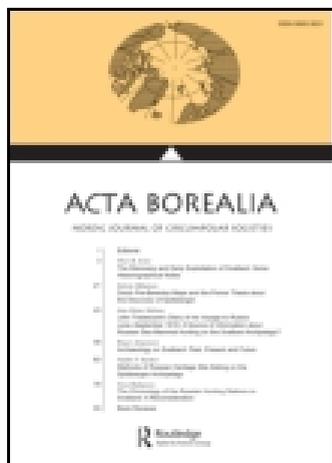


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### Urban Sámi Identities in Scandinavia: Hybridities, Ambivalences and Cultural Innovation

Torill Nyseth<sup>a</sup> & Paul Pedersen<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Sociology, Political Science and Community Planning, Faculty of Humanities, Social Science and Education, University of Tromsø - Arctic University of Norway

<sup>b</sup> Centre of Gender Research, Faculty of Humanities, Social Science and Education, University of Tromsø - Arctic University of Norway

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# Urban Sámi Identities in Scandinavia: Hybridities, Ambivalences and Cultural Innovation

TORILL NYSETH\* & PAUL PEDERSEN†

\*Department of Sociology, Political Science and Community Planning, Faculty of Humanities, Social Science and Education, University of Tromsø – Arctic University of Norway & †Centre of Gender Research, Faculty of Humanities, Social Science and Education, University of Tromsø – Arctic University of Norway

**ABSTRACT** *One of the most significant social and cultural changes in the northern part of Scandinavia, as in other parts of the world, is urbanization. All over the northern region, towns and cities are growing, and a large portion of the indigenous population now lives in urban areas throughout all Scandinavian countries. Within these multicultural cities, urban Sámi communities are emerging and making claims to the cities. From a situation where migration from a Sámi core area to a city was associated with assimilation, an urban Sámi identity is now in the making. In this article, we discuss what seems to be the emergence of an urban Sámi culture. The article builds on findings from a study of urban Sámi and their expression of identity in three cities with the largest and fastest-growing Sámi populations in the region: Tromsø (Norway), Umeå (Sweden) and Rovaniemi (Finland). A main finding is the increasing recognition of their status as indigenous people and the growth in Sámi institutions in the cities. Another finding is an urban Sámi culture in the making, where new expressions of Sámi identity are given room to grow, but where we also find ambivalences and strong links and identifications to places in the Sámi core districts outside of the cities.*

**KEY WORDS:** Urbanization, Sámi, Indigeneity, Cities, Identity

## Introduction

During the last generation, a profound change in the Sámi settlement pattern has taken place in the northern part of Scandinavia: the urban Sámi population has increased in all Scandinavian countries. This is due to two parallel processes; the first involves the revitalization of Sámi language and culture, the second is linked to urbanization (Sørli & Broderstad, 2011; Pedersen & Høgmo, 2012; Pedersen & Moilanen, 2012). The strength of urbanization is related first of all to migration to towns and cities, but also to some degree to a revitalization of the older Sámi generation living in the

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*Correspondence Address:* Torill Nyseth, Department of Sociology, Political Science and Community Planning, Faculty of Humanities, Social Science and Education, University of Tromsø – Arctic University of Norway, 9037 Tromsø, Norway. E-mail: [torill.nyseth@uit.no](mailto:torill.nyseth@uit.no)

urban areas before 1990. These cities are multicultural and they are multi-Sámi with all different categories of Sámi, from north and south, coast and inland, meeting in the same place. In this context, a new generation of a native Sámi population has grown up, and there is reason to believe that this new generation now imprints on their urban environment, such that living in an urban environment impacts their identity and vice versa. The urban Sámi have made a difference in the towns where they live.

In this article we ask questions about what “Sámi-ness” means in an urban context. How could a Sámi culture or profile be expressed in an urban environment? Because identity is constructed and performed through the different discourses an individual relates to (Mead, 1934; Høgmo, 2012), dwelling in an urban context will influence identity construction over time. Urban indigenous people all over the world are struggling to reformulate institutions and practices to support their cultures and identities so that indigenous people can continue to survive as distinct peoples in contemporary societies (Peters & Andersen, 2013: 8). To Amin and Thrift, what defines a city is “the density of ‘light’ institutions offering collective assets through organized activity” (2002: 72). To become alive, then, we believe that a Sámi urban society needs institutions that are permanent, materialized and visualized expressions of “Sáminess”. To what degree is Sámi everyday life dependent on, for instance, basic local service institutions such as primary school, kindergartens, religious societies, higher education and universities and other main cultural institutions? Our main hypothesis is that such structural dimensions create new frames of reference for Sámi identity construction and culture where diversity and difference in the promotion of Sámi identity is a central characteristic.

This article is based on a case study of three cities: Tromsø, Rovaniemi and Umeå, the northern capital centres in Norway, Finland and Sweden, respectively. They may not be considered “world cities” as their size does not exceed 120,000 inhabitants, but to their regions they are central urban hubs as they host important public institutions, not only to the increasing number of Sámi living there, but also to the Sámi nation as a whole. Our main focus is to describe and interpret this part of the Sámi culture. The article is structured into the following sections. A short review of the literature addressing urban indigeneity follows this introduction. Then we present methods and data, and the historical and institutional context of the three countries/cities. The data consist both of data on urban Sámi residents’ place identity as well as how Sáminess is expressed in the cities’ urban profiles. In the last section we analyse individual urban Sámi identities. The article is summed up in a discussion focusing on some of the ambivalences and ambiguities that can be revealed from the data.

