

# YOU CANNOT BEAT A TROLL WITH ITS OWN TRICKS

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In 2014 the Sámi reindeer herder Jovsset Ánte Sara went to court to challenge the Norwegian *Reindeer Husbandry Act*'s enforced culling of herds. Prior to this, he had been ordered to kill 41 of his 116 reindeer.<sup>1</sup> Not only would the reduction of his herd put him in danger of losing his reindeer herding license and cause bankruptcy, it would also exclude him from enacting a cultural practice embedded in his community. Reindeer herding has been practiced by the indigenous Sámi people for centuries and has become an emblem of Sámi culture following a brutal Norwegian assimilation policy, which almost erased certain Sámi languages and practices. The reduction of herds is justified as an environmental protection of the tundra. Yet, green energy and mining projects are planned in this region heavily populated by Sámi people. The appropriation of indigenous land without prior consent for green development is called 'green colonization.'<sup>2</sup> In this way, Sara's case protests the ongoing colonization of his community by the Norwegian state through challenging the *Reindeer Husbandry Act*. He won in the district court and in the court of appeal before facing the state at the supreme court. Outside of each courthouse, Jovsset Ánte Sara's sister, Máret Anne Sara, staged the art project *Pile o'Sápmi* (2014-2017). The project consists of decapitated reindeer heads, gathered from slaughterhouses ordered to execute reindeer to comply with the *Reindeer Husbandry Act*. These heads were first installed as a pile: a brutal display as skin and eyes were intact. As Jovsset Ánte Sara's case made its way through the judicial system, *Pile o'Sápmi* underwent a transformation. Following the first display, the skulls were stripped to the bone, and woven together with metal wire to resemble the first official Sámi flag. The transformation correlates to the history of Norwegian colonization of the Sámi people which continues to take place. This paper narrates the parallel development between Jovsset Ánte Sara's lawsuit which took place in a court of law and Máret Anne Sara's project which unfolded in the public eye.

<sup>1</sup> The 2007 Reindeer Husbandry Act determines the upper limit of reindeer a 'Siida' can have. A 'Siida' is an age-old term but can nowadays be thought of as a group of reindeer herders belonging to a specific district. In Sara's district, 20 Fálá, the upper limit was 1700 reindeer, but in March 2012 the number was 3105. Now, the way this is managed is a bit complicated. The ones ordering the reduction of the herds is the Norwegian Reindeer Husbandry Board, which have four members appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and three from the Sámediggi. The Sámediggi is the Sámi parliament, founded in 1989, which mirrors the Norwegian government, but solely has an advisory status and no veto right. In 20 Fálá, the group of reindeer herders decided to split the reduction of reindeer fairly among them, so that Jovsset Ánte Sara would not lose his reindeer herding license. However, even with the 35.6% reduction, he would still not be economically stable. When Sara first protested the reduction, his complaint went to the Norwegian Reindeer Husbandry Board who decided not to take up the complaint, but forward it to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. This institution disregarded the complaint and insisted on the reduction of the herd. Following this Sara went to court claiming the order had no legal standing. Dan Robert Larsen, "Detter er Jovsset Ánte Sara-saken" *NRK Sápmi* December 11 2018, [https://www.nrk.no/sapmi/nrk-sapmi-forklarer\\_jovsset-ante-sara-saken-114329501](https://www.nrk.no/sapmi/nrk-sapmi-forklarer_jovsset-ante-sara-saken-114329501).

<sup>2</sup> Green colonialism is the expropriation of land to promote mitigation measures related to climate change. Examples of this are the reforestation of vast areas claimed for agriculture, or the establishment of parks to preserve natural areas, without consideration for indigenous peoples or other people living off the land, who are displaced as a result of these measures. Generally, green colonialism is implemented in 'third' world countries, and the conservationist efforts are enforced by Western states governing it with financial aid. In Norway, green colonialism is considered to be an internal colonialism of the Sámi people, as the culling of the reindeer is justified by the protection of the tundra. Yet, this is merely a veneer of conservationist efforts, as the state simultaneously installs green development in this area from which it profits. Aili Keskitalo, the first woman president of the Sami Parliament, has used the term 'green colonization' to describe the Norwegian green energy development on Sámi land. She describes it as "colonization in the name of the climate." Trevelyan Wing, "Climate Change, Green development, and Indigenous Struggle for Cultural Preservation in Arctic Norway,"

The Sámi People of Sápmi have lived under Nordic colonial domination for centuries.<sup>3</sup> Sápmi, the Sámi people's region, spreads across Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. The largest Sámi population is situated in Norway, which has subjected the Sámi to a vicious assimilation policy, known as 'Norwegianization.'<sup>4</sup> Ignoring the effects of its colonial history, Norway continues to present itself to the world as an egalitarian, democratic state overtly concerned with human rights.<sup>5</sup> Norwegian subjugation of Sámi culture goes back centuries, and intensified when Norway gained independence from Denmark in 1814 following 400 years of unionism.<sup>6</sup> The Norwegian state began to imagine itself as a single community; the eradication of Sámi difference was presented as a natural consequence because the Sámi have different languages, traditions, and norms.<sup>7</sup> Norway prohibited the Sámi languages, using schools to further impose 'Norwegianization' from the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> The assimilation policy then intensified following World War Two.<sup>9</sup> The Norwegian welfare state's vision of equality manifested in the perpetuation of 'sameness,' marginalizing Sámi culture.<sup>10</sup> The Sámi resisted Norwegian hegemony, establishing the Sámi Nordic Council in 1956, which advised the Nordic governments on Sámi matters.<sup>11</sup> The Sámi Council's efforts ended the prohibition of the Sámi languages in 1959, marking the official termination of 'Norwegianization.'<sup>12</sup>

