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## **Negotiating an Urban Indigenous Identity:** – expectations, prejudices and claims faced by urban Sámi in two contemporary Norwegian cities

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– expectations, prejudices and claims faced by urban Sámi in two contemporary Norwegian cities

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*Siv Eli*

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## Abstract

Indigeneity is often assumed to be a rural condition, but globally indigenous peoples are now increasingly characterized as urban populations. Research suggests that a large proportion of the Sámi population in Norway reside in urban areas and that new generations of Sámi are growing up in cities; a phenomenon coined as a geographical re-organization of Sápmi.

This thesis is an investigation of some of the challenges the urban Sámi face in negotiating and maintaining a Sámi identity in two contemporary Norwegian cities. The concepts of *expectations* and *claims* connected to a Sámi identity have functioned as running themes in the thesis and I argue that such expectations and claims come from both the Sámi and the non-Sámi community in regards what it means to be an urban Sámi. One central finding is that prejudices and stereotypes are common experiences to the urban Sámi, and I identify different strategies how to deal with such claims.

I argue that the urban Sámi identity thus is something one needs to *manage* to a greater extent than other identities. Certain cultural traits, activities and skills function as performances of a Sámi identity. The city provides great freedom and allows the construction of an urban Sámi identity to be both creative and diverse, but the notion of an urban Sámi identity is at the same time challenged by predominant discourses of authenticity and stereotypical ideas. By insisting on ambiguity, the urban Sámi is combating the notion of cultural hierarchy.

*Key words: Sámi, identity, urban indigeneity, urban Sámi, identity, prejudices, expectations*

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*Sápmelašvuoda guovttebealatvuohta, dat lea hui finna ja divrras vásáhus. Mun láven dan gohčodit ivnniid searat, ahte don duosttat vázzit ivdnás biktasiiguin vaikke don livččet okto gii dan dagašit eará ránes olbmuid gáskkas. Ahte don sáhtat leat ivdne čuokkis ránes olbmuid searvvis.*

*Ánde Somby, ássá Romssas*

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*The two-sided aspect of the Sáminess is both beautiful and precious. I use to think of it as the power of color; which gives the strength to dress up in all your colors amongst grey people even if you are the only one to do so. You can be the colorful dot amongst the grey.*

*Ánde Somby, lives in Tromsø*



## 1. Introduction

I grew up in Kárášjohka, a Northern Sámi municipality in the inner parts of Finnmark. Being a Sámi, speaking the language and practising my culture, has always been very natural to me. As I grew up in a core Sámi area, I had never given much thought to my Sámi identity. It was never questioned nor criticized, it just was there; as an unspoken premise. At school we learned the history of our people and the incorporated shame that was brought upon the generations before us based on their ethnicity as Sámi in the past.

At the age of 17, I moved with my family to Harstad, a city in the southern part of Troms County and the neighboring municipality of Skånland, which has a significant proportion of Sámi residents. There I experienced for the very first time in my life, ethnic bullying based on my Sámi background. It took me by surprise that such a thing could happen in the year of 2002. There was in particular one fellow student who voiced a strong discontent towards Sámi and he strongly questioned the origin of the Sámi people in the particular region in Southern Troms. He would call me `touchy` and `sensitive` when I did not laugh of his jokes about Sámi. He once asked me: “Why do you need to be Sámi in the city?”. I remember answering him that I did not know how to *not* be a Sámi. Years later I found out that this particular young man who explicitly denied any Sámi ancestry, would identify himself as a Sámi as an adult.

My interest in the topic of urban indigeneity is thus personally motivated. I have lived most of my adult life in cities, both in Oslo previously and Tromsø, where I now reside. The question once asked of me in my late teens, has inspired me in writing this thesis. Instead of focusing on the `why` of the question, I have been interested in the `how`. This thesis seeks to discuss some of the challenges the urban Sámi face in negotiating, reforming and maintaining a Sámi identity in a multicultural city setting in Norway, with a particular emphasis on the expectations, prejudices and claims connected to their indigenous identity from both the Non-Sámi community and within.

My hope is that this thesis, from an indigenous perspective, will voice the urban Sámi and promote their ways of dealing with an indigenous identity and the claims connected to it, which according to indigenous scholars should be the purpose of indigenous research (Smith, 2012; Chilisa, 2012; Kovach, 2009).

## 1.2 Defining a Sámi

The Sámi people are the indigenous people who have historically inhabited the area of Northern Fennoscandia, in what comprises the northern areas of Norway, Finland, Sweden and Russia's Kola Peninsula today. Norway ratified the ILO Convention no. 169 in 1990, that states as a main principle that indigenous peoples and tribal peoples in independent countries have the right to further develop their culture, and that the authorities have an obligation to initiate measures to support this work (C160 – Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989). The size of the Sámi population in total has been estimated to approximately 70.000 – 100.000, but the number varies in accordance with criteria such as genetic or ancestral heritage, first language and the self-ascription as Sámi (Hansen, 2011). The largest proportion of Sámi is believed to live in Norway, but it is difficult to pin point the exact size of the population as there is no data basis for creating individual-based statistics on people of Sámi ethnicity since no information is recorded on the ethnicity of Norwegian residents (Statistics Norway, 2016). In Norway, which is the country of interest in my thesis, there are three official groups of Sámi: the North-, Lule- and South Sámi. In addition, there exists several unofficial terms in use reflecting divisions, either through their way of living or their geographical belonging (Evjen, 2009). The Sámi population is engaged in a variety of livelihoods, including farming, fishing and reindeer herding, which are considered to be traditional Sámi livelihoods, but data from 2009 found that only a minority of the Sámi in Norway are working in reindeer husbandry (Hansen, 2011). Today, many Sámis live in cities and are occupied in modern professions and are facing the challenge of both “conserving traditional knowledge, values and culture traits while both the local community and the world continues to change” (Flemmen & Kramvig, 2008, cited in Hansen, 2011, p: 21).

The task of defining who the Sámi are however; is not as easy as it sounds because there is no clear cut definition to it. Instead, I point to the official criteria of the Sámi Parliament regarding who is entitled to vote in the elections of the Norwegian Sámi Parliament. In order to vote, one must register in the Sámi electoral register. The criteria for registration are firstly; to self-ascribe as a Sámi and secondly; that oneself, a parent, a grandparent or a great-grandparent speaks or have spoken the Sámi language at home. There are Sámi individuals who fulfill these criteria, but who are not registered and there are individuals who do not fulfill the criteria, but still identify as Sámi (L. Gaski, 2008). The aspect of self-ascription is thus highly relevant in the definition of Sámi. The next section will try to contextualize why this is still problematic for some.

### 1.3 Historical background

I will here briefly draw some historical lines which I believe to be relevant, even though the thesis focuses on the present, modern time. The historical background plays, as presented in the introduction, a role in Sámi peoples` lives even today. Thuen (1995) refers to the *Norwegianization* policy in Norway as the main effort of the state to influence the ethnic identity of the Sámi and thus, a presentation of this policy is in order. Due to the limitations of a master thesis, I have chosen to focus merely on Sámis living within the Norwegian national state and from now on referring to Sámi, it should be understood within the Norwegian context.

#### 1.3.1 Norwegianization

The long period of state driven assimilation; a process often named as *Norwegianization*, in the first half of the twentieth century, led to the abandonment of Sámi identification in many Sámi communities (Minde, 2003). The oppression of Sámi languages, communities and culture was particularly hard in Norway. National security was an enduring motive of state efforts in law regulations and the spreading of the Norwegian language and cultural symbols through education and public propaganda (Eriksen & Niemi, 1981). The policy of *Norwegianization* aimed to create a homogenous society by providing education only in Norwegian and was ideologically based on Social Darwinism and Nationalism. It was believed that the Sámi people were intellectually inferior to Norwegians and the policy was thus influenced and motivated by racism (Stordahl, 1997).

The Sámi languages were in the period between 1880 and 1970 deliberately kept outside the public language sphere and forbidden at school. In only a few churches in the County of Finnmark were the priest`s sermon translated and at times, if absolutely necessary, an interpreter was used in the court rooms (Magga, 2000). As a result, the Sámi languages were efficiently wiped out in large parts of Northern Norway. Ole Henrik Magga, who is a Professor in Sámi languages and the former president of the Sámi Parliament in Norway; characterizes the policy of assimilation as a destroying force to both Sámis and Norwegians, as the majority population was taught to think lesser of Sámis. The negative attitude towards Sámis became `natural` amongst the Norwegian population, in particular in the North and moreover, it influenced the way Sámi people thought of themselves in a negative way:

“Virkningen av denne politikken var ødeleggende for samisk språkutvikling og for samisk selvfølelse. Virkningen for nordmennene selv var heller ikke bra. Mange lærte, bevisst og ubevisst, å forakte og nedvurdere samisk kultur og dermed også samene som enkeltmennesker<sup>1</sup>” (Magga, 2000, p: 39)

The consequences of the Norwegianization process were individualized and in part associated with shame, as being taken for a Sami in public was a personal defeat (Minde, 2003). Many Sámi people thus deliberately hid their Sámi ethnicity in the presence of Norwegians (Eidheim, 1969). The Sámi language and culture did, however, prevail in some Sámi communities; whilst it was more fragmented in other areas where the language was eventually spoken only in the homes. Bjørn Bjerkli writes of the village Manndalen in the Northern part of Troms County as one of those communities where fractions of the language and culture lived on. Many identify as Sámi in this community today, whilst it is still difficult to others:

“Even though many people in Manndalen actively look upon themselves as Saami and engage in ethnopolitical matters, the ethnic affiliation is questioned by others. The question of mixed decent for example, is today used by some of the inhabitants as an argument against being Saami. Expressions like, “We are not Saami, we are descendants from three different kinds of people, Norwegian, Saami and Kvens, and now we are all Norwegians”, can be heard” (Bjerkli, 2010, p: 226).

How did the language survive in some Sámi areas, considering the harsh statedriven assimilation towards the Sámi and the Kven population in Northern Norway over such a long period of time? Geir Grenersen (2015) argues in his article *Finnfondet: et fornorskningsinstrument eller et ekstra lønnstillegg? – En gjennomgang av fondets midler til lærerne 1901 -1902*, that there was also ambivalence towards the assimilation policy from the teachers, who were supposed to carry it out. During the time of Norwegianization, a number of assimilation initiatives in primary schools in Northern Norway were funded by the Lap Fund (Finnfondet in Norwegian), which was a special item in the national budget established by the Storting to bring about a change of language and culture. A common belief has been that teachers who worked in accordance with the instructions of assimilation, were given a grant from the fund as a reward, whilst it was denied to others. Grenersen demonstrates in his study of 63 applications from teachers in the period 1901 – 1902, that all teachers were given

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<sup>1</sup> My translation: The impact of this policy was devastating for Sámi language development and for the Sámi self-esteem. The impact for the Norwegians was not good either. Many learned, consciously and unconsciously, to despise and disparage Sámi culture and thus also Sámi as individuals (Magga, 2000, p: 39).

the grant and that none of them explicitly wrote in their application that they worked actively to make Sámi children feel Norwegian. Grenersen argues that the Lap Fund did not work as an incentive for Norwegianization, and points to the fact that teachers who spoke the Sámi language, used the language to a great extent in the classrooms during the time of Norwegianization.

### 1.3.2 Revitalization

The policy of assimilation started to encounter resistance after the Second World War, a period of time when Norway was recovering from many years of war. The state focused on modernization and the build-up of a welfare state, which underlined that all citizens were equal, regardless of their ethnic background. During the 1960s and the 1970s there was a massive ethnic revival with the uprising of a Sámi ethnopolitical movement, which coincided with an increased global focus on human rights, civil rights and indigenous rights (Sissons, 2005). In order to mobilize group spirit amongst the Sámi and in the construction of a Sámi identity, which was hidden for a long period of time during the assimilation process, there was a great need of common Sámi idioms as Harald Eidheim describes as *a language loaded with ethnic meaning*; a language of signs, symbols and categorizations (Eidheim 1971). It is also in this period that the notion of *Sápmi* is created, as a way of unifying and creating a new self-image of a people that has been culturally and geographically separated (Stordahl, 2000). *Sápmi* is both a geographical definable area and a term that can be applied on the Sámi people as an indigenous nation, which acknowledges the geographical variation of Sámi settlement (Eidheim, 2000).

The Sámi movement engaged actively in the international pan-indigenous movements from 1960 and onwards. The establishment of several Sámi institutions, for instance the Nordic Sámi Council (now named Sámi council) in 1956 and the Nordic Sámi Institute in 1973, exemplifies how the Sámi in this period of time, were becoming active political players nationally (Magga, 2000). The demands from the Sámi ethnopolitical movement became impossible to ignore for the Norwegian authorities when the Alta-case became an international media case, revealing what the state was willing to sacrifice. The governmental plans of building a hydroelectric dam would set the village of Máze under water and destroy Sámi traditional homelands. The Alta-case led to massive demonstrations and a strong cooperation between the Sámi and the environmental movement, and therefore caught the

attention of the world. It became obvious that there was a huge gap between Norway`s international engagement in human rights and their own national policies affecting the Sámi people (Eidheim, 2000, pp: 7-8). A Sámi action group engaged in a short, but important, hunger strike in 1979 outside the Storting (In English: The Parliament). The government postponed the construction of the dam, for a while, and started comprehensive studies on Sámi rights (Minde, 2008). Norway was forced to consider the claims about self-determination and rights connected to traditional lands from the Sámi movement, especially after the Norwegian state forcefully removed protesters at the construction site in 1989 which then was criticized in the UN system. The process consequently led to the establishment of the Sámi Parliament in 1989.

Torill Nyseth and Paul Pedersen, who have engaged in research on urban Sámi identities in Scandinavia, identifies a second wave of strong Sámi revitalization in Norway which came after the 1990s, in the period between the establishment of the Sámi parliament through 2012. By comparing the yearly growth of the Sámi electoral registers in Norway, Finland and Sweden, they found that the growth in Norway was much higher than in the other Nordic countries. One of the main factors to this growth, they believe, is that an increasingly proportion of the urban Sámi population now regards themselves as Sámi:

“The growth in the number of registered Sámi in Norway increased 172% from 1989 to 2013 compared to a 4-5 times in some large and medium-sized towns. At the same time (2012), 42% of the registered Sámi lived in municipalities with towns of 5000 inhabitants or more” (Nyseth & Pedersen, 2014, p: 137).

In regards of the topic of this thesis, the Sámi revitalization has also paved a way for an increased acceptance in the different ways to be Sámi (Hovland, 1996; Pedersen & Nyseth, 2015).

## **1.4 Thesis outline**

This thesis is divided in nine chapters in total. The two first chapters are the introductory chapters, which aim to give a general overview on the topic on urban Sámi identity. The third and fourth chapters are the theoretical and methodology chapters, which give the foundation this thesis is built on. Chapters 5 – 8 are the empirical and analytical chapters, where I present and discuss my findings regarding four selected topics. The last chapter is the concluding



chapter, where I summarize the main findings and discuss identity in light of three concepts, namely stigma, resistance and performance.

In the first chapter I have aimed to present the topic of this thesis, which is urban Sámi identity. In this chapter, I have presented and positioned myself as a researcher in the field of the study. I have also given a historical background, more specifically on the history of assimilation and revitalization, as those are relevant in the identity processes of urban Sámis today.

The second chapter is devoted to the concepts of urban indigeneity, urban Sámi identity and the differentiation between the urban Sámi areas and the core Sámi areas. I also give a brief overview of previous research conducted on the topic of urban Sámi identity, touching upon some relevant studies done on indigenous urban identity globally.

The third chapter presents the theoretical framework and some key concepts that are used in the analysis of this thesis.

The fourth chapter concentrates on indigenous methodology and the methods used in this thesis. I discuss the need for indigenous methodology and what it can contribute. I also discuss the position of insider research and some ethical reflections regarding this position. In the section regarding methods I discuss why I have chosen interviews as my main method and the challenges I have faced in translating the oral stories of my informants. Next, I present the eight informants who have contributed to this thesis and discuss two ethical aspects: the choice of anonymity and the choosing of informants. Lastly, I present the two chosen field cities and how the Sámi identity plays out differently in Tromsø and Oslo.

The fifth chapter is devoted to my informants' experiences in regard of prejudices, ethnic discrimination and harassment, in particular when their ethnic identity is visible. The next section in this chapter deals with stereotypes and the multiple confrontations of 'the truth' regarding Sámi issues and three strategies how my informants deal with such confrontations. Lastly, the topic of expectations within the Sámi society is discussed.

The sixth chapter is about the Sámi language and the struggle to learn, speak or make room to the language in an urban setting. I identify some of the important language arenas that are created and discuss the language as a performative, deeply connected to my informants' self-identification and management of their Sámi identity.

The seventh chapter explores the arenas in a city where the Sámi identity can be performed, strengthened and maintained. I distinguish between the physical arenas, the digital world and the self-created arenas at an individual level.

The eighth chapter aims to look at the city as context for the urban Sámi identity. In

this chapter I discuss how the city can be more inclusive of a Sámi identity compared to core Sámi areas and how the city context encourages an innovative Sámi identity. The importance of networking with other Sámis and the active choice of being an urban Sámi are also discussed.

The ninth chapter is the concluding chapter.

## 2. Urban indigeneity

Indigeneity is often assumed to be a rural condition, where it is argued that indigenous peoples do not belong in towns and cities because they are so closely connected to nature and their traditional lands. In this romanticized idea lies the focus on the massive cultural loss. Jeffrey Sissons demonstrates in his book *First Peoples – Indigenous Cultures and their Futures* (2005) how this is a misconception, as indigenous urbanization followed post-settler urbanization in the second half of the twentieth century. It followed, as it did also in the non-indigenous world, after industrialization and modernization which relocated more and more people both within and outside of Europe. In the context of Northern Norway, the socio-economic changes after the World War II and the build-up of the welfare state, led to an urbanization of small communities and villages in the outskirts (Høgmo, 2012).

Sissons argues that cities do not deprive indigenous people of their cultural distinctiveness and that urbanism and movement are the predominant conditions of indigeneity today. In Sissons words: “What the nostalgic view overlooks is that indigenous people are as culturally creative and adaptable as anyone else” (Sissons, 2005, p: 63). Globally, there is a broad movement of indigenous people from a primarily rural to an increasingly urban population. Findings from demographic analyses show for instance that the proportion of indigenous people in Canada residing in urban areas is now roughly 50 percent, whilst the number in both New Zealand and Australia is over 80 percent. In the United States roughly two-thirds of indigenous people live in urban areas (Peters & Andersen, 2013).

### 2.1 The urban Sámi

The concept of the urban Sámi is as not a new concept, as Sámi people have inhabited cities and towns all over Scandinavia for decades. As an example; the Sámi organization *Oslo Sámiid Searvi* was established in 1948, in a period of time that marked the beginning of the revitalization process. Historically, the Sámi people have been a modern people for thousands of years, argues Veli-Pekka Lehtola (2000), who points to archaeological and linguistic sources that attest to Sámi participation in European trade as early as the Roman Era, in the

year 98. Lehtola thus characterizes “the Sámi frontier as a crossroads of mutual contacts” (Lehtola, 2000, p: 185).

In contemporary Norway, there is a large Sámi population living in cities, although no one can give the exact number of urban Sámis (see chapter 1.2). The number of the Sámi population is however not as interesting in this context, but rather the migration pattern is worth mentioning. Findings from research conducted by the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) in collaboration with the Sámi Health Research Center at the Arctic University of Norway in Tromsø, show a big demographic change within the Sámi population. By examining the moving patterns of the inhabitants in 23 Sámi district municipalities in a total of seven core Sámi regions in the counties of Finnmark, Troms, Nordland and Northern-Trøndelag over time, the report published in 2011 revealed that one third of the population had moved and settled in a city. The research shows that almost four out of ten have left the Sámi district municipality, and that there are more women than men who have moved to a city (Sørli & Broderstad, 2011). According to the NIBR-report, the cities attracting most of the Sámi inhabitants are Tromsø, Alta and Oslo. Tromsø is by far the largest with 60 percent of the total urban relocation, and according to the report, there are 65-70 percent more Sámi inhabitants in Tromsø than in Oslo, crushing the longstanding myth of Oslo being the biggest Sámi municipality in Norway<sup>2</sup>.

In addition, by comparing the numbers in the Sámi electoral register in all three countries where the Sámi Parliament is established, researchers found that there has been both a big growth in the Sámi population in cities whilst the numbers in core Sámi areas have remained stable. Researchers thus conclude that the growth in the urban Sámi population is a result of revitalization, as more and more people living in cities choose to define themselves as Sámi (Pedersen, 2015, p: 108). Regardless of the lack of official statistics of how many Sámi are living in cities in Norway, research suggests that because of the revitalization, there is a new generation of Sámi growing up in an urban environment where the surroundings of the city is also impacting their Sámi identity and, the city itself is opening up for a urban way of being a Sámi (see also Kemi Gjerpe 2013, Dankertsen 2006). The phenomenon is described as a geographical re-organization of *Sápmi* (Pedersen & Nyseth, 2015).

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<sup>2</sup> NRK Sápmi, *Byene tiltrekker seg samer*, URL: <https://www.nrk.no/sapmi/byene-tiltrekker-seg-samer-1.7978154>

## 2.2 The urban Sámi and core Sámi areas

The terms *urban* and *core* used in this thesis should be understood as an attempt on my behalf to distinguish between the Sámi people living in cities and the Sámi people living in traditional Sámi municipalities or regions with a significant Sámi population. Many of my informants also use the same terminology. The terms are not fixed; many urban Sámis might feel a strong connection to a core Sámi area even if they live in a city and might thus have a perspective from both sides. The term *core Sámi area* should be understood as an area where the Sámi population is either in the majority and/or the Sámi language, culture and other aspects of a Sámi identity are more visible than in a big city. Tromsø, which is one of my field cities, might be characterized as both a Sámi area and an urban city. Many of my informants also describe Tromsø as a *Sámi city*.

The urban Sámi is not just one category; it is a mixed group consisting of many sub-groups and individuals with great variations within. It is impossible to conceptualize just one urban Sámi identity (see also Nyseth & Pedersen 2015; Kemi Gjerpe 2013; Dankertsen 2006). Instead, this thesis seeks to identify some common aspects amongst Sámis residing in a city. Research on indigenous urbanization from other parts of the world, refers to a conceptualized and abstract indigenous *community*; which is neither fixed nor geographically bounded. The urban indigenous community may thus consist of social networks, cultural practices and institutional landscapes, which are described as key organizations that provide services in regards to the indigenous language and that create spaces where indigenous cultural and linguistic practices can be validated (Patrick & Tomiak, 2008), as well as certain events and meeting places where the indigenous identity is displayed and practiced. This is also true for my informants, who describe a strong sense of a Sámi community consisting of established Sámi institutions in the city and the self-created arenas that are regarded as Sámi.

## 2.3 Previous research

There has been an increased interest on the topic of urban indigeniety in the global indigenous world in the recent years (see for instance Patrick & Tomiak 2008, Kulis, Wagaman, Tso & Brown 2013). In the book *Indigenous in the City*, edited by Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen (2013), the dominant scholarly emphasis on indigenous cultures and communities in rural areas is challenged. Based on studies done in Canada, USA, New Zealand and Australia, the researchers argue that the preoccupation with an indigenous relationship to homeland has deflected attention away from an understanding of the many ways indigenous

people express their identities in an urban context. They conclude that indigeneity survives, adapts and innovates in modern cities:

“Viewing non-urban tribal communities as the primary influence on Indigenous peoples` lives in cities misses the complex ways in and through which Indigenous peoples selectively interact with urban societies to create meaningful lives in cities” (Peters and Andersen, 2013, p: 9).

However; the indigenous world is not one-dimensional and studies from countries such as Australia and Canada may not be comparable with the situation of the indigenous population in Norway. Turning to my particular topic of urban Sámi identity there are fewer examples of previous research. A large amount of Sámi research has been conducted over the last 30 years, but most of it has been centered in the core Sámi areas whilst the urban Sámi has been left out. Paul Pedersen and Torill Nyseth have recently conducted a study which has a Nordic comparative approach, focusing on urban Sámi identities in Scandinavia. In their book *City-Saami: Same i byen eller bysame?* (2015), they present findings which argue that a new urban Sámi culture is in the making, where new expressions of a Sámi identity are given room to grow. Their research reveals, however, that there are also ambivalences, strong links and identifications to places in the Sámi core areas outside of the cities. Nyseth and Pedersen (2014) also underline that in an international context; little is known about the patterns and experiences of indigenous urban peoples.

There are also some studies dealing with identity and modernity in a Sámi context. Arild Hovland (1996) discusses identity; local and ethnic belonging and modernity amongst Sámi youth in Sámi municipalities. Vigdis Stordahl (1996) also discusses societal change and the aspect of identity; but within the context of Karasjok; a core Sámi municipality. Asle Høgmo (1986) demonstrates how identity can change in his study of how three generations of sea Sámi manage their Sámi identity. Kajsa Kemi Gjerpe (2013) and Astri Dankertsen (2006) have written master theses dealing with urban identity, both indicating how young urban Sámis today are mixing and incorporating their Sámi identity as part in their Norwegian identity. There are also other studies dealing with Sámi identity, the concept of Sáminess and the Sámi presence in different disciplines (see for instance Paine 1987; Paine 2003; Kvernmo & Heyerdahl 1996; Pietikäinen 2003; Kuokkanen 2011)

### 3. Theoretical framework and key concepts

This thesis revolves around the concept of identity, which is conceptualized as ongoing processes of construction and negotiations. An individual's identity is never static, it is in a constant state of flux (Robbins, 1973). Identity seeks to answer 'Who am I?', both at a subjective and objective level as described by Asle Høgmo (1992). Our subjective identity is something we ourselves construct, whilst the objective identity is something we are given from the outside, for instance from our family, local community or by the national state. In this thesis I will be discussing identity from both personal and social perspectives, and the notion of ethnicity and ethnic identity will be used frequently.