### **Framing the Field**

Despite the large amount of Sámi research that has been conducted over the last 30 years, particularly in Norway, information about urban Sámi is almost non-existent. As stated by Kjell Olsen: “It appears that the

ethnographic tradition and possibly the Sámi's recognition as an indigenous people have left larger urban settlements as a *terra incognita*" (Olsen, 2010: 30). There are a few Master's theses, both about Sámi living in capital cities such as Oslo and Helsinki (Uusi-Rauva, 2000; Dankertsen, 2006; Gjerpe, 2013), a PhD thesis dealing partly with Sámi issues in Tromsø (Kielland, 2013) and a book based on studies of Sámi ethnicity in Alta (Olsen, 2010). More recently, studies of the processes of urbanization occurring in the Arctic, beyond particular cities and towns (Dybbroe, 2008; Dybbroe et al., 2010; Megatrends, 2011) have been published. Still, urban indigeneity is an understudied field in other parts of the developed world as well, for instance in Canada, the US, New Zealand and Australia. Indigenous studies have had a focus on rural/remote areas despite the fact that most indigenous people now live in urban areas. There is a substantial amount of work focusing on urban Indigenous populations paying attention to marginalization in a number of ways often related to colonization (see Walker, 2006; Kishigami & Lie, 2008; Edmond, 2010; Trondheim, 2010). Many of these studies focus on social issues such as homelessness, drug abuse, poverty and isolation. In a Scandinavian welfare state context these issues are hardly relevant. Even if we extend the review and include studies from other continents, little is known about indigenous urbanization patterns and experiences.

A recent book based on case studies from the US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia (Peters & Andersen, 2013) adds important knowledge that might be relevant in a Scandinavian context as well, particularly some case studies from Canada that are comparable with respect to geographical context and city size with the cities in the north that are the focus of our study. Even if the welfare state context is not the same, it is at least comparable. These studies focus on indigenous negotiations of identity in urban areas, which is of particular relevance to our study. Peters and Andersen (2013: 2) find that indigeneity survives, adapts and innovates in modern cities. They thereby reject the dominant interpretation of indigenous people as being associated with non-urban spaces, and therefore seen as "out of place" in an urban environment (Peters, 2002). Also in Scandinavia, moving to cities has been synonymous with assimilation; urbanized members of the indigenous community were marginalized as they were seen as not Sámi enough (Høgmo, 1986; Gaski, 2000; Paine, 2003). In contemporary anthropology, several studies still focus on the connections with their homeland for indigenous people living in cities. Sahlins, for instance, argues that the characteristics of urban indigenous identities continue to be shaped by connections to traditional territories and communities through circular migration or other linkages (Sahlins, 1999). In addition, according to Clifford, the source of indigenous identities, cultures, and social networks in the city is still the non-urban homeland (Clifford, 2007: 205). However, according to Peters and Andersen, this privilege of a connection to homeland challenges urban indigenous identities and communities: "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” (2013: 9).

The focus on attachment to indigenous land is one consequence of this perspective, which deflects attention away from other identity markers. The focus on indigenous homeland also misses the fact that many urban indigenous dwellers only have sporadic or even non-existent connections to a homeland. For instance, in Norway, many urban Sámi have lost this connection through the process of “Norwegianization” (Høgmo, 2012; see below on historical context and institutional similarities). Even if many of them try to re-establish such links, they still remain diffuse in many cases. Therefore, what could be the sources for the construction of urban Sámi identities? Identity is a highly contested concept, including place identity. Massive migration of people in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has made it less and less possible for cultural identities to be tied to particular places (Appadurai, 1988; Clifford, 1988).

People’s place identity in modern urban societies is characterized not as something stable and fixed, but rather as fluid and loose as one’s own life is no longer sedentary or tied to a particular place. In a social constructivist perspective, the focus is on identification rather than on identities (Hall, 1996). Place identity has therefore become a more complex concept. In contemporary literature, place identity has at least two different meanings. First, “identity *of* a place” is understood as the essence of a place, its character or uniqueness. Second, following Stuart Hall, “identity *with* a place”, on the other hand, has to do with how people relate to and become attached to place (Hall, 1996; Dale & Gunnerud-Berg, 2013). People are still attached to the places they live, but their relationship to place is more complex than either rooted belonging or rootless mobility (Taylor, 2010). People identify with place in new forms and attachment to place is seen as something optional. Savage et al. (2005) call this “elective belonging”. In this article, place identity is discussed using this second understanding. What we attempt to capture is the urban Sámi’s identification with place, in this case the city where they live.

In context, the city is characterized by certain spatiality, a particular density and differences (Hannerz, 1980; Massey, 1999). The city appears as a multiplicity of “faces”, lifestyles, cultures and practices – for instance, a consequence of being a meeting place between the local and the global (Simonsen, 2005). Difference and diversity enable the invention or styling of new identifications and new cultural practices. If ethnicity is relational, as Fredrik Barth (1969) claims, and relations change when moving from a primarily Sámi community to an urban context as a minority, then we would expect that the urban context with its fluidity would produce other forms of expressing Sámi-ness.

The three cities in question are more heterogeneous and mixed compared to the more uniform subcultures in the Sámi districts, although some of these areas are multi-ethnic, for instance the coastal districts in northern Norway where Sámi, Kvens<sup>1</sup> and Norwegians have been mixed for a long period of time. However, not all cities with a Sámi population have developed specific

urban Sámi communities (Lindgren, 2000). This is why these cities in particular are interesting arenas to study as meeting places between cultures; in this context as a meeting place between different forms of Sámi culture and Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish urban culture, and the many new cultures mixing with immigration. The urban Sámi population represents only one of many ethnic groups populating the city. If a connection to an ancestral “homeland” is of relevance, we would still expect Sámi urban dwellers’ attachment to place to be complex and multi-sited.

