

Åse Mette Johansen and Hilde Sollid

# 11 Learning to Reconcile: Entextualisation of a Multilingual Municipality Sign in Educationscapes of Sápmi

**Abstract:** The sign of the trilingual municipality Gáivuotna – Kåfjord – Kaivuono is one of the most discussed items in the linguistic landscapes of Sápmi and Norway. In 1992, the municipality was included in the Administrative Area for Sámi Language, and monolingual Norwegian road signs were replaced with bilingual ones that also included the North Sámi name. Shortly afterwards, the bilingual signs were repeatedly painted over, removed, or even shot at, and the vandalism gained enormous media attention. Meanwhile, vandalised versions of the road sign found their way into both national and local museums. Since 2002, the signs have been left untouched, and in 2016, the Kven name of the municipality was included without any conflict. Based on material ethnography, this chapter analyses the replacement of the sign as processes of entextualisation and as acts of reconciliation aimed at both learning about injustice in the colonial past and building justice for the future.

**Keywords:** Sámi, Kven, road signs, toponymic colonisation, entextualisation, acts of reconciliation

## 1. Introduction

At the beginning of the 1990s, Kåfjord kommune, a municipality in northern Norway, was included in the newly established Administrative Area for Sámi Language in Norway. In this process, the municipality was given a bilingual name, Gáivuona suohkan – Kåfjord kommune, and monolingual Norwegian municipality signs were replaced with bilingual ones that included the North Sámi name. Shortly afterwards, the bilingual signs were repeatedly vandalised: removed, painted over and even shot at. The polarised and essentialised conflict between “Sámi” and “Norwegians” gained enormous media attention and interest from researchers (see for instance Puzey, 2012). Meanwhile, vandalised versions of the municipality signs found their way into two museums. Since the early 2000s, the signs

have been left untouched, and in 2016, the Kven name of the municipality was included without any conflict. Today the official name of the municipality is Gáivuona suohkan – Kåfjord kommune – Kaivuonon komuuni (hereafter Gáivuotna – Kåfjord – Kaivuono).

This chapter is an analysis of this municipality sign as a multilayered semiotic and discursive artefact. Through the analysis, we aim to uncover traces of situated sociopolitical discourses in history and for an anticipated future. We take a broad perspective on the concept of linguistic education (cf. Krompák et al., 2022) by analysing how this specific multilingual municipality sign in northern Norway has been mobilised for educational purposes about language reclamation and reconciliation after long-term colonialism in Sápmi. In the Norwegian context, colonialism refers to an internal process where the nation state aimed at gaining control over the Sámi people, their land and their practices through measures like the regulation of land, religion, language and education (cf. Olsen & Sollid, 2022). It reached its most intense phase with the Norwegianisation policy, which was conducted by Norwegian authorities for more than a hundred years, from 1850 up to the second half of the twentieth century (cf. Minde, 2003). Decolonisation, then, is the critical deconstruction of these hierarchical power relations that minoritised the Sámi people in, for instance, education settings (cf. Olsen & Sollid, 2022). In Norway, the 1980s was a turning point in politics concerning the Sámi people, with a new law regulating Sámi juridical issues (1987), the inclusion of the Sámi paragraph in the Norwegian constitution (1988), and the establishment of the Sámi Parliament (1989). Important here is that the Sámi law states that Sámi and Norwegian are “equal languages” (*likeverdige språk* in Norwegian). What “equal languages” means is further described in chapter 3 on Sámi languages, which was included in the law in 1990. This chapter describes that the extensive rights to use and learn Sámi in official contexts are mainly connected to the Administrative Area for Sámi Language.

The Gáivuotna – Kåfjord – Kaivuono municipality sign has been one of the most thoroughly discussed items in the linguistic landscapes of both Sápmi and Norway over the last couple of decades. The discourses revolving around this sign make it a hotspot for uncovering layers of discourses of social differentiation. The transformation into a multilingual

artefact is the result of a social action of putting up the sign (cf. Pietikäinen et al., 2011; Scollon & Scollon, 2004), which again is the material result of discourses of decolonisation and of revitalising and reclaiming Sámi, and eventually Kven, language and culture. In turn, the sign is situated in a specific historical space that includes the long timescales of the overarching marginalisation of people, multilingual discursive practices, the contemporary processes of changing social orders, and ideas for future relationships. The emplacement of the sign in educationscapes adds new layers of discourse. On the one hand, the municipality sign still does its intended job of identifying and demarcating a given space. On the other hand, the fact that the vandalised versions of it were put on display in two different institutional settings can be seen as processes of realising a new latent meaning and yet another layer of entextualisation (cf. Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Silverstein & Urban, 1996). As these signs are reframed as institutional and educational artefacts with different and multilayered sociopolitical content, this contributes to an accumulation of discourses.

