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Roman, R. B., Stadius, P., & Stark, E. (2021). Core Citizens, Imagined Nation: Historical Security Practices of the Majority and Strategies of the Minorities in Finland. *Journal of Finnish Studies*, 24(1&2), 5-15.
https://www.shsu.edu/eng_ira/finnishstudies/JoFS_Covers.html

Published in:
Journal of Finnish Studies

Document Version:
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:
[Link to publication record in Queen's University Belfast Research Portal](#)

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Core Citizens, Imagined Nation: Historical Security Practices of the Majority and Strategies of the Minorities in Finland; An Introduction to the Issue

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Historically, since the 1930s, Finland, much like the other Nordic countries, has rested upon ideas of openness and civic participation as a political project of modernity. The core principle has been that of a comprehensive welfare state—in Sweden, referred to as *folkhemmet* ('the People's home'), a society with social equality and solidarity between all citizens (e.g., Kettunen and Petersen 2011; Esping-Andersen 1990). This was initially a response to what has been called the breakthrough of mass society, referring to both the legal and cultural leveling of citizenship. Over the course of the twentieth century, the welfare state was constructed on the basis of providing services and security for its citizens. Health, housing, working life, education, and social and political efficacy were considered aspects of this core citizenship. The Nordic, or Social Democratic, welfare regime was built on the principles of universality, where comprehensive and usually not means-tested welfare services were provided. This included an idea of reciprocity: the citizens were understood to gain these rights by participating in society, mainly through work. This has been seen by some scholars as a historical continuum, transforming pre-modern Lutheran values into a dynamic understanding of secular modernity (Stenius 1997). In this interpretation, the tolerance for cultural deviations has been seen mainly as a question of normative enlightenment and a search to bring everybody into a modern concept of a Nordic society. The universalistic

¹ This special issue was written as part of the "Roma and Nordic Societies: Historical Security Practices of the Majority and Strategies of the Minority" research project, funded by the Academy of Finland (2015–18) and based at the Centre for Nordic Studies, University of Helsinki. The articles presented within this issue nevertheless reflect only the authors' views, and the funding agencies are not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

imperative has, however, been subject to particularistic and culture-bound values. In fact, social stratification has persevered, and the standard of living has not been equal to all members of society. Ethnic minorities, such as the Finnish Roma (or, as they refer to themselves, Finnish Kaale), the Tatars, and the various Sami groups, who have practiced traditional livelihoods, have been—and continue to be—not only excluded from many social arenas, but also have faced discrimination and rigid assimilation strategies, mainly from within state-provided education. State authorities have exercised the power to control traditional culture inside its borders and to distance it from anything outside (Noyes 2007).

The study of nations, nationalism, and nation-states received much attention in academic scholarship since the twentieth century (Anderson 1983; Pakkasvirta and Saukkonen 2005; Tamm 2017). Some of the questions posed have been, for example, “What is a nation?” and “Who/what does a nation consist of?”

Historically, this goes back in nineteenth-century Europe and the processes of national awakening, according to which each nationality was considered to form a state and each state was expected to include all members of that nationality. A sense of national identity thus implies the identification of the state or nation with the people—or at least the desirability of determining the extent of the state according to ethnographic principles. From the end of the eighteenth century onward, the nationalization of culture went hand-in-hand with the nationalization of state and political loyalties. The idea of citizenship can be divided in two main principles. One is *jus soli*, the right of territory, which is the idea that everybody born in the national territory is part of the nation. Immigration-based nations, like the United States and many Latin American countries, adhere to this principle (however, not without obvious cultural particularistic dimensions in their respective histories). The other principle is *jus sanguinis*, the principle of blood right. The inclusion in a nation is then based on the idea of ethnic belonging. This idea includes members of a nationality both inside and outside state borders, and it potentially excludes ethnic and religious minorities living within the state territory, while at times directing claims on linguistic-ethnic irredenta areas. Most European states, including the Nordic countries, have been created in this tradition.² In Finland’s case, this tradition was clearly exposed when the Ingrians were given the right to “move back” to Finland in the 1990s, a decision that clearly differed from the country’s general immigration policy.