### **Methods and Data**

This study is a comparative case study where analyses of variation are essential (Ragin, 1987). There are interesting similarities and differences between Tromsø, Rovaniemi and Umeå, at least in size, but also in many other aspects that makes comparison both relevant and possible; for instance, their role as urban centres within Sápmi (the Sámi homeland), institutional differences and differences in national policies. The data which this article builds upon are based on different sources. The first data set consists of semi-structured interviews with representatives of municipal authorities responsible for services to the Sámi population, 6–8 in each municipality. These interviews had the form of: (1) mapping and quantifying the forms and number of services for the Sámi population in the city including civic institutions, and (2) challenges related to developing these services as seen from the municipality’s point of view. These data are analysed in section II. This section also rests on a number of documents, particularly policy documents and media presentations. In this part of the analysis, Tromsø is given slightly more attention than the other two cities because the number of services and institutions are broader and have a longer history in Tromsø than in Umeå and Rovaniemi.

The most important data, however, are the qualitative interviews with Sámi urban dwellers, both individual and focus groups, conducted in 2011 and 2012. In particular, two different age groups were selected: (1) people 40–70 years of age, representing first-generation Sámi living in urban areas, and (2) younger people (20–40 years old), mostly second-generation Sámi living in urban areas. The focus group interview method was used with the younger group, while the first group were interviewed individually. Both the individual and focus group interviews addressed questions related to place identity/identifying with place, belonging and the city as a place to live out a Sámi identity. Many of these interviews can be characterized as story-telling. Particularly, in the focus group interviews the participants share a culture and they operate within a common discursive meaning system containing collective stories (Taylor, 2010). Stories were also told in the individual interviews, stories about longing and belonging, and feelings of loss but also of gain when moving to the city. A total of 60 interviews were conducted. A flexible strategy was used to come in contact with potential informants. Various indigenous networks and organizations were mobilized to identify persons that fit into our selected categories. Then the “snowballing”<sup>2</sup> method

was used to find new informants. The weakness with this method is that individuals with tiny networks will be more easily excluded. This method also means that the results of the interviews cannot be generalized to all urban Sámi in the three cities. However, they still tell relevant stories about the identity construction of Sámi urban dwellers today. In addition, the data set also contains observation data at particular events in all three cities, but mostly in Umeå and Tromsø.<sup>3</sup> The analysis in section II is based on both interpretations of the interviews and the observation data.

### I. Historical Context and Institutional Similarities

To be able to understand the differences between the three cities, some notes about the differences between the three countries related to the general policy towards the Sámi, both in a historic perspective and today, must be highlighted. Three dominant social forces shaped the relations between the state and the Sámi: nationalism, industrialism, and social Darwinism (Forrest, 2002). In all three countries the reindeer industry became state-regulated through a separate administration which became a state governmental tool to control and modernize the industry. Governmental legislation privileged settled forms of land use (agriculture, forestry, and mining) over Sámi forms of land use such as reindeer herding, hunting and fishing. Although the states had similar motives and assumptions, the legal and political control of the Sámi developed in different ways in each state (Forrest, 2002: 260).

In a historical perspective, the oppression of Sámi communities and culture was particularly hard in Norway (Eriksen & Niemi, 1981; Jernsletten, 2002; Zachariassen, 2012). In the last 20 years, however, Norway has been the forerunner in the development of institutions and in recognizing Sámi rights. Norway was the first country to ratify the ILO convention 169 in 1990 and remains the only country in Scandinavia to have done so. “We never had an ‘Alta-case’”,<sup>4</sup> several of the informants in Rovaniemi and Umeå pointed out as an explanation for the low Sámi profile at the central government level. In many ways, the Alta-case changed the discourse and the power imbalance in Norway (Minde, 2003; Thuen, 2005). In accordance with ILO convention 169, Norway in 2005 transferred 96% of the land in Finnmark County to the local residents in Finnmark. The Finnmark Act is managed by a local administrative agency where three of the six directors are appointed by the Sámi Parliament. Swedish Sámi politics are based on the segregation of the reindeer herders who were given a monopoly in the reindeer industry and are protected by law, while a consistent assimilation policy towards the rest of the Sámi population was implemented (Mörkenstam, 2002; Tuulentie, 2002; Beach, 2007). In Sweden only those residing in the particular Sámi communities (*samebyer*) have rights related to the reindeer industry, including hunting and fishing rights. In Finland, the Sámi were not exposed to either strong forms of assimilation or segregation. Rather, they were ignored up until 1970 (Eriksson & Karppi, 2002; Tuulentie, 2002). Finland is also the only country where the Sámi do not have a monopoly in the reindeer business,

in contrast to Norway and Sweden. Traditional Sámi symbols have been commercialized by non-Sámi, particularly in the tourist industry (Routsala, 1995; Saarinen, 1998). This has led to conflicts from time to time. In all three countries all Sámi have the right to vote.

In the 1990s all three countries introduced policy areas where the Sámi language is treated as equal with the majority language. In Sweden, as many as 19 municipalities have joined this policy area; among them are also three urban municipalities: Umeå, Kiruna and Østersund. In Norway, nine municipalities have entered the policy area, all of them rural communities. In Finland, the situation is somewhat different. Only three municipalities and one herding district for reindeer represent the Sámi policy district, and there has been no extension of this area as in Norway and Sweden. The right to teaching in Sámi and the right to use the Sámi language by the authorities were strengthened both in Finland (2007) and in Sweden (2009) through new legislation. The legislation is modelled after the Norwegian Language Act from 1990.