This chapter explores the layers of entextualisation that can be uncovered in the history of the transformation and replacement of this sign. We also discuss how entextualisation of the vandalised versions of the sign can be seen as acts of reconciliation where the goal is to learn about injustice in the colonial past and to build justice for the future.

## **2. Methodology and data: Material ethnography of a sign**

The core data of this chapter is a road sign demarking the borders of Gáivuotna – Kåfjord – Kaivuono along the European route E6 with Kirkenes (Norway) as the northern and Trelleborg (Sweden) as the southern end point. We look at four different versions of the same sign, chosen from the much wider linguistic landscape of the municipality. Within research on educationscapes, this is perhaps a surprisingly limited data set. However, inspired by Stroud and Mpendukana's (2009) material ethnography, we regard following only one item in the linguistic landscape across time and place to trace discursive changes concerning the value of Sámi languages in the municipality and in Norway as important. This material ethnography includes the emplacement of one of the versions of the sign from the roadside to more familiar educationscapes, namely the Arctic

University Museum of Norway (located in Tromsø) and the Center of Northern Peoples (located in Olmmáivággi – Manndalen – Olmavankka in Gáivuotna – Kåfjord – Kaivuono).

An important aspect of our approach to material ethnography is the relationship between a material artefact and space. Blommaert (2013, p. 23) describes space as “a historically configured phenomenon and as an actor” that affects people and practices connected to it. Through history, space becomes a regulating actor, “full of codes, expectations, norms and traditions; and a space of power controlled by, as well as controlling people” (Blommaert, 2013, p. 3). Following this, a material ethnography of a municipality sign is not only about looking into the text in terms of its present form and intended function, but also into textual history; that is, histories of the use, abuse and evaluation of textual material (Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Blommaert, 2013), and thus, how the sign is part of the space’s regulating force. This also means that the regulating force might have different consequences for social actors with different historical bodies using the space (cf. Blommaert, 2013, pp. 27–34). We return to the links between sign and space in section 3 below.

Uncovering historical layers of discourse in the municipality sign requires an ethnographic presence and engagement with the sign and space beyond simply observing the text and space synchronically. Relevant here is that both authors come from the area, and we regularly go to or through the municipality to visit family. We have also conducted different types of sociolinguistic research there. Our personal and professional relationship to the space also contributes to detailed knowledge and experience of Gáivuotna – Kåfjord – Kaivuono. This knowledge emerges also from following media coverage, research and art from and about the area, and attendance at cultural events (e.g. theatre, concerts, exhibitions and festivals).

### 3. Theoretical perspectives

Replacing the monolingual Norwegian with bilingual North Sámi and Norwegian road signs is the result of a chain of social change, political decisions and juridical regulations. Central to this multifaceted chain is language activism, which Haley De Korne sees as

a social project that aims to counter language-related inequalities, and may encompass many different actors, imaginaries, and actions. I view various forms of activism, advocacy, promotion and stance-taking as part of the same larger political project to resist inequalities and/or imagine new avenues towards linguistic equality. (De Korne, 2021, p. 1)

To shed light on the process and the disputes that followed in Gáivuotna – Kåfjord – Kaivuono, we first turn to the concept of entextualisation. Following Bauman and Briggs (1990, p. 73), entextualisation is a “process of rendering discourse extractable”, and of making social, political and juridical discourse or stretches of discourse into a text. Importantly, the municipality sign as text incorporates aspects of situated discourses, making links between discourses and text. Particularly relevant for our analysis is that the text was moved from its original placement at the roadside to two different sites for collecting and sharing knowledge about our past, which emphasises how the text is decontextualised from one space and recontextualised in another. Although the text is still linked to the original space and discourses, this process of replacement also adds new discursive layers. Crucially, as Bauman and Briggs (1990, p. 73) also argue, basic to entextualisation is the reflexive capacity of discourse to comment on or refer to itself, which is highlighted in the decisions to move vandalised versions of the municipality sign to two different educationscapes.

By employing entextualisation to analyse the historical layers in the sign, we also highlight a link between the sign and space as part of the discourse. As indicated above, we follow Blommaert’s (2013) theorising of space as a historical phenomenon. Through the historical layers of discourses and entextualisation, space as an actor contributes to regulating behaviour. In our case, the sign also has a textual history in terms of changes in languages used, as well as in terms of changes in the discourses in place (cf. Scollon & Scollon, 2003) and responses to the sign. This implies that the interrelationship between space and the municipality sign is reflexive in the sense that space gives meaning to the sign, and the sign gives meaning to the space.

