous communities should be given appropriate tools to fight food insecurity within their homelands. Important ‘tools’ would include safeguarding the protection of Sami lands from pollution and extractive companies and fostering the healing of previously contaminated lands. This process should stem from a decolonialising practice in which the Nordic states acknowledge the overriding value of traditional Sami livelihood practices. This will also support the Nordic states’ negative duty to not perpetrate ‘unjust harm on another’ (Orend 2002) and therefore to not limit the survival of the Sami’s ‘collective capacities’ (Whyte 2016). In this context, the notion of ‘decolonisation’ will be used to empower the Sami people, as Indigenous scholar Angela Cavender Wilson suggests (2004). In this chapter, ‘decolonising’ does not mean rejecting all Western theories but rather ‘centring [Indigenous] concerns and worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory and research from [Indigenous] perspectives and for [Indigenous] purposes’ (Tuhiwai Smith 1999, 39).

‘Indigenising’ food sovereignty goes a long way toward clarifying and building a broader understanding of the colonial aspects embedded in the idea of food sovereignty. In line with Coté, the verb ‘indigenise’ means regenerate the relationships between Indigenous People and their lands by revitalising their ecological knowledge and food systems (Coté 2016, 1). In specific, indigenising food sovereignty, Coté notes, ‘means reframing it within Indigenous People’s struggles for autonomy, self-sufficiency, and self-determination rather than within assertions of domination, control, and authority over ancestral homelands’ (2016, 9). Words such as ‘authority’ and ‘domination’ do not belong to Indigenous worldview but rather to the settlers’ viewpoint; hence, they should be avoided when talking about Indigenous food sovereignty.

Therefore, in the context of the legal right to self-determination, indigenising food sovereignty in Sami communities means giving the Sami people the power to define their own food systems, as mentioned in the Declaration of Nyéléni concerning food sovereignty in Indigenous communities (Via Campesina 2007). In these contexts, the revitalisation of Sami traditional food systems through ecologically sound methods based on traditional principles plays a pivotal role in strengthening Sami self-determination, which, in turn, would help decrease their dependence on the market food system. Moreover, the promotion of Sami principles and traditional teachings about land use should play a prominent role in the design of Sami food security

policies for present and future generations. In this sense, efforts to ‘indigenise’ food sovereignty would strongly encourage the recovery of traditional Sami food practices (Coté 2016; Whyte 2016).

Conclusions

Food has a fundamental relationship with other aspects of human life. This chapter has explored the connections among the Sami food system, Sami traditional livelihood practices, such as reindeer herding and salmon fishing, Sami identity and self-determination as Indigenous People. These relationships have been considered from a philosophical perspective under the frameworks of food ethics, food sovereignty, and food security. In the era of globalisation, more effective food security strategies are needed to address food insecurity challenges in Indigenous communities. Theories of food sovereignty play an important role in bringing cultural identity to the foreground of the discourse around food, without being too idealistic (Thompson 2015, 75–76). From the perspective of food ethics, strengthening the relationships among food, identity, and culture can emphasise the need to develop a more respectful attitude toward food matters. This chapter has also shown that traditional Sami food choices and livelihood activities are connected to the natural environment and are part of Indigenous Peoples’ ways of life. They are therefore interlinked with the Sami people’s identity and dignity. In addition, in Sami communities, food plays a role in community bonding, functions as an intergenerational knowledge transmitter, and helps enhance cooperation. As such, traditional Sami food habits are not simply a matter of consumerist preferences for one food over another. They belong to the category of ‘overriding values’, values that are too essential to be ignored or discarded.

In conclusion, to empower Sami Indigenous People, I suggest engaging in processes that ‘indigenise’ food sovereignty and ‘decolonise’ food security. In Sami communities, from a practical standpoint, this means letting the Sami people define food security and food sovereignty and determine their own food policies, avoiding terms such as ‘domination’ and ‘authority’, which do not belong to their worldview. Moreover, when developing and implementing food security policies affecting the Sami community, it would be of great benefit in the long run to take a more inclusive approach in order to develop an understanding of the Sami peoples’ perspective on food security.

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