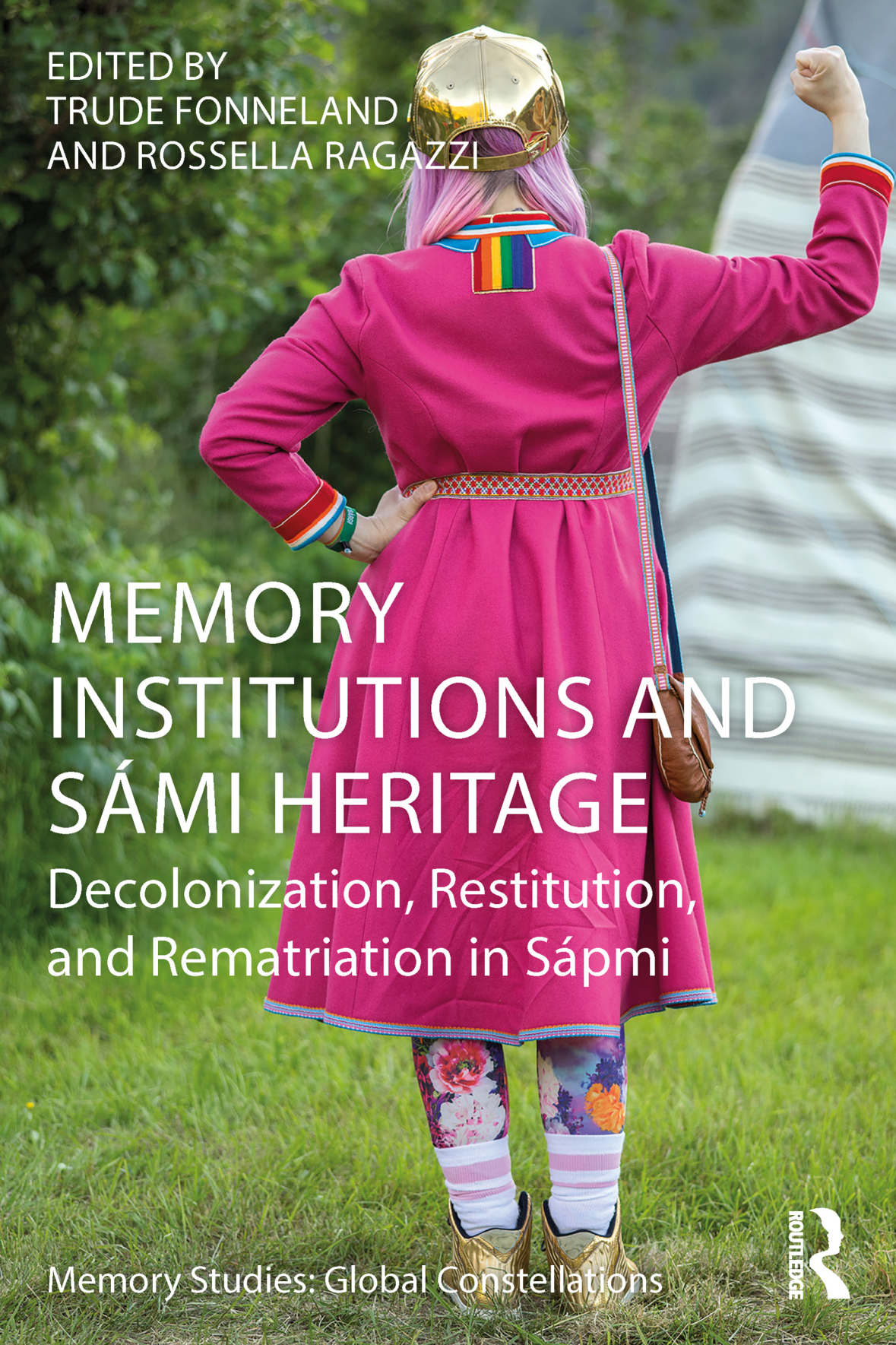
EDITED BY
TRUDE FONNELAND
AND ROSSELLA RAGAZZI
MEMORY INSTITUTIONS AND SÁMI HERITAGE
Decolonization, Restitution, and Rematriation in Sápmi
Memory Studies: Global Constellations
ROUTLEDGE

"*Memory Institutions and Sámi Heritage* addresses the timely topic of how museums, archives, galleries, festivals, etc. deal with their colonial legacy and with an urgent need to revise their role, position, and perceptions on cultural heritage. This volume is an invaluable contribution to the ongoing work of understanding the consequences and implications of the decolonial turn for memory institutions in Sápmi and in other Indigenous contexts."

**Coppélie Cocq**, *Professor in Sámi Studies and Digital Humanities and Assistant Director of Humlab, Umeå University, Sweden*

"This is a collection of well-researched case studies hitting the very core of heritage theory by its explorations of the intrinsic power relations and colonial aspects of museum work. Applying these perspectives to Sámi culture has a double advantage. It gives insights into Sámi cultural expressions as they have moved and been moved from everyday life into museums and other memory institutions, driven by different agendas and agents. Doing so, it also demonstrates the ontological implications of phenomena like restitution, decolonization, and repatriation (or rematriation, referring critically to the gendered concepts of nation and fatherland). At the same time, the book is an important contribution to memory and museum studies more generally, showing the conceptual complexities as well as the practical challenges that follow from shifting the focus from artifacts to agents or from heritage to heirs to autonomous Sámi agency."

**Anne Eriksen**, *Professor of Cultural History, IKOS, University of Oslo, Norway*

"I recommend this book highly for its enlightening presentation of new and thought-provoking perspectives on past and contemporary presentations of indigenous Sámi culture in memory institutions and beyond. Understood as ongoing processes of change in a decolonizing perspective, the contexts of the analyzed examples range from museums to festivals, music, art, and tourism. Where earlier power imbalances caused appropriation and misrepresentations of their culture, today's presenters have to establish new communicative positions and new ways of cooperating with indigenous groups. To readers involved in any presentations of Sámi heritage the book would be inspirational, and would bring greater understanding to the general, interested audience."

**Stein R. Mathisen**, *Professor Emeritus, Department of Tourism & Northern Studies, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Norway*

"One of the most striking features of this insightful collection of essays is the importance accorded to introducing, explaining, and applying Sámi terminology, concepts, and epistemologies as tools to understand historical and contemporary dynamics pertaining to Sámi memory and cultural heritage. This approach not only imparts meaning and substance to the processes of Sámi decolonization and (re)appropriation, but also discloses new, exciting theoretical, methodological, and practice-based perspectives on the work of museums and memory institutions in a postcolonial world – in Sámi, Indigenous, and non-Indigenous contexts alike."

**Marzia Varutti**, *Marie Skłodowska-Curie research fellow, Swiss Center for Affective Sciences, University of Geneva, Switzerland*

# MEMORY INSTITUTIONS AND SÁMI HERITAGE

With a focus on Sápmi – the transcultural and transnational homeland of the Sámi people – this book presents case studies and theoretical frameworks which explore the ways in which memory institutions such as museums, archives, and festivals participate in and guide processes of appropriation, decolonization, and memory-making.

The destruction and concealment of Sámi objects in both private and museum collections worldwide have impacted Sámi knowledge systems, disrupting local ways of knowing. Appreciation and reappropriation are important acts of decolonization which seek to create openings for reconnection to traditions, languages, and practices that were forcibly suppressed in the past. Western memory institutions such as museums, archives, and galleries have had a great impact on how heritage has been collected, stored, conserved, and organized within closed walls and glass cases. As the new museology movement developed in the 1990s, numerous examples revealed how difficult it became for researchers and public alike to access heritage. Considering the proliferation of cultural interventions and the growth of Sámi mobilization, which calls into question assumptions about how best to activate and experience Sámi cultural heritage and what constitutes appropriate stewardship, this book sheds light on initiatives to return artefacts to the Sámi community. With particular attention to the ways in which Sámi self-determination and the shifting boundaries between Indigenous and settler identities are articulated, challenged, and renegotiated, it draws on approaches from critical museology and Indigenous methodologies to explore the initiation, experience, and operationalizing of restitution projects.

This book will therefore appeal to scholars of cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, and museum and heritage studies, as well as to those interested in questions of repatriation, restitution, and healing processes.

**Trude Fonneland** is a professor of cultural studies at UiT The Arctic University Museum of Norway. Her research interests include Sámi cultural heritage, museology, and contemporary shamanism. She is co-author of *Sámi Religion: Religious Identities, Practices, and Dynamics* (2020) and *Shamanic Materialities in Nordic Climates* (2023).

**Rossella Ragazzi** is an associate professor of museum and media anthropology at UiT The Arctic University Museum of Norway. Her current research interests explore critical theories of heritage within Sámi museums. She is the author of *Walking on Uneven Paths: Transcultural Experience of Children entering Europe in the Years 2000* (2009) and has co-edited two volumes of *Nordisk Museologi*, focusing on Sámi heritage and museums.

## Memory Studies: Global Constellations

Series editor:

Henri Lustiger-Thaler

*Ramapo College of New Jersey, USA and Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, France*

The 'past in the present' has returned in the early twenty-first century with a vengeance, and with it the expansion of categories of experience. These experiences have largely been lost in the advance of rationalist and constructivist understandings of subjectivity and their collective representations. The cultural stakes around forgetting, 'useful forgetting' and remembering, locally, regionally, nationally and globally have risen exponentially. It is therefore not unusual that 'migrant memories'; microhistories; personal and individual memories in their interwoven relation to cultural, political and social narratives; the mnemonic past and present of emotions, embodiment and ritual; and finally, the mnemonic spatiality of geography and territories are receiving more pronounced hearings.

This transpires as the social sciences themselves are consciously globalizing their knowledge bases. In addition to the above, the reconstructive logic of memory in the juggernaut of galloping informationalization is rendering it more and more publicly accessible, and therefore part of a new global public constellation around the coding of meaning and experience. Memory studies as an academic field of social and cultural inquiry emerges at a time when global public debate – buttressed by the fragmentation of national narratives – has accelerated. Societies today, in late globalized conditions, are pregnant with newly unmediated and unfrozen memories once sequestered in wide collective representations. We welcome manuscripts that examine and analyze these profound cultural traces.

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# MEMORY INSTITUTIONS AND SÁMI HERITAGE

## Decolonization, Restitution, and Rematriation in Sápmi

*Edited by Trude Fonneland and Rossella Ragazzi*

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The editors would also like to acknowledge all our anonymous peer reviewers who carefully read and commented upon each chapter.

# ON SÁMI LANGUAGE USE IN THIS BOOK

This book discusses Sámi culture, heritage, and issues. As such, many Sámi language terms are used throughout. Furthermore, many of the places mentioned in the text are often referred to in their Sámi-language name because of relevance, as well as in a conscious effort to acknowledge and strengthen the Sámi histories and geographies of this part of the world.

Sámi languages belong to the Uralic language family, and words may have different spellings depending on their grammatical use in a sentence. This means that sometimes a name or noun will be written multiple ways within a single chapter, depending not only on whether it is in singular/plural form (e.g., gákti – singular; gávttit – plural) but also whether it is the direct object or a modifier in a sentence – even when it is a proper noun (e.g., Alta the city is Áltá – name as noun; Alta Museum is Álttá Musea – name as modifier).

The shifting use of Sámi words in singular and plural forms can be found in the glossary.

"Sámi languages" in fact refers to a group of different languages, similar in structure and sound, but nonetheless distinct and not interchangeable. The chapters in this book refer to several Sámi languages – Northern Sámi, Lule Sámi, Pite Sámi, and Southern Sámi, primarily – as well as dialects within certain of these languages, such as Márku Sámi.

When using Sámi terms or names, each author has used the language local or familiar to them and their topic. This can mean that words for the same term in English may differ across chapters.

For clarity (and because currently Norwegian names are still more easily found on maps), place names are written in both Sámi and Norwegian/English when they are first mentioned in a chapter; thereafter, the author has chosen which name they use, based on its specific context.

# GLOSSARY OF SÁMI TERMS

**arkiiva/arkiivvat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. An archive.
**bassiuksa/bassiuvssat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A sacred door.
**bassivárri/bassivárit** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A sacred mountain.
**beaska/beaskkat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. An overcoat made of reindeer skin, often calf, with the fur on the outside.
**bivddemgetsam/bivddemgehtsama** (sing./plur.; noun). *Lule Sámi*. A hunting belt.
**boazosápmelaš/boazosápmelaččat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. Sámi who subsist primarily off reindeer herding.
**boagán/boahkánat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A belt.
**buvssat** (plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. Pants.
**bååstede** (adv.). *Southern Sámi*. To, toward, or in a place from which something came. "Bååstede" is also the name of the Norwegian repatriation project, referring to the return of Sámi artefacts to Sámi regions and museums (see Chapters 1 and 2).
**čávva/čávat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Márku Sámi*. A person who likes to work hard, a lot, and for a long time. Čávva is the term used by Márkomeannu festival to refer to its staff.
**čeavrágillár/čeavrágillárat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. An otter trap.
**čiktingeahpa/čiktingeabat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A net needle, used to weave the threads to knot fishing nets.
**ČSV** (phrase). An abbreviation used to promote Sámi identity and activism. The letters are the three most commonly used in Sámi languages. While the initials can be used to refer to a variety of phrases, the most common intended meaning when using the term is "Čájet Sámi vuoiŋŋa!"/"Show Sámi spirit!" in Northern Sámi.

**čuhti/čuđit** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A merciless thief and fearsome murderer. In Sámi folktales, the čuđit are the human enemies of the Sámi people.

**Čuoppomáddu** (proper noun). *Márku Sámi*. The frog foremother, the origin of all frogs, an entity which protects all frogs. Stories of the frog mother were also sometimes used to scare children away from places they shouldn't be, such as going into the water alone.

**dáidda/dáidagat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. Art as a concept, as well as artwork.

**dáiddár/dáiddárat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A maker of dáidda, an artist.

**dajahus/dajahusat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. The text or lyrics of a yoik.

**Dat ii daga maidege** (phrase). *Northern Sámi*. An expression meaning, "It isn't important."

**dávver/dávvera** (sing./plur.; noun). *Lule Sámi*. An artefact, thing, object, or treasure of particular value.

**dávvir/dávvirat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. See *dávver/dávvera*.

**dorka/dorkkat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. An overcoat made of sheep or reindeer skin with the wool or fur on the inside.

**duiskkas** (adjective). *Northern Sámi*. Literally "from Germany."

**duodjár/duodjára** (sing./plur.; noun). *Lule Sámi*. See *duojár/duojárat*.

**duodje/duoje** (sing./plur.; noun). *Lule Sámi*. See *duodji/duojit*.

**duodji/duojit** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A holistic concept describing Sámi craft and cultural expression, the process of making it, and its philosophy and cosmology.

**duojár/duojárat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. Someone who produces or makes duodje, Sámi handicraft and cultural expression.

**Ellos Deatnu** (phrase). *Northern Sámi*. "Long live Deatnu," a Sámi resistance and resurgence movement established in 2017, opposing and demanding a moratorium on the exploitation of the Deatnu River by both tourists and the state.

**fierra/fierat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A wooden protrusion or horn which is used to give the ládjogahpir its particular shape.

**gákti/gávttit** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. Traditional Sámi clothing whose form and praxis reflect both different Sámi languages and geographical regions, and which is deeply embedded in Sámi cultural values and meanings.

**gállu/gállut** (sing./plur.; noun). *Márku Sámi*. A boulder.

**gáma/gápmagat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. Footwear, traditionally handmade from various types of animal hide.

**gámasuoidni/gámasuoinnit** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. Sedge, grass-like plants.

**gáppte/gápte** (sing./plur.; noun). *Lule Sámi*. See *gákti/gávttit*.
**geažideami** (verb). *Northern Sámi*. A word with roots in the verb *geažuhit*, used to mean to imply, or pulling in two or more directions.
**gieddi/giettit** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A meadow.
**gievrie/gievrieh** (sing./plur.; noun). *Southern Sámi*. See *goavddis/goavdát*.
**giisá/giissát** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A wooden chest.
**goabdes/goabddá** (sing./plur.; noun). *Lule Sámi*. See *goavddis/goavdát*.
**goahti/goađit** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A type of Sámi home or hut built with turf walls, also known as *darfegoahti*.
**goavddis/goavdát** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A ceremonial drum with an oval, wooden frame.
**holbi/holbbit** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. Decorative edging applied to the cuffs or hems of some *gávttit*.
**jávredikšun** (sing.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. The caretaking of lakes.
**juoigat** (verb). *Northern Sámi*. The act of yoiking, of vocalizing or performing luohti.
**juoigi/juoigit** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. The performer of a luohti.
**jåhkåsuorgge/jåhkåsuorge** (sing./plur.; noun). *Lule Sámi*. The point where different branches of a river become entwined once again.
**ládjofierra/ládjofierat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A wooden horn used inside the ládjogahpir to create its distinctive shape.
**ládjogahpir/ládjogahpirat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A woman's hat characterized by a high wooden protrusion, known as a fierra, located at the back of the bonnet.
**láhppeboagán/láhppeboahkánat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A belt woven from wool.
**lávvu/lávut** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A traditional Sámi tent.
**leu′dd/leeu′d** (sing./plur.; noun). *Skolt Sámi*. See *luohti/luođit*.
**livđe** (sing.; noun). *Inari Sámi*. See *luohti/luođit*.
**Luohtearkiiva** (proper noun). *Northern Sámi*. The yoik archive of The Arctic University Museum of Norway.
**Luohtevuorkkás** (proper noun). *Northern Sámi*. The series of albums made available on streaming services as a result of the DigiJoik project (see Chapter 3).
**luohti/luođit** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. Yoik (sometimes written as joik), the distinctive vocal expression of the Sámi People.
**luvvjt** (sing.; noun). *Kildin Sámi*. See *luohti/luođit*.
**máhtsadibme/máhtsadime** (sing./plur.; noun). *Lule Sámi*. A return.
**máhttsat** (verb). *Lule Sámi*. Bringing back, coming back, returning.
**Márkomeannu** (proper noun). *Márku Sámi*. A Sámi festival held at Gállogieddi, in the Norwegian part of Sápmi (see Chapter 9).
**meahcci/meahcit** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. The outer area, gathering and harvesting spaces such as places for fishing, berry-picking, hunting, reindeer herding, and gathering firewood, mushrooms, or sedge.

**mearrasápmelaš** (proper noun). *Northern Sámi*. Sámi people who live along the coastline and subsist primarily on marine resources.

**mujttalit** (verb). *Lule Sámi*. Storytelling, retelling, remembering.

**muoddá/muottá** (sing./plur.; noun). *Lule Sámi*. A coat made from the hides of year-and-a-half- to two-year-old reindeer calves, used as outdoor working clothing.

**náhppi/náhpit** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A wooden bowl often used while milking reindeer.

**Na, maid dál?** (phrase). *Northern Sámi*. "What now?" Also the name of an exhibition presented at Álttá Musea about the Sea Sámi people.

**noaidi/noaiddit** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A religious specialist.

**ofelaš/ofelaččat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A pathfinder or a guide – "one who shows the way" – a term which originally referred to the hero/heroine in Sámi folktales who saves the Sámi from their enemy, the čuđit.

**riebansilba/riebansilbbat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. Mica, a natural, layered stone or mineral group.

**Sábme** (proper noun). *Lule Sámi*. See *Sápmi*.

**sálla/sálat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A hall or corridor. Per Hans Ragnar Mathison (referenced in Chapter 10), the term can also refer to a "furrow, fissure, deep crack in the rock or glacier."

**sámevuohta** (sing.; noun). *Lule and Northern Sámi*. Sámi-ness.

**Sápmi** (proper noun). *Northern Sámi*. The territory of the Sámi, an area which stretches across the four countries of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula in Russia.

**searvelatnja/searvelanjat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A community space.

**searvi/searvvit** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. An association, a group of people organized for a shared purpose.

**sieidi/sieiddit** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A sacrificial item made of stone or wood.

**siellu/sielut** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A soul.

**siida/siiddat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A community or a social unit. The word has several different yet interrelated meanings ranging from "community" to "home." It also refers to the social structure or the way in which Sámi societies were organized historically.

**silbbabassti/silbbabasti** (sing./plur.; noun). *Lule Sámi*. A silver spoon.

**sistebuvssat** (plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. Pants made by tanned leather (*sisti*).

**skáhppu/skáhput** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A box.

**skupmot/skupmohat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A specific type of winter hat.

**tiida/tiiddat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. Knowledge, stories, and physical acts connected to spirituality and passed down from generation to generation.

**ulda/ulddat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. An other-than-human, subterranean/invisible being belonging to the vast and complex Sámi folklore. Ulddat are recurring characters in Sámi storytelling past and present, and are important entities populating the landscapes in which the Sámi also dwell.

**vuelie/vuelieh** (sing./plur.; noun). *Southern Sámi*. See *luohti/luođit*.

**vuolle/vuole** (sing./plur.; noun). *Lule Sámi*. See *luohti/luođit*.

**vuorká/vuorkkát** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. An archive.

**vuotta/vuoddagat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. A shoe band woven out of colourful woollen threads which is wrapped around the top part of the gáma to secure the boot.

**vuottagáma/vuottagápmagat** (sing./plur.; noun). *Northern Sámi*. Winter shoes/boots.

# INTRODUCTION

*Trude Fonneland and Rossella Ragazzi*

Critically engaging with a diverse set of case studies and theoretical frameworks, this book explores how memory institutions participate in and guide processes of appropriation, decolonization, and memory-making.

Western memory institutions such as museums, archives, and galleries have had a great impact on how heritage has been collected, stored, conserved, and organized within closed walls and glass cases. As the new museology movement developed in the 1990s, numerous examples revealed how difficult it became for researchers and public alike to access cultural heritage (e.g., Bennett 1995; Simpson 1996; Hall 1997; Bouquet 2001; Chakrabarty 2007; Thomas 2010; Giblin et al. 2019). Consequently, there is a need to truthfully present the ramifications of colonization and the genocidal acts committed against Indigenous Peoples within the spaces of memory institutions, and to directly acknowledge how Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing have been diminished (Lonetree 2012).

Much has been written about the appropriation of cultural heritage in Indigenous and minority contexts, with a great deal of research focusing on the ethical and pragmatic questions connected to the access, dissemination, and revitalization of memory institutions' collections and archives. Limited accessibility, slow digitization, publication without consent, a lack of proper metadata, and laborious repatriation processes of both tangible and intangible collections are ruptures that can create tensions and senses of exclusion, which also reveal lingering remnants of colonialism still percolating within institutions. Many cultural institutions, particularly those in the Nordic nations, took on Sámi cultural heritage as a focus, but in recent times have often hindered possibilities to intervene, revitalize, or reappropriate elements of that heritage to fuel in new contexts of usage, interpretation, and

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memory-making. Processes of decolonization taken up by memory institutions with roots in colonial structures have been seen as counter-currents, framed as disturbances, resistance, and/or activism (Simpson 1996).

Sápmi, the transcultural and transnational homeland of the Sámi people, offers a vast array of examples of such new practices, methods, and analytical instances due to early political awareness that art, activism, and cultural heritage are at the centre of the formation of Indigenous identities, and are important cohesive aspects for the politics of rewriting one's history.

The destruction and concealment of Sámi objects in both private and museum collections worldwide have impacted Sámi knowledge systems, disrupting local ways of knowing. Appreciation and reappropriation are important acts of decolonization which seek to create openings for reconnection to traditions, languages, and practices that were forcibly suppressed in the past. As Eeva-Kristiina Nylander (formerly Harlin) and Outi Pieski remind us in their exhibition *The Ládjogahpir – The Foremothers' Hat of Pride* (2019) and through their conceptualization of "rematriation," intersectionality in museums, materials, gender, and Indigenous epistemology can give birth to new ways of appropriating collections (Nylander 2022).

This book stems from an important moment within both Norway and Sápmi which constitutes a central point of reference for several of the articles in the anthology. June 2012 marked the beginning of the Bååstede project, wherein the Norske Folkemuseum (Norwegian Folk Museum), the Kulturhistorisk museum (Museum of Cultural History), and the Sámediggi (Sámi Parliament of Norway) signed an agreement that half of the Sámi collections held by the Norske Folkemuseum would be returned to museums under the Sámediggi's management. In 2019, seven years later, the negotiations were completed, and thus began the process of returning over 1,600 items to the Sámi museums.

The Bååstede project revealed that repatriation is about much more than just the objects being returned. Repatriation is a sign of change, both in museums operations and across wider society, which showcase the significance of cultural heritage not only to specific individuals but also to broader senses of identity, encouraging a reconsideration about the control and ownership of cultural heritage.

With methodological bases in critical museology and Indigenous methodologies, the contributors to this book examine ruptures, misunderstandings, tensions, realizations, language, innovation, and creativity (e.g., Vergo 1989; Pratt 1991; Smith 1999, 2006; Said 2003; Bennett 2004; Porsanger 2004; Fabian 2014; Junka-Aikio et al. 2021; Valkonen et al. 2022). One of the core aims of this publication is to explore these aspects within the context of – and with respect to – Indigenous epistemes to highlight innovative ways of constituting, sharing, and disseminating Sámi cultural heritage. All contributors have a scholarly background in cultural science and Indigenous/Sámi studies, and each chapter centres on specific case studies and reflexive approaches.

In Chapter 1, **Eli-Anita Øivand Schøning** uses the Sami museum Árran located at Ájluokta/Drag as her starting point. The chapter analyses Árran's Bååstede negotiations with the Norske Folkemuseum. Her material consists of documents from Árran's Bååstede archive as well as interviews with Árran employees. The chapter identifies three main themes that Árran emphasized in their negotiations about the return of the objects, namely that they promoted diversity, created pride and dignity about Sámi culture, and that the living descendants would have a relationship with them.

The article also identifies the making of replicas as a compromise in the negotiations. Schøning argues that a replica represents a rupture with the original physical material, but also that it can simultaneously create the potential for knowledge production. When a *duojár* (Sámi craftsperson) today is given the opportunity and resources to study a specific object in order to recreate it, knowledge rooted in the past becomes woven with the present.

According to Schøning, *máhttsat ja mujttalit* are central Sámi concepts that focus on negotiations as an arena for knowledge production in repatriation processes in Sápmi. They imply that acknowledgements, stories, knowledge, and values were created both in connection with the preparations for the negotiations, as well as during and after the project took place. The chapter demonstrates how the negotiations themselves which took place during the Bååstede project were an important prerequisite for the objects' return.

In Chapter 2, **Eva Dagny Johansen** also analyses the Bååstede project and its consequences for the Báktedáidaga máilmmiárbeguovddáš – Álttá Musea (The World Heritage Rock Art Centre – Alta Museum). She focuses on three Sea Sámi objects which were returned through Bååstede – a *čiktingeahpa* (net needle), a *boagán* (belt), and a *gákti* (traditional Sámi costume) – and analyses the encounters between these artefacts and the local focus group which contributed to the development of a new temporary exhibition at the museum. Johansen reveals the impacts of the museum's long neglect of Sea Sámi culture through, for example, its 2012 decisions around storing a *dorka* (a Sea Sámi sheepskin tunic). Johansen shows how the focus group's work with the returned objects created new understandings and new forms of knowledge that affected the Álttá Musea in terms of research, educational activities, and administration.

An important requirement for a repatriation process to succeed is that the museum must reflect upon, recognize, and acknowledge the contemporary imbalance in power relationships at play in the cultural heritage sector. Furthermore, as memory institutions, museums must challenge the history in which the museum itself as a practice is anchored. Adopting new foundational memory-making practices seldom occurs without ruptures or misunderstandings which reveal the deep-seated influences of colonial attitudes and responses, as well as asymmetrical power dynamics. When the foundations

of an institution have been forged with a colonial mindset, it takes time to establish a new sense of balance.

Chapter 3, co-written by **Camilla Brattland**, **Trude Fonneland**, and **Rossella Ragazzi**, discusses one specific aspect of Sámi cultural heritage, *luođit* (*yoik*, the vocal art of Sámi people), which today are protected under laws regarding Indigenous immaterial cultural heritage. Specifically, this chapter looks at luođit collections from 1952 which are stored at the Arctic University Museum of Norway, located in Romsa/Tromsø, highlighting the difficulty of defining this ancient but still vibrant vocal tradition due to its multifaceted nature, serving simultaneously as means of cultural, spiritual, mnemonic, and narrative expression.

The Arctic University Museum has begun a formal process to establish a new home for the collections, the Digijoik: Making A Home for Luohti project. Several ethical challenges surround this project, however, with two interconnected paradigms emerging: appreciation and appropriation. While the complications of appropriation are easily recognized, often as an act of "stealing" or using without negotiating or permission, appreciation, when expressed by outsiders culturally, can often lead to idealization, exoticism, and even commodification of Indigenous aspects.

Archives mirror the initial collectors' ideas about what was to be "rescued" from "obliviousness" because, for many decades, Sámi culture was perceived by outsiders to be a disappearing one. The lack of metadata for most of the recorded items, however, led the Digijoik project to invite Sámi cultural experts and guardians of this vocal tradition to collaborate to provide extra information about each recording. Meanwhile, the task of curating albums for digital platforms such as Spotify and DigitaltMuseum facilitated the dialogue of these items between one another, not only based on who had performed them but also thematically. Luođit deemed to be "sensitive" were debated with regards to their public release. Consent issues, both of the performer as well as regarding the person or subject being yoiked, were discussed, with an emphasis on direct descendants' consent. The Digijoik project has challenged relations between the museum and Sámi society, showcasing the museum's capacity for innovation in promoting knowledge and Indigenous heritage while navigating consent and collaborating with diverse voices. This collaborative approach aimed to foster dialogue while acknowledging potential frictions and critiques.

In the case of luođit, rematriation means breaking free from colonial and patriarchal practices and involving many more participants and users of the collections. The Digijoik project not only produced knowledge about luođit, but also enriched understandings of museums, their colonial roots, challenges of rematriation, and future possibilities.

Recurring questions in existing literature revolve around the conditions of appropriation in colonial and neo-colonial contexts, and the consequences

of illicit or asymmetric appropriation. The introduction of a new museology, an awareness of the need to decolonize, and the rise of new institutions dedicated to local or regional cultural heritage has created a growing demand for and reinforcement of claims for repatriation and redistribution, ambitions to establish "contact-zones" (Pratt 1991) and work with source communities, and greater empowerment of Indigenous voices. By exploring the histories of collections, their origins, and sharing this information with Sámi communities are we able to further imbue objects with the authority to be actively involved in empowering, remembering, and healing processes (e.g., Helander-Renvall and Markkula 2017; Finbog 2020; Aikio 2021; Valkonen et al. 2022).

In Chapter 4, **Dikka Storm** and **Trude Fonneland** find their starting point in a *goavddis* (Sámi drum) exhibited today in the Arctic University Museum. It is a northern Sámi bowl-shaped drum that was acquired by the museum in 1962. In 2017, radiocarbon dating of the drum allowed for new perspectives on the goavddis' colonial history. This new knowledge revealed and extended understandings of the true length of time that drums have reverberated throughout Sápmi.

Storm and Fonneland use the goavddis as an entry to look into the relations between the drum and its many encounters, and how the drum has both shaped and affected these encounters. The authors explore the drum's provenance, religious contexts, and transition into a collector's item. Under colonial conditions, the goavddis manoeuvred between the worlds of both the colonizers and the colonized, emerging as a symbol of Sámi cultural heritage, of resistance, and of Sámi presents and futures. The authors point out that the drum's journeys and shifting meanings through time also enrich understandings of the Arctic University Museum's colonial roots, the challenges which must be addressed, and the museum's potential to become something new.

Chapter 5, by **Cathrine Baglo**, elucidates the intricate historical trajectory of the Hagenbeck Sámi collections held in Hamburg at the Museum Europäischer Kulturen and their role in shaping public perceptions of Sámi culture in Germany. The chapter also illustrates how the author engages with this heritage from a decolonial standpoint with an aim to further enhance provenance research, as the author describes her involvement in the Dávvirat Duiskkas project, which focuses on uncovering objects' provenance (primarily from the Swedish and Norwegian parts of Sápmi) through research and collaboration with Sámi communities.

German institutions collectively hold over 2,000 Sámi objects which, in itself, may not seem to be a large quantity, but for Sápmi, it is very substantial. The chapter delves into the historical contexts surrounding the Hagenbeck Sámi collection and how it connects to Hagenbeck's "live exhibition" enterprises in 1875, as well as from 1878 to 1879, during which two separate Sámi groups, travelling with reindeer and equipment, were brought on tour

and showcased in exhibitions across numerous European cities. A series of objects which may have belonged to people within these Sámi groups are carefully described, with hypotheses presented as to how they came to be owned by the collectors.

Baglo, who echoes the voices of many conservators and museum curators in Sápmi, underscores the imperative to revisit the history of Sámi objects in collections, often relegated to sit in storage, disconnected from their source communities and narratives centuries ago. She advocates for a decolonial approach to comprehend the objects' provenances, and challenges stereotypical depictions of Sámi culture which have frequently fixated solely on reindeer-herding. Her reflections are beneficial for both the Sámi museums leading dialogue about rematriation processes, and to the wider research taking place through the Dávvirat Duiskkas project as it continues to address Sámi objects which have sat in the collections of German museums now for over one hundred years.

Repatriation projects such as Bååstede and Digijoik: Making A Home for Luohti, as well as provenance research projects such as Dávvirat Duiskkas, are but a few examples of how these interventions become critical forces in rethinking and transforming contemporary museum practices and landscapes, challenging assumptions of appropriate stewardship of memory institutions in an age of Sámi mobilization, of how Sámi cultural heritage can and should be activated, experienced, and lived.

Across Sápmi, a proliferation of cultural interventions and competing interpretations of Sámi heritage have taken place as various forms of activism on a variety of scales and in different arenas: in the art world, on social media, in international festivals, study groups, and through new forms of museological presentations and digital technologies. Sámi festivals, Sámi language linguistic landscape interventions, art project-performances such as Sámi Dáiddamusea$^{x}$ at the Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum (NNKM; Northern Norwegian Art Museum), *The Sámi Pavilion* at the Venice Biennale, or travelling exhibitions such as *NyArktis/NewArctic* are all presented as case studies.

Chapter 6 by **Sarah Annemarie Caufield** discusses the Sámi Dáiddamusea$^{x}$ performative exhibit project which was presented in Romsa in 2017, temporarily replacing the NNKM with a version of a possible Sámi *dáiddamusea* (art museum). Despite the NNKM's location in Sápmi, and in a town with a significant Sámi population, the museum had, until that point, largely overlooked Sámi creativity. The Sámi Dáiddamusea$^{x}$ project challenged this exclusion while exposing the colonial undertones and monoculturalism engrained in mainstream European national art museums. The project inspired discussions of the position and importance of Sámi art within cultural contexts at local, regional, and national levels. The performance of the Sámi Dáiddamusea$^{x}$ eventually ended, but it left its mark and could be considered a turning point for the NNKM in terms of its own efforts towards decolonization

and Indigenization. The chapter discusses the role and impact of the Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] within the contexts of decolonization and of discourse on the homogenization of cultural traits in European art museums today.

Although ruptures can generate tensions and exclusion, they can also lead to fruitful debates about the whys and hows of the ongoing processes of decolonization.

In Chapter 7, **Katrine Rugeldal** explores two significant endeavours in Indigenous Sámi art: the Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] and "The Sámi Pavilion" at the 2022 Venezia Biennale. The former, the aforementioned temporary Sámi art museum located in Romsa, was a museum performance, while "The Sámi Pavilion" was shaped by Sámi artists from Norway, Sweden, and Finland, and challenged the nation-state structure of the international Biennale exhibition as it currently exists, organized into national pavilions each profiling their chosen artists. Both projects exclusively promoted Sámi art while using temporarily existing institutions to point out, directly and indirectly, the need for the establishment of permanent Sámi art institutions. Each one emerged out of institutions rooted deeply in modern coloniality, highlighting the persistent colonial narratives which exist in art spaces today.

This chapter frames these initiatives within the context of decoloniality, employing qualitative research methods to examine the impact of cultural discourses and policies surrounding Sámi art and institutions, exploring how the appropriation of the "master's tools" in the process of decolonization may temporarily challenge but ultimately perpetuate existing power structures. It acknowledges the complexities of Indigenous museums' existence, and criticisms of their replication of classic European models. It also emphasizes the decolonial potential of these initiatives, revealing wounds which are not yet healed, offering space from which to imagine alternative Sámi – and, by extension, Indigenous – futures.

In Chapter 8, **Gro B. Ween**, expands upon the development of the *NyArktis/NewArctic* exhibition through the Kulturhistorisk museum (KHM; Museum of Cultural History) in Oslove/Oslo between 2015 and 2016. The project challenged exhibition practices related to how the Arctic has been displayed previously at the KHM, celebrating Roald Amundsen, the white, male explorer, as a Norwegian pioneer and national hero. *NyArktis/NewArctic* drew inspiration from ongoing decolonizing initiatives like the Bååstede project as it set out to develop experimental depictions of a "New Arctic," and to assemble stories of the region as a modern-day homeland.

Ween uses a term stemming from Northern Sámi, *geažideami*, as an analytical device to communicate an understanding of different realities, where divergent perspectives co-exist. When the exhibition was taken down in Oslove, it took on a new life as a travelling exhibition, becoming co-curated by Sámi museums, conservators, and their teams. Ween highlights how different Sámi languages became active intervening agents in the exhibition,

creating a space in which new connections between landscapes, humans, and non-humans could be explored.

Key to practices of appreciation and reappropriation are the gesture of mutuality: giving and receiving. When hands form, shape, exchange, teach, receive, and give back, they create an endowment, taking care of what must be protected for posterity but also visualizing the present anew. There is a sense of offering, sharing, and re-installing something in the now, creating space for Indigenous epistemologies, perspectives, and voices. Initiatives to emancipate Sámi cultural heritage from the heavy burden of simply being conserved and displayed are both imagined and practiced, finding momentum through the surrounding debates, discussions, analysis, and formalization of new practices.

Chapter 9, by **Erika De Vivo**, examines the role of the Márkomeannu festival as a site of toponymic activism. Established in 1999, Márkomeannu is held each summer at Gállogieddi, in the municipality of Dielddanuorri/Tjeldsund, and aims to promote Márka Sámi culture and identity in addition to endorsing art and culture from the whole of Sápmi. Festivals such as Márkomeannu are important shared social spaces, where identities are constantly negotiated and where language fosters place- and identity-making processes. Drawing on fieldwork performed while at the festival between 2018 and 2023, interviews, and an in-depth reading of linguistic signs within the festival area, De Vivo presents an account of both current language attitudes and socio-cultural transformation as epitomized by the local linguistic landscape. The festival also becomes a multidimensional research site through its extension online through the festival's website and social media. Linguistic signs and Sámi toponyms constitute important repositories of local Sámi identities, connecting a community with its past through the language of its ancestors while also projecting these Sámi identities and languages into the future.

To analyse such processes effectively, interventions into established language and jargon surrounding heritage and museum efforts are necessary to disclose Indigenous epistemes that would otherwise remain hidden to outsiders, or to those sceptical about the possibility, ability, or need to change. How do such dialogues and negotiations take place? What experiences have yet to be rendered within heritage studies? And what kind of language and expressions are needed to better emphasize this intersectional knowledge?

Finally, in Chapter 10, **Giacomo Nerici** presents a layered exploration of the Sámi heritage-making process using Sálašoaivi/Tromsdalstinden, the mountain protecting the city of Romsa. He first gives historical context of Romssavággi, home of seasonal Sámi reindeer-herding practices during the early 20th century, underscoring the intimate connection between the Sámi people and their environment. Weaving historical narratives, contemporary developments, and personal encounters to provide a comprehensive view

of the subject matter, Nerici raises questions about the preservation of cultural heritage in the face of external influences such as political agendas or transnational events. This chapter prompts readers to consider the dynamic and sometimes contentious nature of heritage construction, and its implications for identity and politics. The chapter examines the sacred status of Sálašoaivi through his conversations with Sámi artist Hans Ragnar Mathisen to explore how various conceptions and understandings of what determines whether something is "sacred" converged during the heritage-making process.

Nerici articulates the challenges of verifying the existence of a *sieidi*, a sacrificial site, when traditional evidence is lacking. His chapter presents a multifaceted exploration of heritage-making, where history and heritage intertwine, often shaped by arguments over vernacular or scholarly interpretations. Descriptions of the debate around the places and traces of past practices are intersected with questions of secularization, academic authority, and Indigenous spirituality, highlighting the evolving nuanced roles of historians and archaeologists in this process.

Overall, this book provides an array of case studies which explore the initiation, experience, and operationalizing of restitution and rematriation projects. The anthology's contributors have all worked closely with or within memory institutions, setting fresh agendas and highlighting how heritage can, should, and must be discovered, revitalized, and bestowed upon collectives. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which Sámi self-determination and the shifting boundaries between Indigenous and settler identities are articulated, challenged, and renegotiated, both within and beyond institutional settings. It is this underlying agency that this volume seeks to explore, striving to shed light upon different experiences of appropriation, appreciation, and creation within museological and memory institutions contexts.

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# 1

# MÁHTTSAT JA MUJTTALIT

## Árran's Negotiations in the Bååstede Project

*Eli-Anita Øivand Schøning*

On 19 June 2019, the legal ownership of 1,639 *dávvera* (Lule Sámi for artefacts, things, or treasures of special value) was formally transferred to the Sámi museums as a result of the historic Bååstede project (Keskitalo 2021, 28). In line with the Sámi's legal right to manage their own cultural heritage as Indigenous Peoples, Bååstede aimed to repatriate parts of the Sámi collection shared between the two Oslo-based museums, the Norsk Folkemuseum and the Kulturhistorisk museum (Museum of Cultural History; Gaup 2021, 9). Árran Julevsáme guovdásj (Árran Lule Sámi Centre) in Ájluokta/Drag, located in the Norwegian part of Sábme,[1] was one of these Sámi museums.

*Bååstede* is a Southern Sámi term meaning "return," or *máhtsadibme* in Lule Sámi. According to Káren Elle Gaup (2021, 7), curator and project manager of Bååstede, the project was about "[…] viewing the project of returning Sámi cultural heritage as a phoenix – something that has faded or even been lost – coming back together in different ways, for instance through reflection and treating different cultures as having equal status. It is about *managing* one's cultural heritage in one's *own way*."

In this chapter, I examine the negotiations that took place between Árran and the Norsk Folkemuseum during the Bååstede project.[2] By "negotiations," I refer to the formal discussions between the museums regarding the question of which dávvera to repatriate. These negotiations took place between September 2017 and May 2018 as a series of four commission meetings. Although the resulting decisions are important, the negotiations and arguments used to support the demands as to why a particular dávver should be repatriated to Árran or retained at the Norsk Folkemuseum shed light on both the tensions and collaborative will at play throughout the process. Examining the negotiation records, six dávvera were subject to considerable discussion:

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two *muottá* (pelts), a *bivddemgetsam* (hunting belt), a *silbbabassti* (silver spoon), and two *gápte* (traditional Sámi clothing). In this chapter I ask, how did Árran present their views regarding these dávvera, and what sorts of arguments were highlighted in the negotiations?

The analysis of the negotiations connected to these six dávvera reveal three overall themes: diversity, dignity, and "our histories." I examine these themes by focusing on which arguments were used to argue for each of the six dávvera. Where the museums were unable to reach an agreement, replicas were raised as a possible solution. Replicas are physical copies of the original dávvera, produced by a *duodjár*, a person with expertise and technical skills or dexterity who makes Sámi crafts and cultural expressions, someone who is a culture bearer. How do these replicas and the history of collecting dávvera reveal some of the tensions and collaborative will embodied within the Bååstede project?

## Data and Methods

Although I do have Lule Sámi ancestors from Oarjep Fuolldá/Sørfold in Nordland County in Norway, these ancestors passed away many decades before I was born, and this part of the Sámi culture and language within my family were sadly lost with them. My Lule Sámi cultural competence is therefore relatively scarce. I do also have marka-Sámi relatives and ancestors from Southern-Troms County, Norway, located in the southern part of the Northern Sámi area, and I am a former student of Indigenous Studies. My background has influenced the choice of which cultural centres and museums I have established relationships with, and it has influenced my analytical perspectives. My background also has equipped me, I would argue, with experience concerning the emotions, values, and curiosity regarding the repatriation process and what the returning of dávvera may evoke for some Sámi people.

The analysis in this article is based on face-to-face interviews with Harrieth Aira, who was Árran's museum manager during Bååstede and today is responsible for the museum's collections, as well as on a close reading and analysis of Árran's Bååstede document archive. This archive, created by Aira, contains the arguments used by both Árran and the Norsk Folkemuseum for each dávver, as well as other documents, such as commission protocols, email communications, and press releases. The interviews were semi-structured with pre-prepared questions which had been sent in advance, but the interviews were not strictly bound to the interview guides.

## Dávvera, Repatriations, and Rematriations

Terms like objects, artefacts, heritage, and items, commonly used in the museum world, do not fully define the collection that was returned in the context

of Bååstede and Árran. I wanted to use a term in this article that would reflect the Lule Sámi context, as well as the various meanings and relations of the returning objects. *Duodje* (Lule Sámi for Sámi crafts, cultural expressions, and knowledges) was a term I considered and discussed with Aira, but as she pointed out in one of our conversations, as not all the returning Lule Sámi objects in Bååstede were duodje, it was better to use a term that described all of the returned collection objects. She therefore suggested the term *dávver* (Harrieth Aira, phone conversation and email to author, 18 March 2022). Dávvera, then, is used in this chapter to refer to artefacts, things, or treasures of special value, and in this context, these artefacts, things, or treasures are what was returned to Árran through the Bååstede Project.

Historian James Clifford framed the repatriation of Alutiiq/Sugpiaq masks in Kodiak, Alaska, in a way that is also relevant for this discussion, noting that, "[…] the masks' repatriation is part of a relational process of historical transformation. This is not, in any direct sense, the renewal of a past life. The masks now exist in a changed, and changing, homeland where they are making new, re-translated meanings. This is their "second life" as heritage […]" (Feminist Media Studio 2013, 1:55; Clifford 2013, 275–314). Dávvera, in the context of being repatriated, may be seen as experiencing a "second life" when negotiated for and returned to the Lule Sámi area. Not a "second life" in terms of a "Life Number Two," nor as if they had been once lost, but rather in terms of the various knowledges, meanings, values, and functions each dávver brings with it when it is returned to the Lule Sámi communities. When negotiated for, the stories are re-remembered and relearned, in the sense that the knowledges and *sámevuohta* ("Sámi-ness") are brought back and restored (Finbog 2020, 140; Aikio 2022, 5).

Repatriation can be seen as "part of a broader movement of decolonization and reparation of past injustice" (Bell 2009, 87), as well as a movement towards self-determination (Stutz 2007, 5). Within Indigenous contexts, the term repatriation most commonly refers to the return of remains (e.g., Wilson 2009; Mathisen 2017), lands (e.g., Walker 2008), or sacred stones (e.g., Schanche 2002; DeBlock 2017), as well as to sacred and ceremonial objects (e.g., Gulliford 1992; Akerman 2010) from non-Indigenous groups or institutions back to their "source communities." In a museum context, repatriation is most often concerned with the return of ancestral remains and cultural heritage objects (e.g., Turnbull and Pickering 2010) from a non-Indigenous museum to the Indigenous "source community" museum (Peers and Brown 2003). The term "source community" has been contested, however. For example, archaeologist and museologist Neil Curtis (2006, 123) has argued that "source communities" can be commonly understood as being essentialist and a product of Western culture, as the term tends to dichotomize Western culture and source communities as two different things, and does not consider the possibility that these so-called source communities can in fact consist of several ethnic groups.

In the case of the Bååstede project, the term "provenance" was used to define the equivalent of a source community, and provenance was the main leverage used in the negotiation processes (Gaup, Jensen, and Pareli 2021, 171), meaning that provenance was the primary criteria used to identify which museum each dávver should be returned to.[3] In a Sámedigge (Sámi Parliament) resolution from 2007, Árran was given the museum responsibility for both the Lule Sámi and Pite Sámi areas (Árran Julevsáme guovdásj 2009a, 3). As such, Árran has the museum responsibility for the region stretching from Bálák/Ballangen to Ruovat/Rana, and the collection at the Norsk Folkemuseum for these parts of Sábme included 699 dávvera: 658 with provenance in Lule Sámi areas and 41 with provenance in Pite Sámi areas.

While examining the Bååstede documents, I identified a dilemma surrounding provenance in the decision that only the Sámi museums consolidated under the Sámedigge were targeted for repatriation.[4] One consequence of this decision was that Sámi regions such as Pite Sámi were not able to maintain their own cultural heritage after repatriation. The dávvera in the Bååstede project with provenance in Pite Sámi areas were to be returned to Árran rather than to Pite Sámi communities or to Duoddara Ráfe, the Pite Sámi centre. Árran's Bååstede documents show that the manager of Duoddara Ráfe, Stig Morten Kristensen, was reluctant to return the Pite Sámi objects to Árran (Árran Julevsáme guovdásj 2017a, 32). In an interview with NRK Sápmi in 2016, he explained that the Pite Sámi objects should be returned to the Pite Sámi area, where they belonged – which Árran was in agreement with (Andersen 2016). One challenge with provenance in the Bååstede context, then, is that some dávvera were not returned to the area to which they belong, but were instead sent to the nearest constituted Sámi museum even if it was geographically distant to the community itself.

Although Kristensen and Duoddara Ráfe later changed their positions to accept the repatriation of Pite Sámi dávvera to Árran, these preliminary discussions reveal some of the complexities regarding the use of provenance as the main criteria for repatriation. When I use the term provenance in this chapter, then, I refer to how the term was applied within Bååstede specifically, namely as the location in which the dávvera were acquired, produced, or used.

In the Nordic context, the National Museum of Denmark was the first, in 1982, to start the process of repatriating parts of the Greenlandic collection to Nunatta Katersugaasivia Allagaaterqarfialu (Greenland National Museum and Archive) in Nuuk. This process ended in 2001 and was later known as "Utimut," the Greenlandic term for "return." A few years later, in 2006 and 2007, the *Recalling Ancestral Voices – Repatriation of Sámi Cultural Heritage* project was initiated. This was a collaboration between the Säämimuseo Siida in Aanaar/Inari (in the Finnish part of Sábme), Ájtte Duottar- ja Sámemusea in Jåhkåmåhke/Jokkmokk (in the Swedish part), and

Várjjat Sámi Musea in Vuonnabahta/Varangerbotn (in the Norwegian part) to examine and create an overview of Sámi collections in Nordic museums. This project was one of the Sámi-led initiatives that inspired the Norsk Folkemuseum to open a dialogue regarding the repatriation of Sámi objects, which eventually led to the Bååstede project (Harlin 2021, 119). In 2017, the National Museum of Finland began a formal process to repatriate the Sámi collection to the Säämimuseo Siida in Aanaar, and the return of the entire collection was undertaken in 2022.