In the case of the municipality sign, both the spatial and semantic scopes (cf. Blommaert, 2013, pp. 43–48) are quite wide, as the sign is a nationally standardised demarcation of borders between municipal administrative

units. It tells the audience where they are and where to go for municipal public services. In addition, through the choice of language, the sign also says something about whose space this is and the relationship between the social groups in the area. Significant here is therefore the political content, as the road sign and the different versions are the textual result of struggles over political power. Helander (2014, with reference to Harley, 2001) argues that the silencing of Indigenous Sámi toponymy can be seen as toponymic colonisation, a claim of ownership over land. Likewise, the inclusion of Sámi (first) and Kven (later) can be seen as part of a process of decolonisation. Hence, the semantic scope of the municipality sign is wider in the sense that it is standardised and strictly structured by national regulations, but the scope is simultaneously specific and must be interpreted by considering the historical layers of discourse and entextualisation. The specificity comes from the historical past and the contemporary consequences for people living in the municipality, as well as the targeted audiences beyond the municipality borders. It also points forward to the construction of a decolonised and socially just society.

#### **4. Analysis: One sign, four layers of entextualisation**

In this section, we seek to uncover and describe the different entextualised layers of the municipality sign in focus more thoroughly. As pointed out in the introduction, these layers are linked to specific chronological events along the historical timeline which involve the transformations and replacements of the sign at certain points in time. This timeline is also reflected in the structure of the analysis. However, Blommaert (2013) reminds us that space is historical, owing to the connection between space and normative expectations, not least concerning social order, “for the normative expectations we attach to spaces have their feet in the history of social and spatial arrangements in any society” (Blommaert, 2013, p. 33). In other words, each layer of entextualisation for this municipality sign can be analysed as a complex process involving social actors in past, present and future, and social space itself plays a crucial role as one of the main actors in these processes: Each layer includes semiotic changes in social space that call for actions and reactions among users since consequential questions

of being either “in place” or “out of place” are raised (Blommaert, 2013, p. 32).

#### **4.1. Before 1994: The monolingual sign**

Originating in the regulatory discourse of the already mentioned period of nation-building and Norwegianisation, the first road sign that demarcated Kåfjord kommune as a geographical, political and social unit was monolingual and in Norwegian. The official Norwegian name and the present borders of the municipality date back to 1929 when Kåfjord was separated from the large municipality of Lyngen. Within this first historical layer of the entextualisation of the sign, the Norwegian name of the fjord was extracted from the dominant political and official discourse and given status and priority by Norwegian authorities. It became a text in social space in which it served to reinforce the ongoing process of establishing a monolingual and monocultural norm both within municipality schools and administration locally, and within the nation more broadly. In other words, the first monolingual sign reflected the naturalised and standardised social order of colonisation and assimilation from which historical, cultural and linguistic complexity has been erased. It communicated Norwegian ownership of the place and a culturally and linguistically monolithic social space.

The monolingual sign also contributed to silencing. As Helander (2016) points out, all place names on signs in Sámi areas in the Nordic countries have until recently – that is, the 1990s – either been in the majority state language or represented with older and incorrect spellings in Sámi. As stated above, this can be seen as a broader and long-lasting policy of silencing the Indigenous toponymy, which also includes the erasure of Sámi and Kven place names from official maps regulated by the state (Helander, 2016, pp. 230–232; cf. also Irvine & Gal, 2000). The introduction of the monolingual signs in Gáivuotna – Kåfjord – Kaivuono coincided with the far-reaching consequences of assimilation that affected individuals and society in the most profound way, not least due to comprehensive language shift processes in the area from Sámi and/or Kven to Norwegian during the twentieth century. Also silenced were Sámi traditional practices

and artefacts, as well as questions of identity and belonging (cf. Johansen & Lane(submitted)).

#### 4.2. 1994: The bilingual sign

The bilingual North Sámi and Norwegian municipality sign, reading *Gáivuona suohkan – Kåfjord kommune*, was introduced in 1994 when the municipality was included in the newly established Administrative Area for Sámi Language and became officially bilingual together with five other municipalities that had done so two years earlier. (As of this writing, in 2024, this area covers 13 municipalities.) Like the process that occurred behind the first monolingual sign, this significant change in the linguistic landscape was rooted in overarching juridical regulations and political discourse, but this time in favour of the Sámi people's right "to safeguard and develop their language, culture and way of life" as stated in the Sámi Act of 1987.

In other words, the second layer of entextualisation for the sign implied a discursive change that brought Sámi language and identity back "in place" after a long period of having been defined as "out of place" through different forms of silencing and erasure.