It is common to distinguish between a *primordialist* perspective; which argues that people's ethnicity is given to them since they are born, from their ancestral lines, and a *instrumentalist* perspective; which argues that ethnicity is fluid, highly dynamic and able to adjust to different circumstances. The third category, which is also the one relevant in this thesis, is the constructivist perspective which tries to bridge the primordialist and instrumentalist perspectives. In a constructivist perspective, ethnicity is something that is context-dependent and dualistic, and views ethnicity as one of several identities. Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2010), refers to Anthony Giddens who stresses that social life is built on both agency and structure, or in Eriksen's terms: freedom and constraint. Ethnicity is a social and cultural created product, which deals with the classification of people and group relationships. Eriksen argues: "Ethnicity is an aspect of social relationship between persons who consider themselves as essentially distinctive from members of others groups of whom they are aware and with whom they enter into relationships" (Eriksen, 2010, pp: 16-17).

In regards of social identity; Erving Goffman argues how society creates means for categorizing individuals, giving them attributes that are regarded as 'normal' in the different categories. Social settings provide a backdrop for what categories a person is likely to encounter. Thus, we use the anticipations that we have to the different categories and convert them into expectations that are then presented as demands. In other words, we create and use stereotypes. These demands do not concern us however, until we are questioning whether the demands are being met or not (Goffman, 1990 (1963)). Social identity then consists of statuses and stereotypes; the expectations and assumptions of society and relations with other people. In this, Goffman also distinguishes between *actual social identity*; which are categories and attributes a person may hold, and *virtual social identity*; which are attributes and categories we expect a person to hold. Some of these attributes are what Goffman

describes as *stigma*. These are the categories that make a person different from others in the same available category for the said person. The individuals that do not have these stigmatizing attributes is regarded as `normal`. Stigma is thus negative affordances onto traits of identity, a concept which is highly relevant in this thesis.

Individuals have many statuses and many possible identities, made relevant by different social situations. Eriksen (2010) coins this as the *fluidity* and the *relativity* of identity, and referring to scholars as Gerd Baumann and David McCrone, he writes of identity concerning `routes` rather than `roots` (Eriksen, 2010, p: 215). Eriksen argues that social integration is a condition for identities to become relevant since it is contact that engenders social identity. Consequently, identity is not natural given as it is socially constructed and defined. So in the case of ethnic identity, which has its foundation on notions of shared origins. Ethnic identity “can be seen as expressions of metaphoric kinship” (Eriksen, 2010, p: 81) and must be considered legitimate by both insiders and outsiders; members of the group and people who do not belong to the said group. Ethnic groups are an attribute of social organization as opposed to an aspect of culture; and there are some mechanisms that uphold such an ethnic group. In the introduction of his seminal work *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Barth states: “The critical focus of investigation from this view becomes the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses” (Barth, 1969, p: 15). In other words; the ethnic content of a group; such as language, dress and food traditions may change, but the boundaries remain. The cultural traits that are significant are the ones marking the difference between groups. By focusing on the boundaries of a group, one thus can argue that the main concern is not who is a member, but who is not. In order to be within the ethnic boundaries, one relies on self-ascription as well as ascription by others. The power of defining ethnic identity is thus an issue for both the individual and the surrounding society.

But the ascription of others – or the mere definition of indigeneity may be problematic in an indigenous context. Historically, indigenous peoples ethnic identity has been subject to marginalization and assimilation, and has in the colonial context been condescending both socially and politically. Henry Minde argues: “The term `indigenous` can have different uses, the understanding of the term has developed over time and the interpretation of how it should be defined has been (and is) an ongoing political struggle” (Minde, 2008, p: 83). Indigenous people living in cities, will often differ from the expectations of the *authentic indigeneity*. Jeffrey Sissons (2005) introduces the concept of oppressive authenticity which is placing an

urban indigenous life to a position of out-of-place. He describes indigenous authenticity as conceptual captivity which has deep roots within colonial racism. In the words of Sissons:

“In addition to being naturally other, indigenous people are expected to be visibly other. To be visibly other is, above all, to be phenotypically different. Hair, skin colour and facial features are assumed to index levels of `genuine` racial, and by extension, cultural belonging. Ideally, there should also be no contradiction between these visible biological elements and cultural ones such as speech, dress and manner” (Sissons, 2005, pp: 42-23).

As this thesis revolves around indigenous identity in an urban context, I find it useful to also apply modernity in the theoretical framework. Anthony Giddens argues that the self-identity is a reflexive project as the reflexivity of modernity extends into the core of the self: “In the settings of modernity, by contrast, the altered self has to be explored and constructed as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change” (Giddens, 1991, p: 33).

Returning to the topic of this thesis then, a Sámi identity in an urban setting is something that needs to be explored and constructed in line with both personal and social factors. I connect this to the theoretical concept of *performances*; a term used by Erving Goffman (1990 (1959)), who is regarded as one of the major contributors to urban anthropological thought (Hannerz, 1980). Goffman uses the term `performance` to refer to “all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (1990, p: 32). Trond Thuen is also concerned with performativity, and describes the ascription of ethnic identity as assigned to two different sources which often operate in combination:

“(i) to the social significance of common denominators such as the idea of shared descent or locality of origin; and (ii) to performative expressions of an idiomatic character such as conduct, speech, dress and similarly acquired characteristics of cultural competence” (Thuen, 1995, p: 84).

In an urban context especially, it might be difficult to draw the ethnic boundary between an ethnic Sámi and a non-Sámi. Sanna Valkonen (2014) writes how the modern Sámi is not always very different – or not different at all – from the majority population in their way of life. Valkonen, referring to Müller-Wille (1971/1996), describes personal recognition as traditionally important in the classification of Sámis and argues how recognition itself can be considered as a performative. In order to be recognized as a socially accepted Sámi, the person thus must perform the established and perceived Sámi elements.



## **4. Methodology and methods**

I will start this chapter by giving a brief introduction to indigenous methodology, which this thesis is inspired by. I will explain how indigenous methodology is relevant in this context and I will discuss the concept of insider research, which is a position I myself can relate to. I will then present the methods used in this thesis, focusing in particular on doing interviews and later transcribing and translating. It is the latter aspect in particular that has been the most challenging for me. Next, I will present my informants; the storytellers of this thesis and discuss the ethical aspects in regards of their requested anonymity. Lastly, I will explain my motivation behind the choices made in regards of the field.

### **4.1 Indigenous methodology**

Methodology refers to the set of reflections on how the researcher conducts the research, and is thus about both the choices in research and the strategy consisting of research topics. In short, methodology summarizes the research process (Chilisa, 2012). My thesis is inspired by indigenous methodology and seeks to combine some principles from indigenous methodology at an ideological level with the use of conventional methods within anthropological research. Indigenous methodology seeks to decolonize research and re-centering indigenous values, knowledge systems and cultural practices into dominant research discourses in order to connect the indigenous ways of knowing within the dominant academic sphere (Kuokkanen 2000; Chilisa 2012; Smith 2012). Indigenous scholars Beth Blue Swadener and Kagendo Mutua argue that indigenous methodology is a theory of inquiry and that indigenous methods – including poetry, drama, storytelling, and critical personal narratives – are performative practices that represent and make indigenous life visible (Swadener & Mutua, 2008).

The indigenous peoples in the world are socially, culturally and politically different from one another. Indigenous methodology is thus not one fixed solution on how to conduct research, but aims at a general level to be sensitive, safe and relevant to the specific community in which the research is focused. Indigenous methodologies are often a mix of existing methodological approaches and indigenous practices (Smith, 2012, p: 144).

#### **4.1.1 The need for indigenous methodology**

Research on indigenous peoples and cultures has historically been problematic both at a global and local level. One example is set in the Sámi village Tysfjord in Northern Norway, where researchers within the field of physical anthropology entered the local community in the early 1900s. The researchers measured the skulls and other physical features of the Sámi

population during their data gathering. Bjørg Evjen (1997) argues that the researchers were clearly focused on racial hierarchy in which necessary ethical considerations were not made. The example from Tysfjord sheds light on how research has an aspect of *power* which can be challenging in an indigenous context. In his doctoral thesis *Kulturell gjenreisning i et markasamisk kjerneområde*, Geir Grenersen also discusses the power aspect from his own research in an area in southern Troms at the early 80s. Grenersen describes how there was a strong resentment from members of the Sámi population in Skånland and Tysfjord towards research that, in their view, was based on a power hierarchy where the Sámi aspect was regarded inferior to the Norwegian (1995, pp: 56-60).

Bjørg Evjen (1997) argues that the academic field has now seen a shift in regards to power relations, where the `research objects`, in this context the Sámi people, actively participate in researching their own culture. However, the power structures between *the researcher and the researched* will always be an issue in research, whether one takes an indigenous methodological approach or not; but the inclusion of an indigenous methodology will challenge and encourage the researcher to look for other perspectives and realities. In the words of indigenous scholar Bagele Chilisa who advocates for a postcolonial indigenous perspective in research:

“The researcher has to pay attention to issues of concern to the colonized researcher and those who are disadvantaged, to the history of the researched, to the history of the methods used and to the literature on the colonized researched” (Chilisa, 2012, p: 174)

In order to deconstruct research which is imperially colored, Rauna Kuokkanen (2000) suggests an inclusion of an indigenous paradigm when doing research on and with indigenous communities, as educational institutions have been central to the process of colonizing indigenous peoples` minds all over the world. Kuokkanen argues how decolonization is a part of both empowerment and self-determination, and argues for research based on indigenous peoples` premises, values and worldview, and points to the importance of indigenous self-presentation:

“It is perhaps appropriate to note here that while discussing an `Indigenous paradigm` I am not, however, suggesting that there is only one way to do Sami research. My point is that if we acknowledge the importance of the decolonization process of Indigenous societies on the way to empowerment and full-self determination, it is also crucial that we reconnect ourselves to our cultural concepts, values and knowledge systems in order to also be self-governing intellectuality” (Kuokkanen, 2000, p: 413).

According to Kuokkanen, research has a clear connection to the researcher`s own culture, which is reflected in language, style, structure, methods and assumptions of knowledge and the role of the researcher (ibid).

#### 4.1.2 The contribution of indigenous methodology

Indigenous methodology allows and encourages storytelling in research as an approach that fits well with the oral traditions still important in indigenous lives today (Smith, 2012). Thus, stories function as both method and meaning; saying something about who we are and are closely linked to indigenous ways of knowing (Kovach, 2009). I support the views of Chilisa, who says: “Stories are the tools of data collection, analysis and interpretation that give another side of the story to deficit theorizing about the *Other* and allow the *Other*, formerly colonized and historically oppressed, to frame and tell their past and present life experience from their perspective” (Chilisa, 2012, p: 139).

In this thesis there are stories from both my informants and myself, which I connect to the concept of indigenous auto-ethnography. Paul Whitinui argues for “the importance of considering indigenous auto-ethnography as another preferred `Native` method of inquiry in indigenous research (Whitinui, 2013, p: 5). He amongst many other scholars (see Chilisa 2012; Wilson 2008; Smith 2012) are concerned with indigenous knowledge and its` role in research; and also to involve ones` own experience from the standpoint of being an indigenous person and reflecting knowledge from an indigenous perspective. Chilisa argues for an indigenizing of research; an adjustment of existing methodologies in order to make them tailored to the culture and history of a researched group.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith elaborates:

“Engaging in a discussion about research as an indigenous issue has been about finding a voice, or a way of voicing concerns, fears, desires, aspirations, needs and questions as they relate to research. When indigenous peoples become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems are defined differently, and people participate on different terms” (Smith, 2012, pp: 195-196)

## 4.2 Insider research

I am a primary informant, being a Sámi and living in Tromsø, one of my chosen field cities, and by writing a thesis about urban Sámi identity, also doing research within my own contemporary context or within my own reality (Wadel, 1991). My fieldwork is a continuous process, which started over 14 years ago as illustrated by the introduction. I am in a position which calls for reflection, and through this thesis, I am also exploring my own contemporary history.

Many may say that the common knowledge of the *researcher* and the *researched*, is not valid as professional insight. The commonality of interest may also lead to culture blindness; where the researcher's preconceptions and understanding of *how things are*, may put the researcher in a position where she is not capable of discovering important nuances and knowledge may be taken for granted (Stordahl, 1996). The longstanding debate in social anthropology has questioned if it is possible for an outsider to have an insider perspective and vice versa. One argument is that insider research may lack the analytical distance, whilst outsider research may be incapable of fully understanding the processes within (Stordahl 1996; Paulgaard 2005). In the words of Linda Tuhiwai Smith:

“One of the difficult risks insider researchers take is to ‘test’ their own taken-for-granted views about their community. It is a risk because it can unsettle beliefs, values, relationships and the knowledge of different histories” (Smith, 2012, p: 140)

The role as an indigenous researcher in one's own community is complicated because there are multiple ways of being both an insider and an outsider in one's own culture. Being in the role of the researcher and coming from the academical sphere, might make me an outsider within the Sámi community. Also my personal background, coming from Kárašjohka; which is a core Sámi area and having learned the Northern Sámi language as a child growing up, can place me in an outsider position to many of my informants in the cities who have re-discovered their Sámi identity as adults and are in the process of learning and re-learning the language. Scholars such as Vigdis Stordahl (1994) and Gry Paulgaard (2005) have done fieldwork in their own home communities in Finnmark, and they argue that common cultural knowledge or experiences does not necessarily cause a negative impediment on the research. The researcher doing research from an insider perspective needs to clarify and be open about the role she has taken during the process as a way of positioning herself as both an insider and an outsider (Paulgaard, 2005, p: 90). In the context of this thesis, by choosing this particular topic and by asking certain questions, I have already influenced the process of gathering and

creating data from the start. I am by being Sámi an insider in my own culture; a position that has granted me space in social relations within the urban Sámi community and access to urban Sámi people. I am however, also an outsider as I am as a researcher selecting, categorizing and analyzing the experiences in those social relations systematically, which I would not have done had I participated in those social relations merely as a fellow Sámi. As a researcher one need to be in both positions, regardless of how close the researcher is to the culture in focus (Wadel, 1991).

While conventional research methodologies may assume the outsider perspective to be `neutral` and `objective` since the researcher will be able to observe without being implicated; indigenous methodology takes on a different approach. Being an insider does not necessarily imply subjectivity even if there is closeness between the *researcher* and the *researched*. Chilisa states: “This closeness creates difficulties in separating the researcher’s experiences from those of the participants” (Chilisa, 2012, p: 168). The insider research needs a high degree of reflexivity to overcome biases and to be aware of the concepts or symbolic meanings that are familiar from a cultural perspective. This being said, the insider position may also give access to information that is not necessarily spoken out loud or to informants who do not usually take part in the public debate. As an indigenous researcher looking into ones` own familiarities, one has to be critical about the process itself. Smith argues:

“Insider research has to be ethical and respectful, as reflexive and critical, as outsider research. It needs to be humble because the researcher belongs to the community as a member with a different set of roles and relationships, status and positions” (Smith, 2012, p: 140).

### 4.3 Methods

This thesis is mainly based on qualitative methods, which is used in the study of people`s life histories or everyday behavior (Silverman 2013). The research approach focuses primarily on interviews with informants. As I have gathered personal data about individuals, I have submitted a notification form to the Data Protection Official for Research in line with the regulation of the Norwegian Centre of Research Data (NSD)<sup>3</sup>, which has approved my project. To ensure a voluntary participation and to highlight the informants` right to withdraw at any given time, each informant was given a pre-written information sheet (see appendix 1)

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<sup>3</sup> NSD is the Data Protecion Official for Research for all the Norwegian universities, university colleges and several hospitals and research institutes. For more information, see their webpage: <http://www.nsd.uib.no/nsd/english/pvo.html>

that informed them about the project, my intentions with the research and contact information to my supervisor, Geir Grenersen. All of the informants then gave their written consent regarding their voluntary participation and the choice of anonymity.

In addition to the interviews conducted, I have also had numerous informal conversations with urban Sámi about identity maintenance and ethnic discrimination and bullying in particular. These conversations have taken place at random places at random times and although they are not specifically part of my empirical chapters, they added valuable viewpoints to the project as they confirmed the need to raise such matters in academia. I have also been a part of the field as a participating observer at different Sámi events in both of my chosen field cities and some of those observations will be part in the analysis. My data material also includes written sources, such as articles, books, online newsarticles and statistics, which I refer to in the running text.

#### **4.3.1 Interviews**

I have conducted in-depth interviews with eight informants in the period of July 2015 – February 2016. The qualitative interview offer access to attitudes, values and feelings (Seale, 2012). Such interviews enable flexibility, exploration of suppressed views, discussion of sensitive issues, depth, reflection of complexity and allow informants to answer “in their words” (Seale 2012, p: 211). I chose interviews as the main tool for data collection early on in the process, as I wanted the informants to express their own values and feelings in regards to their urban ethnic identity.

My interview method shifted between the unstructured or non-standardized interview and the semi-structured interview. The first category is described as an interview beginning with a general question in the area of study, accompanied by a list of topics to be covered in the interview, which allows for flexibility. The second category is described as focused interviews where the interviewer follows an interview guide, which ensures the researcher to collect similar data from all informants (Chilisa 2012, p: 205). I had beforehand written an interview guide, which covered several different topics that I believed to be relevant (see appendix 2). Examples of the topics were definitions of the Sámi identity, identity markers, Sámi identity in the city and urban habits in relation to Sámi traditions, stereotypes and prejudices, discourses on Sámi identity, language use and language arenas and Sámi politics and media. Some of the questions were designed to be open for interpretation by each informant, because I wanted my informants to express their meaning spontaneously and

honestly. Examples of such questions are “What is Sámi identity?” or “How to be Sámi in a city”. There are different types of questions that can be asked and Michael Patton (2002) distinguishes between experience and behavior questions, opinion and value questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions, sensory questions, and background and demographic questions (Patton, 2002, cited in Chilisa, 2012, pp: 205-206). The questions in my interview guide combined several of these categories, with an emphasis on experience, opinion and feelings.

I talked to all of my informants beforehand, presenting my project and my intentions. I also encouraged my informants to raise topics of their own interest during the upcoming interview, which most of them did. After conducting the first interviews, I also revised the interview guide, in which I added a few more questions within certain topics and re-wrote or deleted questions that seemed unnecessary. Though the interview guide is written in Norwegian (appendix 2), the questions were asked in both Northern Sámi and Norwegian during the interviews. The interview process was as individual as the informants themselves, influenced by their own areas of interest with follow-up questions from me. As such, each interview was unique and individually took approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours.

My role as the researcher has thus been twofold; on the one hand I wanted the informants to lead the conversation in line with both the core standard within semi-structural interviews and indigenous methodology that encourages research *with* the informants (Chilisa, 2012). On the other hand, the selection of the topics discussed in this thesis and the theoretical approach, is a result of my analysis. Research is creation of data, based on the fieldwork that is analyzed and categorized, and the researcher is dependent on both a distance and closeness to the subject of research (Paulgaard, 2005).

All interviews were recorded for the purpose of transcription, with the permission of my informants. This was helpful in the process of transcribing the interviews, a subject I will return to shortly. The informants decided where they wanted to meet me for the interview, as I wanted them to feel as comfortable as possible. Some of my informants I have visited in their homes, others at their office at work or at a public place such as a café and a festival. One informant wanted to meet me at the University of Tromsø. I had originally planned to meet the last informant, whom I interviewed via Skype, but due to the informant's tight work schedule at the time, it was not possible. The informant thus suggested Skype as an alternative with web-camera.

### 4.3.2 Transcribing and translating

One of the main challenges for me personally in this process has been the task of transcribing and translating the oral stories of my informants. Firstly, the transcribing was a highly time consuming process and I ended up with more than a hundred pages of transcript. Secondly, I felt it quite difficult at times to reproduce both a correct translation and meaning of the Sámi language to English writing. This may have many explanations, firstly and obviously; because English is not my native language, but also secondly; as the Sámi language linguistically is very different from English. The Sámi language is a verb-driven language, which “has a deep impact on an oral society’s mentality and way of thinking” (Ong, 1982, cited in Grenersen et.al., 2016, p: 1184)

Indigenous methodology encourages researchers to produce research which is multilingual and multivocal. Aroztegui Massera (2006) reflects on some of the challenges in the act of translating, which implies loss of information. Massera exemplifies this with her own experience when presenting bilingual texts in her doctoral dissertation:

“The difficulty in translating is mostly a cultural problem. Some words that are essential to understanding the meaning of the narratives have a specific meaning within the context of the group interviewed: Uruguayan female former political prisoners. Such words, although they might have a Standard English translation, would lose an important part of their meaning because these meanings are created by the context within which they are used” (Massera, 2006, cited in Chilisa, 2012, pp: 154-155).

As Massera points out, the meaning is created in context, which is also relevant when it comes to the Sámi language. For instance, this aspect is demonstrated by Jakob Meløe (1990) in his article *The two landscapes of Northern Norway*, where he, in his quest for understanding one single Sámi term that describes a patch of snow on the mountain, discovers and unravels how he needs to understand the practice and the experience with the correct word that exists in order to fully understand the meaning of the single word. To learn a language is thus also about learning to know a culture and the concepts of it (Meløe, 1990). Also scholars Geir Grenersen, Kjell Kemi and Steinar Nilsen (2016) discuss this aspect in their article *Landscapes as documents* where they describe the Sámi as a language focused on relationship and processes, and argues how indigenous oral tradition, including stories, are important sources for knowledge and culture-specific forms of documentation. Thus, the Sámi may use stories as encoded informaton, defined as “information that has symbolic, linguistic, or signal-based pattern of organization” (Bates, 2006, cited in Grenersen et. al., 2016, p: 1190).



It was important for me to quote my informants as correctly as I could and in the language that was used during the interview. I therefore have transcribed in both Sámi and Norwegian. It was also important to me personally to signify the Sámi language in terms of my own choice of topic about urban Sámi identity. Actively using and displaying the Sámi language in an academical text, is also a way of promoting and expressing a Sámi identity. However, due to practicality, when quoting just a sentence or two of the interviews, I have written as a running text in English instead of making it a whole paragraph in either Sámi or Norwegian. Six out of the eight interviews were conducted either fully or partly in the Northern Sámi language, which is also my mother tongue. The two remaining interviews were conducted in Norwegian. I let the informants decide which language they wanted to speak during the interview.

Two of the interviews that were conducted in Sámi, switched between Norwegian and Sámi. In cases where the informants did not understand my question in Sámi, I translated it freely to Norwegian. All of the quotes and paragraphs from my informants are in the written text translated to English, which I have placed in a footnote with a notion that the translation is done by me. I have aimed to ensure that the meaning of the paragraph is as correct as possible. Therefore, they may not be grammatically correct and any mistakes in the translation are fully my own responsibility.

#### **4.4 The storytellers**

This thesis is based on the stories of eight individuals, who are the bearers of knowledge and the true experts on their urban Sámi life. All of the eight define themselves as Sámi. Three of them live in Tromsø, and one of them is born and raised in this particular city. Four of my informants live in Oslo. The eighth and final informant is currently living abroad due to work, but is born and raised in Oslo, which by the informant also is characterized as her hometown.

Half of my informants have lived in both chosen field cities, Tromsø and Oslo, for either a short or a long period of time. The majority of my informants have moved and settled to the particular city. Some of them are originally from core Sámi areas, while others are from cities or villages where the Sámi population is a minority. My informants are from the coastal areas and inlands of Finnmark and Troms, and Oslo. They range in the ages from 20+ to 50+. Their ages and other basic facts presented in this thesis are from the time the interview was

conducted. As my fieldwork started in the summer of 2015, both basic facts and current place of residency of some of my informants may have changed.

I have interviewed four women and four men as I wanted a gender balance. Some of them are active in the Sámi organization in the city they reside or they take part in Sámi events and festivities arranged throughout the year. Some of them also take part in the public debate regarding Sámi issues, some of them also figure in media and some engage in Sámi politics. A few of them work in Sámi institutions or are connected to such institutions outside their professional life. Others do not engage to a great extent in Sámi organizations or other Sámi events.

My informants are:

- *Ánde Somby* (57), lives and works as an Associate Professor in Tromsø and is also a known performer of joik. He is originally from Polmak, a small village in the municipality of Deatnu/Tana in the eastern part of Finnmark. He has lived in Tromsø since 1992.
- *John-Egil Svinsås J. Magga* (20), student in Tromsø, which is the city he is born and raised in. He has family in Máttá-Várjjat/Sør-Varanger in the eastern part of Finnmark, Kvænangen in the northern part of Troms and Vesterålen in Nordland.
- *Sarakka Gaup* (24), actress who was born and raised in Oslo. She currently lives in Sweden, where she works as an actress. Her father was from Guovdageainu/Kautokeino in the western part of Finnmark, but spent most of his childhood in the Southern part of Norway where he was raised by a Norwegian family.
- *Biret* is from a village in the county of Troms, but has lived in Tromsø since 2003. She has also lived in other cities in Norway and abroad. She learned the Sámi language in primary school in her homevillage. She is in her mid-thirties.
- *Ánne* is originally from a city in Finnmark, but has lived in Oslo for five years. She has also lived in other cities in Norway. She has learned the Sámi language as an adult by attending language courses in Oslo. She is in her mid-twenties.
- *Piera* is originally from a village in Finnmark. He has lived in Oslo for 16 years, but has also lived in different areas in both Finnmark and Troms. Sámi is his mothertongue. Agewise, he is in his late fifties.

- *Máret* is from a village in Finnmark and has lived in Oslo for two years. She speaks Northern Sámi fluently and has previously lived in a city in Finnmark and abroad for a longer period of time. She is in her mid-thirties.
- *Niillas* is from a village in the county of Troms, but has also lived in a village in Finnmark during his youth. He has lived abroad for a longer period of time and has settled in Oslo where he has been living for 16 years. He is in his mid-forties.

#### 4.4.1 The question of anonymity

In an indigenous research context, naming the informants can be an act of empowerment. In a discussion about postcolonial indigenous research paradigms, Chilisa (2012) argues for a relational ethical framework which moves away from the concept of the researched as participants, to the researched as *co-researchers*. Chilisa, referring to Wilson, emphasizes the importance of revealing their names so the knowledge can be traced back to its originators, if permitted by the informants. Revealing the real names of informants may go against most university ethical research policies, but Wilson argues that naming the informants creates accountable relationships between informants and the researcher (Wilson in Chilisa, 2012, pp: 121-122).

David Silverman write about the general ethical principles in research where protection of research participants is the standard instructions in the British Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and states that the anonymity of respondents must be respected: “This requires that researchers take steps to ensure that research data and its sources remain confidential unless participants have consented to their disclosure (...)” (Silverman, 2013, p: 162). The formal rules and regulations in research vary from country to country. In a Sámi context in Norway for instance, there are no particular rules for research on Sámi issues or communities, but there are regulations stating that ethnicity is one of several matters that needs to be handled with care (Olsen, 2016).