In the nineteenth century, the Finnish nationalist movement, Fennomania, contributed to the development of the Finnish language and its literature and achieved for Finnish a position of official equality

² However, it is worth pointing out that some Central, South-Eastern, and Eastern European powers, such as the Austro-Hungarian Empire, also had the principle of domicile, which shaped somewhat distinctive understandings and experiences of these issues (Marushiakova and Popov 2021, 593–98).

with Swedish—the language of the dominant minority (Anttonen 2012; Alapuro 1988). The nationalistically oriented bourgeoisie then constructed the basis for the political claims for national statehood soon to be raised by the people in whom they had kindled the spirit. One may argue that the people as such formed a class of their own because they shared many social realities—or social constructions of reality—in their daily lives. The term “class” usually implies a group of individuals sharing a common situation within a social structure, usually their shared place in the structure of ownership and control of the means of production. Class may also refer to groups of individuals with a shared characteristic relevant in some socio-economic measurement or ranking. Social stability, however, need not imply consensus (Burke 1992, 109). Because of this, within some forms of Marxism, the core ethnic members of a nation or “the folk” were interpreted in terms of their opposition to the upper classes. This resulted from the interpretation of the Marxist paradigm, according to which the modes of production were supposed to form the basis of a society’s infrastructure. Some anthropologists and ethnologists, for example, have shown how the lower classes have possessed ways to resist power and the upper classes by using folklore or acting against the ideals of the rich or the rising bourgeoisie (Scott 1985; Holbek 1987; Frykman and Löfgren 1987).

However, in most societies, there have been, and still are, inequalities in the distribution of wealth and other advantages, such as status and power, drawing social boundaries within the members of “the folk.” This is often a consequence of the structuring of social life and the definition of inclusion and exclusion within it. In fact, as Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1993) has argued, as a key component in the very definition of citizenship, “nationalism stresses the cultural similarity of its adherents and, by implication, it draws boundaries vis-à-vis others, who thereby become outsiders” (6). This would point to a complex process by which certain groups or individuals are deemed as not belonging to the nation-state on grounds of cultural, religious, or social distinctiveness. Furthermore, this emphasizes the ways that boundaries between groups are not only put in place but also, more importantly, continuously enacted and crossed by “majorities” and “minorities” themselves. In other words, when talking about minorities, what needs to be strongly emphasized is how both distinctive cultural, social, or political groups (and group identities) develop in a continuous contact with one another, rather than in complete isolation.

In this issue of the *Journal of Finnish Studies*, we aim to examine the historical, cultural, and ideological forces that have shaped Finnish national identity and the ways in which perceived “outsiders” of the nation-state have positioned themselves in relation to state ideologies and the majority society, as well as in relation to their understanding of their own communities’ boundaries. Furthermore, though less explored ethnographically, religion plays an undeniably fundamental role in the

construction of identities and experiences of belonging for all members of a nation-state, from the role of religion as a state prerogative (i.e., the Lutheran state church) to that of religion as a lived experience, referring to individuals' own experience of religious life. As such, a central aspect within this special issue is also a discussion of the relationship between ethnicity, religion, and nationalism in Finland from historical, sociological, and cultural perspectives. The focus is, in other words, on the role of broader social-historical changes in shaping diverse and often contradictory understandings of nationhood, citizenship, and national identity. As an example of this, mass media and other forms of communication technology have had an enormous influence in shaping self-esteem, public opinion, and underlying sentiment. Apart from majority-minority relations, it is, therefore, crucially important to discern ethnic minorities' "own histories" and experiences.

To this purpose, the main drive of this special issue is to bring together articles highlighting the distinctive manifestations and understandings of "the nation" and "national belonging" in Finland, from the perspectives of both so-called "majorities" and "minorities." We will do so, first, by looking at the construction of a national narrative of "Finnishness" and the expanding connection that Finnish intellectuals have had with other Nordic states, in the form of "Scandinavism." Unlike Finnish nineteenth-century nationalism, "Fennomania," "Scandinavism" strived to unite the Nordic countries into one state. While the Fennomane movement advocated for the Finnish language becoming the national language together with Swedish (while also highlighting the Finnish-language folk culture), the Scandinavists addressed their interest toward the West, in other words, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. Moreover, Scandinavists openly opposed Russia and claimed that Fennomans were too loyal to the Russian empire. As Mikael Björk-Winberg argues in this volume, the Scandinavists in Finland consisted of only a handful of activists and, in the nationalistically oriented atmosphere of nineteenth-century Finland, they were considered too radical. Although most of the early Fennomans were Swedish speaking themselves, the Scandinavists were pushed to the margins of society and even into exile, as was the case with Emil von Qvanten, who was one of the most prominent Finnish Scandinavists.