As already described in the introduction, this change in the linguistic landscape of the municipality caused severe conflict among people in the fjord. The controversies gained broad attention in local and national media, in which they were presented as ongoing ethnic conflict between "Norwegians" and "Sámi". On the contrary, people who positioned themselves as either for or against implementation of revitalisation measures often shared family history and background, and harsh tensions arose not only between colleagues and friends, but also between family members. According to legal requirements, the North Sámi name was positioned above the Norwegian one (see Figure 11.1), and this was seen as a particularly provocative characteristic of the new municipality sign. In a 2001 documentary about the conflict in *Gáivuotna – Kåfjord*, produced and broadcast by Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK; Jacobsen, 2001), one of the local interviewees expresses his opinion about the new municipality sign: "I think it is provoking. I simply think so. If they only had been wise enough to place the Sámi name below the Norwegian one,



I think it would have been somewhat better”. (Translated from Norwegian dialect: *Eg syns det e provoseranes. Det syns eg. Rett og slett. Hadde dem hadd vett å sette det samiske under det norske, så trur eg nok det ville ha vært litt bedre, ja.*) The quote captures the experienced sociopolitical disorder of revitalisation. The bilingual sign introduces a new social and rights-based normativity that makes Sámi language, identity and history visible. Further, it is clearly consequential as it contributes to shaking up the established social order of long-term colonialism and Norwegianisation. The interviewee in the NRK documentary refers to the bilingual sign as misleading: “To non-locals, there are only Sámi in Kåfjord, and that is so terribly wrong”. (Translated from Norwegian dialect: *For utenforstående så e det bare sama i Kåfjord, og det e så forferdelig feil.*) According to him, the sign provides wrong information about social and ethnic groups and their ownership of their shared space (see Figure 11.1).



**Figure 11.1** The bilingual municipality sign in North Sámi and Norwegian (photo by Hilde Sollid, 2009)

Signs designating the names of municipalities in Norway are standardised official items with white letters on a deep blue background. The signs consist of a sign plate installed on three steel poles (see Figure 11.1). As we shall soon see, these different elements of the total materiality of the sign play a significant role in the entextualisation processes involving this bilingual artefact. In addition to the bilingual name, the municipal coat of arms is included, which in this case is a spinning wheel in silver on a red background. Interestingly, the coat of arms of Gáivuotna – Kåfjord – Kaivuono was designed and approved as late as 1988. The spinning wheel reflects the old, local production of yarn from sheep wool, an important resource for *duodji* – North Sámi for traditional Sámi handicraft – in this coastal Sámi area. Despite its roots in coastal Sámi culture, the symbol was not read as transgressive by anyone when it was included in the sign. While the Sámi name on the municipality sign, Gáivuona suohkan, was the target of repeated vandalism for a period of several years, the coat of arms was mainly left in peace. Although the spinning wheel might be seen as a coastal Sámi symbol today, it can also be defined as local. After all, practices related to Sámi handicraft remained vital during the period of Norwegianisation, but during the assimilation period they were reinterpreted and talked about as “local” or “from Kåfjord”, not “Sámi”, in local discourse.

In other words, Sámi language is seen as transgressive in a completely different manner. Sámi language is necessarily Sámi and does not contain the same interpretative flexibility as the coat of arms. Helander (2016, p. 245) argues that in Norway, “Sami settlement names are clearly regarded as symbols of Sámi rights”, not only language rights but Sámi rights in general, including land rights and rights to traditional Sámi livelihoods. In other words, the extreme form of erasure (cf. Irvine & Gal, 2000) that the repeated vandalisation of the municipality sign represented was targeted at the introduction of a new rights-based order in the local community.

#### 4.3. 1994–2001: The vandalised sign(s)

The vandalisation resulted in two different versions of the sign. In the first version, paint and/or bullet holes covered first and foremost the Sámi name of the municipality (cf. Figures 11.4 and 11.5), but on at least one

occasion also the Norwegian name (cf. Figure 11.2). In the second version, the entire sign plate was removed by the Norwegian Public Roads Administration (in Norwegian *Statens vegvesen*) in order to replace it with a new one (Figure 11.3). Replacement was a time-consuming process (Pedersen, 2009, p. 49), not least because producing and erecting new signs is expensive. Thus, this second version of the sign reflected the implementation of Sámi language rights simply through three poles of steel positioned to support the bilingual sign plate. This clearly visible absence of the bilingual name in both North Sámi and Norwegian is similar to what Volvach (2023) calls a “shouting absence”, which makes it explicit that something that should have been present in the landscape and on the sign is no longer there. The absence is utterly underlined by the bilingual sign as a clearly standardised artefact, as described above. It is a material and a symbolic void (Volvach, 2023), expressing ongoing and unresolved conflict concerning the revitalisation of the Sámi and the multilingual place. How to move on from here?



