BOOK REVIEW

Book review of *Sámi media and indigenous agency in the Arctic North* by Coppelie Coco and Thomas A. Dubois

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Book details

Sámi media and indigenous agency in the Arctic North marks the arrival of Sámi-specific studies in new media and communication. Coco and Dubois (2020) begin their study in the 1970s, providing a detailed history of the Sámi production and use of Sámi language media. They then quickly transition to demonstrate how these communities spread through Norway, Finland, and Sweden (and Russia, though those are not addressed in this text) and have adopted contemporary social media ranging from Twitter to YouTube to garner support for their protests while also preserving their language, songs, and cultural heritage. The authors elegantly demonstrate traditional communication patterns used by Sámi and give detailed examples of how those have been preserved and supported by social media. They also highlight the role of social media in shaming and embarrassing organizations which have encroached on Sámi's rights and culture in an attempt to leverage change. This book highlights the use of new and social media both within and beyond the community and includes examples in both Sámi languages and English.

The book is divided into seven chapters organized chronologically which are bookended by an introduction and conclusion. The introduction places the text well within the pre-existing body of literature and provides a useful history of how the Sámi engaged with debates regarding the use of "indigenous" as a term to respond to colonialization and claim or restore Sámi lands. Chapters 1 through 4 then provide a detailed history of Sámi media from the 1970s to 2000s. This history is illuminated through radio and television broadcasts, song lyrics, cd covers, descriptions of art, and its reception by audiences. This detailed history far surpasses what has been previously available in English and makes the book incredibly usefully before even getting to the contemporary analysis which emerges in chapter 4.

Chapter 4 focuses on how international pressures to recognize indigenous rights played out in Sámi communities. The authors explore the concepts of repatriation of museum artefacts and re-writing of colonialism. The role of museums, documentaries, and television interviews played a critical role in these changes. Attention is also played to how Sámi's history has been told in Sámi-produced films and documentaries. For example, the film *Sami Blood* is discussed in detail, with reference to the ways that Sámi children were forced into boarding

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schools and the difficulties that they faced if they decided to give up a Sámi way of life. These programmes and media are outlined in detail both as a view into historical activism as well as to set up the reader's understanding of how digital media radically affected the possibilities for activism.

The second half of the book, chapters 5–7 turn their attention to case studies of contemporary use of digital media by Sámi communities. Chapter 5 presents the findings of interviews alongside media artefacts collected across YouTube to examine the global media within a Sámi context, and the inverse, Sámi media in a global context. Drawing from Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies*, this chapter skillfully demonstrates the interplay of history, media, and networking. This sets the foreground for chapter 6 which examines the platforms used by the Sámi—Facebook is addressed, but more interesting is the description of SameNet—a Sámi network developed for use across Sámi communities. SameNet was designed for organizations and community groups, but what it became was a digital meeting space in which women were able to advance their educations, conferences could be held across many different communities, and Sámi languages could be promoted and preserved. Interviews presented in this chapter argue that SameNet overcame the top-down organizational structure which Sámi encountered on other platforms. Although SameNet closed in 2011, the authors convincingly argue that the platform set a standard and expectation for what a Sámi digital homeland could be. This includes safe spaces where Sámi participants did not need to begin by defending or defining themselves as the must often do when engaging in platforms such as Facebook.

Chapter 7 turns back to the Sámi—focusing on the ways that digital media have enhanced, protected, and promoted Sámi languages. Digital media and networking have resulted in language support to preserve some of the most endangered Sámi languages and provide educational materials for children who both live with herds and live in urban communities. Language groups have emerged to encourage young people to speak Sámi languages with each other, connecting even the most urban Sámi to their heritage.

Cultural heritage has also been promoted, such as through the use of #MittSapmi (My Sapmi). This chapter demonstrates the ways that Sámi arts, home goods, and events have been showcased on Instagram, drawing attention from young community members and resulting in a revived interest in cultural heritage. A recent look shows Sámi community members in traditional clothing alongside Sámi doctors and mountaineers. There are far too many examples to include here, which is one of the

joys of the text—it is rich in examples, data, and evidence. Chapter 7, framed well by earlier chapters in the text, makes a compelling case that the Sámi are well engaged in digital activism both within and beyond their communities. The text concludes by connecting this activism to experiences and work of other indigenous communities. This is the only part of the book where I was left wanting more data and details, and yet, it is a great set-up for a second book.

In the conclusion, the authors provide an encouraging outlook for Sámi and their use of digital media. The authors critically question the role of new and social media for the Sámi—asking if it encourages globalization and in which ways does it hold the potential for empowerment. They convincingly argue that through communication and research over new and social media, (some) Sámi see themselves as sharing common colonial experiences with other indigenous groups, and as a result of this pan-indigenous identity, they have argued for new policies and programmes both within and beyond their own communities.

Declarations

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N/A

Consent for publication
N/A

Competing interests
The author declares that there are no competing interests.

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