In the process of writing this thesis, I have reflected a great deal about whether I should anonymize all of my informants. After reading works from other researchers engaged in the topic of Sámi identity, I realized that most of the research has anonymized the respondents (see for instance Stordahl, 1996; Dankertsen, 2006; Kemi Gjerpe, 2013; Pedersen & Nyseth (2015). I support the view of Chilisa and Wilson, and regard naming indigenous informants as an act of empowerment and as an aspect of self-representation in research (Kuokkanen, 2000), and I was thrilled to find the same view in some of my informants. Also,

my supervisor Geir Grenersen, who used authentic names of his Sámi informants in his doctoral thesis (1995) in addition to allowing the informants to read his text along the way and discussing his analysis with them, was supportive of the idea of presenting my informants with their full names with their consent.

All of my eight informants were thus given the choice of anonymity. Three out of the eight, expressed a strong wish to be presented in the thesis with their real names. All three of them have given a written consent regarding their choice of identification and in line with the recommendations of The Norwegian Centre for Data Research (NSD), the informants who are identified with personal data such as their real names, have read and approved the quotes of their interviews prior to submission of the thesis. In addition, I have met their requests of adding or taking out some words in their quotations in order to clarify their opinions.

Five of my informants wanted to be anonymous, which I fully respect. Therefore, I have given them fictitious names, which are written in italics in the text and their ages are written in a general way. The fictitious names are random and common Northern Sámi names not connected to the informants, but rather familiar to me from my own home area. I have chosen not to name any specific region where the informants are from nor to name or identify any other location mentioned by the informants in the interviews. This is explicitly marked in a parenthesis in the text. Identifying details about their professional life, social life and other, are also kept anonymous or left out. Out of respect for their requested anonymity, I have also done some modifications in regards of their spoken dialect in my transcription. Many of them use words that are specific to a certain area. To a Sámi reader, it therefore would have been possible to identify their place of origin by the use of certain words. I have not marked the words which are replaced in the text out of consideration for their requested anonymity. The written paragraphs are thus intentionally colored by my own dialect, which is from Kárašjohka.

However, Sápmi and the communities connected to it, are small. It makes it difficult to guarantee that the informants who have requested to be anonymous cannot be identified by their local communities in Tromsø and Oslo or people who are close to them. I have therefore tried to anonymize them as best I could in order to reduce the risk of identification. To this day, only my supervisor and I know their full identity.

#### 4.4.2 Reflexivity in regards of choosing my informants

I started out the initial part of my fieldwork in the spring of 2015 by reaching out to Sámi people in both Oslo and Tromsø who I knew beforehand, asking them if they knew of people who might be interested in talking to me about Sámi identity. This method is also described as snowball sampling or network sampling that “involves obtained respondents through referrals among people who share the same characteristic and who know of each other” (Seale, 2012, p: 145) and relies on personal recommendations of people whom a respondent knows. This method however, provides a risk of interviewing people within a network where the people are likely to have similar experiences or in my case, similar attitudes on the topic of Sámi identity. I thus tried to reach out to different people I knew of who did not have the same geographical background as myself, and who differed from me in terms of age, sex and interests. Many of them then suggested people I should contact and some of them ended up being informants. I regard this part of the fieldwork as the research phase, where I talked to many different people both about the project and the relevancy of it. Although I did not take much notice of it back then, the subject of ethnic bullying, harassment and stigma often came up in these informal conversations, which later on in the process helped me to focus the interviews to include such topics. Most of my informants had reflected upon these topics previously.

In this phase I also tried to reach out to a broader audience by using different pages and groups in social media, primarily Facebook and Twitter. I wanted to recruit people who had a particular interest in the topic of identity and I asked them to contact me if they wanted to take part in my master thesis. This method is also referred to as volunteer sampling (Seale, 2012). Unfortunately, this attempt to connect to urban Sámis did not succeed. Instead, I started following a group of people on Twitter who engaged in discussions about Sámi topics and contacted them directly. One of them agreed to be my informant. Social media thus became a very useful tool for establishing and building relationship to members of the urban Sámi community. Research suggests that the use of Internet can be an important aspect of reaffirmation of indigenous identity and re-establishment of communication lines (Dyson, 2011) and as a new medium for the communication and expression of tradition (Olsen, 2012). This is a theme that I will return to in the empirical and analysis chapters.

At that period of time, there was also a huge debate in Sámi media about language domains in cities and a person who was interviewed by the media on the topic, caught my interest. The

person agreed to be an informant. The news coverage on that particular topic thus directed me to this person. Another informant was a person I had knowledge of through media some years ago, in which the person had expressed thoughts which I found interesting, on the topic of rediscovering a Sámi identity. However, most of my informants were found through my personal network and the suggestions I got from people I know. Firstly, it is important to specify that I do not regard any of my informants as personal friends of mine; some of them I would characterize as acquaintances. Secondly, as I myself have lived in both Oslo and Tromsø in addition to having worked as a Sámi journalist for many years, the Sámi `world` or sphere is rather small. It is almost inevitable to cross paths with Sámis who actively engage in Sámi issues, events or discussions.

The aspect of including the indigenous *researched* in the process of selecting the informants, is in line with indigenous methodology, but it is at the same time challenging as it might imply a bias on my behalf. By starting in my own network and by asking people within my own network to suggest people from their network, it may imply that the networking process itself steers and decides the selection of informants. It is as such, also a risk of selecting informants who are too similar to myself. Pedersen & Nyseth (2015) characterize cities as educational centres that attract an increasingly proportion of young generation Sámi. Cities, such as Tromsø and Oslo, have been and are still important arenas in regards of education, research, culture and policy-building in a Sámi context, creating a Sámi elite that has been at the front line in regards of proposing, shaping and implementing Sámi political initiatives, which in turn has influenced the notion of a Sámi identity. The cities also attract Sámi from all the different subgroups who educate themselves and work in different professions. The Sámi population in cities is thus characteristically heterogenous both in terms of culture, language and profession (Pedersen & Nyseth, 2015, pp: 22-23).

I will however argue that the educated urban Sámi population as presented here, also can be regarded as a homogenous group in the Sámi context. The notion of an intellectual elite signifies a unified, sub-group of the total Sámi population. In relation to my thesis this becomes evident as most of my informants are educated and work in the tertiary sector of the economy or in the quaternary sector, a new economical classification which includes information technology, education and financial planning. None of my informants are on a daily basis engaged in agriculture, fishing or reindeer husbandry; which are traditional Sámi industries. Three of my informants have personal connections to reindeer husbandry through

kinship relations. One of my informants; Sarakka, owns her own reindeer, but is not actively engaged in it on a daily basis. She will however spend time in the mountains with the herd when she is visiting close relatives. It is also worth noting, although I do not make a point of separating Sámi in the different categories in this thesis, that I have not interviewed people who identify themselves as South or Lule Sámi. Some of my informants have close relatives or kinship connections to people in those language groups. I had initially planned to include Sámi from these language groups, but unfortunately I had trouble finding people who were willing to participate and/or had the time to meet me during the period of fieldwork.

As my empirical data is based on interviews with eight North Sámi informants who all belong to an educated and professional subgroup in two chosen cities in Norway, my sample is thus not representative of the whole urban Sámi population. This thesis aims to identify some challenges based on the stories of eight Sámi individuals, rather than to generalize and draw any conclusions on behalf of all Sámi who reside in cities.

#### 4.4.3 Self-identification as criteria

My primary criteria for the selection of informants, has thus been based on their own self-identification. In this thesis I argue that to be Sámi or to make it relevant in one's urban life, is to many an active choice when living in a city where the 'Sáminess' is not as easily found. I have met and talked to people who will describe themselves as 'half-Sámi' or people who connect their Sámi background to a specific Sámi place or area outside the city, where they have chosen not to identify as Sámi in the city or where the ethnic identity is not relevant in their daily life. Research on urban Sámi identity has focused on this aspect previously (see for instance Dankertsen, 2006, Kemi Gjerpe, 2012, Pedersen & Nyseth, 2015).

To some people; such as myself who describe the Sámi identity as 'natural', it does not immediately appear as a choice of being Sámi, rather it is described as something *that is just there*. The Sámi identity thus has an aspect of both essentiality and choice. Astri Dankertsen (2006) found different categories of Sámi living in Oslo in her master thesis "*Men du kan jo snakke frognersamisk. Tradisjon og kulturell innovasjon blant samer i Oslo*". Dankertsen for example, separates between the non-practicing and practicing Sámi, implying that having an ethnicity as a Sámi and an identity as a Sámi are two different things. It is in particular the latter category that is of my interest. I wanted to interview Sámi who practiced and/or emphasized their Sámi identity in their city lives. I connect this to the concept of performativity (Goffman, 1990 (1959); Valkonen, 2014; Thuen, 1995) and I argue in this

thesis that even those who define their Sámi identity as `natural`, need to deal with choices and performances in their everyday life in order to maintain a `natural Sámi identity`.

#### 4.5 Tromsø and Oslo as field cities

There are mainly two reasons why I have chosen Tromsø and Oslo as field cities in this thesis. Firstly; I have a personal connection to these cities as I have lived in both of them for several years. Many of my own experiences of being an urban Sámi are located to these two cities. Secondly; research findings show a big demographic change within the Sámi population, in which two of the cities attracting most Sámis, are Tromsø and Oslo (Sørliie & Broderstad, 2011). For a long period of time, there has been a myth that Oslo, the capital of Norway, is the biggest Sámi municipality based on the assumption that the city has the largest number of Sámi inhabitants outside of Sápmi. The research from NIBR and the Sámi Health Research Center at the University of Tromsø (see chapter 2.1) has proven that Tromsø in fact is the city in Norway with the largest Sámi population outside of core Sámi areas. Both cities, Tromsø and Oslo, have a number of institutions aimed at the Sámi population, and both cities have signed a co-operation agreement with the Sámi Parliament. A recent report; *Hjertespråket (NOU 2016:18)*, from the Sámi language committee appointed by the Norwegian government, proposes that certain large cities will have special responsibilities for the Sámi language. Both Tromsø and Oslo are proposed to have certain obligations related to the Sámi language<sup>4</sup> in the future, states the report that was published October 2016.

I will also present a few key institutions in both cities. Sámi children in Oslo and in the surrounding region, can get granted space at *Cizáš*, the Sámi kindergarden which is run by the municipality. There is also language education in Northern Sámi at Kampen School, an offer for pupils and students in both primary and upper secondary school, in addition to distance learning programs available in the other Sámi languages<sup>5</sup>. There is a Sámi organization, *Oslo Sámiid Searvi*, which was established in 1948. The Sámi organization was the driving force behind the establishment of the Sámi House in Oslo, which was established in 2004<sup>6</sup>. The Sámi Youth organization *Noereh*, established a department in Oslo in 2015, called *Oslove Noereh*.

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<sup>4</sup> NOU 2016: 18. Hjertespråket – Forslag til lovverk, tiltak og ordninger for samiske språk. URL: <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2016-18/id2515222/>

<sup>5</sup> Oslo kommune, URL: <https://www.oslo.kommune.no/sokeresultater/?searchID=toppmeny&q=samisk>

<sup>6</sup> Samisk Hus i Oslo, URL: [http://www.samer.no/?page\\_id=202](http://www.samer.no/?page_id=202)



Tromsø has more official institutions to offer to the Sámi population, in particular the University of Tromsø is a major contributor, which has numerous courses in Sámi related issues and languages. The municipality of Tromsø also has an established Sámi kindergarden, *Guovssahas*, in addition to a separate Sámi department at *Sjømannsbyen* kindergarden. There is a Sámi class at *Prestvannet* skole where all the education is given in the Sámi language. In addition; Sámi pupils at other schools, can be given language education at their respective school<sup>7</sup>. The municipality also runs a Sámi language center, *Gáisi giellaguovddáš*, established in 2004, which offers several courses in both language and other Sámi culture related topics throughout the year. There is a Sámi organization in Tromsø as well, *Romssa Sami Searvi*, established in 1969<sup>8</sup>, and there is an organization for Sámi students, *Sámi Studeanttaid Searvi Romssas*. Several other Sámi institutions have established offices or departments in Tromsø, for example the *Sámi Parliament*. Despite a longstanding effort from the Sámi organization in particular, Tromsø has not yet established a Sámi House, similar to the one in Oslo. As such, there are no specific Sámi meeting places in Tromsø.

#### 4.5.1 The differences in being Sámi in the North and the South

Many of my informants reflected upon both the experienced and imagined differences in being an urban Sámi in a city like Tromsø in the North and in Oslo in the South. Many of my informants believed it to be a more `harsh` line towards Sámi in the North, whilst some of my informants who had lived or live in Oslo at the time being, have experienced an exotification because of their Sámi background.

One of my informants, Sarakka (24), travelled across Norway as a Sámi *Ofelaš* in 2012/2013, a statefunded project aimed to build relationships between Sámi and Norwegian youth. Each year, Sámi youth travel to different locations and schools across Norway to teach Norwegian youth about Sámi culture. Sarakka has also travelled to different locations in Norway in her work as an actress and lived in Tromsø for a shorter time period as an adult. She contemplates on the difference between the North and the South in regards to negative prejudices connected to her Sámi ethnicity:

“Jeg tror det er skarpere i Alta, Tromsø eller Tysfjord, akkurat det med å være same, i de fornorskede områdene. I Oslo er det heller mer det at det er noe eksotisk og spennende med å være

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<sup>7</sup> Tromsø kommune, URL: <http://www.tromso.kommune.no/samisk-i-skolen.338170.no.html>

<sup>8</sup> Tromsø Sameforening, URL: <http://www.tromsosameforening.no/>

same. Men jeg mener jo at det i seg selv kan være rasistisk, at det liksom skal være så spesielt og `wow, du er native`. Spiser du reinkjøtt hver dag eller? Ja, det er en nysgjerrighet, men det er også en uvitenhet. For det samiske blir så fremmed for nordmenn<sup>9</sup>.”

Both Oslo and Tromsø are cities where people from multiple nationalities reside and there is a great variety of different ethnic groups, which would imply a tolerance for multiculturalism. In Tromsø, this proved to be a somewhat wrong assumption in the election year of 2011. The heated debate that followed throughout the year, made it clear that the Sámi issue in Tromsø is still a hot topic.

The majority of the Municipal Council of Tromsø decided on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 2010, to prepare an action plan about Sámi languages, which were to be addressed and decided upon by the Municipal Council the following summer. The action plan would form the basis of an application to the Norwegian Municipal and Modernization Ministry, in regards to becoming part of the administrative jurisdiction for the Sámi language, which would ensure that Sámi and Norwegian are equal languages in the municipality, funded by the Sámi Parliament. As part of the administrative jurisdiction for the Sámi language, the municipality is obliged to put up official signs in the Sámi language, where the Sámi name is to be placed first. Again, the majority of the Municipal Council agreed on the action plan and the application to the Ministry. The Liberal Party, The Progress Party and The Conservative Party announced a couple of weeks later that they would cooperate and withdraw the Sámi application if they won the election, which they did in the fall of 2011.

Many believe their promise of withdrawal, was partly the reason for the win and that the Sámi signs in particular provoked people in Tromsø. The resistance towards a Sámi sign of Tromsø, is quite the paradox as official institutions in Tromsø at the state-, county and municipality level already followed the regulations in the Sámi Language Act and consequently had put up Sámi signs many years ago (Pedersen & Nyseth, 2015). The debate prior to the election that fall was cruel and brutal, said many of my informants. *Biret* describes the period like this:

“Dat lei hui bávvččas, maiddái munnje gii láven gierdat .. altså, jeg tåler en trøkk og det bruker vanligvis å prelle litt av for man er nødt til å være litt hardhudet. Muhto dien áigge, de dovden

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<sup>9</sup> My translation: I believe it is tenser in Alta, Tromsø or Tysfjord, the part of being a Sámi, in those Norwegianized places. In Oslo it is regarded much more exotic and exciting to be Sámi, but in my opinion that in itself can be racist, the belief that being Sámi is special and `Wow, you`re a Native`. Do you eat reindeer meat every day? Surely, there`s a curiosity, but there`s also ignorance. Because the Sámi are so unfamiliar to Norwegians.”

duođai ahte dán in nákke šat. Mun lean gullan diekkáriid doarvái mánáidskuvlla rájes ja dál in nagot šat<sup>10</sup>.”

The local newspapers were full of insulting commentary, in which some can be characterized as pure racism (Thuen, 2015). In a research report about Sámi languages conducted by Norut and Nordlandsforskning in 2012, Sámi children and youth in Tromsø reported to have been bullied based on their ethnicity by both pupils and teachers at their school in (Vangsnes, 2013, p: 81). How did Tromsø, which is home to multiple nationalities, come to this? Some descriptions of my informants may shed light on this particular question. Ánde (57) describes Tromsø as a double-layered city with a `stereo-Sáminess, playing both the light and dark tunes of the Sámi identity`. He explains:

“Tromsa *lea* mángga láhkai sámi gávpot, go dáppe leat ollu sápmelaččat geat ellet hui bures iežas sápmelašvuodain, geat čájehit ja návddašit iežaset sápmelašvuoda. Ja Tromsa čáhkke dáid olbmuide saji, sii besset buori láhkai dánset Tromssa kulturláhhti alde. Ja dat nubbi bealli Tromssa sápmelašvuodas lea ges dat ahte dáppe leat maid ollu nuppi, goalmmát, njealját buolvva sápmelaččat mat leat čiehkádan dan dološ dáruiduhttima geažil. Sis lea ges veahá váddásut oktavuoha dan sápmelašvuhtii. Sii leat doliin heahpanaddán gielaid geažil, sápmelašvuoda geažil. Nu ahte dáppe lea ain olu bávččaš ja dat ii vel jávkka<sup>11</sup>.”

Looking back, it is no question that the heated debate in Tromsø regarding Sámi issues was painful to many Sámis at the time, but as Pedersen & Nyseth (2015) argues, the aftermath of the debate proved to be positive. The Sámi population in Tromsø received support and acknowledgement by a large portion of the non-Sámi community and most politicians revised their views on the matter. As a result, the municipality and the Sámi Parliament signed a cooperation agreement in 2012, which symbolically acknowledges that the Sámi language, culture and community are a valuable part of the cultural diversity of Tromsø. Many of my informants in Tromsø have a similar view on the matter, that the situation today is not nearly as bad as it was some years ago. However, prejudice and discrimination is still part of the urban Sámi life, which will be dealt with in the next chapter.

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<sup>10</sup> My translation: It was very hurtful, even to me and I can usually handle such .. pressure. Usually I just shake it off, because you have to be a bit thick-skinned. But at that particular time, I really felt defenseless. I have heard those arguments ever since primary school and I can't take it anymore.”

<sup>11</sup> My translation: Tromsø *is* in many regards a Sámi city, because there are a lot of Sámis here who proudly and easily live with their Sáminess, who enjoy it. Tromsø also gives room to those people, who are invited to dance on the cultural floors of Tromsø. The other aspect of the Sáminess in Tromsø is that there`s also many second, third and fourth generations of Sámi living here who have been hiding because of the Norwegianization in the past. To them, the connection to the Sámi is not as easy. They have been ashamed of the language, of their Sáminess for a long time. There is still a lot of hurt here and it has not gone away yet.”

## 5. Lived experiences, prejudices and expectations of the Urban Sámi

*“Dat leat dat classic examples, ahte sii juiget du mánjis dahje fertet gullat historjjáid mo sápmelaččat leat nu `kravstore` dahje `en rein spiste opp ripsbuksene til mora mi`. Mun in láve dadjat eará go `ojá nu`. Diesa gal nu hárváná, ii dat šat nu suhttat<sup>12</sup>.”*

*Biret, ássá Romssas / lives in Tromsø*

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The quote above deals with some of the experiences which many of my informants have experienced in a city, especially when their Sámi ethnicity is visible. *Biret* has experienced how someone has joiked toward her when passing by her when she is dressed in her traditional Sámi costume. The joik is the original music of the Sámi and is comparable to the traditional chanting of some Native American cultures. Joik belongs to the genre of oral literature, with clear parallels to storytelling and the use of adages, rhymes and jingles (H. Gaski, 2008). All of my informants have either experienced such or heard of similar incidents of what they describe as mock-joiking, when someone non-Sámi joiks toward a Sámi. None of my informants characterize this as serious harassment, but believe it to be an act of common mocking. If they confront the person joiking at them, the act is often explained to be humorous and funny.

I witnessed this phenomenon myself in Tromsø in the fall of 2015, after a Sámi concert had ended one late night. Most of the people present were Sámi and many were dressed in the *gákti*; the Sámi traditional costume. A group of young men; who were passing by the concert venue, suddenly joiked a bit of “*Sámiid Ædnan*<sup>13</sup>” by the sight of the Sámi people outside on the street. A Sámi man in the group then addressed the men, jokingly saying they should update their joik repertoire and stating that he would teach them a new joik. Some of the Sámis present bursted out in laughter by this and a few of them then started to joik a different

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<sup>12</sup> My translation: You have the classic examples, people joiking toward you or you have to hear stories of how highly demanding the Sámi people are or how a reindeer ate the red currant bush of someones` mother. I just usually say `oh, is that so` to those. You get so used to it, it doesn`t upset you anymore.

<sup>13</sup> The song “*Sámiid Ædnan*” was the Norwegian entry in the Eurovision Song Contest in 1980, performed by the Norwegian artist Sverre Kjelsberg and the Sámi joiker Mattis Hætta. It is unofficially said to be the most famous joik in Norway, but the words of the song were performed in Norwegian. For more information on this particular joik, please see Harald Gaski (2008).

joik. The group of young men swiftly walked away and the group of Sámi outside carried on with their conversations as usual.

I connect this spontaneous response to the strategies of dealing with stereotypes and harassment, which is a topic I will return to later in this chapter. The act of mock-joiking, may not be labeled as harassment by my informants, but some of them tell stories of a different degree of severity, which they believe to be based on their Sámi ethnicity. This chapter will highlight some of their experiences, and the different strategies they have come up with in order to deal with such encounters.

### **5.1 Bullying and ethnic discrimination**

In his doctoral thesis from 2011, based on data from the SAMINOR-study, Ketil Lenert Hansen found that the Sámi population more often experience bullying and ethnic discrimination than ethnic Norwegians in general. The study also points out that Sámi with a strong Sámi affiliation reported higher levels of ethnic discrimination outside the Sámi Language Act's district, whilst Sámi with a weaker affiliation reported highest prevalence of ethnic discrimination inside the Sámi Language Act's district – and that half of the Sámi population who reside outside of a core Sámi area, has experienced ethnic discrimination (Hansen 2011). Several other studies of self-reported discrimination suggest that parts of the Sámi population have been ethnically discriminated and harassed (see Josefsen 2006, Lange 2008). The SAMINOR-study defines ethnic discrimination as something that often is based on stereotypes, which are “unstructured prejudices as derogatory simplifications and generalizations regarding ethnic groups different to one's own” (Hansen, 2011, p: 40).

In a new study *Selvopplevd diskriminering av samer i Norge*, many Sámi report that they have been discriminated because of their ethnicity and research suggests that the discrimination against Sámi is four times higher than discrimination against the majority population in the last two years. In total, 50 percent of the Sámi people who responded to the questionnaire, reported to have been discriminated. In comparison, only 14,3 percent of the non-Sámi people who participated in the study, reported the same (Hansen, 2016). The study which will be published at the end of November 2016 as part of the Sámi statistics *Sámi logut muitalit*, describe many different arenas where Sámi people report to be discriminated, such as in school, in their professional life, in the local community and online. The research also reveals

that Sámi people are discriminated and harassed by both Norwegians who belong to the majority society and other Sámi people, who belong to the minority society (Hansen, 2016).

Some of my informants tell similar stories of those in the studies mentioned above. *Ánne* believes her ethnicity as a Sámi was the reason her boyfriend was beaten up on a late night in one big city in the southern part of Norway many years ago.

“Vi hadde vært ute på byen og var på vei hjem da noen karer begynte å prate med oss. Vi var en liten gjeng og så ble de så utrolig frekk med oss da de hørte at vi var finnmarkinger. De tøyset litt med geografiske ting, at Finnmark ligger så langt unna at vi ikke burde være en del av Norge. En av dem spør: er du same da? Ja, svarte jeg og da ble han veldig frekk. Kjæresten min svarte frekt tilbake og begynte å hetse søringer, og da ble det slåsskamp. De ropte til meg at jeg skulle være glad for at dem ikke tok meg, men at de tok ham i stedet. De banket opp kjæresten min, men de skulle egentlig ta meg.<sup>14</sup>”

*Ánne* and her boyfriend reported the incident to the police, but the men who attacked them, were never found as they ran away from the cite afterwards and the case was closed, according to *Ánne*. Later, when *Ánne* moved to Oslo for studies, she experienced harassment by a group of young men when she was headed to the University dressed in her *gákti*. By the mere sight of her, they started shouting ”Lappjævel”; which can be translated to a `goddamn Sámi` (Hansen, 2011), although the English translation may be regarded as too kind in this context; it expresses the sentiment, and that she should return to `where she came from`. *Ánne* explains that even if she has had a few of these negative encounters before, they never cease to surprise her<sup>15</sup>.

20-year old John-Egil, who is born and raised in Tromsø, admits that it has been difficult at times to grow up as a Sámi in Tromsø. He talks openly about how he has been bullied in school and that he believes that his Sámi background is a part of why he was bullied especially at the end of his lower secondary education and as he started his first year at the

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<sup>14</sup> My translation to English: ”We had been out in the city and we were on our way home when some guys started talking to us. We were a small group and the guys suddenly became very rude when they heard we were from Finnmark. They made jokes about Finnmark being so far away that we shouldn’t even be part of Norway. One of them asked if I was a Sámi. I said yes, and he then was very rude to me. My boyfriend replied back to him rudely and made similar mocking jokes about people from the south and it all culminated in a fight. They shouted at me that I should be glad that they didn’t attack me, but settled with my boyfriend. My boyfriend was beaten up, but they intended to attack me.”

<sup>15</sup> Interview with informant *Ánne*, August 2015

upper secondary school of Breivika in 2011, which was the time of the heated Sámi debate in Tromsø.