**Figure 11.2** A vandalised bilingual municipality sign from Gáivuona suohkan – Kåfjord kommune (screenshot from Jacobsen, 2001)



**Figure 11.3** A sign from Gáivuona suohkan – Kåfjord kommune with the sign plate removed (screenshot from Jacobsen, 2001)

On February 6, 2000 – the Sámi national day – the Arctic University Museum of Norway (formerly the Tromsø museum) in Tromsø opened a permanent exhibition: *Sápmi – Becoming a Nation* (Norwegian *Sápmi – en nasjon blir til*). The exhibition covered the development of the modern Sámi movement in the post-war decades. Included in the exhibition was a vandalised version of the municipality sign from Gáivuona suohkan – Kåfjord kommune, with the Sámi name being unreadable as a result of the bullet holes caused by shotguns (see Figure 11.4).



**Figure 11.4** A vandalised municipality sign from Gáivuona suohkan – Kåfjord kommune in the exhibition, Sápmi – Becoming a Nation, at the Arctic University Museum of Norway, Tromsø (photo by Hilde Sollid, 2012)

Some years later, in 2011, the Center of Northern Peoples opened in Olmmáivággi – Manndalen – Olmavankka in Gáivuotna – Kåfjord – Kaivuono. This is a Sámi cultural and Indigenous centre encompassing the High North and Sápmi area. The Center houses different Sámi organisations, including the Riddu Riddu Festival, which is a widely known annual international festival that celebrates the cultural diversity of Indigenous people in general and the Coastal Sámi in particular. Another institution located at the Center is the Museum of Northern Peoples, which includes another vandalised Gáivuotna – Kåfjord sign – this time with both bullet holes and paint (see Figure 11.5). This sign was included in the exhibition on a permanent basis when the museum opened.



**Figure 11.5** A vandalised municipality sign from Gáivuona suohkan – Kåfjord kommune in the exhibition at the Museum of Northern Peoples at the Center of Northern Peoples in Olmmáivággi – Manndalen – Olmavankka (photo by Hilde Sollid, 2017)

We analyse the inclusion of these signs in the respective exhibitions as a third layer of entextualisation. Unlike the two first layers, these entextualisation processes are not related to state-regulated language policy and signage, but instead to the construction of educationscapes in two different knowledge institutions. Within the contexts of the exhibitions, the two vandalised signs have some characteristics in common: their main reflexive

function is to comment on themselves as frozen objects of ethno-political conflict (see Pietikäinen et al., 2011). Although the social spaces that include the signs are dynamic interpretative settings, the signs are not supposed to change. Both signs communicate that this conflict is an important and memorable part of modern Sámi history, in which progress and change for both individuals and communities have come with considerable struggle and costs. This is emphasised through the geosemiotic arrangements of the two signs. At the Arctic University Museum of Norway, the sign was first located above the entrance to the exhibition *Sápmi – Becoming a Nation*. The placement enhances the salience of the sign itself, making this artefact serve as a headline for Sámi nation-building processes. Below, we will return to a more detailed description of the similar heading-like placement of the vandalised sign at the Center of Northern Peoples. More generally, both signs address situated sociopolitical discourses back in time, but they also point towards the future. The signs invite us to remember in order to learn from the past.

Further, both exhibitions in which the signs are included are targeted at broad audiences of local and tourist visitors as well as students at different levels in the education system. At the same time, the scope of the exhibited signs differs within these institutional contexts. The Arctic University Museum of Norway is – as the name communicates – a national institution located at UiT The Arctic University of Norway, which is fully owned by the Norwegian state. The exhibition *Sápmi – Becoming a Nation* exists side by side with other exhibits on topics such as birds and animals in the Northern regions, the Northern lights, Viking burial traditions in the North, and art from churches in northern Norway. The main responsibility of the museum is to present science-based knowledge about different aspects of nature, culture and history in northern Norway more broadly. Within this context, the vandalised sign becomes part of a narrative about the modern history of the Sámi people in Norway and, according to the website of the museum, how “the Sami went from being an oppressed minority to a modern Indigenous people” – a story “about this troublesome journey and the fight the Sami had to put up for their culture and rights”.

In contrast, the Museum of Northern Peoples is located at the Center of Northern Peoples, which can be defined as a local institution. The

Center is, for instance, partly owned by Gáivuotna – Kåfjord – Kaivuono and receives a considerable amount of funding from Sámediggi, the Sámi Parliament. Unlike the Arctic University Museum of Norway, this museum has a more narrow and specific focus on “regional Sami culture and contemporary history in particular, and northern people’s art and cultural expressions in general” (the museum website). The focus on local history and diversity is strengthened by the fact that the current basic exhibition of the museum is called *mii*, which means “us” in North Sámi. It is worth noting that the exhibited vandalised sign is here placed over the main entrance to the museum, which is a staircase leading down to the first floor from the lobby of the Center on the main floor. Consequently, everybody who visits the Center for different purposes will see the sign from the main entrance, no matter whether they plan to visit the museum or not. Important here is the fact that the Center houses many different activities for the local community and these are not necessarily related to the different Sámi institutions. For instance, the Center includes a cafeteria and a large room with a stage that is frequently used for both private and public events, ranging from wedding receptions and memorial services to school events, dinner parties, concerts and theatre productions. In short, the Center functions as an important meeting place for the locals.