Despite its official termination, however, 'Norwegianization' continues to operate. Presently, the country expropriates Sámi land and marginalizes their culture.<sup>13</sup> This has forced the Sámi people into a continual fight for the right to their land, languages, and culture.<sup>14</sup> The *Reindeer Husbandry Act* (1978), has become a particularly contentious topic between the Sámi and the Norwegian state. The Sámi tradition of reindeer herding dates back centuries and is integral to Sámi cultural identity, but the governmental act categorizes it as a sector of the meat industry.<sup>15</sup> The act has been altered continuously, and it generally imposes a strict labyrinth of laws which makes it increasingly hard to practice reindeer herding. Highlighted here is the way in which reindeer herding licenses are issued to families, the conditions of this license, and the forced reduction of herds.

The forced reduction of herds was implemented in 2007 due to the fear of overgrazing in Finnmark, a

*Climate Institute*, November 28 2017, <http://climate.org/climate-change-green-development-and-the-indigenous-struggle-for-cultural-preservation-in-arctic-norway/>; Clisel, s.v. "Green Colonialism" accessed May 25, 2019, [https://clisel.eu/green\\_colonialism](https://clisel.eu/green_colonialism).

<sup>3</sup> Rauna Kuokkanen, "'Survivance' in Sami and First Nations Boarding School Narratives: Reading Novels by Kerttu Vuolab and Shirley Sterling," *American Indian Quarterly* 27, no. 3/4 (Summer-Fall 2003), 703-704.

<sup>4</sup> Veli-Pekka Lehtola, *The Sámi People: Traditions in Transition*, trans. Linna Weber Müller-Wille (Anaar-Inari: Kustannus-Puntsi, 2004), 10.

<sup>5</sup> Diana Mulnari, et al., "Introduction: Postcolonialism and the Nordic Models of Welfare and Gender" in *Complying with Colonialism: Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region*, eds. Suvi Keskinen, Salla Tuori et al., (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 8.

<sup>6</sup> Harald Larson, *Bjønrestjerne Björnson: A Study in Norwegian Nationalism* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1945), 9.

<sup>7</sup> Concurrently Norway was reinventing its own written language separated from Danish. This corresponds to Benedict Anderson's analysis of the correlation between the creation of a national imaginary and print languages. See: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, [1983] (London: Verso, 1991), 45, 74-75.

<sup>8</sup> Lehtola, *The Sámi People*, 44.

<sup>9</sup> Ivar Bjørklund, *Sápmi - Becoming a Nation: The emergence of a Sami national community* (Tromsø: Tromsø University Museum, 2000), 9.

<sup>10</sup> Bjørklund, *Sápmi*, 9-11.

<sup>11</sup> The assimilation policy still succeeded. The seaside Sámi were almost completely assimilated and their language was on the verge of extinction. Furthermore, being Sámi had become attached with so much shame, that many Sámi hid their true identity. See: Lehtola, *The Sámi People*, 72.

<sup>12</sup> Bjørklund, *Sápmi*, 9.

<sup>13</sup> Lehtola, *The Sámi People*, 9.

<sup>14</sup> Beth Blue Swadener and Kagendo Mutua, "Decolonizing Performances: Deconstructing the Global Postcolonial" in *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, eds. Norman K Dencin et. al. (California: Sage Publications, 2008), 33-34.

Sámi area.<sup>16</sup> Instead of targeting owners of large herds, all herders of specific districts are forced to reduce their herds by the same percentage. This puts young reindeer herders, such as Jovsset Ánte Sara, at risk, as the act states that a reindeer herder cannot maintain their license if they have less than 50 reindeer. If Jovsset Ánte Sara had followed the state's orders in 2013, his reindeer herd would have shrunk to under 70 reindeer. Due to climate change, the animals' ability to feed is threatened, leading to the deaths of several reindeer every year.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, a reindeer herding license is not issued to an individual but a group of herders, usually a family. This means that

the state's orders would put Jovsset Ánte Sara's entire family's reindeer herding license at risk. Additionally, it is impossible to create a livelihood out of such a small herd. This makes it economically unattractive for other young Sámi reindeer herders to maintain tradition and follow in the footsteps of previous generations.