“Da ble det veldig tydelig at jeg ble mobbet. Jeg har et ekstremt samisk etternavn og alle elevene hadde egne skap der etternavnene sto. Jeg opplevde ofte at det var mye spytt på skapet mitt, men ikke på noen av de andres skap. Jeg tror at det var på grunn av etternavnet mitt.<sup>16</sup>”

John-Egil says he has heard many negative comments about his Sámi background in school and he has experienced how other pupils have made fun of Sámis in general or used the term “Sámi” as a word of insult towards him. He explains that these sort of incidents has led him to always have his guard up in Tromsø.

*Máret* lives in Oslo and says that she has had many unpleasant encounters because of her Sámi background, but that she usually does not care as much. But one particular incident that happened recently during daytime in public whilst she was with her two young children, made her both afraid and angry. There were many other people witnessing what *Máret* describes as pure harassment, but no one present said anything to the group of men who orally attacked her and her children.

“Muittán ledjen T-bánnas máná guoktáin manjel bárggu ja mii leimmet jođus ruoktot. Mun sámástin máná guoktáin nu mo dábálaččat dagan ja de fáhkka fuomášin ahte nuorra dáža dievddut geat čužžo min bálddas, bilkidedje mo mun hállen. Sii áddeštalle ja čaibme mus. Jáhkken álggos ahte sii navde mu suomelažžan, muhto de álge hállat hui romit sápmelaččaid birra ja de áddejin ahte sii han gal dihtet mun lean sápmelaš. Buot maid mun dadjen, dan sii bilkidedje dan botta go gehčče hirkmadit min guvlui. Mun in duostan dadjat sidjiide maidege, mun válden máná guoktá fárrui ja guđden T-bána.<sup>17</sup>”

*Máret* describes this particular incident as threatening and as something motivated by racism. In retrospect, she regrets that she did not say anything nor record the harassment so she could report the men to the police. She explains that she did not act upon the harassment because she did not know how the young men would react and she did not want her children to be

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<sup>16</sup> My translation: “At that point it became very clear that I was bullied. I have a typical Sámi surname and all the pupils had lockers with our names on them. I experienced several times that my locker had a lot of spit on it, but not on any of the other lockers. I think it was because of my surname.”

<sup>17</sup> My translation: “I was on the subway with my two children heading home. I spoke the Sámi language with my children as I usually do, when I suddenly became aware that a group of young Norwegian men beside us were making fun of me and the way I talked. They repeated everything I said and laughed at me. I initially thought they believed me to be Finnish, but then they started to talk really bad about Sámi in general and I figured that they knew that I am Sámi. They mocked everything I said whilst staring at us. I did not dare to say anything to them, I just took my children and left.”

frightened. She says: “I was on the other hand very surprised when no one else present reacted; everyone could clearly see how uncomfortable I was in that situation.<sup>18</sup>”

The three stories presented by my informants is not a blueprint in the challenging part of being an urban Sámi today, but should be read as what they represent: subjective and individual experiences which far too often seem to be silenced. A report from The Institute of Social Research from 2015, which reviewed existing research on discrimination among the indigenous Sami population, national minorities and immigrants and their descendants in contemporary Norway, concludes that research on discrimination among Sámis is deficient. Moreover, the researchers conclude that it is reason to believe that most cases of ethnic discrimination amongst the Sámi population are unreported.

“Selv om spørreundersøkelser kan gi viktig kunnskap om selvopplevd diskriminering, kan de aldri erstatte gode registerdata. Når det i tillegg ikke er gjennomført eksperimentelle studier som undersøker forekomsten av diskriminering direkte, må vi konkludere med at den foreliggende kunnskapen om diskrimineringsutfordringer blant samer er mangelfull<sup>19</sup>. (Midtbøen & Lidén, 2015, p: 94)“

Self-reported, experienced ethnic discrimination and bullying is by its subjective nature, hard to prove. Some of my informants characterize certain incidents as `harassment` or `bullying`, whilst others describe joiking or name-calling as common mockery. None of my informants have reported experienced ethnic harassment or bullying to the police. The available research suggests that the Sámi population experiences bullying twice as much as the Norwegian population, in which ethnic discriminating and negative comments are the most common (Hansen, 2012, p: 25) and that such discrimination is rarely reported to officials (Hansen, 2016). *Anne* contemplates on this matter too and says: “It sort of becomes a truth, that one should just accept and move on. But if you think about it, it is actually kinda sick that this sort of harassment against Sámis isn` t a big issue in the media. No one talks about it<sup>20</sup>.”

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with *Máret*, July 2015

<sup>19</sup> My translation: “Although surveys can provide important knowledge about perceived discrimination, they can never replace good registry data. Additionally, the fact that there have not been conducted experimental studies examining the prevalence of discrimination directly, we must conclude that the present knowledge about discrimination challenges among Sámi is deficient (Midtbøen & Lidén, 2015, p: 94).

<sup>20</sup> Interview with *Anne*, August 2015



## 5.2 The visible Sámi

The section above describes negative encounters experienced by some of my informants in a situation where the ethnic marker is not as obvious. The following section will go back to the starting point of this chapter, where visibility is a key term. All of my eight informants have and use their *gákti*, the traditional Sámi garment, proudly at certain festive occasions and some of my informants also use the *gákti* in ordinary daily-life situations in the city they live in. Being visual as a Sámi is very important to many of my informants, including *Anne*, who lives in Oslo.

“Jeg tar gjerne på meg komagene når jeg drar på jobb eller så bruker jeg kofte veldig ofte, av og til også når jeg bare skal på butikken og har hatt den på meg på universitetet bare fordi jeg har hatt lyst til det. Nå har jeg også hatt den på jobb et par ganger, for å vise den frem for det er mange som vil se den og litt for å ta brodden av det, at det ikke er så utrolig spesielt å ha på seg kofte liksom. Det er nesten sånn at hvis jeg går ut av døra uten å ha på meg noe samisk, så tenker jeg: å nei, nå er det jo ingen som ser at jeg er same<sup>21</sup>.”

This is also familiar to *Sarakka* (24), who was born and raised in Oslo where she has lived for most of her life. She reflects upon the difference in how she manages her Sámi identity is dependent on if she is in *Sápmi* or outside.

“Når jeg er i Oslo, så er det annerledes. Der må jeg ta på meg søljene mine, komagene og slenge på et ullsjal. Jeg vil at min identitet skal være synlig. Og det er litt *ČSV* over det, men det er veldig morsomt å plutselig oppdage en annen same på T-banen og bare ”heey, se på oss to samer i byen”. Det gir en god følelse uten at jeg kan forklare hvorfor. Jeg mener at å være same i by, betyr at man er litt aktivist hver dag. Jeg har aktivt valgt å fronte og å synliggjøre min kultur så mye som jeg kan<sup>22</sup>.”

*Sarakka* uses the word “activist” when describing her Sámi identity in a city and elaborates in the interview that even if she expects that someone might say something negative, she still chooses to show off her Sámi ethnicity. She also connects this to being “*ČSV*”, a term and a

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<sup>21</sup> My translation: I'd gladly wear my Sámi shoes when I go to work and I use the traditional Sámi dress frequently, sometimes even when I'm just going to the grocery store. I've worn it at the university just because I wanted to. I have also worn it to work a couple of times to show it off, because a lot of people want to see it and also to take the sting out of it, as a statement that it isn't that special to wear it. It is almost like if I go out the door without putting anything Sámi on, I'm thinking, oh no, now nobody will see that I am Sámi.”

<sup>22</sup> My translation: Whenever I am in Oslo it is different. There I have to put on my silver brooches, my Sámi shoes and wrap a wool scarf around me. I want my identity to be visible. It is a bit “*ČSV*”, but it is very fun to suddenly discover a Sámi on the subway and we are like: “hey, look at us: two Sámi in the same city”. It is a nice feeling, but I can't explain why. I believe that to be Sámi in a city, you are a bit of an activist in the daily life. I have actively chosen to highlight my culture as much as I can.”

symbol created in the revitalization process in 1970s which refers to the Sámi phrase “Čájehehkot Sámi Vuoiŋŋa<sup>23</sup>”.

According to Vigdis Stordahl (1996) this period of time marked the beginning of the collective Sámi identity and being “ČSV” meant to take back what was lost. The “ČSV” generation would promote the Sámi; both through meanings, statements and clothing as a way of confronting and resisting the Norwegian society (Stordahl, 1996, p: 87). To both *Anne* and *Sarakka* (24), it is important to make their ethnicity known and visible, as a way of stating the Sámi presence. In this sense, ethnicity then becomes a tool of resistance and has a function. Cookie White Stephan and Walter G. Stephan (2000) write about the purposes of ethnic identity and describe ethnic identities as situated identities. They argue:

“Situating identities define the relationship between the actor and others in the environment at a given moment. Individuals use their knowledge of these identities to predict others’ behaviors and determine their own behaviors. One implication is that, in situations in which ethnic identity is salient, the individual and others will monitor the situation for information regarding ethnicity and its behavioral correlates. Others’ situated identities may then serve to determine one’s own” (Stephan & Stephan, 2000, p: 239).

Showing a Sámi ethnic identity is thus a selected choice, which may serve a certain purpose. All of my informants are aware of the aspect of attention when dressing up in their *gákti* as *Anne* comments: “There is always someone commenting how nice I look when I am wearing it<sup>24</sup>.” Attention can however be both positive and negative, which sometimes puts some of my informants in a two-folded dilemma.

*Biret* who works and lives in Tromsø, explains how she often dresses up in Sámi accessories in her daily life, sometimes explicitly because she wants to let her surroundings know that she is Sámi and because she feels nice wearing the *gákti*. She is proud of being a Sámi and explains how she in her youth would always get into discussions about Sámi issues without hesitating. But living in Tromsø for over ten years has made *Biret* more conscious. Now she is ‘picking her battles’, because she has had her share of stereotypes, negative comments and arguments about Sámi rights in general in Tromsø. This has also led up to that dressing up in her *gákti*, has become something that requires a thought process. She underlines that most of the time she will choose to dress up in the *gákti* anyway, but that almost everytime the decision is based on a clear assessment beforehand.

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<sup>23</sup> My translation: Show Sámi Spirit

<sup>24</sup> Interview with *Anne*, August 2015

“Mun lean álo čájehan gii mun lean, mánnávuoda rájes. Muhto dál go mun lean ollesolmmoš, ii leat álo ahte mun nu gillen nu sákka. Dat lea nu faktisk duollet dálle ahte mun smiehtan: aaaah, gillen go mun gávtti coggat dán festii? Mun ferten veahá jurddašit dan birra, dovdat veahá makkár foarpmas mun lean, gillen go mun riidalit ja nie. Go dat han boahtha, diedusge. Olbmot juiget du manjis dahje cielahit, ja danne ferten mun nie dovdat gillen go mun dan vai háliidan go dušše vuolgat sámefestii ja suohtastallat. Dat ii leat álo ahte dat geavvá juoga, muhto don fertet measta leat gearggus dása álo. Ha piggene iallefall halveis ute og klar til å parere, liksom<sup>25</sup>.”

The dilemma that *Biret* talks about, reveals an aspect of the *gákti* which I find interesting. The traditional dress is not just a garment, but also a symbol of ethnicity. It is clearly an identity marker, which also positions you geographically and can surely be used as a communicative tool to mark a Sámi background to other Sámi people present. By choosing to be either visible as Sámi or not, reveals an aspect of both control and management of one's ethnic identity and the situations where the ethnic identity can be played out. For Sámi people living in a city, being a city-Sámi thus entails an active choice to signify the Sámi identity (Pedersen & Nyseth, 2015).

One of my informants, *Piera*, has lived in Oslo for over 15 years. He explains that he does not feel any need to `demonstrate` his Sámi identity in his daily life. He does not hide his ethnicity and uses the *gákti* at occasions where it is `natural`. Christina Åhrén, a Sámi scholar from the Swedish side of Sápmi, describe symbols such as language, dress and handicraft, as overt expressions of an ethnic identity, but separates between those who are born with a *cultural competence* as Sámi and those who feel the need to acquire Sámi symbols as an affirmation of their Sámi identity, as a *cultural ladder* (Åhrén, 2008).

*Piera* is in this term, culturally competent. He has however, at times worn the *gákti* to non-Sámi events connected to his work, especially when there have been guests from foreign countries present. He describes it as a demonstration of his ethnicity:

“In mun dieđe manin mun lean dalle välljen coggat gávtti, árvideames go lean háliidan čájehit sidjiide ahte dáppe orrot maid earát go dážat. Mun lean barggu oktavuodas deattuhan ovdamearkka dihte sámegeiela ja várra lei lunddolaš de maid čájehit ahte mii leat dás, ja mis leat seamma bárggut vaikke leat iešgudetgelágan beroštumit. Na, leat leamašan diekkár smávva `demonstrašuvnnat` mu

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<sup>25</sup> My translation: “I have always shown who I am, since childhood. But now when I am an adult, it isn't always that I want to. In fact at times, I think to myself: can I be bothered to wear the *gákti* to this party? I need to reflect upon it, decide if I'm up for arguing and stuff, because surely it can happen. People might joik toward you or harass you, and I need to go through my emotions to see if I can handle it that day or if I just want to go to a party to have fun. It is not always that such things happen, but nevertheless, you need to be prepared for things like that at all times. You need to have your spikes out, at least halfway, and sort of be ready to strike back.”

bealis ge. Gákti lea diehtelasat markøra ja markering<sup>26</sup>.”

### 5.3 Confrontations of the “truth”

Many of my informants have experienced being put in a position as an individual Sámi where they need to defend; argue or explain on behalf of the whole Sámi community. In general, there is an evident lack of knowledge about Sámi history and culture in the Norwegian educational system as revealed in the research by Hadi Khosravi Lile (2011), who interviewed Norwegian 9<sup>th</sup> graders about what they are taught about the Sámi. The study also revealed that the vast majority of teachers who were questioned said that they had learned little about the Sámi at teachers` college and in their supplementary education. In addition, the study revealed that many of the teachers especially in the Northern part of Norway, had negative attitudes toward the Sámi.

The lack of knowledge about Sámi is something that *Piera* can relate to. He believes that ignorance most of the time, is based on lack of knowledge and stereotypical ideas of how a Sámi is and should be. His children are now in their youth and many of their friends in Oslo do not know much about the Sámi life. Often they are curious and eager to learn, and he describes their questions as relevant. He has often heard from the youth that they hardly learn anything about the Sámi culture in school.

Thus, he takes time to answer their questions as best he can, but admits that he has given up the adult generation, which does not seem to be interested in hearing stories of Sámi diversity.

“In dieđe beroštit go ollesolbmot oppanassiige, sii dihtet ahte gávdnojit sápmelaččat davvin gos nu, ja orru nu ahte sii eai dárbbáš diehtit eambo go dan. Lean máŋgii gullan ahte mo bat don leat sápmelaš, it don bargga bohccuiguin? Jáhkán sámevuotta ain lea hui garrasit čatnon boazodollui, ja dat han lea máŋgii dat mii govviduvvo, bohccot váris ja nu ain.<sup>27</sup>”

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<sup>26</sup> My translation: “I don`t know why I have chosen to wear it at certain events, probably because I`ve wanted to point out that there are others present here than Norwegians. Through my work, I have underlined the importance of, for instance, the Sámi language and I guess it felt natural to me to show them that we are here and that we can have the same jobs, with different subjects of interest, of course. Well yes, there have been such small `demonstrations` on my behalf too. The Sámi dress is surely a statement as well.”

<sup>27</sup> My translation: “I don`t know how much they care really, they know that Sámis live somewhere in the north and sometimes it seems like that`s all they need to know. I have often heard, how can you be Sámi, you don`t work with reindeers? I think sáminess is still very strongly connected to reindeer husbandry and that`s often the picture portrayed; reindeers in the mountains and so on.”

Reindeer husbandry is the predominant image of Sáminess and is from the outside world considered to be the most distinguished Sámi livelihood, even if less than ten percent of the Sámi population belong to this category. Nonetheless, reindeer husbandry has to this day an important aspect of cultural maintenance (Thuen, 1995, p: 36). The close association between Sámi and reindeer husbandry is familiar to many of my informants who live in cities.

*Biret* explains how reindeer husbandry and other issues connected to it, come up easily in conversations she has with non-Sámis in Tromsø. Even if she has no connection to it as she do not belong to a reindeer herding family, she has experienced how people almost expect her to have great knowledge and interest in the subject just because she is Sámi. *Biret* explains how it often seems to surprise people when she clarifies that she does not have that much knowledge of it, and that it does not seem to fit with the image they have of `the Sámi`. Over the years she has heard many negative comments about reindeer husbandry in general:

“Olbmot leat nu suhttan daid bohccuid ala, mun in ádde manin lea nu. Ja de lea dávjá ahte vurdet mu leat juogalágan sámi orakel. Sii orrot jáhkkime ahte mun dieđan buot mii gávdno sámi kultuvrras go lean sápmelaš. Ja go in nagot vástidit go hállet boazodoalu birra, de dat suhttada sin. Mun ferten de dadjat ahte mun in leat boazosápmelaš ja ahte mun in vuordde sin máhttít olles norgga boanddahistorjjá ge dušše danin go sii leat dážat. Muhto juo, de lea dávjá ahte gulan nu mo “de helvetes samene, de er så kravstore” ja ahte sii eai beasa várrái go “samene utestenger oss”. Ja de vurdet mu čilget manin lea nu. Ii leat duohtavuolta ge.<sup>28</sup>”

All of my informants have come across stereotypical `truths` about Sámis, both positive and negative. One of them is that all Sámis are skilled in activities connected to nature or wildlife, which connects to the term eco-indigenism; the idea that indigenous peoples partly are defined by their closeness to and special care of nature (Sissons, 2005, p: 23). Nature has a dominant position in representations of Sámi identity and culture, and scholars such as Siv-Ellen Kraft have argued that nature is the master myth of Sámi discourse (Kraft, 2009, cited in Olsen, 2012).

Ánde (57) explains how he during his years of studies in Oslo was put in the role as the builder of a fire whenever he and his friends spent time outdoors. “I moved away from my home as a very young boy and I hadn’t learned to build a fire properly. Luckily, I’d always

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<sup>28</sup> My translation: People are really angry at the reindeers, I don’t understand why. And often they expect me to be a sort of Sámi oracle who knows everything that there is to know about the culture just because I am Sámi. And when I can’t answer all their questions about reindeer husbandry, it provokes them. I then need to explain that I am not a reindeer-herder and that I wouldn’t expect them to know everything about the Norwegian farming history just because they are Norwegians. I often hear arguments like: “the goddamn Sámis, they are so demanding” or that the Sámis are keeping them out of the mountains. And they expect me to explain why that is. And it’s not even true.

managed to get it right anyhow<sup>29</sup>.” Also John-Egil (20) explains how he seems to be speaking with more `authority` in issues regarding nature. His surroundings seem to take him more seriously in his arguments ”because they expect me to know stuff about nature because I am Sámi, although I’m not an expert<sup>30</sup>”.

Other prejudice revolves around right issues. Examples of this might be arguments that Sámi students do not need to have sufficiently good grades in order to get access to studyprograms such as medicine because of an unjust quota system, or that all Sámis can bypass Norwegian regulations relating to the use of motor vehicles on uncultivated land.

Many of my informants describe it as tiresome to have to explain and often refute such arguments. *Máret* says: ”sometimes one ought to be both a politician and a lawyer to deal with their questions<sup>31</sup>” or as *Anne* who says ”as a Sámi you are expected to vouch for everything a Sámi has said to any given time<sup>32</sup>”. Others, such as *Piera*, steer clear of such debates as he proclaims “I am getting too old for that”<sup>33</sup>. *Ánde* (57) lives in Tromsø and believes such debates are issues that cannot be dismissed nor neglected. He talks about Sámi identity as something than one needs to *manage*. He remembers being a 14-year old boy when he was confronted for the first time with the belief that the Sámi population wanted to form a separate state. Since then that particular question and other issues connected to Sámi rights has come up frequently. *Ánde* believes this to be a part of the Sámi identity which one cannot escape from, but on the contrary, need to deal with.

“Dat lea olbmo eallimis muhtin diekkár hommát mas ii sáhte dolkat, oainnat okta oassi sámi identitehtas lea ahte Norgga skuvla lea čiehkkan sámi historjjá ja sápmelašvuoda iežas álbmogii. Norgga álbmot ii leat oahppan maidege sápmelaččaid birra, ja dat mearkkaša ahte mii eaŋkilsápmelaččat go boahit norgalačča ovdii, fertet čilget sápmelašvuoda dološ greikkaid rájes. Ja instinkta mielde dat livččii hui dolkadahtti dilli, muhto das ii sáhte dolkat go mii han diehtit dat boahťa ja boahťa dat seamma. Nu ahte dat leat diet bealit sámi identitehtas mat addet veahá liige bárggu, mas majoritehtaservvodat beassá eret.<sup>34</sup>”

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with *Ánde*, August 2015

<sup>30</sup> Interview with John-Egil, September 2015

<sup>31</sup> Interview with *Máret*, July 2015

<sup>32</sup> Interview with *Anne*, August 2015

<sup>33</sup> Interview with *Piera*, July 2015

<sup>34</sup> My translation: There are certain aspects in the human life that you cannot be tired of. The Norwegian school has hidden Sámi history and Sámi existence from its people and that is a part of the Sámi identity as well. The Norwegian people have not learned much about the Sámi, which means that the individual Sámi in encounters with Norwegians need to tell the story of Sámis from the ancient times of the Greek up until today. By instinct, this situation would be tiresome, but we cannot allow ourselves to be tired of it because we know that this issue comes up again and again. Those are the parts of the Sámi identity that requires some extra work, which the majority society is free from.

### 5.3.1 Three strategies of dealing with conflict

The aspect of managing and dealing with one's Sámi identity and the 'truths' about it, is relevant to all of my informants, who describe such confrontations to be both tiresome and demanding. During the interviews they gave different answers to how they would deal with such a confrontation, depending on the situation.

Here, I will identify and discuss three potential strategies based on findings from my fieldwork. The first one is to engage in a discussion on the topic and to give different arguments as a way of explaining the reality, a strategy which *Biret*, for example, often uses. The second one is to remove oneself from the situation or to keep quiet, as a way of ending the discussion before it has begun, a strategy which both *Piera* and *Niillas* describes.

The third one seeks to benefit from elements in the Sámi culture, more specifically from the oral tradition. This third strategy however, demands a high degree of Sámi cultural competence, a term I will return to in the next chapter (Åhrén, 2008). I will illustrate the third strategy with two examples.

The first example is a story of Ánde (57), who remembers one incident at a local pub in Tromsø where he was orally attacked by a man who called him names such as 'fánena supersápmelaš', a term that can be translated to a 'Goddamn Super-Sámi'. The term is used in a highly negative way to identify or imply a Sámi superiority, often about people from core Sámi areas in the inner parts of Finnmark.

In the words of Ánde:

“Dalle mun jurddašin ahte dál lea mu eahparaš mu fallehan, dát lea dakkár olmmoš mii lea čihkkojuvvon ja mii dál aiggušii oidnot. Mun in láve das suorganit, jus vel gohčodivččet mu duonin ja dánin, eanaš láven guldalit maid de lohket. Ja de gulul de boahta ovdán ahte su áddjá lei sápmelaš. Ja veahá maŋŋelaš ahte su eanu hállá sámegiela. Ja de jearrá loahpas, jáhkat go ahte son lea sápmelaš? Na, go du áddjá lei sápmelaš ja du eanu hállá sámegiela, de han don ge leat sápmelaš. Ja de manná, ja šaddá hui ráfi. Mus lea dat áddejupmi ahte mii boahtit dán eallimii dain skeaŋkkain maid mii leat ožžon ja dat skeaŋka mii mus lea dat lea mu sápmelašvuohta. Ja de galgat mii daid máhttit geavahit dán áigge oktavuodain<sup>35</sup>.”

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<sup>35</sup> My translation: I then thought that this is my 'eahparaš' attacking me, a person who has been hidden and who now wishes to be seen. I don't really mind if they call me this and that, I usually just listen to what they have to say. After a while the man reveals that his grandfather was a Sámi. A bit later he reveals that his uncle speaks Sámi. At last he asks me, do you think I am Sámi? I answered that he must be, since both his grandfather and uncle are Sámi. He then left and it became peaceful again. My understanding is that we enter this life with the gifts we are given and my Sáminess is my gift. And then it is up to us to use them in situations of our time.”

Ánde describes the man at the pub as his *eahpáraš*<sup>36</sup>, which is a paranormal figure and a phenomenon in Sápmi, believed to be a spirit of a dead, unbaptized newborn child that haunts people. The stories of *eahpáraš* are stories that are still told in the Sámi communities and I remember them myself from my own childhood in Kárášjohka. I will not dwell on the story itself, but there are different solutions in these stories how to escape the *eahpáraš*, and one of them is to baptize it with a name. Ánde draws a comparison to the confrontation at the local pub with the haunting of the *eahpáraš*, as the man at the pub wanted to be `named a Sámi`. Ánde explains how Sámi stories can be helpful in understanding different views and attitudes connected to the Sámi ethnicity.

The second example of how elements from the Sámi culture can be used in a situation that may lead to confrontation is from my fieldwork a year ago in Oslo, at the end of October 2015. I attended a marketing event hosted by Finnmark Rein, one of the biggest suppliers of reindeer meat in Norway. The glamorous event at Aker Brygge marked the launch of a big reindeer meat campaign in collaboration with NorgesGruppen, the largest retailer of Norway and attracted celebrities, business people and others within retailing, in addition to invited guests from the Sámi population<sup>37</sup>. A group of reindeer herders from Finnmark were also present and I spent some time talking to some of them. During our conversation, we were interrupted by a group of Norwegians who initiated a discussion on the topic of overgrazed pastures and environmental destruction caused by reindeer husbandry in quite a rude manner. One of the reindeer herders then cheerfully told a story about the grazingland of his family and started to joik the land, as a gesture to the Norwegian group. Afterwards, the Norwegians thanked him for joking and left the group.