### *National Differences*

There are no specific differences regarding the process of urbanization in the northern part of Scandinavia after 1990 (Pedersen & Moilanen, 2012). However, there are huge differences between the countries when we look at the Sámi revitalization process. This indirectly affects the growth rate of the Sámi urban population. To estimate the degree of urbanization of the Sámi population, however, is difficult. The Sámi population cannot be separated in statistics since public statistics do not register citizens' ethnic backgrounds in Scandinavia (Axelsson & Sköld, 2011; Pettersen, 2011a). However, one indicator is the Sámi voting register set up in connection with the establishment of Sámi parliaments in Norway (1989), in Sweden (1993) and Finland (1996). As this register is published and updated every fourth year (in connection with the elections), the strength in the Sámi revitalization process and its possible regional variation can be measured (Pedersen & Høgmo, 2012).

Two points are of particular importance. From the 1990s, after the establishment of the Sámi parliaments and until 2013, the revitalization has been strong, particularly in Norway. The yearly growth of the Sámi electoral register was 7.2% in Norway and 2.7% in Sweden and 2.9% in Finland.<sup>5</sup> In 2013 roughly 15,000 persons were registered in Norway, compared to 8000 in Sweden.<sup>6</sup> In Finland the growth of the Sámi electoral register was 55% between 1992 and 2011, from nearly 8000 to approximately 10,000. The other main factor is the strength of the urbanization of the Sámi population. The growth in the number of registered Sámi in Norway increased 172% from 1989 to 2013 compared to 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. Similar lines of development are found in Sweden and Finland. There are, however, few studies that could document this in more detail.<sup>7</sup>

The cities studied in this article – Tromsø, Umeå and Rovaniemi – are all county capitals and Tromsø and Umeå are also capitals in their regions. Umeå is the largest city and has nearly 120,000 inhabitants, Tromsø 70,000 and Rovaniemi has 60,000. Regarding size of the Sámi populations in the cities, Tromsø has 1166 registered Sámi with three times more Sámi than Umeå and 6 times more than Rovaniemi. All three cities are also profiling their multiculturalism, and all three countries have recognized the Sámi as indigenous people with legitimate rights to the services necessary to preserve their language and culture. In 2011 Umeå joined the Sámi policy area. While on the political agenda in Tromsø during the same year (2011), it was transformed into an antagonistic conflict that ended in a changed political regime that withdrew the application to become a member. However, the new political leadership has signed an agreement with the Sámi Parliament (2013) to collaborate to strengthen the Sámi language and culture in the city (Pedersen & Nyseth, 2013). Rovaniemi is not a member of the Sámi policy area, but does have an agreement with the Finnish Sámi parliament to collaborate on policies to strengthen Sámi language and culture.

#### *Institutions at State and County Levels*

Institutions matter according to Lowndes and Roberts (2013). This is also the case when looking at institutions serving the Sámi population in the three cities. Looking at visual expressions of Sámi presence, there are rather huge differences between them (see Table 1). As regional capitals all three cities host important institutions. A university with study programmes in the Sámi language exist in all three cities. In Umeå and Tromsø there are separate research centres conducting Sámi research on a broad number of disciplines. In all three cities there are also research institutions oriented towards different fields of Arctic research of particular importance to the Sámi communities. All three cities also have bilingual services at all state institutions: hospital, court, prison, and at different local sections of state departments, for instance car and food inspection. This is also the case with county administrations and upper secondary schools. A regional or university museum with Sámi collections is present in all the cities, and there are district offices of Sámi radio and broadcasting. In Norway, both state and county institutions that serve the Sámi population in the Sámi policy area must have signs in both Norwegian and Sámi. This is not the rule in Sweden and Finland. In Norway, the national Sámi church council has its main office in Tromsø, and Tromsø also hosts the secretariat of the Arctic Council, where indigenous peoples in the circumpolar region are represented.

#### *The Municipal Level*

The largest differences between the cities are related to services for children and youth. Sámi kindergartens exist and Sámi is taught at primary and secondary school levels in all three cities. There are, however, huge

**Table 1.** Sámi Institutions in Tromsø, Umeå and Rovaniemi

	Tromsø	Umeå	Rovaniemi
Public administration	State and county level, bilingual service and Sámi signs at state and county institutions: Hospital, Court, Prison, Car Inspection and in county administrations, Sámi Parliament local office and national office of Sámi Church Council	Bilingual services at state and county institutions: Hospital, Court, Prison	Bilingual services at state and county institutions: Hospital, Court, Prison
Public services	Municipal level One Sámi kindergarten, Sámi taught at 22 primary schools and 1 secondary school. Sámisk signs at City Hall and other municipal buildings Sami flagging and public celebration on the Sami national day	The municipal administration consults the Sámi community in three issue areas: (1) School (pre-, primary and secondary schools), (2) Social services/elderly care, (3) Information, Culture and leisure	One Sámi kindergarten, Sámi distance education with 3 groups: (1) Sámi as mother language, (2) as second language, and (3) as foreign language. On all levels from primary to upper secondary school
Research institutions	Sámi Research Centre, Sámi research at a number of university faculties	Centre for Sámi Research (CeSam)/Vaartoe, Department of Language studies – Unit for Sámi at Umeå University, Sámi research at a number of university faculties	University of Lapland: some faculties can study Sámi; research also at Arctic Centre
Civic institutions	Sámi association (NSR) Sámi student association RealRomsa: Sámi football team, Sámi parental network	Sámi association SSR, Sámi student association Umeå Sámi Association, Umeå Sámi Language Association	Sámi association
Cultural institutions	Gaisa Language Centre Tromsø Museum has two permanent Sámi exhibitions Sámi Broadcasting	Sámi Exhibition at the Vesterbotn Museum The Sámi festival (Sámi week) Sámi cultural centre. Both are run by Umeå Sámi Association	Sámi Exhibition at the Arctikum (Museum) Department of Lapland at the Library

differences in the scope and level of the services. Tromsø has a much broader spectrum of public services than the other two cities. This has to do with the larger number of Sámi living in Tromsø and the fact that the Sámi Language Act in Norway was implemented in 1992 – nearly 20 years before similar provisions were applied in, for instance, Umeå. In Tromsø we find a well-performing Sámi kindergarten and Sámi is being taught in 22 primary schools and at one higher secondary school. To support the implementation of Sámi language and culture in different municipal services, a Sámi language centre has been created.