In conjunction with the implementation of forced reduction in 2013, the government constructed green developments and mining projects in Finnmark, the same area they wanted to protect from overgrazing.<sup>18</sup> One proposed project includes a windmill park in an area which had been Sámi reindeer's breeding site for decades. If this is realised, the breeding site will be ruined.<sup>19</sup> This is 'green colonization': the expropriation of Indigenous land without prior or informed consent for green development.<sup>20</sup> In 2015, Norway generated an excess of energy, nonetheless it continues to build new windmill parks and hydroelectric power plants. Norway, declared as "Europe's green battery," is preparing alongside the European Union to create huge power lines across country borders to export energy to Germany and the United Kingdom, while the country already exports energy to Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Denmark.<sup>21</sup> The ambitious objective of this profitable enterprise with eager investors is for Norway to store excess energy from European countries' wind-farms and solar plants, and return it when needed.<sup>22</sup> The capitalist profit-driven economic model followed here reveals that Norway's economic ethics do not match its discourse of human rights.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the green energy projects have a negative impact on the Sámi livestock and land.<sup>24</sup> The Reindeer Husbandry Act is an agent of 'green colonization': paving the way for green developments, yet conflicting with the International Labour Organization's Convention 169 (ILO) signed by Norway in 1990, which protects Indigenous Peoples' right to their culture, land, and language.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Bjørklund, *Sápmi*, 43-44.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Martyn-Hemphill, "In Norway, Fighting the Culling of Reindeer with a Macabre Display," *The New York Times*, December 12 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/06/world/europe/reindeer-norway-trial.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Jonas Gabbatiss, "Climate Change in Lapland: The impact of global warming in the land of Santa Claus," *Independent*, December 23 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/climate-change-lapland-santa-claus-father-christmas-reindeer-global-warming-a8113041.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Wing, "Climate Change."

<sup>19</sup> Carl-Göran Larsson, "Vakre er de ikke," *NRK*, June 24 2017, [https://www.nrk.no/sapmi/xl/\\_vakre-er-de-ikke\\_-113560415](https://www.nrk.no/sapmi/xl/_vakre-er-de-ikke_-113560415).

<sup>20</sup> Wilfrid Greaves "Arctic (in)security and Indigenous peoples: Comparing Inuit in Canada and Sámi in Norway" *Security Dialogue* vol. 47, no. 6 (December 2016), 470-71, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010616665957>.

<sup>21</sup> Christoph Seidler, "Norway Wants to Become Europe's Battery," *Spiegel Online*, May 24th 2012, <https://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/norway-wants-to-of-fer-hydroelectric-resources-to-europe-a-835037.html>.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.; Wing, "Climate Change."

<sup>23</sup> Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, "Introduction: Critical Methodologies and Indigenous Inquiry," in *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, eds. Norman K Denzin et. Al. (California: Sage Publishing, 2008), 1.

<sup>24</sup> Rebecka Snefiglli Sondell, "Who Speaks up for the Sami People in Paris?," *The Barents Observer*, December 11 2015, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/ru/node/207>.

<sup>25</sup> This convention remains unsigned by Sweden, Finland, and Russia.



↑ fig. 1 Måret Anna Sara, *Pile o'Sápmi*, 2014, 200 reindeer skulls and wooden flag, Tana, Norway. (Photo: Iris Egilsdatter)

As such, *The Reindeer Husbandry Act* is an attack on both Sámi culture and history. Particularly the attack on reindeer herding carries historical significance. During the nineteenth century, the Sámi reindeer herders' nomadic lifestyle protected them from severe forms of 'Norwegianization.'<sup>26</sup> Hence, it is not only a means of livelihood but also a symbol of resistance. Furthermore, reindeer have an important role in Sámi languages and hand-crafting traditions.<sup>27</sup> In Sámi lore, the Great Spirit placed a young female reindeer at the heart of the earth, and if the Sámi felt their existence threatened, they would listen to the ground for the sound of a heartbeat. The Sámi equate this sound with their very survival.<sup>28</sup> In this way, targeting reindeer herding is part of a long history of Norwegian colonialism's marginalization of Sámi culture.

While Jovsset Ánte Sara challenged the Norwegian state on the legitimacy of the Reindeer Husbandry Act, his case identifies the act as a symptom of continued Norwegian colonialism. It is important to emphasize upfront that the justice system is built to protect Western values and preserve status quo, which in this case is Norwegian hegemony. Jovsset Ánte Sara attempted, in the words of a Sámi proverb, "to beat a troll with its own tricks."

<sup>26</sup> *The Parliament of Bodies: Pile o'Sápmi with Måret Anne Sara and Candice Hopkins*, 03/09/2019, 41:47-43:03, <http://www.documenta14.de/en/calendar/24863/pile-o->, accessed 22/12/2017.

<sup>27</sup> Gabbatiss, "Climate Change in Lapland."

<sup>28</sup> Harald Gaski, "Forord," in *Vindens Veier*, Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, trans. Laila Stien (Uddevalla, Sweden: Bokklubben Nye Bøker, 1990), s.p.