In the Norwegian part of Sábme, the question regarding the repatriation of objects from Norwegian museums to Sámi institutions can be traced back to 1984 when the Lule Sámi organization Julevsáme duodje initiated discussions with the Norsk Folkemuseum to start a repatriation process (Aira 2021b, 50). For various reasons, it took nearly 25 years to commence the process (the reasons why it took this long has yet to be explored), but in 2009, a working group consisting of representatives from the Norsk Folkemuseum, the Sámedigge, and the Sámi Museasearvi (Sámi Museum Society) was established, and the Kulturhistorisk museum joined the group in 2011. Their investigations resulted in the published report, *Bååstede. Tilbakeføring av kulturarv* (*Bååstede. The Return of Cultural Heritage*; Pareli et al. 2012), which became the foundation for the Bååstede project, formally starting in 2014.

The term "repatriation" does not generally refer to the return of practices, knowledges, values, and meanings (e.g., Finbog 2020; Harlin and Pieski 2020). Therefore, "rematriation" has been applied by some researchers as an alternative but equal term, first used to incorporate the restoration of peoples' sacred relationship with their ancestral lands (Newcomb 1995). Sociocultural anthropologist Robin R. R. Gray (2022) argues that today, rematriation can be seen as representing a feminist Indigenous paradigm (1), meaning that, among other concepts, it "celebrates the leadership and labour of Indigenous women and affirms matriarchal authority" (24). Political scientist and Indigenous scholar Rauna Kuokkanen (2019, 98) notes that rematriation can be linked to Indigenous women's restoration and reclaiming of political roles and authority within governance structures and political orders. In the context of Indigenous museums, archaeologist Eeva-Kristiina Nylander (formerly Harlin) and artist Outi Pieski have further developed the concept in relation to the revitalization of the *ládjogahpir* (Sámi women's hat). They note that, "rematriation has the potential to resocialize cultural belongings into the settings of everyday life. Repatriation returns stolen objects, but it does not necessarily restore their meanings and functions within society" (Harlin and Pieski 2021, 210). Finbog (2020) points out that rematriation is what happens after repatriation, because in the process of rematriation, people join their efforts to also recover meanings, stories, knowledge, and values (193). She notes that, "if epistemicide [destruction of knowledge] is the

illness, then rematriation would be the cure" (127), meaning that rematriation may provide help in re-building knowledge systems that were targeted for destruction due to colonialism. In the case of Árran, Aira (2017/2018, 13–14) emphasized that the return of the dávvera would help restore Lule Sámi identities, belonging, and knowledge, which were nearly all lost due to the processes of Norwegianization.

Neither term – repatriation or rematriation – explicitly implies or includes negotiations as a part of the process of returning. In the Bååstede context, however, negotiations were key to the process because the agreement was to share the Sámi collection across both capital museums and Sámi museums. In the preparations for the negotiations, Árran examined, restored, created, and shared knowledges about the owners, families, and histories of each dávver, putting effort into investigating the value and meanings the return would provide Lule Sámi communities. The negotiations process was thus an arena where knowledge was built, not only during Árran's preparation of its arguments, but also later, at the negotiating table. While my aim is not to come up with a general, broad, analytical concept, an appropriate term which encompasses this entire process is necessary to effectively discuss the empirical material in this article. Thus, to identify a term that includes the aspects of rematriation that have been emphasized by Harlin and Pieski (2021) and Finbog (2020), and which is also inspired by Clifford's (2013) "second life" concept, I have chosen to apply the Lule Sámi term *máhttsat ja mujttalit* as an alternative to repatriation and rematriation. This term creates space to consider the negotiations as arenas where storytelling and knowledge-building took place. Máhttsat translates to "bringing back/coming back/returning," and mujttalit translates to "remembering/storytelling/retelling," thus the full term also translates to reference re-remembering, because in Sámi language, remembering, storytelling, and retelling are the same. While kept in Oslo, the physical objects became decontextualized from their communities, and the stories, meanings, and functions of the dávvera faded away. Through máhttsat ja mujttalit, these relationships become reconnected in new ways, like a *jåhkåsuorgge*, the point where different branches of a river become entwined once more.

## The Negotiations between Árran and the Norsk Folkemuseum

Pareli (2021, 38) notes that "there was, from the outset, an explicit wish from the Sámi Parliament that the Norsk Folkemuseum should continue to study and exhibit Sámi culture and that sufficient material should remain in Oslo for these purposes." To share the collection was a joint decision between the Norsk Folkemuseum, the Sámedigge, and the Sáme Museasearvi – the working group behind the Bååstede report. One argument the working group used to back its decisions was that, as pointed out by social anthropologist Eva Dagny Johansen, the Sámi museums have "particular competence

regarding the history of the objects and their use, while the capital museums have research competence, which together lead to an important synergy" (Pareli et al. 2012, as cited in Johansen 2022, 195, author's translation). In retrospect, however, the decision to share the collection has been criticized, for instance by Johansen (2022, 195), who reminds us about the colonial structures that lie behind arguments such as the one just noted above. This article's focus is on the negotiation processes. Therefore, I will not go into more detail about the decisions made in advance of the project. However, the decision to share the collection is an important backdrop for the forthcoming discussions, as this turned the negotiations into either a hindrance or an opportunity for the Sámi museums to achieve máhttsat ja mujttalit.

The negotiations between the Sámi museums and the Norsk Folkemuseum took place in commission meetings. As part of the preparatory steps for these meetings, curators at the capital museums allocated the Sámi collection according to provenances. These preparations provided the Sámi museums a foundation on which they could negotiate. Five joint meetings were arranged between 2015 and 2019, with an aim to consolidate and anchor the project between all parties (Gaup 2021, 16).[5] While the joint meetings included all parties taking part in Bååstede, the commission meetings focused on one Sámi museum at a time.

Four commission meetings were arranged for the negotiations between Árran and the Norsk Folkemuseum, in September and November 2017, and in February and May 2018. The Kulturhistorisk museum, the Sámedigge, the Sámi Museasearvi, and representatives from some of the other Sámi museums participated in these meetings (Árran Julevsáme guovdásj 2018). Before the first meeting, Aira, as the representative for Árran, received a list from the Norsk Folkemuseum of all the dávvera with provenance in the Lule Sámi area. Using this list as a starting point, Árran arranged two public meetings with members of the local communities to gather feedback regarding which dávvera should be prioritized in the negotiations. These meetings were open to all and announced in local media as well as on Árran's website. In the following months there was also a local hearing process that took place during which Lule Sámi and Pite Sámi organizations, institutions, and duodjára were invited to give their feedback. With the input from the Lule Sámi and Pite Sámi communities, then, Árran determined which dávvera they would focus on in the negotiations. As a result of the Bååstede project, Árran ultimately took over legal ownership for 348 Lule Sámi and 18 Pite Sámi dávvera (Aira 2017/2018). The Pite Sámi collection was not negotiated for during these four commission meetings due to the previously mentioned reasons (Aira 2017/2018, 32). Therefore, the negotiations concerning the Pite Sámi collection are not included in this chapter.

After the first two commission meetings, decisions surrounding 32 dávvera were postponed until a later date as the parties could not agree on whether

these dávvera should be returned or retained. The decisions surrounding six of these dávvera were particularly disagreed upon. In an edited version of the commission protocol sent to the Norsk Folkemuseum, Árran highlighted these six dávvera with the following comments:

> Silver spoon [silbbabassti] – no compromise – alternatively, postpone, to be negotiated.
> Hunting belt [bivddemgetsam] – no compromise – alternatively, postpone, to be negotiated.
> Sámi woman's traditional clothing [gáppte] – no compromise, strong symbolic value – alternatively, postpone, to be negotiated.
> Sámi man's traditional clothing [gáppte] – no compromise – alternatively, postpone, to be negotiated, replica may be ok.
> Man's fur pelt [muoddá].
> Woman's fur pelt, goatskin [muoddá] – not really a compromise, but can compromise because two in the collection, then replica to Árran.
>
> *(Árran Julevsáme guovdásj 2017b, 25, author's translation)*

#### *Diversity – A New Wind for Duodje*

The woman's muoddá (see Figure 1.1) is registered in DigitaltMuseum as having provenance in Divtasvuodna/Tysfjord. The database does not contain information regarding where specifically in Divtasvuodna the muoddá was collected from, nor does it include information about the original owner. DigitaltMuseum does note who bought this garment, namely Travel Secretary Bertrand M. Nielsen who, in 1936, was sent to Sábme by Norway's Etnografisk museum (Ethnographic Museum; DigitaltMuseum 2014a). Aira comments in an interview that one of the reasons that Árran negotiated for the return of the woman's muoddá was that it was unusual to make pelts out of goatskin; however, goatskin was part of the fishermen farmer economy. This particular garment therefore demonstrates how Sámi along the coast used goatskin as fabric (Aira 2021a).

The man's muoddá was also bought by Nielsen, according to DigitaltMuseum. The records for this dávvera include that its original owner was Matthias Nilsen Tjihkkom (1858–1952), a reindeer herder from Utsvona/Uts'vuodna/Grunnfjordbotn in Divtasvuodna. His family sold the muoddá to Nielsen in 1953 who, this time, had been sent to Sábme by the Norsk Folkemuseum (DigitaltMuseum 2014b). In the negotiations for the two muottá, Árran requested both because a muoddá is not a common item of clothing in the Lule Sámi area today. According to Aira, the return of these dávvera would thus demonstrate variations in materials and design between men's and women's clothing, while also showing how the Sámi of the region dressed in the winter, which is essential knowledge for local duodjára (Árran

**FIGURE 1.1** The woman's muoddá, an outer garment made out of a goatskin pelt, item ID NFSA.2289.

*Source:* Photo by Anne-Lise Reinsfeldt/Norsk Folkemuseum.

Julevsáme guovdásj 2017b). Aira noted that the request for both men's and women's clothing came from local duodjára because they wanted to see the gendered variations in the clothing (Harrieth Aira, email to author, 29 September 2022).

The man's gáppte, meanwhile, has no owner registered in DigitaltMuseum. The database does mention that it is a bridegroom's gáppte, collected in the summer of 1924 by Paul Egede Nissen (DigitaltMuseum 2014c), an assistant at the Etnografisk museum, during his journey in Lule Sámi and Southern Sámi areas. The bridegroom gáppte is the only one in the entire Lule Sámi collection at both the Norsk Folkemuseum and the Kulturhistorisk museum. According to Aira, the man's gáppte is old and "special" in terms of its decoration, with a neckline traced in a yellow zigzag pattern of thorns on red textile, which is uncommon for a Lule Sámi gáppte (Aira 2021a).

Aira compared the loss of knowledge regarding diversity in design to the standardization of duodje, noting that,

> The typical consequence of the Norwegianization [processes] is that several generations of Sámi did not learn duodje. Traditionally, this transmission of duodje had been passed down in the home, transferred as traditional knowledge, but Norwegianization caused a breach in this knowledge production that we still struggle with today.
>
> […] As large numbers of people stopped sewing, only a few gáppte-makers remained. This expertise was held onto by very few hands, leading to a standardization of duodje: these particular colours, that particular model, and so on. What we now see in the Bååstede collection reveals another image. It shows diversity regarding the gáppte, in how it was decorated, in the combination of colours […]
>
> *(Aira 2019, author's translation)*

Epistemicide refers to the destruction of knowledge (Santos 2014, 18). In Sámi contexts, the term has been used to describe breaches in the transfer of duodje knowledge from one generation to the next due to the impacts of Norwegianization (Finbog 2020). The loss of knowledge to which Aira refers, of how much more diverse duodje expression had been in the past, can be seen as a form of epistemicide. The standardization of gáppte design thus limits manoeuvrability in terms of how such clothing could or would be made. According to Aira (2019), the return of duodje items contributes to challenging the common belief that gáppte decorations and design must always follow strict, standardized rules. Furthermore, the collection provides duodjára opportunities for broadening the possibilities of duodje, challenging the beliefs of what is "authentic" and "traditional," and securing knowledge for future generations.

### *Dignity – Counterstorytelling*

The silbbabassti (see Figure 1.2) is made of silver and has a pear-shaped blade with engravings inside. Divtasvuodna is registered as its provenance in DigitaltMuseum, but there is no information about who owned the silbbabassti. The collector is registered, however, namely Bertrand M. Nielsen who sold this dávvera to the Etnografisk museum in June 1932. Carl August Lahn, who was a goldsmith in Bergen in the mid-19th century (Tandberg 2013, 113), was the producer (DigitaltMuseum 2014d). The silbbabassti material is so-called Lappish silver, referring to silver that was produced by goldsmiths upon the order of Sámi customers, and was made to certain cultural specifications in terms of decoration, resulting in the silver having a notably different appearance to other Nordic-style silver pieces (Fjellström 1962, 11).

**FIGURE 1.2** Silbbabassti, the silver spoon, item ID ÁRR-00652.

*Source:* Photo by Anne-Lise Reinsfeldt/Norsk Folkemuseum.

In her article in the book about the Bååstede project, Aira maintains,

> I am extremely grateful that the only silver spoon in the Sámi collection in the Norsk Folkemuseum that is from the Lule Sámi area is being returned. […] the silver artefacts represent a distinctive epoch in Sámi history – a period of prosperity and economic growth in the early 1500s (Fjellström 1962; Kolsrud 1947). We can use this object to tell and discuss the history of our people, which can be linked not only to negative events, but to the times of prosperity, wealth, and freedom of action.
>
> *(Aira 2021b, 54)*

By "negative events," Aira is referring to negative characteristics that were used by the majority of society to describe the Sámi people, such as the Sámi being associated with poverty and "being outside of society" (Harrieth Aira, email to author, 29 September 2022). What Aira describes is related to a particularly dark period in Sámi history, from approximately the mid-19th to the mid-20th centuries, characterized by Norwegian nationalism and social Darwinism. Historian Steinar Pedersen has noted that there was a change in the relationships between the Sámi and Norwegians from the 1860s as the Norwegian population began to more explicitly express beliefs that positioned them on a higher cultural rung than the Sámi (2019, 135). Meanwhile, social Darwinism was becoming influential in cultural science development theory and, according to historians Knut Einar Eriksen and Einar Niemi, had

its breakthrough in Norwegian (and Swedish) contexts around 1870. This theory was used by the Norwegian state as an argument to legitimize the Norwegianization Policy (Eriksen and Niemi 1981, 37). Influenced by social Darwinism, the research field of physical anthropology became increasingly popular in the early-20th century. Physician Kristian Emil Schreiner and physical anthropologist Alette Schreiner, two prominent researchers at the time, came to Divtasvuodna in 1914 and 1921 as part of their investigations into Sábme, during which they "studied" Sámi people by taking skull and body measurements (Evjen 2009, 180–181). Such encounters between the Sámi and researchers, coupled with highly problematic research focuses and methods, marks some of the negative events which have been remembered and re-remembered by the Sámi in Divtasvuodna through generations (Mikkelsen 2016). Even today, knowledge concerning Sámi culture is limited, with the result that the Sámi still experience prejudice from the majority society.

The silbbabassti offers an opportunity to relearn and re-remember stories of a past before Norwegianization, a past not associated with poverty nor exclusion, but rather with trade, growth, and wealth. Such re-remembrance can be understood as counterstorytelling. Indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012, 2) notes that counterstories narrated by Indigenous Peoples make for a powerful resistance against colonizers' stories about Indigenous Peoples. In Sámi contexts, numerous stories about the Sámi, coloured by social Darwinistic attitudes, have been articulated by non-Sámi, such as those of Olav Holm, a pastor in the Divtasvuodna parish from 1878 to 1884, who continuously exoticized the Sámi people through his writings (Evjen 2009, 178–179). Indigenous scholar Margaret Kovach (2009, 94) maintains that stories signify relationships and are interrelated with knowing. Since the late-20th century, various social actors have been "taking back" Sámi history through counterstories as part of their knowledge production. As for Árran and the Lule Sámi communities, máhttsat ja mujttalit provides an opportunity to strengthen the intrinsic relationship between stories, memories, and knowledge, allowing for new chapters of Sámi history to be written, and challenging old prejudices and colonial narratives through the use of dávvera such as the silbbabassti.

### *Our Histories*

Cultural historian Veli-Pekka Lehtola examined how the return of photographs to Sámi communities provided opportunities for the sharing of personal stories about families, kinship, and the Sámi communities themselves. He noted that, "it seems, however, to be typical for 'our histories' to be specifically local or even 'private,' related strongly to certain families or kinsfolk" (Lehtola 2018, 6). Árran's Bååstede archives and the interviews with Aira show that the dávvera with connection to families were important for

máhttsat ja mujttalit because descendants of the original owners still live in the Lule Sámi area today. Some of the dávvera for which Árran argued on the basis of a known owner was the bivddemgetsam (hunting belt), the man's muoddá, and the women's gáppte.

The bivddemgetsam was owned by locally well-known bear hunter Jon Pedersen from Suoksavuomjávrre/Makkvatnet in Hábmer/Hamarøy in the southern part of the Lule Sámi region. This dávver was collected by Bertrand M. Nielsen and sold to the Etnografisk museum in August 1932 (DigitaltMuseum 2014e). Árran's argument for the return of this dávver was that it would provide them with a way to narrate Pedersen's story and build knowledge about the local hunting culture. Although hunting and gathering culture was a central part of Lule Sámi cultural heritage, knowledge about this part of the Lule Sámi culture today is scarce. Furthermore, Árran noted that the bivddemgetsam would help them create a more complete story about the people in this part of the Lule Sámi area.[6] According to Árran, the bivddemgetsam enables the re-building of identity, and is important to both Pedersen's descendants and the history of Suoksavuomjávrre.

The man's muoddá, which had belonged to Tjihkkom, as previously mentioned, connects to the history of reindeer pastoralism in the region because Tjihkkom was a reindeer herder. Utsvona has a long history as a pasture area for reindeer herders (Tysfjord Lokalhistorielag 1988, 29–30), and the man's muoddá therefore contributes to restoring the local historical knowledge. As Aira commented, Tjihkkom has many living descendants today, and the muoddá provides an opportunity to link the past with the present, creating an identity for his kin in Divtasvuodna (Harrieth Aira, email to author, 29 September 2022).

Meanwhile, the woman's muoddá made of goatskin connects to the histories of the farmer-fishermen economy and Coastal Sámi culture. In a museum context, Coastal Sámi culture generally disappeared as a cultural display category by the end of the 19th century (Baglo 2019). In the Lule Sámi area, Coastal Sámi spoke Norwegian language and dressed in Norwegian clothing by the turn of the 20th century (Evjen 1997, 15). As the Sámi coastal culture has been less recognized as being a part of Lule Sámi history, then, highlighting it and strengthening its representation has been one of Árran's priorities (Árran Julevsáme guovdásj 2009b, 28–29).

Although the woman's muoddá, as well as the man's, are important to different aspects of the local history, during the negotiations, Árran noted that if they had to choose between the two, they would choose the man's because they knew who originally owned it, and the owner's descendants are alive today. This prioritization, made explicit by Árran, illustrates the potential Árran saw in the dávvera's ability to enable and build "our histories."

Finally, the woman's gáppte (see Figure 1.3) was bought by the Etnografisk museum in 1913 from Elen Finnesen, with DigitaltMuseum listing

**FIGURE 1.3** The woman's gáppte, a traditional Sámi tunic, item ID ÁRR-00554.
*Source:* Photo by Anne-Lise Reinsfeldt/Norsk Folkemuseum.

Finnesen as the seller and Divtasvuodna registered as the provenance (DigitaltMuseum 2014f). Elen Finnesen was related to Sámi politician Peder Finnesen, who was strongly engaged in Sámi politics, working alongside other notable Sámi politicians such as Elsa Laula Renberg and Henrik Kvandahl in the early 1920s (Aira 2021a). Renberg and Kvandahl are both well-known for their long political engagement at a time when the Sámi were already either largely written out of history or generally represented by non-Sámi (Andresen, Evjen, and Ryymin 2021, 19). Finnesen has many living descendants today, with some even employed at Árran. During the negotiations, Árran argued that the gáppte would have huge symbolic value, as it connects to Sámi politics and cultural engagement.

Connection to living family was a particularly strong argument in the negotiations between Árran and the Norsk Folkemuseum, as illustrated by the case of the bivddemgetsam, the man's muoddá, and the women's gáppte, with the Norsk Folkemuseum explicitly acknowledging that, because these artefacts could be connected to individuals, they should be returned (Árran Julevsáme guovdásj 2019, 25).

### *Burden of Proof*

The Bååstede documents I have examined show that, between Árran and the Norsk Folkemuseum, the majority of arguments presented were by the Sámi museum from the standpoint of máhttsat ja mujttalit. In general, the capital museum merely replied to the Sámi museum's points, presenting few arguments of their own. To illustrate, Árran presented 14 arguments for the return of the man's and woman's muottá, while the Norsk Folkemuseum provided only one for keeping it: "[…] the Norsk Folkemuseum wants to retain [the woman's muoddá] as it is important to show the use of goatskin" (Árran Julevsáme guovdásj 2017b, author's translation). In her doctoral thesis, "Samisk kulturarv tilbakeføres – innvirkninger på lokalmuseum og samfunn i Altafjorden, Sápmi," Johansen noted,

> In order to get the items back from the Norsk Folkemuseum, the Sami museums were required to make lists and explain why it was important to return the items in question. It was [the institutions] who today have the legal ownership of the objects who were allowed to set the conditions in the process, without the legitimacy of this ownership being directly challenged. […] Despite international conventions recognizing the rights of Indigenous People, the Sami museums were left with the burden of proof *vis-à-vis* the Norsk Folkemuseum and the Kulturhistorisk museum.
>
> *(Johansen 2022, 150, author's translation)*

Johansen argued that the repatriation process could have had a larger decolonizing impact if the negotiations had begun from the perspective of assumed Sámi ownership (194). In other words, if the situation had been reversed and it was the capital museums which had to bear the burden of proof, then it might have been the Norsk Folkemuseum having to present a list of arguments to justify their claims to retain the woman's muoddá in Oslo. The reason that the negotiations over the woman's muoddá did not favour máhttsat ja mujttalit, however, has to do with the definition on how the collection should be shared between the Sámi museums and the capital museums. In this case, Árran had already been given ownership of half the muoddá collection from Lule Sámi area, and one more would not be possible according to this agreement. As such, the women's muoddá demonstrates

one of the problems with shared collections. Because of the decision of sharing the collection, Árran had to let go of the woman's muoddá even though they had well-developed arguments for its return – when the rule was activated, the Sámi museums lost their manoeuvrability in the negotiations. Thus, although the Bååstede project were guided by rules to ensure a reciprocal and a respectful process (Pareli et al. 2012, 13, 43), it was still not an equal process.

However, when examining the process from the perspective of knowledge production, having to shoulder the burden of proof may have also benefitted the processes of máhttsat ja mujttalit. The documents and interviews reveal that Árran, and Aira in particular, spent considerable time and resources examining each dávver in the Norsk Folkemuseum's Lule Sámi collection while developing their arguments supporting their claims for máhttsat ja mujttalit. This meant that, from an early stage in the Bååstede processes, Árran had to examine, reflect, and discuss, as well as documenting the values, emotions, and functions that each dávver could potentially bring back to the Lule Sámi community. Through this deep dive into the processes of relearning and remembering each of the dávver, Árran built a solid base of knowledge about each one early on. Furthermore, involving the local communities at such an early stage of the project may have also helped Árran establish relationships and trust with the residents in the region. A relationship based on trust can become useful when a collection is returned, in this case to Ájluokta, as museum employees continue the work of collecting stories related to each dávver. Hence, despite the negative aspects of bearing the burden of proof, the knowledge produced early on may have contributed to establishing and securing the Sámi museum's role within its community. At the very least, the multiple contexts of having to shoulder the burden of proof indeed reveal that, in Bååstede, máhttsat ja mujttalit was a complex and multifaceted process.

### Recontextualizations, Replicas, and Ruptures

In the end, the silbbabassti, the woman's gáppte, the man's muoddá, and the bivddemgetsam would be brought to Árran, with an agreement that a replica of the silbbabassti would be made for the Norsk Folkemuseum. Meanwhile, the man's gáppte and woman's muoddá would come to Árran as replicas (Árran Julevsáme guovdásj 2018, 19). In the Bååstede project, the creation of a replica was considered as a solution in cases where the parties could not agree upon whether objects should be returned to Sámi museums or retained at the Norsk Folkemuseum or the Kulturhistorisk museum (Ween 2021, 131). A replica became the meeting place or compromise in the Bååstede negotiations,[7] however the negotiations regarding replicas also brought certain tensions and issues of collaborative will to the forefront.

A rupture, as a theoretical term, can be used to describe a critical cut or turning point that causes a significant break within existing conditions, thereby bringing about new values. The term can be debated and criticized for its association with violence in revolutionary politics (Holbraad, Kapferer, and Sauma 2019, 3). Philosophers such as Antonio Gramsci (e.g., 1971), Louis Althusser (e.g., 1969), and sociologist Stuart Hall et al. (e.g., 1978) are among the most recognized researchers who have examined ruptural crises as moments of potential change. Ruptures can, according to social anthropologist Caroline Humphrey (2019, 27), involve both a "break from" and a "break towards," as when one is in crisis, there is a need to face both past and future. In other words, ruptures can occur when something bad happens, and this event or moment becomes a turning point for change – either towards something better or worse. The Norwegianization processes and the Norwegian nationalism characterized by ideas of social Darwinism illustrate turning points towards something worse for the Sámi, with epistemicide as one of its consequences. During this epoch of Sámi history, missionaries, emissaries, and other civil servants travelled on commission to Sábme to collect dávvera. More recently, under the Bååstede project, such encounters between the Sámi and civil servants were recognized as asymmetrical power relations (Gaup 2021, 8). Art historian Mårten Snickare refers to such contexts as sociocultural landscapes defined largely by colonialism. According to Snickare (2022, 19), acknowledging an object's colonial history is an important step towards decolonization. He uses the concept of "colonial objects" to refer to "a state in the historically situated existence of an object." In the case of Bååstede, the state of historically situated existence that occurred when the dávvera were collected from Sámi homes and brought to the capital museums from the late-20th up to the mid-21st century can be understood as the dávvera being recontextualized into a colonial sociocultural landscape. It is in these moments of recontextualization that I argue the dávvera and the acts of collecting them can be seen as ruptures, a break from being dávvera in Lule Sámi communities as they became museum objects in a capital museum.

In her article, "The emergence of value in the process of the Sámi repatriation," anthropologist Gro Ween, who was the Kulturhistorisk museum's representative in the Bååstede project, noted that, "Conversations with the *duojarat* [those who practice duodje] among museum representatives however made the [members of Bååstede] aware that even these objects [such as horns, spoons, gáppte, and tools] had qualities that could be hard to reproduce" (2021, 57–58). Reflecting on these conversations, Ween maintains that the qualities of the individual animal materials out of which the objects were made, the original objects' natural colours, and the relationship between the objects and their maker are just some of the aspects that are difficult or even impossible to copy (58). In the case of the woman's muoddá and the man's gáppte, Ween's argument is particularly relevant. According to Finbog (2020, 172),

the voice of the material is killed in the making of replicas because, as she notes while referring to duodjár Gunvor Guttorm, "the material shows you how to shape it, meaning that the material and the duojár always engage in dialogue […]" (Guttorm 2012, as cited in Finbog 2020, 171–172). A replica is clearly a rupture, then, a break from the original dávver. Furthermore, original dávvera may elicit emotions, especially if they had been owned by a family member, and such emotions cannot be copied into a replica.

Snickare (2022, 19) has noted that, "In the same way as an object might have been something else before it became a colonial object, it might become something else again." This holds true in the case of dávvera which enter a "second life" through máhttsat ja mujttalit (Clifford 2013). A replica does not have the potential to bring with it a second life for the original dávver, but that does not mean it cannot still provide new insights and knowledges – mujttalit – for Lule Sámi communities. The process of creating a replica provides a duodjár with the opportunity to deeply explore the materials, patterns, techniques, and decorations that were once used, which can be seen as a break towards opportunities for regeneration and renewal.

## The Dávvera and "Sámi Cultural Heritage as a Phoenix"[8] – Concluding Remarks

Two muottá (pelts), two gápte (Sámi traditional clothing), a silbbabassti (silver spoon), and a bivddemgetsam (hunting belt) were all subject to several rounds of negotiations between Árran and the Norsk Folkemuseum. As study materials, the discussions around these six dávvera provide insights into some of the arguments and rationales used by Árran to support their claims in the negotiations.

Three overall themes were identified in the negotiations for máhttsat ja mujttalit: diversity, dignity, and "our histories." The muottá and gápte would provide Árran with opportunities to create and share knowledge about the various forms of duodje. Such knowledge is scarce today, underlining the importance of the diversity in these dávvera. The silbbabassti, meanwhile, serves as a testimony to past Sámi wealth, contradicting stereotypes still held by many, and its return to Árran, máhttsat ja mujttalit, therefore contributes to the returning of dignity to the Lule Sámi community. In this way, the silbbabassti can be seen as a key to counterstorytelling, reshaping the dominant narratives of Sámi history. Finally, the bivddemgetsam, together with the man's muoddá and the women's gáppte, were three of the dávvera under focus in this chapter whose original owner was in fact known, and dávvera with known owners were particularly important for máhttsat ja mujttalit due to their potential in strengthening "our histories."

In cases where the museums did not reach an agreement, replicas were seen as the means of compromise. As I have argued, replicas can be seen as

ruptures, not only as a break from the original dávver, but also as a break towards relearning and re-remembering, as the creation of a replica requires in-depth study of the dávver by a duodjár, which brings new life to the object as well as the knowledge embedded within it.

In the context of the Bååstede negotiations, the dávvera with provenance within Lule Sámi and Pite Sámi area will now be housed by Árran through máhttsat ja mujttalit. In practice, this also means that duodje, previously transferring from one generation to the next in private settings such as homes, are now being considered and valued as having a place in Sámi museums. In other words, the dávvera that will come to Ájluokta and Árran are like a phoenix, creating new possibilities for relearning and re-remembering within Sámi communities' own premises.

## Notes

1 The traditional territory of the Sámi people in Fennoscandia has slightly different names across the various Sámi languages – in Lule Sámi this region is called Sábme. Reflecting the culture and specific region being discussed in this chapter, all terms and names used in this chapter are in Lule Sámi language (unless in a direct quote from another document or the name of a place or institution located in a different Sámi area).

2 A large part of the Sámi collection was originally owned by the Kulturhistorisk museum, but this ownership was extended to (and the items placed in the care of) the Norsk Folkemuseum collection for storage and caretaking in 1951 (Pareli et al. 2012, 9), meaning that both museums shared ownership of the Sámi collection at the time the Bååstede project took place. As the negotiations with Árran were chaired by the Norsk Folkemuseum, however, this article refers specifically to the Norsk Folkemuseum as the party in negotiation with Árran.

3 Although provenance has been the primary criteria used to determine how or to which Sámi collection an object should be returned through Bååstede, other criteria were also used (e.g., producer, techniques, age of the object, purpose, function; Gaup, Jensen, and Pareli 2021, 171–173). These were particularly useful in cases where identification of provenance was difficult or impossible.

4 The consolidated Sámi museums are Árran, Várdobáiki Sámi Guovddáš (Várdobáiki Sámi Centre), Saemien Sijte (Southern Sámi Museum and Cultural Centre), Davvi Álbmogiid Guovddáš (Centre of Northern Peoples), Várjjat Sámi Musea (Varanger Sámi Museum), and RiddoDuottarMuseat.

5 The parties involved in Bååstede (from 2014 to 2019) were the Norsk Folkemuseum, the Kulturhistorisk museum, the Sámedigge, and the consolidated Sámi museums. The Sámedigge's role in Bååstede was to ensure good framework conditions (Keskitalo and Olsen 2021, 184) and to administer the funds that had been granted by the Norwegian state to support the project (Gaup, Jensen, and Pareli 2021, 165).

6 More of Suoksavuomjávrre's history is now known through the story of border guide Anna Pedersdatter, the granddaughter of Jon Pedersen, who is known for helping refugees flee to the Swedish part of Sábme during World War II (Soleim, Nergård, and Andersen 2015, 118). Today, Suoksavuomjávrre is used only for open-air activities (Árran Julevsáme guovdásj, 2017b, 23).

7 A working group consisting of members from the Sámi museums and the Norsk Folkemuseum has now been established, tasked with administering a project

called "Kopieringsprosjektet" ("The Copy Project") with an aim to support and finance the process of creating the agreed-upon replicas for the museums that took part in the Bååstede project.

8 A reference to Gaup (2021, 7).

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Árran Julevsáme guovdásj. 2018. Árran Bååstede Archive Folder 6/7, Harrieth Aira, email to Leif Pareli regarding protocol texts. 31 August 2018. Árran Julevsáme guovdásj, Ájluokta/Drag, Norway.

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# 2

# OLD SEA SÁMI ARTEFACTS AND NEW MUSEUM PRACTICES

*Eva Dagny Johansen*

On 17 January 2017, a shiny, sealed metal box from the Norsk Folkemuseum in Oslo arrived at The World Heritage Rock Art Centre – Alta Museum/Báktedáidaga máilmmiárbeguovddáš – Álttá Musea (hereafter simply Álttá Musea) in Finnmark/Finnmárku, Norway's northernmost region. The box contained seven old Sámi artefacts that were now returning to Sápmi, the traditional homeland of the Sámi people, after having been away for a century: a box/*skáhppu*, a needle for knotting nets/*čiktingeahpa*, a belt/*boagán*, a bonnet horn/*ládjofierra*, an otter trap/*ceavrágillár*, and two traditional Sámi costumes/*gávttit*. What are the effects of returning such artefacts to local museums and to today's Sámi communities? In this chapter I focus on three of the artefacts mentioned above, namely the čiktingeahpa, the boagán, and one of the gávttit. I followed these items while collaborating with a local focus group at Álttá Musea that was contributing to the development of a new temporary exhibition, titled, *Na, maid dál? Our Sámi Cultural Heritage Heading Home*.[1] The chapter aims to investigate what is already or what becomes either visible or invisible, material or immaterial, in the encounters between artefacts and people at the museum during the repatriation process, the themes which emerge, and, considering the museum as a contact zone, what is exchanged in this space. The artefacts' connections to individuals and the local community are also examined, revealing which processes and discussions old Sámi artefacts can engender in their encounters with and inclusion in everyday Sea Sámi life in Alta/Álttá today. Furthermore, I discuss how these encounters create new understandings and new forms of knowledge, and their relevance to the museum's education activities, administration, and research.

The three artefacts in focus in this chapter are old tools and clothing that were once used in daily life in Sea Sámi communities in Altafjorden/

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Álttávuotna and Øksfjorden/Ákšovuotna in Finnmárku. Finnmárku stretches from the northern coast to the inland of Sápmi, as do the reindeer migration routes, as they move between their summer and winter pastures. The fjords along the coast are traditional Sea Sámi areas, as well as places where people of numerous different cultures have lived for centuries. The artefacts being returned in 2019 had been collected for the Kulturhistorisk museum (Museum of Cultural History) in Oslo in 1907 and 1910. As ethnographic artefacts, they were deemed to be of interest as representations of other cultures. At the time, museums were constructed within a knowledge system where geographical journeys from the centre were also regarded as journeys through time, and as such they also assumed the power to represent the "others," those who were not admitted a capacity to represent themselves (Rio 2002; Larsen 2009). At the same time that these objects were collected, powerful Norwegianization processes were taking place throughout Norway, as Sámi culture and cultural expression were not seen to have a place in the national and ethnic Norwegian community (Kyllingstad 2023).

The old Sámi artefacts were delivered to the Kulturhistorisk museum, and later transferred to the Sámi collections of the Norsk Folkemuseum, an open-air museum featuring Norwegian vernacular architecture and exhibits of cultural heritage. In 2019, however, the parties involved in Bååstede, the Norwegian repatriation project, signed an agreement to transfer ownership of numerous objects, and today the artefacts referred to in this chapter are in the possession of the municipal museum in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino, Finnmárku, but remain on loan to Álttá Musea.[2]

## The Cultural Biography and Social Life of Artefacts

To regard the museum as a contact zone (Clifford 1997), that is, as a field where various interests, perspectives, and understandings convene and views are exchanged, also affords an opportunity for change (Golding and Modest 2013). The museum becomes an actor in a practice where different groups and people can take part in negotiating relevant categories and significant artefacts, (re)present their own culture, and thereby make it possible to transform museological discourse on key identity markers. An important prerequisite for such a venture to succeed is to be sensitive to both the shifting, asymmetric relationships that are active in this field in the present as well as to the long-term historical developments that the museum as a practice is rooted in. It is therefore necessary for the museum both to relinquish power and to be aware of and accommodate local stakeholders' intentions and political strategies.

Artefacts which were transferred from their original usages in Northern Norway to national museums in the south of Norway were thus decontextualized and then recontextualized elsewhere, adding new layers of meaning

through their displacement and new usages. Moreover, their return journey entails new layers of meaning being added through new contexts. I employ Arjun Appadurai's theory from *The Social Life of Things* (1986) to study object biographies, that is, how objects are assigned new meaning in new value regimes. I aim to shed light on such object biographies and on the contexts and strategies by which objects are created and recreated, and demonstrate how people and artefacts are linked together (Thomas 1991) while pointing out the opportunities this provides in people's own, personal narratives (Hoskins 1998). Appadurai distinguishes between an object's "cultural biography" and its "social life." Objects embody meaning that will subsequently change in new cultural contexts. Woven into different people's narratives and relationships, they have the capacity to extend beyond ethnic, geographical, and temporal borders. The concept of a cultural biography focuses on specific objects "as they move through different hands, contexts, and uses" (Appadurai 1986, 34; Kopytoff 1986, 64). When we look at relics not as individual items but as larger groups, Appadurai emphasizes, we should keep the "big picture" in mind:

> When we look at classes or types of thing, however, it is important to look at longer-term shifts (often in demand) and larger-scale dynamics that transcend the biographies of particular members of that class or type. Thus a particular relic may have a specific biography, but whole types of relic, and indeed the class of things called "relic" itself, may have a larger historical ebb and flow, in the course of which its meaning may shift significantly.
>
> *(Appadurai 1986, 34)*

The regimes of change that artefacts go through assign them with new value and also imply shifts in power. The items returned to Sápmi through the Bååstede project included artefacts that were collected and then either sent to or, as was often the case, sold to the Kulturhistorisk museum in Oslo from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century. Such items were then included in the museum as *ethnographica* – exotic objects – and displayed as representations of foreign cultures. Categorized as Sámi artefacts, they were transferred to the Norsk Folkemuseum in 1951, forming the museum's Sámi collection (Pareli et al. 2012). The museum retained the collection's ethnic classification, but provided scant information about the original contexts the individual items operated within. This new system separated the artefacts from their former existence, decontextualizing and recontextualizing them as documentation or evidence, as representations of cultural wholes. This management system did not request nor seek to discover any information beyond the artefacts' physical properties. The artefacts' links to their Indigenous contexts were thus reduced in this new value regime, examples of changed power

relations. Within this new context, knowledge about the artefacts was now managed by the museum's staff, who became experts on Sámi culture via the various disciplines involved in the museum's management and education activities.

Appadurai (1986) uses the terms "cultural biography" and "social life" to refer to differences that are not typically seen as relevant in museological practice. This may be due to a dearth of information, however the management of a museum also has the power to define what they believe is relevant when categorizing and presenting the objects in its possession. Taking artefacts from local, Sámi communities and placing them under the management of Norwegian museums must in that sense be regarded as cultural appropriation, as they were taking power over cultural objects belonging to another ethnic group. In 1985, the Norwegian Sámi Association held part of its annual meeting at the Norsk Folkemuseum, with delegates stating that the museum's Sámi artefacts should be considered the property of the Sámi people (Johansen 2022). In 2007, in connection with a seminar held by Sámi museums in Finland, Sweden, and Norway during their joint project *Recalling Ancestral Voices: Repatriation of Sámi Cultural Heritage*, the Norsk Folkemuseum announced its willingness to return parts of the Sámi collection (Harlin 2008).

As Indigenous Peoples began to challenge how their material culture was being presented in museums and by whom, museums began to engage in collaboration and dialogue, something that was especially important for the legitimacy of ethnographic museums (Simpson 1996; Clifford 1997; Peers and Brown 2003; Tythacott and Arvanitis 2014). Depending on the institution, such engagement may have been a genuine recognition of local and Indigenous interests, or it could have been a perfunctory move to deflect criticism (Boast 2011; Thomas 2016). Dan Hicks is critical of perspectives that focus on artefacts and people as entangled entities, even as they obfuscate the power relations involved in museums' knowledge production. Instead of viewing the museum as a method, he suggests that we recognize "the ongoing status of the museum as a weapon," as an instrument used to erase something and make it invisible through knowledge that is ignored (Hicks 2020, 28). From this perspective, museums can be accused of "killing" artefacts, dislocating them from their original context and inserting them into a new one, while also acting as an intellectual regime that plays a dominant role in determining what sort of knowledge is transmitted about these same artefacts.

Recognizing Indigenous Peoples' collective ownership of the artefacts once claimed by museums leads to a transfer of power and possible changes in relationships. The Bååstede repatriation agreement was signed in Norway in 2012, aiming to return and transfer the legal ownership of 1,639 Sámi artefacts from the museums in Oslo to Sámi museums in the Norwegian part of

Sápmi. The process also impacted Álttá Musea, a local museum within Sápmi managed by Norwegian museum authorities. The local museum's participation in the repatriation process and its collaboration with the local populace led to new perspectives, also regarding its own collections, as artefacts previously categorized as belonging to Northern Norwegian coastal culture were revealed to in fact be Sea Sámi artefacts.

By listening to the needs of stakeholders, museums have the ability to share their power and resources in order to produce new knowledge and thereby promote restitution processes. It was through such an effort that a local focus group, working with Álttá Musea to develop the *Na, maid dál? Our Sámi Cultural Heritage Heading Home* exhibition, was able to play a key role in reposition artefacts returned through the Bååstede project. Their involvement in determining how to present the artefacts of the past led to new ways of managing both the artefacts themselves and the historical records going forward, demonstrating how museological practice can also be used to bring artefacts and knowledge back to life.

These broader dynamics can be illuminated through three historical Sámi artefacts – the čiktingeahpa, the boagán, and the gákti – that came to Álttá Musea thanks to the museum's participation in the Bååstede project. I also discuss the effects these repatriated artefacts had on the local Sámi community and Álttá Musea, and how led to the development of a future exhibit dedicated to the Sea Sámi. Before the focus group began its work, however, a fourth artefact would prove to be key in building trust and cooperation within the group.

## The Focus Group and the Artefacts

The focus group appointed to help develop Álttá Musea's exhibition in 2017 consisted of seven individuals who either came from the local Sámi community or were part of the museum staff at the time: Dagrun Sarak Sara, Tor Bjørnar Henriksen, Bente Sjursen, Yvonne Normanseth, Kristin Harila, Kristin Nicolaysen, and myself, as manager and researcher.[3] We held a total of eight meetings of two to three hours each from October to December 2016, where we discussed salient topics, chose relevant artefacts, refined the exhibition concept, and engaged in a dialogue with the exhibit designer János Kolostyak.[4]

For each focus group meeting, I would send out a memorandum identifying a topic for discussion and calling for input. The first meeting was enthusiastic and open-minded, but there was also a slightly tentative mood, with the group members not entirely sure what to expect. This slight wait-and-see atmosphere inspired what would later become the first part of the exhibition's title, "*Na, maid dál?*" ("*What now?*"), an open but expectant question, suggesting pensive curiosity or perhaps ambivalence as to what the outcomes

of our group might be. As the members gradually formed opinions about the inherent opportunities of our collaboration, various issues also emerged providing an overall direction for the exhibition's theme, selection, and design.

Early in the process, conservator Anne Pettersen explained how it would be constructive to identify the exhibition's target group sooner than later. This led to questions and discussion about what visitors would need to know about the local Sámi history, which prompted the venting of some frustrations related to the recognizable and dominant visual culture of the reindeer-herding Sámi, as opposed to the lesser-known yet more local Sea Sámi culture. Tor Bjørnar Henriksen, one of the focus group members, pointed out:

> Our area has been depleted. We should have felt something more … like a *boost*, for the future. […] There is this demand that you must highlight your Sámi history, which has been Norwegianized, which has been shunted to the side, which has been hidden away, and people go around thinking they have been … and then they have a history here that is valuable, that is wonderful, that is Sámi. And I think we should be able to impose this on people a little bit, without being impolite about it, just show what has happened in these areas in times before. How did we dress, what did we eat, how did we live? Things like that – like, what language did we speak?
>
> *(Tor Bjørnar Henriksen, in an informal working group discussion, 2016)*

We spent a considerable amount of time discussing how the artefacts returning from the south of Norway are a part of Áltá's local history, and how they might now help bring visibility to the Sea Sámi way of life and culture. The dive into these discussions at the kick-off meeting revealed a particularly urgent need to discuss this topic.

At the tail-end of the meeting, a direct question was asked about whether Álttá Musea considered Sámi history to be part of Áltá's local history. Álttá Musea was established in 1978, financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Equity, Álttá Municipality, and Finnmárku County. In 2007, the institution was reorganized as an inter-communal company, with new responsibilities and a new name: The World Heritage Rock Art Centre – Alta Museum.[5] In addition to the collection, documentation, research, and dissemination of cultural and natural history in the municipality of Áltá, the museum is also a centre of expertise regarding rock art in Finnmárku.[6] Álttá Musea's mandate includes the history of the area, which does include Sámi history, but few of the collection's artefacts are in fact linked to Sea Sámi culture and history. In fact, Álttá Sámi Giellaguovddáš, the local Sámi language centre, had collected artefacts and objects – Sámi winter shoes/*vuottagápmagat*, woven shoe bands/*vuoddagat*, and a Sea Sámi sheepskin tunic/*dorka*[7] – through the work

of Dagrun Sarak Sara and others documenting and highlighting the local Sea Sámi culture. In 2012, they had asked Álttá Musea whether the dorka could be stored there to ensure adequate storage conditions while keeping the traditional Sámi handicraft accessible to the local community. The museum declined the Sámi artefacts and, in explaining their decision, referred to the then-current division of responsibility among Sámi and Norwegian museum units in Finnmárku, RiddoDuottarMuseat's responsibility for Sámi cultural heritage in western Finnmárku, and Álttá Musea's own substandard storage conditions. This suggests there was uncertainty about whether only Sámi museums in Finnmárku should be responsible for conserving Sámi artefacts. The Sámi museums in Norway are managed by the Sámediggi (Sámi Parliament), transferred from the Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Equity in 2002. The Sámi museum in Kárásjohka, Sámiid Vuoká-Dávvirat, was established in 1972, and today is a part of the RiddoDuottarMuseat foundation comprising four Sámi museums and a Sámi art collection, located across western Finnmárku, from the coast to the inland.[8] However, in 2013, Álttá Musea was outfitted with new storage rooms, and the subsequent collection plan for 2016 onwards identified cultural diversity as one of its priorities. There were thus no longer any formal or practical obstacles preventing the dorka from being relevant to the museum's collections. In 2018, the museum accessioned the dorka.

Returning to 2016, the aforementioned Sea Sámi artefacts which Álttá Musea had rejected were still privately owned and on loan to the Sámi Language Centre. However, the focus group members all agreed that they should now be given to the museum and included in its collections. This task was thus assigned to me as an Álttá Musea employee as directly as possible without the group actually having the authority to give a direct order, and at the subsequent focus group meeting the members expressed their wish that the museum request to borrow the dorka from the Sámi Language Centre for the upcoming exhibition. There was uncertainty as to whether the sheepskin costume was still at the language centre, how it was being stored, and who had responsibility for it when no Sea Sámi were employed at the institution. To find out more about the dorka, I contacted the language centre. The manager proved helpful and accommodating, and although it took her some time to sort through the intricacies of who formally owned the dorka, she had no objections to lending it out. She did not know exactly where the sheepskin costume was, but she went straight to the shed outside the Sámi kindergarten[9] and found it hanging among sleds and reindeer hides. Since the language centre could not prove that they owned it, we agreed that I should contact the original owner's son to seek his input. In the meantime, I was given permission to move the dorka to Álttá Musea's cold storage locker, first in anticipation of the upcoming exhibition, as well as in the hope of eventually transferring it from the private owner to the museum's collection.

It turned out that the rediscovered dorka had in fact been owned by the family of one of the focus group members, Bente Sjursen:

> It was my granddad's dorka. It used to hang in the boathouse at Mum and Dad's. In the 1970s it was used on Christmas Eves. It's a good thing that the costume has ended up in the museum. It has no practical use today.
> *(Bente Sjursen, personal communication, 2017)*

It was another focus group member, Dagrun Sarak Sara, who had tracked down and rediscovered the dorka while visiting Liidnavuotna/Lerresfjord, just north of Áltá, to conduct interviews about Sámi place names. Made of sheepskin, the tunic was originally intended to provide insulation from the cold subarctic climate, and was subsequently used as a folk costume before almost fading into obscurity, stored in a boathouse in Liidnvuotna.

The focus group insisted that the dorka be admitted into the museum's storage room. The artefact was considered to be relevant to Áltta Musea's mandate, even though the museum is managed by the Norwegian authorities. The multifarious history of the Sea Sámi dorka had come to light while speaking with local inhabitants, and this cultural biography is part of its recontextualization and transformation into a museum object in museum archives. As part of the museum's collection and as an item on display in the upcoming exhibition, the dorka was being repositioned in a new context and assigned value as cultural heritage. The focus group used the tunic to highlight both Sea Sámi cultural heritage and local history that had previously gone unnoticed. Through this process, the costume thereby acquired a new social life, becoming productive and able to provide information about local Sea Sámi life and Sámi values not only in the past, but also in the Álttávuotna area today.

The question, then, is: Do artefacts which have been away from their local community for well over a hundred years have the same potential?

## Sea Sámi Material Culture and Museum Structures

At the first focus group meetings, the aim was to choose artefacts representing Sea Sámi material cultural heritage from the Norsk Folkemuseum's catalogue of its Sámi artefacts. It was decided that the exhibition concept would revolve around the sea, kitchen tables, and stories. We did not have access to the artefacts during this phase, only to the pictures and information contained in the catalogues. The pictures of artefacts were passed around and studied carefully, while the focus group members discussed which artefacts would be the most relevant to the exhibition. They also searched for artefacts that would showcase local Sámi culture, that were related to the sea, the landscape, and Sámi crafts, known collectively as *duodji*. After some back

and forth, the focus group agreed on three sets of artefacts that the group considered to be important, relating to everything from hunting, trapping, and fishing to sewing, weaving, and knitting, as well as artefacts related to Sámi spirituality and traditional nature worship. The categories the focus group used to structure their work were in line with the museum's own systems of management and categorization.