I asked the reindeer herder why he had joked to the men who were rude to him, in which he replied with a smile: “you see, the joik is calming to people<sup>38</sup>”. Joik is often said to be one of the oldest forms of music in Europe. Harald Gaski (2004) argues in the article *When*

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<sup>36</sup> Definition from Britannica Academic: The *äppäräs* in Sami religion and folklore is the ghost of a dead child that haunts the place of its death because it did not receive proper burial rites. The *äppäräs* is only one of several of the anomalous dead figures in Finno-Ugric mythology that serve as warnings for the living to observe the norms of society or expect supernatural intervention. URL: <http://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/94884>

<sup>37</sup> Million-PR for reinkjøtt, URL: <http://www.altaposten.no/lokalt/nyheter/2015/10/14/Million-PR-for-reinkj%C3%B8tt-11683700.ece>

<sup>38</sup> Informal conversation with a reindeer herder from Finnmark, October 2015



*the thieves became masters in the land of the shamans*, that the joik tradition already from the beginning of the 19th century had elements of resistance, and points to an awareness of art as a bearer of several messages at the same time. I point to this as a mere reflection, as I cannot conclude whether the joik performed at this specific event in Oslo can be understood in the framework of opposition or not. The reindeer herder himself explained the joik to be `calming`, thus the act of joiking served a purpose in a potential conflictual situation. The story of the joiking at the streets of Tromsø which I began this chapter with, was also an act which served a purpose of ending the mock-joiking and taking control over the situation.

I thus connect the third strategy to the concept of stories as method and meaning, as a culturally nuanced way of knowing and the understating of stories as active agents in a relational world (Kovach, 2009, p: 94). The story of the *eahpáraš* and the spontaneous joiking are relational to the relationships in the given context and has an agency. In both examples the stories or rather, the usage of stories, changed the discourse. In Ándes` case, the story of the haunting spirit helped him to better understand the person confronting him and in the case of the reindeer herder, the joik helped him to calm down a potential heated situation. By accessing elements from within the Sámi culture, they gained control over the discourse and could decide on their own terms whether they wanted to engage in it or not.

This perspective is also supported by Maori scholar Paul Whitinui (2013) who is referring to Charles Royal (2009) who argues that the `gift of indigeneity` lies in indigenous peoples ability to rediscover and recenter their culture from within, as opposed to relaying solely on `externally codified` forms of knowledge that are often devoid from indigenous ways of knowing and doing. The journey as he describes it, is deeply necessary as it enables the individual to reflect on their own cultural intellectual wisdom and supports the individual in recalibrating ones` own inner as well as collective cultural potential (cited in Whitinui, 2013, p: 460).

### **5.3.2 The provoking Sámi in the North and the `emblematic` Sámi in the South**

One of my informants, *Biret*, reflects a great deal in the interview about why the situation in Northern Norway seems to be more tense than further south, and why she, as a Sámi in Tromsø, needs to be prepared for heated discussions about Sámi issues. She refers to it as a history of many layers and describes the Sámi as an element that has been hidden:

“På den ene sida så skal man være så tolerant og kulturvennlig, men så e det noe med det samiske her i nord som pirker borti et eller anna som ligger gjemt. Som same må man bare skjønne at det samiske ikke alltid e helt greit for noen. Da blir alt mye lettere<sup>39</sup>.”

In his article *When Ethnic Identity is a Social Stigma*, Harald Eidheim (1969) demonstrated how the Sámi identity was only expressed in closed mono-ethnic spheres and deliberately hidden from Norwegians in a coastal area in Finnmark in the 60s. Kjell Olsen (2007), tracing Eidheim in his article *When Ethnic Identity is a Private Matter*, identified a certain change of the expression of a Sámi identity in the same area decades later. Olsen, however, remarks that there are still some resemblances with the ethnic processes in the past and argues that the articulation of a Sámi identity still mostly belongs in the private sphere and to occasional public celebrations of identity such as the Sámi nationalday. Olsen argues that a spatial ordering of ethnic boundaries and a pragmatic assumption of Norwegian culture being the neutral norm are among those features perpetuated until today.

“Today a spatial organization of ethnicity still separates the interior, the coast, and the fjord areas. What, in the institutionalized discourses, are symbols of Sáminess are features that, on the coast, are regarded as belonging to the interior. The change is that the temporal organization on the coast has broken down. It has been eliminated by its reduction to real or classificatory spaces (Fabian 1991: 198). The establishment of such real or classificatory spaces means that ethnicity is still a private matter. But the reason for this privacy has changed, too. Today being Sámi is seen as a private choice that has no implications for others but only in certain spheres can a Sámi identity be expressed without having such an effect” (Olsen, 2007, p: 83).

Similar stories of oppressed Sámi identity are also found in coastal Sámi communities in the county of Troms (see for instance Bjørklund, 1985; Hovland, 1996; Høgmo, 2011) and researchers believe that the strongest resistance of the Sámi is often found in Sámi-Norwegian communities which were assimilated (Høgmo, 2005). Jens-Ivar Nergård contemplates on whether there is an end to an assimilation process in his article *Når slutter en koloniprosess?* (2011), and argues that the Norwegianization process in Sápmi has caused harmful, long lasting effects which created and still creates, a disunity in the population of Northern Norway. He characterizes the resistance from certain groups in Tromsø against the Sámi in the election year of 2011, as a resistance towards peoples` own Sámi past. He argues that a colonial process which has ended, continues in the memories and attitudes of the colonized, thus continuing the destructive colonial task:

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<sup>39</sup> My translation: On one hand there is this great tolerance and accept for cultures, but then again there`s something with the Sámi that scratches the surface of something that is hidden. As a Sámi you just have to accept that the Sámi isn`t always OK for some. It just makes everything easier.”

“Et viktig resultat av en koloniprosess er at offeret indentifiserer (sic) seg med fienden og fortsetter hans ødeleggende virksomhet. Derfor er det ingen selvfølge at et kolonisert samfunn reiser seg etter at fienden er blitt borte. Det dypeste lag av koloniseringen lever i den enkelte som fortrenge minner, som vage forestillinger, men også med stikket av skam over samisk tradisjon<sup>40</sup>” (Nergård, 2011, p: 123).

In Oslo, in the southern part of Norway, the confrontations about the `truth` of the Sámi plays out differently. Many of my informants talk about a great lack of knowledge about the Sámi and an exotification of the Sámi. Sarakka (24) has experienced how her identity is questioned because she does not look like a genuine Sámi by her appearances; connecting to the concept of indigenous authenticity and being expected to be both the natural and visibly other (Sissons, 2005). Sarakka characterizes such exotification of a Sámi as racism.

“Altså, det er den type rasisme som man ikke tenker er rasisme, fordi det ikke er den åpenbare rasismen. Men det er mer den `er du virkelig same for du ser jo ikke så samisk ut?` eller `men er du så samisk du som har en norsk søster?`. Jeg tar det veldig ille opp, det er frekt fordi det går på utseende liksom. Men nå har ingen noe å ta meg på om du skønner, jeg kan svare deg på samisk og jeg kan en del om reindrift<sup>41</sup>.”

*Niillas* has not experienced much negative confrontations of the `true` Sámi whilst living in Oslo and believes that most people have very little understanding and knowledge of the Sámi. In those encounters, he too has experienced the exotified images of the Sámi life. He however, does not view these as purely negative. *Niillas* says that the Sámi should take advantage of the `postcard` images as a way of making the Sámi visible on the global scene. During his stay in different countries abroad, he has experienced how these images are vivid in the minds of foreign people:

“Go mátkkoštat máilmmis, ja gos de ain boadat, sii dihtet mii `Lappland` lea ja sii de govahallet heargeráiddu, gávttéhásaid, vilges muohtaga. Dat lea ealli govva mii muitala juoidá min álbmoga birra, ja sáhtat dadjat dat lea negatiiva ja ahte dat ii govvet olles sámivuoda. Mun in oainne dan

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<sup>40</sup> My translation: “An important result of a colonial process is that the victim identifies himself with the enemy and continues his destructive activity. Therefore, it is not guaranteed that a colonized society rises after the enemy has disappeared. The deepest layer of colonization lives in the individual as repressed memories, vague notions, but also with the sting of shame of Sámi traditions (Nergård, 2011, p: 123).

<sup>41</sup> My translation: It is the type of racism you wouldn't normally think of as racism, because it's not the obvious one. It is more the type of `are you truly Sámi, cause you don't look much like a Sámi` or `can you truly be Sámi, since you have a Norwegian sister?`. I'll get really offended by it, it's rude because it's based on appearances. But now no one can accuse me of such anymore, I can answer you in Sámi and I know much of reindeer husbandry.”

bahán, mii geat eallit sámi kultuvrras fertet man nu láhkai čáhkkehit alcceseamet saji máilmmekultuvrras vai eat jávkka<sup>42</sup>.”

Kjell Olsen (2003) discusses the concept of the `emblematic Sámi` in a discourse of tourism, which promotes an idea of the Sámi as traditional and radically different from modern Norwegian culture. He argues how such a touristic gaze on Sámi culture is in danger of re-inforcing clear-cut ethnic boundaries instead of applying concepts such as hybridity, and that the recognition of a Sámi mostly relies on the recognition of stereotypical images.

The concept of the emblematic Sámi is thus also relevant in the context of this thesis, in particular in regards to the revitalized Sámi community: “For many of those who can trace their background to both Norwegian and Sámi heritage, but do not fit into the dominant cultural characteristics of the emblematic Sámi, the construction of these asymmetrical counterconcepts might be a barrier” (Olsen, 2003, p: 16) In the case of Sarakka, this plays out in her encounters with non-Sámis in Oslo where her identity is questioned. By re-learning the language and gaining more knowledge on the topic of reindeer herding, she states that nobody can accuse her of *not being truly* Sámi anymore. Such claims of authenticity are also an issue within the Sámi community, a topic that will be raised in the following section.

#### 5.4 Sámi expectations

Many of my informants describe a Sámi hierarchy, which gives certain norms in regards of how to how to be Sámi. These norms are mostly unspoken, but occasionally also stated directly to my informants. They are subjective in nature and sometimes connected to *the way it is done in their family*. And as my data material also shows, sometimes these norms are created by the informants` themselves. This subchapter will discuss how expectations and prejudices work both ways, also from within the Sámi community.

For *Niillas* it is his profession in the private sector that is the main reason why he has settled in Oslo, the capital of Norway. He remembers in his youth, he decided to study his profession,

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<sup>42</sup> My translation: Wherever you travel in the world, people know about `Lapland` and they picture the reindeer sleigh, people dressed in traditional costumes, white snow. It is a vivid picture that says something about us as a people, and some say it is negative because it doesn` t give the whole picture of the Sámi. I don` t see anything wrong with it, because we who live in the Sámi culture need to make space for ourselves in the world culture so we don` t disappear from it.”

partly abroad and a cousin of his stated that he ought to work for the benefit of the Sámi society instead of leaving for education and work outside of Sápmi. His cousin expressed a concern that by leaving, he would also leave his Sámi identity behind.

“Ledjen veahá hirmáhuvvan dainna ja diet lea čuvvon mu das rájes, ahte mo sáhttet jurddašit ahte mu sámivuolta jávká go ásahan gávpogii? Lea nu mo Issat Sammól Hætta čálii teavsttas, `unna vielljaš, don leat mannan amas olbmuid bálvalit, itge boađe goassige ruoktot, itge sáhte goassige jorgalit`. Nie lei dalle, in dieđe lea go seamma garas ain diet jurdda. Mun goit oaivvildan ahte sáhtta gazzat oahpu ja leat oassin sámi servvodathuksemis vaikke orru gávpogis<sup>43</sup>.”

The ideal of working to benefit the Sámi society, was predominant during the ČSV-period in the 70s and 80s, a period which has been described as heavily dichotomized bearing strict claims on how to be the correct Sámi. In this period, there were no in between-alternatives; either you were Sámi or not (Stordahl, 1996, p: 95).

The Sámi society has seen many changes in regard of how to express a Sámi identity since then and the generation which followed the ČSV-generation, has a more nuanced view on their own Sámi identity. Káren Elle Gaup writes in her article *Historie, minne og myte i moderne samisk identitetsbygging*, about a new generation with a deeply rooted Sámi identity, who chooses to express it as they see fit both within the Sámi society and outside. The framework in which the identity is displayed is still Sámi, but there is a mix of tradition and modernity (Gaup, 2006, p: 96).

Ánne belongs to this generation, and is now confident with her Sámi identity. She grew up not learning the Sámi language at home, but she started to learn Sámi in 2013 by attending courses at The Sámi House in Oslo. Sometimes she fumbles with the words and she remembers one particular incident as she was working as a volunteer at the café at the Sámi House. She was giving back change to an elderly woman who is from a core Sámi area in Finnmark, and as Ánne still is not fluent, she counted out loud in Norwegian.

“Da kalte hun meg `en sånn nysame`. Det var veldig sårende og jeg tenkte: fanken heller, jeg er ennå ikke inne. Når jeg får høre sånt, så føler jeg meg som en gjest i min egen kultur. Og jeg føler jo at jeg må bevise overfor andre samer at jeg er en genuin same. Det er en slags skepsis som

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<sup>43</sup> My translation: I was a bit surprised by it and it has been with me ever since, how could they believe that my Sáminess would disappear when I settled in a city? It is like the lyrics of Issat Sammól Hætta: `little brother, you are a servant of strangers, and you'll never return home, you will never be able to turn around`. That is how it was then, I don't know if it is as strong now. I believe it is possible to be a part of the strengthening of a Sámi society even if you study or live in a city.”

ligger der hele tiden, hvorfor skal du lære deg samisk nå da og hvorfor skal du ha deg kofte? Så ja, jeg må liksom forklare og bevise at jeg vil være same, at jeg ikke bare er på besøk<sup>44</sup>.”

*Ánne* emphasizes that these encounters are relatively rare and that she is mostly met by a positive attitude from other Sámi, in particular the young generation, regarding her learning to speak the language. She believes that there is a difference in the responses from elderly Sámis and young Sámis, in regards of her being a genuine Sámi.

John-Egil (20) in Tromsø, does not speak Sámi fluently and at times, experiences a bit of the same as *Ánne*. He describes it as a certain degree of mistrust from other Sámis, especially from core Sámi areas, where he gets the impression that they tend to believe that he does not have the same amount of Sámi knowledge as them since he grew up in a city. Sometimes it is said directly to him, other times it is said in an indirect manner. This however, does not make John-Egil feel any less Sámi<sup>45</sup>.

These examples relate to the discourse of a Sámi hierarchy, an unofficial system where some Sámis are ranked above others according to status or authority and has been found in previous research (Pedersen & Nyseth, 2015, p: 207). In the article *The silent language of ethnicity*, Britt Kramvig describes the concept of Sáminess as something that has revolved around the notion of purity and characterizes it as conceptual violence. Kramvig points to a new public discourse of Sámi identity that is dynamic and situated, which by its insistence on ambiguity is also resisting Norwegian society and the logic of nationalism (Kramvig, 2005, p: 61), and in this context; thus also the discourse of a Sámi hierarchy.

I have elsewhere pointed to the cultural competence as a Sámi, a term coined by Christina Åhrén (2008) who has engaged in research on Sámi identity amongst youth on the Swedish side of Sápmi. In her doctoral thesis *Är jag en riktig same? En etnologisk studie av unga samers identitetsarbete*; Åhrén distinguishes between those who are brought up as Sámis and thus have a high degree of cultural competence who do not necessarily need to acquire Sámi symbols in order to show their own identity, and others, who might feel pressured to affirm

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<sup>44</sup> My translation: Then she called me `a new Sámi`. It was very hurtful and I thought to myself: dammit, I'm still not on the inside. When I hear things like that it makes me feel like a guest in my own culture. And I do feel like I have to prove that I am a genuine Sámi to other Sámis. There is a certain degree of skepticism throughout; why are you learning Sámi now and why do you want a traditional dress? I do feel like I need to explain and prove myself, that I'm not just visiting.”

<sup>45</sup> Interview with John-Egil, September 2015

their Sámi identity and need the symbols as a cultural ladder to acquire the same competence. At the same time, there is a reconciliation of the cultural influences from both the Sámi and the modern, majority society (Åhrén, 2008).

This is true in the case of *Anne* who has attended several Sámi cultural courses at the Sámi House in Oslo as a way of increasing her cultural competence as a Sámi. In her sparetime she practices *duodji*, which is Sámi handicraft and she explains how she often thinks to herself that by doing so, she is `the typical Sámi`.

“Det er en av mine forestillinger om det å være same, at veldig mange driver med håndverk. Men så merker jeg jo at de som ikke driver på med det reagerer litt og sier `herregud, det må da gå an å være same uten å sitte å veve hele dagen`. Jeg er jo enig i det selvsagt, men for min egen del har det vært en fin inngang til min samiskhet<sup>46</sup>.”

Discovering the `proper Sámi way`, is also a concern of *Máret*, who is raising two children in Oslo. She reflects a great deal about her own attitude towards her identity as Sámi when she was younger and living abroad when it was more important to learn about other cultures. Becoming a mother changed her perception and it became very important to be `true` to her own identity for the sake of her children. She contemplates about how she should teach her children Sámi values, how to increase their interest in the language and stresses the importance of the knowledge of kinship, whilst raising them in Oslo.

“GávpoGIS dus lea ieš ovddasvástáduS buot dása mi guoská sámi identitehtii. Sámi birraSis ii leat dus diekkár ovddasvástáduS, doppe lea dat nu lunddolaš. GávpoGIS šattat maid ieš defineret mi dat lea dat `sámi` dán dilis ja de ballat lean go son mun defineren dál boastut ja dan de oahpahan mánáide? Ja dan de gullat go boahotá davás? GávpoGIS ii leat servvodat veahkkinn duođáštitt ahte juo, don leat sápmelaš ja dát gullá sámevuhtii. Ja ii oro ge dárbu dasa davvin. Mun in jáhke mun livččen gorron alccen gávtti jus orošin davvin, doppe leat čeahpes duojárát geat gorrot<sup>47</sup>.”

*Máret* describes an important aspect of the sponsorship and upbringing of Sámi children, namely that it traditionally has not been just a matter concerning the parents of the child, but

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<sup>46</sup> My translation: It's one of my notions of being Sámi, that many do handicraft. But then people who are not engaged in it, react a bit and say `oh my god, it is possible to be Sámi without having to weave all day long`. I agree, of course, but for me personally it has been a nice entrance to my own sáminess.

<sup>47</sup> My translation: “In a city you have the responsibility regarding everything connected to the Sámi identity. In a Sámi area that is already there, naturally. In a city it is also very much up to you to define what the `Sámi` is in this setting and then it is a fear whether one is doing it right. What if I teach my children wrong and then have to hear it when I go north? The society in a city is not helping you to reassure your Sámi identity and the things that belong to it. And in the north you don't really need that. I don't think I would've sewed a traditional costume if I'd lived in the north. There you have professionals doing it.”

rather concerning a whole network of people connected by kinship, practice and rituals (Kramvig, 2005) and that the extended family is expected to take part in the socialization of the child (Nergård, 2004). *Máret* describes how she needs to fill the roles of the whole Sámi `community` and to define and identify the Sámi aspects in her life in Oslo – and at the same time, be worried if she is defining the Sámi aspects correctly. In the quote she also expresses how there is a risk of her upbringing being a topic in conversations in core Sámi areas in the northern part of Norway. I understand her statement as awareness of the claims and expectations that exist in the core Sámi areas regarding how a Sámi mother should raise Sámi children, and vice versa; that she too, as a Sámi mother have certain expectations to how she should foster for her Sámi children in Oslo.

In order to meet their own expectations of what it entails to be a `Sámi in the city`, many of my informants have come up with different answers and solutions, which can either manifest itself in something concrete or as a `imagined` sense of a Sámi community.

## 5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has investigated and identified some of the experiences of the urban Sámi connected to prejudices and expectations, from both the non-Sámi and within the Sámi community. My informants tell stories of common mockery, negative comments and stereotypes connected to the Sámi identity, but the chapter has also revealed that the urban Sámi is skilled in mixing tradition and modernity, thus insisting on ambiguity in regards of what a Sámi identity is (Kramvig, 2005). The chapter has discussed three different strategies of dealing with situations that can lead to confrontations, and discussed how the Sámi can be perceived as both provoking and exotic; as the emblematic Sámi (Olsen, 2003). Lastly, the chapter has discussed concepts such as cultural ladder and cultural hierarchy, revealing how the informants adapt to the circumstances in their Sámi performances, implying a difference between the North and the South.



## 6. The `golden language` and the struggle to keep it alive

*“Mun dieđan ollugat leat massán giela, muhto.. sámi identitehta ii leat dušše gávtti coggalit sámi álbmotbeaivve dahje searvat feasttaide Sámi viesus. Dan ferte aivve deattuhit, ahte giella galgá gullot Oslos vaikke ii gullo. Dat lea hirbmat rahčan ja mun dovddan maid ahte mun ge lean massán olu gielas go lean orrun máŋga jagi olgoriikkas gos maŋázassii vel niegadin eangalasgillii. Dáppe mun dál ozan sániid sátnelisttus jus in daid lunddolaččat gávnna. Dat lea munnje juogalágan proseassa go mun ferten váruhit vai mus ge giella ovdána. Dáppe galggašii gávdnot `giellapolitiija` nu mo davvin, soames gii cuiggoda ja dikšu gollegiela<sup>48</sup>.”*

*Máret, ássá Oslos / lives in Oslo*

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The quote above belongs to *Máret*, who grew up in a Sámi area with Sámi as her mothertongue. She, and many of my informants, refer to the Sámi language as the `golden language`; a popular term describing the Sámi language in contemporary literature and lyrics. This chapter will highlight some of those strategies, challenges and daily victories of those who insist on the importance of the Sámi language in an urban setting.

Two of the eight informants have learned the language when they were adults, though one of them spoke the language in her childhood. One informant had Sámi as a subject in school, but does not describe himself as a fluent speaker today. One informant did not learn the language at home, but through schooling and speaks it fluently. The four remaining informants have all had Sámi as their first language while growing up.

### 6.1 Learning the language

The process of Norwegianisation had a significant impact on the use of the Sámi language, as discussed in the introduction chapter. Many Sámi are now in the process of taking the

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<sup>48</sup> My translation: "I know many people have lost the language, but... the Sámi identity isn't just about dressing up in the traditional costume for the Sámi National Day or attending parties at the Sámi House. It's necessary to constantly emphasise that the language must be heard in Oslo, even if it's not. It's hard and I know I've lost parts of my own language after living abroad for so many years, where I eventually also dreamt in English. Here I need to look up words if I can't find them naturally. It's a process to me as well to ensure that my language develops. We should have the `language police` here as they do in the north, someone who corrects and cares for the `golden language`."

language back, an important part of the cultural revival.

This is also the case for *Ánne*. She grew up knowing that her family was Sámi, but it was never `relevant`. *Ánne* describes it as they were `a bit` Sámi by blood. One day in 2013 whilst living in Oslo, she discovered that a language course was to be held. She signed up, just for the fun of it.

“Jeg tenkte at det hadde vært gøy å kunne samisk, bare som en artig greie. Jeg hadde arvet en kofte litt før det, men det var først etter at jeg begynte på kurset, andre eller tredje kurshelg, at det samiske plutselig ble utrolig viktig for meg. Da ble det liksom `herregud, dette er språket mitt` og det er ikke bare for gøy, dette er på ordentlig og jeg skal lære det. Det ble plutselig veldig viktig for identiteten min<sup>49</sup>.”

Learning and later on mastering the language, has had a major impact on *Ánne*. She explains how she used to `play and act` as a Sámi during her younger years. Learning the language gave her more confidence in her self-identification as a Sámi and in retrospect, she is sad that she did not learn the language as a child. Her family in her home area is mostly glad that *Ánne* has learned Sámi, especially her grandmother.

“Mormor som selv prater samisk er kjempeglad for det. Vi to prater bare samisk i lag nå, eller vi prøver i hvert fall. Jeg jo lært meg samisk i Oslo så jeg prater ”bokmållsamisk” og ho prater (dialekt), så det stopper jo litt opp av og til. Mamma og pappa har litt den samme holdningen som jeg selv hadde, litt sånn `jaja`<sup>50</sup>.”

*Ánne* explains that not all members in her family want to identify as Sámi, which is also the reason why she has not told her other grandmother that she has learned the language because `she doesn't want to have anything to do with the Sámi<sup>51</sup>`. However, after learning the language, she feels that other Sámi accept her as Sámi `more easily`, whereas before she needed to explain where her parents and grandparents came from.

Sarakka (24) who grew up in Oslo, spoke Sámi as a child when she was in the Sámi kindergarden, but later on the language weakened as she did not have the Sámi language as a

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<sup>49</sup> My translation: I figured that it would be fun to know the language, just for the fun of it. I had inherited a traditional costume a bit before that, but it was really after I attended the course, the second or the third gathering, that the Sámi became very important to me. It suddenly struck me: `oh my god, this is my language` and it's not just for fun, this is for real and I'm learning it. It became very important to my identity.

<sup>50</sup> My translation: My grandmother (on the mothers` side) is really happy. Now we only speak Sámi to each other or at least we try. I have learned Sámi in Oslo and I talk `standardized` and she speaks (dialect), which sometimes makes a haul in the conversation. My mother and father have a bit of the same attitude that I had, a bit `oh well`.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with *Ánne*, August 2015

subject in school. During her childhood, she often visited relatives in Kautokeino and remembers how she felt ashamed when she could not reply to them in Sámi.

Often she would question if she could be `a real Sámi` living in a city without the language. Growing up in Oslo she felt a need to justify her identity to others, thus she decided to move to Kautokeino when she was 18-19 years old to re-learn the language. She describes it as a paramount life-changer.

“Sámeigiella lea nu láhka mu váimmu, dat lea mánnávuođa giella ja čátnon áhči historjjái. Dat lea dakkár lag-på-lag-proseassa. Ja... mun in beroš ahte mu giella ii leat aibbas riehta ja ahte in huma čuođi proseantta. Mus lea ártegis grammatihka ja nuohtta maid ii leat go earáin. Ollugat jerret lean go Suomas eret, go mus lea hui garra `R:a` mu gielas ja nu ii leat nu čielggas gos mun lean eret. Muhto mun goittotge duosttan sámástit juohke beaivve<sup>52</sup>.”

For both *Anne* and Sarakka it has been an empowering journey to learn and re-learn the language, both in a self-identification aspect, but also in regards to the identification from other Sámis. Jon Todal (2007) defines three factors as particularly influential in the vitalization of languages; namely the *barrier*, the question of *owning a language* and the question of *inclusion and exclusion*. The first factor speaks of a generation of Sámis who grew up hearing the Sámi language without learning to speak it themselves, and the barrier is then what prevents the second generation from speaking the language. The second factor relates to ownership of a language, where non-Sámi speaking Sámis may define the language as something that belongs to their ancestors and to those who speak. The third and final factor is about inclusion and exclusion from the language community. Todal argues that since there is an official definition of who is Sámi, there also is a definition of who is not. By definition, one cannot become a Sámi and this can in turn lead to challenges in the language revitalization, especially in areas where the language is most vulnerable – and that learning or re-learning the language becomes crucial as it functions as an ethnic identity marker (Todal, 2007, p: 206-208).