During Jovsset Ánte Sara's first trial at the district court in Tana in 2014, Máret Anne Sara arrived with a truck of two hundred reindeer heads. She purchased the heads during the period of forced culling from a slaughterhouse executing reindeer on the state's orders (fig. 1).<sup>29</sup> If a herder resists the ordered culling, the state will enforce killings by use of laws and authority.<sup>30</sup> The pile of reindeer heads, still with eyes and skin, was a grim and chaotic display, with the Norwegian flag planted on it. In Tana, complaints were made of the scent from the decomposing heads.<sup>31</sup> This was the ugly, the stinking, and the crude reality of enforced reindeer culling brought to surface, making it impossible to ignore.

Pile o'Sápmi recalls the name of the site "Pile of Bones" where the Cree nation stacked buffalo bones to affix the animals' spirit to the land. Simultaneously, it resembles the photograph (1892), showing a towering pile of bones, memorializing North America's killing countless buffalo to clear the indigenous lands (fig. 2).<sup>32</sup> Under the guise of protecting the tundra, Norway is similarly clearing indigenous land by killing the reindeer, and the Norwegian flag on the top of Sara's pile exhibits this colonial imagery succinctly. The reference to the Cree nation's spiritual undertaking perturbs the Norwegian claim to the land. In addition to making Norway's neo-colonialism explicit, Sara reclaims the reindeer heads, otherwise considered waste, as Sámi tradition utilizes every part of the animal.<sup>33</sup> This juxtaposition is accentuated by the bullet holes on the reindeer's skulls, which are foreign to traditional Sámi killings; this is a colonial killing.<sup>34</sup> The gruesome display references early colonial imagery from America to expose the enforced reindeer culling as a part of 'green colonization.' In Máret Anne Sara's public trial the pile of reindeer heads is evidence of the ongoing colonization, and a questioning of Norway's claim to the land.

Inside of the courthouse, Jovsset Ánte Sara argued, in accordance with The International Human Rights Convention, that the *Reindeer Husbandry Act* violates his property rights.<sup>35</sup> Contrarily, Pile o'Sápmi took on a more complex tale of past and present which sought to contextualize the case historically. The pile of decapitated heads showed the enforced culling's roots in the colonization of indigenous lands. Jovsset Ánte Sara won the case, but the state appealed.<sup>36</sup>

The second trial took place at The Court of Appeal in the bigger, southern city of Tromsø in 2015. *Pile o'Sápmi* was altered: the skulls were bare, skin and eyes removed, revealing the gunshots to their heads clearly. They were exhibited enclosed in a glass box, appearing restricted under a systematized structure (fig. 3). *Pile o'Sápmi* took on the appearance of an exhibition display with an ethnographic air, exposing the scrutiny imposed on Sámi culture. In Tromsø, Sara gathered a larger group

<sup>29</sup> *The Parliament of Bodies*, 07:54-08:12.

<sup>30</sup> *The Parliament of Bodies*, 07:54-08:12.

<sup>31</sup> *Thinking at the End of the World. Perspective from The North' Short film Series: Máret Anne Sara*, 00:19-00:38, <https://www.oca.no/audiovisual/maret-anne-sara>, accessed 03/03/2018.

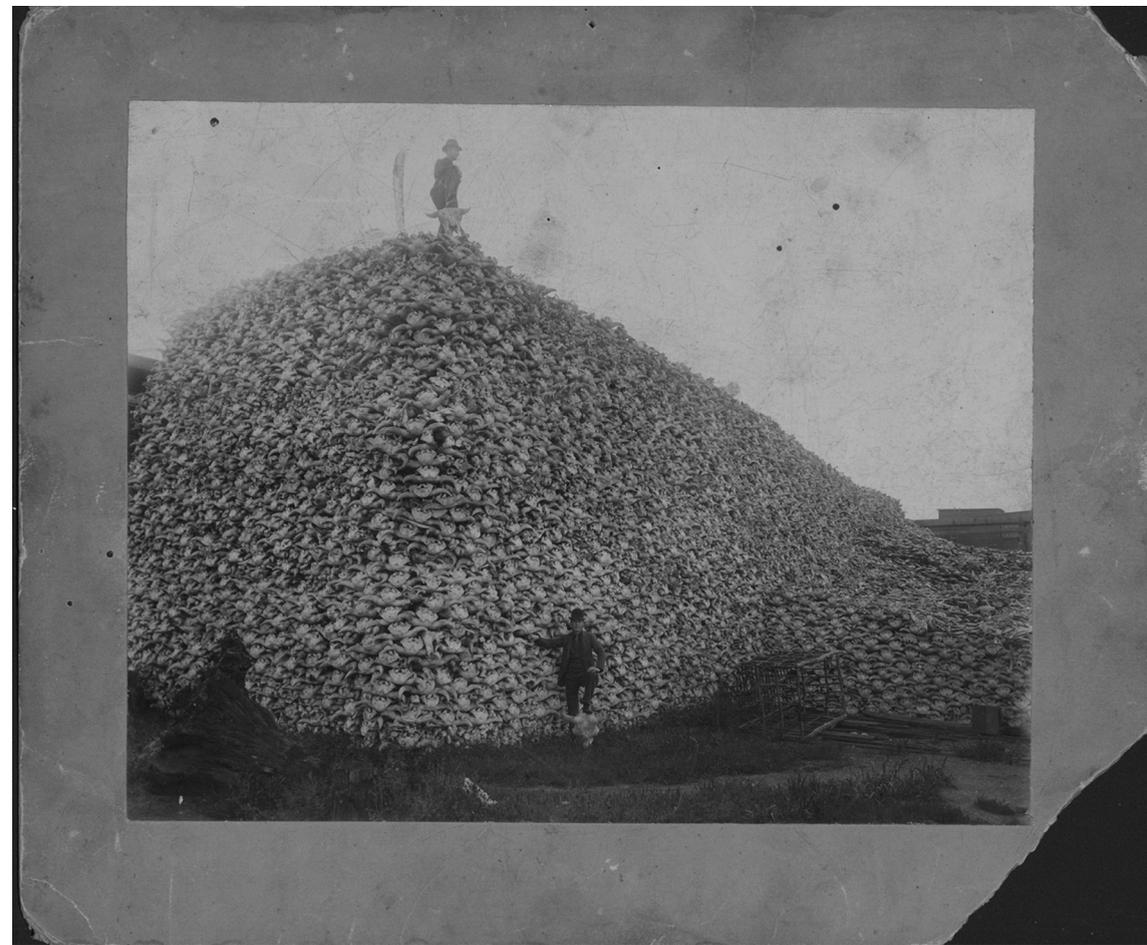
<sup>32</sup> *Thinking at the End of the World*, 05:43-06:03.