When Umeå joined the Sámi policy area in 2011 things began to change and the municipality has now adopted nearly the same legal rules as in Tromsø. However, the economic support from the Swedish state is not as generous as in Norway. The implications of this are still in progress, but plans are being made on many levels and sectors of the community. However, in 2012 there still were no Sámi signs on public buildings, as one can find in Tromsø.

Rovaniemi is not a member of the Sámi policy area. In Finland, the economic funding of language and cultural projects towards the Sámi population is quite marginal outside the Sámi policy area (Niittyvuopio, 2013).<sup>8</sup> In addition, the number of Sámi in the voting register is not more than 200. This has made it difficult to organize permanent services like Sámi kindergartens and teaching Sámi language in school. Rovaniemi, therefore, has a rather low urban Sámi profile. The Sámi are more or less invisible in public, except for the tourism industry with, for instance, a restaurant providing traditional Sámi dishes owned and operated by non-Sámi. In Rovaniemi the aim is to increase the quality of the services that are produced, but there are no ambitious plans pointing towards an increase in the efforts to give Sámi language and culture greater attention.

So far our analyses reveal that the urban Sámi population imprints the urban environment primarily through the Sámi institutions and other Sámi elements that have been integrated in all three cities. Of the three cities, Tromsø stands out due to the larger Sámi population, the density of Sámi institutions and the visualization of Sámi language, culture and civil life. Particularly in Tromsø and in Umeå we find a variety of civic Sámi associations, for instance student associations, clubs and networks within sports (football, bandy), church associations and culture as well as interest-based networks (parents network, net-based networks). In Tromsø and Umeå, Sámi culture is celebrated over a period of 7–10 days every year with a cultural programme including Sámi research, theatre, music, exhibitions, food traditions and an international focus on indigenous perspectives. These institutions are “rooting” Sámi into everyday life in the cities.

## II. Exploring Urban Sámi Identities

Being a Sámi in a Scandinavian context has not been associated with settlement in cities despite the fact that this has been the case for decades; instead, urbanism has been viewed as assimilation into a Sámi Norwegian/

Swedish/Finnish culture. Many Sámi who had affirmed themselves as Sámi can look back at least 30–40 years as citizens settled in a town. The Sámi migrants did not always want to be identified as Sámi in every context and it is still possible to live as a guest in the town and commute to other territories where one has acquired roots, by origin or through relationships. Many other adaptations could, however, be imagined. We will start with looking more closely into how the urban Sámi see themselves as Sámi in the city and we will emphasize what seem to be similar experiences among urban Sámi in the three cities.

Within the elder generation who have been living in the city most of their adult life, most of them identified with the city. They had a good life there and were proud of the city, for instance expressed like this: “I love Umeå. It is here I have my social network, both through the Sámi association and the needlework association” (woman, age 51, in Umeå).

There were no particular differences between the three cities in this respect. In Tromsø most specifically, several informants experienced that the city today appreciates Sámi culture more than before. This was linked to the establishment of a variety of Sámi institutions, Sámi signs on public buildings and to the increasing number of events where Sámi culture was promoted, not only on the Sámi national day on 6 February, but also through cultural events and at the many national and international conferences held in the city. Parents with children particularly emphasized service institutions like education in primary and secondary school and Sámi kindergartens. A mother of two children states that:

Tromsø is a good place to live. It is a good place to be a Sámi, and in all other ways too. You have all possibilities in Tromsø, here people talk Sámi, you have the Sámi kindergarden, you have the Prestvannet school – there both children and teachers speak Sámi. Those possibilities are not there in for instance Kåfjord, Lavanger and Skånland (Sámi districts on the coast) (woman, age 40, born in Skånland, Norway).

These institutions made normal Sámi everyday life possible in the city. In all three countries Sámi culture has been promoted through daily news broadcasts on the Sámi TV channel (Oddasatt),<sup>9</sup> through *duodji* art, paintings, theatre and music, and through public display of the Sámi flag for instance, the Sámi week (Umeå and Tromsø) and Sámi signs on public buildings and public transportation (Tromsø). The younger generation in particular emphasized organized activities within sports, feasts and other informal networks. Sámi expressions in the city are therefore linked to institutions and organizations and their activities and to the more informal networks used in leisure time. This may be expressed through the following quote from one of the informants: “Tromsø is the only north-Norwegian city that is both urban and at the same time a place where it is possible to live a full Sámi life” (man, 28, living in Tromsø, born in Karasjok).

According to Agnew (1987), there is a dynamic relationship between place and its people; place affects its citizens, and vice versa. To Sámi citizens who have completed higher education in the city, the urban community has been

important in their identity construction in all three cities. Through studies and being together with other Sámi students they acquired new concepts and approaches that could be used in their own understanding of who they are (Hovland, 1996). This has been a strong source for Sámi revitalization. To Sámi citizens originating from districts where Norwegianization has been particularly strong and to those who for different reasons had lost their Sámi language in Sweden and Finland, this had been particularly important. One informant who had moved to Tromsø to be a student expressed it like this:

It didn't have to do with you moving to the city which made you a Sámi, it had to do with what you learned there, about yourself and the experiences you had brought with you and how they were framed in another way. So the city has been decisive to me and to many others (woman, in Tromsø, moved from Kåfjord).

Becoming a student has, for many, also been an entrance into activism in Sámi organizations and some of them became “combatants” in the struggle for Sámi rights which has been so important to Sápmi as a whole.