In other words, mastering the language, also means mastering the Sámi identity. Both of my informants who have taken back the Sámi language, talk about the language as something that connects them to their family, whilst the language in the case of *Anne*, also is a reminder of

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<sup>52</sup> My translation: The Sámi language is very close to my heart, it is the language of my childhood and it's connected to my fathers` history. And... I don`t care that I don`t speak the language correctly, one hundred percent. I have funny grammar and a different melody. Many ask me if I am from Finland, because of my hard `R` and it`s not that obvious where I`m from. But at least I dare to speak Sámi everyday.

the assimilation process still relevant today. Her parents did not learn Sámi when growing up, while the grandparents talked Sámi to each other and their siblings. Her parents belong in Todal's second category, whilst she herself felt more included when learning the language (Todal, 2007). Sanna Valkonen (2014) argues that the Sámi ethnicity is strongly connected to the established elements which are perceived as traditional, and that Sáminess consists of mastering and performing cultural elements. Valkonen differentiates between the bodily Sámi and the cultural Sámi in her article *The embodied boundaries of ethnicity*, arguing that a person who is born a Sámi is not guaranteed a Sámi identity unless the person performs the established Sámi elements; in this context the language. Valkonen argues:

“This process filled with power can be described as performativity, in which a person's Sámi identity is produced performatively in those acts which are considered to result from Sámi identity followed by Sámi origin. This can be the unconscious performing of Sámi ethnicity as one's natural way of life or a more conscious construction of identity” (Valkonen, 2014, p: 221).

Following the argument of Valkonen, performances are relevant to both those who uphold their Sámi identity as 'natural' and who by birth have acquired a Sámi culture competence (Åhrén, 2008) and those who are re-learning and climbing the cultural ladder. The next section will focus in particular on those who are in the first category, and I will argue how the usage of language and the creation of language arenas as such also are performances.

## 6.2 Speaking the language

The usage of the language is important to all of my informants. *Biret* remembers mainly speaking Norwegian at home in her childhood even if her mother spoke Sámi as her second language, which she had learned in adult age.

*Biret* believes she started to speak Sámi in second grade at primary school and speaks the language fluently today. She works in a Sámi institution where she practices the language on a daily basis. She believes that to be crucial in regards of maintenance of her Sámi identity and language competence.

“Mun muittán go bargen (eará sajis), de mun váillahin gullat ja geavahit sámegeiela. Doppe ii lean ii oktage geainna sáhtten hállat sámegeiela, ii goit beaivválaččat. Ovddit háve go dáppe bargen, de

ovdánii mus giella hui olu go dalle in lean mun guhkes áigái sámástan nu olu. Ledjen vajáldahtán sihke grammatihka ja sániid<sup>53</sup>.”

The continuity and the relevancy of the Sámi language is also important to *Niillas*. He grew up speaking the Sámi language and describes the language to be his primary identity marker. However, that has not always been the case. He spent many years of his adult life abroad and later on in Oslo, where he has started a family. He describes the Sámi language as merely his `thought language` during the years before he became a father, because his identity then was very much connected to work in a non-Sámi speaking environment. Becoming a father gave the language, which had weakened over the years, a new function.

“Go šadden áhččin, de lei mus sámeigiella masa jávkan go nu unnán dan geavahin árgabeaivvis. Munnje šatta hui dehálaš gulahallat mánáiguin iežan gillii ja mánát de šadde munnje reaidun ja motivašuvdnan doalahit ja sealluhit giela<sup>54</sup>.”

The mother of *Niillas`* children is not Sámi, but *Niillas* insists on speaking only Sámi to the children when they are at home. He believes he would not have managed to teach his children Sámi without the Sámi kindergarden and the school as supportive language arenas. However, he expresses concern of his childrens future language development.

“Mii sámástat ruovttus vel lassin skuvllas ja go leat davvin fulkkiid luhtte, muhto eanaš ruovttus. Dat lea albma hástalus, mo sudno giela fievrredit viidáset go stuorruba? Mus oažžuba vuodu, muhto dál galgaba oahppat grammatihka ja vearbaid sojahit. Dat soaitá šaddat váttis go galggašii de hállat stuorit birrasiin beaivválaččat. Mu mielas sámeigiella lea maid hui váttis ja muittán iežan mánnávuoda (dán báikkis) mo mun ožžon korrekšuvnnaid olles servvodagas. Dan eaba oaččo soai, dušše dan unnán maid mus oaččuba<sup>55</sup>.”

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<sup>53</sup> My translation: When I worked (at the other place), I really missed hearing and using the Sámi language. There I had no one to talk Sámi with, at least not regularly. The last time I worked here at my current workplace, my language really improved. I hadn't spoken the language in a long time and I had forgotten both grammar and words.

<sup>54</sup> My translation: When I became a father, my language was almost gone, because I hardly used it in my daily life. It suddenly became crucial to be able to communicate with my children in my own language. The children then became a tool and a motivation to take care of and to keep the language alive.

<sup>55</sup> My translation: We talk Sámi at home, (they) use it at school and when we are visiting our relatives in the North. It's a huge challenge, how to pass on the language when they grow up? I give them the foundation, but soon they'll learn grammar and verb conjugation. That might become challenging, since they should practice the language in a bigger (language) community. I think the language is very difficult and I remember my own childhood (in this place), how I was corrected by the whole community. They don't get that, they'll only get a small portion of that from me.”

The home is one of the most important language arenas for my informants who are fostering children, as *Niillas* who strives to only talk Sámi to his children with the support of his non-Sámi speaking wife. Lenore A. Grenoble and Lindsay J. Whaley who are concerned with language revitalization, argue: “The intergenerational transmission of a language is typically, and appropriately, used as a benchmark for whether a language will maintain its vitality into the indefinite future” (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006, p: 6). Intergenerational transmission, meaning that a language will survive and flourish from one generation to the next, often has its basis in the home. *Máret*, who is raising two small children in Oslo, uses the home arena actively in language development and preservation, which is also embedded in their daily routines. She has also made a choice of consequently speaking Sámi to her children, whose father is Norwegian.

“Iddes go lihkan, de bijan Sámeradio ala. Dat gal lea juoga maid mun duodaid *ferten* dáhkát. Ja de logan sámi áviissaid, geahčan Ođđasiid (...) Dán viesus mii aivve čuovvot sámi ođđasiid. Mun doalvvun máná guoktá sámi mánáidgárdái, dat ádjána sullii 45 minuvtta dušše dohko ollet ruovttus. Mun livččen sáhttit doalvut sudno dáža mánáidgárdái mii lea lagabui, muhto mun lean válljen ahte soai galgaba gullat sámejiela beaivválaččat. Go gearrgan barggus, vieččan mánáid ja de leat vel moadde diimmu ruovttus ovdal nohkkanáiggi mas stoahkan ja giella lea guovddázis<sup>56</sup>.”

The parents or other caretakers of a child are the superior language models during the first years of the child`s life, but after a while others will affect the language development (Hyltenstam & Stroud, 1991) and for a language to be vital, it must be actively used by children (Grenoble & Waley, 2006).

The Sámi kindergarden in Oslo is thus an important language arena for parents such as *Máret*. To her it is important that her children hear and speak the Sámi language everyday, also outside their home. She uses more time to travel back and forth to ensure that the children learn both the language and other knowledge connected to the Sámi culture. *Máret* explains how the children in the Sámi kindergarden learn Sámi food traditions, rhymes and stories, values and other traits. The children have, for example, taken part in the slaughtering of a reindeer and the drying of the meat, and used the vocabulary connected to these activities. Such activities point to the cultural creativity that emerges in cities, where the Sámi

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<sup>56</sup> My translation: When I wake up, I`ll turn on the Sámi Radio channel. That`s just something *I have to do*. I`ll read Sámi newspapers, watch the Sámi TV-news (...) In this house we`ll only watch Sámi news. I take my children to the Sámi kindergarden, it takes about 45 minutes just to get there from home. I could have placed them in a Norwegian kindergarden closer to home, but I have decided that my children shall hear the Sámi language everyday. When I finish work, I`ll get my children and then we have just a few hours before bedtime where we`ll play and focus on the language.”

kindergarden is bringing Sámi traditions in to an urban space. These are also aspects of the Sámi culture that *Máret* cannot teach her children alone and cultural knowledge that in many cases is naturally transmitted to children from their parents or grandparents in Sámi areas. Most importantly to *Máret* however; is that the Sámi kindergarden gives status to the Sámi identity of her children and helps them to understand that the Sámi language is not `just the language of mom<sup>57</sup>.

The modern world, with the emergence of new technology and the internet in particular, has created new language arenas accessible for some communities in the world. Grenoble & Whaley (2006) argue however, that these new arenas are overwhelmingly dominated by a handful of languages. I will not dwell on this topic for now, as I return to the digital aspects of an urban Sámi identity in the next chapter. The new language arenas created by new technology, are however, highly relevant to urban Sámi living in a city where the language is rarely heard and used. *Máret* is always searching for new ways to incorporate the Sámi language in her childrens life. Technology is a big part of Norwegian childrens lives today, but there are few games and applications in the Sámi language while there are many in the Norwegian language. *Máret* had, at the time the interview was conducted, just downloaded a game application where characters well known for Norwegian children, speak Sámi<sup>58</sup>. *Máret* becomes emotional when she talks about the joy her child expressed when discovering the application.

“Ikte mii geahččaleimmet vuosttaš geardái dan Kaptein Sabeltann-áppa, ja mu nuoramus lei nu ilus. Son njuikku njuikku dás illudii ja dajai: `jurddaš eadni, Kaptein Sabeltann hállá sámegiela, mu giela`. Dat lei hirmat somá dan oaidnit, mo sus iešdovdu stuorui dainna ja ahte son oinnii iežas sámevuođa das (...) Dat lea hui dehálaš munnje ahte soai oaidniba ahte sámegiella lea dehálaš min beaivválaš birrasis, vaikke eai leat nu gallis geat hállet dan<sup>59</sup>.”

Many of my informants stress the need to emphasize the usage of the Sámi language in city environment, such as *Ánne* who often takes initiative to meet up with other Sámi youth in Oslo at cafées for language practice<sup>60</sup> or *Ánde*, who values and makes the many aspects of the

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<sup>57</sup> Interview with *Máret*, July 2015

<sup>58</sup> “Kaptein Sabeltann snakker samisk”, URL: <https://www.nrk.no/kultur/kaptein-sabeltann-snakker-samisk-1.12475851>

<sup>59</sup> My translation: Yesterday we tried out the app about Captain Sabertooth, and my youngest was so excited. He jumped up and down in joy and exclaimed: `can you believe it mom, Captain Sabertooth speaks Sámi, my language`. It was really nice to experience that, how his self-confidence grew from that and how he connected his own identity to it (...) It`s very important to me that they appreciate that the language is important in our daily life, even if not that many speak it.”

<sup>60</sup> Interview with *Ánne*, August 2015

storytelling and joik-tradition heard in the city<sup>61</sup>. Some of my informants describe it as both `natural` and `hard work` to make room for the language, which often puts some of them in a quirky dilemma. *Máret* has for instance experienced how her choice can be upsetting to Sámi who do not speak the language themselves.

“ Sii atnet gal arvvus sámegiela, muhto eai buohkat oro áddeme manne mun galggan leat nu konsekveantta. Vuohán ahte sii oaivvildit mu leat `váltisin` go deattuhan dan. Dat sáhtá ovdamearkka dihte leat muhtin deaivvadeamis Sámi mánáidgárddis gos buohkat eai hála sámegiela, de vuohán ahte sii oaivvildit livččii olu álkit jus mii buohkat hállat giela maid buohkat áddejit<sup>62</sup>. ”

This is also something that *Niillas* can relate to. He describes it as very `natural` to speak Sámi with his children, but admits that he did reflect upon whether he would be able to beforehand. He reflects upon the amount of effort he and other Sámi parents puts in this and whether or not the Sámi community really comprehends and values that effort done in cities and how much energy it takes.

“Mun in jáhke sii áddejit man árvvolaš dat lea (...) Sii atnet gal árvvus, muhto mun dušše jearan; atnet go dan doarvai arvvus? Nu mo dáppe lea (namma festiválas) áidna sámi arena, muhto dat juohkebeaivválaš sápmelašvuohta ii leat nu čielggas. Ja dat gal lea.. dat galget leat garra navccat ođđáigge eallimii váldit dan sápmelašvuođa, ahte ii šatta dušše fáddán geasseluomus ja festiválain<sup>63</sup>. ”

A lot of Sámi parents in both Oslo and Tromsø who I talked to about this topic, can relate to what my informant *Niillas* is saying. Many of them talk about it as a heavy responsibility and for the parents living in a city like Oslo, which has not a very big or active Sámi community; it also is a very lonely responsibility, as expressed by *Máret*. She believes that if there were a Sámi language center established in Oslo, it would be much easier to ensure a language transmission<sup>64</sup>. This is the reality for many Sámi families living outside of the core Sámi

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<sup>61</sup> Interview with *Ánde*, August 2015

<sup>62</sup> My translation: “They do value the language, but they don’t seem to understand why I need to be consistent. I get the impression that they think I’m just being `difficult`. It can be at a gathering at the Sámi kindergarden for instance, where some might not speak the language. I get the feeling that they think it would be more convenient if we all spoke a common language.”

<sup>63</sup> My translation: “I don’t think they understand just how valuable it is (...) Surely they appreciate it, but I just wonder if they appreciate it enough? If you think of this place, (name of festival) is the only Sámi arena, whilst the everyday-Sáminess is not that clear. And it is.. it really takes a lot of energy/effort to take the `sáminess` in to a modern life, so it’s not just something you do on summer vacation or at festivals.”

<sup>64</sup> Interview with *Máret*, July 2015



areas, where language preservation demands a greater effort from the Sámi speaking parent compared to parents in Sámi areas where there are more language arenas (Todal, 2007).

Many of my informants have had to make certain choices in order to live as urban Sámis, whether it entails travelling across the city for their children to be able to go to Sámi kindergarden or school, or to attend cultural courses which increases their Sámi competence. Following the argument of Valkonen (2014), they have to perform certain elements which are perceived as Sámi. Some of my informants` admit that they probably would not be doing so if living in a core Sámi area, as for instance to learn how to tailor and sow their own gákti. Some of my informants however, say it is natural and that they have not chosen anything. The next chapter will however illustrate how those who uphold the naturalness in their identity management, also create or define certain arenas or activities as `Sámi` and thus perform their natural Sámi identity.

### **6.3 Chapter summary**

In this chapter I have aimed to show the significance of the Sámi language in regards to my informants` maintenance of their Sámi identity. I have discussed two aspects, namely learning the language and speaking the language. In the first category the language is important as a self-identification aspect and as an identity-ascription of other Sámi. In the second category, the language functions as re-inforcement and support in regards of transmitting the Sámi identity to a younger generation.

I argue that the language is regarded as an ethnic marker and a Sámi performance. Speaking the Sámi language in an urban domain where the Sámi is in minority, requires great effort from the individual.

## 7. Sámi Arenas and the creation of such

*“Jeg tror det samiske miljøet her i byen bare vokser og vokser. Om det er fordi det kommer flere samer hit, det tror jeg ikke, folk har kanskje bare begynt å bidra og å vise seg frem. Men man hører jo om glansdagene i Oslo, det levende og store, aktive samemiljøet. Men det har nok ligget brakk en stund i Oslo og vi kommer nok aldri tilbake til Alta-dagene (...) Det er jo litt kjipt at man må gå på Samisk Hus å spise vafler med en haug 70-åringer for å få litt samisk input. Det er ikke sånn at du kommer inn der og tenker: yes, nå er jeg hjemme<sup>65</sup>”.*

*Ánne, ássá Oslos / lives in Oslo*

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One of the main differences between the two field cities; Tromsø and Oslo, is my informants' opinion of the city as a 'Sámi city'. None of my informants in Oslo regarded the capital as a 'Sámi' city, but rather as a multi ethnic city with a small and active Sámi society. My informants' in Tromsø on the other hand, regarded Tromsø as a 'Sámi' city, even if Tromsø also is home to more than 130 nationalities. Pedersen & Nyseth (2013) writes that many regard Tromsø as the 'principal Sámi city' as the Sámi culture and identity has become more present in the city through an increased Sámi institutionalization.

To all of my informants it is mainly the socialization with other Sámis that is most important in their evaluation of the city as Sámi or not. *Biret* believes Tromsø to be a Sámi city because of the large Sámi population who lives there and does not connect it to any physical aspects, but rather to the cultural life which often makes room for the Sámi culture too. She says the university attracts a lot of young Sámis from all over and describes Tromsø as 'the heart of Northern Sápmi' which makes it in reality impossible to be anonymous as a Sámi in Tromsø<sup>66</sup>. John-Egil (20) also describes Tromsø as a city with a compact and active Sámi population, where you 'can hear children play in Sámi in the neighborhood'<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>65</sup> My translation: "I think the Sámi community here is growing. I don't think it's because there are more Sámi here now, people might just began to contribute and to show themselves. But you hear about the heydays in Oslo, the vibrant, large and active Sámi environment. But I think it hasn't been viable in Oslo and we will probably never experience the same as the Alta-period (...) It is kinda crappy that one must go to the Sámi House to eat waffles with a bunch of 70-years-olds to get some Sámi input. It's not like you're going there and thinking: yes, now I'm home."

<sup>66</sup> Interview with *Biret*, September 2015

<sup>67</sup> Interview with John-Egil, September 2015

*Ánne* says that the active Sámi community in Oslo consist of a small group of people who initiate and coordinate the Sámi activities and a large group of people who will occasionally attend or choose not to, and that she rarely hears the language outside of these domains<sup>68</sup>. This is also in line with the thoughts of *Piera*, who believes there to be a large Sámi population in Oslo that is `hidden`, consisting of people who do not choose to be active or want to participate in the Sámi activities<sup>69</sup>.

### 7.1 Physical meeting places

As discussed in the fifth chapter, both the Sámi kindergarden and the school where Sámi children get language education in Sámi, are important language arenas to my informants. They are, however, also important as some of the very few physical meeting places. *Máret* says that her Sámi socialization is first and foremost with her family who lives in Oslo and with other Sámis who are connected to the Sámi kindergarden; for example through play dates, birthday parties and the celebration of the Sámi national day. She describes the Sámi House in Oslo as a meeting place for mainly adults with few activities suited for families with young children, which she misses<sup>70</sup>. Also to *Niillas*, both the Sámi kindergarden and later, the school where his children get Sámi education, have become the primary meeting place for Sámi interaction in the city. “I can’t think of any other arenas for Sámi families in Oslo<sup>71</sup>”.

*Ánne*, who does not have any children, the Sámi House is her primary Sámi arena in Oslo. She goes there mainly to practice the language and to attend courses. She describes it as a place where mainly elderly Sámi meet to drink coffee, which does not attract many young people.

“Det er ikke så veldig innbydende for folk i 13 til 30-års alderen, men (...) Alle kurs og aktiviteter jeg har vært på, arrangeres der. Så det har blitt en viktig språkarena iallefall, det er bare der det er kurs. Der lærte jeg samisk og der lærte jeg å joike. Det føles veldig rart at ting som andre har lært hjemme, det har jeg lært på et bygg på Grünerløkka<sup>72</sup>.”

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<sup>68</sup> Interview with *Ánne*, August 2015

<sup>69</sup> Interview with *Piera*, July 2015

<sup>70</sup> Interview with *Máret*, July 2015

<sup>71</sup> Interview with *Niillas*, July 2015

<sup>72</sup> My translation: It’s not as welcoming to people from the ages 13 to 30, but (...) Every course and activity that I’ve attended, is there. It’s an important language arena, it’s the only place that have courses. That’s the place I learned Sámi and how to joik. It’s a bit strange to think that those things that others learned at home, I’ve learnt in a building at Grünerløkka.

There is not a similar Sámi House in Tromsø as there is in Oslo, but the Sámi organization in the city launched a similar idea in the 60s, which is now in process<sup>73</sup>. To many of my informants in Tromsø, it is a welcoming idea to create a common Sámi meeting arena in the city, although many of them believe it should be filled with activities in order to be relevant and vibrant. *Biret* describes it as `a chance of luck` to meet other Sámis in the city if it is not planned in advance or if there is not a Sámi event going on<sup>74</sup>.

John-Egil (20), who grew up and lives in Tromsø, believes that it is a good idea to have a physical meeting place in Tromsø. Also to him, the Sámi interaction is very much connected to his own network, which he has gotten to know through school, his family and other Sámi events. He remembers a big Sámi community in his childhood.

“Jeg har gått i samisk klasse på Prestvannet skole og jeg har vokst opp med mange andre samiske barn. Vi har bodd i området rundt Prestvannet og der har det jo bosatt seg mange andre samer, det er en slags `ghetto` med flere og flere samer. Jeg har alltid hatt samiske kompisser rundt meg hele tiden og sånt (...) Når det blir såpass konsentrert, så blir det jo et miljø<sup>75</sup>.”

All of my informants believe it is important to have a Sámi network in the city. Such interactions are important as they build a Sámi community or a group belonging in the city. In both Oslo and Tromsø, there are very few physical and permanent meeting arenas, but many of my informants describe social events such as concerts, Sámi parties, conferences and others as important arenas to meet other Sámis from all over Sápmi. Sarakka (24) is excited about *Idja*, a new Sámi night club-concept which takes place four times a year in Oslo with Sámi artists playing, which she describes as `very cool`.

*Ánne* believes that the social interaction amongst young Sámis today are much more based on events or happenings, rather than a physical meeting place: `We don't sit around at a café just waiting for a Sámi to show up<sup>76</sup>. *Piera* remembers how there used to be certain cafés or pubs

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<sup>73</sup> NRK Troms, ”Planlegger Samisk Hus i Tromsø”, 14.12.2015, URL: <https://www.nrk.no/troms/planlegger-samisk-hus-i-tromso-1.12703846>

<sup>74</sup> Interview with *Biret*, September 2015

<sup>75</sup> My translation: I was in the Sámi class at Prestvannet school and I grew up with a lot of Sámi children. We lived in the area around Prestvannet, where a lot of Sámi people had settled. It is a sort of `ghetto` with more and more Sámis. I've always had many Sámi friends growing up (...) When an area is densely populated by Sámis, it creates an environment.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with *Ánne*, August 2015

where you were `almost guaranteed to meet other Sámis in Oslo` many years ago, but that it has changed<sup>77</sup>.

## 7.2 The digital world

The Sámi interaction in my informants` daily lives is very much dependent on their life situation and interests as the previous section has shown, and some of my informants describe their contact with the Sámi community in the city as minor. Internet and social media is an easy way to keep oneself updated generally in Sámi news, politics and other current issues. All of my informants` emphasize the internet and social media, as important arenas that create meeting places with other Sámis or as a way of connecting with the Sámi society. In a global context, the internet has been instrumental in restoring, at least virtually, a borderless territory and in forging new indigenous identities (Dyson, 2011). It has proven to be a tool that can re-establish communication and connections and revitalize languages. Moreover, it is a new medium for communicating and expressing indigenous traditions and identities (Olsen, 2012).

This is true to *Piera*, who occasionally attends Sámi events in Oslo, but does not usually engage in the Sámi organization or the Sámi House in Oslo. Instead, he is very active on social media where he discusses Sámi issues and also uses the Sámi language. To him, social media is a way of keeping himself updated on relevant and important issues in Sápmi and as an arena where he can express himself.

“Sosiála mediiját leat šaddan hui dehálačča munnje (...) Doppe sáhtta digaštallát áššiid, mat eai soaitte leat nu Oslo-relevántta mu eallimis, muhto dat leat dattege dehálačča sámis. Galgá go beassat juoigat girkus Guovdageainnus ovdamearkka dihte ii leat juoga mii munnje guoská, dat lea dávjá báikkálaš, muhto de lea maid dakkár ášši mas mun sáhtán beroštit ja jienádit<sup>78</sup>.”

*Piera* also spends a lot of time talking on the phone with relatives and friends who live in core Sámi areas, sometimes on a daily basis. He describes it as an important aspect of his identity maintenance to `gossip` and to know what the community is concerned about in regards to certain issues. He explains that it is important for him to know about what is happening in the lives of his acquaintances in the North and believes he would feel `very isolated, as he would

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<sup>77</sup> Interview with *Piera*, July 2015

<sup>78</sup> My translation: Social media has become very important to me (...) The issues that are debated might not be as relevant to my Oslo-life, but they`re still important in a Sámi context. Should it be permitted to joik in the church in Kautokeino for instance, is not an issue that relates to me personally, it`s a local issue, but it can also be an issue that I engage in and comment upon.”

be stranded on an island` without this aspect in his life<sup>79</sup>.

*Máret* also uses social media as both a communicative and practical tool in her everyday life in Oslo, in addition to Sámi applications which she will download on her phone. She often uses Facebook and her social network to ask for guidance whether it is about the meaning of a certain word, where she can find a good Sámi book for children or just to write and read in her own language. She describes Facebook as something that gives her `a sense of fellowship<sup>80</sup>. Many of my informants thus use the internet to connect to a perceived Sámi community, which is both geographically dispersed and easily accessed. Social media is also a way of practicing the language and a way of staying connected to other Sámi people's way of life. The digital arena is also a way to learn, identify and confirm certain elements as `Sámi`. *Anne* has for instance learned a great deal by following fellow Sámi on Instagram. Social media has proven to be a big help in the process of getting to know her own culture and to master the Sámi elements that she is expected to know or that she herself believes she should know of, for instance the yearly cycluses in reindeer husbandry.

“Mye av kulturen er jo fortsatt litt fremmed for meg. Reindrift er jo .. altså, vi hadde rein for 200 år siden, så det kan jeg ingenting om. Og det er en slags forventning til det å være same, at reindrift skal man iallefall vite alt om. Hvis du selv ikke har det, så skal du iallefall vite hvordan det å ha det. (...) Sosiale medier har gjort at store deler av kulturen som jeg kanskje aldri ville fått noen innsikt i, blir noe som jeg kan noe om fordi det blir tilgjengelig for meg. `Oja, kalvemerking, er det noe som foregår nå?` og sånne ting<sup>81</sup>.”