To sum up, the two different signs are entextualised in similar and yet different educationscapes that target different audiences in different social spaces and therefore function in different ways. Both signs become “memorials in public space” that “engage with the multilingual realities of the communities that commission, construct and challenge them” (Blackwood & Macalister, 2020, p. 1). While the sign in the university museum functions as a symbol of the struggle for Sámi rights in Sápmi in general, the sign at the Center of Northern Peoples at one level symbols the same, but at another level also deals with the shared memories and struggles of the local community. Because both signs put an ethnopolitical conflict on display, they have the potential to contribute to reconciliation. The sign in the university museum calls for reconciliation between the majority population and the Sámi people, while the sign at the Center of Northern Peoples does the same at one level but can at another level also be read as “the embodiment of shared emotions” (Blackwood & Macalister, 2020, p. 3) based on the history of the local community that is in need of being



reconciled with itself after severe, divisive conflicts. We will return to the concept of reconciliation in the discussion below.

#### 4.4. 2016: The trilingual sign

In 2016, yet another text was inscribed on the linguistic landscape of the municipality when the municipality sign became trilingual and came to include the Kven name: Gáivuona suohkan – Kåfjord kommune – Kaivuonon komuuni (see Figure 11.6).



**Figure 11.6** The trilingual municipality sign in North Sámi, Norwegian and Kven (photo by Hilde Sollid, 2017)

This, the fourth and – hitherto – final layer of entextualisation generated no conflict at all among people in the fjord. Already in 2004, a report that analysed the implementation of revitalisation efforts in the municipality was published with the title *Struggle, Crisis, and Reconciliation* (our translation of the Norwegian title *Kamp, krise og forsoning*, Pedersen & Høgmo, 2004). In the report, the researchers concluded that the conflict in the municipality had come to an end and had been replaced with a state of reconciliation (Pedersen & Høgmo, 2004, pp. 161–164). This conclusion is based on local recognition of Gáivuotna – Kåfjord – Kaivuono as a multicultural and multilingual community in which there is room for different individual subject positions in the cultural interface between Sámi, Norwegian and Kven identities and languages (Sollid & Olsen, 2019, with reference to Nakata, 2007). Against this backdrop, the entextualisation processes involving the multilayered municipality sign have contributed to transforming and expanding the social space, and the history of this transformation of social space is also written into the intertextuality of the different layers of the sign.

## 5. Discussion: From acts of activism to acts of reconciliation

The entextualisation processes analysed above emerge from actions and reactions relating to discourses on decolonisation. These processes are anchored in an overarching process of language activism (De Korne, 2021), and the different versions of the sign can be read as acts of activism. In the discussion in this section, our attention is on the movement of two vandalised municipality signs from the roadside to two institutions dedicated to collecting and sharing knowledge. The two educationscapes have the goal of counteracting epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007; Koskinen & Rolin, 2019) by documenting people's lifeworlds and historical events in the region, including wrongdoings towards the Sámi. Learning about the past is an opportunity for the visitors to develop knowledge for the future.

The replacement of the signs is here analysed as acts of reconciliation. Departing from Isin's (2008, 2009) theorising of "act" in the context of citizenship studies, we see an act of reconciliation as a performative doing that aims to disturb an enduring hierarchical social order between majoritised and minoritised groups. In the hierarchical relationship under

scrutiny in this study, the main responsibility for bearing and adjusting to the colonial legacy in social and political practices is carried by the minoritised Sámi. In Gáivuotna – Kåfjord – Kaivuono, toponymic decolonisation (cf. Helander, 2014) by putting up a bilingual municipality sign surfaced responses of hate and violence against Sámi language and rights. The opponents rejected the project of including the Sámi language and culture in the shared social and political space of the municipality. An act of reconciliation thus has as its goal the changing of these interaction orders (cf. Scollon & Scollon, 2004), and it departs from the observation that the community is not yet at an endpoint of reconciliation, but rather in the process of negotiating a common understanding of historical and present social and political circumstances. Isin (2009, p. 379) describes an act as “an expression for the need to being heard”. Adding to this, reconciliation is relational, and an act of reconciliation can therefore also be the majority’s need to acknowledge the minoritised’s experience of being silenced. Within the context of moving a wrecked municipality sign to educational institutions, we observe two different acts. In the first case the act is performed by a nation-state Norwegian actor, while in the second case the actor first of all represents coastal parts of Sápmi and Northern Indigenous peoples. In both cases the act makes visible the hate and affective responses to the bilingual municipality signs, and the signs tell an unambiguous story of hateful opposition to expanses of discourse on decolonisation and reclamation.