Of the Sámi artefacts chosen from Norsk Folkemuseum's collection, I focus on the čiktingeahpa, a needle used to knot fishing nets collected from Reaššvuotna/Rafsbotn in Áltá, the gákti, a traditional Sámi costume collected from Ákšovuotna, and the boagán, a belt collected from Ullovuotna/Ullsfjord in Láhppi/Loppa Municipality. The čiktingeahpa was brought to the Ethnographic Museum in Oslo by the ethnographer Ole Martin Solberg, who had visited Áltá and Reaššvuotna on a research trip in 1907, while the gákti and boagán were acquired for the museum by Bertrand Marius Nilsen. The museum's catalogues provided information about who collected the artefacts, and where and when they did so, as well as the item's dimensions and their material make-up.

The catalogues did and still do lack information about who made, owned, and/or used the artefacts, and about the provenance of their materials. This reflects the sort of information that was deemed to be relevant in the colonial knowledge system that the ethnographic museums were a part of, and which resulted in asymmetric power relations that, consciously or unconsciously, are continued today, still affecting people's lives in many ways. The context of the artefacts within the ethnographic museum was one of representing various cultures and symbolizing the societies they originated from in an objective, evolutionary, and hierarchical system. In ethnographic museums, different cultures had different places within time and space. Thus, Norwegian culture had its own prehistory, as presented by the archaeological department, while Sámi culture was presented by the ethnographic department, with sparsely described artefacts linked to a past phase of human development (Rio 2002, 59). The narratives that the Sámi artefacts had been a part of were not deemed to be of interest or necessary to understand the artefacts themselves; such narratives were considered subjective, hence, irrelevant.

Through the Bååstede repatriation project, the hope was that the return of cultural heritage artefacts would unearth new information in the encounter between the artefacts and the local communities where they had originally been used (Pareli et al. 2012). The negotiations between the Norwegian and Sámi museums featured precisely the type of knowledge exchange that Gro B. Ween (2022), in the context of the Kulturhistorisk museum in Oslo, describes as having an unforeseen decolonizing potential. Ween argues that this space for dialogue and knowledge exchange became possible because the collection was shared among the Norwegian and Sámi museums, and the Sámi and Norwegian museum staff, in joint negotiations, unearthing new

knowledge about the artefacts. However, this analysis is exposed to the same criticism that Hicks (2020) levels at when using the term "brutish" museums, which is that the major European museums take for granted that they own or control the given artefacts without reflecting on whose needs are being met or what conditions the intercultural negotiations are predicated upon. In the Bååstede context, the repatriated artefacts' encounters with the local Sea Sámi populace highlighted entirely different needs than the museums' needs for new knowledge regarding their collections. The focus group in Áltá had little additional information they could provide about the returned artefacts, but the process involved in the setting up the new exhibition served as a springboard for other discussions and reflections that were relevant to understanding Sámi knowledge, experiences, and values. The selection of items for the exhibition was guided by the local need to call attention to Sea Sámi culture and language through artefacts, stories, photos, and the words of the Sea Sámi.[10]

In the following sections, I provide insight into how the selected artefacts help to activate and articulate different dimensions of Sea Sámi experiences, knowledge, and realities. The artefacts were connected to the sea, which sparked discussions within the focus group on local communities near Áltá, good fishing spots, battles for Sea Sámi rights and identities, and connections to other worlds.

### *The Čiktingeahpa/Net Needle*

It became clear early on that the small čiktingeahpa, made of either bone or horn, should be included in the exhibition.[11] The čiktingeahpa was obtained by Ole M. Solberg during his fieldwork in Reaššvuotna from March to July 1907. The neatly carved initials "VA" are probably those of the person who made, owned, and used the čiktingeahpa.[12] The museum's archive does not describe the relationships between the artefacts and the people the artefacts were collected from. The two national museums in Oslo which had at one time possessed the čiktingeahpa each marked it with a black marker, with the Kulturhistorisk museum giving it the acquisition number 15396 and the Norsk Folkemuseum designating it "Sa.935 Alta Finnm." In the Primus database, the Norwegian museums' collection management system, it has been assigned the number NFSA 0935, indicating it is Item #935 in the Norsk Folkemuseum's Sámi collection. The museum had thus marked the čiktingeahpa with a number according to this new management system, where place and ethnic codification – and little else – are all that was regarded as significant information.

In the focus group, we first discussed how the čiktingeahpa was used and speculated about who "VA" could have been. The čiktingeahpa is a tool used to tie traditional fishing nets prior to nylon nets becoming the standard

in the 1970s. Those who needed such a tool were wont to make it themselves, and could thereby customize it as they wished. It was crucial that the čiktingeahpa fit in the user's hand and had the appropriate tension so that the thread released easily and allowed the work to flow. Several focus group members had memories of their fathers or grandfathers sitting in the kitchen corner and mending their fishing nets; some had tried doing it themselves, or they had seen pictures of it in their families' photo albums. In Sea Sámi households in the past, the kitchen had been a central space for transferring knowledge and skills, where people worked, received guests, and told stories. This was one of the first occasions in the group where someone began to share an experience, with several other quickly chiming in of their own experiences, thus engendering a common identification or intersubjectivity.

The ability to make a proper čiktingeahpa, to use it effectively to fashion a sturdy net, and to successfully use that net in fishing spots that had been located over generations of accumulated knowledge was a prerequisite for becoming a good fisher, and perhaps even a captain – in other words, someone people could tell a wealth of stories about. Tore Forsberg from Skirvi/Skillefjord, one of the small communities just north of Áltá, writes that it was not unusual for a captain to know up to 200 *mea*, that is, a good fishing spot out in the sea. The mea is a place identified from land on the basis of two straight lines of sight that cross one another – the point of intersection is the given position, the mea. The basis for locating a mea was familiar landmarks in the landscape, such as mountains, *sieidi*, church towers, or an individual's homestead (Forsberg 2014). It is within this landscape and social field that the meaning of the čiktingeahpa as a tool is to be found. However, the focus group's conversations about the čiktingeahpa also turned to larger issues, such as sustainable ways of life today in the local Sámi communities and the current struggle over rights to the sea and to fishing. The struggle for the local populace's rights to nature is linked to Sámi identity through Finnmárku Estate (FeFo), which owns and manages land and natural resources in Finnmárku and through international conventions related to the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Given these frameworks, people living along the coast exist in a grey area between Sámi and Norwegian societies, with policies challenging them to document their ethnic difference in order to legitimize their rights. Through their choices and stories, the focus group began to create new connections to the čiktingeahpa, making it possible to use this particular object as a starting point to discuss larger issues, such as Sea Sámi rights and identity in today's world.

Fishing tools and čiktingeabat are among the first artefacts recorded in Álttá Musea's collection. Acquired in the 1970s, they were categorized under "fishing, hunting, and foraging" and linked to Norwegian coastal culture. The archives contain information about numerous čiktingeabat that were made and owned by Knut Oskar Valdemar Murberg, who happened

to be the cousin of the grandmother of one of the focus group members. A few days after we had discussed the čiktingeahpa, his grand-niece Siv Malén Murberg came to my office at the museum. Her grandfather – Knut Oskar's brother – Johan Bertin Murberg was also a fisherman and craftsman who made his own tools and built boats. Siv Malén possessed several artefacts she had inherited from her grandfather, and we were able to borrow some of them for the exhibition. One of the items was another čiktingeahpa, this one with her grandfather's initials: JBM. During an interview, she mentioned that the čiktingeahpa was part of a larger puzzle she'd had to piece together to figure out her own Sámi history and identity. Her father was also a fisherman and craftsman, and during her childhood the family had lived on what nature had to offer. She had also inherited a Sámi Bible from her grandfather, which we also borrowed for the exhibition.

Siv Malén had always known that her father spoke Sámi, but it was never a topic related to Sámi identity. She became more aware of her Sámi identity while she was bringing up her own daughter. In the early 2000s, when they moved to Áltá, Siv Malén's daughter wanted to learn Sámi language at school, something that connected her to her grandfather, who helped her with Sámi language homework. The year she turned 15, she wanted a traditional Sámi gákti for her church confirmation. Siv Malén therefore began doing her own research, reading books and going through old family photos, and ended up sewing gávttit for both her daughter and herself. She told me how putting on the gákti felt right, like coming home. She has since moved several times, but she has always carried the čiktingeahpa and other artefacts with her, in memory of her grandfather and her family's way of life. When I visited her, I noticed there were sheep heads hanging to dry in a large birdcage which is now used the opposite way – to keep birds out as traditional autumn food is prepared. Guided by the artefacts and knowledge handed down through her family and rooted in Sea Sámi culture, Siv Malén has gradually been able to discover and recognized her Sámi identity.

One of her grand-uncle Knut Oskar's čiktingeabat is marked clearly with his initials, and was subsequently found by Álttá Musea's collection officer, photographed for the Primus database, and stored in a collection together with nine other čiktingeabat. One side features the initials "K. O. V. M" (see Figure 2.1) in beautiful cursive writing alongside a pattern of small triangles carved with a knife, while the other side notes a place and time: "S. L. F 1905."[13] The triangles have been carved both between each of the letters as well as after them in a group of four, with the tips pointing inwards towards each other to form a cross. But what was the meaning of this pattern? Is it decoration or an additional signature? Did Knut Oskar have something specific in mind when adding this pattern? The pattern is one that recurs in several other Sámi artefacts, and has been associated with interpersonal relationships, communication, and Sámi communities (Dunfjeld 2006).


**FIGURE 2.1** Knut Oskar Valdemar Murberg's čiktingeahpa, catalogued as AM 00753 in the Álttá Musea collection.

*Source:* Photo by Eva Dagny Johansen/Álttá Musea.

In the museum's management system, Knut Oskar's čiktingeahpa is categorized under "fishing and knots," and recontextualized as a subcategory representing Norwegian culture, making it invisible as a Sea Sámi artefact. The focus group, however, understood his čiktingeahpa within new contexts that valued it more highly as a culturally significant object. Knut Oskar's čiktingeahpa is also linked to other čiktingeabat through cultural biographies and connections to specific Sámi people's lives, in both the past and the present, providing an opportunity to discuss Sea Sámi identity, community, relations with Sea Sámi areas, and access to resources in the present day.

### *The Boagán/Belt*

The Norsk Folkemuseum's Sámi collection included six boahkánat which had been acquired by Bertrand M. Nilsen while in Ákšovuotna and Ullovuotna in Láhppi Municipality, and sent to Yngvar Nielsen, then Head of the Ethnographic Museum. In 1907, Ole M. Solberg, assistant professor at the Kulturhistorisk museum, was on a research and collection trip in Finnmárku, where he visited Reaššvuotna in Álttávuotna. That same year, deacon and secretary of the Sami mission, Bertrand M. Nielsen, sent his first objects to the Kulturhistorisk museum. A letter dated December 1910 states that Nielsen was paid 4.50 kroner for three boahkánat. He continued to collect and forward artefacts to the museum for around 50 years (Pareli 2019).

**FIGURE 2.2** The boagán, the Sámi belt, previously identified as NFSA 1314 in the Norsk Folkemuseum collection, was repatriated to Sápmi in 2019.

*Source:* Photo by Haakon Harriss/Norsk Folkemuseum. Image provided by Álttá Musea.

The focus group chose a belt with two bands of triangles of mica running along its full length (see Figure 2.2). A boagán is used to hold gákti in place, as both protection and decoration. Traditionally Sea Sámi areas in particular were impacted by Norwegianization processes, and many people felt forced to hide their Sámi identity. Material objects such as this boagán are therefore particularly important objects of memory in this region.

The boagán is made of cloth with a red base colour, green triangles with inset holes to display the mica, blue rhombuses, and yellow crosses. White sheepskin leather is used for the edging, as well as for the cords used to fasten the belt. The yellow crosses bring to mind the decoration on the čiktingeahpa, creating a form of four triangles with tips facing inwards towards each other. Boahkánat from Sea Sámi areas are often decorated with *riebansilba* – "crow's silver" or mica – and silver buttons, much like the chosen boagán, which features natural materials and ornamentation recognizable from the area. Within Sámi culture, silver is understood as providing protection. Riebansilba is mica rock which lies in flat layers in the rock and can be separated into thin, shiny flakes. Jorunn Løkvold, a *duojár* or practitioner of traditional Sámi craftsmanship, has explored and specializes in working with mica in various clothing and ornamentations, and this particular boagán has been part of her research into and renewal of Sea Sámi duodji (Løkvold 2019). With the revitalization of Sámi culture throughout the 1970s and 1980s, use of the traditional gákti resumed in Sea Sámi areas. Gákti designs vary

according to region, making it visible where the wearer comes from, and variations of this particular style of boagán are used today by both women and men as a part of the gákti from the Láhppi, Návuotna/Kvænangen, and Áltá areas. With the inclusion of mica in the boagán, the wearer is able to literally carry a part of the country with them wherever they go.

### *The Gákti/Traditional Sámi Costume*

Three days before the Áltta Musea exhibition was set to open in 2017, the museum opened the metal box containing the artefacts that had been sent from Oslo. The focus group and other invitees were invited to inspect the items before they were to be placed into the display cases to become a part of the exhibition. The focus group had already noticed how frayed and fragile the man's gákti seemed to be even when we first studied the images in the museum catalogues (see Figure 2.3). Our assumptions were confirmed when the gákti itself lay in front of us on the table, as we dryly wondered what sort of conservation methods the museum had used. According to the Norsk Folkemuseum catalogue, the gákti had been bought in 1910 in Ákšovuotna, collected by Bertrand M. Nilsen, and sent to Yngvar Nielsen. In his cover

**FIGURE 2.3** The working group studying and documenting the Sámi gákti. From right to left: Idun Meli, Kristin Nicolaysen, Beate Bursta, Kristin Harila, and Eva Dagny Johansen.

*Source:* Photo by Ann Silje Ingebrightsen/Álttá Musea.

letter, Nilsen states that he bought the gákti for 13 kroner, adding a discreet wish for a slightly higher reimbursement given the effort he had made to secure the jacket, albeit without making this a specific demand. The catalogue noted that the Kulturhistorisk museum and Folkemuseum had owned and stored it since its arrival to Oslo, but did not mention the condition the gákti was in at the time of acquisition, or where and how it had been stored and treated while in the museum's possession.

The gákti is made of black cloth, with yellow and red decorative ribbons layered on a yellow zigzag made of fabric following the bottom edge. The collar features a hand-sewn zigzag pattern and is decorated with mica, and woven ribbons cuff the sleeves. The bands on the sleeves appear to be later additions, probably to repair wear and tear. The jagged edges are uneven: parts appear to have been replaced, and the decorations assembled using narrow strips or small pieces of cloth. The overall impression is one of being sparing with the materials, using what is at hand, combined with practical suitability. The costume is large and spacious, clearly suitable for working in, with space to wear a sheepskin dorka underneath to keep out the cold.

Idun Meli was one of the local community representatives present when the box of artefacts was opened. She inspected the handicraft carefully and was impressed by its execution. She sews gávttit and boahkánat for herself, her family, and others, and she was one of the first to contribute to the re-adoption of wearing traditional gávttit in the local Áltá populace in the 1980s as the Sámi political movement gained traction following its protests against the construction of a hydroelectric power plant in the Álttá–Guovdageainnu Watercourse. That period was particularly important in the revitalization of Sámi culture in Finnmárku and throughout Norway. Meli had worked as a teacher in Kárášjohka/Karasjok for many years, wearing a Kárášjohka gákti during that period. Even before the Álttá protests, as the Sámi resurgence developed in the late 1970s, there had been strong pressure for teachers in Kárášjohka to be Sámi-speaking. Meli and her husband, both Norwegian speakers, relocated to Áltá during that time, however she only wore the Kárášjohka gákti once while living in Áltá – it felt wrong to wear it in Áltá. However, she had missed wearing a gákti and searched for alternatives. For a long period she wore gákti-like dresses before she became aware of the gákti courses held by Gry Fors and Ranghild Enoksen at the old boarding school in Ákšovuotna. The courses were a part of an initiative launched in 1982 by the Nordic Sámi Institute in Guovdageainnu, the "Sea Sámi Clothing Traditions in Loppa, Kvænangen and Kåfjord" project. Fors and Enoksen were involved in the Láhppi and Návuotna areas (Fors and Enoksen 1991, 7). This project is still ongoing, with more and more people from the Sea Sámi community now sewing their own traditional Sámi clothing and boahkánat.

A gákti with the Norsk Folkemuseum catalogue number NFSA.1310 had been used as a design prototype for what has become the gákti for the

municipalities of Láhppi, Návuotna, and Áltá, with varieties of gávttit shown at an exhibition that toured during the revitalization of Sámi culture in this local area in the 1980s (Fors and Enoksen 1991). As previously mentioned, the design and decoration of a gákti identifies the geographical area the person wearing the gákti belongs to. Since the 1980s, the basic design and the ribbon sizes and colours have adapted and varied, but the jagged edge and the collar decoration in particular have characterized the gákti from this area. Newer versions of this gákti are narrower and shorter than the prototype, and a woman's gákti has also now been developed.

The gákti has once again become an item of clothing that people enjoy wearing, but this traditional garb is not unaffected by its journey through time and space – from when it was collected as an exotic object linked to a people associated with humanity's past and with primitive customs, to when it was used an educational tool in exhibitions or lectures in populated European centres, to the current struggle for the right to be visible on one's own terms and treated as an equal. To visualize connections between past and present, the focus group suggested using a mix of past and recent family photos. The exhibition included a photo of Bente Sjursen and her two cousins, taken recently, aesthetically arranged against a neutral background, all wearing traditional Sámi costumes. They mimic their relatives who had been photographed a century before by a professional photographer. The point of juxtaposing these photographs was to highlight both a new era and cultural continuity, highlighting that the Sea Sámi still exist in the Álttávuotna area. The Sea Sámi have a history, voices, and intentions, and the items on display in Álttá Musea cannot merely be seen as historical artefacts from foreign places; for people living their lives here and now, they are sources and expressions of knowledge, and connections to a specific place.

## The Role of Museums in Restitution Processes

In the Kulturhistorisk museum's management system and practices, Sámi artefacts had been removed from their Sámi contexts, decontextualized and then recontextualized as museum objects and representations of Sámi culture, the knowledge of which the museum then controlled. The encounters that took place in the Kulturhistorisk museum as a contact zone revealed a distinction between the objects' cultural biography and social life – between, on the one hand, complex narratives and variations that the artefact may be a part of, and, on the other hand, the museological categories the artefact was placed within, in a system geared towards recognizability. The Kulturhistorisk museum itself did not discuss such a distinction, and in its presentations Sámi artefacts became stereotypical representations of general Sámi culture. One reason could be that Norwegian museums lacked (and still do lack) sufficient information to show the differences and variety within

Sámi material culture, but these museums also have the power to define what they think is relevant, outline general categories, and seek new knowledge to promote greater diversity and complexity in the understanding of Sámi culture. Taxonomies, classifications, and categories are all structures geared towards order and searchability. Museums focus on a general category – such as "a gákti/traditional Sámi costume" or "a čiktingeahpa/net needle" – and pay less attention to what is special about this specific, unique gákti or čiktingeahpa, each object having its own cultural biography. Such a practice is intentional and facilitates accessibility, but reduces complexity. This is the power of the museum, and it is cultural appropriation. Museums possess too little information about artefacts, even as they have a responsibility for having knowledge about the collections that they have taken ownership of.

During the process of recontextualization, when the artefacts were brought to the focus group, we begin to see the difference between social history and cultural biography. An object is recognized as specifically a gákti, a čiktingeahpa, or a boagán, and the focus group responded to and spoke about each specific artefact, how they are linked to a place, to Sea Sámi individuals and families, as well as to patterns and ornamentation that have been used, interpreted, and negotiated. The difference that Appadurai (1986) makes space for with his terms of "cultural biography" and "social life" comes to the fore when reflecting on the focus group's recontextualization process as a way of bringing out complexity, meaning, and understanding. The meaning of an artefact may have changed significantly depending on what was brought into and accepted by the focus group, and depending on the consensus of the group, this meaning and knowledge could change the discourse in the museum itself. This means that Álttá Musea, in a collaborative context, became expected to take on board new knowledge that could stimulate change. Through this process, the local community reappropriates the object, bringing in new, relevant knowledge that can change the value regime, and thereby also the power relations that are in effect at the museum.

Through the process of collaboration, the focus group managed to bring Sea Sámi artefacts into Álttá Musea, adding information, and challenging the museum's categories and knowledge management system. In the *Na, maid dál? Our Sámi Cultural Heritage Heading Home* exhibition on Sámi cultural heritage, Sea Sámi words were used, where known, to encapsulate also linguistically a wider Sea Sámi worldview while presenting the artefacts. Well aware of the simplified and stereotypical narratives that Sámi artefacts are typically understood within, measures were taken to visually show variation and continuity, such as the aforementioned juxtaposition of old and recent photographs. By connecting the artefacts to Sámi life and Sámi practices, the items were linked to a living Sámi culture. Furthermore, Álttá Musea's relationship with the Sea Sámi community gives legitimacy to the exploring and presenting of Sea Sámi culture, history, and knowledge, at the same time

that local stakeholders, through a newfound relationship with the museum, were able to take part in negotiations about relevant and significant artefacts as identity markers and (re)presentations of Sámi culture, thus shifting the wider museum discourse on Sámi artefacts. As an extension of the Bååstede repatriation process, the work done by the focus group has engendered new collaborations at Álttá Musea and opened up the museum's storage rooms for new artefacts and Sea Sámi knowledge. This has shed light on values and categorization systems firmly established in the museum's practices that were difficult to identify, but that were based on an object-based knowledge system and normatively rooted in Norwegian culture. By recognizing the opportunities that lie in Álttá Musea's knowledge production and Sea Sámi needs, the museum was able to increase its knowledge of its own collections, and making it possible to correct biases in its own representations and allow the Sea Sámi to (re)present themselves in exhibitions going forwards. In this way, local Sea Sámi communities and museums now have the opportunity to take part in furthering the return of Sámi cultural heritage by redefining what a museum can be, from being a venue for representations of the past to becoming a more accessible source of knowledge for general uses and needs in the present, while in ongoing negotiations about Sea Sámi futures.

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## Notes

1 "Na, maid dál?" is Northern Sámi, and can be translated as "What now?"
2 The items were initially sent on loan for the temporary anniversary exhibition *Na, maid dál? Our Sámi Cultural Heritage Heading Home* in 2017, but were subsequently included as a long-term loan as part of the new permanent exhibition at Álttá Musea which opened in June 2022.
3 Dagrun Sarak Sara, duojár, former leader of Alta Sami Language Centre/Álttá Sámi Giellaguovddáš; Tor Bjørnar Henriksen, teacher, former chairman of Álttá Sámi Giellaguovddáš; Bente Sjursen, local historian, former fisherwoman, and farmer; Yvonne Normanseth, artist; Kristin Harila, museum administration assistant at Áltta Musea; Kristin Nicolaysen, museum lecturer at Áltta Musea; Eva Dagny Johansen, former museum lecturer at Áltta Musea; all members had grown up and/or lived in Sea Sámi areas of Sápmi.
4 Janos Kolostyak has worked for many years as a permanent exhibition designer for Álttá Musea, as well as designing and producing exhibitions for Lofoten Museum and Nord Troms Museum.
5 The Sámi name of the centre, Báktedáidaga máilmmiárbehouvddáš – Álttá Musea, was approved in 2021.
6 The rock art in the Áltá area was inscribed into UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1985 (see www.altamuseum.no).

7 Image of the dorka available at https://digitaltmuseum.no/021027665277/dork.
8 See https://rdm.no for more information.
9 The kindergarten and language centre are housed in the same building. The objects in the outdoor shed are primarily used by the children in everyday kindergarten life.
10 Specifically, the Sea Sámi dialect of Northern Sámi language.
11 Image of the čiktingeahpa available at https://digitaltmuseum.no/011023293246/garnnal-skyttel.
12 The Norsk Folkemuseum collection includes four čiktingeabat that Ole Solberg collected on the same journey. One of the other čiktingeabat is notable because it is made of reindeer bone. The initials are shaped differently on each čiktingeahpa, but they appear to be variations of the same letters; it is difficult to determine which letters they are, but the working group ultimately landed on "VA."
13 "S. L. F." refers to Store Lerresfjord/Stoura Liidnavuotna.

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# 3

# FROM DIGIJOIK TO LUOHTEVUORKÁ

## Appropriation and Appreciation in the Process of Making New Homes for Luođit

*Camilla Brattland, Trude Fonneland, and Rossella Ragazzi*

### Introduction

Over the past decade, debates have intensified regarding the rightful ownership of colonial objects in Western museums, and these debates have become a delicate and pressing issue with far-reaching legal and ethical implications. The debates have triggered several repatriation projects in which the legal ownership of Sámi cultural heritage, material and immaterial, has been transferred from Nordic and European museums to Sámi museums. The Bååstede project in particular became a game-changer (2012–2019). This was a project in which half of the collection at the Norsk Folkemuseum was repatriated to Sámi museum institutions in the Norwegian part of Sápmi (Gaup et al. 2021).[1] Repatriation projects such as Bååstede have encouraged institutions such as the Arctic University Museum of Norway to rethink and challenge the status of archives, collections, and dissemination practices. This chapter investigates the possibilities for the decolonization and repatriation of the collection of field recordings of *luođit*[2] stored at the Arctic University Museum. We ask, how can the collection be made available to various public groups? What challenges must be addressed on the road towards decolonization and repatriation? And what does the future home of the *luohti* collection look like?

About 12,000 recordings of luođit are kept at the Arctic University Museum in various original formats as well as digital sound files. These have been collected by various collectors and researchers from the early 1950s until today. The Sámediggi (Sámi Parliament in Norway) defines luođit as follows:

> In Sámi areas, *luohti/leu'dd/livđe/vuolle/vuelie* are all names for the traditional Sámi form of *juoigat*. Sámi music is when a luohti/leu'dd/livđe/vuolle/vuelie is combined with instruments, Sámi lyrics and song texts,

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> and/or modern Sámi music, if the perfomer/composer is a Sámi person and that he or she acknowledges the music as Sámi music.
>
> *(Sámediggi 2019, 3, authors' translation)*[3]

The luohti collection has long been a point of debate, with the Arctic University Museum depicted both as a prison – where luođit are held in custody, deprived of their liberty and made unavailable to Sámi society – and as a unique archive that preserves important cultural heritage (e.g., NRK Sápmi, Pulk et al. 2015).[4] Repatriation of the collection has yet to be proposed formally, but the Sámediggi does have an explicit policy to create a shared institutional home for luođit that is governed by the Sámi themselves (*Sametingsrådets redegjørelse om joik og Samisk musikk*, Sámediggi 2019). This call to reassemble collections of luođit under Sámi custodianship has already acknowledged and inspired the Arctic University Museum to work towards the decolonization of its archives, and to imagine a possible future wherein the collected luođit are returned to the communities from which they were recorded, and made available to Sámi who want to vitalize their cultural heritage.

Through the DigiJoik project, a one-year pilot project funded by the Norwegian Cultural Council, the museum explored potential options for making luođit available to the public, and possibilities for the decolonization of the so-called Yoik Archive. This involved discussions of repatriation, appropriation, and the changing relations between museums and Indigenous communities. This chapter gives insight into how criticisms and changing expectations of the museum have triggered discussions on appropriateness and ethical issues surrounding the collection and the dissemination of cultural heritage, balanced against challenges presented by the archives in terms of the law, legitimacy, and availability. The concepts of appreciation (Diamond 2006; Hilder 2012, 2015; Aubinet 2022) and cultural appropriation (Schneider 2006; Kramvig and Flemmen 2018) are especially relevant in illuminating the changing role of the Arctic University Museum and its engagement with Sámi cultural heritage, and we discuss how these terms can be used as a means to promote the processes of repatriation and rematriation (Pieski and Harlin 2020).

## Position and Methodology

This chapter is written by three of the scholars with responsibility for the Sámi archives and collections at the Arctic University Museum. One of the authors identifies herself as Indigenous, and the other two have long-standing knowledge of Indigenous culture through continuous engagement with research projects focused on Sámi culture, collections, and communities. With the funding of the DigiJoik project, we became involved in the process as

project leader (Brattland) and project members (Ragazzi and Fonneland). Our approach within the project is characterized as partial and careful participation (Brattland et al. 2018) in support of knowledge production that will benefit the diversity of Sámi cultures, foster consciousness about the interface and rapport between researchers and Indigenous Peoples, and raise awareness about heterogeneity within Indigenous groups.

Through close collaboration with one of the collectors and creators of the archive, Professor Emeritus Ola Graff, who provided insight and details on the history of the archive, we also strive to build new relationships with the Sámi community by balancing the continuity of museum traditions and contributions with the ongoing revitalization of Sámi culture and emerging new trends in Sámi cultural scenes. Our position through the DigiJoik project has become one of making a stand regarding the value of making traditional luođit available to new generations of Sámi, thus changing the purpose of the museum collections from the preservation of a dying culture to supporting the continued emergence of new trends in Sámi cultural scenes and cultural efflorescence.[5]

To ensure this form of expression cannot be appropriated for commercial or melodic exploitation by outsiders, it is important to respect expectations of cultural copyright, and to protect the creation of each yoik as well as Indigenous cultural property rights (Solbakk 2007). Questions of appreciation and appropriation are therefore at the heart of our analysis, and our approach has been to work together with cultural guardians and knowledge bearers who are insiders to Sámi cultures and the practices of juoigat.

## Defining Luođit

To define luođit as the "traditional musical expression of the Sámi peoples" can be reductive, as it is a product of relations between people, nature, and places (Stoor 2007). However, in this text we do not attempt to an all-encompassing definition of luođit. We examine the process of public rendition of some of the museum archives of recorded luođit, and the subtle implications that such publishing brings forward. The luohti we refer to here is an object of collection, a cultural heritage item, captured and stored in archives in the same way as classic or folk music. We try to abstain from defining luođit within the unique paradigm of an ethnic expression. It is one of the oldest musical forms present today in Europe, and as such, we assign it a complex musical nature (Edström 1978; Wersland 2006).

A luohti is an ancient, complex Sámi musical expression. It resists conventional definition, although many musicologists and scholars have tried to render its peculiar traits (among them, Acerbi 1799; Jones-Bamman 1993; Somby 1995; Gaski 1999; Graff 2004, 2011; Fjellheim 2012; Aubinet 2019,

2021; Renzi 2021). A luohti is a cultural, spiritual, and social expression, but is not necessarily ceremonial; it is not merely a folk tune that is identically reproduced and transmitted, but a personal musical creation that bears the signature of both the performer and the subject (i.e., person, animal, nature, place) of the luohti. Juoigat, the act of performing luohti, is an art of remembering, a form of existential narrative, a celebration of the living, and a summoning of the invisible and the past. In some cases, luođit have a powerful political dimension, for example when performed in collective protest actions (Hilder 2015). A luohti resists both musicological and anthropological perspectives about its entertainment power or social functionality. All these aspects may be contained in the act of creating a luohti and juoigat, but both defy any one single definition, and are seldom strictly defined by insiders of Sámi culture.

A common typology of luođit which is relevant for understanding the kind of luođit collected by museums in the period between 1950 and 1970 is to divide them into traditional or modern luohti expressions (Stålka 2006). Another common typology is the difference between luođit characterizing persons, animals, nature, and places. Personal luođit are by far the most numerous, and are controversial because they may contain text (*dajahusat*) with personal characteristics that are not always intended to reach an audience beyond one's relatives and friends (Gaski 1999). The collection we are concerned with in this chapter contains only traditional luođit recorded in the field with the aim of becoming part of a museum collection, as opposed to modern expressions of luođit which are generally performed as an art form in studios or on stages.

Luođit were long suppressed and stigmatized by Christian missionaries, through national assimilation policies, and more generally by outsiders to Sámi communities in charge of controlling Sámi society. Just like the consumption of alcohol, juoigat was considered a sin by the Christian church among lay clergymen and by the northern Norwegian public, many of whom were members of puritan religious movements such as Læstadianism.[6] The opportunity to freely perform it was therefore drastically reduced for many centuries due to societal judgement and norms (Jernsletten 1978).

It is important to acknowledge that, the transition of a practice which, for centuries, had been synonymous with shame and stigma, and had been forced underground due to persecution, to have now reached the stage where it is taught in summer schools nationally and abroad is a wonderful and dramatic evolution. All this is encompassed in any attempt to define luođit and juoigat today.

The next sections describe the background of the luohti collection at the University Museum, and the process of making it digitally available to the public, thus contributing to making new homes for Sámi cultural heritage beyond the museum walls.

## The Yoik Archive

Until World War II, knowledge regarding the Sámi was produced and disseminated predominantly by a small but highly influential group of Norwegian scholars and clergymen. The context for the collection of Sámi cultural heritage such as luođit was nation-building and a general social Darwinist worldview. The emerging image of the Sámi was that of a people that were bound to vanish in the wake of modernization and progress due to their colonial beliefs regarding their racial characteristics and cultural inferiority. Beginning in the mid-1960s, however, there was a period of intense cultural revitalization among the Sámi which completely turned the image of the Sámi as a dying people on its head. This was expressed, among other ways, through music and a revitalization of luođit as an icon of Sámi culture, particularly through the work of Nils-Aslak Valkeapää (1943–2001), Inga Juuso (1945–2014), and others who composed luođit themselves and also performed and published traditional luođit. Between 1972 and 2019, Sámi society in the Norwegian part of Sápmi underwent tremendous development, both culturally and politically. Most notably, the Sámi gained the status of an Indigenous People within the Norwegian legal framework and, in 1989, the Sámediggi was established as the Sámi's own representative body within Norway which entailed, in particular, increased self-determination over Sámi languages, education, and cultural affairs.

During the post-war period, the yoik collection was already known to those who had been interviewed and recorded – as well as their descendants – by the museum collectors. The name "Yoik Archive" was already established among Sámi artists and cultural workers in the early 1970s when a copy of Arnt Bakke's archive was provided to the newly established Sámi instituhtta (Nordic Sámi Institute) in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino. Around the turn of the millennium, the Northern Norwegian Folk Music collection was digitized, which included its collection of luođit. This increased possibilities for disseminating copies of the recordings to interested parties, but it also raised new challenges regarding how to control the use of the recordings, particularly for purposes that were not the original intentions of the museum collectors. Sharing recordings on modern platforms such as the Internet would have been unimaginable in the 1950s, and continues to remain unfamiliar to older generations. However, using the archive recordings to gain access to increasingly forgotten traditions was seen as one of the ways by which youth and emerging artists could learn about older traditions.[7] In the following decades, the lack of greater access to the Yoik Archive was problematized by Sámi cultural workers as well as political and cultural associations (e.g., the National Sámi Association – NSR, yoikers' associations), and the Arctic University Museum was criticized for not making more of the archive available to the public and to the Sámi communities who were still in the process

of piecing together their own cultural histories. A lack of inside knowledge of Sámi culture and language was also a challenge for the museum in the management of archive metadata and in mediating communication about the luođit collection.

It was in this changing context that the Yoik Archive, as a collection of Sámi music and luođit, was established and has since continued to work, shifting in focus from an attempt to preserve and document a dying culture before it was too late into one in which Sámi themselves were and are increasingly engaged, reclaiming and continuing cultural traditions as a part of a living and thriving culture.

The Yoik Archive was established in 1947 by lector Arnt Bakke as part of the Folk Music Collection, a collection of Norwegian, Kven,[8] and Sámi folk music. The archive consists not only of sound recordings stored on various recorded media but also field diaries, manuscripts, and other metadata that provide the basis for a description of every single luohti included in the collection. Travelling mainly in the northern regions of Sápmi during a period of over 20 years, Bakke and other collectors (including Thor Frette and Ragnvald Graff) collected more than 2,000 samples of luođit through recordings conducted in the field and at the museum. As recording equipment at the time was expensive and did not allow for long recordings, their approach was to store as much as possible on limited magnetic sound tapes. In 1972, when Arnt Bakke resigned from his position, the Folk Music Collection's Yoik Archive consisted of hundreds of 30-minute tapes filled with luođit, psalms, songs, and instrumental pieces. The collection includes 52 tapes of recorded luođit, with recording lengths varying between 20 seconds and several minutes, depending on how the collector judged the quality and value of the recording. Luođit were also sometimes mixed together with Norwegian and other traditional songs on the same tape recordings, and some of the tapes have clearly been wiped of their original recordings and new material re-recorded on the same tape. Sometimes, the recordings were cut off before the performance itself had finished. For instance, one luohti describing a reindeer migration route is cut off in the middle because Bakke, in that case, did not realize the value of having the whole luohti recorded (Ola Graff, personal communication, December 2021). On some tapes, Bakke gives an introduction to the recorded content, sometimes also explaining the content of the subsequent recording between individual samples. Details about the performers, a description of the content of the recording, and the time and place of the recording were noted down meticulously and stored on standardized schemas. The collection itself probably moved between different buildings and offices, as the museum moved into a new building in the early 1960s. Although generally, as a rule, the recordings were done in people's homes and then stored at the museum, some skilled performers were also invited to the museum in Romsa to record songs and luođit.

One of the first to be invited by the museum to be recorded was Bikko Niilá ("Small Nils," Norwegian name Nils N. Biti), who performed over 70 luođit over several days in 1952, which were recorded in a room in a hotel in Romssa city centre. Bikko Nillá comes from the village of Šuoššjávri, close to Kárášjohka/Karasjok, one of the main settlements in northern Sápmi, and was known for his ability to remember an astonishing amount of different luođit and for his ability to produce dajahusat within the context of a luohti, that is, narratives about people or places.

When Ola Graff took over the collection in 1972, he inherited a methodology for sampling and routines to systematize the archive from his predecessors. What was new, though, was the technology and equipment available at the time, which now allowed for longer recordings. Graff recorded more than 5,000 luođit from different Sámi areas while also collecting copies of published Sámi music, resulting in an almost complete Sámi music library documenting the intense Sámi cultural revitalization taking place in the post-war period. When Graff retired in 2019, the collection consisted of more than 7,000 unique samples and recordings of luođit as well as more than 5,000 further recordings of published Sámi music or that were copies received from other Nordic archives.

In 2020, the Sámediggi announced a new strategy to provide a new institutional home for luođit. Its 2019 report on yoik and Sámi music had criticized the lack of greater access to the content of the Yoik Archive at the Arctic University Museum, noting:

> […] there is an ongoing debate about access to the yoik archives, where yoikers over a long period of time have called for both improved accessibility and […] making the archive public. It is, among others, the archives at Tromsø Museum[9] which are at the centre of the debates about access to the archives.
>
> *(Sámediggi 2019, 6, authors' translation)*

Another report, which had been commissioned by the Sámediggi one year earlier summarizing the desire to establish a new institutional home for luođit, placed its emphasis as follows:

> It is most optimal that the centre and institutional home for luođit has as its goal to be established as a physical centre with a decentralized structure. Such a centre will contribute to recruiting new yoikers and revitalizing yoiking in areas where it is not used, contribute to activities that provide a forum for gatherings, and contribute to making yoik visible in Sámi areas.
>
> *(Noodt and Reiding 2018, 24, authors' translation)*

This report refers directly to the ongoing debates about the role of the Arctic University Museum as a "prison keeper" of the Yoik Archive. The debates in newspapers (e.g., articles noted in Footnote 4, among others) concerning the accessibility of the collections, together with the reports from the Sámediggi referenced above and the retirement of Graff from the Arctic University Museum were all signs that some action had to be taken. It was clear that there was a need to create public access to part of these collections, and so an experimental pilot scheme was announced.

When the DigiJoik project was launched in 2021, the ambition was to provide new approaches and solutions not only to the dissemination of information and content of the Yoik Archive, but also to building relations with Sámi society. The collecting of luođit bears witness to a challenging museum history, and the museum has a responsibility to establish new relations, create space for collaboration, and enter into dialogue about the restitution and future of the Sámi collections. This attitude formed the foundation of the DigiJoik project.

## The DigiJoik Project

DigiJoik began as a one-year pilot project funded by the Kulturrådet (Norwegian Cultural Council) with the aim to make the luođit collection available to the public. At the beginning of the project, the DigiJoik leader and project members decided to invite the custodians and performers of luođit to engage in a broad discussion and collaboration regarding the museum's approach to achieving this. An initial seminar was held at the Arctic University Museum in February 2021, where representatives of juoigit associations, artists, record companies, and Sámi institutions came together in a public event. Prior to the seminar, the project team sent the representatives several examples of what, according to Graff, had been described as "sensitive" luođit, asking them for their opinions about making these available to the public. The examples were selected on the basis of Graff's experiences working with the archive and with Sámi communities accumulated over a period of 40 years. These included, among others, a luohti that was labelled by the collectors as a "*noaidi*'s luohti,"[10] another luohti containing dajahusat with characteristics of female sexuality, and a luohti where the juoigi had consumed alcohol during recording. Other issues were also discussed, such as the ethics of consent from the owners of the juoigit – the juoigi themselves, the person being yoiked, the creator of the luohti, and the performer.

The noaidi luohti was already known by many, and had been performed by Ole Henrik Magga, first President of the Sámediggi and later Chair of the United Nations' Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, in a film included in the 2014 *Sámi Stories* exhibit shown in New York City.[11] In the video, Magga describes it as one of the oldest luođit in the archive. It conveys an

image of a landscape with seven valleys which contains sacred places, known as *sieiddit* (Ragazzi 2014), but is focused on the wolf which can travel across those seven valleys in a short period of time. In the 2021 DigiJoik seminar, the fact that it was not in fact a noaidi luohti but rather a luohti for the wolf was discussed. The group agreed that the luohti should be given a different description in the Yoik Archive (namely, the "luohti of seven valleys," and categorized as an animal luohti), and that it could be published and made available for larger audiences. This was an important correction, which highlighted that the descriptions and other metadata of many luođit do need to be revised and corrected in the Arctic University Museum's archive.

The second selected luohti was about a sassy woman, and sparked discussions regarding the museum's right to withhold the recording as nobody but the museum had problematized the text, and there were no living relatives nor descendants who had raised this as an issue prior to the luohti's publication on the Arctic University Museum's website. The third example luohti concerned the consumption of alcohol. Several luođit contain texts describing individuals as being drunk, which could cause upset among living relatives who do not feel that it is appropriate to broadcast such descriptions of their family members. Other luođit were recorded in contexts where the juoigit themselves had consumed alcohol. The degree of alcohol consumption and the circumstances of how the alcohol was consumed remain unknown, but it could have occurred either by having been served alcohol during the recording of the luohti, or by the juoigit having consumed alcohol in another context before the recording. For example, in Bikko-Niila's recording of the "Mihkkal Piera" luohti, he weaves a contextual comment into the luohti itself, stating that he is in Romsa and is currently under the influence of alcohol, but also that he thinks that this does not matter ("*dat ii daga maidege*"). In the DigiJoik seminar, the group discussed these luođit in terms of unethical contexts of the recordings, and consulted the opinion of relatives and descendants of the juoigit.[12] In all cases, the group placed the most emphasis on the importance of the personal consent of direct descendants of the juoigit – for all categories of luođit – as well as on the importance of also obtaining the consent of the person being yoiked for personal luođit.

The DigiJoik seminar revealed divisions between generations, between tradition and modernity, and between different understandings of the appropriation and appreciation of luođit. This was illustrated particularly by the intense discussions surrounding the use of alcohol during recordings and characterizations of people as drunk in luođit dajahusat. Both before and during the seminar, the fact that one could hear that juoigit were under the influence of alcohol and the idea of relatives' luođit being played as entertainment and listened to at tables where alcohol could be served was met with resistance and discussed as a difficult and emotionally painful issue. There were, however, conflicting opinions. Whilst the senior juoigit tended to want

to keep private luođit that contained offensive lyrics or that were associated with the consumption of alcohol, the artists and younger participants wanted these to be made available to a larger audience, and especially to younger people wanting to learn the tradition, as examples of Sámi cultural heritage.

As the DigiJoik project proceeded, the seminar participants continued to act as a reference group, with several meetings where methods and possibilities of how to make the luođit public continued to be discussed. The different opinions within Sámi society on making the archived recordings available beyond their local and cultural contexts, such as through a website or a music streaming service such as Spotify, was one of the central topics. The position of some of the juoigit associations, seniors, and traditional performers was that they did not want to make luođit public until the recordings had been approved by the persons being yoiked and the performer or, in cases where the performer or the person being yoiked had died, their direct descendants. This restrictive position was also held by the main archival institution for Sámi documents, the Sámi Arkiiva (Sámi Archive). The Sámi Arkiiva is seen by many as being a safe home or a *giisá* (Northern Sámi for [treasure] chest) for the recordings. The Arctic University Museum had also been perceived by many, including the recorded yoikers, as a safe place for the recordings. The intention to publish luođit on digital platforms now challenged the museum's previously comfortable role as a keeper of the recordings, where they would be locked and well-conserved inside the museum walls. In contrast, younger juoigit, backed by strong voices in urban and academic Sámi society, as well as Sámi recording companies, wanted to publicize all of the recordings by whatever means possible.

In many ways, collecting luođit by recording them is to extract a cultural expression from its context, without removing the tradition itself. The collected and archived luođit are forever frozen at the time of the recording, thereby freezing a particular version of the luohti at a specific time and place in what would otherwise be a continually changing tradition. This also became a topic of discussion in the reference group, as dajahusat could contain information about relatives and persons that were perceived to be inappropriate to share with the general public. For example, the recordings of Bikko-Nillá had a particularly rich array of content that portrayed family members, places, and animals. The recordings also captured content that was intended for a listener in a particular local cultural context, not for a broader audience. Bikko-Nillá and other recorded yoikers would often give a brief introduction to the luohti at the start of the recording, stating what it was about or summarizing its content. In the 1950s and 1960s, the recordings were played on Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) programmes such as for folk music hours, or on NRK Sápmi Radio. To make these recordings available at any time and for all audiences is, however, a completely different proposition, particularly when there is the prospect of having relatives' luođit

played "at the tables" (meaning, where alcohol is consumed). This was seen as inappropriate by some of the reference group participants. As the texts are in Sámi language, however, the "sensitive" texts would not be known beyond listeners who understood Sámi language.

As part of the DigiJoik project, two digital channels were identified for publishing luođit from the Yoik Archive: DigitaltMuseum, an online platform allowing digital access to museum collections, and streaming services such as Spotify, where compilations of selected tapes from the archive could be published to reach a variety of audiences and target groups. After the initial reference group discussions, the DigiJoik project group had to decide how to navigate between the different positions and opinions within Sámi society on the issue of publishing luođit. The project group first decided to maintain good relations and collaboration with Sámi society by asking for consent for the publication of luođit from yoikers' descendants, as far as was possible. Although these negotiations between humble insider archival workers and knowledgeable practitioners and museum outsiders may appear to have been participatory and symmetrical, they were not entirely without asymmetry and power differences: the final decisions were made by the museum insiders and ultimately the DigiJoik project leader. In this way, the project expressed an exercise of power in moving towards an innovative solution. Making use of either the popular Spotify platform or the Open Access DigitaltMuseum platform could have unforeseen consequences for the ethical implications of the art and practice of yoiking. The museum was aware that this move would have been both appreciated but also criticized. Nevertheless, the decision to break with past Arctic University Museum policies of discretion and restricted access to the archives marked the beginning of an experiment that DigiJoik was undertaking with awareness. This does not underscore the fact that the museum also retained its power to control conservation or publication policies. This decision to break with past tradition and to embrace Spotify and DigitaltMuseum was also grounded in the fact that the archive had been created by museum collectors, and was thus owned by the museum itself. The archive also contained cases where private persons had donated or deposited collections of luođit to the museum, in which case the museum is not at liberty to publish these materials without the consent of the owner of the archive.

At this point, the DigiJoik project group and the museum elected to expand the team. Two Sámi experts with extensive knowledge of both traditional luođit and modern music production were employed by the project to attend to the quality of the recorded content for publication on streaming services, and of the material metadata destined for DigitaltMuseum. The collections being published on these platforms were given Sámi names, *Luohtearkiiva* (for DigitaltMuseum) and *Luohtevuorká* (for the albums published to streaming services), both of which combine the word luohti with

either arkiiva or *vuorkká*, both Northern Sámi terms meaning "archive." This act of renaming the Yoik Archive as *Luohtearkiiva* and *Luohtevuorká* was a way of signifying the transformation of the archive to its current purpose, and one way that the DigiJoik project attempted to return these materials back into the hands of the Sámi community. Before publishing luođit that were not already on the Arctic University Museum website, rightsholders and relatives were approached for their consent to having the material published on streaming services. By registering as artists with TONO,[13] the yoikers would also gain financial compensation based on the number of times their performance is played by listeners.

The digital album, titled *Luohtevuorká* ("*From the Luohti Archive*") focused on the recordings of Bikko Nillá made in Romsa in 1952, which were edited and restored to make a curated collection of luođit. Legally, as the luođit were more than 50 years old when the digital album was released and, furthermore, because the performers were deceased, it was not particularly difficult to publish the collection as an album to be streamed or purchased through platforms such as Spotify. According to Sámi customs and perceived rights, however, the relatives and descendants of the deceased yoikers involved should first be consulted before any publication of the luođit in a new format. After the process of improving the sound quality was completed, the descendants of Bikko Nillá were approached and given a preview version of the digital album to listen to before they consented to its release. In the end, they agreed to publishing all tracks, including one that their mother or aunt (the daughter of the performer) had been sceptical about making public. This illustrates that the perception of what is considered to be sensitive or an object of contempt can change over time.

*Luohtevuorkkás – Bikko-Nillá* was released in February 2023 during a seminar at which some of his descendants were present. The seminar ended with these relatives performing Bikko Nillá's luohti in honour of their grandfather.

Despite divided opinions,[14] the collaboration with the reference group nevertheless revealed that the DigiJoik project was and is much more than a pilot study for the publication of audio recordings. It is also linked to issues related to collaboration, complex networks of relations, cultural return, and governance. However, the final decisions in projects such as this are also a result of the power relations that museums can still exert.

The different platforms developed and proposed by the DigiJoik project challenge and unsettle already established relations between museums and civil society, positioning the Arctic University Museum in a surprising position where it can experiment and try out different solutions, as opposed to the usual rules and regulations to which archival institutions are bound by state management. This is due to the societal relevance that is required of contemporary museums. In communicating about art or science, museums are


**FIGURE 3.1** The material made available through DigitaltMuseum is published under the name Luohtearkiiva as a collection belonging to the Arctic University Museum of Norway, while the material available on streaming services was released by DAT as an album series titled *Luohtevuorkkás – Bikko Nillá/Nils N. Biti 1952* ("*From the Luohti Archive*"), curated by Ol Johan Gaup.