Internet and social media are arenas where the Sámi culture, language and identity can be expressed and can as such be understood as online nationalism. Benedict Anderson describes modern communications as important aspects in the build up of an *imagined community* (Anderson, 1991). This also gives people the opportunity to both learn and reflect upon one's own identity as Sámi. Certain images and cultural traits are perceived as `Sámi`, which functions as a reinforcement and authentication of what it means to be Sámi. Anderson argues that language can be a tool to generate an imagined society while building particular solidarities within the society. I believe this to be relevant for the situation of many minorities

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<sup>79</sup> Interview with *Piera*, July 2015

<sup>80</sup> Interview with *Máret*, July 2015

<sup>81</sup> My translation: I'm a stranger to a great deal of my culture still. Reindeer husbandry for instance.. we had reindeer 200 years ago, so I don't really know anything about it. And there is a certain expectation of you as a Sámi, that you should know about it. If you don't have reindeer yourself, you should at least know how it is to have reindeer (...) Social media has made a large amount of my culture available to me, knowledge that I would never know. `Oh, so they're marking the calves now?` and stuff like that.”

and indigenous peoples in an urban setting, where the notion of a community might not be based solely on everyday face-to-face interaction. A modern identity is thus a project of reflexivity which is connected to peoples' choices and by connecting and building relationships with the distant others (Giddens, 1991). The Sámi identity is both an individual identity and a group identity; a cultural fellowship, which entails both a self-ascribed identity as Sámi and a recognition and confirmation from other Sámi.

But there is yet another, more problematic side to the internet as an arena to express a Sámi identity, namely online harassment. The Norwegian term `samehets` (which can be translated to harassment based on a Sámi ethnicity) is something that most of my informants are familiar with. Ketil Lenert Hansen (2012), who has engaged in research concerning ethnic discrimination towards Sámis, raises a paradoxical aspect of today's society. Even if the historical Norwegianization-process is over and the Sámi culture and identity is revitalized in many areas; course wording, jokes about the Sámi, online harassment and mock-joiking is still considered common amongst Sámi (Hansen, 2012, p: 72). Referring to his follow-up study on the same topic, Hansen writes of the findings of his research, in which more than 1000 respondents from the five northern-most counties had participated:

“De fleste samer opplever å bli diskriminert på skolen, i arbeidslivet eller i sitt lokalsamfunn, men stadig flere opplever krenkelser gjennom sosiale medier, som de siste årene har utviklet seg til å bli en ny arena for både kollektiv og individuell hetsing av samer og rasistiske utsagn om minoriteter<sup>82</sup>” (Hansen, 2012, p: 74).

*Niillas* can vouch for this tendency, and explains that online harassment used to make him both angry and upset in the past. He often used to engage in those debates, but says that he has given up attempting to change the discourse in the online debates regarding Sámi issues.

“Neahtas gal lea álki cielahit ja dat gal geavvá dávjá. Mu mielas lea hui suddu ahte neahtta lea šaddan dakkár friddjabáiki gos sáhtta anonymalaččat duolbmat olbmuid vuolemužžii. Deiven oktii ovttá albmá, mun dihten sullii gii son lea ja moai leimme digáštallan muhtin neahttabáikkis ovdal gos son de mu cielahii. Mun jerren das de go deiven su, it go cielat mu dál? Don han leat neahttaávissas dan dahkat? Son jávkkehii de oalle jodánit. Jáhkan neahtas lea nu álki cielahit go don it oainne sin gean duolmmat<sup>83</sup>.”

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<sup>82</sup> My translation: “Most Sámi experience discrimination at school, at work or in their communities, but more and more experience abuse through social media, which in recent years has evolved to become a new arena for both collective and individual flaming of Sámi and racist statements about minorities” (Hansen, 2012, p: 74).

<sup>83</sup> My translation: It's very easy to harass someone online and it happens very often. It's a shame that the internet has become a freespots where people anonymously can insult others in a very rough manner. I met one man once, and I sort of knew of him as we had both been active at an online site where he harassed me. I asked him when I

My informants who engage in the digital world by participating in debates on social media revolving Sámi issues, believe the online harassment against ethnic minorities have increased over the last years. Many of them say that `it has gotten worse`. *Anne* describes a feeling of both hopelessness and indifference when she comes across such debates. On the one hand she is furious and wants to engage in the discussion to set things straight, but on the other hand she feels powerless because she believes there is no point to try because they will not listen to her. She explains that she, as an individual Sámi, often feels responsible to speak up since no one else corrects them.

“Jeg føler ofte at jeg burde, jeg gjør det jo så sjelden fordi jeg orker bare ikke. Men man bør jo, i alle fall en gang i blant, være den stemmen som sier `hallo, nå er dere på villspor` og fordi det ikke skal bli et ekkokammer der de sitter og roper til hverandre og så blir det en sannhet<sup>84</sup>.”

### 7.3 Self-created arenas

Apart from the few physical Sámi arenas, social happenings and celebrations of important dates throughout the year, there are not many places my informants `go to` in the city to strengthen or play out their Sámi identity. Some of my informants have however, created their own `Sámi arenas` in the urban landscape where they live. *Sarakka* (24) describes for instance Akerselva in Oslo as a river that reminds her of the river in Kautokeino, and says she often goes there to `feel close to nature`<sup>85</sup>. She elaborates that one of the positive things about living in Oslo, is that the nature is very close to the city.

The nature aspect is also important to *Niillas* who goes hunting every fall with a group of Sámi men that all live in a city. They go hunting in the county of Hedmark and *Niillas* says that even if it initially was not meant to be a `Sámi arena`, it now has become an important one. He does not describe the hunting itself as something `Sámi`, but the way the group organizes the hunt, the conversations and topics brought up, the way they respond to each other and the jokes around the fire, are all connected to their Sámi identity and what *Niillas* describes as the `Sámi way`.

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met him, why don't you harass me now? You have done it online in the newspaper? He vanished from there hastily. It's so easy to harass people online because you don't see the person you are violating.

<sup>84</sup> My translation: I often feel that I should, but I do it so rarely because I just cannot stand it. But one should, yes, at least once in a while be the voice that says `hello, now you are just lost` and to prevent it becoming an echo chamber where they shout at each other, and then it becomes a truth.”

<sup>85</sup> Interview with *Sarakka*, February 2016



“Dat leat moadde `triksa` diesa. Mun lean bivddus aivve sápmelaččaiguin juohke čavčča, geat maid leat gávpotolbmot. Dat lea issoras buorre korrekšuvdna sihke giela ja kultuvrra ektui. Ja jus mii de vahkku bivdit, de lea dávjá ahte maŋnel goalmát beaivve, de gulat ahte juoga rievdá, dan sihke gulat ja dovddat. Go leat olggobeal sámi birra ja de gávnnat dákkár joavkkuid, nu mo mii geat leat bivddus, de šaddá dat hui garra identitehtamarkora. Dat lea dehálaš arena ja mun jáhkan don fertet ráhkadit diekkár báikkiid go orut gávpogis<sup>86</sup>.”

The hunting group functions as a reinforcement and strengthening of *Niillas`* Sámi identity, and as a collective correction of his own language and culture. He believes it to be important to create such arenas in a city, which is also something *Máret* can relate to. She has decorated her home with Sámi elements, symbols and colours. She believes that it would probably not have been as important to her if she lived in a Sámi area.

“Mun ohcalan sámi symbolaid ja ivnniid (...) Jáhkan davvin maid lea olu duodji olbmuid dáluin, muhto dáppe lea mus masa dárbu. Gardiinnat fertejit govvidit bohcco dahje dain galget sámi ivnnit, govat galget čájehit bohcco, gávttiid ja nu ain. Jus livččet mus nuorran jearran dán, de gal livččen varra čaibman ja dadjan ahte in goassiige aiggo diekkár viessogálvvuid ja čijaid. Muhto dál.. dat lea varra mánáid dihte, ahte sámi symbolat galget leat lunddolačča ja ahte máhttiba daid<sup>87</sup>.”

I met *Máret* and a few other informants in their homes in both Oslo and Tromsø. In each home that I visited, I noticed that there were many objects, furniture and other elements used as decorations that resembled something `Sámi`. The pillows on the couch and the curtains hanging from their windows were in bright colours, there were pictures and paintings of the reindeer, mountains, people dressed in their gákti and art pieces of well-known Sámi artists. In some kitchens there were kitchen utensils made of materials such as wood and reindeer horn and signs and posters with the Sámi letters printed on. My informants reasoned this partly as a way of visualizing their Sámi identity as it represents the `Sámi`, but mainly because they regarded those elements in their home to be beautiful and decorative. Gunvor

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<sup>86</sup> My translation: “There are certain `tricks` to it. I go hunting each fall with Sámis, who all are city people. It gives a very useful correction in terms of both language and culture. If we`re hunting for a week, then you can usually sense a change in the group after the third day and you can also hear it. When you`re outside the Sámi community and then find such groups, as we have with the hunt, it becomes a very strong identity marker. It`s an important arena and I believe you just have to create such spaces when you live in the city.”

<sup>87</sup> My translation: “I look for Sámi symbols and colours (...) I think there is a lot of duodji (Sámi handicraft) in peoples` homes in the North too, but here I don`t think I have a choice. The curtains should have reindeer print or they should be in the Sámi colours, the pictures should show a reindeer, the national costume and so on. If you`ve asked me this when I was young, I would have laughed at the thought of me decorating my house with such things. But now.. it`s probably because of the children, so they will regard the Sámi symbols as natural and that they`ll gain knowledge about those symbols.”

Guttorm argues that Sámi craft, which often has the culture as its starting-point, is embedded in a discourse of representation and self-representation (2009). Home décor can thus be a construction and re-affirmation of a Sámi ethnicity by the use of symbols which are perceived to be Sámi and in this context; be regarded as one strategy of identity maintenance in an urban setting and as a performance of the urban Sámi identity.

#### **7.4 Chapter summary**

This chapter has focused on Sámi arenas and the creation of such domains where the Sámi language, culture and identity can be exercised and expressed. I differentiate between the physical arenas, arenas that are established online and the self-created, individual arenas.

I argue that it is not the arena itself that creates a notion of a pan-Sámi community, but the network within the arena, although an increased Sámi institutionalization make Sámi culture and identity more present in the city. The sense of fellowship or a Sámi community is not bounded by geography, as the internet provides an arena where a Sámi identity can be expressed, and cultural traits can be taught and confirmed as Sámi. The creation of arenas that are perceived to be Sámi, is important to many of my informants who reside in cities where the Sáminess is not easily seen and found.

## 8. Sámi in the city – freedom of choice

*Lei hui hearváii oktii mus muhtin boares fuolki lei galledeamen mu. Ja de lei mus muhtin ustit gii lea Sri Lankas eret gii bođii ovddal dás gáhta alde. Moai hálešteimme, nu mo dágat go deaivvadat ustibiin. Mu boares fuolki de jearai: maid bat Ánde, don go dovddat čáhpuhiid? Mun čilgejin ahte son lei mus 7-8 jagi juo leamaš buorre oahpesolmmoš ja dat attii munnje dan gova maid gávpot addá, earet eará ahte don dáppe deaivvat olu mánggalágan olbmuid. Go boaittoealde orru, de lea maid olbmos buorre dilli. Sáhtta váldit buori áiggi oahpásmuvvat ja soaitá heivet jearrat áksu luoikkasin easka go kránnjá leat dovdan muhtin 7 jagi. Dáppe gávpogis dáhpáhuvvá diet olu jođáneappot, go čađat deaivvat ođđa olbmuid ja álkit boađat ságaid ala. Kánske it deaivva šat sin it goassige, kánske deaivvat fas sin nuppebeal`nurkki<sup>88</sup>.*

*Ánde (57), ássá Romssas / lives in Tromsø*

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Are Sámis in a city different than Sámis who live in traditional settlements? And can the city give a valuable Sámi life? Ánde (57) has lived most of his adult life in a city and left his home village already as a child. He says he might have less practical knowledge about nature, but that the city might have taught him other valuable lessons in life, for example tolerance and acceptance for other cultures, as the quote above illustrates.

The city represents diversity and variations and is characterized by certain spatiality, a particular density and differences (Hannerz, 1980; Massey, 1999). The city embraces the multiplicity of lifestyles, cultures and practices, and is a meeting place between the local and the global (Simonsen, 2005, cited in Pedersen & Nyseth, 2015). This is something Sarakka (24) can relate to, as she grew up on the eastside of Oslo, where 80 percent of the population has a different cultural heritage than Norwegian. She values the cultural input in Oslo and

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<sup>88</sup> My translation: Something funny happened one time I had my old relative visiting me here. A friend of mine, who is from Sri Lanka, came across us on the street and we talked for a while, as you do when you meet a friend. My old relative later asked me: Ánde, do you know `čáhpuhiid` (black people)? I explained that I'd known him for 7-8 years already. It gave me the image of what the city provided, because here you will meet different kinds of people. If you live on the outskirts, you usually can take your time to get to know people. You might not ask to borrow your neighbors' axe unless you've known him for 7 years. Here in the city such interactions happens very quickly, you'll meet new people all the time and it's easier to start a conversation. Maybe you'll never meet them again, maybe you'll come across them again on corner of the street.

explains that to her it is `as natural to have a friend named Ali as Håkon` and describes her equal love for both the traditional Sámi and the multicultural city<sup>89</sup>.

When asked to explain the difference between a life in a city and a life in a traditional Sámi area, my informants use words such as `hasty`, `career-oriented`, `individuality`, `loneliness` and `freedom`. This chapter will explore some of their thoughts on how to incorporate traditions in to a modern lifestyle in a city and how the urban scenery gives space to both of these aspects.

### 8.1 The inclusive city

Even if Oslo is not regarded as a `Sámi` city by my informants, it has however created a space for some of my informants to act out and to *be* Sámi. *Anne* describes the region where she grew up as `incredibly Norwegianized` and that Oslo became the city that gave her access to the Sámi culture. She explains that her Sámi identity is much more important to her in Oslo. Coming back home reminds her also about the tension in regards to the Sámi.

“Jeg faller litt tilbake i gamle tankesett der, at jeg også blir litt sånn `nå skal vi ikke snakke så mye om det her, for vi er jo ikke helt samisk egentlig`. Og med tanke på at heller ikke hele familien min er helt klar på at vi er samisk, så blir det liksom naturlig nok litt nedtonet. Men her i Oslo er det helt annerledes, jeg føler meg mye mer samisk her enn når jeg er i tjukkeste Sápmi (i dette området). Det er veldig merkelig, men her er friheten til å være samisk absolutt tilstede<sup>90</sup>.”

To *Anne*, the city of Oslo itself gives her the framework to be Sámi. She describes her Sámi network as something that she mainly gained in the city and through the activities at the Sámi House. In the quote above she describes her home area as a place which is `in the thickest of Sápmi`, whilst at the same time placing Oslo, and the tension in her own family outside of this context. Being outside `the Sámi context` and in a city context, can thus give a freedom when it comes to dealing with ones` own identity, which all of my informants range very high.

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<sup>89</sup> Interview with Sarakka, February 2016

<sup>90</sup> My translation: I go back to my old mindset when I'm there, I become a bit `we shouldn't talk too much about this, because we're not completely Sámi, in a way`. And considering that not all members of my family agree that we are Sámi, it naturally gets a bit toned down. But here in Oslo it's completely different, I feel much more Sámi here than when I'm in the thickest of Sápmi (in this area). It's strange, but here I have the freedom to be Sámi.”

*Piera* who grew up in a Sámi area and who has lived in several Sámi areas also as an adult, describes a certain degree of relief of just needing to *be oneself* and at the same time, choosing to be as Sámi as he wants on a daily basis.

“Mun jáhkán ollugat vásihit dan seamma, boahit deike ja beassat ráfis orrut. Ii oktage jeara ja ii oktage čuovu du (...) Go leat ruovttus, de leat don gean nu gánda, vilbealli, oahpis ja nu ain. Buohkat dihtet gii don leat, maid don barggat, geainna ja gos. Dat ii leat dáppe ja dat addá stuorit friddjavuođa go davvin. Nie lea smávit báikkiin diehttelasat, muhto sámis de lea maid du gullelašvuohta juoga mas beroštit. Ja dáppe beasan mun leat seamma sápmelaš juohke beaivve<sup>91</sup>.”

The aspect of kinship or the ties to one's ancestry, as *Piera* describes it, should not be understood as something that is regarded as unimportant. All of my informants speak very highly about their families and the importance of kinship, which is a prominent aspect in Sámi culture (Nergård, 2004). A large family in a Sámi context means that there is a large network of support and help. In many social situations identification is often based on kinship and thus a way of positioning oneself in a broader context. But what if one belongs to the 'wrong' family or do not meet the expectations from the people closest to you? Sarakka (24) reflects a great deal upon this and describes the Sámi community in general as both including and excluding in light of this.

“Dat lea váttisvuohta min servvodagas, ahte lea .. sáhtta dadjat siskkáldas rasisma. Ii dušše diet jurdda ahte man sápmelaš leat don duodaid, muhto maddái leat go rivttes sápmelaš? Máhtat go goarrut, ráhkadit sámii biepmu, leat go dus bohccot ja sierra mearka? Ja makkár sohki gulat? Nu mo Guovdageainnus lea hui olu status čatnon sohki, du áddjá nammii (...) Ja dat lea... Altså, vi er ett folk i fire land, men en sånn konstant vurdering av hvem du er i samfunnet kan være veldig splittende. Det er vanskelig å være annerledes eller å være en som ikke passer inn i den same-boksen<sup>92</sup>.”

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<sup>91</sup> My translation: I think many people experience how they can come here and live undisturbed. No one asks and no one pays attention to you (...) When you're home, you're always someone's son, cousin, acquaintance and so on. Everyone knows who you are, what you're doing with whom and when. You don't have that here and it gives more freedom than in the North. Surely, that's something that happens in all small places, but in Sápmi people tend to care for your ancestry, too. And here I can be as much Sámi as I want everyday.”

<sup>92</sup> My translation: It's a problem in our society, that there's.. you might say; internal racism. And not just regarding how Sámi you truly are, but also whether you're the right Sámi? Do you know how to sew, cook Sámi food, do you have reindeer and your own reindeer mark? And who is your kin? In Kautokeino there's a lot of status connected to the kinship, to your grandfathers' name (...) And that can be.. Like, we are one people living in four countries, but this continuous assessment of who you are in the community, can be very divisive. It's hard to be different or to be someone who doesn't fit into the Sámi-box.”

Sarakka describes a sense of strictness within the Sámi context, where being too different as a Sámi can make it challenging to tick the `Sámi-box`. Urbanity may thus create an arena where multiple expressions of a Sámi identity is welcomed, encouraging new and innovative forms of Sáminess (Nyseth & Pedersen, 2014).

All of my informants access the city life, either if it is Oslo or Tromsø, as something `different` and something `else` than the core Sámi areas. It has a rapidness that might not be central in core Sámi areas. *Biret* describes herself; the urban Sámi as `the academical/bureaucrat/culture-Sámi, who practically can work and live in the home area, but who needs a certain degree of buzz around her`. She enjoys everything the city has to offer in regards to cultural activities and believes she is `more into culture` when living in Tromsø<sup>93</sup>.

## 8.2 Networking with Sámi

It is important to all of my informants to have a Sámi network in the city, regardless of the size and whether it is happening at a café, at Sámi events or institutions or online. As the previous chapters have shown, the social network has many functions in regards of the maintenance of the Sámi identity. The network plays a key role in the preservation and correction of the language, as a verification and acknowledgement of one's self-identification as Sámi and as a connection to the Sámi community as a whole. The friendships created in the Sámi network, are also based on a mutual understanding of how it is to *be* Sámi. Ánde (57) describes it as a feeling of coming home when meeting other Sámis, also because then there is no longer a need to explain or justify one's existence.

“Dat lea hirbmat dehálaš ja buorre iežas olbmuiquin deaivvadit ja dat lea juoga maid identitehta addá, don oahpat atnit árvvus daid olbmuid geain leat sullii seamma referánsat. Mis sápmelaččain leat min máidnasat, dajaldagat, giella ja min hervvoštaddamat mat čatnet min oktii. Ja don masa beasat vuoinjastit go deaivvat dakkáriid. Lea hui duohta maid Áillohaš čálii divttas ahte ruoktu lea váimmus. Dáid deaivvadeimiid bokte beassá de dovdat ruovttu fas<sup>94</sup>.”

John-Egil (20) regards it as *easier* to get to know other Sámis compared to getting to know

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<sup>93</sup> Interview with *Biret*, September 2015

<sup>94</sup> My translation: It's very important and a good feeling when you get together with your own people and the identity aspect teaches us to be grateful of people who have similar references as oneself. We Sámi have our own stories, sayings, language and other enjoyable traits that connect us to each other. It's like you can rest a bit when you're with such people. The poem of Áillohaš is very true in that sense; the home is in the heart. Through these meetings you can get a feeling of home again.

Norwegians. He believes a major reason for it is the common culture and history of the Sámi, and describes it as hearing the same stories with different wording. Meeting others who belong to the same minority culture, is to him, very important. Being the only Sámi in a Norwegian group often makes him sense his `differentness` more than usually. Whenever entering a Sámi gathering, he describes it as a way of just blending in.

“Når man kommer inn i en samisk sammenheng, så bare glir man inn på et vis og man treffer alltid på kjentfolk. Om man bare har én som man kjenner litt fra før, så blir det mye lettere å bli kjent med de andre. Det går også veldig fort i samisk sammenheng, synes jeg. Og det å håndhilse på alle når man kommer inn et sted vil kanskje oppfattes som litt sært i en norsk sammenheng, mens i det samiske er det en selvfølge<sup>95</sup>.”

The mutual understanding seems to be important to my informants in both cities, and all of them believe there is a `Sámi fellowship` or community, regardless of geography. *Biret* describes it as something beyond the physical aspect, which allows her to `roll her eyes` together with a fellow Sámi. “It’s connected to our nature as a people, to our way of thought and how we see the world around us. It’s definitely there<sup>96</sup>.”

### 8.3 The active choice of being an urban Sámi

The Sámi identity is described as `natural` and at the same time as something `different` by my informants. However, as discussed in the previous chapters, there are certain `tricks` or performances that are done to uphold or strengthen the Sámi identity. To all of my informants it is important to act out their distinctiveness as Sámi, whilst adapting to their surroundings (Hovland, 1997). For example, Sarakka (24) reflects upon how she usually and often will choose to approach a Sámi group of people at an event or gathering where there are also Norwegians present, just because they are Sámi. “It’s a very powerful and strong connection there and I really want to be around my own people<sup>97</sup>.”

To *Anne* it has been an explicit choice to approach the Sámi culture which she now has a strong connection to and which she describes as an important and personal process. She reflects why she needs to be a Sámi in the city and believes her motivation is driven by both a

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<sup>95</sup> My translation: At a Sámi gathering, you naturally blend in and there’s always someone you know present. Even if you just know one person there, it makes it easier to get to know the others. It all happens more quickly with Sámi people. And just the aspect of greeting everyone whenever entering a place, would probably be looked upon as a bit peculiar in a Norwegian setting, while it is a given in a Sámi context.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with *Biret*, September 2015

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Sarakka, February 2016

commitment to raise awareness of the diversity amongst Sámis and a will to make the term `asfaltsame<sup>98</sup> cool again.

“Samtidig er man fra en undertrykt minoritet som den sentrale makten her i Oslo en gang forsøkte å viske ut, og da blir det kanskje litt sånn ČSV over det? For å vise at vi er her vi også (...) Det er en styrke for det samiske samfunnet at det finnes et samisk samhold uansett om man bor i Kautokeino eller Oslo og at andre også ser at det samiske er helt vanlig, akkurat som alle de andre gruppene som bor i Oslo<sup>99</sup>.”

Ánne stresses that even if she is both Sámi and Norwegian by nationality, she is more reflected around the first one and tries to make it as `relevant as possible` in her life. Not all Sámi living in Oslo or other cities in Norway regard their Sámi identity as `relevant` in their daily lives. During my fieldwork I have met and talked to several Sámi people who identify themselves as half-Sámi or `semi-Sámi` and who to a certain extent, regard their Sámi ethnicity to be more connected to their parents or relatives who live in a core Sámi area.

None of my informants have the same view, but some of them do share similar thoughts when it comes to the relevancy of their Sámi identity in a city. As *Máret* explains: “At work I have my professional identity, at the soccer-practice I am just a teammate, not the *Sámi teammate*<sup>100</sup>.” Coming back to terms *fluidity* and *relativity* of identity (Eriksen, 2010), the social situations are a condition of identities to become relevant in the given situation.

Urbanity it is not just one way of life, but many (Hannerz, 1980) and it is true also within an urban Sámi context; one can choose when and how to express the ethnic identity as a Sámi in the city. Identity and the choices in different identities, thus seems to be dependent on many factors. Identity is as *Niillas* says it: `not just black and white`. He believes his Sámi identity to be as part of him as his other identities, which are not easily separated. He finds it hard to define his Sámi identity as the most important one. In the interview he gives a long list of possible identities that are part of who he is: heterosexual, western, a male in his middleages, a Northerner, educated, part of the business life and so on.

“Ja buot dát gullet dan seamma ruitui, mas maiddái gávdno mu sámevuohhta ja mat váikkuhit nuppi nuppi. Lea go son mu sámevuohhta mii váikkuha mu maskulinitehtii ja mu jurdagiid dasa mii

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<sup>98</sup> My translation: The Asphalt-Sámi

<sup>99</sup> My translation: At the same time, I'm from an oppressed minority, which the central powers here in Oslo once tried to erase and it might be a bit `ČSV`, to show that we're still here, too (...) It's a strength to the Sámi society that there's a strong fellowship regardless of people living in Kautokeino and Oslo, and also that the Sámi is viewed as something completely normal, just as the other groups living in Oslo.

<sup>100</sup> Interview with *Máret*, July 2015



guoskká mo dievdoolmmoš galgá leat? (...) Lea go sámevuhta mii dagaha ahte in bala agis ja boarásmuvvat? Mun in dieđe<sup>101</sup>.”