<sup>33</sup> *Thinking at the End of the World*, 03:53-04:21.

<sup>34</sup> As Sámi reindeer herders earn money from slaughtering their reindeer and selling the meat, it is important to emphasize that it is not the overall dead reindeer which is a sign of Norway's neo-colonial killing, but rather the forced way this is undertaken to regulate the Sámi people's traditional livelihood.

<sup>35</sup> Domsslutning 2 (Norsk), accessed January 28 2018, <http://www.pileosapmi.com/domsslutning-2-norsk/>.

<sup>36</sup> Simen Helsvig, "Pile o'Sápmi til menneskerettsdomstolen i Strasbourg," *Kunstkritikk*, December 21 2017, <http://www.kunstkritikk.no/nyheter/pile-osapmi-til-menneskerettsdomstolen-i-strasbourg/>.



↑ fig. 2 Man stands on top of enormous pile of buffalo skulls, 1882, photographic print, 19.05 x 24.13 cm, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit, MI, USA. (Photo: © Detroit Public Library)



↑ fig. 3 Máret Anna Sara, *Pile o' Sápmi*, 2015, reindeer skulls, metal wire and glass, Tromsø, Norway. (Photo: Matti Aikio)

of artists to spread the protest throughout the city to get people talking.

The display in Tromsø echoes how colonization became organized and focused on assimilation in the nineteenth century: the skulls are contained, exhibited, and subject to the spectator's scrutiny. Additionally, it recalls the documentary *Give Us Our Skeletons* (1999), in which the Sámi artist and activist Niilas Somby reclaimed his ancestor's skeleton from the Anatomical Institute in Oslo.<sup>37</sup> Somby's ancestor was executed after rebelling against Norwegian authorities, and his skull requested for research purposes. In this vein, Sara also reclaims the reindeer heads, and by doing so, she transforms their status from waste to a sign of dissidence highlighting Norway's continual colonial offenses. The display is less shocking compared to the decomposing pile in Tana, emphasizing the way in which colonialism manifests itself in increasingly polished and subtle ways. The display accentuates how the assimilation policy is not resigned to the past as 'Norwegianization' has found an afterlife in the *Reindeer Husbandry Act*. By guarding reindeer herding with complex laws and making it economically unattractive, the tradition is difficult to maintain and pass on to future generations. The violence of this is accentuated by the bullet holes on the skulls.

Jovsset Ánte Sara argued article 169 of ILO Convention on Indigenous Peoples' rights to their land, languages, and traditions. Once again, he won and the state appealed, and the case went to The Supreme Court.<sup>38</sup> From this, a hope that the European judiciary would respond to the Indigenous Peoples' rights emerged.

By its presence outside of the two trials, *Pile o' Sápmi* caught the attention of *documenta* (14), in which a record of eight Sámi artists were invited to Kassel (and Athens), in 2017.<sup>39</sup> Among the exhibited works were Britta Marakatt-Labba's monumental frieze *Historja* (2003-2007), installed centrally at the Documentahalle narrating Sámi history, customs, and spiritual beliefs with embroidery and collage across 23 meters of fabric. Documenta has received critique for its exclusion or fetishization of 'the peripheries.' Working in the legacy of previous *documentas*, *documenta* (14) were dominated by non-Western and Indigenous practices to 'unlearn' Western hegemony.<sup>40</sup> Although the critique of fetishization is still applicable, it is clear that Marakat-Labba's and Máret Ánte Sara's presence, among others, 'used the institution back' to serve their own political cause.