*Source:* Photo by Gunnar Fougner/Finnmark Fylkesbibliotek Archive. Album cover design by Bjørn Hatteng.

challenged to be innovative in their ways of mediating knowledge adapted for the public sphere and the values surrounding them. Museums have not only a responsibility for the conservation and preservation of old archives, but also a mandate to renew, correct, and reorganize their database systems to highlight new metadata and produce alternative views on acquired knowledge from the past. This is even more urgent in museums such as the Arctic University Museum which protect Indigenous heritage.

**FIGURE 3.2** Members of the Digijoik Project consulting the Arctic University Museum of Norway archives and collections in 2022. From left to right: Professor Emeritas Ola Graff, Ol Johan Gaup, Kristina Jåma, and Camilla Brattland.

*Source:* Photo by Rossella Ragazzi.

Moreover, as part of an academic institution (housed under UiT The Arctic University of Norway), as a place of research and new knowledge, the Arctic University Museum is also a place of innovation, simultaneously engaged in numerous difficult negotiations around issues of consent and collaboration with multiple and diverse voices within Sámi society.

## Dynamics of Appreciation and Appropriation

The previous section examined pragmatic aspects of the DigiJoik project and its implications at institutional and societal levels. Looking at some of the analytical concepts that arose through the process of making the museum archives available to the public, two connected paradigms emerge: appreciation and appropriation. These concepts have been used across a variety of different contexts and are, to a fair extent, intertwined in that appreciation can lead to inappropriate acts of taking without permission, that is, appropriation.

Appreciation of outsiders of Indigenous cultural expressions and material culture, mainly as an aesthetic appreciation (Bateson 1973), have shaped an idealization of these cultures which has often lent itself to exoticism and even commodification (Hall 2006; Schneider and Wright 2010). It also boasts a certain neo-colonial aspiration from outsiders (e.g., pretenders or those who

aspire to be "new natives") to embrace cultural markers which, in the past, would not necessarily have been desirable, appropriating them in a manner that is not recognized as being traditional, authentic, or fair (Kramvig and Flemmen 2018, 2019). In such cases of improper appropriation some rituals, spiritual or culturally distinctive expressions, motives, and symbols could be taken out of their social context of use and simplified or hybridized, eventually becoming exploited or commercialized. In the case of yoik, one such example is the appropriation of luođit by inserting them into musical compositions belonging to a diffuse "world music" aesthetic.[15] This type of appropriation does not comply with the ethics that protect Indigenous immaterial heritage. Even if the outsider's initial appreciation of luođit may have been an expression based in good intentions, its appropriation as heritage or melody and its use within a new, different cultural or even commercial context is inappropriate if not even illegitimate.

Recently, the terms appreciation and appropriation have also taken on more positive nuance when expressed by insiders and experts of Indigenous cultures. In the case of luođit, its expressive power is captivating and distinctively recognizable, and the dajahusat are becoming increasingly translated and appreciated for their poetic qualities. The unforgettable experience of listening to luođit is also charged with affectivity, regardless of whether one is an insider or an outsider of the culture (Fagerheim 2014), and the feeling of immediately being endowed with a unique gift when witnessing yoikers improvize has been reported by many listeners. Sámi music festivals have reinforced opportunities for outsiders to be curious and appreciative of yoik as complex cultural expression. This highly appreciative phenomenon positions luođit in the limelight of world music, but this has also led to its musical appropriation by those in the media industry and through its illicit hybridization with other genres.

This points to two different types of appreciation. The first is more inflected with admiration for a musical form that is unique, spiritual, complex, and captivating. The second, which follows this type of appreciation, leads to the possibility of appropriation with the aim of revitalizing hybrid music forms, but also exploits such melodic inspirations. The music industry pervasively exploits "Indigenous" sonorities in order to reach vast audiences and forge new trends in pop music.

In the case of luođit, new approaches to the mediation of knowledge about luohti collections from Sámi/Indigenous actors, or projects such as DigiJoik, are leading to a process of re-appropriation. Custodians of Indigenous knowledge, juoigit, artists, and musicians have access to and can obtain research support to analyse the collections and establish new paradigms through which to interpret and use the recordings or luođit. The DigiJoik project addresses the problematic phenomenon of the appreciation and appropriation of Indigenous immaterial cultural heritage, by emphasizing how

cautious and respectful one should be when accessing archives, particularly those which, until recently, have been relatively guarded and protected. Before making the decision to publish archive materials on the Internet, it was necessary to devote an entire year to negotiating, elaborating, doubting, and resolving. Throughout this process, the overriding consideration was always respect for the ideals of collectivity, collegiality, guardianship, care, and consent. These features are integral to Indigenous ontologies; there is also a trend towards these in wider academia – including in the social sciences – although in these cases the final aims are knowledge production and not necessarily action and pragmatism. In the case of DigiJoik, all these factors had to be taken into consideration and, as the final act – to facilitate the public circulation of certain items from the museum's collections – was a resolution which did take a toll on the participants, but which also opened up the possibility for a new existence of the collections, one existing beyond the protective stores of an academic institution.

Guardianship in the DigiJoik framework has been designed to be collective and shared, but based on cultural and insider expertise. The project conveys cultural competences, respecting norms relevant to Indigenous cultural heritage governance. These gestures demonstrate care, and they require a sense of justice towards the multiplicity of interests and claims expressed by different social Sámi actors. Therefore, collaboration must to be conducted with a certain frankness and tolerance. In this case, appreciation – as a quality expressing curiosity and the ability to listen and reflect upon consequences for the most vulnerable issues (e.g., regarding the stigma of alcohol consumption) – should, in theory, facilitate dialogue. At the same time, such processes also involve frictions and critiques that are unavoidable, and which must be processed and overcome.

Another example of appreciation is the evidence that Sámi and Indigenous cultures have become a desirable research topic in many institutions globally. To promote future academic, historical, and critical research, it is necessary to look at other system-collections elsewhere from a comparative perspective. There is, therefore, a need for a digital database that can be linked to larger information systems. Here, Sámi and non-Sámi scholars alike can collaborate for a common good, always respecting Indigenous research ethics and policies and with supervision of cultural experts and insiders. This can then lead to another form of appropriation whereby networks and availability on digital databases, compatible codes of access and linking, and ongoing work to update and cross-reference information becomes fundamental to understanding one single item within a collection. In the case of luohti databases, metadata should be made available in several languages, including in different Sámi languages, according to the specific object in the collection. This type of appreciation then promotes cutting-edge debates relating to Indigeneity and decolonization across multiple disciplines.

Another parallel form of appreciation comprises fostering a sense of trust among both Sámi and non-Sámi, and between these groups and communities outside the archival institutions. Museums have previously had a strong level of authority, but policies implemented as a result of new and critical museology trends have encouraged museums to become "contact zones" (Pratt 1991; Clifford 1997, 192–193). Projects stemming from various modes of contact zones can, in fact, transform the authority of museums that has been primarily concerned with accessibility and specialized knowledge into arenas for new forms of guardianship. Ideally, in these arenas, Indigenous methodologies will be deployed correctly, administrated, and expanded upon. Diverse social actors and experts should be involved in this framework, thereby fostering the societal relevance of archives and of collections as systems that disclose their genealogies, retracing how they came about. DigiJoik is a critical, intersectional, educational project that valorizes and vitalizes collections that otherwise could remain perpetually dormant or unexplored, or simply inaccessible to new critical scrutiny (Finbog 2021; García-Antón 2022). This can lead to yet another form of appropriation, one in which expert groups try out pilot projects to measure the impact of new circulation or mediation of cultural heritage, defining the modes of performance (material and immaterial are intertwined), renaming it, and therefore re-appropriating it. These corrections facilitate the activation of new metadata to intercross and reveal the sedimented legacies of the archives, here revised in collaborative settings. We assume here that appreciation and appropriation can also be seen as positive aspects of cultural transformation.

There is a risk here of idealization, however, because neither appreciation nor appropriation are ever neutral. In their dynamic interplay lies a laborious process in which nothing can be taken for granted. Moreover, paternalism and prevarication can always re-emerge, as the renaming, interpretation, and impact of performative gestures are also connected to power relations. The difficult process of decolonizing archives is not just a matter of opening the door of a cage; it also necessitates open acts of care and protection. But who is entitled to receive and provide protection of an archive, and who is entitled to take on the role of custodian? This is what has been emerging through the DigiJoik discussions – within the reference group, but also continuing in both formal and informal settings between participants, on social media, through emails, and through the interventions of members.

In doing this work, one also comes across accounts of personal lived experiences in matters of appropriation, stigma, and injustice connected to the practice and transmission of luođit. Allowing for such moments to be revealed and fostered, and respecting and protecting the vulnerability of related individuals and families, is the delicate task that DigiJoik must address at every step.

## Luođit and Rematriation

Decolonization is not only about territorial claims, economic strategies, and racial ideologies, it also involves the appropriation of tangible and intangible culture (Naum and Nordin 2013; Äikäs and Salmi 2019). Through the DigiJoik project, we have examined this multivocality associated with the luohti collection, and the main question that has arisen from the reference group discussions was what a future home for luođit should look like. Is the transfer of luođit from one archive to another, regardless of the adoption of Sámi terms (e.g., Luohtevuorká), the best starting point for a nascent repatriation process?

The goal of the DigiJoik project has been to open the doors to the archives of the Arctic University Museum. What was once appropriated and placed in a museum archive must now be made available to Sámi communities. Repatriation can be seen as an act or process by which important cultural items or human remains, once appropriated by collectors and scientists, are returned to the country of origin, allegiance, or citizenship. It has been proposed as a movement towards self-determination, as well as a restitution of injustice and colonial violence (e.g., Hicks 2020; Bell 2009).

Some scholars point out that repatriation does not encompass the full scope of a project for the return of material and immaterial cultural heritage. The term "rematriation" has been suggested as being broader, and is increasingly defined as a form of reclaiming ancestral knowledge and spirituality beyond the acts of repatriating objects. Rematriation as a term has been used by, among others, Sámi scholar Rauna Kuokkanan in her work on Indigenous self-determination and governance (2019), as well as by Outi Pieski and Eeva-Kristiina Nylander (formerly Harlin; 2020). Using the *ládjogahpir* (a traditional Sámi women's hat) as an example, Pieski and Nylander see rematriation as a way of bringing traditional women's voices and practices back to the forefront in Sápmi. As they remind us, "by exploring the history of collections, their origins, and by sharing this information with the community we can, at best, enable objects to be actively involved in empowering and healing processes in the present" (Pieski and Harlin 2020). In other words, rematriation involves new prerequisites for trust, knowledge-building, and self-determination on Indigenous Peoples' own terms.

How, then, does rematriation relate to the DigiJoik project? The politics of Norwegianization and the concealment of luođit in private or museum collections around the world have affected Sámi knowledge systems. Without the luođit to act as a compass, local ways of knowing were lost. Furthermore, luohti is an expression and practice that transgresses a gender divide. In relation to DigiJoik, rematriation involves breaking free from colonial and patriarchal collecting and the collection system of museums. It involves reclaiming both women's and men's voices and knowledge systems, and the

acknowledgement of non-human actors. Rematriation signifies something more than a merely the transfer of documents and recordings from the museum's archives. It raises awareness of the opening up of museum practices, of collaboration with Sámi communities, and of the public sharing and repatriation of knowledge about luođit – which for the past 150 has been restricted by the museum as an institution – now made widely available through platforms such as DigitaltMuseum and Spotify. These types of practices can trigger new power relations and actions, inspirations, desires, and memories in the present. As juoigi Jørgen Stenberg stated in an interview with PhD fellow and Sámi musician Jakop Janssøn, gaining access to the old archive recordings is a healing process that is of major importance for the possibility of developing living luohti traditions, and has an impact on society today (quoted in Janssøn 2023).

As a memory institution, the Arctic University Museum encapsulates the diversity of stories linked to each luohti and the luohti's performer, as well as to the context in which it was recorded. At the same time, platforms such as DigitaltMuseum and Spotify make the luođit accessible to a wide audience, which includes younger generations of Sámi. This creates a situation in which a luohti can become a source of innovation, a situation in which current and future generations of Sámi can interact with their heritage and configurate the museum's archived luođit for new interventions and transformative impact. With regard to the luođit archives at the Arctic University Museum, rematriation should not involve launching a new canon, nor replacing one hierarchy with another. Rather than making grandiose gestures, a tentative path forward might be preferable, utilizing a diverse array of small interventions, experiments, questionings, gradual alterations of ingrained practices, and the loosening of rooted patterns of thought. By making luođit accessible beyond being "objects in a museum archive," the intention of using new platforms such as Spotify and DigitaltMuseum are to offer alternative structures for sharing. These platforms can also provide opportunities for transformative moments, where the collected luođit can be listened to, experienced, and lived, allowing the listener to be part of a becoming and opening pathways for return.

A prerequisite for repatriation and rematriation to take place is that we do not conceal the colonial roots of our museum institutions – and this is also a prerequisite for our museum to remain relevant. As Rassool points out in "Rethinking the Ethnographic Museum":

> Transforming the museum means embarking on projects of restitution, not just as return but also as a methodology of rethinking what we mean by museum. It also entails understanding the history of the museum as the locus of empire and coloniality in all its forms, and to embark on the difficult work of interrogating its collecting histories and epistemologies.
> *(Rassool 2022, 65)*

If the term "museum" is to mean anything in the future, the museums of today must be willing to alter and modify their internal structure and their ideas to fit changing world conditions and advances in social thought. As Haraway argues, "Trouble is an interesting word […] Our task is to make trouble, to stir up potent response to devastating events, as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places" (2016, 18). Exploring the luohti collections and their pasts, presents, and futures together with representatives from Sámi communities through the DigiJoik project has not only enabled the production of knowledge about luođit, it has also enriched an understanding of the Arctic University Museum itself – of its colonial roots, its challenges, and its possibilities.

## Notes

1 See also Schøning (Chapter 1) and Johansen (Chapter 2) in this book.
2 Northern Sámi term for what is known in English as yoik, a style of vocal expression unique to the Sámi People; the act of yoiking is *juoigat*. In this article, we use the Northern Sámi terms *luohti* (singular) and *luođit* (plural) when referring to single and multiple yoiks, respectively.
3 "Luohti/leu'dd/livđe/vuolle/vuelie leat sámi guovlluid árbevirolaš juoiganmállet. Sámi mushikka lea fas luohti/leu'dd/livđe/vuolle/vuelie seaguhuvvon čuojanasaiguin, ja/dahje sámi lyrihkka ja lávlunteavsttat, ja/dahje ođđa áigge sámi musihkka jus ovdanbukti/dahkki ieš lea sápmelaš ja son ieš dohkkehan iežas musihka sámi musihkkan." The other Sámi language terms for yoik included in this statement include *leu'dd/luvv't* (Kildin Sámi), *livđe* (Inari Sámi), *vuolle* (Lule Sámi), and *vuelie* (Southern Sámi), however this list is not exhaustive, and a diverse range of additional terms exist in each of these language areas which are not listed here.
4 Examples of news articles from the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK; https://www.nrk.no/sapmi/joik-gjemmes-bort-i-arkiver-1.11962909) and NRK Sápmi ("Krever tilgjengelig joikearkiv," https://www.nrk.no/sapmi/krever-tilgjengelig-joikearkiv-1.12256369).
5 See also De Vivo (Chapter 9) and Rugeldal (Chapter 7) in this book.
6 Lars Levi Læstadius was a Swedish Lutheran clergyman, preacher, and naturalist. He is known as an author of revival literature and as the leader of the Læstadian faith movement in the Nordic region in the mid-19th century, which became popular among many Sámi believers. Læstadianism advocated a form of Christianity characterized by radical pietistic influences, inciting individual conversion to a "new life" in accordance with biblical ideals.
7 A selection of around 400 luođit was released online via the Arctic University Museum's website in 2009 to meet the increasing demands and requests from the public to access the archive. The published selection represented different luohti traditions, and Graff had taken care to secure the consent of the performers or their descendants, as well as choosing to not release sensitive luođit, those with dajahusat that could be interpreted as offensive or which incited reactions from traditional performers.
8 The Kven are the descendants of Finnish immigrants from the area of Bottenviken who first began to migrate to the regions of Northern Norway during the 16th century in response to population increase and the consequent search for land to cultivate. In Norwegian, they are also known as *norskfinner*. Today they are a recognized ethnic minority in Norway, and the Kven language is currently undergoing a process of revitalization.

9 Today renamed the Arctic University Museum of Norway.
10 Noaidi is the Northern Sámi term for a religious specialist and healer within the old Sámi religious worldviews.
11 This description and performance of the yoik can be viewed on YouTube from 11:24: https://youtu.be/vJghX2zUQPc?si=Dz6RsZ09fSdVf65Z&t=684.
12 Graff had discussed with Bikko Nillá's daughter the extent to which some of the luođit were inappropriate, and why she resisted the idea of publishing them, especially luođit that contained characteristics of persons as being under the influence of alcohol.
13 TONO is the Norwegian organization for the administering of musical copyright.
14 Sometime after the DigiJoik project had launched, disagreement about possible online publication, and about which platforms were most suitable, led to some members of the reference group to withdraw from the project. As the Arctic University Museum had by that point already decided on a path forward, the DigiJoik project leader decided to discontinue the reference group.
15 Artefacts endowed with particular powers or culturally specific expressions associated with spirituality and recognition of ontologies that are fundamental to collective worldviews – for example, Indigenous – have often become appropriated by the market under postcolonial capitalism. The market as an entity here references a performative force which produces new commodities and objects of desires for (mass) consumption. In many cases, this occurs by masking of the act of "taking without asking" (i.e., appropriation) as intention to celebrate an emerging multicultural society, often in affluent regions of the world. With music, the epiphenomenon alone (in this case, luohti melodies) are taken and forged into hybrid styles masked by a sense of "authenticity." This act is often based on asymmetrical power relations, often downplaying or overlooking legal aspects of belonging or ownership, or failing to consider (Indigenous) worldviews, which already are poorly understood and generally shown little respect.

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# 4

# DRUM TIME

## Tracing the Multifaceted Significances and Stories of a Sámi Drum

*Dikka Storm and Trude Fonneland*

Drums are among the most treasured items in the cultural museum context, and have been and still are sought after as a means of visualizing Indigenous religions and histories. This is indeed the case with the drum held by the Arctic University Museum of Norway,[1] which became a part of the museum's collection 28 March 1962, and has since served as a key symbol for the museum's dissemination of Sámi culture. From its present location in a display cabinet in the *Samekulturen* (*The Sámi Culture*) exhibit, the drum raises numerous questions. This chapter addresses some of these by focusing on the drum's cultural biography, its history, and its shifting meanings, movements, and associations.[2]

Ernst Manker's ground-breaking publications *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel Vol. I* and *II* (1938, 1950) were the first attempts to collate all knowledge then known about Sámi drums. In these books, the drums are drawn and catalogued, and the symbols on the membranes are interpreted. Much has developed on the research front since the 1950s, however, and new drums have since emerged. In Manker's works, the drums were dated according to when they were appropriated, confiscated, and collected. Recent archaeological methods and analysis such as radiocarbon dating, however, have allowed for completely new approaches to gaining knowledge about when or where the various drums were fashioned, and radiocarbon dating of the Arctic University Museum's drum in 2017 challenged existing research and opened for new perspectives on its history. This new knowledge revealed and extended our understandings of the true period of time that drums have vibrated throughout Sápmi.

In this chapter, we use the drum as an inspiration to look into the relations between the object itself and its many encounters, and how the drum has

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**FIGURE 4.1** The goavddis and the drum hammer.

*Source:* Photo by Mari Karlstad/The Arctic University Museum of Norway.

both shaped and affected these encounters. We ask how knowledge about the drum's biography, its translations, and travels emancipate Sámi cultural heritage from the heavy burden of simply being conserved and displayed. Furthermore, we explore the ways that increased knowledge has repositioned the drum as a cultural belonging, as an instrument for shifting power relations, and as a means to create identity and memory.

## A History of Ruptures

The drum in the Arctic University Museum collection reveals a history of ruptures which have arisen from colonial contact zones. Beginning in the 17th century, hundreds – perhaps even thousands – of Sámi drums vanished over a period of about a hundred years. They were burned in bonfires, forcibly rounded up and removed by missionaries, used as trophies, or hidden in mountains to be found and later presented to collectors or museums. Many drums were sent to the Missionary Collegium in Copenhagen, where more than 70 drums were lost in a fire in 1728. The destruction of these Sámi drums or their concealment in private or museum collections around the world had a huge impact on the Sámi knowledge system – without the drum as compass, local ways of knowing were disrupted.

Sámi drums are referenced in written sources from as far back as the end of the 12th century. The first manuscript to include an account of drum use

is the *Historia Norwegiæ*, a medieval-era Norwegian manuscript documenting regional history from 1190. The drum in *Historia Norwegiæ* is said to have depicted whales, deer wearing bridles, snowshoes, even a ship with oars (Ekrem and Mortensen 2003). The account tells us that the drum at this point in time was already an acknowledged instrument used in spiritual séances. However, we must jump several centuries ahead before we find any further lengthy written accounts of Sámi drums. In the 17th and 18th centuries, Norwegian and Swedish missionaries and clergymen wrote zealously about the "Bible of the Devil" (Kildal in Krekling 1945, 136) which they were intent on seizing and eradicating. Despite their bias, these texts are commonly referred to as being the most relevant source materials when studying Sámi drums.

The systematic looting and destruction of Sámi objects during the 17th and 18th centuries was one of many strategies of colonial rule in the Sámi lands, in which material culture played an important role, and objects such as the sacred drums were turned into instruments of colonial governance and domination. Due to their violent destruction, the drums became rarities and sought-after collectibles, with the Arctic University Museum in Romsa placing the acquisition of a Sámi drum high on its list of priorities all the way back to the museum's establishment in 1872. Indeed, the museum's first catalogue of the Sámi collection, titled *Fortegnelse over Finnesager i Tromsø Museum med et anheng over en del af de de ting som mangler* (*A List of Sámi Items in the Tromsø Museum with Notes of Some Missing Items*), includes a drum in the list of objects that the museum hoped to acquire (Vorren 1972, 111).[3] The museum's *1960 Annual Report* gives further insight into the persistent efforts the museum made to obtain a drum:

> The museum has contacted museums in Sweden and Denmark to seek out a donation of a Sámi drum, without success. Furthermore, a search has been undertaken in the Norwegian Sámi region for specimens which may be found preserved in a family's possession or buried in specified locations, but without positive results. However, there are privately-owned drums in Sweden. Through curator Dr. Ernst Manker at the Nordiska Museum, we have been able to get in touch with the owners of fine and, for [the museum], well-suited specimens. This past year, we have received offers from two individuals who are willing to sell their drums. As Professor Guttorm Gjessing points out, this opportunity is "a great event in our cultural preservation," and it would be a tragedy to miss out on having one of the treasures of Sámi cultural remains returned to Norway, and especially to the primary museum within our Sámi region.
>
> *(Vorren 1960, 44, authors' translation)*

In the museum's *1962 Annual Report*, Ørnulv Vorren, professor and leader of the museum's Sámi Ethnographic Department, proudly announced

that a drum had been procured (1962, 52–53). At that time, there was only one drum held across all Norwegian museum collections, located in Tråante/Trondheim. That the museum in Romsa got its own drum in 1962 was therefore considered to be a major event. In his eulogy to Ernst Manker published in the museum's *1972 Annual Report*, Vorren recognized Manker's key role as intermediary in the process of transferring the drum to the Arctic University Museum, writing, "Ernst Manker was invaluable to the museum for his exceptional skills in communication. His knowledge of Sámi drums and his unique position in this regard enabled him in not only to procure an offer of a drum, but to also mediate the trade for the museum" (Vorren 1972, 75, authors' translation). With Manker's help, the drum was transported from Skåne and introduced into the Romssa museum context in 1962, where it was quickly designated by Vorren as the "jewel" of the Sámi collection, becoming a key inclusion of the museum's planned permanent exhibition, *Samekulturen*.

## A Vessel for Traditional Knowledge

Each Sámi drum has its own unique design. All are portable, made of wood, horn, bone, or metal, and decorated with Sámi ornamentation. They were constructed and used by Sámi people across all of Sápmi. Unfortunately, today, many of the drums' provenances are unknown or obscured. Nevertheless, the shape of the drum and the symbols on the drumhead can provide us with an idea of a drum's area of origin, for example, whether it is a Northern Sámi *goavddis*, a Lule Sámi *goabdes*, or a Southern Sámi *gievrie*.

The drum at the Arctic University Museum is a Northern Sámi goavddis, a bowl-shaped drum with a membrane made of reindeer hide attached to the frame with sinew. The drum is fashioned from a pine burr (*Pinus sylvestris L.*; Manker 1938, 715; Kirchhefer 2016). It is similar to one famous pine goavddis that belonged to Poala-Ánde [Anders Paulsen] in the 1600s,[4] a Sámi who was sentenced to death, but killed while in custody in Finnmark in 1692. Poala-Ánde himself is believed to have remarked, "[a drum] cannot serve anyone unless it is made of pinewood" (Qvigstad 1903/1904, 68–82; Lilienskiold [1698] 1942, 199–208).[5] While it is still unknown why pine was the preferred drum-making material, 65 of the 71 Sámi drums described by Ernst Manker are made of pine (Manker 1938, 1950). Isaac Olsen has also given a detailed account about the material to be used when building a goavddis:

> The drum of the *noaidi* [a Sámi religious specialist] must be made out of and carved from a burr, one which is large and oblong, elongated like a bowl or barrel, and the tree it comes from must have grown in a strange way and in a special place, such as by a waterfall or deep in a valley, away from any other tree […].
>
> *(Olsen [1715] 1910, 47, authors' translation)*[6]

**FIGURE 4.2** The goavddis' frame with handles, ornamentation, and brass chains which hang from the edge of the frame.

*Source:* Photo by Mari Karlstad/The Arctic University Museum of Norway.

As Rolf Christoffersson has noted, according to source materials, the ideal drum wood comes from a sun-facing tree, the grain moving towards the right as it travels upwards. Indeed, this twisting of the tree trunk is most common in pine (2010, 110). Even though the Arctic University Museum's goavddis' creator is unknown, even a superficial examination tells us that they possessed profound knowledge about their physical surroundings and had thorough expertise as to how to select material for an enduring drum, one which could embody the power to provide spiritual guidance for generations to come. Liisa-Rávná Finbog calls these types of knowledge *tiida*. Tiida, according to Finbog, refers to knowledge, stories, and bodily acts connected to spirituality, and passed down from generation to generation (Guttorm 2001; Dunfjeld 2006, 31–33; Finbog 2020, 132).

The goavddis at the Arctic University Museum is 35.5 cm long, 21.5 cm wide, and 7 cm deep, and its frame is decorated with carvings. It has two coarse, biconvex handles, and is adorned with seven parallel triangles. Brass chains hang from the edge of its frame. Some of the pendants have been lost, and today only seven remain. The drum skin has faded slightly, but apart from a few dark spots, it is well-preserved, and the contours of the symbols drawn with alder bark are still visible.[7] The symbols painted on the membrane are expressed in two sections, with a horizontal line dividing the upper and lower parts. The symbols are drawn with double lines, and are simplified, stylistic, and abstract.

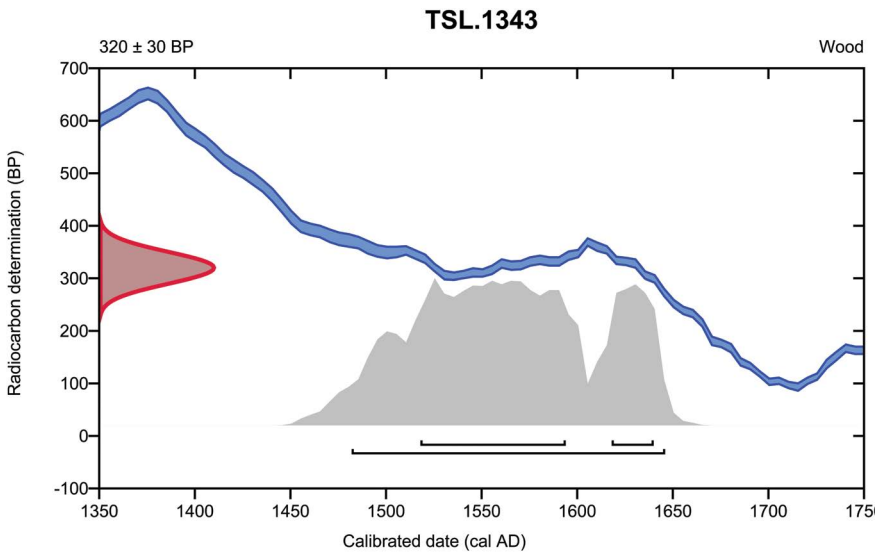
**FIGURE 4.3** The goavddis' membrane. The drum skin has faded slightly, but apart from the dark spots, it is well-preserved and the contours of the symbols drawn with alder bark are still visible.

*Source:* Photo by Mari Karlstad/The Arctic University Museum of Norway.

Much is still unknown about the lives of Sámi drums and the practices of which they were a part. The drums were probably used for multiple purposes, serving as instruments not only for divination and general consultation, but which could also act as compasses and solaces (Rydving [1993] 1995; Christoffersson 2010; Storm and Fonneland 2022).

Written sources refer to the drum as a tool to communicate with divine or supernatural powers, or as an instrument of divination which helped noaidi tell the future (Storm 2016, 194; Hansen and Olsen 2022, 216). However, it is likely that using the drums for divination was not reserved for noaidi alone – in fact, they could have been used by any number of people (Hallencreutz 1990). As a divination tool, the drums were used in their domestic contexts and on their local grounds, acting as a translator between the earthly and spiritual realms. The drummer would decode the messages conveyed by the drum's *árpa* – small pendants made of bone, brass, or silver which acted as pointers – as they wandered the drum skin, "communicating" with the drum's symbols. These translations were vital, providing guidance regarding grazing lands, fishing, or family matters (Mebius 2000, 41, 2003, 17;Storm 2016, 194). In other words, the drum functioned as a life compass that was initiated through acts of interpretation. They contained ways of understanding as well as teachings, transmitting traditional knowledge (Sjöholm 2023, 28).

The drum at the Arctic University Museum was described by Manker in detail, and catalogued in *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel* (1938, 1950) as No. 48 (Manker 1938, 714–718; 1950, 378–380). Information about the dating of Drum No. 48 is missing from Manker's notes, probably due to the many gaps in the stories about when this drum was confiscated from its Sámi owners and homelands. However, developments in radiocarbon dating eventually facilitated new opportunities to understand the long time span that drums have vibrated throughout Sápmi. In 2018, a small sample of the drum's pine burr wood was radiocarbon dated to 320±30 BP (Beta-518297), based on the locations referenced by Manker (1938, 715).[8] According to archaeologist Marianne Skandfer, the calibration curve hits the radiocarbon determination at a long and relatively flat interval between 1518 and 1594 cal AD, and at a shorter interval from 1482 to 1646 calibrated AD (cal AD). Summed, with 95.4% probability, the dating indicates that the drum was fashioned sometime between 1482 and 1646 cal AD, which means that this drum may have been passed along through several generations of Sámi, to be used as their tool of guidance before being removed from its homelands.




| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 95.4% probability | | |
| (95.4%) | 1482–1646 cal AD | (468–304 cal BP) |
| 68.2% probability | | |
| (53.5%) | 1518–1594 cal AD | (432–356 cal BP) |
| (14.7%) | 1618–1640 cal AD | (332–310 cal BP) |

**FIGURE 4.4** Calibration curve and radiocarbon dating data for Drum No. 48, indicating that the drum was likely created sometime between 1482 and 1646 AD.

While Manker did provide knowledge about when many of the Sámi drums were seized, the results of the radiocarbon dating revealed the much longer life span of the goavddis, painting a picture of an object that has lived and wandered from hand to hand, generation after generation, through shifting circumstances and contexts. This knowledge about the age of the goavddis opens up possibilities for new critical approaches related to the study of drum time.

## The Drum's Provenance

Based on studies of Drum No. 48's composition, and through comparison to the other known Sámi drums, Manker (1938, 715) described the drum as a "Ranen-type," coming from the region today known as Raane/Rana. He also referenced the descriptions of Wiklund (1912, 1930) – who suggested that the drum's symbols bear resemblance to the Suarsa/Sorsele drum type – and Reuterskiöld (1912, 1927) – who, due to one of the drum's sun symbols, categorized the drum as being from Sjeltie/Åsele.

These suggested provenances constitute a large region that stretches from today's Raane, in the northern part of the Southern Sámi region in the Norwegian part of Sápmi, down to the middle and southern parts of Västerbotten county in the Swedish part of Sápmi. From the 16th century, and during the drum's presumed period of activity, this area was characterized by interactions, mobility, and migration routes between the coast and inland. People's movements through the landscape during this time changed according to seasonal changes in relation to its accessibility and to their needs for a broad variety of resources and food (Hansen and Olsen 2014; Hermanstrand 2020). According to Hansen and Olsen, the Sámi societies in these areas faced three main external political forces between 1550 and 1750: colonization, Christianization, and integration into economic networks, all of which also affected the drum.

From the start of the 1600s, trade in Fennoscandia was increasingly subjected to decrees and political interventions by states who strove to channel trade into permanent markets which they controlled. The result was a permanent structure of institutionalized marketplaces throughout northern Fennoscandia (Hansen and Olsen 2014, 225–240). This process contributed to the integration of the Sámi economy more firmly into these existing trade networks. Two of the drum's potential provenances are noted in Hansen and Olsen's map of "institutionalized" Sámi markets, with Raane noted as a summer and autumn market, while Sjeltie is highlighted as a winter market site (237).

That the drum can be argued to connect to three separate provenances highlights the fact that it is impossible to make an unambiguous and indisputable categorisation of the drums (Kjellström and Rydving 1988;

Rydving [1993] 1995; Hansen and Olsen 2014). Both gievrieh and goavdát are known to have come from these areas, and the symbols painted on drum skins can vary extensively. Drums were made by individual *duojárat* (Sámi craftspersons), with each drum marked by their maker's unique personal style. In addition to this, the drums most likely accompanied the Sámi migrating between inland and coastal areas, interacting with the shifting landscapes, circumstances, animals, and people.

### The Drum's Religious Context

What of the religious situation in the Raane, Sjeltie, and Suarsa regions at the time of the drum? Political changes and economic integration of Sámi regions also led to shifts in the legal and religious spheres. In *Norges beskrivelse*, first published in 1613 (*Descriptions of Norway*, G. Storm 1881) clergyman Peder Claussøn Friis (1545–1614) offers a glimpse into the regional situation at the time. Friis himself lived his life in Stavanger, and was inspired by scholars from Oslo and Bergen, however his knowledge about Northern Norway likely came from a *lagmann* in Agder, Jon Simonssøn, a legal expert who employed his knowledge as a consultant for the Legislative Assembly. Simonssøn was born at Holum Gård in South Trøndelag, grew up in Helgeland, and was educated in Tråante/Trondheim, thus Friis' descriptions of Sámi livelihood, economic life, and religion were particularly reflective of the situations in Helgeland, North Trøndelag, and the southern part of Nordlánda/Nordland (Knutsen 1993; Jørgensen 2000). Specifically, Friis wrote that:

> […] the Finns cannot be considered anything other than heathens, as they refuse to allow anyone to properly educate them in the Christian faith and teachings; and although the Sea Sámi bring their children to the parish priests to be baptized (some children even three or four years old), and although some will travel to churches each year to hear the sermon and receive the Blessed Sacrament (which, during the Pope's reign and for a long time afterwards, was given to them unconsecrated, as the Finns would most likely misuse this holy bread for sorcery), and although some do know which parish they belong to, giving their parish priest his yearly dues, they nonetheless demonstrate through their sinful and immoral witchcraft and idolatry that these details are but sheer pretense and deception.
>
> *(Friis 1613, cited in Storm 1881, 399, authors' translation)*[9,10]

Friis gave detailed descriptions of Sámi *sieiddit* (sacrificial sites and sacrificial items), describing what he considered to be examples of Sámi "witchcraft" with regards to both people and animals, as well as to their skills in fortune telling and reading the weather. He noted that the nomadic Sámi were

even more knowledgeable in this, and that the Sámi living by the coast would send their children to be educated by the nomads so as to maintain a true faith. However, from 1618, the Danish king instructed the Bishop of Trondheim to visit the churches within his own diocese each year, and all churches in Finnmark and Nordland regularly every third year. Friis also noted that not all Sámi were "heathens," with some attending church services in Bi̇ton/Piteå and having their children baptized. Clergymen would also travel to the Sámi winter dwelling places each year to baptize the children.

Friis' descriptions of the religious situation in these regions are further substantiated by Peter Schnitler in his 1742 reports based on judicial interviews. Meanwhile, in 1733, missionary Albert Christian Dass made a detailed list of the Sámi population in Vaapste/Vefsn, an area noted for its particularly close connections to and communications between Inland and Sea Sámi communities (Schnitler 1929, 65–78). According to his reports, intermarriages were common during this time, and residents would attend church either inland in Liksjoe/Lycksele or along the coast in Suarsa.

In the Swedish part of Sápmi, the first part of the 17th century was marked by conscious and zealous efforts to christen the Sámi population (Lindmark 2016). King Karl IX (reign 1604–1611) had five churches established in the Sámi administrative districts ("lappmarker") of Ume, Pite, and Torne. After him, King Gustav II Adolf (reign 1611–1632) founded two schools to serve the Sámi in Bi̇ton and Liksjoe in the Ume Sámi district, and had ordered Nils Andersson, principal of the school in Bi̇ton, to issue religious books in Pite Sámi language.[11] The translation and publishing of religious texts into Sámi language continued for several decades, with texts including Luther's catechism, an alphabet book, and a large religious handbook. Later, under Queen Christina (reign 1632–1654)[12], vicarages were organized within each of the Sámi administrative districts, with 11 churches built and five clergymen installed across the region by the middle of the 17th century to serve the Sámi communities. These efforts were all a part of a larger strategy intended to enforce control over the land and its resources (Kolsrud 1947; Berg, Storm, and Bergesen 2011, 157–158).

During the 17th and 18th centuries, drastic offensives were launched against the Sámi religion through missionary work inspired by nascent pietism in the Norwegian part of Sápmi, and by Lutheran orthodoxy on the Swedish side. These actions, which can broadly be considered a part of the broader "protracted Reformation" that was taking place in Scandinavia as it shifted gradually from the Catholic to the Lutheran faith, were diverse and dramatic, involving mission events, so-called "witch trials," international political conflicts, and even war. Official Lutheran churches demonized both Sámi religion and Catholic rituals (Rasmussen 2016; Johnsen 2022), with encounters leading to increased persecution of Sámi religious practices and intensified missionary activity. The threat of flogging and fines for not

attending church raised service attendance rates, but the church firmly believed that it needed to destroy "the tool and instrument of Satan" – the Sámi drum (Forbus [1728] 1910, 87). Thus, in tandem with missionary activities, Sámi religious and cultural artefacts were collected and confiscated across Sápmi. The drums were taken away and replaced with Bibles.

These offensives can be seen as colonial ruptures which caused dispossession and displacement, impacting and irreversibly changing Sámi religious life and practices. However, recent research into Scandinavian court cases from the late-1600s and reports from the early-1700s has confirmed that many Sámi likely combined church attendance with continued Indigenous practices, thereby alternating between and even integrating religions (Rydving [1993] 1995; Rasmussen 2016; Hansen and Olsen 2022). As David Chidester has argued, resistance and "more complex creative responses have also been evident in new strategies for weaving together alien and Indigenous religious resources" (2018, 140). Even if colonization was a destructive force on Sámi Indigenous religions, the Sámi nonetheless developed strategies to manoeuvre between the religious worlds of both the colonizers and the colonized. Though this context of colonial oppression, the Sámi drum was introduced to new spiritual geographies and religious resources, becoming a tool for transcending colonial powers, and a container for Indigenous religious memory.

There are very few written 18th-century sources which provide Sámi perspectives on the denigration and erasure of their spiritual practices, or how practices moved underground. Similarly, few sources discuss how Sámi worldviews were kept alive, despite missionary efforts to erase religious symbols and objects. The powerlessness a drum's owner must have felt, their anger, fear, and discouragement, these were seldom documented. However, Anders Erson Snadda is one of the very few Sámi narrators who did give testimony to how the loss of the drum affected the Sámi community. Snadda's statement is referenced by Pehr Högström (1714–1784), missionary and later parish priest in Syöldate/Skellefteå:

> Since [the Sámi] began to deviate from the customs of their ancestors, they have become scattered, and today live mixed into the whole of the community, though often only a few, most of whom are beggars. One told about his father, who had been well when he used the [goabdes]; since having to put it aside, however, he found himself unable to understand anything else, soon having to beg at the doors of others… Other Lapps echoed his words, noticeably sharing the same opinions.
>
> *(Högström 1774–1745, authors' translation)*

Although the witch trials were not specifically focused on the Sámi population, King Christian IV wrote a letter in 1609 to the provincial governors

Hans Kønningham [Cunningham] and Hans Lilienskiold, noting that those who practiced Sámi witchcraft should be killed without mercy (Hansen and Olsen 2014, 322–323). During the trials, several Sámi were condemned to death for using their drums in the Norwegian part of Sápmi, while at least one person was executed for the same offence on the Swedish side. In 1693, in Árjepluovve/Arjeplog, Lars Nilsson, a 60-year-old Sámi man in Pite Lappmark was executed because he had used his drum in an effort to save his grandson who had drowned. The court records document that Nilsson, who had good knowledge of the Christian faith, explained that he considered the old Sámi gods to be more helpful than the Christian God (Randulf [1723] 1904, 18–19 ff; Rydving [1993] 1995; Westman, Utsi, and Mulk 1999, 25; Christoffersson 2010).

### Confiscation and Transition into a Collector's Item

Exactly when the drum in the Arctic University Museum's collection was confiscated and taken from its Sámi homelands is unknown. As mentioned, several of the drums catalogued by Manker are in fact dated according to when they were seized, confiscated, and collected, with many of the drums being linked to two major events: a mass confiscation of drums which took place in Liksjoe between 1723 and 1724, and the largest known drum confiscation in the Swedish part of Sápmi, occurring in Sjeltie in 1725.

Thomas Von Westen, who led the organized mission of the Danish-Norwegian state, was shocked at the degree of "paganism" he found during his three missionary travels in the Norwegian part of Sápmi between 1716 and 1723 (Hammond 1787), and he was certain that this "paganism" had a similar (or even larger) presence on the Swedish side. In a letter to Swedish and Norwegian clergymen dated 11 March 1723, von Westen called for a collaboration between Swedish and Norwegian clergymen to convert Sámi communities:

> The noble peace which God has given the Nordic Kingdoms will certainly bear fruit, that both Norwegian and Swedish clergy shall extend to each other the right hands of society for the enlightenment and conversion of the Lapps […]. The Swedish Lapps and Finns are victims of the same paganism as ours, I have far too clear evidence of that, and in many places the Swedish Finns and Lapps demonstrate even stronger sorcery practices than ours, and are the schoolmasters and leaders of our Lapps and Finns.
>
> *(cited in Reuterskiöld 1910, vii, authors' translation)*

At von Westen's request, Nils Grubb in Ubmeje/Umeå began an investigation of the parishes, seeking evidence of continued use of the forbidden drum. Bishop Petrus Asp followed his lead, and on New Year's Day 1725 rounded

up 45 Sámi families at an assembly in Sjeltie. Asp forced the Sámi to hand over their drums, resulting in the seizure of 26 drums.

Von Westen himself is said to have had 100 drums given to him by converted *noaiddit* (Sámi religious specialists) upon his return from his missionary journeys (Randulf [1723] 1904, 29; Kalstad 1997). Several of these drums were sent onwards to the Missionary Collegium in Copenhagen, where more than 70 drums were lost in a fire in 1728. For the missionaries, the removal of the drums from their Sámi owners was seen as an act of transformation in these regions, where the drums would no longer have influential power in these communities.

Parallel to the confiscations condoned by the authorities were the interests of private collectors. Despite the limited information we have of the history of the drum at the Arctic University Museum, we do know that it escaped destruction to become a collector's item and a colonial trophy, that it was privately owned and had served as an heirloom in its colonial context as well. The drum was bought to the Arctic University Museum in the early-1960s from Swedish brothers A. K. D. and C. W. Kemner, from Ystad in southern Sweden, with Manker's facilitation, and its purchase was made possible through a donation from professor and doctor Leif Kreyberg (1896–1984). The Kemner brothers had inherited the drum from their father, G. Sture Kemner, who himself had obtained the goavddis from his grandfather on his mother's side, Doctor Magnus Bruzelius (1786–1855), who had been ordained as a clergyman in 1819 and had served as dean in Hørup and Lødrup in the Lund diocese. According to Manker,

> [… Bruzelius] was unusually versatile – in addition to his intellectual profession he was also interested in chemistry, archaeology, and history, and was a member of the Götische Association and Det Kongelige nordiske oldskrift selskab (The Royal Nordic Antiquities Society) – and kept the company of like-minded people who, in the early 19th century, were affiliated with prehistory researcher N. H. Sjöborg.
>
> *(Manker 1938, 714, authors' translation)*

Bruzelius had his own collection of local antiquities[13] and cooperated extensively with Sjöborg (1767–1838) who also demonstrated a broad interest in and knowledge of Nordic religious cultural heritage, as evidenced through his various published texts which included *Typanum Schamanico-Lapponicum in Museo Historico Lundensi* (*The Lappish Shaman Drum at the Lund Historical Museum* 1808, 1822, 1830). Manker suspected that Bruzelius acquired the goavddis through Sjöborg's contacts (1938, 714), however considering the drum's age and its period of fabrication (i.e., 1482–1646), it may also be possible that the drum had been collected much earlier and was already in the possession of clergymen before von Westen's call to escalate

the confiscation of drums. Regardless of when it was taken, when the drum was seized, it entered the learned spheres of the 18th Western European elite. Here, the goavddis became a coveted collectible that emerged as the foremost symbol of the Sámi people's "superstition" and "primitivism," and became a favoured object for scholarly studies about so-called Sámi "paganism." The Sámi ceremonial drums transitioned from being an integral, valued part of family and community life to becoming a curiosity to be exhibited, displayed, and traded beyond the borders of Sápmi, even beyond the borders of Scandinavia.

It was through creative scholarly encounters and the translation process that the goavddis became known as a "shaman drum." As Konsta Kaikkonen writes, "the discourse of 'Sámi shamanism' entered the academic world through the paradigm of comparative mythology as it was adopted by the Finnish ethnographer and linguist Matthias Alexander Castrén in the 1840s" (2020, 3). Norwegian linguist Jens A. Friis, building upon Castrén's theories and ideas, introduced this discourse into the up-and-coming field of "lappology" (3). Already in 1808, Sjöborg referred to the drum held in the collection of the Lund Historical Museum as a "*Typanum schamanico-Lapponicum*," later writing:

> Comparing what Rudbeck, Scheffer, Torneæus, and Högström state about the Swedish Lapps, as well as what Jessen and Leem have noted about the Norwegian Lapps, their religion, drums, predictions, and raptures, with what Levesque in his *Histoire de Russie* and Langlés in *Rituel des Tartars* wrote about the *Culte Chamanique* [*The Shamanistic Cult*], I have become convinced that the religious concepts and ceremonies of the Lapps are taken from the shamanism commonly practiced in northern Asia, and it is on this that I have based my explanation.
>
> *(Sjöborg 1830, 191, authors' translation)*[14]

"Shaman drums" eventually became an umbrella term for all Sámi drums, blurring both localized expressions of *duodji* (Sámi handicraft as well as, in line with Finbog 2020, a cosmological material praxis) as well as the diversity of Sámi religious practices and practitioners.

## The Drum and the Museum

Processes of selection, inclusion, exclusion, and ordering are fundamental for museums. As Anne Eriksen argues, the question of which kind of objects deserve to become part of a collection or exhibition has been essential throughout the history of these institutions (2009, 117). Sámi drums have a prominent yet vulnerable position within this history, as one of the most coveted collector's items. The oldest collections which included Sámi drums were

so-called cabinets of curiosities. In modern terminology, they were miscellaneous or even inconsistent collections of objects gathered from diverse fields of knowledge. Geological and zoological objects were mixed with pictorial art pieces and ethnographic or archaeological artefacts. The first cabinets were established in Italy during the late-Renaissance, and the practice spread quickly to the rest of Europe. Owned by powerful aristocrats, merchants, or scholars, the cabinets were a symbol of power, wealth, and knowledge, regarded as micro-cosmoses, memory theatres, and symbols of the collectors' control over the world. Two of the most famous cabinets, both of which included Sámi drums, were the Ole Worm Museum in Copenhagen and the Schefferus Museum in Uppsala.

In the Arctic University Museum's *1960 Annual Report*, Vorren referenced the search for and acquisition of the Sámi drum, describing it as a repatriation project. As mentioned previously, at this time only one Sámi drum was known to be in the possession of a Norwegian museum, at the NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet. Meanwhile, the Arctic University Museum was then the only established museum located in the northern part of Norway, and Vorren emphasized the importance of bringing a drum "home" to the primary museum within the Norwegian region of Sápmi (1960, 44). This is perhaps also why there was a particular focus on seeking out a goavddis specifically, as this type of drum is often associated with the Northern region of Sápmi (Christoffersson 2010). However, when a drum was found by the museum, upon return to this Sámi region in 1962, it was merely inserted into a new context, still positioned distantly from its origins and original purposes.

Rather than returning to a home of sorts, the goavddis now entered a museological history of colonial collections and collecting, inserted into a Western collection system and given a designated museum tag, L1343 – L referring to "Lappish," terminology with roots still firmly in the scholarly traditions of the 1800s. Indeed, the cataloguing of the drum in 1962 differs very little to the format and considerations used in 1885 when Just Knut Qvigstad published a catalogue of the same museum's Sámi collection, *Samlingen av lappiske Sager* (*The Collection of Lappish Objects*). New meanings and values were added, but decidedly Western colonial ones, and unlikely those which the drum's creator or owners would have highlighted. The museum tag, then, can be seen a marker of "conceptual violence," demonstrating how the drum was labelled in relation to categories invented and defined by colonizing institutions (Snickare 2022, 170). In other words, the catalogue reveals museums' power to classify and represent (Riegel 1998, 85), as well as their power to misrepresent (Hall 1997; Tythacott 2010).