#### 8.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has highlighted the city as a domain of multiple lifestyles and identities, and my informants` description of the city as a place that encourages and gives room for a great personal freedom in terms of defining and expressing their Sámi identity. To many of my informants, the city is inclusive; as their Sámi identity is regarded as their personal one and not the label of their family. The city thus gives room to play out multiple identities simultaneously. The citylife is not concerned with ancestral or kinship connections and differs from the traditional Sámi context where identification often is based on kinship. I argue in this chapter that the freedom in a city thus requires an active choice of when, how and to what extent a Sámi identity is promoted and displayed. In order to do so, the urban Sámi is dependent on certain performances that are perceived and regarded as Sámi.

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<sup>101</sup> My translation: And all of these go in the same pot, which also contains my Sámi identity. They all influence one another. Is it my `Sáminess` that influences my masculinity and my ideals on what a man should be? (...) Is it my `Sáminess` that is the reason why I don`t fear age and the process of getting older? I don`t know.”

## 9. Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to discuss and highlight some of the challenges the urban Sámi face in negotiating, reforming and maintaining a Sámi identity in a multicultural city, with a particular emphasis on expectations, prejudices and claims connected to their indigenous identity from both the Non-Sámi community and within. Based on the empirical material which mainly consists of interviews with eight informants who now either reside in or have been born and raised in the chosen field cities Tromsø and Oslo, I have discussed four main topics in this thesis. The four topics are 1) prejudices, confrontations of stereotypical `truths` and Sámi expectations on how to be urban Sámi; 2) the struggle to learn, re-learn and to uphold the Sámi language in the city; 3) The physical and self-created Sámi urban areas and the importance of the digital world; and finally 4) the Sámi city life which consists of both the freedom to choose when the Sámi identity is relevant and the performative act of displaying a Sámi identity. The concepts of *expectations* and *claims* have functioned as running themes through the thesis, and I argue that while some of the expectations and claims my informants talk about are perceived to come from their surrounding social settings and relationships (Eriksen, 2010; Goffman, 1990 (1963)), others come from their personal experience regarding what it entails to live an urban Sámi life.

This thesis does not aim to answer what an urban Sámi life is, as urbanism is not just one way of life, but many (Hannerz, 1980). Rather, I have tried to identify some aspects of the urban Sámi life of my eight informants, which might – or might not – also be applicable for other urban Sámi. I cannot however speak on the behalf of the whole urban Sámi population, as it is as diverse as any other. The four topics related to prejudices, expectations and claims are thus just a fraction of a whole and there are surely other issues that I have not discussed in this thesis.

I will here discuss some of my findings by connecting them to a discussion on identity as stigma, identity as resistance and identity as performance.

### 9.1 Identity as stigma

Returning to the theoretical concept of stigma (Goffman, 1990 (1963)), which is described as negative affordances onto traits of identity; I find it useful to repeat some of the findings in regards to prejudices and stereotypes. The Sámi population in contemporary Norway experience bullying and ethnic discrimination twice as much as the Norwegian population (Hansen, 2012), a tendency which is also found in the interviews with my informants, who

have experienced mock-joking, namecalling and negative comments connected to their ethnicity as Sámi. The risk of facing negative attitudes is especially present when the Sámi ethnic marker is visible. The choice of being a visible Sámi is thus also about being prepared for both negative and positive incidents as a way of taking control over a situation. All of my informants have experienced how stereotypes are presented and believed to be `truths` about the Sámi. The stereotypes are perceived to be both `innocent and positive`, for example the stereotype that all Sámi are very skilled in activities connected to nature and wildlife which is a concept coined as eco-indigenism (Sissons, 2005), and of more `serious and negative manner`, for example stereotypes about Sámi special rights to nature resources which non-Sámi people are left out of. Yet another stereotypical claim is the vivid ideal of the emblematic Sámi (Olsen, 2003), which promotes the Sámi as traditional and very different from the modern Norwegian. The emblematic Sámi is in particular a perception met by my informants in Oslo in the southern part of Norway, whilst the perception in Tromsø in the northern part can be more conflictual which also is supported in recent research about urban Sámi identity (Pedersen & Nyseth, 2015).

Despite the fact that many of my informants have had negative encounters and experiences connected to their Sámi identity, none of them describe their Sámi identity as stigmatizing or as something they need to *undercommunicate* (Hannerz, 1980). It is rather the contrary; all of my informants are very proud of their Sámi identity, which also becomes evident as some of them describe the Sámi language as `gollegiella` (in English: the golden language) and their identity as `eallima skearjka` (in English: the gift of life).

In addition, all of my informants express a deep understanding of why a Sámi identity still is problematic and thus; a stigma to some people. For instance, both Ánde and *Biret* describe the Sámi as a people that intentionally was `čihkkon` or in English; hidden. By expressing their Sámi identity openly and naturally in front of people who have been taught for generations that the Sámi is not something to show off, they understand how that can be painful. This is what *Biret* describes as the many layers of history.

Sarakka can also relate to this and believes the fact that she was raised in Oslo and that she has learned the language as an adult, makes her Sámi identity more difficult to accept – especially for those who have lived in areas in Northern Norway that have been assimilated:

“Og så kommer det en søring-jente fra Oslo som snakker samisk og som gjør det med så stor stolhet, det stikker kanskje noe voldsomt i dem? Som om de tenker: hvordan våger DU når vi skulle glemme<sup>102</sup>?”

There is in other words, an acknowledgment of the long lasting effects that the statedriven *Norwegianization* policy has had and continues to have in many areas in the northern part of Norway. The understanding of such long lasting effects is also to many of my informants a strategy of coping with negative encounters, as it gives both comfort and strength to not let such negative incidents affect their own opinion of their Sámi ethnicity. My empirical findings thus correlate to the research of Sanna Valkonen (2014), who states that the previous stigma of Sáminess has nearly disappeared:

“Sámi identity has become desirable and, in many ways, a significant source of strength and self-dignity for many Sámi. At the same time, ethnic distinctions and demarcation have become important issues at both the collective and individual level. For instance, in Finnish Lapland, there is a continuous political struggle over how the Sámi group should be defined and who, at the individual level, are ‘real’ indigenous people” (Valkonen, 2014, p: 210).

Valkonen discusses here yet another important aspect, which is also discussed in my empirical chapters; namely the essential question of *who is Sámi*? The question of who is truly indigenous, is highly debated also in the global, indigenous world. In the article *Indigenous Identity. What Is It, and Who Really Has It?*, Lakota scholar Hilary N. Weaver discusses the problematic aspect of what she refers to “the self-appointed identity-police” (2001, p: 251) consisting of indigenous people accusing fellow indigenous people of not being ‘indigenous enough’. Some of my informants tell similar stories of not being accepted as ‘genuine’ and describe a sense of scepticism from other Sámi in regards of their Sáminess, relevant to the concept of a Sámi hierarchy (Pedersen & Nyseth, 2015). Claims or stereotypes from within the Sámi community can thus create a cultural hierarchy, which serve as both cultural strengthening factors but also divisions (Kemi Gjerpe, 2013). The concept of stigma may therefore to some extent work internally, rather than as previously, externally (Eidheim, 1971).

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<sup>102</sup> My translation: And then a southern-girl from Oslo comes along, who speaks the Sámi language and who does it with such pride, that it probably is an intense wounding. Like they are thinking: how dare you, when we were supposed to forget?

Ánne pinpoints this when she describes an incident when she was called a `new Sámi` by a fellow Sámi, which gave her a feeling of despair as she did not feel recognized and accepted on `the inside yet`, implying that it is a continuous process of being accepted.

## 9.2 Identity as resistance

The dominant picture of indigenous peoples have been that of the defenceless victims of progress and how the western world has had destructive and culturally detrimental effects on their cultures, writes Vigdis Stordahl (1994). She argues that although that is an important aspect, it is, as important to demonstrate how indigenous peoples have resisted the oppression and managed to survive as a people despite centuries of dominance (Stordahl, 1994, p: 57). The very notion of an indigenous identity and in this context, a Sámi identity, is thus itself an act of resistance in which a new Sámi self-understanding has developed. There is an evident lack of knowledge about the Sámi also in the Norwegian educational system (Lile, 2011); and although the state of Norway has a comprehensive legislation designed to combat ethnic discrimination (Hansen, 2011), the topic of stereotypes and ethnic bullying against Sámi has been little debated in the public spheres. A few private initiatives have been made in Norway as a way of combating such stereotypes, as *Samisk Myteknuser*<sup>103</sup>, which refutes common myths and stereotypes about the Sámi online, created in cooperation by the Norwegian Centre against Racism and Juddabeassi, a voluntary organization aiming to create a factual discussion arena regarding Sámi issues.

In contemporary Norway the continuous stereotypical ideas of the Sámi are thus mostly combated on the individual level, as stated by many of my informants. They are proud and confident regarding their Sámi identity, and when faced with stereotypes or misstatements about the Sámi, most of my informants have tried to explain and promote an alternative truth. I have earlier identified three different strategies used by my informants in dealing with a potential conflictual situation, namely 1) to engage in a discussion to promote an alternative truth; 2) to remove oneself from the potential conflictual situation; and 3) to benefit from elements in the Sámi culture and to recenter their response from within.

I believe the third strategy and my argument of the Sámi identity as something one needs to *manage* can be connected to the indigenous concept of stories and culture as active agents (Kovach, 2009), meaning that stories are comprised with a strong social purpose, that

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<sup>103</sup> `Samisk Myteknuser` is an online tool aiming to refute common stereotypes about the Sámi and to create a factual understanding of Sámi issues, funded by the Sámi Parliament in Norway and the private non-profit foundation Fritt Ord. The website was launched in 2013. URL: <http://samiskmyteknuser.no/>

can teach of consequences, moral code and practices that can assist members of the collective. In this thesis, this connects to my informants' explanatory strategy and deep understanding of why an individual Sámi may find herself in a conflictual or misinformed situation where they ethnicity is attacked, questioned or criticized in contemporary Norway.

Yet another strategy of resistance in regards of stereotypes and claims coming from within the Sámi community is to increase the cultural competence (Åhrén, 2008) as an individual Sámi; a strategy used by informant *Ánne*. She has attended several courses in order to learn Sámi cultural skills and the language. Jon Todal (2007) describes the language as a factor of inclusion and exclusion. In connection to this, *Ánne* believes by learning the language she is regarded as more genuine by other Sámi<sup>104</sup> and by that, escaping the notion of the internal stigma connected to a Sámi hierarchy.

### 9.3 Identity as performance

The concept of an urban Sámi is placed in the late-modern discourse on identity, where identity choice and *being oneself* are highlighted, and it is a discourse insisting on ambiguity (Kramvig, 2005). To many of my informants, being urban Sámi is a choice of displaying and signifying one or a few out of many identities to their own choosing. *Niillas* describes the city as a place where you are allowed to choose and switch between multiple identities, and characterizes the debate of a Sámi identity as one that easily becomes a 'cartoon', where the Sámi often is highlighted as the most important one and as the only one. To *Niillas*, his Sámi identity is just one part of who he is<sup>105</sup>. All of my informants talk about different situations where the Sámi identity is relevant and other social settings where it is not as prominent. Erving Goffman discusses the production of social life and social reality in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* and how the individual guides and controls the ideas which others form of him, whether they are fully aware of it or not. He describes such activities as 'performances' (Goffman, 1990 (1959), p: 32). I believe such performances also can function as individual perceptions of oneself, as Valkonen (2014) also discusses.

In this thesis cultural traits and activities, such as using the Sámi language online or in public settings where the Sámi language is rarely heard; or dressing up in clothes or fashion accessories or decorating the home with elements that can be perceived as Sámi symbols; or attending events that are perceived to be Sámi events, can all be regarded as Sámi

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<sup>104</sup> Interview with *Ánne*, August 2015

<sup>105</sup> Interview with *Niillas*, July 2015

performances. They are important in a city context where the Sámi culture is less visible, and some of my informants` believe that such performances would probably not be important to them if they had lived in a core Sámi area.

Based on my empirical material, these Sámi performances tends to be more important to those who do not characterize their Sámi identity as natural, but as something that is re-gained. The aspect of being visually recognized as a Sámi seems to be particularly important, to both *Ánne* and *Sarakka*, who characterizes being urban Sámi as also being a bit *activist* everyday. They both talk of the symbolic value of their Sámi identity, and symbols that are perceived as Sámi are important as they have a strong *symbolic* meaning. Káren Elle Gaup (2006) argues that the usage of Sámi symbols was very important during the ČSV-period as a way of marking a difference, and contemplates whether the generation today needs such symbols in their expression of a Sámi identity. My informants who actively use Sámi symbols in their urban lives combine traditional Sámi symbols with elements from modern fashion: the Sámi jewelery on fashionable dresses or by using their *bievssut* (in English: the Sámi shoes) with a pair of jeans. The expression of ones` Sámi identity in the city is as such creative, playful and rooted in both the traditional Sámi and the urban, and can be regarded as a performance of an urban Sámi identity.

The construction of a Sámi identity is thus reflexive (Giddens, 1991) and performative (Thuen, 1995). I argue that such performances are also important to those who uphold their Sámi identity as `natural` or said differently: to those who have a high degree of a cultural competence (Åhrén, 2008). I will demonstrate this with the example of networking with other Sámi, that to my informants, gives both a sense of fellowship and a corrective to ones own identity as Sámi. *Niillas* describes the hunting group he is a part of consisting of fellow urban Sámi men, as an important Sámi arena. The location of the hunt is in the southern part of Norway mainly non-Sámi hunters go. The hunting techniques and weapons are the same as the non-Sámi hunters` use. Still, *Niillas* describes it as a Sámi arena. He connects this to the topics in their conversations, to the jokes and stories that are shared around the campfire and to the language that is used that particular week. He describes the hunting as an important corrective to his own identity as Sámi.

*Máret* describes social media as an important arena where she can find guidance of other Sámi who she connects with through these channels. By writing something in Sámi and getting a response back in Sámi about a common topic of interest, she feels that she is part of

a fellowship. This too is important to *Piera* who uses the internet and the phone to keep himself updated on the current concerns or debates in the community where he is from. He believes that he would `feel stranded alone on an island` without these connections and says in the interview: “In livčče birgen verddiid hága<sup>106</sup>”. The term *verdde* is described as friend-guest relations (Eidheim, 1971) which entails a system of mutual exchange of goods and services, that existed between the nomadic reindeer herding families and settled people and which to an extent, still exist today in particular in the county of Finnmark (Evjen, 2007). *Piera* describes his network in the North as his *verddet*, independent if they are reindeer herders or not. The word can as such also mean `friend` and in this context: a friendship of exchange. To *Piera*, the relationship he has to his *verddet* functions as an anchor and as a connection to his roots. The maintenance of such relationships; to either a core Sámi place or to a group of Sámi thus becomes an ethnic marker – also for those who regard their ethnicity as natural. The maintenance of such relationships is a performance of their Sámi identity.

All of my informants describe a sense of belonging to the Sámi community as a whole. This is strengthened through various performances, whether they entail dressing up in symbols that are perceived to be Sámi or by connecting to fellow Sámi online in social media. My informants speak of two unifying aspects; that geographical distances becomes smaller and that the subgroups within Sámgi becomes irrelevant. My empirical material corresponds as such to the research of Torill Nyseth and Paul Pedersen who argue that urban Sámi identities “are being `stretched out` across particular places and territories” (2014, p: 147).

#### 9.4 Concluding remarks

Identities are always fragmented, multiply constructed and intersected in a constantly changing, sometimes conflicting array – and they do not exist before they are constructed in relationship with others (Weaver, 2001). I would argue that the urban Sámi life is vital as it displays both tolerance and creativity in regards to different expressions of a Sámi identity in the city, but is at the same time challenged by predominant discourses on authenticity and stereotypical ideas from both the non-Sámi and the Sámi.

By resisting the notion of cultural hierarchy and insisting on ambiguity, the urban Sámi who reside in a place of cultural diversity, is making an active choice by being Sámi and claiming the right to express the Sámi identity in new and innovative forms (Nyseth & Pedersen, 2014).

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<sup>106</sup> My translation: I wouldn't have managed without my `verddet`. The term `verdde` if translated directly; means `guestfried` or `friend`. For a deeper understanding of the term `verdde` and the Sámi verdde-system, please see Eidheim, 1971 and Evjen, 2007.



By doing so, the urban Sámi are, to use the description from Peters and Andersen: “complex, highly vernacular engines of Indigenous cultural power” (2013, p: 11).

The urban Sámi population is growing, both in numbers and in terms of awareness.

Researchers engaged in the topic of urban Sámi identity, believe the urban Sámi in the future will require new arenas, and influence or leave their marks on the city to a greater extent than was previously held. They will continue to create new and innovative ways to be Sámi by creating their own symbols marking an urban Sámi identity.

I have in this thesis emphasised the value of stories, both the stories of my eight informants who have shared their thoughts and reflections with me – and stories of myself from my perspective. It has been a reflexive journey which has allowed me, as a researcher, to express my own inward knowing. Sharing ones` own story is an aspect of co-constructing knowledge from an indigenous perspective, and a reminder that our experiences, which live in memory, are vital to indigenous research (Kovach, 2009). The Sámi language and the Sámi culture is not just familiar to me, it is part of who I am and my own identity. The landscape in which this thesis dwell in, is thus also my own. Marie Battiste (2008) argues that a body of knowledge differs when it is viewed from different perspectives, and that interpretations of indigenous knowledge depend on researchers` attitudes, capabilities, experiences and understanding of indigenous perspective, consciousness, language and order. My perspective is Sámi and I believe this to be one of the strengths in this thesis. The stories of my informants, their metaphors and their concepts, are close to me and many other Sámi. The concepts of *eahpáraš* and *verdde* have a strong metaphorical and symbolic meaning – which the English translation fails to compile. The decision to write the passages in the language they were told, was thus an easy decision to make. By highlighting how traditional elements from the Sámi culture are valued and used by my informants who live their lives in urban settings, I hope to have illustrated how the urban Sámi is expressing a Sámi identity in a creative and innovative way. By doing so, they are combating the notion of a Sámi hierarchy and the stereotypical, emblematic Sámi. They are by doing so, and I am by writing this, claiming the right to be regarded as equal and as genuine as all the other Sámi – insisting on ethnic markers such as diversity, cultural creativity and adaptation.

## Appendix 1: Information sheet and written consent form

### Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjektet

#### ***”Urban bysamisk identitet – fordommer og forventninger”***

##### **Til deltakere:**

Jeg er masterstudent ved urfolksstudier ved Universitet i Tromsø og holder nå på med min avsluttende masteroppgave. Mitt prosjekt handler om bysamisk identitet med et særskilt fokus på fordommer og forventninger knyttet til det å være urban same i dag, både fra ikke-samisk og samisk hold. Forventninger kan også knyttes til egne erfaringer og tanker om hva det vil si å være urban same.

##### **Bakgrunn og formål**

Formålet med studien er å beskrive noen av utfordringene som bysamer opplever i forhold til å skape, holde på og leve med en urfolksidentitet i en multikulturell bysetting. I den forbindelse ønsker jeg å intervju samiske personer som lever i urbane strøk fra alderen 18 år og oppover.

##### **Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?**

Deltakelse i studien innebærer at du blir intervjuet der spørsmålene knyttes opp mot din samiske identitet og tilhørighet til kjernesamiske områder. Spørsmålene vil omhandle ulike temaer; som for eksempel fordommer, identitet, samiske møteplasser, språk, samiske symboler etc. Jeg vil følge en semi-strukturert form for intervju, hvor jeg stiller relativt åpne spørsmål der du som deltaker vil få mulighet til å styre samtalen inn på de temaene som du anser som viktige og relevante. Intervjuet vil ha samtalepreg og vil vare i omtrent en time.

Om du planlegger å delta på samiske arrangement eller andre samiske møteplasser i din hjemby vil jeg spørre om jeg kan delta som observatør. Intervjuene vil med ditt samtykke bli tatt opp på lyd slik at jeg lettere senere kan transkribere intervjuet, men lydopptaket vil bli slettet ved studieslutt. Alle informanter i studien vil bli spurt om de ønsker å identifiseres ved fullt navn eller om de ønsker å bli delvis/fullstendig anonymisert.

##### **Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?**

Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Det er kun ansvarlig student og veileder som vil ha tilgang til personopplysninger. Personopplysninger vil bli lagret og oppbevart på kontoret på universitetet i låste skap. Dersom informanten ønsker å bli anonymisert vil vedkommende få fiktivt navn i den endelige masteroppgaven. Dersom informanten ikke ønsker at opprinnelig hjemsted/tilknytning til annen by/sted skal være del av publikasjonen kan det tas vekk.

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes 20. mai 2016. Alle lydopptak vil bli slettet. Alle deltakere vil få en kopi av masteroppgaven tilsendt elektronisk om de ønsker det.

##### **Frivillig deltakelse**

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn. Dersom du trekker deg, vil alle opplysninger om deg bli anonymisert.

Dersom du ønsker å delta eller har spørsmål til studien, ta kontakt med undertegnede Siv Eli Vuolab på telefon 95168927 eller e-post [siveli.vuolab@yahoo.no](mailto:siveli.vuolab@yahoo.no). Veileder for prosjektet er førstemanuensis Geir Grenersen ved UiT og kan kontaktes på telefon 77646555 eller e-post [geir.grenersen@uit.no](mailto:geir.grenersen@uit.no).

Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS og finansieres av Senter for Samiske Studier ved Universitetet i Tromsø – Norges Arktiske Universitet.

**Samtykke til deltakelse i studien**

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien, og er villig til å delta

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Jeg ønsker å bli anonymisert i endelig publikasjon (sett ring rundt svaret):

JA / NEI

E-post som masteroppgaven kan sendes til: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2: Pre-written interview guide

### Intervjuguide

Varighet: 50 minutter – 1 ½ time

Intervjuer/ansvarlig: Siv Eli Vuolab, masterstudent UiT v/ Indigenous Studies

### Tema

*Bysamisk identitet og forvaltning av samisk identitet i multikulturell setting – og fordommer.*

### Kjernespørsmål

*Hvilke identitetsmarkører er viktige for samer som lever i by? Er det visse arenaer som er mer viktig enn andre i identitetsforvaltning? I hvor stor grad påvirkes bysamer av hendelser, politikk og/eller aktuelle samfunnssaker fra samiske kjerneområder (Indre-Finnmark/sentrale deler av Troms og Nordland). I hvor stor grad har bysamer selv skapt egne unike identitetsmarkører som de foretrekker fremfor andre? I hvor stor grad blir man konfrontert med sin samiske identitet i møte med ikke-samer og andre samer? Hvor stor del av hverdagslivet er den samiske identiteten?*

### Intervjuet

Intervjuet starter idet lydopptakeren slås på (forutsatt samtykke av informant).

Innledningsvis vil informanten bli spurt om egne erfaringer/kunnskap om temaet; f.eks om informanten har vært med i organisasjoner som har jobbet med bysamiske spørsmål (politisk/sosialt). Dersom informanten har det vil det være naturlig å begynne med å snakke litt rundt dette.

### Bakgrunnsfakta

- Navn, alder, fødested/hjemsted, sivilstatus/familiesituasjon, yrke/posisjon, språkbeherskelse og samisk tilhørighet.

Urban kontekst:

- Hvor lenge har vedkommende bodd i den aktuelle byen?
- Hvor har vedkommende bodd før?
- Hva liker du med å bo i denne byen?
- Er det noe du ikke liker ved å bo i denne byen?
- Er det noen spesifikke plasser/situasjoner i byen hvor du kan være samisk? Eller velge å ikke være samisk? Er det et valg?
- Kan man være same og bo i by?
- Er dette ditt permanente hjem? Kan du tenke deg å bli gammel i denne byen?

### ***Samisk identitet***

- Kan du fortelle meg hvordan du definerer din identitet?
- Hvordan kommer din samiskhet til uttrykk i hverdagen i denne aktuelle byen?
- Er det anledninger/settinger der din samiske identitet er sterkere enn andre?
- Hvor ofte reflekterer du over din samiskhet?
- Når reflekterer du over det?
- Kan man ha flere identiteter?
- Hvordan skiller den samiske identiteten seg fra din norske identitet?
- Hva er samiskhet for deg?

### ***Samisk identitet i by***

- Når føler du deg mest samisk i denne byen?
- Hvor viktig er det å kunne vise sin samiskhet i denne byen?
- Når, hvor og hvordan gjør man det?
- Hvordan vurderer du at man best lever/er samisk i by?
- Hvordan er det samiske miljøet i denne byen?
- Hvilke reaksjoner har du fått fra andre ikke-samer i denne byen når du forteller eller viser din samiskhet?
  
- Har du møtt på fordommer? Hvilke? I hvilke situasjoner?
- Hvordan reagerer du på fordommer? Uvitenhet?
  
- Etter ditt synspunkt, hvordan er en urban, samisk identitet annerledes fra en generell urban identitet i denne byen?
- Hva tror du gjør deg annerledes enn andre ikke-samer som bor i denne byen?
  
- Hva tror du gjør deg annerledes enn samer bosatt i tradisjonelle, kjernesamiske områder?
- Har du noen erfaringer/kunnskap som du tror andre i samiske områder ikke har?
- Hvor stor kontakt/interaksjon har vedkommende med andre samiske områder eller personer?
- Beskrivelse av den formen slik interaksjon har.

Finnes det samiske møteplasser i byen?

Hvor møter du andre samer i denne byen?

Er det stort/lite?

Savner du et aktivt samisk miljø? Hva mangler du?

### ***Samiske diskurser i Sametinget***

- Hvor opptatt er du av Sametinget?

- Er Sametinget viktig og relevant for deg?
- Hva er inntrykket ditt av hvem den "typiske samer" er ifølge Sametinget?
- Hvilke temaer synes du at Sametinget burde fokusere på som angår bysamer?
- I hvor stor grad føler du at det blir tatt hensyn til av Sametinget?

### ***Samisk identitet i kjernesamisk område***

- Hvor relevant er det for deg å følge med på hendelser som skjer i kjernesamiske områder?
- I hvor stor grad føler du deg tilknyttet det som skjer i resten av det samiske samfunnet?
- Identifiserer du deg lettere med samer i andre områder enn f.eks nordmenn i din egen by?
- Kan du beskrive samisk fellesskap?
- Er det samiske samfunnet inkluderende?
- Er det tilfeller der det er ekskluderende? Hvilke?

### **Avsluttende spørsmål**

- Er det noe mer du ønsker å legge til?
- Er det noen spørsmål du ønsker å svare mer på eller som du ønsker å presisere?

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