At *documenta* (14), Sara adapted *Pile o' Sápmi* into 400 reindeer skulls hanging from the ceiling (fig. 4). The repetitive pattern of empty-eyed skulls faced the spectator univocally with colonialism inscribed by bullet holes. Máret Ánte Sara arranged the skulls according to shade, in order to resemble the first unofficial Sámi flag designed by the Sámi artist Synnøve Persen in 1977 (fig. 5).<sup>41</sup> This flag was made during a protest against the Norwegian state's plan to construct a hydroelectric

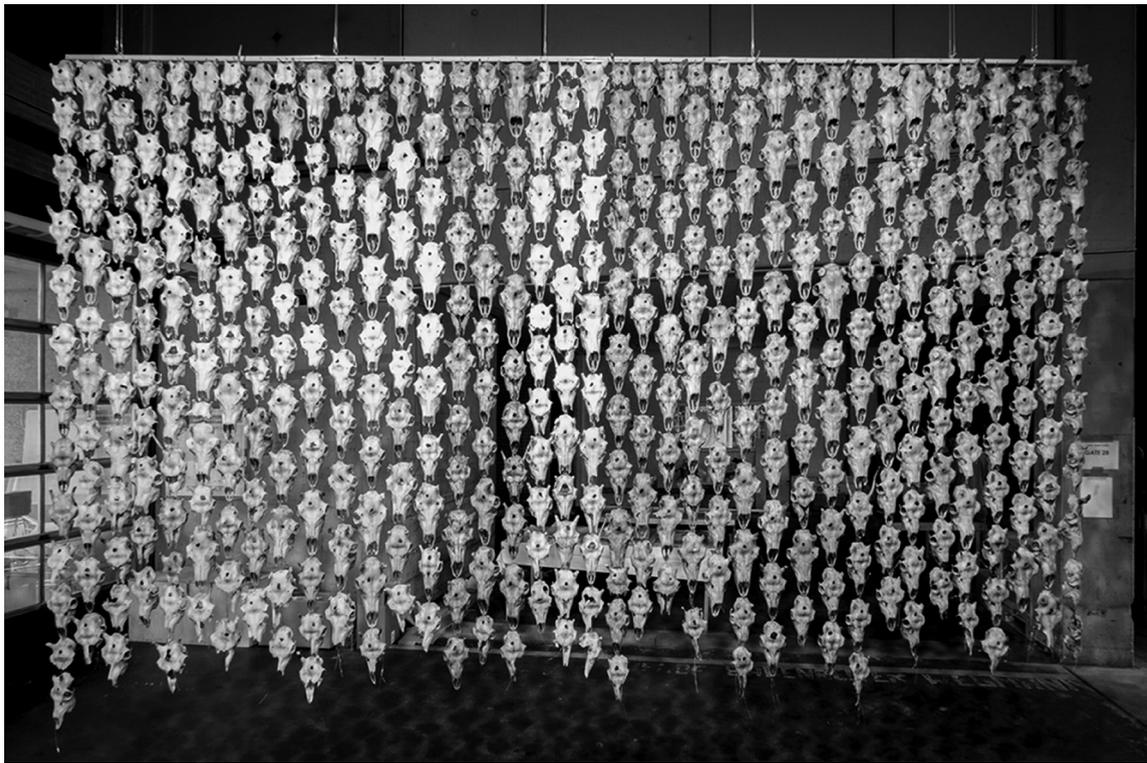
<sup>37</sup> Wendy Gay Pearson, "Memories of Cultural Dismemberment: Nils Gaup, Mons Somby and the Re-Membering of Sámi history," in *A Companion to Nordic Cinema*, eds. Mette Hjort and Ursula Lindquist (Chichester: Wiley, 2016), 377-78.

<sup>38</sup> Breivik, "Forced into Politics."

<sup>39</sup> Katya García-Antón, "The Winds of Change. Recovering the future in an Era of Indigenous Turns," *OCA*, November 9 2017, <https://oca.no/publications/project-booklets/the-winds-of-change-recovering-the-future-in-an-era-of-indigenous-turns.1>.

<sup>40</sup> Adam Szymczyk, "14: Iterability and Otherness—Learning and Working from Athens," in *Documenta 14: The Reader* (Munich: Prestel, 2017), 32.

<sup>41</sup> Martyn-Hemphill, "In Norway, Fighting the Culling of Reindeer with a Macabre Display."



↑ fig. 4 Máret Ánne Sara, *Pile o'Sápmi*, 2017, 400 reindeer skulls and metal wire, 300 × 450 cm, documenta (14), Kassel, Germany. (Photo: Mathias Völzke)



← fig. 5 Synnøve Persen, *Sámi Flag Proposal*, 1977, silkscreen print, 30 × 44 cm. (Photo: Marvin Pope/courtesy of the artist)

power plant on the Alta/Kautokeino river in Finnmark, another example of colonialism's presence in the violent structures of capitalism.<sup>42</sup>

The Sámi Council's warning of the plant's damaging effects on rural Sámi economies was ignored by the government, and Sámi land was expropriated for green development without Sámi consent, an early intrusion of 'green colonization.'<sup>43</sup> While the protesters failed to stop the project, the size of the plant was reduced and the protest group's dissent gained international recognition. Persen's flag symbolizes a moment in Sámi history where their resistance became unified and heard far beyond Norway's borders. By using Persen's flag, Sara is quoting a Sámi group of activists which fought the same system that Jovsset Ánte Sara rebelled against in court.