Second, we will look at the ways in which particular aspects of folk culture have been utilized and played a role in creating particular images of minorities. According to the ideals cherished by the Fennoman nationalists, the most authentic Finnish people were to be found among the landless populations of the country's hinterland. The idea of the common Finns as one undivided people, however, served to simplify the actual diversity of rural life. As Eija Stark points out, many rural inhabitants failed to fit into the model of ideal Finnishness. Indeed, town-dwellers, industrial factory-workers, peddlers, or some of the ethnic and linguistic minorities, like the Finnish Roma and the Finnish Tatars or the Swedish-speaking population, were all excluded from the idea of the Finnish nation.

Consequently, the search for an authentic Finnish nation determined how folklore was collected and indexed.

Finally, we will look at how minorities themselves, with a focus on Finnish Roma and the Tatars, have utilized the mainstream narrative in the construction of their own sense of national belonging. The Finnish Tatars, as the country's oldest Muslim minority, have been depicted as an ideal case of successful integration. As Ainur Elmgren points out, the Tatar minority did not create its own identity and history in a national vacuum but, rather, with inspiration from Turkish nationalism or Tatars in other countries with whom the Finnish Tatars maintained active contacts. Lacking a strong sense of belonging to the Finnish nation, Tatars saw themselves as members of a worldwide community of Muslims.

On the other hand, according to Raluca Roman, another example of minorities holding the mainstream narrative is through the role of religion in re-shaping understandings of social embeddedness and social engagement among the Finnish Roma. The case presented concerns the conversion of Roma to Pentecostal and Evangelical congregations, within a mainstream Lutheran context. Additionally, from a distinctive point of view, Finnish Roma also appear to have adopted a positive narrative about Roma soldiers fighting in the Finnish Army, for their home country. As Malte Gasche and Martin Holler argue, this narrative strategy has been successful, since it perfectly matches the mainstream narrative about a brave and fair "Continuation War," which Finland is seen to have fought against the Soviet Union independently, and separately from Nazi Germany. According to Gasche and Holler, not only the memory of discriminatory Finnish legislation against the Roma minority before and during the war, but also uncomfortable questions about the potential involvement of Finnish Waffen-SS and Wehrmacht volunteers in Nazi atrocities against the civil population—including Roma—in the German-occupied parts of the Soviet Union were suppressed both by the Finnish majority and the Roma minority themselves.

As such, a connection between majority and minority narratives of national belonging are clearly manifested through diverse means and forms of expression, be it the adoption of particular memories of the Second World War or the relationship with the Lutheran state church. This shows not only the ways in which minority groups' social lives are inextricably embedded within the mainstream societies they inhabit, but also how this embeddedness continuously informs and shapes narratives of national, as well as group, identity. Therefore, through this particular selection of articles, this special issue will help further illuminate the complexities and contradictions of identity politics within Finland, and the role that both mainstream and minority discourses have played in the experience and expression of national belonging and, to some extent, of the "nation" itself.

On the whole, this collection of articles deals with some of the Finnish minorities that have had a more complex relationship to the majority

and its national narratives. However, this issue will not present a comprehensive and systematic study of *all* historical minorities in Finland. For instance, the Swedish-speaking element of the Finnish nation is not present here explicitly, even if the Scandinavian connections presented in Björk-Winberg's article connect to later twentieth-century Finland-Swedish identity building. Moreover, unlike the Finnish Roma, the Tatars, or the Sami, the Swedish-speaking Finns have historically formed a minority group that has enjoyed considerable political, economic, and cultural agency and power in Finnish society (see Mikkola, Olson, and Stark 2019). Finally, albeit in Swedish, they often share and share in the grand narrative of Finnish nationhood.

Since this issue of the *Journal of Finnish Studies* stems from the results of the research project *Roma and Nordic Society: Historical Security Practices of the Majority and Strategies of the Minority* (funded by the Academy of Finland 2015–18), more focus is cast on the relationship between majority society and the Finnish Roma. As such, the Roma case permits the analysis of how hierarchies have been constructed from a majority perspective, and how these have been both contested and subject to minority strategies in Finland. However, the Sami, as one of Finland's minorities, will be highlighted only partially in the article of Peter Stadius, since it deals with the “sociology of absence” of indigenous people in many of the Finnish national narratives on Lapland (and, in this case, Petsamo in particular). We want to stress that the issue highlights only a few examples within the minority frame, but it does so in combining the historical constructions of majority narratives and their mechanisms of power, and the views of the minority itself in contemporary time. For this reason, after the analysis of several historical case studies, the special issue ends with Raluca Roman's ethnographically informed article, which moves the focus from the historical to a contemporary perspective, while also highlighting the connection between the two. Furthermore, this approach and the chronological organization of this collection help us move across historical timelines and bring the minority-majority issue to the present day, while also providing the minority's own voice, which in the past, more often than not, has been lacking from scholarly analyses.