The urban culture and a feeling of openness and freedom have also been important. Some informants claimed that they expressed their Sámi identity more after moving to the city than they did at their place of birth. One informant expressed it like this: “In Tromsø I can live out my Sámi identity – that I could not do in Hammerfest. There being a Sámi was a private issue, nothing you marked in public, here I express myself as a Sámi in a quite different way” (woman, 30, moved from Hammerfest to Tromsø). This woman was born in Hammerfest, a small coastal town where the Sámi issue had been repressed for a very long time and therefore people with Sámi roots hid their Sámi-ness. This is also the case with some who grew up in the Sámi core area where Sámi is expressed all the time. A young man from Karasjok said this: “In Tromsø I can be what type of Sámi I like, that I could not do in Karasjok”. According to this informant, a form of conformity about what it means to be a Sámi in Karasjok limited how one could express their Sámi identity. Living in the city, in this case Tromsø, provided more room for other expressions of Sámi identity.

### *Ambivalences*

A more complex issue deals with how ethnic identity and identification with place become integrated and mixed. Does the city as a lived environment influence the urban Sámi's ethnic identity? To many this is an ambivalent issue. One of the reasons has to do with their troublesome “ethnic journey”. Particularly in the elder generation, who had lost their Sámi identity in the assimilation process, the road to a Sámi identity had been bumpy. One of the academics expressed it like this:

It's been a turbulent journey. I was 30 when I understood that I was of Sámi descent, but my own process of recognizing myself as a Sámi has taken much longer. I have had many doubts if I had that competence. Unfortunately, it was other Sámi who questioned my Sámi identity more than the Swedes (man, 55, in Umeå).

We find similar experiences among many urban Sámi also in Norway, who grew up in the coastal Sámi areas. A young woman stated: “I sometimes lack confidence as a Sámi; I often feel when I am with other Sámi that they are more Sámi than me” (woman, 22, in Tromsø). Another expressed something similar: “I am a Sámi mostly together with my wife. I do not know the language, and when I am alone I never dress in my *gade*” (man, 45, in Rovaniemi). The feeling of lack of Sámi competence is a common characteristic among Sámi undergoing a process of revitalization (Hovland, 1996; Hansen, 2008; Høgmo, 2011). Many talked about a “hierarchy” among Sámi, placing the Sámi from the interior at the top of the hierarchy.<sup>10</sup> Even Sámi speaking South Sámi and Lule Sámi expressed similar views. They have also felt marginalized by the dominant Northern Sámi communities. Conrad may have a point claiming that the dominance of the reindeer-herder Sámi image tends to disallow the notion of multiple identities, or of alternative understandings and interpretations of Sámi-ness (Conrad, 2000: 48).

When asked about their own attachment to place, most of the informants referred to other places than the city, basically communities located in the Sámi core areas or the coastal areas. This was the case with most of the elder generation and even for some of the young generation too, even if they themselves were born in the city. One informant stated: “My place is Ammarnas, that’s where my heart is. I share my time between Ammarnas, where I have my cottage, and Umeå, where I dwell” (woman, 50, in Umeå).

This was also the case for some of those born and raised in the city, as this informant stated: “I was born in Tromsø, and grew up in the city, but my sense of belonging is to Tana, where my grandparents live, and where I spent most of my summer holidays in my childhood ... I could never live there, however” (woman, 28, born in Tromsø). Her close personal relationships with her grandparents seems to be what gives her belonging to Tana, but perhaps also it is here that she find the Sámi markers she can identify with and not in the city. These quotes illustrate a distinction between belonging to a place and the place where one lives their life. These two aspects of place identification do not always match. This is, of course, more the case for Sámi than for others who move from their place of birth to another place. At the same time, we find that this is also the case with persons born and raised in a city. This supports Sahlins’ (1999) and Clifford’s (1988) arguments about links and connections to a homeland. On the other hand, we also find a group where this distinction is not that obvious and to whom we now turn.

### **Elective Belonging and Bicultural Identities**

Identifying with place is only one aspect of a person’s identity. Ethnic identity is another aspect that might be integrated into one’s place identity, but often not. A number of studies on Sámi identity construction in modern society point to the ambivalence that claiming a Sámi identity may represent (Høgmo, 1986; Stordahl, 1994; Hovland, 1996; Eidheim, 1999; Gaski, 2000; Olsen, 2010). In Norway, particularly those who grew up along the coast are marked with the consequences of the Norwegianization policy. Similar

policies were implemented in northern Sweden. One of the most important consequences was that the generations that were born after this policy ended did not learn the Sámi language. Many of these who lost the Sámi language feel that their identity as Sámi is not something definite, something one either is or is not, but rather something one has to fight for. The following quote from a woman who grew up in such a district is one example:

It is difficult to find someone who is not Sámi with my background, who have moved in from the periphery and into the city. It is more or less up to you how conscious you are about this, of how much you want to be a Sámi. For people like me, you have to know the history to be able to understand your part in it and the cultural baggage that you carry (woman, 35, in Tromsø).

This is an expression of ethnic identification as something one, in one sense, can choose. On the other hand, we also find expressions of the opposite, that ethnicity is not something one chooses among those who grew up in the Sámi core areas: “I have never hidden my Sámi identity, that is what I am, and people from Kautokeino are not concerned with being a Sámi, because it’s so natural, that’s who we are and we do not need to promote it” (man, 50, born in Kautokeino, now in Tromsø). To this person, who grew up in Kautokeino, one of the main Sámi districts in Norway, now living in Tromsø, Tromsø does not add anything to his Sámi identity, but it does not take it away either, even if he had to go back to Kautokeino from time to time, a place that he is very much attached to.