The curatorial choices at *documenta* (14) attempted to contextualize *Pile o'Sápmi's* despite its displacement from its original context. The photograph from Tana hung near the work to demonstrate its evolution from this source image, and a vitrine showcased excerpts from the two previous trials.<sup>44</sup> At *documenta* (14) Sara continued her case. By exhibiting the skulls, woven together as the Sámi flag, Sara aids an unlearning of Norway's democratic reputation, showcasing Norwegian neo-colonization internationally. Although removed from her brother's court case, it continues the struggle for justice by exhibiting Sámi pride and a history of resistance. However, an urgency is inscribed in this display, as Sámi lore recalls that the dead reindeer allude to the threat of Sámi existence. Surrounded by documentation of the previous trials, *Pile o'Sápmi* functioned as a symbol of death, urgency, and Sámi pride weaved together. It emphasized that the transformation of the reindeer skulls is indeed a narrative which responds to Sámi history as well as the development of the trial. *documenta* (14) thus became a stage on which the political dissidence of *Pile o'Sápmi* gained an international audience.

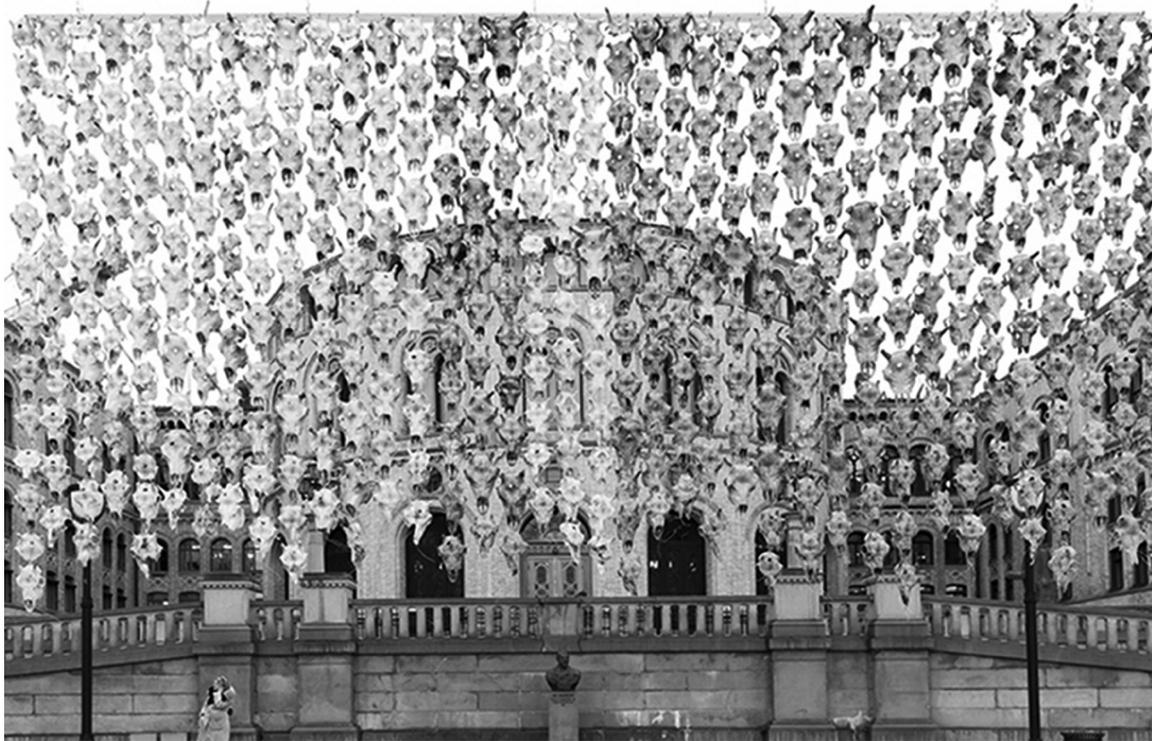
In early December 2017, *Pile o'Sápmi* was renamed *Pile o'Sápmi Supreme*. The work refocused on its initial cause: Jovsset Ánte Sara's challenge of the Norwegian state, which had made its way to The Supreme Court. *Pile o'Sápmi Supreme* was staged as a flag, like at *documenta* (14), and hung on Eidsvoll's Plass [Eidsvoll Square] in front of the Norwegian Parliament on December 5th and 6th (fig. 6). Again, Máret Ánne Sara gathered artists and performers to draw attention to the case.