As such, the individual acts are completed once the signs are in place at the Arctic University Museum of Norway and at the Center of Northern Peoples. We nevertheless do not know to what extent these acts in turn accomplished drawing attention to the local conflicts and through that the injustices towards the Sámi people. What at least is achieved is an act that responded to the need to break different forms of long-term structural silencing of Sámi and Kven. Once put on display in the two education-scapes, the signs invite the audiences to reflect on the current and historical situation, as well as aspirations for further reconciliation. In this way, the reflexivity of the municipality sign is written into the educationscapes as materialised discourses that also comment on the historical and present social space in which the signs on the borders of Gáivuotna – Kåfjord – Kaivuono are emplaced.

Seeing this local situation in a broader perspective, it is fair to say that despite important Sámi political and juridical changes over the last decades, Norway is not in a state of reconciliation. The relationships between the minoritised Sámi and Kven and the majoritised Norwegian society are still broken and characterised by a hierarchical social order. This is part of the background to the political decision to put together a *sannhets- og forsoningskommisjon* (Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC]) in Norway in 2018. The TRC submitted its final report to the *Stortinget* (Norwegian Parliament) in June 2023. The TRC's mandate covers the situations of both the Sámi and the Kven minorities. Additionally, the mandate includes the Forest Finns, a national minority traditionally situated in the south-eastern part of Norway. The TRC's main goal is to lay the foundation for "further reconciliation" (*fortsatt forsoning* in Norwegian) between the three minoritised groups and majoritised society (Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen, 2023; see also Johnsen, 2021, pp. 29–30). The foundation for further reconciliation is to establish a shared understanding of the Norwegianisation politics and its consequences. The TRC defines reconciliation as relational efforts to transition from practices of injustice and conflict to a socially just and equitable society. In the TRC report, Gáivuotna – Kåfjord – Kaivuono is referred to as an example of cultural and linguistic reconciliation (Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen, 2023, pp. 632–633). Seen as acts of reconciliation, the replacement of the municipality signs in the two educationscapes is part of a series of official and personal acts of reconciliation that might lead to more knowledge and eventually a reconciled society.

## 6. Final words

In this study, we sought to uncover the entextualisation processes linked to a municipality sign based on material ethnography. By analysing the different layers of the textual history of this sign, we aimed to shed light on the relationship between situated sociopolitical discourses and transformations of the sign. The different versions and emplacements of the sign helped us trace the overarching development from silencing and minoritising Sámi and Kven presence and practices to breaking silence and re-establishing and reconstructing a multilingual and multicultural social

space. We argue that the entextualisation processes also include acts of reconciliation that are based on developing and sharing knowledge in the aftermath of a heated conflict concerning historical background, present social orders and future coexistence in a more just society.

## References

- Bauman, R., & Briggs, C. L. (1990). Poetics and performance as critical perspectives on language and social life. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 19, 59–88. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2155959>
- Blackwood, R., & Macalister, J. (2020). Introduction. In R. Blackwood & J. Macalister (Eds.), *Multilingual memories: Monuments, museums and the linguistic landscape* (pp. 1–9). Bloomsbury.
- Blommaert, J. (2013). *Ethnography, superdiversity and linguistic landscapes: Chronicles of complexity*. Multilingual Matters.
- De Korne, H. (2021). *Language activism: Imaginaries and strategies of minority language equality*. De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501511561>
- Fricker, M. (2007). *Epistemic injustice: Power and the ethics of knowing*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi-org.mime.uit.no/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198237907.001.0001>
- Harley, J. B. (2001). *The new nature of maps: Essays in the history of cartography*. Edited by P. Laxton. The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Helander, K. R. (2014). Sámi placenames, power relations and representation. In I. D. Clark, L. Hercus, & L. Kostanski (Eds.), *Indigenous and minority placenames: Australian and international perspectives* (pp. 325–349). ANU Press.
- Helander, K. R. (2016). The power of administration in the official recognition of Indigenous place names in the Nordic countries. In G. Puzey & L. Kostanski (Eds.), *Names and naming: People, places, perceptions and power* (pp. 229–249). Multilingual Matters.
- Irvine, J., & Gal, S. (2000). Language ideology and linguistic differentiation. In P. V. Kroskrity (Ed.), *Regimes of language: Ideologies, politics, and identities* (pp. 35–84). School of American Research Press.
- Isin, E. F. (2008). Theorizing acts of citizenship. In E. F. Isin & G. M. Nielsen (Eds.), *Acts of citizenship* (pp. 15–43). Zed Books.