Minorities vs. “Minorities”: A False Opposition?

On Land Ownership and Citizenship

Historically, the core citizenship or the ideal member of the nation in Finland was constructed on the foundation of home-ownership. Owning a house was the ideal shared both by individuals and by the state, which implemented three land reforms in the twentieth century. Unlike the majority population, however, Finnish ethnic minorities' livelihoods were different from those of rural peasants and forest workers. As some examples of this, the Finnish Roma were generally considered to be itinerant, the Sami were nomadic reindeer herders, and the Jews and Tatars often were urban merchants.

Farmers' interests also played an important role in the making of the Finnish welfare state, and agricultural policies were closely connected with social policies. The system, whether a family was big or small, was organized according to the rights and responsibilities assigned to the sedentary married couple, with the husband enjoying more rights and privileges than the wife (L. Stark 2015). The institution of the pre-modern Christian family, which set the norms for participating in society, kept its central role in the Finnish welfare-state project well into the latter half of the twentieth century. As a result, many of the fruits of economic growth, social security, and access to education went to those who performed rural livelihoods, not the groups that lived apart and on the margins. For example, farmhouse loans were only given to married men. As the Finnish Roma did not have the custom of Christian marriage, they were automatically blocked from ownership of a dwelling place.

Furthermore, Finnish Roma, much like the Sami, are considered to be a traditional minority in the country, both in terms of their present-day official status (based primarily on their long-term presence on Finnish territories) but also in terms of what concerns the internal organization of the community. As an example of this, Finnish Roma pride themselves in upholding community-specific norms, rituals, and taboos. Among these, a crucial aspect of community social relations is the practice of what some have called non-institutional marriage (Grönfors 1997). Marriage itself is not publicly celebrated among Finnish Roma. In this sense, the majority norms required for the ownership of land and the acquisition of farmhouse loans would most likely be inaccessible to members of the Finnish Roma community, and so, for the longest time, the Finnish Roma have been continuously excluded from full citizenship rights within the country.

In fact, the first Roma-focused organization within the country, *Suomen Mustalaislähetys Ry* (later renamed Romano Missio), was not established until 1906. At its inception, this organization was led by non-Roma Christian Evangelicals, such as Oskari Jalkio, who himself was a Finn, with the main purpose of bringing the Christian faith to the Finnish Roma. It also contributed to the establishment of several Finnish Roma children's homes in the country, primarily in the first half of the twentieth century. After the 1940s, however, the organization temporarily joined with the state in its encouragement of making Roma into full Finnish citizens, including attempts to eradicate any signs of cultural distinctiveness (Roman 2016, 27). It was only decades later that the first Roma director of Romano Missio was elected, and, with this new leadership, the aim of the organization again shifted toward its social one. Currently, though mainly aimed at addressing wider social concerns faced by Finnish Roma (education, housing, elder care) and deeply connected to its Evangelical ethos, Romano Missio nevertheless plays a crucial role in recommendations toward wider national policies concerning Roma in the country. This particular organization's story, therefore, shows a clear historical

shift from an institution led mainly by non-Roma toward one led by the Roma and connected to wider policies of nationalization, to one in which Roma themselves play an active and engaged role within the shaping of policies that address them (Roman 2020). Yet, despite some possibilities for social mobility into mainstream society, Finnish Roma have historically been (re)presented as being on the outer margins of Finnish society. Along with the Roma, the Sami groups have long felt marginalized in the decision-makings regarding Sami issues. For example, recent Sami interpretations of their history as a history of colonialization has been partly contested by Finnish majority historians, who view this approach to writing the Sami history of Finland as too focused on victimhood (see Lehtola 2015, 24). This critique, presented by various historians, points out that archival sources in Finland do not manifest a clear Sami subjugation on the part of Finnish state authorities and suggests that the Sami were not systematically treated as a distinct group. The encounter between Finnish settlers and Sami was not a systematic extinction of the latter (Lähteenmäki 2006, 204). This certainly holds a partial truth, but this complex question still contains a quite explicit history of othering the Sami, as not being part of the concept of the Finnish nation, at least in the case of the Petsamo Skolts during the first years of Finland's independence.