In 1973, ten years after its arrival, the goavddis was first made available for public viewing, as a part of the museum's permanent ethnographic exhibition, *Samekulturen*. The exhibit documented what Vorren perceived as being the last remnants of traditional lifestyles of the Sámi in Norway

(Fonneland 2019). The opening of *Samekulturen* coincided with a political and cultural awakening unique in Sámi history. As the museum stood on the threshold of becoming a university museum, Vorren was eager to engage the interest of young Sámi academics. In the centennial anniversary book, *Museum og Universitet: Jubileumsskrift til Tromsø Museum 1872–1972* (*Museum and University, Tromsø Museum 1872–1972*), Vorren (1972) reflected upon the importance of exhibitions being created with the input of minority voices, as well as on the new possibilities of achieving this goal due to the increasing number of Sámi academics.

*Samekulturen* was developed with an aesthetic approach to the display of Sámi objects. The exhibition positions the objects at the centre, and arranges them systematically according to typology. In the Sámi religion display case, the drum is at the heart of the tableau. Dimly lit, the goavddis hangs from the case ceiling with a drum hammer nearly touching its skin. The display case also includes sieiddit – sacrificial items made of stone or wood – from the wider area of the Norwegian part of Sápmi, drum hammers, and enlargements of the symbols found painted on various known drums, casting the actual drum on display in the exhibit as an example of a category, conveying objective knowledge of a past culture. The display case constructs an overarching narrative of Sámi religion where local perspectives and diversity of religious expression are lost into a stylistic display narrative. Nevertheless, one aspect of the exhibition does stands out, namely a drawing by Sámi artist Iver Jåks (Ánddir Ivvár Ivvár, 1932–2007). From 1967 to 1972, Jåks, who had an academic background from the Norwegian State Crafts and Art Industry School, had been awarded a scholarship for the purposes of illustrating the *Samekulturen* exhibition. By studying the collected Sámi objects, Jåks gained a unique knowledge of how the different objects – from the *náhppi* (milk bowl) to the goavddis – were used practically, and this knowledge was of great inspiration to him in his later works (Serck-Hanssen 2002, 42). To return to the Sámi religion display case, Jåks' conscientious drawings brought the drum back into a Sámi dominion and knowledge system through his depiction of a kneeling noaidi who, in apparent deep concentration, grasping the drum in one hand and the hammer in the other, is bent over to observe and communicate with and through the goavddis.

During the 50 years that the drum has been exhibited in *Samekulturen*, the understanding of the drums' role in wider Sámi society has changed due to a number of cultural and political shifts, among them being the results of processes connected to the Sámi nation-building movement which began in the early 20th century (Zachariassen 2012) and accelerated through the course of the 1970s and 1980s (Bjørklund 2000). Drum motifs begin to appear in Sámi art and literature from the beginning of the 1970s. Sámi artist and author Nils-Aslak Valkeapää's (Áillohaš, 1943–2001) book *Terveisia Lapista* (*Greetings from Lappland*) that was published in Finnish in 1971 contains

motifs of Sámi drums. Also, the 1975 map of Sábme by artist Elle Hánsa (Hans Ragnar Mathisen) depicts the traditional Sámi territories with place names written in Sámi languages accompanied by mythological references and ritual objects, such as a Sámi drum. More broadly, however, referring to Krister Stoor (2016), Siv Ellen Kraft has noted that drums, which had been stigmatized in both Swedish and Norwegian sides of Sápmi, had rarely been used as a symbol of Sámi-ness before the 1980s. She writes, "The shift to widespread presence and usage came after the turn of the 21th century, and then through different forms, formats, and media, across fine art and popular culture and (to a more limited extent) in political domains" (Kraft 2022, 173).

From the 1980s, drums began to be depicted in Sámi theatre and music as well, for example with The Sámi National Theater Beaivváš's inaugural production in 1981, *Min duoddarat* (*Our Plains*) incorporating drums, and celebrated Sámi musician Mari Boine making drums central to her performances from the early-1990s (Kraft 2015). By 2019, in an opinion piece published in *Aftenposten*, a Norwegian national newspaper, Aili Keskitalo, then-president of the Sámediggi (Sámi Parliament) in Norway, declared that the drum and the *ládjogahpir* (traditional Sámi women's hat) "are some of the strongest symbols of Sámi cultural heritage taken from us by force and exhibited to others."[15] Thus, while today the drums have become detached from a delimited religious context, they have become repositioned in a broader field of cultural heritage – as well as reborn through the formation of heritage – and their presence in the public space has been expanded (Kraft 2022; Äikäs and Fonneland 2023).

It is also as a part of this wider context and as a symbol of cultural heritage that the drum in the Arctic University Museum collection emerged in 2014 as part of *Sami Stories – Art and Identity of Arctic People*, a temporary touring exhibition. It was a collaboration between the Arctic University Museum and the Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum (Northern Norwegian Art Museum) to celebrate the Bicentenary of the Norwegian Constitution and the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Sámediggi in Norway, and was intended to place focus on the history, identity, politics, and visual culture of the Sámi people (Hauan 2014). Through this exhibition, the drum once again migrated between categories, acting not only as a religious object, but also as an expression of duodji and *dáidda* (Sámi art), as well as being an identity-creating symbol used in contemporary Sámi society (Storm and Isaksen 2014, 91–102).

Moving between these two distinct display paradigms, as part of both *Samekulturen* and *Sámi Stories*, the symbolism of the goavddis at the Arctic University Museum also changed. Even though the context of the *Samekulturen* exhibition itself had not changed since it opened in 1973, when the drum returned after being on tour, it had become reframed as an important

contemporary symbol of Sámi cultural heritage and identity. The drum, in other words, had grown to become a symbol connecting the narratives, imaginings, and interpretations of Sámi in the past with those in the present and into the future. In this way, the goavddis' value grew far beyond its role as a focus point of possible aspects of Sámi religious practices, emerging as a site hosting a complex web of demands and articulations continuously expressed, negotiated, and contested.

## The Pasts, Presents, and Futures of the Drum

This chapter has focused on the changing associations and contexts of one particular Sámi drum. Today, it hangs on display in the Arctic University Museum, but during its centuries of existence it has been entangled in, influenced by, and itself affected by a myriad of political, cultural, and geographical influences. While its initial purpose and value was already complex, as an integrated meaning-making instrument within a Sámi worldview, missionaries later singled it out as an instrument of the devil before it became a collector's trophy claimed by Swedish clergymen. Later, the drum re-emerged as an object for scholarly interpretation, and became sought after as a museum artefact, at which point its existence was further defined by Western European collection and display systems.

While the drum's history does include violence and censorship, it is important that these colonial influences are not concealed, as they have also formed the drum as it exists today. As Mårten Snickare has written:

> We must be able to see, and to show others, the traces of colonial exploitation and violence inscribed in present-day museums (and not only ethnographic museums, but also art museums, history museums, and natural history museums) without it preventing us from appreciating the beauty and import of the colonial objects on display.
>
> *(Snickare 2022, 161)*

This drum's story reveals the impact of a colonial legacy, at times stripped of its original identity, while also being ascribing new meaning within these same frameworks. Moreover, its tale reveals resistance. Under colonial conditions, the goavddis manoeuvred between the worlds of both the colonizers and the colonized, emerging as a symbol of Sámi cultural heritage, of opposition, and of Sámi presents and futures. This journey also enriches our understanding of the museum as an institution – its colonial roots, the challenges which must be addressed, and the possibilities we have to make the museum something new. Meanwhile, just as in its past, the Sámi drum continues to have the power to trigger new actions and inspirations.

## Notes

1 Tromsø Museum was constituted in 1872. UiT The Arctic University of Norway was established in 1968 and opened in 1972. Tromsø Museum was incorporated into UiT in 1976, and renamed The Arctic University Museum of Norway in 2019.

2 Inspired by Håkan Rydving's seminal *The End of Drum-Time* ([1993] 1995), we use the term "drum time" to refer to the long period during which the beating of drums could be heard throughout Sápmi, and we further delve into the contexts of drums within museums as a still-ongoing but altered drum time.

3 According to Vorren, the list was made by a merchant from Deatnu/Tana named Schanke and contains, among other things, the Sámi objects that were allocated to the museum after the provincial exhibition, *Den Almindelige Udstilling for Tromsø Stift*, held in Romsa in 1870.

4 In court records, Poala-Ánde is referred to as Anders Poulsen, but was also known as Paul-Ánde or Pávvál Ánde.

5 "Den lidet at kunde tiene. Om den ey aff fyrretræ bleff udarbeidet." https://www.arkivverket.no/utforsk-arkivene/eldre-historie–1814/hekser-og-trolldom-i-finnmark#!#block-body-3.

6 "Den Runnebomme som Noiden har, den skal først være giort og ud graven af En Rirkulle, som Een stor aflang eller langagtig skaall eller fadt, og træet skal være voxen paa Een underlig viis, og paa Een særdelis sted, Ved Een Elve førß eller i Een dyb dall, opvoxen for sig self, og icke andet træ der nær hos (…)" (Olsen [1715] 1910, 47).

7 Different parts of the alder tree had specific significance, and have been used in a variety of ritual contexts in traditional Sámi religion, such as in bear hunts (Christoffersson 2010, 114).

8 We would like to thank archaeologist Marianne Skandfer for helping us interpreting the radiocarbon dating. Acknowledgement also goes to the Creating the New North research group at UiT The Arctic University of Norway which provided financing for the radiocarbon dating.

9 "… ere Finnerne icke andet at regne end for Hedninge, fordi de vilde icke lade sig rettelige undervise I den christelige Tro oc Lærdom; thi endog Siøfinnerne føre deris Børn ud til Presterne oc lade dem døbe (somme naar de ere 3 eller 4 Aar gamle), oc somme komme om Aaret ud til Kircker oc høre Prædicken oc anamme ocsaa Alterens Sacrament (hvilcket udi Pawedommens Tid, oc lenge der-efter, bleff dennem gifuet uviet og usacreret, som mand mente) [visstnok fordi finnerne misbrukte nattverdbrødet til trolldom], oc en Part vide, huilcke Prestegield de høre til, oc gifue deris Sogneprest sin aarlige Rettighed; saa bevise de dog met deris ugudelige og forskreckkelige Troldom og Afguderi, at saadant er icke uden idel Skrømpteri" (Friis, Peder Claussøn 1613, in G. Storm 1881, 399).

10 The Sámi are referred to by several names in historical sources. The descriptions differ depending on their state, region, or livelihood context across various time periods. The term used also depends on the source language. The term "Finn" was previously used for settled Sámi living by the coast – that is, Sea Sámi – while "Lap" denoted Sámi living inland, closer to the border, who were usually engaged in reindeer herding – Mountain Sámi or Forest Sámi. Today, "Lapp" and "Finn" are considered derogatory terms, and the word "Sámi" is now preferred over the old designations.

11 The Pite Sámi translation, published in Stockholm in 1619, was the first book printed in Sámi language (Magga 1974).

12 In 1654, Christina converted to Catholicism, and therefore had to abdicate.

13 Carlgren, W. "Magnus Bruzelius." *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*. Accessed 4 October 2022. https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/17093/.

14 "Vid jamförelsen av hvad Rudbeck, Scheffer, Torneæus och Högström anföra om Svenska, samt Jessen och Leem om Norrska Lappar, deras religion, trummor, spådommar och hänryckningar, med hvad Levesque uti sin Histoire de Russie och Langlés uti Rituel des Tartars skrivit om culte Chamanique har jag fått den öfvertygelse, att Lapparnas religionsbegrepp och ceremonier äro hämtade från den i norra Asien allmänna Shamanism, och härpå grundar sig min förklaring." (Sjöborg 1822, 191).

15 Keskitalo, Aili. "Hornluen og trommen er derfor noen av de sterkeste symbolene på samisk kulturarv fratatt oss med makt og stilt ut for andre." *Aftenposten*, 9 October 2019. Accessed 16 November 2021. https://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/debatt/i/70JR0B/vi-krever-retten-til-aa-eie-vaar-egen-historie-aili-keskitalo?form=MY01SV&OCID=MY01SV/.

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*døde, tilligemed denne udødelige Mands Levnetsbeskrivelse: samt Anhang om de første Missionariis og andre Missionens Medhielpere/uddragne af offentlige Brevskaber og egenhændige. Haandskrifter*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.
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# 5

# THE HAGENBECK SÁMI COLLECTION AT THE MUSEUM EUROPÄISCHER KULTUREN IN BERLIN

*Cathrine Baglo*

Among the 948 Sámi objects in the holdings of the Museum Europäischer Kulturen (MEK; Museum of European Culture) in Berlin are ten objects which were submitted to the collection by the world-famous animal dealer and zoo purveyor Carl Hagenbeck (1844–1913) from Hamburg. According to the archive of its predecessor, the Museum für Völkerkunde (Museum of Ethnology), the objects entered the collection in 1879. They consist of garments and shoes from Sámi communities in northern Norway and northern Sweden, according to the catalogue, and are affiliated with both *mearrasápmelaš* – Sea Sámi people in Northern Sámi language, and *boazosápmelaš* – reindeer-herding Sámi. Beyond this, the MEK's information about the artefacts is scarce. To a German, as well as to many other Europeans, however, the objects' connection to Hagenbeck already says a lot, placing the objects in a museum category known in German as "Völkerschau Objekte" ("people show object"; Frühsorge et al. 2021). Unlike most ethnographic objects in European museums, these were not necessarily collected in far-away places. Instead, they could – but not always – have been the dispossessions of peoples brought from around the globe to European cities to be "displayed" themselves.

According to film and media scholar Eric Ames, Hagenbeck's name is as evocative in Europe as that of P. T. Barnum or Walt Disney in North America (Ames 2008). Hagenbeck was the 19th century's foremost animal trader and ethnographic showman, known for the invention of the modern zoo's adoption of spaces that resemble natural habitats (Rothfels 2002), but also for his enormously popular displays of exotic-appearing people, animals, and artefacts arranged to reflect natural habitats (Hagenbeck 1911; Thode-Arora 1989; Ames 2008). The culmination of Hagenbeck's commercial ventures was the opening of a new zoo outside Hamburg in 1907, a dazzling assemblage of

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(re)constructed exotic environments inhabited by both animals and humans. This display of people, animals, and artefacts used to be referred to in English and in most languages using a plethora of terms, but in the last decade or so has increasingly been referred to as a "human zoo" (Baglo 2017, 220–221, 2024; Baglo and Stien 2018). In German, these displays were largely known as *Völkerschauen* ("people shows" in English), the term which Hagenbeck himself used to refer to them (Hagenbeck 1911, 46), or as *Anthropologische-zoologische Austellungen* (anthropological-zoological exhibitions; Ames 2008, 63). Here, I refer to them as living or live (ethnographic) exhibitions.[1]

By 1879, the acquisition date of the Sámi artefacts noted in the MEK catalogue, Hagenbeck had organized two living exhibitions involving Sámi people, the first in 1875 and again in 1878–1879. These exhibitions took place at his animal park, the newly established Tierpark (1874) in St. Pauli in Hamburg, a facility that had little in common with the panorama park later established in Stellingen outside of Hamburg. While Hagenbeck himself does not mention the groups' origins in his memoirs – only that the agent of the first group was a Norwegian photographer who spoke German (Hagenbeck 1911, 48), investigations have shown that the exhibitions featured people from northern Sweden and Norway, from Gárasavvon/Karesuando, Romsa/Tromsø, Kárášjohka/Karasjok, Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino, and probably also Porsáŋgu/Porsanger (Baglo 2011, 70–77, 82–88, 2017, 58–63, 67–73). The groups demonstrated nomadic Sámi culture based on brought along reindeer, herding dogs, tents, and household belongings (Olsson 1978; Broberg 1981–1982; Schou 1987–1988; Gjestrum 1995; Andreassen and Henningsen 2011). The first group demonstrated the reindeer herding way of life to audiences in Berlin and Leipzig in addition to Hamburg, and in 1878, the itinerary had been expanded to include venues in Paris, Lille, Brussels, Düsseldorf, Berlin, Dresden, Magdeburg, and Bremen, in addition to Hagenbeck's Tierpark in Hamburg.

Investigations have revealed further information and documentation regarding the two groups. While the Swedish-born Romsa-based photographer Johan Erik Wickström (1826–1897) acted as middleman and interpreter for the 1875 group (Baglo 2015a, 31–32, 2017, 62) Hagenbeck indicates that Hagenbeck's own agent, sailor Johan Adrian Jacobsen (1853–1947) from Risøya island outside Romsa recruited the Sámi in the 1878–1879 group. Jacobsen also bought the reindeer and many of the objects used in the display to Hamburg and travelled with the troupe through Germany and France (Jacobsen 1887, XXV–XXIX; Jacobsen 1946, 63–80). Jacobsen's older brother, Jakob Martin Jacobsen (1841–1888), who had settled in Hamburg, photographed the troupe. Both the groups were examined by physical anthropologists, as was the case for many such living exhibitions in the late-19th century (Baglo 2006, 2017, 158–168). Evidently, only the 1878–1879 group was photographed by Carl Günther, photographer for the Berlin

Anthropological Society. Some of his photographs form part of the MEKs collection comprising 670 historical pictures. Photographs of the Sámi that Hagenbeck hired in 1875 do not seem to exist, only illustrations.

This article explores the historical incidents that, in turn, would constitute the "Hagenbeck Collection" at MEK in Berlin. My point of departure is the ten Hagenbeck objects in the museum's collection, photographs of the 1878–1879 Sámi troupe, archival material, and Jacobsen's – also partly Hagenbeck's – accounts of the events. The objective is to help provide the objects' provenance as part of a decolonial practice. Moreover, I address the way museum objects have been muted by being placed in storage far away from their source communities, with "no one to talk to or with, no language to share, no stories to tell, and with no purpose to fill," to paraphrase Sámi scholar Jelena Porsanger (2023). So, to start, how, why, and when were these objects acquired?

In 2022, the MEK initiated their own provenance research project on their Sámi collection, the first museum outside of Northern Europe to do so. A third objective is therefore to relate the MEK's research project to ongoing restitution and repatriation initiatives. How do the MEK and other German museums work with and relate to Sámi objects in their collections today, and what kind of future awaits them? I must stress that I am not a Sámi scholar, and my knowledge of Sámi cultural heritage is restricted. Moreover, the object photos used are primarily images from the museum's datasheets. What I can bring to the table is detailed knowledge on the history of Sámi participation in the live ethnographic displays Hagenbeck and other entrepreneurs organized from 1820 until the 1930s and later, and how this practice has contributed to memory-making. Moreover, I have detailed knowledge on both Johan Adrian Jacobsen's activities and Sámi museum collections in Germany. I therefore start by accounting for some of the convoluted paths through which the Hagenbeck Sámi objects became part of the MEK collection.

## From Gárasavvon and Romsa to Germany: The 1875 Group

Sometime during the summer of 1875 Hagenbeck sent his agent, an unknown name today, to Romsa to import reindeer and have them shipped to his business in Hamburg. The small town of Romsa was already a port of call for commercial tourist traffic on the way to North Cape, including German tourist traffic. The steamboats would typically stop in places where the tourists could see Sámi or visit Sámi camps, such as "Lappeleiren Ltd." outside Bergen (Baglo 2007) or the camp in Romssavággi/Tromsdalen used in the summer by nomadic reindeer-herding Sámi from Gárasavvon in northern Sweden (Baglo 2015a). The Romssavággi camp was conveniently located just across the strait from Romsa. The idea of adding people to the group to attract more visitors and, in a way, dislocating camps that had become tourist

attractions in Norway and other places, has been attributed to Hagenbeck's friend, Heinrich Leutemann (1824–1905), a freelance journalist and illustrator (Ames 2008, 18).

As mentioned previously, photographer Johan Erik Wickström (1826–1897) seems to have acted as a middleman between Hagenbeck and the Romssavággi Sámi (Baglo 2015a, 30–37, 2017, 58–63). Wickström had a studio in Romsa and photographing local Sámi and Sámi camps was part of his business base. Although Hagenbeck refers to the photographer who escorted the Sámi to Germany as Norwegian, Wickström was born in Haparanda in northern Sweden, just across the border from Finland. Evidently Wickström also spoke Northern Sámi, as he worked as a church interpreter in Northern Sámi in Romsa (Arkivverket [Tromsø Census] 1875), a job title which would disappear from the area as the cultural assimilation policy against the Sámi known as Norwegianization was tightened in the 1880s. Around the same time, the authorities' view of reindeer husbandry changed from it being seen as a time-honoured right to it being merely tolerated, as expressed in the 1883 Norwegian–Swedish reindeer herding act "Concerning the Lapps in the United Kingdoms of Norway and Sweden" known as "Felleslappeloven"[2] (Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen 2023, 209).

The exact circumstances are not known, but Wickström either directly or indirectly got in touch with Ella Maria Josefsdotter Nutti (1841–1930), her husband Nils Rasmus Persson Eira (1838–1929), 45-year-old Lars Nilsson Hotti, and his 21-year-old son Jacob Larsson Hotti, and succeeded in persuading them to accompany the 31 reindeer Hagenbeck's agent had bought to Hamburg. Josefsdotter Nutti would later be remembered locally in Romsa as "Hamburg-Ellen"[3] due to her experience in Germany (Baglo 2015a, 36).[4] Josefsdotter Nutti and Persson Eira were both born in Gárasavvon, and married in 1872 (Karesuando Parish [1720–1923] 2007, 102). The territories of the Sámi from Gárasavvon stretched across the Norwegian border to islands and peninsulas in the county of Romsa where their reindeer herds would graze in the summer. From 1923, however, when the new Swedish-Norwegian reindeer grazing convention of 1919 entered into force, the Sámi reindeer herders from Gárasavvon would gradually be shut out of their own territories.

Josefsdotter Nutti had partly grown up on the island of Ráneš/Ringvassøya, outside Romsa. Her family came to the island with several other families soon after she was born, and they wintered in the valley of Norddalen for a number of years (Inger Ella Päiviö, conversation with author, 2015). Ráneš became used as pasture for reindeer-herding Sámi from Sweden largely due to the border closures between Norway and Finland in 1852, and between Finland and Sweden in 1889, which led to an increase in the number of reindeer-herding Sámi in the Gárasavvon area, and thus placed greater pressure on the winter pastures (Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen 2023, 211).

Lars Nilsson Hotti and his son Lars were also from Gárasavvon, and in the 1890 census are both listed as reindeer herders (*fjellapp* in the Norwegian of the time) from the Rommavuoma and Könkämä reindeer herding districts, respectively (Riksarkivet 1890).

Although it would have been difficult for any Sámi to imagine – or explain – what awaited them in Hamburg, many Sámi, not least those from the coastal Romssa area, were familiar with catering to the interests of local, national, and international tourists. Their motivations to participate seem to have been the same as many of those involved in living exhibitions that took place abroad: to communicate information about the reindeer herding culture, express pride in their heritage and traditions, and last but not least, to lessen a difficult economic situation caused by discriminatory state policies (Baglo 2014, 150–157). Local Norwegian initiatives had in fact already preceded Hagenbeck's German enterprise. For example, the recently organized *General Exposition for Tromsø Diocese* (1870) had included reconstructions of Sámi domestic spaces, with presentations of "live" Sámi (Tromsø Stift 1872; Baglo 2019, 9–10). The exhibition included both reconstructions of "Sea Sámi" and "Mountain Sámi" domestic spaces, with a turf hut inhabited by a family from Unjárgga/Nesseby recruited by Sheriff Brun, and a winter tent inhabited by two families from the island of Sážža/Senja, south of Romsa ("Udstillingen i Tromsø" 1870; Tromsø Stift 1872, 147; Baglo 2019, 33–34).

In September 1875, Ella Maria Josefsdotter Nutti, Nils Rasmus Persson Eira, their three-year old daughter Kristina, and baby boy Per Bernhard, along with Lars Nilsson Hotti and his son Jacob Larsson Hotti, travelled by steamship from Romsa to Hamburg. On the ship were also 31 reindeer, three herding dogs, Wickström the photographer, and a collection of objects considered to be "characteristic of the life of this nomadic people" (Leutemann 1875, 743). It is not known whether all the objects actually belonged to the group or if they were purchased from others specifically for the purpose. The same is the case for the reindeer and the dogs.

In Hamburg, the troupe set up camp in the back of Hagenbeck's Tierpark in St. Pauli. Hagenbeck wrote in his memoirs (1909), which were translated into English that same year and into Danish in 1911:

> It was a pleasure to see how they [the Sámi] caught the reindeer by means of a noose, how deftly they arranged the sledges, and how expediently they pitched the tents and took them down again. Great interest was aroused each time the reindeer were milked, and the small Sámi woman caused quite a stir when she, in her naivety and without being disturbed by the presence of the public, breastfed her child. Our guests were unadulterated natural people.
>
> *(Hagenbeck 1911, 49, author's translation)*

Leutemann, for his part, illustrated and reported on the incident in *Die Gartenlaube* (1875), a middle-brow family magazine with national distribution. The family was referred to by the name "Rasti," probably due to the fact that "Ráste" is a Sámi form of the name "Rasmus." "Herr Rasti" was described as a good father who often carried his children on his arm, while "Frau Rasti" opened a chest – a *giisá* – and pulled out a copper kettle when she saw that Leutemann had drawn pictures of some of their equipment. Readers of *Die Gartenlaube* also learned that the Sámi were literate, Christian, and "well-informed," he wrote, and that the reindeer, several tools, and garments were available for purchase during the exhibition (Leutemann 1875). After two weeks, "when all of Hamburg had seen our Sámi" (Hagenbeck 1911, 50), the troupe travelled to Berlin where they set up camp in Hasenheide Park, before the tour ended in Leipzig and the group returned home. Information on salaries and contracts are not known.

In Berlin, the group was examined by physical anthropologist Rudolf Virchow (1875a, 1875b) and a linguist named Wilhelm Schott (1875). Such examinations would be the rule for almost all Sámi exhibition groups passing through Germany between 1872 and 1897 (Baglo 2019, 162, 178). The rise of (physical) anthropology as a scientific discipline meant that the living exhibitions were incorporated into scientific discussions about race, and nowhere was this more prominent than in Germany. As Andrew Zimmerman (2001) has pointed out, although anthropology arose more or less simultaneously across all of Europe, it was primarily Germany that would give rise to the intellectual and institutional movement he refers to as "anti-humanism." According to Virchow (1821–1902), one of the most prominent physical anthropologists of the time, the Sámi was a race of their own (Virchow 1875a, 37).

Although their usage as anthropological field laboratories would gradually cease in step with increased emphasis on cultural and geographical context – as advocated not least by Virchow's student and critic, Franz Boas (1887) – the living exhibitions would continue their successful journey as one of the most popular mass media of its time. One effect was that these exhibitions helped reinforce an understanding of "natural" peoples (*Völker*) as fundamentally different from "cultured" or "historical" peoples (*Volk*). "Natural" peoples became an object for *Völkerkunde* (Gerholm and Hannerz 1982), for ethnography or "lappology," and could be studied almost entirely by this one discipline (Baglo 2001). Another effect was that the exhibitions would reinforce an image of the Sámi as exclusively reindeer herders.

## From Kárášjohka, Guovdageaidnu, and Porsáŋgu to Germany: The 1878–1879 Group

When Hagenbeck hired a new group of Sámi in 1878, he had a Norwegian agent on his payroll, Johan Adrian Jacobsen (1853–1947), a sailor, skipper,

and landowner's son from the island of Risøya. Jacobsen had settled temporarily in Hamburg with his older brother, Jacob Martin (1841–1888), and sister-in-law, photographer Jørgine Martine Kjær (1845–1875), where he assisted in his brother's ship chandler business. After Jørgine died, Martin also worked as a photographer (Baglo and Holiman, 2024). On 14 June 1878, Jacobsen left Hamburg by boat, arriving in Romsa 12 days later. The instructions from Hagenbeck were "to fetch reindeer and Lapps [Sámi] and collect ethnographical curios" (Jacobsen 1887, XXV).

The Sámi in the Romssa area consisted of two groups: the already-mentioned Sea Sámi, who subsisted on farming and fishing, sometimes combined with small-scale stationary reindeer herding, and the nomadic reindeer-herding Sámi. However, Jacobsen did not recruit Sea Sámi for Hagenbeck, as only the nomadic reindeer-herding Sámi would be regarded as representing the authentic Sámi lifestyle, a notion that would be systematically reinforced by living exhibitions much like how North American Indigenous Peoples from the Great Plains were sought out as subjects in Wild West shows (Penny 2015). It seems, however, that Jacobsen did collect objects and dress from the Sea Sámi. In contrast to 1875, Jacobsen did not recruit reindeer-herding Sámi locally either, perhaps because it would have complicated the paperwork as many were Swedish nationals. Instead, he travelled further north to Hammerfest, around North Cape, and into the Porsanger fjord, where he called at a place with a telegraph station – most likely Čuđegieddi/Kistrand.[5] From here, Jacobsen would "make little trips to all the places where the Sámi had set up camp, and buy, collect, and order different models, clothes, etc." (Jacobsen 1887, XXV). Jacobsen hired an interpreter, "a Laplander living by the coast" (Jacobsen 1946, 63–76), and began his journey inland.

After two weeks of collecting artefacts and trying to induce people to come with him to Europe, Jacobsen finally met a group that was willing to take the chance. The group was later identified as Kirsten Pedersdatter Nicodemus (b. 1838), her husband Jon Persen Gaup (b. 1842), their son Nils (b. 1876), Jon Person Gaup's 15-year-old niece, Inger Gaup (b. circa 1863), and her siblings Mikkel (b. 1855), Kirsten (b. 1861), and Aslak Andersen Sara (b. 1866) from Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino, as well as bachelors Per Larsen Anti (b. 1860/1861) and Jon Josefsen Porsanger (b. 1832) from Kárášjohka/Karasjok, both listed as *fjeldfin*, reindeer herders, in the church registries. In addition, Pedersdatter Nicodemus was pregnant at the time, and gave birth to her son Per in Lille, in French Flanders (Jacobsen 1887, XXVIII; Thode-Arora 1989; Baglo 2017, 67–73).

Rather than moving inland with their herd to more forested areas that autumn, the group gathered their dogs, packed their winter tents and household equipment, and headed to the coast to board the steamer that Jacobsen had ordered to be rebuilt to accommodate animals. According to an invoice from Ced. Ebeltoft, dated 11 October 1878, their own gear was complemented

with objects Jacobsen had bought in merchant Ebeltoft's souvenir shop in Romsa (Hagenbeck Archive). The list of objects is long but difficult to decipher. On the way to Romsa, the boat stopped along the coast to pick up the 40 reindeer and 113 bags of reindeer lichen which Jacobsen had purchased before heading up to Porsáŋgu. The group boarded the steamer 16 August, and on 31 August they arrived in Hamburg (Jacobsen 1887, XXV).

There, the troupe set up camp in the back yard of Hagenbeck's Tierpark before they went on a longer tour to Hannover, Paris, Lille, Brussels, Düsseldorf, Berlin, Dresden, Magdeburg, Bremen, and then returning again Hamburg. Most of the reindeer Jacobsen had bought on the way to Romsa died before reaching Hannover, the first stop on the itinerary, and he had to buy new ones. Moreover, conflict arose between Jacobsen and Persen Gaup over the skinning of two dead reindeer. In Paris, Gaup became ill and was hospitalized. In Berlin and Düsseldorf, the group was examined by physical anthropologists (Virchow 1879) and photographed by Carl Günther (Baglo 2017, 161–168). These photos differ from the ones taken by Jacob Martin Jacobsen. While Günther's photographs are studio portraits in accordance with anthropological canon of the time, Jacobsen also took photographs outdoors. In these images, the people depicted appear to feel more comfortable and, in one, they pose proudly (see Figure 5.1). In Berlin, the physical

**FIGURE 5.1** From left to right, Jon Josefsen Porsanger, Jon Persen Gaup, and Per Larsen Anti posing with saddled reindeer in Hagenbeck's Thierpark in Hamburg, in 1878 or 1879.

*Source:* Photograph by Jacob Martin Jacobsen. Image courtesy of Museum am Rothenbaum – Kulturen und Künste der Welt (MARKK).

anthropologists took 36 measurements of each person in the group, with the exception of the youngest boys. The hair, eye, and skin colours were also noted, and plaster casts were made of at least two individuals (Baglo 2017, 182). Today, the plaster casts form part of the collection at the Berlin State Museum's Replica Workshop.[6] The group returned home in the spring of 1879 after having spent more than half a year abroad. Information on salaries and contracts are not known.

## The Hagenbeck Sámi Collection at the Museum Europäischer Kulturen (MEK)

The practices of recruiting people for living exhibitions and for ethnographic collecting were closely connected in the late part of the 19th century, a time which also coincides with the building of ethnographic museums, and both Hagenbeck and Jacobsen became involved in the world of ethnography in several ways. Both men also had private collections that were sold or donated to museums (Baglo 2024). On 29 December 1879, Carl Hagenbeck's Handelsmenagerie and Thierpark issued a list of objects which constitutes the Hagenbeck Sámi collection held at the MEK today (MEK Sámi Collection). Unfortunately, the text is faint and difficult to read. It has therefore not been possible to compare today's object descriptions with this original list, and I do not know if the order of the acquisitions is the same as in MEK's list, however I decided to follow it. Moreover, place names, personal names, and provenance do not seem to be mentioned, as is typically the case with museum entries from this time. Nevertheless, certain items are legible.

The first object listed in MEK's Hagenbeck collection is a woman's *boagán* or *láhppeboagán*, a woven belt with a white cotton base and patterns in red and blue wool, fitted with a square brass buckle, inventory number II C 975. According to the inventory, the belt "presumably belonged to a participant in an ethnographic exhibition [Völkerschau] in 1879,"[7] with "Northern Sápmi" stated as its place of origin. In areas in the Norwegian part of the Sámi lands, this kind of belt has been used in the county of Finnmarkú/Finnmark (Halbertsma et al. 2022). In Kárášjohka and Guovdageaidnu, in western Finnmarkú, the tradition is to weave with white base thread and red pattern yarn, similar to the belt in the MEK holdings, while yellow base thread is more common in the Swedish and Finnish parts of Sápmi (Hætta 2016, 11).

A photograph of Inger Gaup and Kirsten Sara taken by Günther shows both teenage girls wearing woven *boahkánat* (belts) over their fur *beaskkat* (overcoats), but these belts are not identical to II C 975. One of the belts has a round buckle, while the other seems to be tied at the side of the girl's waist. A photograph of Kirsten Pedersdatter Nicodemus, Jon Person Gaup, and their son Nils, taken by Jacobsen in Hamburg, shows Pedersdatter

Nicodemus with the same kind of fur *beaska* but without the belt. That is not unexpected. As mentioned, Pedersdatter Nicodemus gave birth to a baby boy on 2 February 1879 (Steen 1986, 123). Pedersdatter Nicodemus was, in other words, most likely pregnant at the time the photograph was taken, and this is probably why she is not wearing a belt in the image. Of course, that's not tantamount to belt II C 975 belonging to her. As mentioned, Jacobsen also bought ethnographic paraphernalia from people other than the ones he recruited for Hagenbeck. Due to the pregnancy however, Pedersdatter Nicodemus was not in need of a belt, and Jacobsen or Hagenbeck might have persuaded her to sell it. If so, Pedersdatter Nicodemus would not have parted with it lightheartedly. To make a belt like this is a huge piece of work. A láhppeboagán is woven with a rigid heddle loom, usually made of reindeer horn, and a wooden shuttle (Halbertsma et al. 2022). By today's standards, preparing the harness alone takes about three weeks, while the weaving itself takes another week of work. The technique today is under threat, as few people know how to make them, and essential materials cannot be purchased.

Several other traces of the Nicodemus-Gaup family were found during investigations. When the son, Per, was baptized in Guovdageaidnu in October 1879, the priest complained that the birth year for Pedersdatter Nicodemus was "impossible to find. She had been baptized, confirmed, and married in Russia" (Kautokeino church register 1879, author's translation).[8] According to another source, the couple was married in Eanodat/Enontkekiö some 80 km (50 miles) south of Guovdageaidnu, in today's Finland. Indeed, Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire until 1917, and Nicodemus is a family name with origins in Eanodat (Steen 1986, 423). At the time of the baptism, the family was registered as living at "Nortabælle" [Nuortabealli], the "eastern mountain," towards Kárášjohka (Ellen Bals, correspondence with author, 8 September 2023). However, baby Per died already the following year and was buried on 31 January, less than a year old.[9] Pedersdatter Nicodemus and Persen Gaup had five children, two of them twins, but only Nils and John (b. 1881) lived beyond infancy. At this time, the infant mortality rate was high in Finnmárku,[10] a county with a large Sámi population, much higher than in the rest of Norway (Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen 2023, 360). Pedersdatter Nicodemus died too, sometime between 1888 and 1891. When Persen Gaup married Inger Rasmusdatter Spein in July 1891, the priest noted, "Previous marriage diss. [dissolved] by death"[11] (Steen 1986, 124; Ministerialbok for Kautokeino prestegjeld 1891, author's translation). Today, nearly 150 years later, the boagán Kirsten Pedersdatter Nicodemus brought to Germany might still be in Berlin.

The next object in MEK's Hagenbeck Sámi collection is a woman's *skupmot*, a winter cap or outer cap in black and red "English cloth" with white or grey trimmings in lace (twill), applications in red wool, and sewn-on

cotton bands (II C 976). Although little research has been done into the Sámi history of using English cloth, a particularly fine type of wool fabric, it is understood to have been considered a particularly exquisite material. English cloth was usually too expensive to use for an entire *gákti* (a type of tunic or dress worn by both men and women), but in the South and Lule Sámi areas, for example, breast cloths and other decorative elements are often sewn in English cloth (Sissel Ann Mikkelsen, conversation with author, September 2023). The skupmot, the Sámi cap, was used in large parts of the Northern Sámi area in place of an ordinary cap when the latter was not warm enough for the weather. Evidently the shape was the same as an ordinary woman's cap, but without the brim (Nielsen 1979, III, 463). Pedersdatter Nicodemus wears one in the photograph shown in Figure 5.2.

According to the MEK inventory, this particular skupmot is from Gárasavvon. As mentioned, Ella Maria Josefsdotter Nutti, in the 1875 group, was born in Gárasavvon. Again, the cap may have been purchased or collected from someone else, but it may also very well have belonged to her. The

**FIGURE 5.2** The woman's láhppeboagán (II C 975; (left), likely belonging to Kjersten Pedersdatter Nicodemus (right). Image of boagán courtesy of BPK/Museum Europäischer Kulturen – Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin.

*Source:* Portrait by Jacob Martin Jacobsen and courtesy of Museum am Rothenbaum – Kulturen und Künste der Welt (MARKK).

cap design is not uncommon, but old examples of skupmot are. A search for "skupmot" in the Norwegian DigitaltMuseum database results in three hits, all listed as part of the Norwegian Folk Museum collection in Oslo. However, not all museum objects are published on DigitaltMuseum. Moreover, the Norwegian Folk Museum has been in the process of returning a large part of its Sámi collection to the six Sámi museums in Norway through the Bååstede project (2014–2019; Gaup et al. 2021).

Inventory number II C 977a is listed as a man's gákti, the tunic-like dress used by men, women, and children. This gákti is 120 cm long and made in black cloth with a stand-up collar and decorations in red [and yellow] cloth, according to the catalogue description. Kárášjohka is listed as a possible provenance (Karasek 1999). However, the Kárášjohka gákti has also been used in Deatnu-Tana and Porsáŋgu, as well as in adjacent areas in the Finnish part of Sápmi. Moreover, the photograph of the gákti shows that it has a red and yellow cloth strip sewn around its bottom edge. Such a decoration, known as *holbi,* is today characteristic of the women's Kárášjohka gákti (Guttorm 2021). However, many "really old" men's *gávttit* from the Kárášjohka and Deatnu areas had *holbbit* as well (Gáivuona NSR 1995). It is not stated that the gákti may have belonged to a Völkerschau participant, but it must have been connected to the 1878–1879 group, either directly or indirectly. In a photograph Jacobsen took of three of the men in the group posing with a reindeer (see Figure 5.1), they all wear gákti. In the middle, Persen Gaup carries a dark-coloured gákti with what seems to be a holbi, but I am unable tell if it is II C 977a. Meanwhile, Per Larsen Anti, to the right, carries a light-coloured (maybe white) gákti. In the photographs I have had access to for this investigation, all the women wear beaskkat, an outer garment of reindeer skin, preferably reindeer calf, rather than *gávttit*.

The MEK holds several artefacts that testify to knowledge on crafting methods that are greatly sought after by Sámi communities today. A pair of man's leather pants, *sistebuvssat,* constitutes inventory number II C 977b in the Hagenbeck Sámi collection. The pants have a brown leather waistband and legs made of reindeer skin with fur (partly damaged), with the ankle lined in red fabric. As with the woven belt, the pants presumably belonged to an 1879 Völkerschau participant. The provenance is listed as northern Sápmi.

Particularly interesting in the Hagenbeck Sámi collection is a "Fisher-Sámi male costume," consisting of a white, wool gákti with red and blue trimmings around the neck, on the shoulders, and along the arm openings,[12] white wool pants or *buvssat*, and a pair of hand-sewn leather footwear, *gápmagat* (II C 978a, II C 978b, II C 978 c–d; see Figure 5.3). All presumably belonged to a Hagenbeck show participant, as the northern Norwegian coast is stated as the provenance. The type of leather used for the footwear is not indicated, but cow, ox, goat, sheep, even sometimes seal skin could be used. If reindeer

**FIGURE 5.3** A male Sea Sámi gákti (II C 978a) and buvssat (II C 978b), part of the Hagenbeck Sámi collection.

*Source:* Photo courtesy of BPK/Museum Europäischer Kulturen – Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin.

skin was used, it had to be obtained from the reindeer-herding Sámi, and the same applied to the tendons which would have been used for thread.

The following two items, C II 979a and C II 979b, are also listed as being Sea or "Fisher" Sámi. C II 979a is a *dorka*, an overcoat made of sheepskin with the fur on the inside (in contrast to the beaska, which has the fur on the outside). According to the description, the collar is made of blue cloth with red trimmings, while the chest is decorated with red, olive green, and blue-striped fabric. C II 979b are leather wading boots with long shafts. According to DigitaltMuseum, the Várjjat Sámi Musea has a pair of such boots, but they are more modern, with rubber soles. Again, it is difficult to pinpoint who the objects came from. We know that Jacobsen did make various purchases throughout the Porsanger fjord area. For example, the name "Pettersen" and "(Kistrand)" appears on Hagenbeck's list of expenses related to the 1878–1879 tour (Lapplaender 1878). This could refer to Isak Pettersen Barbala, a merchant of Kven heritage who is mentioned as a merchant in Kistrand in a census, but at a later date, in 1910. And, it is unlikely that Jacobsen would have obtained Sámi dress from a merchant, as while footwear was typically sold at markets and other places (Baglo 2019, 32), other elements of Sámi dress were and are still today considered to be personal, and are made and kept mainly within the household or extended family.

Of course, the wool gákti and wading boots could also have belonged to Jacobsen's guide, the anonymous "Laplander living by the coast" (Jacobsen 1946, 63–76). Another possible interpretation of this description is that the

Sámi living by the coast *was* Jon Josefsen Porsanger, and that the dorka also belonged to him. On the back of a portrait Jacobsen took of Josefsen Porsanger, he or his brother Johan Adrian has written in Norwegian, "Laplander from Porsanger fjord in Finnmark, approximately 40 years old."[13] Elsewhere, Josefsen Porsanger is stated as coming from Kárášjohka. However, four years after his stay in Germany and France, Josefsen Porsanger was indeed found in Čuđegieddi in Porsáŋgu. In March 1883, Josefsen Porsanger married Brita Kaisa Henriksdatter (b. 1859) from Pohjanmaa in eastern Finland in the Kistrand church (Arkivverket 1881–1889). Around 1880, Porsáŋgu was mainly a Sea Sámi society where Sámi and Kven were the majority, and Norwegians a minority (Persen 2008, 38). Of course, Kárášjohka and Porsáŋgu are not mutually exclusive, just like the categories "Sea Sámi" and "Mountain Sámi" are not. Indeed, they may reflect seasonal migrations between inland and coast, as well as a mixed economy. In light of other entries in the church registry, however, the marriage does seem indicative of a more sedentary life.

Josefsen Porsanger is the only person other than Persen Gaup who was given a personalized description by Jacobsen. According to Jacobsen, Josefsen Porsanger was "always ready for a joke"[14] (1887, XXVIII). When Persen Gaup's son was born, he and Jacobsen went to the town hall to report the incident to the French authorities. The authorities asked several questions and when they returned, Persen Gaup asked Josefsen Porsanger why. According to Jacobsen, Josefsen Porsanger had replied that his son was now enlisted in the French army, and that when he reached the legal age, he would have to travel to France to do his national service (Jacobsen 1887, XXVIII). Although a bachelor at the time, Josefsen Porsanger would later feel the weight of fatherly responsibility. On 28 June 1883, his daughter Marie Lovise was baptized in the Kistrand church. A little more than a week later, on 6 July, she was buried. A year after that, on 12 July 1884, his daughter Josephine was baptized in the same place (Arkivverket 1881–1889).

The last two objects in the Hagenbeck Sámi collection at the MEK are another pair of gápmagat (II C 980a–b) and a woman's belt with sewing equipment, leather pendants, and brass rings attached (II C 1588a–b). The objects are described briefly, and the provenance is stated merely as "Sápmi." The belt is dated 1889, but this was most likely a slip of the pen. The Hagenbeck company only hired Sámi for living exhibitions in 1875 (from Norway and Sweden), 1878–1879 (from Norway, perhaps also Finland), winter 1910 (from Finland and Sweden), Spring 1910 (mainly from Finland), 1911 (mainly from Sweden), and finally in 1926 (from Norway and Sweden; Baglo 2017, 2023).

## The MEK's Work on Their Sámi Collection

Although the MEK's Sámi collection make up just a whisker in the total museum holdings of around 285,000 objects, most of them from Germany, the

museum has expressed interest in and worked on its Sámi collection since the 1990s (Elisabeth Tietmeyer, email to author, 20 September 2023). The MEK was established in 1999 through the merger of the Museum für Volkskunde (German Folk Museum), established in 1889/1904, and the European department of the Museum für Völkerkunde, today the Ethnologisches Museum, established in 1873 (Tietmeyer 2019). Around 250,000 objects have their origins in the museum's German folk collection, and about 30,000 to 35,000 objects come from the European ethnological collections. Among the oldest objects in the Sámi collection are two ceremonial drums. One is a frame drum (Inv. nr II C 954), a *gievrie*, of a type known to have come from Raane/Rana in the northern part of the Norwegian Southern Sámi area.[15] The other drum is a historical copy of a bowl drum, a *goavddis*, of the type known to have come from the Torne River area in northern Sweden (II C 955).[16] These two drums were documented by Swedish ethnographer Ernst Manker (1938) as part of his large-scale Sámi drum survey performed nearly a hundred years ago. Apart from that, little documentation on either those items or the wider collection exists. The rest of the collection is largely categorized as objects of everyday culture and crafts, such as those included in the Hagenbeck Sámi collection.

When Elisabeth Tietmeyer became the head of the European department of the Museum für Völkerkunde in 1993, she began to work with the Sámi collection, including the historical photographs (Tietmeyer 2001, 2008). Two exhibitions were also made in which Sámi culture played a role, in 1999 and 2008.[17] In fact, Tietmeyer, the director of the MEK since 1999, facilitated my own visit to the museum's photo archive in the early 2000s. All the objects in the MEK's Sámi collection are published online, but the database is of course in German.[18] In contrast to the situation among museum staff during Manker's time, knowledge of German is no longer common in the Nordic countries today, at least not in Norway. Moreover, the set-up of German museum databases is can be quite unfamiliar to many foreigners.

In 2000, the MEK organized Sámi Cultural Days in collaboration with Ájtte Swedish Mountain and Sámi Museum, the Swedish Embassy to Germany, the Finland Institute in Germany, and Sámi researchers. In relation to the exhibition, the *duojár* (artisan) Anna-Stina Svakko from the Swedish part of Sápmi assisted the MEK in their work with the collection. Among other things, Svakko made the MEK aware of the rarity of the white wool gákti and accompanying pants (II C 978a–b). The garments were in poor condition at the time, but the MEK later restored them (Elisabeth Tietmeyer, email to author, 20 September 2023). I do not know the details behind Svakko's reasoning, but garments from Sea Sámi areas are rare in Norwegian museum collections.[19] There are several reasons for this lack. First, buildings and infrastructure in northern Norway – and along with those, also, people's belongings – were largely destroyed by the Nazis in 1944 to prevent Soviet forces arriving from the east from gaining access to supplies. This is

a centre of gravity for modern Sea Sámi populations. Second, the Sea Sámi were particularly targeted by policies of cultural assimilation or Norwegianization that were increasingly legitimized by racial arguments from the late-1800s onwards. Both Kven and Sea Sámi populations in northern Romsa and Finnmarkú counties were severely affected by various Norwegianization measures for more than 100 years, primarily through the school system but also through fishery politics (Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen 2023, 566, 568–569). Until the 1850s, it was generally accepted that the right to fish depended to a large extent on collective or individual rights based on age-old use. In 1857, the doctrine of a "Free Sea" was formalized in the "Lofotfisket Loven" ("Lofoten Act"; Nordland Archive 2022). Fisheries in Finnmarkú, for example, became a national resource, which contributed to a tripling of the region's population between 1835 and 1900. In 1867, a state commission was established to assess the introduction of the doctrine, however, the commission received complaints from the Sámi in Unjárga that they were displaced by Norwegians and others from their old fishing grounds. The commission asked Sheriff Brun, the organizer of the 1870 display of Sea Sámi culture in Romsa with people from Unjárga, to investigate the case. Brun reported back that the Sámi were indeed being kept from fishing, "chased from place to place, losing both tools and fish" (Bull 2011, 53, quoted in Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen 2023, 207).[20] He therefore recommended that they were assigned a separate fishing area. However, the bailiff strongly opposed the proposal. It was the "law of nature" ("*Naturens orden*") that the Sámi, "as a less powerful Race than the Norwegians, Kvens and [other] Norse people […] will fall short of their competitors" who were also better equipped with boats and gear (Bull 2011, 54, quoted in Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen 2023, 207, author's translation).[21]

Since 2000, several Sámi museums, artists, and researchers have visited the Sámi collection at the MEK (Elisabeth Tietmeyer, email to author, 20 September 2023). Some years ago, the MEK facilitated artist Outi Pieski and researcher Eeva-Kristiina Nylander's Finnish-based project, "The Ládjogahpir. Máttaráhkuid Gábagahpir – the Foremother's Hat of Pride" (Pieski and Harlin 2020).[22] The *ládjogahpir* is a hat that was used by Sámi women from the middle of the 18th century until the beginning of the twentieth century in areas of what is now northern Norway and Finland, and was also worn by the women in the 1878–1879 group. The hat went out of use, probably due to restrictions imposed by the Laestadian religious movement.[23] Instead, it became an attractive collector's item. The hat's particular shape is due to the high wooden protrusion known as a *fierra* positioned at the back of the head. Very few hats remain in the Nordic countries and in Sámi areas (Pieski and Harlin 2020, 10), however the MEK has two such hats in their holdings (II C 968 and II C 969). As such, the MEK collection is seen as a valuable resource. For example, in 2021, Finnish-Sámi filmmaker Suvi West investigated

the photographs from the Sámi living exhibitions as well as the Hagenbeck objects (Elisabeth Tietmeyer, email to author, 20 September 2023).