- Isin, E. F. (2009). Citizenship in flux: The figure of the activist citizen. *Subjectivity*, 29(1), 367–388. <https://doi.org/10.1057/sub.2009.25>
- Jacobsen, A. R. (2001). Samisk skyteskive. *NRK Brennpunkt*. Broadcast February 6.
- Johansen, Å. M., & Lane, P. (submitted). Breaking silence: A longitudinal study of language revitalisation.
- Johnsen, T. (2021). Negotiating the meaning of “TRC” in the Norwegian context. In S. Guðmarsdóttir, P. Regan, & D. Solomons (Eds.), *Trading justice for peace? Reframing reconciliation in TRC processes in South Africa, Canada and Nordic countries* (pp. 19–40). AOSIS. <https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2021.BK174.01>
- Koskinen, I., & Rolin, K. (2019). Scientific/intellectual movements remedying epistemic injustice: The case of indigenous studies. *Philosophy of Science*, 86(5), 1052–1063. <https://doi.org/10.1086/705522>
- Krompák, E., Fernández-Mallat, V., & Meyer, S. (Eds.). (2022). *Linguistic landscapes and educational spaces*. Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/KROMPA3866>
- Minde, H. (2003). Assimilation of the Sami: Implementation and consequences. *Acta Borealia*, 20(2), 121–146. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08003830310002877>
- Nakata, M. (2007). *Disciplining the savages: Savaging the disciplines*. Aboriginal Studies Press.
- Olsen, T. A., & Sollid, H. (2022). Introducing Indigenising education and citizenship. In T. A. Olsen & H. Sollid (Eds.), *Indigenising education and citizenship. Perspectives on policies and practices from Sápmi and beyond* (pp. 13–32). Scandinavian University Press. <https://doi.org/10.18261/9788215053417-2022-02>
- Pedersen, A.-K. (2009). Haldningar til offentleg bruk av minoritetsspråklege stadnamn i Noreg [Attitudes towards the public use of minority-language place names in Norway]. L.-E. Edlund & S. Haugen (Eds.), *Namn i flerspråkiga och mångkulturella miljöer* [Name in multilingual and multicultural environments] (pp. 38–56). Umeå.
- Pedersen, P., & Høgmo, A. (2004). *Kamp, krise og forsoning: Sosiale, kulturelle og økonomiske virkninger av samepolitiske tiltak* [Struggle, crisis and reconciliation: Social, cultural and economic effects on Sámi political measures]. NORUT samfunnsforskning no. 4

- Pietikäinen, S., Lane, P., Salo, H., & Laihiala-Kankainen, S. (2011). Frozen actions in the Arctic linguistic landscape: A nexus analysis of language processes in visual space. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 8(4), 277–298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2011.555553>
- Puzey, G. (2012). Two-way traffic: How linguistic landscapes reflect and influence the politics of language. In D. Gorter, H. F. Marten, & L. Van Mensel (Eds.), *Minority languages in the linguistic landscape* (pp. 127–147). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen. (2023). *Sannhet og forsoning – grunnlag for et oppgjør med fornorskingspolitikk og urett mot samer, kvener/norskfinner og skogfinner* [Truth and Reconciliation – the basis for a settlement with Norwegianisation policies and injustice against the Sami, Kven/Norwegian Finns and Skog Finns] (Rapport til Stortinget). [www.stortinget.no/globalassets/pdf/sannhets--og-forsoningskommisjonen/rapport-til-stortinget-fra-sannhets--og-forsoningskommisjonen.pdf](http://www.stortinget.no/globalassets/pdf/sannhets--og-forsoningskommisjonen/rapport-til-stortinget-fra-sannhets--og-forsoningskommisjonen.pdf)
- Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. W. (2003). *Discourses in place: Language in the material world*. Routledge.
- Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. W. (2004). *Nexus analysis: Discourse and the emerging internet*. Routledge.
- Silverstein, M., & Urban, G. (1996). Natural histories of discourse. In M. Silverstein & G. Urban (Eds.), *Natural histories of discourse* (pp. 1–17). University of Chicago Press.
- Sollid, H., & Olsen, T. A. (2019). Indigenising education: Scales, interfaces and acts of citizenship in Sápmi. *Junctures*, 20, 29–42. <https://doi.org/10.34074/junc.20029>
- Stroud, C., & Mpendukana, S. (2009). Towards a material ethnography of linguistic landscape: Multilingualism, mobility and space in a South African township. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 13(3), 363–386. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9841.2009.00410.x>
- Volvach, N. (2023). Shouting absences: Disentangling the ghosts of Ukraine in occupied Crimea. *Language in Society*, 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404523000325>