Minorities from the Majority Point of View

If one wants to study how Finnish minorities lived and experienced their distinctive lives in the past, the task is challenging. Despite our contemporary understanding, for a long time, archives were not primarily designed as centers of historical research, nor did they function as such. In the first place, archives served the authorities of the state (Müller 2013) and, for that matter, the ones who held power. For example, population statistics, parish registers, in-depth descriptions of everyday life and customs were seen to represent the nation—in other words, the very core of the Finnish-speaking majority.

The ways in which knowledge about the old minorities has been gathered, used, and, at times, abused, leads us to consider the institutions that have housed and controlled the information and views on the given minorities. Finnish Tatars, the Sami people, and the Finnish Roma, at the levels of both local and state government (not to mention in everyday life), tended to be ignored or considered different from the norm even within the archive collections from the early days of collecting traditions (see Mikkola, Olsson, and Stark 2019). From the archival documents and extracts made by the majority members of the Finnish society, minorities were often objectified. As Eija Stark shows in her article, Finland's traditional minorities showed up as strange or comic, or sometimes they were simply absent, as Peter Stadius argues in his analyses of fictional literature, handbooks, and policy-oriented documents on the Finnish Arctic Ocean territories. In 1920, Finland was given a corridor to the Arctic Sea, the area of Petsamo, situated along the eastern side of the present

Russo-Norwegian border. For the Finns, expanding the state borders fitted perfectly into a Greater Finland expansionist ideology. According to Stadius, a colonialist discourse, which conditioned the silencing of the local Sami presence, was the outcome of a nationalistic interpretation of modernity. The colonialist discourse was produced according to a logic of international competitiveness, although a certain plurality and debate of methods existed. Those who took an interest in the Sami, however, seldom questioned the development of the region by Finnish farmers, promoting a Finnish way of life. This was the case of the state geologist Väinö Tanner, while others, such as Jalmari Kara, saw Petsamo first as a potential Eldorado for its economic benefit. This latter discourse tended to see the region as more or less empty ground for a modern experiment.

As shown in the previous pages, although all of the traditional minorities of Finland have had their own customs and views distinctive to the majority society, they also have shared a great deal of cultural knowledge with the majority (Blomster and Mikkola 2014, 15). This is because of the universalistic nature of Finnish governmental institutions; in other words, all Finnish citizens, regardless of their mother tongue or ethnicity, have been entitled to benefits, such as child allowance, primary school, old-age pension, and access to public health. Historically, welfare society has involved its members in a national project where nationhood is constructed through shared practices. However, many of the minorities still suffer exclusion, discrimination, and a lack of political power; such is the case in Lapland where different Sami groups have sought to protect their traditional lands and, for that matter, livelihoods. Currently, this issue has arisen in connection to a projected Arctic railway that routes from Helsinki through Rovaniemi to the Arctic Ocean, and the town of Kirkenes, Norway. Expectations of increased world trade in the Arctic as a consequence of global warming has given the northernmost part of Finland a new national interest from the perspective of Helsinki. In the initial planning stage, local Sami groups have raised their discontent with the process, and it is likely that this question will receive extensive media coverage if advanced. Hearings with Sami groups have been conducted by Finnish authorities, but still there seems to be a problem acknowledging Sami agency and rights. In the light of the goal set up by the Nordic Council of making the region the most sustainable in the world, this appears as a potential paradox.

Although the points of departure in this special issue of the *Journal of Finnish Studies* are in the concepts of nation-state and nationhood in relation to Finnish old minorities, we are well aware of the relationship between national minorities and the broader legacy of colonialism, as well the national and transnational effects that have resulted from the struggles and barriers that ethnic and linguistic minorities have continuously encountered. Oftentimes, majority societies have remained blind to the social and cultural obstacles that minority groups face in their everyday lives. For this purpose, the aim of this special issue is to bring together

perspectives and experiences from both “sides,” minorities and majorities alike, and form the starting point for a larger conversation concerning the everyday understanding and experience of nationhood. Thus, rather than looking at the impact of “majority” policies on “minority” lives, or the ways in which majorities perceive and engage with national minorities, all the articles in this collection focus on the contradictions and the spaces in between, as well as the undeniable interconnectedness between both minority and majority narratives of nationhood and national identity.

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