New momentum was also gained in the MEK relationship with Sámi communities when Aili Keskitalo, then-president of the Norwegian Saemiedigkie (the Sámi Parliament) visited the museum with a delegation in the summer of 2019. Since the 1980s, Sámi societies have worked to map Sámi cultural heritage in museum collections (Harlin 2021, 118–119), and it had been known for quite a while that the MEK collection is substantial. The visit had at least two important outcomes. First, the Dávvirat Duiskkas ("Artfacts in Germany") project was initiated, a five-year (from 2021 to 2026) Sámi–German museum collaboration project organized from Norway through the Saemiedigkie and the Sámi Museums Association, with the MEK a key partner.[24] A second important outcome, although not a new objective, was to prioritize the MEK's own provenance research project, with Dávvirat Duiskkas as the partner from the Norwegian part, Siida from the Finnish part, and Ájtte from the Swedish part of Sápmi.

### Sámi Cultural Heritage in Germany: A Blind Spot

The past decades have witnessed a growing debate about the handling and restitution of collections from colonial contexts in European museums, and numerous research projects and publications have outlined the dynamic field of postcolonial provenance research (e.g., Fienup-Riordan 2005; Gabriel and Dahl 2008; Fforde et al. 2020; Gaup et al. 2021). What is particular about Sámi collections in German museums, however, is that they are not necessarily recognized as colonial by Germans nor by German institutions. In Germany, the Sámi's status as an Indigenous People is little known. Moreover, German public debate has been largely concerned with formerly colonized areas of the so-called Global South (Norges Museumsforbundet 2022), thus making Sámi cultural heritage a blind spot in Germany, particularly within the museum apparatus.

Until now, the colonial history of Sámi communities has been largely ignored or even contested within the Nordic publics themselves, not only in Germany. That is one of the reasons why Sámi communities have demanded historical scrutinization and truth and reconciliation commissions from their respective governments. The Norwegian Truth and Reconciliation Commission published their report on the state's cultural assimilation policy and injustice against the Sámi people, Kven people, and Forest Finns in June 2023.[25] Similar truth commissions have been established in Sweden[26] and Finland,[27] but towards only the Sámi specifically. In Germany and elsewhere outside of the Nordic countries, these developments are less known. Nevertheless, the term "Nordic colonialism" is slowly gaining momentum (Für 2013; Lehtola 2015; Rud and Ivarsson 2021).

### The Key Role of the MEK and German Museums

An explicit colonial perception of Sámi pasts constitutes the backdrop for the MEK's already-mentioned project, "The Sámi Collection at the Museum Europäischer Kulturen – A multi-perspective approach to provenance research" (2022–2024). Inspired by Pieski and Nylander's work, the project emphasizes duodji and the revitalization of museum objects (and thereby also language and culture) through craft workshops. As rightfully noticed by the MEK, German collection of Sámi cultural heritage took place at the height of inner European colonialism (Norges Museumsforbundet 2022). "Inner European colonialism" entails the various oppressive domestic policies enacted against the Sámi communities within Norway, Finland, Sweden, and Russia, as well as practices developed in Germany and elsewhere that were embedded in colonial structures, such as Hagenbeck's living displays or ethnographic collecting. Indeed, domestic oppressional policies constituted the context in which these practices operated and took effect in. Needless to say, the explicit assimilation policies by the Norwegian state towards the Sámi since the mid-nineteenth century created a cultural void that was – and still is – being remedied in paradoxical ways. Elsewhere I have argued that Hagenbeck's displays also constituted a refuge from a difficult domestic situation and access to important social, political, and economic means, despite their colonial ramifications (Baglo 2014, 2017). In recent decades, cultural heritage that was once taken away or transported out of Sámi communities has become a centre of the formation of new identities, and an important cohesive aspect for the politics of rewriting one's history.

German museums may play a key role in this regard. Currently, 15 German heritage institutions appear to hold Sámi objects in their depositories.[28] The museum in Hagenbeck's hometown, Hamburg, formerly the Museum für Völkerkunde, now the Museum am Rothenbaum – Kulturen und Künste der Welt (MARKK), may have held the largest Sámi collection in Germany. However, a large part of it appears to have been lost. The number has not been confirmed, but MARKK seems to have at least 400 Sámi objects. In addition to MEK and MARKK, the Museum Fünf Kontinente in Munich has 460 Sámi objects in their holdings. Another important collection is found at the GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde in Leipzig. The museum has only six Sámi objects, but all are ceremonial. The remaining German museums and cultural heritage institutions have anywhere between 1 and 153 objects. Many objects in German museums are not man-made artefacts or crafts – duodji in Northern Sámi – but rather samples of food or raw materials for making clothing, tools, or other equipment (Baglo 2022).

Since 2017, MARKK has been in a restructuring phase under the leadership of Barbara Plankensteiner. Among other things, the restructuring has resulted in an emphasis on the investigation of colonial heritage. MARKK

has also initiated collaboration with Sámi scholars and communities through the Goethe-Institut Finland (Goethe Institut Finnland 2021). A historical explanation of the lasting relationship between Germany and Finland might be found in Finland's status as Germany's brother-in-arms during World War II (Nyyssönen 2023). In Norway, on the other hand, the long-lasting contact with the once much-admired German museums that for a long time had spearheaded a worldwide effort to preserve the material traces of humanity (Penny 2002) seem to have ceased almost overnight after World War II. Dávvirat Duiskkas visited MARKK and its Sámi collection in the fall of 2022. At that time, they were already planning a Sámi exhibition. A year later, on 7 September 2023, the museum opened the exhibition "The Land Has a Mind to Speak. Sámi Horizons" in collaboration with Kunsthaus Hamburg. Indeed, increased international attention on Sámi art (e.g., Baglo and Stien 2018), not least the Sámi Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2022,[29] has not gone unnoticed by the large German ethnographic museums. While projects such as Dávvirat Duiskkas and the MEK's provenance research project were unthinkable a few years ago, the time is now ripe.

## Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have investigated the provenance of the Hagenbeck Sámi collection at the MEK and its possible relation to two Sámi groups (the first in 1875 and the second 1878–1879) who took part in living exhibitions organized by Carl Hagenbeck in Hamburg. It is probable that some of the objects, such as the láhppeboagán (II C 975), may have belonged to individuals in these groups. While a more detailed investigation of provenance requires additional skills than my own, I have shown that the Hagenbeck Sámi collection – much like the living exhibitions themselves – to a large extent coheres to the dominant trope of collecting and displaying objects representing Sámi reindeer-herding culture. At the same time, the collection contains objects such as the white wool gákti (II C 978a–b) which challenge easy assumptions about what has been considered worth collecting. On one hand, the Sea Sámi objects in the MEK collection should probably be perceived in much the same way as the Sea Sámi display at the exhibition in Romsa in 1870, in that the Sámi ethnographical canon was still in the making, and Sea Sámi were still considered to be ethnographically significant. On the other hand, the objects precede the period when the cultural assimilation of the Sea Sámi in northern Norway would tighten its grip, leading to loss of culture and language. In any respect, the Hagenbeck Sámi collection is a timely reminder of the partial version of history that has been collected and presented in museums, living exhibitions, and elsewhere. At the same time, it seems to testify to less orderly, even chaotic, principles for collecting. Moreover, the Hagenbeck Sámi collection demonstrates the latent potential for knowledge production that

German museum collections hold for Sámi societies today. The Hagenbeck Sámi collection might not be large in a German context, but it nevertheless chronicles complex histories of exchange, colonialism, and lived lives. Small collections may not only contain materials significant to descendent groups on their own terms, as pointed out by Magnani and others; they may also provide the grounds to generate new forms of Indigenous-initiated, balanced reciprocity (Magnani et al. 2023).

## Notes

1 Similar to Ames (2008), I see the exhibitions as an integral part of a broader movement in the 19th century towards more realistic displays and, where Hagenbeck was particularly influential, also for museum culture (Baglo 2011, 2015b, 2017).
2 "Felleslappeloven" translates to "The Common Law of the Sámi [in Sweden and Norway]."
3 "Hamborgar-Ellen" in Norwegian.
4 All proper names in this chapter are written the way they appear in official censuses, which is in Norwegian or Swedish, not in Sámi language. I do not know the Sámi names. The Sámi – also the Kven (persons of Finnish ancestry) – had and still have their own naming traditions in addition to the parallel name systems used in Norwegian or Swedish, but both ethnic groups had to adapt to foreign administrations and their language norms.
5 Kistrand (later named Porsanger Municipality) was at the time also the name of a parish that had comprised both inland Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino (until 1851) and inland Kárášjohka/Karasjok (1873).
6 In German: "Gipsformerei der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin."
7 As described in the "MEK – Hagenbeck – Datasheet," assembled by Salwa-Victoria Joram (MEK) for the author, August 2023. All information about the Hagenbeck Sámi objects at MEK mentioned in this chapter are taken from this datasheet.
8 In Norwegian: "Alder umuligt at finde Aaret paa, Russisk, under Daab, døbt, konfirmeret og gift i Russland."
9 According to the church registry, the place of birth was Paris, not Lille, as reported by Jacobsen, but in this case, Jacobsen is more trustworthy.
10 As late as 1905, 155 out of 1,000 live births.
11 In Norwegian: "Forrige Ægteskab opl. ved Døden."
12 For a description of Sea Sámi clothing tradition see, for example, *Sjøsamisk klesbruk i gamle Lyngen* (Gáivuona NSR 1995).
13 In Norwegian: "Lapplander fra Porsanger-fjord i Finmarken ca. 40 Aar gammel."
14 In Norwegian: "[A]ltid oplagt til Spøg."
15 Registered by the Swedish ethnographer Ernst Manker (1938, 470–475) as nr. 5.
16 Registered by the Swedish ethnographer Ernst Manker (1938, 34) as nr. 76.
17 *Pictures of the self and pictures of the other* (1999) and *Discover Europe* (2008).
18 The MEK's Sámi collection, including 670 historical photographs of Sámi people, can be found here: https://recherche.smb.museum/?language=de&question=samen&limit=15&controls=none.
19 While Sámi subsisting on fishing has been common in both Swedish and Finnish parts of Sápmi, the long Norwegian coastline has historically entailed adaptations from today's Møre in the south to Finnmárku in the north (Hermanstrand 2014).
20 In Norwegian: "[J]ages fra Sted til Sted, mister Redskaber og Fisk."

21 In Norwegian: "Finnerne som en mindre kraftig Race end de Nordmænd, Kvæner og Nordfarerere [... vil] komme til at trække det korteste Straa i Forhold til deres Konkurenter, der baade er en kraftigere Race og udrustede med bedre Baade og Børskab."
22 The project was presented at the Max Liebermann Haus in Berlin as part of a series of public events developed by the Finnish Miracle Workers Collective for the Finland Pavilion at the 58th Art Exhibition at the Venezia Biennale in 2019.
23 Læstadianism was a Lutheran revival movement that arose around the Swedish-Sámi priest Lars Levi Læstadius (1800–1861) in the mid-19th century and quickly spread across northern Norway, Sweden, and Finland. Læstadianism had and has strong demands for piety. Revival and grace are central concepts and the movement was from the beginning faithful to Martin Luther's teachings. In Luther, the Norwegian Læstadianists also found resistance against the Norwegianization policy, namely in the principle that God's word should be spoken and read in the mother tongue. The pastors preached in the language that was used in the assemblies, and used an interpreter if required. The assemblies and gatherings thus became sanctuaries for Sámi and Kven languages (Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen 2023, 179).
24 The project aims to map Sámi collections in German museums and other heritage institutions, linking collection history with artefact-specific knowledge and enhance the competence of both German and Sámi museums (see https://museumsforbundet.no/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/EN_Prosjektplan-Tysklandsprosjektet-okt-2021.pdf).
25 Full report (in Norwegian) available at https://www.stortinget.no/en/In-English/About-the-Storting/News-archive/Front-page-news/2022-2023/the-truth-and-reconciliation-commission/.
26 Formed in 2022, work ongoing (see https://sanningskommissionensamer.se/en/about-the-commision/).
27 Formed in 2021, work ongoing (see https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/10616/sami-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-to-continue-its-work).
28 Museum – Naturalienkabinett in Waldeburg, Museum Natur und Mensch in Freiburg in Breisgau, Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen in Mannheim, Museum Fünf Kontinente in München, Museum Europäischer Kulturen in Berlin, Übersee Museum in Bremen, Museum am Rothenbaum – Kulturen und Künste der Welt Hamburg, Naturkundemuseum im Ottoneum in Kassel, Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt, Völkerkundliches Museum in Witzenhausen, Niedersächsisches Landsmuseum Hannover, Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum Kulturen der Welt in Köln, GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig, Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, Lübecker museen. The gievrie in the Meininger Museen – Museum im Schloss Elisabethenburg was returned to Saemien Sijte South Sámi Museum and Cultural Center in 2023 (https://saemiensijte.no/gievrie-tromme-tilbakefores-fra-meiningen-museum-i-tyskland/), while Museum für Regionalgeschichte Hennebergisiches in Kloster Veßra may once have had a Sámi drum, but it is no longer there.
29 See Rugeldal (Chapter 7) in this book.

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# 6

# THE NORDNORSK KUNSTMUSEUM

## A Case Study in Decolonization

*Sarah Annemarie Caufield*

On Friday 15 February 2017, the Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum (NNKM) in Romsa/Tromsø disappeared without warning; in its place stood the Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] (SDMX). The building itself hadn't changed, but new signage had appeared featuring a colourful, new logo: a bold × contrasting on a background colour, both shades drawn from the Sámi flag. Online, the NNKM Facebook page had gone silent as an SDMX page sprang to life, announcing the opening of its "latest" exhibit that evening, *There Is No*. Meanwhile, the NNKM website now redirected to the SDMX page – though it was easy to find an explanation that this was a joint performative exhibition between the RiddoDuottarMuseat (RDM) and NNKM. Other than this brief explanation on the website, however, the NNKM was effectively gone the SDMX in its place – presented as though it had always been there. That same day, press releases were distributed inviting one and all to the opening of *There Is No*, and despite the short notice, news spread quickly and that evening, SDMX director and curator Marita Isobel Solberg[1] hosted a full house, welcoming everyone in attendance in both Norwegian and Northern Sámi languages to *There Is No* at the SDMX.

If one were to point to a particular moment to say that now, here, this is the moment that the NNKM began to make a conscious effort to begin to decolonize, it could be argued that it was with its decision to create the SDMX. As the only national art museum in the north of Norway, the NNKM has been (and still is) a central cultural institution in Romsa/Tromsø since it opened in 1988. It was also the only nationally supported art museum in the Norwegian part of Sápmi, the traditional lands of the Sámi, yet its by-laws lacked any direct reference to Sápmi, the Sámi People, or their culture (NNKM stifelse n.d.; Gullickson 2023a). And while it claimed then, as now, to be a cultural centre

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for all of Northern Norway, its interpretation of what constituted "culture" during its first three decades, as evidenced by the focus and framing of its exhibitions during this period, was very much informed by Western European art and aesthetics. As an art museum, the NNKM was clearly a specifically Norwegian institution and, with both its programming and a Board which, year after year, chose to maintain the same phrasing in its defining documents, the NNKM as an organization appeared to not see this as an issue.

2017 marked a decolonial turning point for the NNKM, however, with the SDMX and *There is No*, but this is not simply because of the museum's newfound, overt focus on Sámi artists and content, nor merely because the SDMX performance took a political stance to point at the ongoing lack of a *dáiddamusea* in both Norway and Sápmi. Merely highlighting Indigenous culture and creativity does not mean that an institution is opening itself up for closer analysis or colonial criticisms, nor does it necessarily imply that the organization is conscious of how it helps maintain colonial systems – if a pointed exhibit leaves no trace once it's ended, then the institution presenting it was merely a host, not a part of the conversation. The SDMX performative exhibit existed for only a specific period of time, but its development, presentation, and conclusion – and its manner of departure – showed that the NNKM was also changing. These shifts were not only physical but also in its self-reflection and positioning within various communities (including those of the Sámi and the cultural sector), all of which started the NNKM on a new path towards decolonization and Indigenization. The exhibit mattered, but even more important were the conversations and considerations that led to the choices made in its development and presentation – both what was and was not done differently, and what changes remained afterward.

Decolonial efforts differ necessarily for each and every cultural institution due to specific contexts, pasts, and presents. However, overlap and inspiration can be found in the sharing of these individual processes and experiences. This chapter is not a critique of the aesthetics of the SDMX and *There Is No*, nor is it an assessment of the project's success or failure.[2]

Taking an Indigenous methodologies approach, this chapter reflects upon the NNKM in a particular moment in time, a particular exhibit, within its particular cultural context. In addition to relevant literature, published materials regarding the NNKM and the SDMX, and the author's own experience as a visitor to the SDMX in 2017, the author interviewed the museum directors behind the project to gain insight into the intentions and considerations involved in the development of the performative exhibit. This chapter takes an interpretive, dialogical stance to question and challenge the power dynamics within colonial structures (Denzin, Lincoln, and Smith 2008; Kovach 2010; Smith 2012), the context out of which Western European art museums such as the NNKM have evolved, and the outcomes, impacts, and implications the SDMX project left in its wake.

### Decolonization, Deinstitutionalization, and Indigenization

Galleries and museums play important roles in society as archives and broadcasters, both recording and representing cultural pasts and presents for those headed into the future, presenting and framing microcosms of cultural essentials. They hold and convey knowledge and histories, sparking imaginations and creativity. Within these roles, however, they also become gatekeepers of that same knowledge through their ability to define and control narratives by choosing which stories and perspectives to include, highlight, or dismiss. As a subcategory of museums, art museums also assert some degree of authority over aesthetic values as they decide which creators, styles, or artworks have cultural importance, defining creative movements or determining canons through the way they present or position works of art, both visually and textually.

The call to decolonize these cultural institutions is not new, but it has grown in both volume and influence in recent years, demanding change in institutional practices, acknowledgement of past omissions or disrespectful treatment of other cultures, and the repatriation/rematriation of objects or collections (Finbog 2020; Heal 2019; Jilani 2018; Kasmani 2018; Shoenberger 2019).[3] The concepts of both "decolonization" and "deinstitutionalization" refer to the dismantling of power dynamics in which the realities and truths of one people are privileged through the erasure or subjugation of another's; both require self-reflection and self-awareness to consider that which has been taken for granted – as well as who or what has been included or excluded – in what becomes understood as being normal or routine, and thereby faded out of conscious perception (Ahmed 2012). In colonization, these select versions of reality are rooted in culture and worldview, referring primarily to the erasure of Indigenous and non-colonizer ways of being; in institutionalization, the focus is on structure, hierarchy, and operations, all of which have strong impacts on alternative or minority groups defined by gender, heteronormativity, religion, race, and of course, Indigeneity.

Elisa Shoenberger (2019), referencing Shaheen Kasmani's 2018 talk, writes of the decolonization of museums as "an overhauling [of] the entire system" – anything less would be merely a continuation of colonialism and its inherent power inequities in the modern-day context. Sarah Jilani (2018) points out that decolonization "demands fundamental change rather than mere representation," and that museums must "facilitate historical accuracy by engaging their majority white audiences with how cultures, societies and national identities today remain deeply shaped by the era of colonialism." Finally, Sara Wajid (as quoted in Heal 2019, 212) notes the responsibility of museum staff working within cultural institutions, as they are "better equipped to start dismantling the class privilege, inequality and colonial narratives of those institutions."

Importantly, decolonization and deinstitutionalization are both words of action, describing a proactive dismantling of systems which have been constructed, integrated, and reinforced in such a way that many have forgotten that they are, in fact, merely constructs, not truths. In cultural institutions, these processes occur internally – in the way in which the organization operates on a daily level (e.g., hierarchies, existing power dynamics, or in values that inform decision-making) – as well as externally (e.g., how the organization interacts and integrates with outside communities, or which groups it supports or shows kinship towards). If the aim is to break down systems of knowledge and power, however, Indigenization is an important part of the transition process – adapting and integrating alternative ways of thought or action to create something new. Indigenization is similar to decolonization in that it is also a process of recognizing and dismantling power constructs that have dis-included Indigenous thought and knowledge (Gaudry and Lorenz 2018; Kovach 2010; Kurtz 2013); however, rather than framing actions and noting what to draw away from (i.e., colonial ways, thought, priorities), Indigenization centres focus on Indigenous cultures and ways of being, not merely as a means of inclusion, but in fact as a starting point, a place from which to build (Kreps 2015).

Decolonization seeks to reverse and amend. Deinstitutionalization works to dismantle. Indigenization strives to build and create.

These three concepts are inherently intertwined, and each process complex and nuanced, without a prescribed route or endpoint. Each organization is set in its own specific cultural context, history, politics, and present. Even so, the first steps towards institutional decolonization can be quite tangible, as to begin down this path requires conscious self-reflection, recognition of the existing power structures, and making an active choice to change.

The SDMX project pointed to the lack of a Sámi dáiddamusea and aimed to challenge perceptions and politics and point a finger at the ongoing colonial blind spots within the Norwegian cultural sector. Through the development of the exhibit, the NNKM embarked on its own journey of decolonization, recognizing not only its shortcomings in including and representing Sámi communities and perspectives but also opportunities for change. Meanwhile, its collaboration with the RDM afforded input and influence from a Sámi perspective, specifically within a Western museum context. But to recognize the significance of the NNKM's choices and conversations in 2017 depends on understanding the wider context of Norway's history of colonization,[4] as well as what the NNKM had been to that point.

## The Foundations of the NNKM

The NNKM first opened its doors in 1988, with a mandate to "create interest in and knowledge around visual arts and crafts in the region of Northern

Norway" (NNKM stifelse n.d., §3). Its inception and placement in Romsa/Tromsø can be seen as an extension of the ideology of "district politics" which developed in response to perceptions of non-urban areas in Norway as being "backward and less developed" (Grønaas, Halvorsen, and Torgersen 1948), aiming to create equality between national regions – an ideology which is still influential today.[5] The NNKM, then, was conceived as a way to connect and equalize cultural power dynamics between Norway's rural north and urban south. As well as being a period of particular growth and development in Northern Norway, the 1980s were also a key moment in modern Sámi politics within Norway.[6] After a long history of Sámi culture and language being not only excluded but devalued and even outlawed in Norwegian society, the Alta Crisis of the late-1970s shone light on the Sámi and their rights (e.g., Anderson 2006; Minde 2003a, 2003b; Paine 1987), leading to the 1987 amendment of the Norwegian Constitution to formally recognize the nation's "legal, political, and moral" obligations to support the Sámi as an Indigenous People in 1987 (Sameloven 1987), and the election of the first Sámediggi (Sámi Parliament) in Norway in 1989. Despite all this – the heightened presence of the Sámi in the national consciousness as the NNKM was first defining itself; it being the first and only art museum located within all of Sápmi; the NNKM's purpose, according to its own by-laws, being to highlight the visual arts and crafts of the "Northern Norwegian" region, a region comprised of numerous cultures including Sámi – the final constitution and by-laws of the NNKM contained no references to Sápmi or Sámi culture (NNKM stifelse, n.d.). Exhibits during the NNKM's initial decades may have included works by Sámi artists or depicted Sámi themes, but this Sámi-ness was most often relegated to being a detail mentioned in texts accompanying the artworks, if noted at all. Sámi culture was not overtly excluded nor unwelcome in the NNKM, but it also was not embraced nor shown to be an integral consideration of the art museum's focus or expected community. In fact, overall, these choices suggest that the NNKM was eager to align itself with its counterparts in southern Norway and the rest of Europe and join them at their table, rather than seize an opportunity to develop a two-way relationship and extend northern perspectives and influence into the south. Rather than acknowledge the current dynamic cultural politics and celebrating the complex, multi-layered nature of identities in the region, the NNKM – a national institution formed and framed by Western European perspectives, aesthetics, and history – held fast to the philosophical foundations it was built upon, and for three decades, this focus persisted largely unchallenged.

## The Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] – Conceptualizing a Missing Presence

Sometimes it takes an outsider's perspective to recognize what's being taken for granted, to question what's grown to be understood as "normal."

In 2016, for the NNKM, this came in part through the appointment of a new director, Jérémie McGowan. Soon after stepping into the role, McGowan met Anne May Olli, director of the RDM, an association of Sámi museums located across the Norwegian part of Sápmi.[7] It was at their first meeting that McGowan expressed an interest in developing opportunities to highlight Sámi art within the NNKM, a detail he had noticed was missing in previous years.

> He felt that the NNKM had a responsibility to Northern Norway, and that the Sámi are a part of that. It was quite nice for me to hear, because that had not been happening before! So that was a really good starting point.
>
> *(Olli 2019)*

Olli was one of many who had already been actively pushing for a Sámi dáiddamusea, and she immediately raised the issue with McGowan. This ongoing but unfulfilled demand became the concrete detail which sparked a collaboration between the two to create the SDMX and *There Is No*. As McGowan put it, this was a way in which the NNKM could "use our budget, our position of privilege and power, to make real change" (McGowan 2019).

From early on, however, the goal of the SDMX project was not to create the missing dáiddamusea. As the SDMX website notes, "This is not *the* Sámi Dáiddamusea, but rather a *possible* Sámi dáiddamusea" (SDMX | NNKM 2017a). But even the creation of this *possible* dáiddamusea required much more than simply a name-change. Both McGowan and Olli came to the project with museum experience from a Western/Norwegian perspective, and were conscious of the potential as well as the limitations of such an institution. Additionally, McGowan brought with him a background in art and design, while Olli had Sámi cultural knowledge being Sámi herself, as well as through her roles at the RDM – as a curator starting in 2004, and then as director since 2015, exploring how to present exhibits and collections and even operate the museum "in a Sámi way" (Olli 2019). Together, McGowan and Olli began to imagine how to present a space to represent what a Sámi dáiddamusea could be, but they were also aware that, when pushing boundaries, it's important to balance the expected and the unexpected. While discussing ideas, despite an eagerness to reimagine an art museum in a Sámi way, both acknowledged the importance of keeping their possible *dáiddamusea* recognizable so as to limit cognitive barriers for the sake of engaging audiences.

## A New Name, A New Institution?

The first thing any visitor to the SDMX would come across, whether physically or online, was its name – Sámi Dáiddamusea[x]. The overnight rebranding

of the NNKM included new signage with the new name in a new font both outside and inside the building, as well as online. The NNKM website redirected to the SDMX website (https://www.sdmx.no), on Facebook, the NNKM page went silent as the SDMX sprang to life, even email signatures were updated, all to reflect that this building, this organization, this museum was the Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ. The project branding entailed a strong, bolded × brightly splashed against a contrasting colour, using various combinations of the red, yellow, green, or blue tones of the Sámi flag. The × branded everything: the entrance signage, the flags outside the building, the website, and social media. Colourful pins touting the × were even made for visitors to take with them for free – a means of spreading the message of the performative exhibit even further than the walls of the SDMX.

This × was a very considered choice, made to serve multiple purposes as they explained on the SDMX website. It represented a footnote, the "ˣ" in "Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ," pointing first to the lack of an actual dáiddamusea,

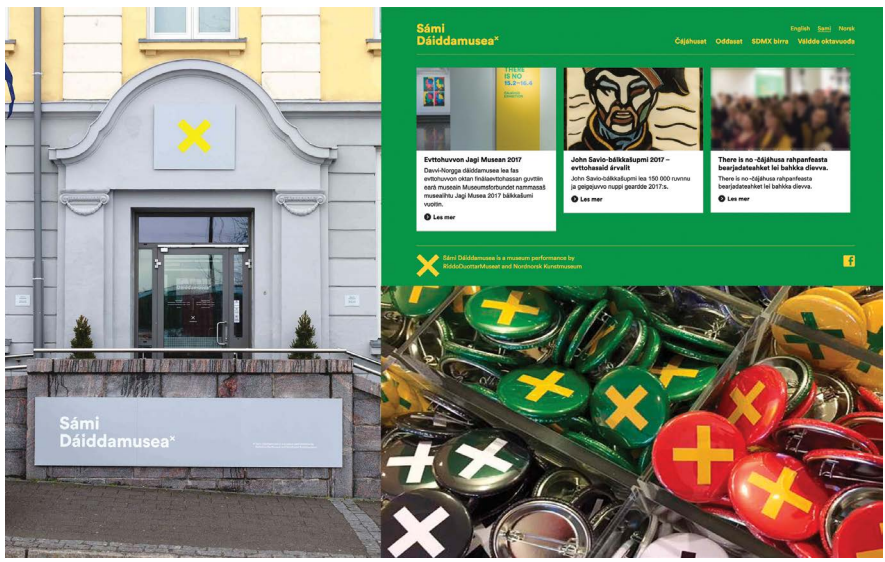


**FIGURE 6.1** Overnight, the NNKM rebranded itself as the SDMX both physically and online, placing a strong emphasis on both the × and the use of the colours of the Sámi flag. Left: The exterior of the SDMX (NNKM), with Northern Sámi now replacing the usual Norwegian text. Top right: A screenshot of the SDMX.no website, where the NNKM.no website auto-forwarded during the first iteration of the SDMX performance. Bottom right: Free pins for visitors acted as another marketing tactic.

*Source:* Photos by Morten Fiskum/Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum.

and acting as a disclaimer that this SDMX was "at least partly a fiction, a performance" (SDMX | NNKM 2017c). As an ×, two perpendicular lines, it was also intended to suggest a crossroads, "a place where something is, where something happens, or might be found" (SDMX | NNKM 2017c).

McGowan explained that the × was also meant to signify an erasure, the crossing out of the NNKM and its replacement with the SDMX (SDMX | NNKM 2017c). But to go as far as to claim to have "erased" and "replaced" an institution that had already existed for three decades, and had made a particular history and name for itself already, treads into complicated territory when spoken by the director of a colonial institution.

## Challenging the Un/Expected

Part of the development process of the SDMX was playing with the balance of conforming to or challenging audience expectations of what an art museum should be, a detail which plays out in how the exhibit itself was presented. As director of the RDM, Olli had already been negotiating between the potential of a museum existing as a Sámi institution but still needing to meet Norwegian standards and expectations, for example, balancing methods of preservation and presentation of collection objects as dictated by European museum conventions with practices based on longstanding traditional Sámi knowledge of how to care for these same objects.

> As a Sámi museum, we try to treat academic and traditional knowledge as being equal, even though the traditional knowledge isn't academically approved. But we need to use it because we're a Sámi institution. But also, the institution itself has to be "Norwegian" according to the [Norwegian] rules, because otherwise you aren't understood from outside. And if you aren't a museum as the government understands a museum to be, you don't get funding as a museum.
>
> *(Olli 2019)*

Part of the care of an object or artwork is how it is presented to the public – its positioning, framing, and lighting – not only to limit its deterioration over time, but also to determine how it is or isn't perceived by audiences, and how the audience will interact with it. In historical or cultural museums, objects and dioramas may display already-fragile historical objects. As such, preservation is of vital importance and dimmer lighting is often used so that the objects can act as a shorthand describing a culture. Doing this, however, robs both the object and its creator of their unique creative identities, as the craftsmanship, creativity, and individuality of the object becomes lost. In contrast, art museums and galleries today more often than not make use of the "white cube" style, which stems out of Bauhaus aesthetics, becoming

popularized and institutionalized in gallery settings beginning in the 1930s in large part by the Museum of Modern Art in New York City (Cain 2017). This presentation format has become standard practice today, featuring a simple, dynamic aesthetic of large, blank, white walls and open spaces to limit distractions, with artworks lit and presented in a way that highlights details and directs visitors' attention to what the curator has determined are key elements of each piece.

Historically, Sámi artists and creators have been poorly represented in Norwegian art collections, in part due to the imprecise connections between the Sámi concept of *duodji* and overly rigid concepts of what is art or handicraft from a Norwegian (and, more broadly, a Western) culture and language (Grini 2019). As many duodji are or have been used objects, they more often appear in historical cultural museums, rather than art museums, interpreted as handicraft more than art. Within a Sámi worldview, an object's status as duodji isn't simply in the concrete final product, it's the journey the materials have taken to become that end result, the aesthetics or fit of the object for its intended use, by its intended user. However, Western culture has a long history of distinguishing between art and handicraft. While "(high) art" holds inherent value evidenced by creative and technical skill and expression, handicraft, in part due to it often being used as everyday items (e.g., clothing, tools, utensils), as well as historical or class-driven devaluing of labour and "women's work" as merely tasks of necessity (i.e., not requiring skill nor creative expression), becomes merely another overlooked "object."[8]

The impact of display style on audience interpretations means that the choice of how to display duodji, an object which exists as both a process and a final product, necessarily demands a complicated conversation about what is respectful, what contributes, and what detracts from the object's story and value. When presented as an object exemplifying a culture, the creator's individual style and unique details are washed away; when presented as art, the stark, blank, neutral background may separate the duodji from its heritage. McGowan was conscious of these impacts, noting that,

> When we display duodji in a white cube style, it then becomes very much an art object, and you can heighten that even more by how you light it or label it. The other extreme is to display duodji in a very ethnographic frame – on a reindeer skin with rocks about, for example. And that speaks to a whole other lineage of display. It's not that one is right and one is wrong, […but each style causes] you to experience that object as a very different thing.
>
> *(McGowan 2019)*

With this awareness, and in consideration of how rarely duodji had been presented as art objects, McGowan wanted Sámi dáidda and duodji to be positioned side by side, with both presented as "high" art. Thus, the *There*

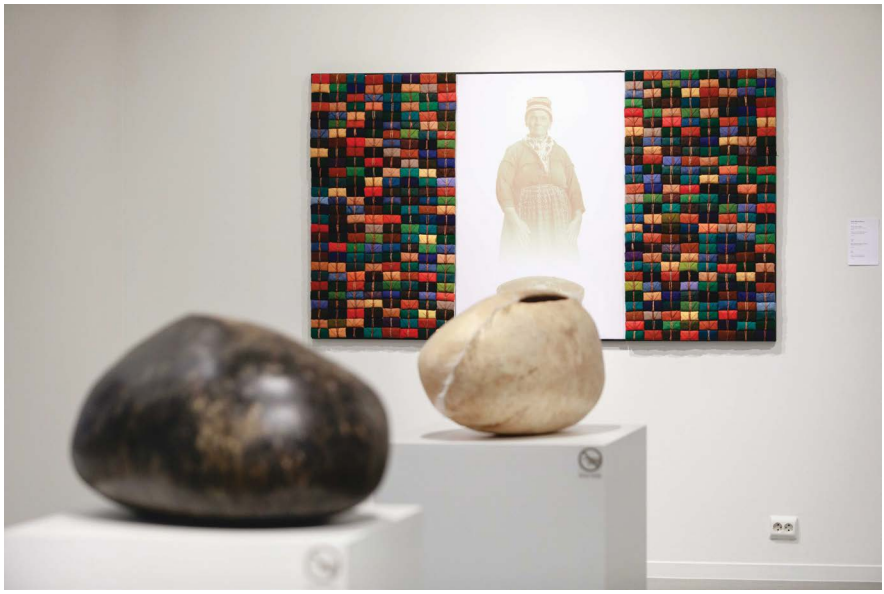

**FIGURE 6.2** The SDMX attempted to balance ideas of what a Sámi-style dáidda-musea could be while also meeting audiences' expectations, for example, presenting dáidda and duodji in the familiar "white cube" style. Pictured: Works by Rose-Marie Huuva on display in *There Is No* at the SDMX/NNKM, *Áhkku 448 vuorkkát* (2006) in the background.

*Source:* Photo by Morten Fiskum/Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum.

*Is No* exhibit opted to use the white cube style, drawing on the audience's familiarity of this method of presentation to imbue both duodji and dáidda with the same inherent "high art" values.

In her thorough exploration of the history of the format, Birkett describes the white cube style's effect as "elevat[ing] art above its earthly origins, alienating uninitiated visitors and supporting traditional power relationships" (Birkett 2012, 75). Within the SDMX project, the surface intent of adopting this presentation format may have been to remove art from distracting surrounds and allow it to speak for itself, but as an ingrained element of art museums as institutions, the white cube style also reinforces a colonial hierarchical dynamic that can create a sense of exclusion to those who may already feel out of place or unwelcome in the environment. Reflecting on the SDMX project later, however, Olli noted this as a potential shortcoming.

> *There Is No* was meant to give a taste of what a Sámi art museum might be. But it needed to be recognizable. The white cube system, white walls, was quite boring in a way. If the curators were only Sámi people, probably not every wall would be white, because the colours are quite important.
>
> *(Olli 2019)*

Given that the NNKM was already upending audience expectations by rewriting the present reality (i.e., creating an already-, ever-existing SDMX), choices were made to limit how far the performance would push its audience – as McGowan noted in our interview, "It wasn't necessarily just a Sámi, non-Sámi question." The NNKM also had to determine where the institutional construct of a colonial art museum could be pushed or challenged without either the NNKM or the SDMX losing credibility as an "art museum" in the contexts of both audiences and the wider Norwegian cultural sector.

## The Politics of the Written Word

While the NNKM followed Western art museum traditions in its presentation style of the exhibit, one visual detail that did change was how information about the artworks was presented and contextualized linguistically. In Norway, Sámi languages are now recognized as official national languages, and official information and assistance in all levels of government departments should always be made available in Sámi language, as well as in Bokmål and Nynorsk, the two written Norwegian languages.[9] However, no such requirement exists for non-governmental organizations or services, so outside of towns with high incidences of Sámi inhabitants, it was rare in 2017 to see Sámi language used commonly in public settings, either spoken or written. This was the case in Romsa, despite the 2017 Sámediggi voting records reporting the city as having the second highest Sámi population of all its constituencies.[10] In addition to historic cultural intolerance, rationale for businesses to choose not include Sámi language may have been that the vast majority of Sámi Norwegians speak Norwegian fluently, and if meaning could be conveyed through Norwegian alone, why spend the time, space, or money to include a second language if it wasn't officially required? Thus, in the majority of museums around Norway, information was, and still largely is, written in Norwegian and English as the norm – Norwegian for Scandinavian visitors, and English for the rest of the world's tourists.

As mentioned previously, before 2017, the NNKM largely positioned itself as Norwegian, existing for Norwegians first and foremost. Until then, the use of Sámi language in exhibits or signage had been the exception rather than the standard. But as McGowan and Olli imagined how a potential dáiddamusea could or should be, this lack of visible Sámi language as a norm in the NNKM stood out.

Exhibit summaries, promotional materials, and artwork labels may seem like small details in art exhibits, but these written words do much to prime their audiences' experience. Barthes (1977, 38–40) identified how the combination of words and images can clarify what is seen or what *is* by "anchoring" one's perception and nudging the viewer towards a particular "code" through which to interpret what they're seeing. Art labels especially can

seem particularly innocuous, often presenting minimal information beyond the displayed artwork's title, creator, date, and materials. Simple and brief, they can easily be overlooked in its mundanity, even by those who consider themselves to be experienced art museum visitors. However, this makes them even more important to consider, as their impact on audiences are thus subtle and surreptitious. Art labels provide context, defining what one is looking at, what one should take note of, what one should find impressive. Research into museum wall text and art labels has shown the importance of wording and framing in terms of accessibility, and how these impact audiences' experience, understanding, and interaction with exhibits (Kjeldsen and Jensen 2015; Pierroux and Qvale 2019). The literal words and language used to present this information, as well as which details are considered to be "important enough" to be mentioned subconsciously impart value, importance, and gravitas of that information, and of the language in which it's all written.

When one sees information written in their language, they know they've been considered as a potential reader, which thereby imbues them with a sense of inclusion and belonging (Kuoljok 2015). The NNKM's choice to display information in only Norwegian or English demonstrated that these languages were the most valued, the ones the NNKM expected most of its visitors to understand or prefer. Despite its location deep within Sápmi, the exclusion of Sámi language in the NNKM pre-2017 indicated that the museum did not deem it necessary to proffer a welcoming gesture to the Sámi community specifically. However, in imagining a potential Sámi dáiddamusea, McGowan and Olli recognized the connection between visible language and inclusion, and chose written text as another way of repositioning Sámi culture within the performative exhibit and, by proxy, in the NNKM, proactively demonstrating to Sámi communities that they and their language were welcome (McGowan 2019).

When the SDMX opened its doors in February 2017, visitors were welcomed with Northern Sámi and English languages on outdoor signage, and with the addition of Norwegian inside and online. Even non-exhibit signage (e.g., marking restrooms) was now written in Northern Sámi. Not only was Northern Sámi suddenly visible in a space where it had been notably absent previously, it was being prioritized over or even replacing Norwegian through positioning and font sizes. The art labels now noted information in Northern Sámi first, followed by English and Norwegian, further identifying it as the most relevant language for the NNKM's location and expected visitors. For local supporters already familiar with the museum, this linguistic shift stood out in its contrast to what had been the norm before, redefining who the NNKM was for. With language visibility also known to contribute to the processes of language revitalization and preservation, both of particular importance after Norwegianization policies leading to anti-Sámi sentiment and

Sámi languages falling out of use across Fenno-Scandia (Andresen, Evjen, and Ryymin 2021; Bjørklund 2000; Minde 2003a; Todal 1998), making Sámi language visible was also a way that the NNKM, as a public institution, could further act to follow its mandate of existing for all people living in the North of Norway. There was also a third but equally valuable impact this choice had, this one affecting the experiences of transitory but important, often one-off visitors: tourists.

As outsiders to a culture, tourists are fresh observers. Every detail they see during their visit hints to them a suggestion of the ideals, values, and depths held by the communities they visit (MacCannell 1999; Metro-Roland 2009). As they develop an understanding of that culture – what's normal, what's important – they construct the story that they will take with them after they leave, and share onwards with others elsewhere. Generally speaking, most visitors to Northern Norway, including Norwegians hailing from the south, know very little about the Sámi before they arrive. Some have heard of the Sámi as an Indigenous People, but Sámi representation overall has been poor or tokenistic, particularly in terms of its diversity, even in domestic tourism (Keskitalo and Carina 2017). The Sámi are largely depicted as reindeer herders through "Sámi experience" tourism, while historical-cultural museum exhibits have often presented a more static, "traditional" representation of Sámi culture rather than reflecting the vibrant, multi-faceted, living culture that it truly is (Mathisen 2011). A tourist to Tromsø entering the NNKM may arrive expecting only to be explore art. But when coming across information communicated in Northern Sámi and Norwegian equally, artistic, aesthetic, and operational alike, they have no reason to not simply interpret this as "normal" for the organization, as well as for the city and region, understanding that this space belongs to and represents the Sámi as much as it does the Norwegians. The SDMX opened during the high winter tourism period and continued through summer. Though subtle, the linguistic representation on and within the museum helped to convey to tourists that they were not only in Tromsø, Norway – a Norwegian-flavoured European town – but that they were also in Romsa, Sápmi, contributing to the foundation of their interpretations, memories, and experiences, and perhaps giving them a more multifaceted perspective of the town's cultural makeup.

Representation matters, and the SDMX acknowledged this by incorporating Sámi language throughout the museum. When the SDMX eventually disappeared and the building once again became the NNKM, this practice of presenting information in Northern Sámi continued – an example of how the NNKM was beginning to lean into Indigenization. As it began to address its knotted colonial past, it was also beginning to embrace Sámi influence as it invited Sámi language into its space.[11]

## Acknowledging the Custodians

Another quietly bold choice was made in the attributions noted on the art labels of the pieces on display in *There Is No* to the SDMX, both while the building stood as the SDMX itself, as well as when the NNKM returned hosting this touring exhibit. The majority of the artworks and duodji had come from the Sámi Dáiddamagasiidna (RiddoDuottarMuseat n.d.), supplemented by works from the NNKM collection (SDMX | NNKM 2017a). Even without a publicly funded dáiddamusea, Sámi art had nonetheless been purchased and collected for decades by and for its communities, by Sámi organizations during the 1970s and 1980s, and later by the Sámediggi who established the Dáiddamagasiidna to store the collection. As of 2023, the Dáiddamagasiidna boasts over 1,600 works of duodji and contemporary art, stored under the care of the RDM in Kárášjohka/Karasjok (RiddoDuottarMuseat n.d.). Pieces from the collection are exhibited in the Sámediggi building, and many are loaned out for travelling exhibits within Norway and internationally, but when not on tour or one of the select few pieces on display in the Sámediggi, much of this extensive collection of Sámi creativity sits in storage.

Before 2017, the NNKM had often placed a strong focus on the value and importance of art collections. In fact, in 2015, the NNKM used its 30th anniversary year to celebrate the role of collectors and collections in particular, and media releases about exhibits noted the collections from which the pieces came from as being a detail of particular importance. For example, the summary of the 2015 exhibit *Fra Dahl til Munch* refers to four external collections or collectors and one art historian, noting the importance of each and contextualizing them within the Norwegian art sphere to impress upon readers and visitors the high value of the exhibit (NNKM 2015).

Within the fictive world of the NNKM's performative exhibit, the Dáiddamagasiidna was now in the care of the imaginary SDMX, and while the SDMX stood in the heart of Romsa, the artwork attributions referred to the pieces as having come from the SDMX's permanent collection. Once the SDMX "left" and the NNKM "returned" with *There Is No* as its primary exhibit, the artwork attributions were updated to state that the pieces were on loan from the SDMX collection – still not the Sámi Dáiddamagasiidna – continuing to keep the idea and the spirit of the SDMX alive. In the context of the relatively recent focus on collections at the NNKM, this decision to reference the SDMX collection achieved several things. First, this choice to maintain this particular detail of a Western European art sector framework – of noting and thereby valuing the collection from which pieces come from – lifted up the Dáiddamagasiidna collection from the "traditional Western art museum" perspective, elevating the importance of the Dáiddamagasiidna by portraying its contributions as being exclusive within the familiar museum framework. Later, once the NNKM returned and the world once again had

no dáiddamusea, the attributions to the SDMX continued to draw out this fantasy that perhaps there could be a dáiddamusea, and implied a reality where these pieces would return to their own home after the exhibit ended where they would still be placed on display in their home environment and their own gallery, as part of its permanent collection, where this wealth of creativity and culture could continue to be shared. Simultaneously, however, these art labels also acted as catalysts for questions of why a collection of such importance didn't have its own perpetual viewing place in our actual current reality.

### Political Apoliticality and Loss

From its inception and development to its presentation, and in its ongoing impacts and effects, the entire concept of the SDMX was an attempt to confront and challenge the issue of the lack of a dáiddamusea, and to position Sámi creativity within the context of Norwegian art institutions. It is often said that all art is political, and as George Orwell (1946, 5) famously put it, "The opinion that art should have nothing to do with politics is itself a political attitude." However, there was an awareness that, to achieve the impact they were looking for, perhaps they needed to be cautious of being too confrontational. Even if every piece in *There Is No* was a representation of specific politics, an effort was made to avoid reinforcing the stereotype that all Sámi art is angry, or that it's all just about the experience of being Sámi, specifically.

> Actually, the SDMX exhibition was a nice one. We could have included art that was much more critical towards the Norwegian government, but we chose to show art that [conveyed] what people are missing, […] of what a Sámi art museum could be. That was the focus.
>
> *(Olli 2019)*

When speaking about the SDMX project, both McGowan and Olli make it clear that, as far as intentional political actions go, the performance itself was intended as the strongest, most pointed one, replacing an entire Norwegian cultural institution with another to specifically raise the question of why that other hasn't already existed.

> The intention was also to show that it [a dáiddamusea wasn't] something to be afraid of, something that would be dangerous, but that it could actually be quite good and interesting. That Sámi society doesn't only protest – it's so many other things, too.
>
> *(Olli 2019)*

It was important to McGowan and Olli, however, that the project didn't try to fill the void it was pointing a finger at. As McGowan explained, "to also deliver the solution [to the problem we're raising] would cancel out self-determination, and then it's colonialism all over again!" (McGowan 2019). The decision was to give the SDMX its time in the spotlight for a certain period of time, but to also take it away before too long, to make it clear what Sápmi was still missing. Rather than removing all trace of the SDMX in one go, however, the NNKM found a way to take it away gradually, inspiring further shifts and reconsiderations in broader conversations.

As mentioned previously, when the NNKM returned on 21 April 2017, it was presenting *There is No*, a "touring" exhibit from the SDMX, now on display at the NNKM until 29 August. Hints of the SDMX's influence remained in this new version of the NNKM, however, such as the visibility of Northern Sámi language on art labels and other signage around the building, positioned equally beside the Norwegian and English languages. In total, *There Is No* ran for six months across both SDMX and NNKM iterations, making it the primary exhibit on display in 2017, and the only exhibit to be shown in that building for such an extended period of time.[12] However, *There Is No* did eventually end, and this had always been an important part of the planned performance. McGowan explained:

> One of the very big words that [Olli] wiggled into the project was to create a feeling of loss. So that society – not just Sámi, but also broader – would become aware of this thing that was missing, that they maybe weren't aware of. And [it worked], people were getting a bit sad when the Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] was going to close. Nobody was sad when NNKM disappeared overnight! But there was a sense of loss about the departure of the Sámi Dáiddamusea[x].
>
> *(McGowan 2019)*

Positioning Sámi creativity in the heart of Romsa and in the major cultural institution of Northern Norway for such a long period of time created a situation where the NNKM's community was nearly able to begin to take its presence for granted.

### What the SDMX Wasn't

The SDMX was not the long-missing Sámi dáiddamusea, neither in intention nor presentation. It was an exhibit, a performance, an attempt to be a catalyst for change on a broader level. It was certainly used as an initiator from an internal institutional level. Efforts were made to make shifts within the NNKM to Indigenize the institution publicly, but one cannot build an entirely new

organism on the skeleton of the original beast – though McGowan and Olli consciously worked to find a balance between what a dáiddamusea could be within the confines of what the NNKM already was.[13]

Through the SDMX, the NNKM did manage to strip down some of its colonial ways of presenting and framing, but could only do so much with the time, budget, and energy the project could muster. So, while the criticism can be made that *There Is No* fell victim to its own blindness of the limitations it put on what an art museum "should be," ultimately, it was not – and shouldn't have been – a goal of the SDMX to be *the* dáiddamusea. There was still a need for an actual dáiddamusea, even when the SDMX existed, not just to house and present Sámi art, but to also do it in a Sámi way in choosing what to display, how it's done, and how the whole organization is managed. An actual dáiddamusea shouldn't be a Sámi-flavoured version of the Norwegian style of art museum, as dictated by Norwegian expectations. Instead, it should grow out of Sámi ways of thinking and of being.