This is only one aspect of living as a minority in a Norwegian/Finnish/Swedish urban environment. Another aspect is that their Sámi identity is not relevant most of the time, expressed in this way by one of the informant: “Yes, I am a City-Sámi, but I am much more than that” (woman, 45, in Tromsø). This woman, born in a coastal Sámi district, points at the Sámi identification as only one part of who she is; she has a Norwegian identity as well and lives an ordinary “Norwegianized” life most of the time. City life can also challenge their Sámi identity: “It is more difficult being a Sámi here than in the Sámi districts. Here you live an ordinary city life” (man, 35, in Rovaniemi). For many in Rovaniemi, marking their Sámi-ness is a private business, not a public one. You put on your Sámi outfit in private parties and in family gatherings, not when you go to work, or to the shop. It is, however, quite common to experiment with symbols, expressed for instance by this woman: “I often wear Sámi symbols, it could be a necklace, a bracelet, but it can be quite discreet. I have many gadgets, but I like to challenge by combining them with other things, for instance using the traditional boots with other clothing, or an ordinary dress and then Sámi boots (*komager*) with a nice woven band” (woman, 40, in Tromsø). Both in Tromsø and Umeå you see more Sámi clothing and people wearing Sámi symbols more often, but not the full dress, perhaps a scarf, an earring, etc. Out of this, an urban Sámi identity is being marked through traditional and new symbols such as Sámi symbols in new combinations on dresses in modern urban design, jewellery, hand bags, scarves, headgear, boots, etc. Our data from observations also

illustrate that these symbols are sometimes almost invisible, only understood by those who know the codes. This also corresponds with findings from studies of urban Sámi identities in Oslo and other southern cities (Dankertsen, 2006; Gjerpe, 2013).

In Rovaniemi, Sámi organizations have fought against the ways Sámi is promoted in the tourism industry and in the museum where Sámi have been put on display in very odd ways only in order to attract more visitors. There has also been a fight about dressing in graduation ceremonies in high schools, where fake Sámi dress was used. This fight has been won, and fake costumes are no longer used at these events. However, in part of Finnish Lapland the commercialization of Sámi symbols and tradition has been much stronger than in Norway and Sweden (Routsala, 1995; Kalstad & Viken, 1996; Saarinen, 1998; Viken 2000).

These examples represent ambivalent understandings of what it means to be a Sámi in a city context. We now turn to a group that expresses more confidence as urban Sámi: the City-Sámi.

### *City-Sámi*

The Sámi association in Helsinki is called City-Sámi. Is this also an identity category that gives meaning in this context? A small group of young Sámi could be categorized as City-Sámi, those who live out their ethnicity in the city, even if they were born elsewhere. To them, being a Sámi is something obvious, nothing you question, and therefore nothing that has to be demonstrated all the time. This is also confirmed by the elder generation. An informant from Umeå (born in 1963) reflects on the differences between his generation and the younger generation pointing at two different worlds when it comes to how young Sámi express their ethnicity compared to his own generation:

The young do not carry the older generation's burden, they have not met all the prejudices against the Sámi ... they seem to have more confidence. Those who are ten years younger than me, mark their Sámi identity more explicitly, they use jewellery and Sámi clothing. To them this is not associated with shame, and they are more educated, they speak the language better, and they make claims for more services, and they take a PhD (man, 50, in Umeå).

To this informant, being a Sámi, and expressing a Sámi identity has, over the years, become much easier compared to his own youth. Our data confirm this. Also the younger generation tell stories about ambivalences and unease, but still manage to overcome it, as this informant:

To gain a complete new identity has been ambivalent and not that easy all the time. It has not been easy to be accepted as a Sámi either. I have been more and more accepted as time has passed, and I feel more and more at home within the Sámi community (woman, 55, in Umeå).

Those who characterized themselves as City-Sámi were very confident in their Sámi identity. To them it is the city and the modern knowledge society that framed their Sámi identity. One of the young men stated: “I am a City-Sámi, I don’t belong to the mountains, but in the city. Here you can develop yourself, find the Sámi in you and do as you like” (man, 25, from Umeå). The city represents, to the City-Sámi, a freedom to express themselves as Sámi. In the city there are Sámi public spaces that legitimize being a Sámi in one’s own being. The category City-Sámi is well known among Sámi youth. A young Sámi who categorized himself as a City-Sámi described a City-Sámi like this: “I know two City-Sámi. They are very City-Sámi and they name themselves as City-Sámi, and organize activities for Sámi in the city” (man, 24, from Rovaniemi). Some referred to the City-Sámi, with a twist, and almost like a joke. The City-Sámi were those who expressed themselves as Sámi in every setting. Others criticized the concept, as it did not give any meaning at all. We did find representatives of City-Sámi in all three cities. In many ways they represent an elite; they typically have a university degree, they are organized in Sámi associations and they regard themselves as global cosmopolitans supporting the international indigenous movement, and they attend conferences about indigenous people at a Nordic or even international level. In this group, a new Sámi urban identity is in the making.

## Discussion

The growth in the number of Sámi living in urban areas has made a difference in these cities, more so in Tromsø than in Umeå and Rovaniemi, which probably may be explained by the number of Sámi living in Tromsø. One might say that in Tromsø the number of Sámi has reached a “critical mass” necessary to make a difference. We would also add the fact that Norway adopted the Sami Language Law as early as 1992. According to our data based on urban Sámi’s own experiences, the expression of Sámi-ness in the city is related to the growing presence of a modern Sámi network of formal and informal institutions and organizations that makes Sámi everyday life in the cities possible. These institutions root the Sámi into the cities, making their presence visible and enduring. This is also confirmed in several studies from other countries with an urban indigenous population, for instance the Métis in Canada (Silver, 2006; Laliberti, 2013).