The project was realized alongside an exhibition at the artist-led project space Tenthaus, which assisted with the installation of the work at Eidsvoll's Plass. Anyone who applies for permission to demonstrate prior to protesting can gather on the square outside of the Norwegian Parliament. Thus, *Pile o'Sápmi Supreme* was a background for speakers and performers participating in the protest during its two-day installation. At Eidsvoll's Plass, *Pile o'Sápmi Supreme* defines a new era of Sámi resistance. It responds to a structural but increasingly subtle 'green colonialism' implemented through the *Reindeer Herding Act*, which also continues 'Norwegianization.' Not only is it hung outside the

<sup>42</sup> Robert Paine, "Ethnodrama and the 'Fourth World': The Saami Action Group in Norway, 1979-1981," in *Indigenous Peoples and the Nation-State: Fourth World Politics in Canada, Australia and Norway*, ed. Noel Dyck (Newfoundland: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1985), 193.

<sup>43</sup> Bjørklund, *Sápmi*, 39.

<sup>44</sup> Máret Ánne Sara, <http://www.documenta14.de/en/artists/13491/maret-anne-sara>, accessed 04/09/2017.



↑ fig. 6 Máret Ánne Sara, *Pile o' Sápmi Supreme*, 2017, 400 reindeer skulls and metal wire, 300 × 450 cm, Oslo, Norway. (Photo: Øystein Thorvaldsen)

Norwegian Parliament, but the square is named after the village where Norway established its constitution and convened its first parliament. As such, the artwork challenges the foundations of the democratic and egalitarian Norwegian self-identity.

Yet, the protest is marked by an air of urgency. The reiterated bullet holes emphasize this, as does the fragility of its structure — one can see straight through it. The Parliament lurks behind as an impenetrable, dense structure. Because of its frail structure and similar shade, the Parliament and the flag were hard to distinguish. This alludes to the way in which the Sámi and Norway are irrevocably attached; the threat against Sámi culture being a result of Norwegian nationalism. In this display, the role of the colonizer is emphasized to place culpability in the staging of this public court. The display corresponds to the observation made by a Sámi spokesperson two years prior, regarding the industrial development in Finnmark: “we are used to having to adapt. But we cannot adapt ourselves to death.”<sup>45</sup> *Pile o' Sápmi Supreme* imposes pride, tradition, and pain all at the same time.

*Pile o' Sápmi* as a whole, is a testimony to Sámi history: an abstracted barren assemblage displaying a continued adaptation to all the disguises of Norwegian

<sup>45</sup> Aili Keskitalo on the multiple developments in Sápmi which pose a threat to Sámi existence, quoted in: Scott Wallace, “Dodging Wind Farms and Bullets in the Arctic,” *National Geographic*, March 1 2016, <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/03/160301-arctic-sami-norway-reindeer>.

colonization. It is also a gathering of evidence against the Norwegian State in Máret Ánne Sara’s own legal case, staging past and present as inseparable. She draws on her Indigenous tradition of utilizing every part of the animal to expose an ongoing ‘Norwegianization.’ Altogether *Pile o' Sápmi* elucidates the inflamed relation, agonizing history, and the irreversible violence between the Norwegian state and the Sámi people.

However, in the Supreme Court, the judges were mainly from Oslo and thus removed from Sápmi and ignorant of reindeer herding.<sup>46</sup> Jovsset Ánte Sara lost his case. He is currently appealing to the UN Commission on Human Rights.<sup>48</sup> “You cannot beat a troll with its own tricks,” Máret Ánne Sara proclaimed after the judgement at the Supreme Court.<sup>48</sup> The “troll” is Norway and its “tricks” the Eurocentric judiciary. Regrettably, this study has chronicled Norwegian hegemony. The correlating court cases make explicit the justice system’s inability to address the historical context of colonial oppression, and protect non-European interests. Lawsuits and public protests have not defeated the troll of colonialism, but the efforts to decolonize are ongoing as Jovsset Ánte Sara’s case is still pending.

On 28th April 2018, the National Gallery of Norway, opening in 2020, announced its purchase of *Pile o' Sápmi Supreme*.<sup>49</sup> While the waiting game of the legal system plays out, the piles of evidence are historicized by this Norwegian cultural institution. The Norwegian institution’s acknowledgement of an ongoing history of colonialism indicates a critical engagement with the past, while the implementation of legal changes remains uncertain.

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<sup>46</sup> Eskil Wie Furunes, et al., “Sametingspresidenten er bekymret for rettsikkerheten i Høyesterett,” *NRK* January 2 2018, <https://www.nrk.no/finnmark/sametingspresidenten-er-bekymret-for-rettsikkerheten-i-hoyes-terett-113847419>.

<sup>47</sup> Helsvig, “Pile o' Sápmi til menneskerettsdomstolen i Strasbourg.”

<sup>48</sup> Máret Ánne Sara quoted in Martyn-Hemphill, “In Norway, Fighting the Culling of Reindeer with a Macabre Display.”

<sup>49</sup> Rune Andreasen, “Lagde teppe av 400 reinskaller — nå har Nasjonalmuseet kjøpt kunstverket,” *NRK*, April 28 2018, [https://www.nrk.no/troms/lagde-teppe-av-400-reinskaller-\\_na-har-nasjonalmuseet-kjopt-kunstverket-114027692](https://www.nrk.no/troms/lagde-teppe-av-400-reinskaller-_na-har-nasjonalmuseet-kjopt-kunstverket-114027692).