*There Is No* was, however, a celebration of Sámi dáidda and duodji, and a consciously political attempt to point a finger to the lack of space Sámi art held in Norwegian cultural institutions – including the NNKM. To the wider community, the performance project was a clear signal as to the NNKM's stance on the place of Sámi art within the NNKM and a statement of solidarity, particularly regarding the need for a dáiddamusea. Together, the SDMX and *There Is No* were an opportunity for the NNKM to reflect upon its own sense of "normal" and "representation," giving it the opportunity to make shifts of its own. And so, while the performative exhibit was a vital part of the NNKM's efforts to decolonize as an institution, it was also just one first step along the way. It's the ongoing shifts that the museum made since, both short- and long-term, that are even more important in terms of the NNKM showing a real commitment to change.

The NNKM was awarded four times over for its programming of the SDMX project, giving it an even larger platform from which to highlight what was still missing in Norway and in Sápmi. In its statement explaining why the NNKM was recognized as "Museum of the Year," the Norwegian Museum Association highlighted the SDMX project, commending it for its sharp critique of the failure of Norwegian cultural policy to ensure "a special and permanent" space for Sámi art. The concluding line in their statement stands out in particular. Typically, one would expect an awards statement to bring its glowing commendations back to highlight the prize-winner. However, the statement instead finished with, "The Sámi Dáiddamusea shows us what treasure chest we have in Sámi art; and that it deserves its own museum" (Sund 2017). It's a subtle detail, but to end a statement about a prize-winner by calling for the creation of a completely separate organization points to the true success of the SDMX: jarring audiences into realizing what's missing.

## Ripple Effects

With the SDMX and *There Is No* now gone, the NNKM could have reverted to what it had been before. However, after imagining a Sámi dáiddamusea and breathing life into it, recognizing and acknowledging the privilege and potential the NNKM could wield as a national art museum, the SDMX become the NNKM's first step in a new direction. From 2017 onwards, the NNKM wore its politics proudly, and out loud. As an organization, it showed a commitment to acknowledging its position and creating influence in both the cultural sector and its own community, using its resources to stimulate change and discussion, striving to hold an overt, ongoing space for Sámi presence within and on its walls. Programming continued to cover a broad range of topics, but while the framing of exhibits pre-2017 had focused on classical canons and collections, a clear shift can be seen post-SDMX in how exhibit descriptions are described. An analysis of language, content, and framing of the NNKM's exhibits in the three years before and after the SDMX project reveals marked changes in how many exhibits included Sámi artists (pre-SDMX: 5 of 22 exhibits vs. post-SDMX: 8 of 15),[14] how many of those exhibits referenced Sámi artists' cultural identity in the description (1 of 5[15] vs. 8 of 8), and how many exhibits focused specifically on Sámi artists (2[16] of 22 vs. 5 of 15).

Before 2017, when Sámi artists were part of an exhibition, this detail would generally remain unspoken; now, references to their Sámi identity were made explicit (when relevant), such as *Skjæringspunkter/Intersections* (2018), *Kunstner: Rose-Marie Huuva* (2018), or the exhibits celebrating the repertoire of the biannual John Savio Prize-winner recognizing artists with Sámi roots (Britta Marakatt-Labba in 2017, Aage Gaup in 2019, also serving to heighten the profile and value of the prize itself). The longevity and visibility of these exhibitions imbued the artists with even more importance in the Northern Norwegian cultural milieu, and Sámi creators were being presented as an integral part of Northern Norway – and Sápmi –deserving of strong representation on the NNKM's walls.

The overall tone of exhibits had shifted as well. Before 2017, the broad commonality in framing was to focus on how Northern Norway could be connected to the rest of the world – where "the rest of the world" meant "the largely Western Eurocentric classical sense of the art world." Post-SDMX, however, a more common theme was to celebrate and amplify creative output that originated from or was inspired by Northern Norway and Sápmi. No longer trying to channel the spirit of a possible dáiddamusea, the NNKM was nonetheless aware that, even as a national art museum, there was room – and urgent need – to change. As the introduction to 2020's *HOS NNKM* exhibit put it:

> Museums are not neutral. Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum will be a different museum, a museum that is present, easily accessible and a committed

> speaker for everyday creativity. We believe that art and cultural institutions need to do more to get involved in the very pressing issues of our time. Museums need to be proactive and able to create change and new opportunities. We need alternatives and new visions of what an art museum can and should be today.
>
> *(NNKM 2020)*

Exhibits were now opportunities to challenge accepted discourses and explore the complex nature of identity in Sápmi and Northern Norway. *ANDRES LIV* (2021)[17] questioned Indigenous representation in Western European paintings; *Like Betzy* (2019)[18] pointed to the missing presence of women in art history and canons; *Gába – female resilience* (2023) revealed a diversity of personal connection and self-definition existing in a region that is simultaneously both Sápmi and Northern Norway. *HOS NNKM* (2020) celebrated artistic activism while equalizing "high" art and craft, an example of the NNKM tapping into a Sámi way of thinking – reminiscent of positioning duodji in a Western context – choosing in this exhibit to not differentiate between art and craft. The NNKM was working to reposition itself to be as equally inviting and inclusive towards Sámi and Kven communities as it already had been to Norwegians and foreign tourists, making a concerted

**FIGURE 6.3** While the SDMX existed only in 2017, shifts continued after it left, such as the normalizing of Sámi language visibly and audibly throughout the museum. For example, the makerspace (here, freshly installed in 2020) pointedly included Norwegian Bokmål, Northern Sámi, and English on all its labels.

*Source:* Photo by Sarah Caufield.

effort to distance itself from reputations of museums as ivory towers of high art and culture. And, while striving to decolonize, the NNKM was also making efforts to Indigenize.

Northern Sámi language began to be normalized in the museum's everyday existence, remaining visible on the walls, in communications, online, and in exhibits, positioned as an equal alongside Norwegian and English. Visitors began to hear it regularly while visiting the café or exhibits as the NNKM made active effort to have more Sámi-speakers on staff, and to encourage its use. Sámi influence was also reflected in the museum's look, through colours and materials used, by seeking Sámi designer input during renovations in 2020 when it expanded the gift shop and installed a café and makers' space. Meanwhile, the museum set itself the goal to include no less than 50% Sámi designers in its gift shop partnerships.[19]

Internally, the NNKM also saw changes structurally. From 2018, the organization adopted a less-hierarchical internal structure, shifting towards a flatter, more collaborative workplace model. NNKM curator Charis Gullickson (2023b, 10), while writing about the NNKM's structural shifts specifically, notes that such a transition creates space for more staff members to contribute their thoughts and ideas, shifting the decision-making process. Staff then feel an increased investment in the organization and its projects, and a stronger sense of ownership. While the internal shifts were not necessarily embraced by the entire staff, they were nonetheless impacting the direction of the museum, in the relationships it nurtured, its programming choices, and its vision of the future. And, through all this, the NNKM was also shifting its position within its community. Its political boldness was raising its profile locally, as workshops or marketing choices were inciting conversations locally in the Romsa media outlets, and its programming choices and pointed focus on Sámi creators from not only Norway but all across Sápmi were nurturing relationships with the Sámi community which had previously been nonexistent. The NNKM was increasingly seen as an ally, and a home for dáidda and duodji from across Sápmi. It was not the still-missing Sámi dáiddamusea, but it also didn't pretend or want to be that. The NNKM's goal was to be a better representative of both Northern Norway and Sápmi, and of all the many cultures that existed in this region.

## Conclusion

The SDMX performative exhibit didn't magically decolonize the NNKM overnight, nor was it without shortcomings. Despite efforts to distance the NNKM's ownership of the project by highlighting its involvement of others such as Olli and Solberg, and even "replacing" the museum with the Sámi Dáiddamusea[x], media and even the NNKM's own marketing fell into highlighting McGowan as the notable figure when discussing the SDMX,

ultimately reinforcing the same colonial institutional structures. Nevertheless, the SDMX was a splashy, positive, colourful way for the NNKM to plant seeds of change internally in its priorities and operations, while externally demonstrating its interest in developing better relationships with the Sámi community. Indeed, McFadzean et al. (2019, 266) note the importance of involving community participation in creating change, that "it is not just about creating community relationships but maintaining them […,] acknowledging that process can be as important as outcome and that co-creation and engagement methodologies inevitably lead to more powerful, transformative outcomes for both participants and the museum."

The decolonization of a museum is complicated, requiring critical consideration of organizational practices, processes, and privilege. It demands that one challenge beliefs and attitudes understood as being immutable truth, the givens that no one has thought to consider could be different. But it is particularly vital for a museum to do so. As Janes (2009, 183) writes, "museums, as public institutions, are morally and intellectually obliged to question, challenge, or ignore the status quo and officialdom, whenever necessary. With the exception of museums, there are few, if any, social institutions with the trust and credibility to fulfil this role."

The SDMX was more than just its outcome; it was also a sum of the choices made in its creation, of not only what the NNKM chose to do, but also what it chose not to do. It was the way it engaged with its audience, and the questions it evoked. The 2017 performative exhibit was recognized nationally for its effectiveness and daring style, and is still spoken of proudly today, not only by then-museum staff but also by the wider community. To measure the SDMX in terms of "success" or "failure" would miss the point: the SDMX was an experiment, an attempt to stimulate thought and discussion, to create a space in which the NNKM could consider its own patterns and pivot its practices going forwards. It was a conversation-starter, internally as well as in the public sphere, a hint of what had been missing for so long.

Art communicates in a way that nothing else can. The SDMX performance invited everyone to participate in a process of institutional decolonization by shifting expectations of what the NNKM could and should be, for Tromsø in Northern Norway, and for Romsa in Sápmi.

## Acknowledgement

This chapter is an adaptation of parts of the author's Master's in Indigenous Studies thesis, which focused on the NNKM's efforts to decolonize, deinstitutionalize, and Indigenize between 2017 and 2020. Fieldwork was performed in Romsa and Kárášjohka between 2018 and 2022.

## Notes

1 Solberg, a Sámi performance and installation artist already known across Sápmi and Northern Norway, was approached in October 2016, early in the project's development, and invited to act as SDMX director for the performance project (SDMX | NNKM 2017b) as a way of reinforcing the reality of the SDMX, an intentional attempt to distance it further away from NNKM director Jérémie McGowan, and an effort to symbolically enforce the Sámi ownership of the art, the exhibit, and the SDMX. Solberg's Northern Sámi language was in fact not perfect, not having not had much opportunity to learn it when young, but trying despite limitations was entirely in line with the SDMX project, with Solberg commenting afterwards, "I got feedback from Sámi people understanding it all, others not understanding anything I said. But people said the speech was like a work of sound art. It's a matter of trying and daring" (SDMX | NNKM 2017b).

2 Hansen (2020) has written an excellent criticism more specifically focused on the artworks and exhibit content.

3 Regarding projects specifically regarding repatriation of or increasing accessibility to Sámi cultural artefacts, see the following chapters in this book: Schøning (Chapter 1) and Johansen (Chapter 2) on the Bååstede project; Baglo (Chapter 5) on artefacts in German museums; Brattland, Fonneland, and Ragazzi (Chapter 3) on the Digijoik project.

4 See Hansen and Olsen (2004) for details of the colonization processes experienced by the Sámi during the 1800s and 1900s.

5 Particularly in the mid-20th century, Northern Norway was considered to be a backwards, rural region, generally perceived as underdeveloped in terms of lifestyle, education level, opportunities, economy, and culture. The development of *distriktpolitikk* ("district politics") as an ideology, first in the late-1940s and later influenced strongly by Ottar Brox's 1966 book, *Hva skjer i Nord-Norge* (*What's Happening in Northern Norway?*), has impacted Norwegian politics and policies even today, holding that one should have equal opportunity and capacity and the chance to lead a fulfilling life regardless of whether they live an urban or rural setting (including along the particularly-remote Northern Norwegian coastline (Stein 2019).

6 See Hansen and Olsen (2004, 2014) for in-depth depictions of earlier Sámi histories, as well as events and impacts of colonization in the context of Sápmi, particularly during the 18th and 19th centuries. See also Fonneland and Storm (Chapter 3) in this book regarding these impacts regarding museums and collections.

7 The RDM museums are not included within the portfolio of the Norwegian Ministry of Culture. Rather, under the rationale that the Sámediggi is responsible for "all things Sámi," they are funded through the Sámediggi.

8 The theories of Pierre Bourdieu (1986) on forms of capital are of particular relevance to this discussion. See also Becker (1978), Ługowska (2014), Michna (2020), and Shiner (2012).

9 Spoken Norwegian encompasses many different dialects which vary immensely, but all are considered to be the same language, with no one dialect considered to be the "official" one. There are, however, two official written languages. Bokmål ("Book Tongue") developed during the Danish-Norwegian union from the 16th to the 19th centuries, and is highly influenced by written Danish. Nynorsk ("New Norwegian") was developed by Iver Aasen during the 19th century, who travelled throughout the country to record the wide variety of dialects and create a in an effort to acknowledge and represent the wide variety of spoken dialects and create a Norwegian language that represented them all. In 2021, Språkrådet, the

Norwegian Language Council, reported that 90% of Norwegians use Bokmål as their primary written language, and only 10% Nynorsk, mostly in the west (Vikør 2021), however all students across the country learn both in school. In Northern Norway, Bokmål is the common written language. For more on written languages and dialectical variations, see Vannebo (2001) or the Språkrådet website (https://www.sprakradet.no).

10 1,404 registered voters in Romsa, second to 1,572 in Guovdegeaidu/Kautokeino. https://sametinget.no/politikk/valg/sametingets-valgmanntall/sametingets-valgmanntall-1989-2023/.

11 In 2020 the NNKM extended this further to emphasize Kven language in *Huuttaa ilman sanoitta/To Shout Without Words* (2020), an exhibit on craftivism and the NNKM's first focus on Kven artists. Kven language was prominent in the wall text, with Norwegian, English, and Northern Sámi presented in a smaller font in support. Since 1996, the Kven have been a recognized minority in Norway, whose previous generations emigrated from Finland during the 18th and 19th centuries, settling in a region which would eventually be defined as Norway. Over time, their culture and language blended with Norwegian, Sámi, and other surrounding influences, resulting in a unique and distinct language and culture. Currently, Kven culture is undergoing its own processes of revitalization and reinvigoration, having also been negatively impacted by Norwegianization policies. See Niemi (1978, 2017) or the Norwegian Kven Association website (https://kvener.no) for more information.

12 From 2015 to 2018, the average NNKM exhibition length was just under three months, making *There Is No* unique in its longevity.

13 See also Rugeldal (Chapter 7) in this book.

14 Not including the SDMX performative exhibit and either the SDMX nor the NNKM presentation of *There Is No*.

15 The one pre-SDMX exhibit was *Samiske Historier* (2013) which, while important, is also problematic, as outlined in Caufield (2021, Chapter 3).

16 Both the *Samiske Historier* return exhibit and 2013's *Alf Salo (1959–2013): Soltegn* retrospective are misleading entries on the NNKM website, misrepresenting the time each exhibit was shown at the NNKM; *Samiske Historier* was in fact presented at the Arctic University Museum of Norway on its return, while *Alf Salo* spent more time displayed in Hárstták/Harstad and Olmáivággi/Manndalen than in Romsa.

17 While the Paris version of this exhibit celebrated François-Auguste Biard's life and paintings, the NNKM version examined Biard's portrayal of Indigenous Peoples, asking viewers to reflect upon what was/wasn't depicted and how his choices affected public understandings of these cultures.

18 The exhibit juxtaposed Betzy Akersloot-Berg's unique, plentiful, but underrecognized depictions of Northern Norway with those of male painters traditionally celebrated for having shared the region artistically with the rest of the world, despite the fact that these men generally spent much less time exploring a much smaller area of the north compared to Akersloot-Berg (Bell 1997; NNKM 2019). The exhibit broadened to discuss the longstanding, rarely credited role that women have long played assisting male artists in their creative processes, even doing handiwork to bring the male artists' visions to fruition.

19 The NNKM in fact had a harder time finding non-Sámi Northern Norwegian designers for its shop, hosting roughly 70% Sámi and 30% Norwegian designers in 2022. However as Sámi designers from the Norwegian part of Sápmi are also likely Norwegian designers, this wasn't considered to be an "imbalance" of concern (Caufield 2021, 65).

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# 7

# IMAGINING THE "OTHERWISES" OF INDIGENOUS SÁMI ART

## (De)coloniality in Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ and "The Sámi Pavilion"

*Katrine Rugeldal*

*In 2017, a long-overdue materialization of the world's first Sámi art museum took place as* Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ *("Sámi art museum" in Northern Sámi language) was established in Romsa/Tromsø in Sápmi. The museum was to provide the Sámi Art Collection – today consisting of approximately 1,600 works of art, most of which were usually stored in magazines in Kárášjohka/Karasjok – a space of its own to be displayed publicly. "After almost 40 years of activism, acquisition, negotiation, lobbyism, and stubbornness, the world of art enters a new era. A big day for Sápmi. A big day for Norway. A big day for the world" (Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ 2017). These were the words conveyed on the newly emerged museum's website. However, appearing as some kind of glitch, this seemingly new museum for Sámi art came to be only a temporary reality. In small writing on the same website, it was disclosed that the museum was in fact a museum performance, a fictional and potential Sámi dáiddamusea, and the result of a collaboration between the Sámi museum organization RiddoDuottarMuseat (RDM)[1] and the Norwegian state-driven Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum (NNKM, Northern Norwegian Art Museum) in Romsa, initiated by their respective museum directors, Anne May Olli and Jérémie McGowan. After only two months the Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ disappeared once again through the re-emergence of the NNKM, leaving Sápmi, Norway, and the world with a still-existing void.*

*In their own statements, Olli and McGowan have discussed and characterized the project in various ways, for instance as a "museum performance," an "anti-museum," a "designed fiction," and a "decolonial project." According to McGowan and Olli, the project was designed to meet the needs of the said institutions (McGowan 2018; McGowan and Olli 2022). In the case of the RDM, it was the need to "create new momentum, and inject positive energy*

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*and renewed political thrust into a situation that had somewhat dead-ended in negativity after years of false starts, empty promises, and conflicting interests," referring to the more than 40 years' long history of failed attempts to establish a Sámi art museum in Kárášjohka. In the case of the NNKM, it was the need to "fundamentally change the outlook and makeup of Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum, especially its underrepresentation and misrepresentation of Sámi art and culture – and thereby ask searching questions of Norwegian and Nordic art history and its institutions more broadly" (McGowan and Olli 2022, 59–60). While resources – or rather, political will – remained absent, leaving a permanent Sámi art museum unrealized (Rugeldal 2021), the purpose of the Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] project was to bring visibility to this double-sided absence, and the fact that there was (and still is, in 2023) no Sámi dáiddamusea. It presented a world (re-)imagined, a potential and latent reality in which a Sámi art museum existed – even if just temporarily – and sparked discussions about what a future Sámi art museum could be.*

*Five years later, in May 2022, another historic event for Sámi art took place as a group of Sámi artists were presented in a national pavilion at the Biennale Arte in Venice, an art fair often described as one of the world's most famous and prestigious cultural happenings. Historically, the Biennale has been composed around national pavilions, separate buildings wherein a chosen number of nation-states have, since 1895, displayed their own art and later, from 1980, architecture, as commissioned by the participating nations' governmental bodies.[2] Since its inauguration in 1962, the Nordic Pavilion has operated as a collaborative project between Finland, Norway, and Sweden, ultimately serving to display a "Nordic unity" of politics, arts, design, and architecture (Lending and Langdalen 2020, 48). With the exception of the period between 2017 and 2021, the primary responsibility for the Nordic Pavilion has rotated between each of the three nations. In 2022 it was Norway's turn to host the Nordic Pavilion, under the leadership of the Office of Contemporary Art Norway (OCA)[3] and with the help of its co-commissioners Moderna Museet in Stockholm and the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma/The Finnish National Gallery in Helsinki. However, instead of following the established nation-state imaginary, OCA chose to present the pavilion as "The Sámi Pavilion," wherein the works of the three Indigenous Sámi artists – Máret Ánne Sara, Anders Sunna, and Pauliina Feodoroff – were exhibited under the co-curatorship of OCA director Katya García-Antón and two Sámi curators, Liisa-Rávná Finbog and Beaska Niilas. Together, the artists would represent Sápmi, the land of the Indigenous Sámi people.*

*By replacing the Nordic Pavilion with the so-called "Sámi Pavilion," the project appeared to rupture and challenge the Biennale's established order and its organization around the structure of nation-states. Or, as described by the* New York Times*, it replaced the Nordic presence with a "different notion of nation" (Abend 2022). "The Sámi Pavilion" was subsequently*

*described by OCA as both an "Indigenization" and "transformation" of the Nordic Pavilion, as well as an act of defiance that celebrated "the art and sovereignty of the Indigenous Sámi people," allegedly representing "a pivotal moment in OCA's eight-year journey to advocate for institutional decolonization" (OCA n.d.). However, just like the Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] project, this speculative and performative institution for Sámi art was also only temporary, and on 27 November 2022, in line with the nature of the Biennale, "The Sámi Pavilion" was dismantled.*

The Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] project took place in 2017 on Sámi territory in the institutional setting of a regional art museum for the northern part of Norway. "The Sámi Pavilion" emerged in Italy five years later, in 2022, far from the periphery of Sápmi, framed by an international yet somewhat pompous Biennale culture and its national pavilions. In other words, the institutional and geopolitical contexts of the two projects are distinctly different. Yet despite their differences, they also bear many similarities. To start with, both projects exclusively promoted and made space for Sámi art, or *dáidda,* and *duodji*[4] – albeit for a limited period of time – while also highlighting the need for permanent, robust, self-governed Sámi art institutions. Both Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] and "The Sámi Pavilion" did so through the use and appropriation of already-established imperial/colonial institutions, concurrently presenting potential roads towards a future where Sámi art and institutions are indeed alive and established. Furthermore, both projects were the results of collaboration between Sámi and non-Sámi actors and institutions, each bringing with them their own aspirations, desires, and understandings of the intended goals and outcomes. Even if these may at times have been discrepant, both Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] and "The Sámi Pavilion" are part of a growing body of contemporary curatorial and artistic practices taking place within the broader framework of decolonization, that is, the calls and efforts to decolonize colonial institutions of knowledge such as museums and art institutions (Allain Bonilla 2016; Coombes and Phillips 2020; Harlin and Pieski 2020; Lonetree 2012; Mignolo 2011c; Mignolo and Vásquez 2013; Nylander 2022).

The purpose of this chapter is to examine Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] and "The Sámi Pavilion" as material and onto-epistemological struggles towards imagining the "otherwises" of modernity/coloniality through the lens of decolonial theory and its associated concept of decoloniality. Following Walter Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh (2018, 17), decoloniality is here understood as "a form of struggle and survival, an epistemic and existence-based response and practice – most especially by colonized and racialized subjects – *against* the colonial matrix of power in all of its dimensions, and *for* the possibilities of an otherwise." In short, the colonial matrix of power is composed of the constellation of modernity/coloniality, two entities that, according to Mignolo (2011b), are inherently constitutive of each other, meaning

that coloniality is not only the very logic underlying the formation of Western civilisation, but also the darker and often hidden side of modernity. Decoloniality, then, is the search for alternatives to or something other than "just" modernity and the colonial logics and structures of knowledge and being that it produces. Following this, the present study does not aim to constitute these projects as "decolonizing" necessarily, that is, it was not assumed from the outset that they actually did decolonize the spaces they operated within. Instead, it is concerned with the way in which the two projects, through the concept of decoloniality, allow us to better understand how the complex and dynamic entanglements and structures of modernity/coloniality work, and, in turn, how decoloniality "undoes, disobeys, and delinks from this matrix; constructing paths and praxis toward an otherwise of thinking, sensing, believing, doing, and living" (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 4).

To a large extent, this chapter leans on decolonial thinking that has developed in Latin America and the United States by scholars such as Aníbal Quijano, Arturo Escobar, Mignolo, and Walsh, which has been referred to as "the modernity/coloniality research program" (Escobar 2007), and builds on border thinking, striving towards the possibility of "worlds and knowledges otherwise" (179). Looking through and beyond the totalizing claims and epistemic violence of modernity/coloniality, this chapter looks to relationality and the ways in which different local histories and materialized expressions of decoloniality can reveal the tensions and the pluriversal frameworks that guide the two projects, aiming to draw attention not only to the contemporaneity of Nordic and European coloniality but also to the potentialities and obstacles of trying to challenge its underpinnings both within and through Western art institutions.

To explore these issues, this chapter is framed by three main questions. In what way do Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] and "The Sámi Pavilion" perform spaces for Sámi art? How do they rupture the institutional frameworks they arose within? And, what new challenges and questions arise within these complex, frictional, "otherwise" spaces? To address these questions, this study is informed by qualitative research methods inspired by multi-sited ethnography (cf.,Falzon 2009; Marcus 1995; Tsing 2005) and consists of both fieldwork and analysis of textual and visual materials.[5]

## Sámi Dáiddamusea[x]: Performing a Potential Sámi Art Museum

On 15 February 2017, those living in Romsa woke up to news of a new museum in town. Looking at what had since 2002 been known as the NNKM, they would now see that the museum had given way to something else, as the original logo had changed into a yellow "×," the original sign replaced by letters spelling out "Sámi Dáiddamusea[x]." This was, in fact, no longer the NNKM, but rather a new and long-absent museum dedicated to Indigenous Sámi art.

Until that very moment, no Sámi art museum had existed; the NNKM, on the other hand, had existed as a museum since 1988, initiated by The North Norwegian Art Council, the University of Tromsø, Riksgalleriet, and The National Gallery in Oslo. In 2002, the NNKM had moved into new facilities, a neo-baroque-style building from 1916, built initially to be the post office and later serving as a police station with detention cells. In a public square across the road, visitors are greeted by a statue of Roald Amundsen, erected in 1937 as homage to his celebrated exploration and conquest of the polar regions and whose expeditions are considered paramount to Norway's nation-building. Together, the museum building and its immediate surroundings promote specific images of the Arctic, of the northern part of Norway, and of national pride, an imaginary that in many ways has been reproduced through the museological practices of the NNKM itself, and wherein Sámi art has not played a significant role.

To this day, the objective of NNKM has been to "create interest in, increase awareness and knowledge about fine arts and crafts in the northern Norwegian region" (NNKM n.d., author's translation). Whereas its realization and continuous practices can be seen as part of regional and district politics, words like "Sápmi," "Sámi," "dáidda," and "duodji" are left out of the museum's statutes, despite, as Charis Gullickson (2023, 14), art historian and NNKM curator has pointed out, "the art museum's location, presence, and geographical mandate in Sápmi." In fact, according to the voter registry of the Sámediggi (Sámi Parliament in Norway), Romsa has the largest population of Sámi inhabitants.[6] However, both during and after its realization the NNKM has faced criticism for its lack of representation of Sámi artists (Gustavsen 1988, 28, quoted in Gullickson 2023). Even though Sámi art became increasingly visible within the museum during each subsequent decade, both in exhibitions and new acquisitions, the continuous oversight implied by the (lack of) references in the museum's statutes, as Gullickson also notes, reflect "a suspicion that [Sámi] art was absent in Sápmi/Northern Norway" (2023, 14; see also Caufield 2021, 25–31). The overall criticisms have led Gullickson to suggest an experience of the NNKM as a "settler museum" (e.g., Phillips 2011, 24–26), a museum "that operates within the logic and system of settler colonialism, and can be understood as an institution promoting colonial narratives that position the settler state as universal and benevolent in the interest of Indigenous people" (Gullickson 2023, 15; see also McGowan and Olli 2022, 62–64).

One thing that the Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] project did was to drastically challenge and expose this monocultural and exclusively Northern Norwegian narrative and reality of the NNKM. It did so through a double-sided, performative move, forcing the NNKM to momentarily disappear and, through this act, make room for an art collection which has had nowhere as big a role in the presenting of Norway as a nation, nor of its northern regions, despite the fact that both the NNKM and the Sámi Art Collection are located within Sápmi.

In contrast to the NNKM, the Sámi Art Collection which was now occupying its former facilities (and thus forming the Sámi art museum's premiering exhibition) were comprised of works of art that had been collected since 1979 with a vision of forming a future Sámi art museum (Snarby 2010, 55).[7] However, due to a complex political landscape and a variety of reasons, including internal and external disagreements, a lack of communication and dialogue between involved parties, as well as a lack of political will, and financial means (Rugeldal 2021), instead of having a space of its own where the Sámi Art Collection can be permanently displayed to the public, the collection has lived most of its life archived in the basement of the Sámi cultural historical museum in Kárášjohka, Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat (SVD, the Sámi Museum), or in an old military building a few kilometres away from the museum. When on display, artworks have been shown either in smaller exhibitions at SVD or, for those artworks which can go on tour, travelling far and wide, nationally and internationally, for temporary exhibitions. In 2017, Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ turned this ignorant reality upside down, and entering the former NNKM one was instead met with the impression that the Sámi Art Collection had finally gotten a space of its own, a parallel or imaginative reality where a many-decades-long struggle to establish a more suitable and sovereign space for the unique collection was finally realized. At least, so it might have appeared.


**FIGURE 7.1** Images of the Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ which existed in Romsa from 15 February to 16 April 2017. Left: Entrance to the Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ. Top right: Installation view of *There Is No*, with *Skáhppu čoarvegeasastusain* (1988) by Per Andersen in the foreground. Bottom right: Entrance to the *There Is No* exhibition, *Ánna Márjaá, maid donoainnát?/Anne Marja, What do you see?* (1994) by Lena Stenberg in the background.

*Source:* Photos by Marius Fiskum/Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum.

The brand-new museum for Sámi art was first announced the very morning it appeared, with a press release from an autonomous email address (post@sdmx.no), together with an independent website and a Facebook page.[8] Trying to reach the NNKM's website, one would be re-directed to the Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ webpage, which continues to exist today (although parallel to that of the NNKM), still communicating as though the Sámi art museum is or was a reality.

Through what was presented as the "premiering" exhibition of Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ, titled *There Is No,* works from over 60 Sámi *dáiddárat* and *duojárat* (makers of dáidda and duodji) from all across Sápmi, in addition to one Greenlandic artist, were displayed.[9] The exhibition presented four themes: "Duodji and Dáidda," "Portrait and Identity," "Sámi Artist Group (Máze Group)," and "Iver Jåks." On an overall level, the exhibition sought, both through representation and its conceptual framework, to engage in the ongoing debate of what Sámi art is or could be, and thus tapped into the discussion of the dichotomy between dáidda and duodji (Rugeldal 2020, 40–45).[10] On one of the walls inside the exhibition, one could read:

> There is no set of rules for Sami art.
> There is no fixed definition of Sami art.
> There is no limitation on Sami artists.
> There is no.
>
> (Wall text as written from *There Is No* 2017)

By displaying many and various forms of dáidda and duodji from different times and places, and by using and displaying several mediums, concepts, and materials side by side, *There Is No* sought to rupture the more traditional categorizations and display methods that can be tied to generalized perceptions that have been imposed by the dominant society through defining and categorizing Sámi art and Indigenous art in general, as well as duodji, as merely historical and ethnographic artefacts (Magga 2021, 93; Rugeldal 2020, 40). As pointed out by Maja Dunfjeld (2022 [2006], 165), both dáidda and duodji have not been presented as equal to, nor completely accepted by, traditional Western or national art history. This seemed to be one of the motivations of the exhibition, seeking to rupture the narrative by allegedly striving to "strategically resist, extend and challenge established ways of thinking mainstream art history" (wall text from *There Is No* 2017).

To strengthen the impression of the Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ project being a new museum with its own collection, and *not only* a new exhibition, several interventions were made within the museum space. For instance, the exhibition included only one artwork assigned to the NNKM, which in turn was presented as a deposit for the exhibition. Elsewhere, the labels and inventory

numbers showed that the remaining dáidda and duodji belonged to the Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ, that is, that they belonged to The Sámi Art Collection, relabelled as "SDMX."

As with any other museum, Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ had appointed its own museum director, Sámi installation and performance artist Marita Isobel Solberg, who gave the opening speech at the museum on the day of its inauguration. In this way, Solberg seemed to be replacing the director of the NNKM as the public face of the new museum, an act which could be seen as a symbolic statement of the importance of Sámi actors holding central positions such as this within Sámi institutions. In this specific case, it also reinforced the impression of Sámi ownership of Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ, of its collection, and of the exhibition. The importance of Sámi involvement was further reflected in the project's collaborations and dialogue with, among others, the Sámediggi, Sámi artists and artist associations, Sámi institutions, and Sámi media.

On 16 April 2017, two months after the Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ appeared on the NNKM's premises, it disappeared, leaving Romsa, Sápmi, Norway, and the world with a void, performing yet another subversive strategy by creating a sense of loss among its audience (Rugeldal 2020, 59). The Sámi Art Collection was once again without a permanent space for display, and the NNKM was (almost) back to its old self.[11] For instance, in its aftermath the use of Sámi language was permanently implemented in the NNKM's communication with the public. Moreover, despite disappearing as a physical site, Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ continued to live through new potentialities, continually being brought up in public discussions and documents as an important event both in terms of the practices of the NNKM, but also as a part of the discussions of the establishment of a Sámi art museum in Kárášjohka. In 2020, it also took the form as a potential Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ 2.0, a suggestion for filling the now-empty premises of the National Gallery in Oslo (McGowan and Olli 2020). Despite these movements, and although the issue of establishing a Sámi art museum has been referenced vaguely in political documents such as the white paper on museums (Kulturdepartementet 2021) as well as another feasibility study currently underway, for now, there is still no Sámi art museum.

## "The Sámi Pavilion": Confronting the Nation-State Imaginary Through Political Aesthetics

One week into the fifth anniversary of the opening of Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ, on 21 April 2022, Sámi art once again came to occupy an arena from which it has historically been excluded as the Nordic Pavilion at the Biennale Arte in Venice was temporarily renamed and transformed into "The Sámi Pavilion."

The Nordic Pavilion has been part of the rather obscure geopolitical landscape of the Biennale since 1962, serving as a space that has offered

a "united" representation of the Nordic countries, and the only pavilion at the Biennale planned from the start as a national cooperation (Lending and Langdalen 2020, 38). It was also the first cultural project of the Nordic Council, an official body for formal Nordic interparliamentary cooperation to strengthen the Nordic region during the post-war era, incorporated in 1952 by Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Iceland, and later joined by Finland.[12] During the length of the Biennale's existence, despite the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, and Finland being located on the territory of the Indigenous Sámi peoples as a result of a history that could be described as settler colonial (Junka-Aikio 2022; Kuokkanen 2020a, 2020b; Lahti 2021; Lien 2020; Össbo 2022), Sámi artists have never been represented as a sovereign nation within the pavilion.[13]

Compared to many of the Nordic Pavilion's neighbouring pavilions within the Giardini,[14] many of whom represent well-known imperial powers such as Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, China, Spain, and Denmark, the role of the Nordic countries in the discourse of colonization has historically been strongly underestimated. Taking Norway as an example, its proposed innocence could be connected to the fact that it was itself not an independent nation until 1905, and thus can be recognized as a victim rather than an agent of colonialism. However, quite a different story emerges when looking at the country's responses, collaborations, and means in their efforts to gain their independence. Not only was Norway the first to make claims to Greenland under its union with Denmark, but during that union, Denmark–Norway in fact held several colonies in Africa, India, and the Caribbean. Norwegian shipping and entrepreneurship also profited well from its presence in colonial Africa and Oceania in the 19th and 20th centuries (Kjerland and Bertelsen 2014). Furthermore, alongside its neighbouring nations, the "united Nordics" share the history of colonizing the Sámi peoples, stealing, dividing, and appropriating their lands, resources, and cultures between them. It is difficult to date the exact start of these colonial processes, but the histories of drawing borders, missionary work, witchcraft trials, and more which lead up to the official Norwegianization Policy of the Sámi and Kven people carried out by the Norwegian government in the 1700s, and whose repercussions are strongly present to this day, reflect a history that is far from innocent.[15]

On the day of the opening of "The Sámi Pavilion," the Sámi flag hung proudly next to the flags of the Nordic countries, and opening speeches were given by Silje Karine Muotka, president of both the Sámediggi and the Sámi Parliamentary Council, and Queen Sonja of Norway.[16] Sámi presence was without a doubt substantial in the audience, with many representatives present from Sámi art organizations and other Sámi institutions, underlining the historic importance of the day. Having a prominent location within Giardini, "The Sámi Pavilion" was a visible feature of the Biennale.

The usual signs and symbols that would mark the building as being the pavilion of "Finlandia, Norwegia, Svezia" were (mostly) covered up by birch bark hanging from the ceiling, making the original signs visible only if one were to actively look behind the organic "blockade" (see Figure 7.2).[17] Through the glass walls, or rather, the sliding glass doors, one could catch


**FIGURE 7.2** The birch-based "blockade" set up in front of one of the two entrances to "The Sámi Pavilion" to cover the national names of "Finlandia, Norwegia, Svezia."

*Source:* Photos by Irene Snarby.

sight of the works of art awaiting inside, all of which were centred around the three remaining plane trees, a well-known characteristic of the Nordic Pavilion.

Trees were also at the centre of Pauliina Feodoroff's film installation, a critique of the industrial forestry happening within Sámi territory which sought to put into pictures and words the Sámi people's attempts to heal and repair the damages inflicted upon their lands and waters. This was also the theme of her collective performance titled *Matriarchy* (2022), composed of three acts (*First Contact*, *Auction*, and *Matriarchy*), which was performed several times throughout the exhibition period. During the performance, the audience was led through various spaces and choreographies symbolizing and highlighting various layers of coloniality and, perhaps most importantly, healing and renewal. In the third and final act, the performance culminated in *luohti* (yoik) and dance. Moving several in the audience into tears, the piece ended with Sámi artist Outi Pieski placing a *ládjogahpir* (Sámi women's hat) on the head of one of the performers, a young woman who also happened to be Pieski's daughter (see Figure 7.3). On OCA's website, Feodoroff describes the performance as a process of rematriation[18] or an effort "to return to a world of kinship between people, land, water, spirits, and other-than human beings" (OCA n.d.).[19] The effort was further substantiated by the artists writing on the glass walls: "DON'T BUY OUR LAND, BUY OUR ART INSTEAD."

**FIGURE 7.3** Scenes from "The Sámi Pavilion" at the 59th Venice Biennale Arte in 2022. Left: Installation view of *Illegal Spirits of Sápmi* by Anders Sunna. Middle: Outi Pieski and Biret Haarla Pieski in a performance of *Matriarchy* by Pauliina Feodoroff. Right: Installation view of *Duššan-Ahttanuššan* by Máret Ánne Sara.

*Source:* Photos by Hilde Sørstrøm (left), Chen Chun-Lun/OCA (middle), and Michael Miller/OCA (right).

The second artist whose work was included in "The Sámi Pavilion," Máret Ánne Sara, is particularly known for her protest artwork *Pile O'Sápmi* (2016–), an installation consisting of 200 reindeer skulls piled outside the Inner Finnmark District Court during her brother's trial against the Norwegian State and its attempt to cull his reindeer herd to the point of him having to abandon his cultural livelihood.[20] In "The Sámi Pavilion," the reindeer as well as their connection to humans and Indigenous worldviews were once again strongly represented through three artwork installations. In *Gutted – Gávogálši* (2022), the audience was presented with dried reindeer guts hung by their own sinews, while another sculpture, *Ale suova sielu sáiget/Don't let your soul be torn* (2022), a giant rotating baby mobile, displayed three dried-up carcasses of reindeer calves "leaping" in different directions, hidden within a spiral of hanging branches, *gámasuoidni* (sedge grass), and cotton grass. Lastly, two additional installation sculptures made from reindeer sinew hung from the ceiling, each imbued with a liquid to give off a distinct scent, titled *Du-ššan-Ahttanuššan* (2022).[21] Again, the gut (feeling) was thematized, but this time in a more indirect way. One of the installations gave off a difficult to describe but foul smell which, according to Sara (2020), represented the scent of anxiety and despair experienced by humans and reindeer when encountering the State and its colonizing practices: "a metaphor for the unseen and how it can affect you."[22] The other had more of a sweet scent, meant to represent peace and contentment – the hope needed to resist the colonizers in order to generate new futures (OCA n.d.).[23]

Encounters with the State was overbearing and perhaps even more explicit in its visual expression in the work of the third Sámi artist, Anders Sunna. His work, titled *Illegal Spirits of Sápmi* (2022), consisted of a large-scale installation of six paintings in mixed media – painting and photography, as well as archive documents – and was made in collaboration with his family. Five of the paintings depicted 50 years of his family's struggle to defend their reindeer-herding livelihood from the Swedish State, each painting representing one decade. In the collage and nightmare-like pieces, viewers could spot police cars, figures in uniforms and suits, some faceless and others grinning, burning and x'ed out *lávvus* (Sámi tents), skeleton-like and bloody reindeer, reindeer whose bodies held what might be pictures of Sunna's family, and a courtroom. Or, *the* courtroom from 1971 in which, according to Sunna, the Swedish State made its first step in the persecution of his family by taking away their "nourishment and culture …[so that the] Sámi would become slaved and Swedes lords over the Sámi" (quoted in García-Antón and Brissach 2022, 49). The installation was intended to be a Sámi counternarrative of history and of colonial Sweden. In addition to the grim and disturbing imagery were coded symbols drawing on the Sámi spiritual world (OCA n.d.)[24] such as the depiction of a Sámi *goavddis*, a sacred drum, which has also been persecuted by the State and church alike. Wooden shelves framed the paintings, displaying folders of thousands of legal documents related to the Sunna

family's struggle against the Swedish government, further adding to the story of colonial injustice, and which the audience was invited to browse. On the left side of the floor laid the burnt remains of a sixth painting in which a figure in a *gákti*[25] could be seen, burnt from the neck up.

"The Sámi Pavilion" and the common ground of the three artists were said to revolve around the three key elements of "trans-generational relations, holistic Sámi epistemology, and Sámi spiritual perspectives" (García-Antón 2022, 63). The stories presented in the exhibition were thus meant to tell stories of struggle and renewal from three different points of view. This perspective and presentation of "The Sámi Pavilion" was further reflected and explored in the publication *Čatnosat. The Sámi Pavilion, Indigenous Art, Knowledge and Sovereignty* (Finbog et al. 2022) through writings on the artists' works and dwellings on Indigenous and Western concepts of land, as well as through poems and stories interlinking Sámi spiritual, political, and philosophical perspectives. Working towards the exhibition period, each of the artists had also worked together with and been guided by a Sámi elder, following the Sámi custom of learning from elders in their communities.[26] During the Biennale, other events by additional artists, scholars, cultural workers, and many others took place both on- and off-site through an extended programme featuring performances, concerts, talks, and panel discussions with participants from all over the world.

In November 2022, the Biennale and "The Sámi Pavilion" came to an end. One can only speculate as to what the future might hold for Sápmi in Venice and whether this was an alteration that will lead the Nordic Pavilion representing Sápmi every fourth iteration – which would imply a sustained acknowledgement of the sovereignty of Sápmi. As yet, there has been no such insinuation by OCA nor any of the other commissioners. That said, the future of the Nordic Pavilion does not lie solely in the hands of its commissioners. Perhaps it lies more in the hands of the Italian government and what they recognize as fitting into their constructed representation of the world, that is, one built on the physical borders and sovereignty of nation-states.[27] It is not inconceivable, however, that "The Sámi Pavilion" and the general increased recognition and popularity of Sámi and other Indigenous artists could be considered as contributing aspects to Sámi architecture being the focal point of the Nordic Pavilion in 2023 for the 18th Architectural edition of the Biennale as Sámi artist and architect Joar Nango, alongside a team of collaborators, transformed the pavilion into the Sámi Architecture Library, *Girjegumpi*. [28]

## Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ and "The Sámi Pavilion" as Spaces of Modernity/(De)Coloniality

There is no doubt that both Sámi Dáiddamuseaˣ and "The Sámi Pavilion" arose within spaces whose legacies are deeply entrenched in the history of modern coloniality. As Liisa-Rávná Finbog (2022), one of the Sámi curators

of "The Sámi Pavilion," stated during one of the collateral events, the Biennale was "perhaps the most colonial space I have ever been unfortunate enough to be placed in." Rightly so, the structure of the Biennale, and especially the national pavilions, have been widely criticized and challenged for carrying forward ideas grounded in the "inequalities of the colonialist world order" (Madra 2006; Staal 2014) and for being "propelled by a 'colonial logic [that simply] underwrites the expansion of the art world's traditional borders, as if the art world itself were gleefully following globalization's imperial mandate'" (Lee 2003 cited in Lauzon 2017, 140). Art museums, being part of this same kind of "world order," are no exception with their long and convoluted history of collecting, representing, *mis*representing, and constructing images of various cultures that are "other" than that of the dominant society (Barringer and Flynn 1998; Bennett 1988; Coombes 1988; Karp and Lavine 1991). In other words, the institutional frameworks that comprised Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] and "The Sámi Pavilion" are both expressions and tools of the modern/colonial power, as houses of exclusion and marginalization that hold immense epistemic and aesthetic power and still play active roles in the "colonization of knowledges and of beings" (Mignolo 2011c, 71). Having said that, each of these performances or "stagings" of spaces of and for Sámi art demonstrate that these institutional frameworks can also be made to function otherwise.

### *Appropriating the Master's Tools*

The question of whether the "master's tools" can be used to overcome the mastery itself (i.e., dominant society, its institutions, and its systemic forms of power and domination) in the service of decolonization has long been debated. In 1979, Audre Lorde declared that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change" (Lorde 1984, 112). By this, she was suggesting that any such tool will be so implicated in what it seeks to dismantle, and that its use will only reproduce the same conditions of domination, albeit perhaps under a new guise. In other words, resistance and liberation, or the transformation of say "the canon" or its institutions must come from elsewhere, from somewhere "outside," using tools that are other.

Taking a slightly different stance on the problem of using the master's tools, others have suggested that there are those who have used or appropriated those tools for purposes other than the colonial, thus talking about the importance of transcending, re-constructing, or building houses of their own, rather than dismantling or taking down The Big House (e.g., Gordon and Gordon 2006, ix; Simpson 2011, 32). Without directly engaging with Lorde, the decolonial thinker Rolando Vázquez Melken has implied that the

instrumentality and structure of institutions such as museums and events such as the Biennale, which indeed can be conceptualized as "the master's tools" and even "the master's house," can be repurposed or transformed. Highlighting the importance of the work of the curator, the machine can be turned into a tool in itself, Melken suggests: "Instead of being overdetermined by the enframing of the museum and its history, its political and financial orientations, its epistemic enclosure, they can use that structure as an instrument to make it speak otherwise" (quoted in Wevers 2019, 9). In the context of Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] and "The Sámi Pavilion," this argument could also be expanded to include not only the work of the artists but also that of others involved in the projects, such as activists, Sámi Elders, curators, and other cultural workers, both Sámi and non-Sámi.

For decades, Indigenous Peoples have sought to appropriate and make use of museum institutions to advance their own interests, identities, and efforts at rewriting history in the context of their struggle for Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty. Central to this has been the effort to establish museums of their own, to enable Indigenous communities to preserve their own cultural heritage but to also be able to present it to an audience both within and outside their communities on their own terms (Aikio 2021, 111–112; Lonetree 2012; Simpson 1996). In Sápmi, this has for instance led to the formation of several Sámi cultural-historical centres and museums, the first being the Sámi museum in Anár/Inari which opened to the public in 1963, followed by SVD in 1972 in Kárášjohka, Saemien Sijte in 1979 in Snåasen/Snåsa, and Ájjte museum in 1989 in Jåhkåmåhkke/Jokkmokk.[29]

Another side of this institutionalization is found in the criticisms laid out by scholars who have accused Indigenous and Sámi museums of being blueprints of Western museums by reproducing Western ideas and practices, and thus indeed being "enframed" by their dominant structures (Aikio 2021; Olsen 2000).[30] Sámi Dáiddamusea[x], or rather, its exhibition *There Is No*, has been subject to similar criticism, accused of not applying a "Sámi way" of exhibiting and instead carrying on "the traditions from Western art history and museum practice" (Hansen 2020, 237; Spein 2018). The critiques make valid points in their scepticism towards a "Sámi art museum" (although fictional) taking place inside and made possible through the initiative of a non-Sámi institution. Meanwhile, the critique problematizes the very idea of establishing a Sámi art museum in the sense of a Western understanding of what an art museum is or should be, and the form it might take in the future. Consequently, both these issues actualize the very paradox within the debate of the (im)possibilities of decolonizing museums, because they are inherently colonial (e.g., Kassim 2017; Mignolo 2011c).

As previous research has shown, however, there is a danger that widely used or popularized concepts such as decolonization become metaphors or expressions of a settler move towards innocence (Tuck and Yang 2012).

Stories presented as celebratory of Indigenous cultures and creative practices may as well be hidden expressions of feel-good politics and commodification, serving as "spice" for the "white (cube)" mainstream culture and ultimately serving the monocultural narrative of the nation-state rather than its Indigenous population and their interests (Rugeldal 2020, 106–108; see also Ahmed 2012; hooks 1992). In other words, paying attention to critical issues is important, insofar as entangled asymmetries of power will always be persistent in institutions or systems intrinsic to the colonial matrix of power. One statement, acknowledgement, or action that seems appreciative and inherently "good" or "honest" does not mean that it is only that, or that appropriation within or outside these statements, acknowledgements, or actions are excluded. Meanwhile, there is the need to recognize that, say, actions or sites such as Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] and "The Sámi Pavilion" are complex and pluriversal. In fact, any one-sided criticism would potentially fail to recognize the multi-faceted and possibly subversive aspect of projects or sites where there could be even the slightest possibility of a power hierarchy. Subsequently, within such criticism, the agency of the minority or the colonized often seems to be subjugated to that of the majority or colonizers.

### *Performing In/As (De)Colonial Cracks and Options – Rupturing Coloniality From Within*

The concept of decoloniality, as developed by Mignolo and others, can help one to move beyond binary interpretations which assume that something is either/or (colonial or decolonial), instead of being both-and. Here, the purpose of the concept and theory of decoloniality is to open up and reveal the two projects as being something more than only of and for the majority/state/colonizers. It acknowledges the multiple agencies, knowledges, and worlds that emerge in the cracks of coloniality. In other words, decoloniality is about broadening rather than constricting possibilities, allowing us to recognize the multiple movements, cultural forms, and agencies within sites that are shaped by pluriversal encounters and co-existence. Decoloniality opens the possibility to read Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] and "The Sámi Pavilion" as spaces "otherwise" and, at the same time, acknowledge that Sámi art and actors within these projects are not just victims of a colonial framework.