The three urban communities have several similarities in how the Sámi express their identities. The city represents new prospects related to education and career opportunities. The city also represents another arena for revitalizing or redefining Sámi identity based on non-traditional symbols. In all three cities one will find a number of Sámi activists, researchers, and cultural workers, many with higher education and who represent the modern Sámi middle class.

Still, many of them stay connected to their birthplace, or even the birthplace of their parents. Some do not see the city as the centre of their lives or feel they belong to the city. They may live comfortable lives there and still long for other places. Some are also coming and going in and out of these

cities, underlining Amin and Thrift's (2002) understanding of cities as a place of mobility, flow and everyday practice. This circular migration is perhaps what makes a bicultural identity a highly relevant response. Among those who define themselves as Sámi in the cities today, the majority are first-generation inhabitants, particularly within the age group over 40. They still maintain their relationships with their place of origin, from which they also have their ethnic markers. Their everyday life, however, is in the city. Here, they have their house, their career and friends, and they have become assimilated into the majority culture. They live out their Sámi identity mostly in the private arena, at some public occasions and when they visit their home place. The majority of the informants have not adopted City-Sámi or urban Sámi as a meaningful category. A majority of the informants in all three cities identified with the districts where they had their Sámi roots, even if they were born and raised in the city. They also expressed belonging both to the city and their place of origin, even if they had never lived there. In this sense, the study adds to contemporary understandings of mobility and place where individuals maintain links with communities across distances and formulate identities of belonging to more than one place (Massey & Jess, 1995; Wilson & Peters, 2005). Urban Sámi identities are being "stretched out" across particular places and territories. In that sense we could say that they are carriers of dual identities.

The picture is more complex when we look at the second and third generations, particularly those younger than 40. Some identify themselves as a form of "City-Sámi", which is undeveloped as a category, but still provides meaning as other Sámi categories do not fit in the urban context. What it means to be a Sámi in an urban context, then, is complex, and the ethnic identity is often mixed with other identities, if not hybrid then at least dual. Experimenting with identity is a part of this. It is a fact that Sámi-ness can be expressed in new ways. This may be a consequence of urbanity in the sense that other expressions of Sámi identity are more welcomed in an urban setting than in, for instance, the Sámi core areas, where there are perhaps more particular and strict norms of what it means to be a Sámi.

The city creates a situation dominated by cultural diversity that invites new identity constructions, also as a Sámi. In the urban context, one is mixed with others, not only Norwegians/Swedes/Finns, but also with people of different Sámi backgrounds. Meeting Sámi with different backgrounds might give room for reflection on one's own identity and how this might be accepted. In fact, the element of self-identification that is one of the criteria to register for voting means that individuals have to make an active choice if they are not "born" with a defined ethnicity. The urban Sámi, particularly those with a higher education, will have to reflect and legitimize their identity construction. New and innovative forms of expressions of Sámi-ness might come out of these interactions. In the urban cultural diversity it is perhaps necessary to experiment with the different forms of social interaction.

There are experimentations going on, with the language, with dress codes and signs. This corresponds also with findings from studies of urban Sámi identities in Oslo and other southern cities (Dankertsen, 2006, Gjerpe, 2013).

It may give meaning to talk about the emergence of a new Sámi identity that has the city as its main reference. Constructing urban Sámi identities in these cities is, however, multi-faceted, and the ethnic repertoire is only one of several aspects of a person's identity. The present urban Sámi residents are progressively expressing their Sámi identity in the urban environment where they live their everyday life. They are becoming urban Sámi. This supports Sahlins' argument that culture is not disappearing as a consequence of migration and urbanization (Sahlins, 1999). Sámi culture is not static, it is dynamic and new Sámi identities have developed in response to urban life. The Sámi nation has, as a consequence of urbanization, been extended, dispersed and diversified. There are other studies from other countries with much older urban indigenous populations than in the Scandinavian countries that support such a hypothesis, for instance in Canada and New Zealand (Kishigami & Lie, 2008; Gover, 2002; Hokowhitu, 2013; Noris et al., 2013; Peters & Andersen, 2013).

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Kvens describes immigrants from Finland, particularly the valley Tornedalen, who migrated to Norway and today are recognized as a national minority.

<sup>2</sup> A discrete method of recruitment in which you recruit informants through the network of key informants.

<sup>3</sup> Examples of events include the Sámi Week, which in Tromsø is the first week in February each year, and in Umeå 10 days in March every year. We have also attended meetings at some of the Sámi civic associations, and meetings between Sámi associations and the municipal administrations.

<sup>4</sup> The Alta-case refers to the conflict about the proposal from the Norwegian authorities to dam the Alta River for hydroelectric power in 1979–1980 that led to the historical process on Sámi land rights (Minde, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> The Sámi parliament's election register in Norway and Sweden and the Sámi parliament's internet pages.

<sup>6</sup> The election register consists of persons 18 years and older and who want to participate in the election. Even if these figures are not precise, the criteria for registering in the voting register are quite similar between the three countries. The registration procedure is a combination of genealogical and self-identification criteria. In Finland, the criteria are contested and the control regime are more restrictive than in Norway and Sweden, and it is therefore more difficult to be a member of the voting register than in Norway and Sweden. However, the voting register does not provide exact numbers as it is impossible to estimate the total Sámi population in the Scandinavian countries because ethnicity is not registered in the censuses (Axelsson & Sköld, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Torunn Pettersen (2011b) discusses some of these issues.

- <sup>8</sup> This may be related to the fact that outside the Sámi policy area, for people who claim Sámi rights, for instance related to education, the Act regulating these rights is the immigration legislation.
- <sup>9</sup> Oddasatt is a news broadcasting programme in the Sámi language with Norwegian (Swedish or Finnish) text so that those who do not understand Sámi are also able to follow the programme.
- <sup>10</sup> For similar experiences from the coastal districts see Gaski (2000).

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