Returning to the concept of instrumentality, of turning the machinery into a tool, both Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] and "The Sámi Pavilion" can be read as forms of strategic opportunism realized through strategic and activist approaches that build on a locally situated and vernacular architecture, or what Nango connects to Sámi and Indigenous design and architecture: improvisation and adaption, creating something when it is needed using the material or resources available in the area (Nango 2020).[31] In the specific examples discussed in this chapter, the material and resources available to the NNKM and

the Nordic Pavilion were their money, walls, influence, competence, placement, and history – in other words, their structures, systems, and power. As Olli emphasized, one of the main takeaways of the Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] project was the way in which the two institutions and their different backgrounds and knowledges were used in a constructive way to complement each other, each bringing something to the table. While McGowan brought his designer education, Olli brought her unique competence on the Sámi: "It was in a way that we made each other strong" (quoted in Rugeldal 2020, 46).

At the launch of "The Sámi Pavilion" in March 2022, Sara talked about her conflicted thoughts on participating in the Biennale:

> (…) it is a very deep-felt discussion that I had with myself and a round of thoughts for why I said yes. But also, another thing is that I feel there is a great need around the globe because I get so many questions from museums that are quite desperate, it seems – sincerely desperate – because the world is in a very difficult place, and somehow they navigate towards alternatives because it is failing. The strategies so far for the human race and the protection of the globe are failing, and they are asking us, "What is your secret, can you help us, can you share?"
>
> *(Máret Ánne Sara, statement at "The Sámi Pavilion" opening, 21 April 2022)*[32]

Feodoroff highlighted similar conflicting thoughts, but in her case, she eventually came to realize this was an opportunity to advocate her cause, emphasizing that "there was 'money that's just hanging around' and a cultural zeitgeist she could leverage" (Rubin 2022). However tough and exhausting, both artists seemed to recognize the opportunity to make a difference by using or appropriating the tools already there, just like Olli and her institutions needed to create new momentum in the attempt to establish a Sámi art museum. In other words, one's participation in the art world or in art festivals such as biennales does not mean that one "surrenders to the 'world of art,'" as Mignolo argues. "Rather [one] is *using* the 'world of art' to make a decolonial statement" (Mignolo, quoted in Gaztambide-Fernández 2014, 206).

Paying attention to parallel histories or coexisting worlds or realities is something that Mignolo and Walsh hold as a crucial aspect of decolonial thinking. To them, the decolonial is not a draft for a new totalizing universal model and new acclaimed "truths" (such as those imposed by modernity, religion, or any kind of ideology), but rather an orientation that acknowledges multiple ways of relating and knowing that moves beyond a homogenizing modern/colonial framework. Holding that decoloniality is constitutive of modernity and coloniality, this means that it becomes a "struggle from and within modernity/coloniality's borders and cracks," aiming "to build a radically distinct world" (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 5). In contrast to the postcolonial, with its

"post" prefix suggesting a state or condition, decoloniality, with a prefix of "de," implies action. As such, decoloniality can be understood as a collection of performative acts attempting to undo or reverse the deed of coloniality, presenting options or openings to modernity and coloniality that strive to overcome or delink from their "completeness" (Mignolo and Vázquez 2013). In the context of museums, this could mean striving to resist old taxonomies and monocultural master narratives of, say, the nation, finding ways to re-exist, not just in the sense of resistance but also, as suggested by Mignolo (2018), through a more "fundamental re-existence, for which there is no blueprint" which at the same time reveals "the darker side of modernity" (Mignolo 2011b), what has concurrently been invisible, absent, or non-existing.

By operating simultaneously within and against the institutional framework that enhanced them, Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] and "The Sámi Pavilion" quite effectively confronted and visualized that very non-existence. It is through these cracks that they performed or staged a decolonial option, a liveable space-time for Sámi art to reside in. By imagining (and embodying) an otherwise of a reality wherein Sámi art and its institutions historically have had little to no place,[33] Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] and "The Sámi Pavilion" both contributed to bringing consciousness to the colonial wound, and to imagining and producing knowledge about the future, thus shaping new horizons of possibilities for Indigenous Sámi futures (cf. Goodyear-Ka'ōpua and Kuwada 2018, 50). These movements correspond with what Mignolo (2011c) presents as moves towards the decoloniality of being and of knowledge, one that "on the one hand, reveals the underlying assumptions in the institution itself and, on the other hand, uses the institution to reveal what has been hidden in colonial histories" (79). This in turn could be seen as what he proposes as acts of epistemic and aesthetic disobedience, and ultimately, moves that unveil the wounds inflicted by coloniality, meanwhile offering the possibility of healing (Mignolo and Vázquez 2013).

Both Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] and "The Sámi Pavilion" visualized an absence and performed another possible world, one in which sovereign spaces for Sámi art exist, then eventually disappearing once again, leaving an even more visible void – the absence of spaces for Sámi art. This double-sided move attracted attention to and ruptured that absence; by challenging the visible structures, the invisible became visible and, in so doing, these performed realities raise questions as to why this future is not yet realized. Why is there still no Sámi art museum? Or, where is it?[34] Why does Sápmi not have a place within the Nordic imaginary at the Biennale? Why was OCA the lead commissioner of "The Sámi Pavilion" rather than a Sámi-led institution? As noted by Muotka, Sámediggi president, "The Sámi Pavilion" was "a strong signal that it is time for a Sámi art museum, dedicated to making Sámi art available to the Sámi and the general public at large, to be realized" (Muotka cited in Sámediggi 2022, author's translation). These connections were further

strengthened when the worlds of both Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] and "The Sámi Pavilion" were brought together as t-shirts and postcards emerged on the pavilion site on its opening day. One statement made a clear reference to the museum performance of 2017, stating "THERE IS STILL NO SÁMI ART MUSEUM." The other was both questioning and confronting, asking an international and perhaps unaware audience the pressing question, "WHY IS THERE NO INDIGENOUS SÁMI ART MUSEUM?"

Overall, the performative nature of both Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] and "The Sámi Pavilion" can be seen through their strategies of re-naming and self-(re)presentation, both on-site and in extended programming, as well as in associated publications. Nevertheless, the degrees to which they applied such strategies differ. For instance, compared to the press release of Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] which was written *as though* a real Sámi art museum was "finally realized" while erasing or overwriting most traces of the NNKM both online and in real life, "The Sámi Pavilion" was presented in OCA's press release as a *transformation* of the Nordic Pavilion, but also as a project taking place *within* the Nordic Pavilion. Furthermore, the map of the Giardini still referred to the site as the "Nordic Pavilion." This somehow less-of-a-total reworking was further reinforced by the use of quotation marks around "The Sámi Pavilion," implying that it was merely a project or exhibition taking place *within* the Nordic Pavilion, and thus not delinking the pavilion from its original framework in the same way that Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] did.

These differences can be explained by their respective institutional and organizational frameworks – the foundations of each project in terms of finances, resources, time, etc. – but also of each project's conceptual stated intentions. As mentioned earlier, the urgency and activism aspects, its sudden emergence and similar disappearance, and its play with fiction and non-fiction were central to the idea of Sámi Dáiddamusea[x]. In this way, the project can also be read as a part of the growing field of Indigenous futurisms[35] and its focus on speculative world-building. With Sámi Dáiddamusea[x], this was done not so much by focusing on its artistic content which, specifically, would be the *There Is No* exhibition. In a way, the art functioned more as a "prop" that came secondary to the concept itself, which in turn presented itself as a kind of pop-up activism within the museum, highlighting that museums need not be slow-moving, elitist or conservative.[36] Meanwhile, in "The Sámi Pavilion," the emphasis seemed to be on the arts and the artists' – as well as the curators' – Indigenous methodologies in conveying both the artists' personal stories as well as their reflections upon Indigenous sovereignty and the relationship between Sámi land and peoples.

As Mignolo (2011a) describes, the decolonial is not only a change in content – such as the increased visibility and presence of Sámi art in Western institutions – but also a change in the very terms of the conversation: the underlying frameworks, assumptions, and epistemologies that shape how we

engage in conversations, produce knowledge, and understand the world. As such, decoloniality, according to Mignolo (2011b, 217), involves engaging in epistemic disobedience, presenting decolonial options as potential "roads towards the future." Neither Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] nor "The Sámi Pavilion" seemed to be aiming to permanently transform the existing institutions they were displacing into authoritative Sámi institutions. On the contrary, such intentions have been refuted by the initiators of Sámi Dáiddamusea[x], claiming that the project was not trying to be *the* Sámi art museum (McGowan and Olli 2022). Instead, it strove to present "latent potentialities, of alternatives 'already there, waiting to happen'" (71), that is, a "possible Indigenous art museum in Sápmi" (64). Seen from the perspective of decoloniality, both projects arguably performed decolonial options that revealed the imperial and colonial underpinnings of representation, and of artistic, and curatorial standards, not just of the NNKM and the Nordic Pavilion, but also of museums and biennales in general.

## Conclusion

Through their creative and relational takes on established practices within their institutional frameworks, both Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] and "The Sámi Pavilion" generated temporary and speculative spaces for Sámi art. In so doing, they articulated strategic efforts to respond to and delink from the darker sides of modernity and coloniality by imagining "worlds otherwise" (Escobar 2007), worlds that were somehow "never meant to appear" or "meant to be kept outside or below representation" (Nyong'o 2019, 3). From a critical perspective, these two examples could easily be dismissed as projects *for* the hosting colonial institutions – the NNKM and OCA – aiming to renew their reputation and, as yet another act of appropriating and gate-keeping Sámi cultural heritage, leaving both Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] and "The Sámi Pavilion" as potential expressions of "neocolonial collaboration" (Boast 2011). Yet parallel to, or in opposition of, these potential dismissals, this chapter speaks for how the two projects can simultaneously be understood as praxis of decoloniality, performing, and building pathways to potential "otherwises" of Nordic coloniality manifested through the exploitation and appropriation of already-established non-Sámi institutions and the mechanisms of the global art world. By outlining the way in which Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] and "The Sámi Pavilion" both contribute to imagining the otherwises of Indigenous Sámi art, of potential and possible futures built on activism and artistic work by Sámi artists, curators, and cultural workers, as a kind of strategic survivance. As such, they demonstrate that the colonial frameworks of these already-existing institutions – the NNKM, OCA, the Biennale Arte, and the Nordic Pavilion – can indeed be turned into tools which can serve Indigenous aspirations and challenge the colonial imaginary.

## Notes

1 RDM is an umbrella organization of Sámi museums in what was formerly known as Vest-Finnmark, and which has existed since their consolidation in 2006. Today, the consolidated museums include five Sámi museums: Sámiid Vourká-Dávvirat/The Sámi Museum in Karasjok, Sámi Dáiddamagasiidna/The Sámi Art Collection, Jáhkovuona Mearrasámi Musea/Kokelv Sea Sámi Museum, Guovdageainnu gilišillju/Kautokeino Municipal Museum, and Porsáŋggu Musea/Porsanger Museum/Porsangin museumi.

2 Since 1998, the Art and Architecture Biennales have expanded beyond exhibitions organized with the contribution of the national pavilions which today constitute only one of their three pillars; today, both biennales, which occur every other year, also include the International Exhibition by the biennale curator, as well as collateral events.

3 OCA is a non-profit foundation created in 2001 by the Norwegian Ministries of Culture and of Foreign Affairs which has since then been responsible for the Norwegian visual art contribution to the Biennale Arte in Venice.

4 Just like art, dáidda (the Sámi word for art, originally derived from the Finnish word *taide* meaning "art"), is a difficult concept to grasp or define completely. The term emerged in the 1970s and can be seen in relation to the establishment and development of the Sámi Dáidujoavku/Sámi Artist Group and their wish to express a kind of Sámi aesthetics in the field of visual arts (e.g., Grini 2019; Hansen 2010; Snarby 2019). More then than now, dáidda was considered to be a practice that deviated from the practice of duodji (an essential aspect of Sámi cultural heritage and a holistic concept used to describe Sámi handicrafts, the process of making them, and the philosophy and cosmology imbued in them), but still embodying the same Sámi perspectives found in duodji (Finbog 2020a, 30; Guttorm 2009, 12–17). As Sámi cultural historian Sigga-Marja Magga (2021, 93) describes, the tension between the two concepts derives from "a clash between different systems of knowledge and institutional control pertaining to duodji and fine arts" wherein duodji is seen as traditional and authentic Sámi "craft," and dáidda as something modern/Western (Guttorm 2009, 12–17). Some, however, argue that the two concepts cannot be divided, as duodji is "the original word for all creative practices in Sámi" (Guttorm 2001, 42; author's translation; Jåks in Grini 2021, 18; Snarby [2019] 2022).

5 My personal encounters with the two projects differ, which in turn has impacted the way in which they are presented and described in this text. While I was able to be present at the opening of "The Sámi Pavilion," I never saw the Sami Dáiddamusea[x] in its physical form in 2017. Thus, my presentation of this project is based on oral and written materials, some of which can be found in my own previously conducted research (Rugeldal 2020, 2021) as well as elsewhere (e.g., Caufield 2021; Gullickson 2023; Hansen 2020; McGowan 2018; McGowan and Olli 2022; Spein 2018).

6 The Sámediggi reports 1,824 voters located in Romsa in 2021; see Sámediggi. n.d. *Sametingets valgmanntall 1989–2021*. Accessed 7 May 2023. https://sametinget.no/politikk/valg/sametingets-valgmanntall/sametingets-valgmanntall-1989-2021/.

7 The first purchase of art can be traced back to 1972 in the annual reports of the Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat (SVD), but the registration of works of art and systematic purchases did not begin until 1979 (Rugeldal 2021, 16). Today, the Sámi Art Collection includes approximately 1,600 works of dáidda and duodji, most owned by the Sámediggi but also by the Sámi Dáiddačehpiid Searvi/Sámi Artist Union and SVD, which the latter has the main responsibility for managing the collection (Rugeldal, 8).

8 See https://www.sdmx.no and https://www.facebook.com/SamiDaiddamusea.

9 For more about the exhibition and its content see Rugeldal 2020, 37–45.
10 See note 4 for more information.
11 Parts of *There Is No* remained on display for another four months, from 21 April to 27 August 2017, still exhibited as being owned by the Sámi Dáiddamusea[x].
12 Today, the Nordic Council also includes the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland as members. For more on why and how the Nordic Pavilion was established, see Lending and Langdalen (2020).
13 In 2019, Sámi artist Outi Pieski from Ohcejohka/Utsjoki was represented at the Finnish Alvar Aalto Pavilion with her site-specific installation *Ovdavázzi – Forewalkers* (2019) as part of the transdisciplinary and transnational project *A Greater Miracle of Perception*. However, the Finnish Pavilion was representing the nation of Finland, not Sápmi. The Finnish Pavilion was completed in 1956, six years before the Nordic Pavilion was inaugurated. Between 1962 and 2005, the Finnish Pavilion was rented out to other countries. In 2017, Finland resumed using the space for the Finnish national exhibition with the support from the Finnish Ministry of Culture, while obtaining the "Nordic unity collaboration" at the Nordic Pavilion (for more on this see Frame Contemporary Art Finland n.d.).
14 The Giardini is the park area at the eastern edge of Venice, constructed by Napoleon in the 19th century, and today serves as the site of the Biennale's Central Pavilion as well as the permanent national pavilions.
15 See the Norwegian Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2023 report, https://www.stortinget.no/en/In-English/About-the-Storting/News-archive/Front-page-news/2022-2023/the-truth-and-reconciliation-commission/.
16 As an artist and collector herself, Queen Sonja of Norway has long showed interest in the field of Sámi art. In 2017 she was given the Royal Stables by the king to be used as a venue for art and culture, renaming the building The Queen Sonja Art Stable. From February to August 2019 it hosted *Historjját. Golbma buolvva sámi dáiddára/Histories. Three Generations of Sámi Artists*. During her opening speech on 7 February 2022, the day after Sámi National Day and two years after the opening of the Sámi Dáiddamusea[x], the queen stood alongside prominent Sámi artist Synnøve Persen and former Sámediggi president Aili Keskitalo, among others, and stated, "Let us hope that this is a historical day, and that, like you all hope for, that one day it will be possible to get a house of your own for Sámi art" (quoted in Larsen and Smuk 2019; author's translation; Rugeldal 2020, 69–85).
17 This was not the first time this strategy of "relabelling" the Nordic Pavilion has been used, with various intentions. In 2005, 2010, 2013, and 2015 the "name tag" of the pavilion was either changed, rearranged, or added to. In 2005, because of the withdrawal of Finnish artist Laura Horelli, "Finlandia" was removed completely, while in 2015, during the exhibition *Forms of Freedom* which displayed works by Norwegian architects in East Africa, the word "Norwegia" was moved to the top while "Zambia," "Kenya," and "Tanzania" were added as an act of acknowledgement (Doria 2020, 284).
18 In their work to revitalize the ládjogahpir, Eeva-Kristina Nylander (Harlin) and Pieski use the term "rematriation" to describe the return of the ládjogahpir to its original cultural context, the return to "*eanan eannážan*, to our mother earth" (2020, 127), not just in a material sense (repatriation) but also in the sense of "remembering, decolonizing, and healing," bringing them home and back (in)to (female) life. For more on rematriation see Finbog (2020b).
19 https://oca.no/thesamipavilion-pauliinafeodoroff
20 For more on *Pile O'Sápmi* see http://www.pileosapmi.com.
21 In Northern Sámi, "duššat" means to die from unforeseen circumstances, while "ahttanuššat" is used to describe a fragile human or animal rebuilding their health and strength (García-Antón and Brissach 2022, 89).

22 Sara, speaking at 02:53 in *Máret Ánne Sara Representing Sápmi at La Biennale di Venezia 2022*, film by Forest People (2022). 5 min., 4 sec. Published online 28 September 2021. https://vimeo.com/616781663.
23 https://oca.no/se-NO/thesamipavilion-maretannesara.
24 https://oca.no/thesamipavilion-anderssunna.
25 A traditional Sámi costume whose form and praxis reflects both different Sámi languages and geographical regions. It is deeply embedded in Sámi cultural values and meanings.
26 Feodoroff by Sámi educator and professor Asta M. Balto; Sara by reindeer herder and Sámi knowledge bearer Karen E. M. Utsi; and Sunna by Ánde Somby, Sámi professor of law and *juoigi* (practitioner of yoik).
27 For instance, the Sámi flag was only allowed to be raised on the opening day of the pavilion, after which it had to be taken down. While pavilions can choose whether they fly their national flags outside their pavilions or not, it seems like flags which deviate from the set nation state imaginary are prohibited from permanently "marking" the national pavilions at the Biennale.
28 This time the Nordic Pavilion was organized by ArkDes, Sweden's National Centre for Architecture and Design, with the exhibition open to the public from 20 May to 26 November 2023.
29 Sámi art has an important role in most of these cultural-centre institutions, and there are also several examples of Sámi art institutions which have been established that are *not* museums, such as the Sámi Dáiddačehpiid Searvi (1979) and the Sámi Dáiddaguovddáš/Sámi Centre for Contemporary Art (1986). For an overview of Sámi museums see Fadnes and Rugeldal 2022 and Nylander 2022.
30 Others again have challenged such an interpretation, arguing that Indigenous museums have developed their own counter-strategies which tend to be overlooked (e.g., Lien and Nielssen 2016; Clifford 1997).
31 Joar Nango and Ken Are Bongo, directors. 2020. *Post-Capitalist Architecture TV Part 1– On materiality and resource economy*. 34 min., 5 sec. Published online 19 June 2020. https://vimeo.com/430639511.
32 OCA. 2022. *Launch of the 'The Sámi Pavilion' Project at the Nordic Pavilion of Biennale Arte 2022*. 1 hr., 6 min. Streamed live and published online 7 March 2022. https://vimeo.com/468115519.
33 One such example is that, until relatively recently, Sámi art has been largely under-communicated and ignored within Western art institutions such as the Biennale Arte, the NNKM, and OCA, as well as within art history in general (e.g., Danbolt 2018; Grini 2016; Persen 2000; Rugeldal 2020). However, Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] and "The Sámi Pavilion," as well as documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel in 2017, are some examples from 2017 onwards which have contributed to efforts to change these parameters.
34 This is the pressing question asked by the Sámi Dáiddačehpiid Searvi on the website dedicated solely to the issue: https://samidaiddamusea.net/sds-engelsk.
35 Introduced less than two decades ago, the field of Indigenous Futurisms encompasses "Indigenous perspectives on science fiction, speculative storytelling, and world-building through literary, cinematic, and other artistic forms, emphasizing both the colonial role of science and technology and its decolonial uses in affirming Indigenous sovereignty and creativity" (Dillon and Marques 2021). See also De Vivo (Chapter 9) in this book.
36 McGowan and Olli have emphasized on several occasions that the planning of the Sámi Dáiddamusea[x] allegedly took two to three months, demonstrating that action and rapid change can happen swiftly if there is institutional and/or political will (McGowan 2018, 17).

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# 8

# UPON RETURN, A *NewArctic*

## A Collaborative Museum Experiment

*Gro B. Ween*

The Arctic of the explorers has remained central in the foundational narratives of the Scandinavian nations. The decolonization of our museums therefore inextricably involves new collaborative efforts to narrate a more inclusive Arctic. This chapter describes the development of *NewArctic*, a temporary exhibition developed in the years 2015–2016, an experiment made even more poignant by the alignment of several co-existing events. The experimental exhibition project was initiated as part of the Arctic Domestication in the Age of the Anthropocene research project,[1] which sought to explore the generative effects of Western ideas of civilization upon the Arctic. Specifically, the project challenged the idea of a civilization founded upon agrarian practices, control of animals, and, over time, private land ownership. In comparison, an Arctic populated by nomadic peoples sharing the land, moving with the seasons, and living with herds, became a remote wilderness, a place open for appropriation.

One significant backstory that shaped *NewArctic* was the Norwegian Sámi repatriation project Bååstede[2] which, between 2013 and 2019, negotiated the return of numerous pieces from the Sámi collections held in two capitol museums to six regional Sámi museums.[3] The Kulturhistorisk museum (Museum of Cultural History), which hosted *NewArctic*, was one of the two repatriating parties involved in Bååstede. At the time, new Sámi voices reminded the capitol museums that if the purpose of repatriation was reconciliation, the return of the artefacts could not be considered to be the end of the process. New collaborative efforts should follow, with each museum taking its position as a memory institution seriously, and recognizing that this was an opportunity to become "an excellent space to discuss how the West has

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excluded Indigenous epistemologies" and to remember "what…[our] institution could and should be" (Finbog 2022, 4).[4]

## Challenging Landscapes

If we consider museums to play a role as memory institutions, we should pay attention to how the Arctic has been displayed previously at the Kulturhistorisk museum. When the museum opened in 1904, at the height of Norwegian nation-building, the Arctic was a perfect playground for white, male explorers. Arctic exhibitions at the Kulturhistorisk museum have always featured Roald Amundsen, a celebrated explorer central to the Norwegian legacy (in its own eyes) as a polar superpower. When Amundsen returned from his *Gjøahavn* expedition (1903–1906), after successfully navigating the Northwest Passage, he donated objects collected on the journey to the museum. The museum's first Arctic exhibition opened in 1907, celebrating Amundsen's adventures and the man himself, with the Norwegian flag figuring prominently in the exhibition. Since then, the Kulturhistorisk museum's Amundsen collection has remained unparalleled in its ability to attract large audiences.[5]

Amundsen's central position in museums, whatever the format, highlights that the space we call "the Arctic" remains produced by outsiders. It is a dreamland rather than a homeland, "a place out of space and time" (Kramvig and Gomez 2019, 322). The Arctic on display in Oslo is probably like other Arctics on display in other European museums, similar in the sense that it is based upon a profoundly colonial gaze of the Arctic as wilderness. As a homeland, however, the Arctic is not one, but many. Homelands are landscapes of practices, inhabited since time immemorial. In Sámi, these are lands of many *meahcit*,[6] founded upon care and reciprocity, that extend to a variety of co-existing species (Joks, Østmo, and Law 2018, 1).

Putting the colonized Arctic on display presents a challenge for the Norwegian capitol museums. To be recognizable to its many audiences, the exhibitions must seek to communicate both outside and inside perspectives. Commenting on my interest in communicating this double vision, previously only afforded to those who have experience from the position as insiders, Liisa-Rávná Finbog, who has written extensively about Sámi indigenous knowledges, suggested that I make use of a North Sámi word as an analytical device, *geažideami*, which literally means "drawing in different directions." Geažideami is a term with an inherent capacity for multiplicity and complexity. It offers space for disconcertment, a way of living with the existence of different opinions. In my understanding, geažideami can communicate an understanding into a settler colonial world, of an altogether different existence, where different forms of perspectives must co-exist. Living with such ambiguities might be possible in a place with a strong egalitarian ethos. In a world dominated by a settler colonial vision, however, other perspectives

become the burden of the other. But could a new exhibition make it possible for our audiences to imagine these perspectives themselves?

## Layers of Collaborative Encounters

The making of *NewArctic* involved large networks of relationships, knowledges, and forms of expertise. In developing the exhibit, knowledge-gathering took place together with conceptual and design work. Our sharing of stories also included art, photographs, films, and sound recordings travelling to the Kulturhistorisk museum through our networks, from locations in Sápmi as well as from the larger Arctic region – places such as Romsa/Tromsø and Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino in the Norwegian part of Sápmi, Baikal in Siberia, and Mittimatalik in the Qikiqtaaluk region of Nunavut, Canada.

This larger assemblage was inspired by several relatively recent approaches to ethnographic exhibition-making. Our collaborative efforts included added layers of Indigenous participation. Artists or artworks were included as participants. We also intentionally foregrounded artefacts as subjects, participants in the narrative production (Shelton 2006). Finally, we paid attention to more affective forms of communication with audiences (Varutti 2023; Dudley 2010). Our ambition was that our audiences should not simply see, but also hear, smell, and feel the exhibition. This explicit attention to affect was approached in two ways: by attending to details such as atmosphere, but also more precisely to the potential of art – including music, film, and objects – to complexly engage audience emotions beyond the ability of words (Varutti 2023). In Sigmund Skåden's words, we wanted to provide glimpses of "emotional intimacy" within Indigenous life worlds (2022, 37), but also, to reference Verran (2002) as well as Law and Lin (2010), to produce in our audiences a disconcertment or confusion which we imagined could result from new awareness of other marginalized perspectives. The intention of the exhibit was not to present conclusions, but rather to engage in open-ended conversations with the audience.

Regarding collaborative knowledge production between Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, many have noted that objects have the potential to open conversations to include Indigenous epistemes (Finbog 2019; Verran 2004). With the *NewArctic* exhibit, our aspiration was that exchanges between Sámi and non-Sámi academics could be built upon reciprocal knowledge production, as Kuokkanen (2008) describes, hopefully encouraging a response-ability with a potential for new action also beyond our group (66, 68). Our endeavours made evident that, for the success of such conversations across an Indigenous divide, time is a significant dimension. While some members of our development group were relatively new acquaintances, others had been part of long-term, more or less committed conversations across disciplines and places.[7] Our learning from each other was inspired by

Balto and Østmo's (2012) description of a Sámi ideal for collective learning, where time and recognition of the affordances of others, are participating elements. In their description of Sámi pedagogies, these authors make use of the learning that goes on in a reindeer corral as a metaphor. In this regularly occurring activity, there is room for many kinds of participation, depending upon one's experience and personal skills. Learning takes place as people work alongside one another. To describe this "learning together," Balto and Østmo use the term *searvelatnja*. In conversation with my text, Finbog amplifies the meaning of searvelatnja, adding that by extension, this term describes a community forged through multiple encounters within time and space, a space where the exchange of ancestral or generational knowledge binds together future, past, and present. To Finbog, there is a spiritual aspect to this in that searvelatnja is a space of co-existence, of learning alongside multiple beings.[8]

At this point I should note that this text in itself is not written as a collaborative product; rather, it is a reflection on my experiences of this collaboration, from my position as a curatorial leader of the exhibition. I hope this chapter will read as a meandering ethnographic exploration of the making of *NewArctic* involving learning via multiple beings, including people, objects, art, texts, films, and sound, all elements of what together became an attempt at presenting a New Arctic.

## *NewArctic* in Six Themes

The collective production of an emerging *NewArctic* exhibition relied upon two types of infrastructure: a concept and its design. The concept was developed as a programmatic statement in six parts. These themes did not simply engage one element of the exhibition, they spoke across one or more installations or groups of objects. At times, the themes were difficult to keep separate, deeply entangled as they were. Through our process, as we elaborated the larger creative production, the themes were written and rewritten in increasingly condensed forms until they were eventually printed in the exhibition catalogue.[9] Group writing of such texts involved processes of negotiation over the precise relations between core elements and how they should be ordered. Meaning became challenged anew as the text was translated between languages – Northern Sámi, Norwegian, and English – revealing misunderstandings, often of epistemological dimensions.

In the end, six themes were articulated.

### *Theme 1: Explorers and the Arctic Wilderness*

The Kulturhistorisk museum has furthered the Euro-American Arctic dream from early on, making use of Amundsen's collections to communicate an

Arctic on the premises of the colonizers. Explorers' Arctic dreams are rooted in maps indicating vast, empty space. Maps open frontiers and provide charters of action. Legend makes uses and opportunities visible, promoting particular landscape practices while simultaneously removing all trace of others. The maps we display – particularly as a museum – reveal what from the outside is wilderness and opportunity, initiating effects that counter and conceal complex local practices and histories.

From the inside, landscapes of Sápmi are known as meahcit. Meahcit have not one, but many kinds of use. Embedded in meahcit are complex networks of users' rights associated with particular places and resources. In these landscapes, humans know how to encounter key species in different seasons, and such knowledge provides a degree of predictability, enabling and sustaining their way of life. Within these practices, care and reciprocity secure what the land may offer.

### *Theme 2: Relations Between Humans, Landscapes, and Animals*

In Sápmi, as among other Arctic and circumpolar peoples, uses of natural resources are founded upon intimate knowledge of the region. Peoples' presence involves observation and awareness of landscapes, animals, and relations between species. Rather than relationships being based on control, the relationships of life are characterized by mutualism and trust, but in a way that embraces an element of uncertainty. Nature is not a passive resource to be exploited, but an active constituent of lives that transcend rigid boundaries between humans and non-humans, between culture and nature. Fluidity and reciprocity characterize relationships between people and animals, but also represent ideals in relations between men and women, families, extended kin, and neighbours. Many kinds of agency exist in the Arctic, beyond the human–animal. Weather and wind are part of the landscape and central agents in peoples' lives. The sound of the Arctic can be intrusive or almost absent: ice breaking up in the spring, numerous iterations of water, from annual floods to rain against the window, many varieties of wind, whether as a storm or a breeze, the sound of footsteps on snow, or – in marshland or the dry tundra – birds, mosquitos, and flies in the summer, or their absence, if stopped by the wind.

### *Theme 3: Animals as Resources*

Stories of Arctic relations between humans and animals often emphasize the hunt and the hunter. But much of the significant human–animal engagement, respect, and reciprocity also take pace after an animal's death. The animal becomes food, clothing, and tools. This is often women's work, although also necessarily known by men. Such work is often overlooked in museum

exhibitions, even though these skills remain necessary for Arctic survival. These are also essential cultural expressions, storytelling devices, and the materialization of larger worldviews.

The complexities of these skills cannot be overstated. Making animals into food, clothing, and tools not only involves working with larger animal breeds, but also requires a larger diversity of interspecies relations. It includes cooperation with what is inside the animal, such as bone, sinew, and intestines, on yet another scale, microbes, and bacteria. Even wind and weather, elements of the landscape, must cooperate for making to be successful.

### *Theme 4: Tools and Furs*

Survival in the Arctic, as we have established, was and is made possible through highly specialized technology and complex knowledge. Fur clothes are made using a variety of sophisticated techniques. They are made with fur and animal parts taken from numerous species, such as reindeer, seal, deer, mink, bear, wolf, beaver, muskrat, and fox, but also creatures such as guillemot or salmon. Animal parts are chosen for their unique characteristics, such as warmth, flexibility, breathability, or wind- and water-resistance. Knowledge of the affordances of different animals and furs provide special adaptations that result in better clothing, more durable and effective against the elements than anything else, even today. In both clothing and tools, functionality is always combined with aesthetics, with a particular emphasis on aesthetics in use – in this regard, aesthetics are acts of appreciating as well as respecting of the animal.

### *Theme 5: Scientific and Museal Colonization*

As part of colonizing efforts, science has evoked a northern wilderness, a void open for appropriation. Stories of civilization, of bringing justice and salvation through colonization have been reproduced in innumerable exhibitions. In the museum, the grandeur of architecture and the authority of the institutions add to these versions of history. New forms of dispossession and loss of sovereignty also occur in the museum machinery. Knowledge and culture become "frozen." Local peoples are reduced to imaginaries of "Man: The Hunter." Not only artefacts, but complexities of practices, knowledge, histories, and peoples disappear in exhibitions, or relegated to existing in storage and archives.

### *Theme 6: Control, Trust, Extraction, and Extinction*

An Arctic re-presented provides us with a richer understanding of the history of mankind. We learn that survival does not always require control, and that

food production is not necessarily built upon dominance, control, or individual property rights. *NewArctic* invited us to reconsider the assumption that nature and culture are separate. Today, the Sámi people struggle continuously with the consequences of colonial worldviews. New green economies legitimize mining operations as well as hydroelectric and windmill developments. Indigenous Peoples' lands are continuously sacrificed for "the greater good." Natural resource management likewise imposes restrictions on Indigenous use, often without consideration of the fact that the real causes of species extinction are elsewhere. There are real fears that many nature practices of the Sámi – ways of living since time immemorial, and practices in salmon fishing, inland lake fishing, duck hunting, or even reindeer herding – are becoming extinct.

### *NewArctic* Assemblages

To incorporate these conceptual themes and their inherent tensions into one exhibition is a tall order. How could a presentation of a "new Arctic" make sense from both the inside and the outside? An Arctic that was not one nor the other, but rather many, and even more? Pulling in different directions – producing in our audiences this geažideami – we hoped would invite dis-ease, reflection, even empathy. As our ambition was to interact across epistemic knowledge practices by involving assemblies of objects, art, installations, and multiple collaborative encounters. We wanted to make use of the active forces of design, art and crafts, to make the *NewArctic* installations and interventions more than a vehicle to display museum objects.

The front cover of the exhibit catalogue featured a seal hunter from Baikal. The hunter, clad in all white, wearing knee pads and thick gloves. To our working group, the picture encapsulated the complex and innovative knowledge of animals necessary for survival in Arctic regions. The photograph shows him crouching behind a white screen ingeniously attached to the front of a sled, on the vast, ice-covered Baikal Lake. The screen on the sled allows him to not be visible to the seal that in the photograph barely is visible, resting on the ice next to its breathing hole on the other side of the lake. Hidden behind the screen, the hunter slowly crawls across the frozen lake to get close enough to take aim of the seal. Any unknown sights or sounds would alarm the shy seal, causing it to escape back into the lake.[10] In our opinion, this image symbolized the attentive knowledge of animal and landscape, necessary to secure a livelihood in the Arctic, and the ingenuity of Arctic hunters.

*NewArctic* was designed by Åsmund Steinsholm to be a temporary display at the Kulturhistorisk museum. In the exhibition, perspectives and materials from our contributors, artefacts, films, and sounds all became part of what was assembled. We also hoped the exhibition would become an immersive three-dimensional space. Through the use of the simplest of interactive

**FIGURE 8.1** A photograph of a seal and a seal hunter on Lake Baikal, which was used as the cover image for the *NewArctic* catalogue.

*Source:* Photo by Rob Losey and Tatiana Nomokonova.

design, we our visitors were encouraged to make use of their bodies and all their senses to explore elements in the exhibition. For example, crawling in and curling up in the Sámi turf hut, or *goahti* in Northern Sámi. Laying down on their backs in soft fur, watching images of reindeer moving in the ceiling above. Listening to the sound of wind, steps in the crispy-cold snow on the tundra. Feeling the dry and gnarly surface of a reindeer stomach and inhaling the musty smell of dried flesh.

Rather than avoiding Roald Amundsen, NewArctic presented an Arctic frontier which included many actors, including the explorer, the scientist, the entrepreneur, and the Indigenous. We did not want to conceal the explorer, but rather deny him the position as the only competent body in this landscape. To destabilize the polar explorer, Steinsholm added a comical outreach element: the Roald Amundsen Photobooth, a vitrine large enough for audience members to enter, featuring a life-sized photography cut-out of Amundsen dressed up in his finest polar clothing. The photograph had an obvious late-19th century studio quality to it, Amundsen posing almost coyly in his Inuit fur parka. The back wall of the vitrine was wallpapered with a landscape from Nattilik – or, as Norwegians prefer to think of it,

Gjøahavn – featuring the bay with Amundsen's ship. Above the vitrine, a sign announced the "Amundsen Photobooth" in bright pink, yellow, and blue neon. Beside the booth stood a rack of clothing inviting the audience to dress up. Before his South Pole expedition, Amundsen famously took the advice of Inuit experts in Nattilik regarding suitable clothing and technology for surviving in the Arctic climate. According to legend, this enabled Amundsen to reach the South Pole before the British explorer Robert Falcon Scott in 1911. Some of the costumes available for the Amundsen Photobooth were exact copies of Amundsen's original clothing.[11] The rack also contained newer clothing made by *NewArctic* collaborators, such as seal hats from Baikal and a beautiful bright pink *amauti*/mother's parka with matching deep pink fox fur framing the hood, made by Inuit seamstresses in Nattilik. Once dressed up, visitors could step into the photobooth, take photos of themselves, and post them to Instagram using the hashtag #NyArktis – #NewArctic. A screen on the wall next to the vitrine showed loops of what with time became increasingly long series of selfies with Amundsen, but also other images that our audiences had taken while exploring the exhibition.

**FIGURE 8.2** A view of the *NewArctic* exhibit showing Reindeer Selfies, the Map Machine, Amundsen's Photobooth, platforms covered in furs to encourage visitors to lay back and view the films projected onto the ceiling, and the inviting goahti at the far end of the room.

*Source:* Photo by Kirsten Helgeland/Kulturhistorisk museum.

Steinsholm's next design element, the Map Machine, brought the ghost of Amundsen into specific Arctic dreams. This was a steel and plexiglass structure effectively doing the work of maps, by making landscapes singular. The Map Machine had a steel frame and a concrete base, with a series of plexiglass maps mounted on rails, almost like a shower curtain. All the maps were of the same landscape: the Varanger Peninsula in the far north of Finnmark, Norway. We wanted audiences to be attracted by the maps. For outsiders in particular, maps induce yearning, dreams of faraway places, opportunities of frontiers for explorations, the chance to prove oneself, the promise of new beginnings (Kramvig and Gomez 2019). To illustrate this, each map of Varanger contained a different legend. Each singular map on its own set of rails invited action from the audience, encouraging them to move the maps along the rails. In doing so, they could observe how the landscape represented by each map made complete sense when considered individually. However, when one map was slid on top of another, audiences would see with their own eyes that these maps could not co-exist in the same landscape (Ween 2021).

The first map was simply the outline of the Varanger Peninsula. A second map showed reindeer migration routes through the seasons. A third map was of agricultural areas, displaying colonial history of introduced agriculture in Finnmark of in the late-19th century (Pedersen 1994, Lien 2020). A fourth map depicted the boundaries of existing nature reserves, landscapes with strict rules for allowed movement and use. A fifth map showed snowmobile trails. A sixth map showed infrastructure such as roads and electrical power lines, installations that over time often enable increased use and further exploitation of an area, such as logging, cabin building, or tourism. The legend on the seventh map identified existing mineral resources open for extraction. The Map Machine reminded the audience that maps are in essence evocative. There is a seductive "out of space and time-ness" (Kramvig and Gomez 2019) of a single legend-map that turns an inhabited Arctic into a hopeful frontier, a landscape open for resource exploitation.

*NewArctic* referenced other colonial practices through design, transgressing the traditional technologies of ethnographic museum exhibitions. Steinsholm's Archive Installation commented very directly upon common colonial practices still alive in museums today. Once again, an installation made out of steel and concrete, this time with a large archival drawer made of plywood and filled with what appeared to be accession cards, with a card printed for every object in the museum's Arctic collection. Although it turned out that there was not room enough for the full installation as first imagined, its ultimate size nonetheless served our purpose. It made our audiences aware of the large number of Arctic objects the museum holds, and illustrated that very few are ever on display. Each card held an image of the object, its museum catalogue number, and available provenance. The installation included

a light desk accompanied by a magnifying glass. With these, we encouraged our audiences to examine the accession cards, to observe the very particular practice they are part of. Perhaps observe the objects depicted, their beauty and otherness, but also possibly noticing the lack of precision of the available information. We hoped people would notice the strange and accidental nature of what is collected, the very particular historical time period of large-scale collecting exercises, and the explorers that made a living from such activities.

The exhibition also included more traditional displays of Arctic ethnographic artefacts, but yet again, with a twist by Steinsholm's design. The choice of ethnographic objects foregrounded the crucial importance of animals for life in the Arctic. Instead of limiting the role of the Arctic objects to being "representative" of "local subsistence practices," we sought to amplify the artefacts, filling vitrines with an array of animals; birds, fox, wolf, bear, seal, reindeer, wolverine, or salmon, put into use for highly specialized purposes in ingenious ways. Materials such as fat, sinew, intestines, fur, leather, horn, and bone become clothing, heating, light, housing, storage, and forms of transport, as well as food, all essential contributions for Arctic survival.

The collections on display also reminded our audiences of the deep connections between humans and animals: a baby seal had become a comfortable sleeping bag for a human baby, fur from male animals' clad men, and fur from female animals was made into clothes for women. Clothing also revealed how the furs were fitted to human bodies in the same way they are fitted onto the animals. For example, fur from animal heads was used on human heads, shoulders on shoulders, backs on backs, legs on legs. In *NewArctic*, aesthetics and aesthetic functionality[12] were also enhanced by design elements, contrasting exquisite crafts and the colours of fur, feather, and leather against the stainless-steel vitrines and mirrored surfaces.

The more experimental elements of the exhibition returned to – and opened up – the human–animal relations displayed by the ethnographic artefacts. In the middle of the room, two wooden platforms looked inviting, covered in reindeer fur. Audiences were encouraged to lie down, take time to relax, and get comfortable watching clips of films projected onto the ceiling. Their content was visually powerful and we hoped they would provide the audience with glimpses of everyday Arctic lives and lifestyles beyond their knowledge and imagination. The first film, *Aatsinki. The Story of Arctic Cowboys*, chronicled reindeer herders' daily lives over the course of a year in Finnish Sápmi.[13] Reindeer were also the theme in a second film of drone footage, *Moving with the Reindeer in the Winter*, showing herds silently and hypnotically moving across the tundra and into a corral.[14]

Steinsholm's design also encouraged audience interaction in other installations, such as a modern interpretation of the goahti, covered in soft, inviting reindeer fur, for audiences to crawl into. The goahti was a cozy hiding

place, a space for contemplation, equipped with books about Sápmi and other Arctic locations, as well as iPads loaded with short films. These films were also produced by members of our exhibition group. Each provided opportunities to deep dive into various Arctic locations and practices, such as Sápmi, Baikal, and Mittimatalik. We hoped that the different approaches to the same materials, ethnographic object, animal, and use would remind our audiences that museum artefacts were once part of living knowledge traditions (Finbog 2021; Pieski and Harlin 2020). We hoped the audiences would receive glimpses of the "emotional intimacy" of Indigenous life worlds (Skåden 2022, 37). From Sápmi, a film by Liv Østmo revealed how, during the slaughter, one cuts out the reindeer stomach which then can be used as a container for drying and storing milk or blood.[15] Also by Østmo, a documentary of the practices of *jávredikšun* or "lake stewardship" (Østmo and Law 2018), displaying the weeding of lakes to care for and improve conditions for the fish. The iPads also featured two films from Baikal: one documented the previously described hunting of the notoriously shy lake seal, as featured on the cover of our exhibition catalogue, and the other invited viewers into a kitchen to learn how to make the seal into food products.[16] Seals were also the focus of the films by the Mittimatalik Arnait Muqsuqtuit Collective (MAMC), demonstrating the curing of seal skin, the sewing of *kamik* boots, and the all-important waterproof mittens, made with the *uiguaqtuq*, the waterproof stitch.[17]

Intimate animal relations were also displayed through two photo-series displayed on the walls. One series displayed the work of the MAMC, with bright and colourful images showing female sewers in conversations, close-ups of hands and sealskin from various stages of production. In-progress depictions of mittens and kamik boots photographed against a background of a pink, flowery wax tablecloth. The other series showed reindeer photographed by reindeer. The animals had been fitted with GoPro cameras on their collars[18] enabling reindeer to photograph each other throughout the course of a year, without human interference. Images showed reindeer grazing in the high mountains, magnificent autumn colours, pictures of rut, bulls fighting. Reindeer snowed down in the midst of a stormy winter, digging through ice and snow to find scraps of lichen, and, finally, mountains beginning to green, with females alongside their newborn calves in the spring.

The reindeer stomach, as introduced in Liv Østmo's film, had also travelled to Oslo and was exhibited in its dried form, available for audiences to touch and smell. This was placed next a sculpture of a reindeer stomach by artist Geir Tore Holm (see Figure 8.3), which had been designed to become the door handles of the Ä'vv, the Skolt Sámi museum in Njauddâm/Neiden. Holm named the sculpture after the stomach's Latin name, *Omasum*. To Holm, the stomach is a key element of Sámi ontology. In his words, the sculpture reminds us that to live with reindeer and other animals is to use all parts.[19]


**FIGURE 8.3** Two artistic presentations of reindeer stomachs, as displayed in the *NewArctic* exhibit. Left: *Bladmage* (2016), presenting a dried and preserved reindeer stomach, by Jon Andreas Utsi and Karen Ellen Marie Siri Utsi. Right: *Omasum* (2009) by Geir Tore Holm, cast in brass.

*Source:* Photo by Kirsten Helgeland/Kulturhistorisk museum.

Holm wrote for the exhibition that the circular shape of the stomach is a creative force, and explained that he made this to engage in conversation with Iver Jåks' phallic doorhandles installed at the Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat/the Sámi Collections in Kárášjohka/Karasjok. Just like Jåks' phalli, *Omasum* is made in brass, a material considered by the Sámi as having protective powers.

We hoped that Holm's foregrounding of the foundational principles of reciprocities and respect in human relations with animals would highlight the animals as collaborators, as participants within an epistemology that made and continues to make possible long-term co-existence (Joks, Østmo and Law 2018; Kuokkanen 2008; Østmo and Law 2018). As made evident by other participants in our exhibition assemblage, this respect is also tied to the use of animals as material. All kinds of knowledge of animals enable Arctic existence, of their behaviours, their movements in a landscape, not only according to the seasons, but also in relation to weather, wind, and temperature, with an awareness of multiple kinds of co-existing relations, both human and non-human, including the spiritual. Within this larger understanding, "using an animal well" and returning to nature what is nature's part are central aspects of such spirituality and a Sámi episteme.

To create space for the insiders' own stories of the Arctic, segments of Gomez and Kramvig's film *Dreamland* (2016) was projected on a second platform. Segments of *Dreamland* showed evocative images of a road trip through Sápmi. These images were interspersed with fragmented stories of dramatic colonial events which ranged from the 17th-century witch trials of Vardø to more current political moments such as the damming of the Alta River in the 1980s, as well as examples of slow ongoing violence. Kramvig, as the chronicler of the journey and Sámi herself, speaks in the film of her ambivalence regarding her work as an ethnographer, writing about Finnmark[20] and knowing from her own experience the consequences of such colonial exercises.[21]

*NewArctic* was also in no way a silent exhibition. Margrethe Pettersen's sound installation *Levende land under som over* ("Living Land Under as Above") filled the exhibition space. The composition was created to be engaged with, as if part of a walk through a dark winter in Finnmark.[22] It featured the sounds of the landscape: wind, tress rustling, sounds of footsteps on ice. Some visitors expressed that the unpredictability of the soundscape itself had an effect. Sometimes the sound was loud, sometimes just a trickle, barely recognizable to human ears. At other times, it was an almost overwhelming force. In an article co-written with Britt Kramvig (2016), Pettersen describes the sound installation as being based on "voices that told many stories, in my native Northern dialect, in English, and in Sámi. Voices which said, 'I am snow'; 'I am a water plant'" (139). To Pettersen, these voices "do not necessarily speak for anyone, but rather show the importance of listening, and of letting others (also non-humans) speak" (139). Perhaps, she says, people can be helped to think differently about things (Kramvig and Pettersen 2016, 139). In the time after guided tours, *NewArctic* visitors would sometimes tell me about their personal experiences of this soundscape. Some experienced it as another form of storytelling; some mentioned bodily memories evoked by what to them were similar landscapes, returning their own memories of "the sound of the Arctic," as one visitor put it.

## But Is Sápmi Really Part of the Arctic?

There are certainly risks involved in such collaborations. I cannot say that we succeeded. Some saw the term "the Arctic" as problematic. In previous exhibitions, Sápmi has been included in the Arctic, and for good reasons – there are similarities between Arctic peoples' lives, and lifestyles, and the Arctic Indigenous Peoples involved in the NewArctic exhibit are all currently represented in the Arctic Council. However, some would point out that technically, only a small part of Sápmi is located within the Arctic Circle. Indigenous visitors to the exhibit would also sometimes question the Arctic from a colonial perspective. Should the term even be encouraged, given its

historical origins? Perhaps "the Arctic" in and of itself quells all reference to Indigenous homelands.

In autumn 2016, when the *NewArctic* exhibition was taken down in Oslo, it took on a life of its own. Between 2017 and 2023 the exhibition travelled and became co-curated by Sámi museums, curators, and their teams at Saemien Sijte (in Snåase/Snåsa), Guovdageainnu Gilišillju (in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino), Sámiid Vuorka Dávvirat (in Kárášjohka/Karasjok), and Porsanggu Museat (in Leavdnja/Lakselv). At each new museum, the exhibition changed as it was assembled in new ways. Not surprisingly, Roald Amundsen inspired little enthusiasm in Sápmi. As importantly, the violence of settler states, their extractive ambitions, and their impacts on Sámi lives became even more visual as new examples and interventions were added to the exhibition. Texts were rewritten with added contributions from the Sámi museums, curators, and artists, and as they were translated from one Sámi language into the next. Following the exhibition from one place to another, I observed Sámi languages becoming active and pointedly intervening agents in the exhibition, evoking new connections between landscapes, humans, and non-humans. The ethnographic artefacts that we sought to make less inanimate while displayed at the Kulturhistorisk museum were replaced with artefacts such as living *duodji* and *dáidda*, Sámi crafts and art, respectively.[23] Museum objects became duodji, returning as crafts and as part of living traditions. Dáidda, or art, was added, becoming more precise protests against precise settler colonialism practices. The original minimalist and aesthetic form of the exhibit, with its muted colour scheme, also changed dramatically. Soon, the exhibition was filled with bright colours – green, yellow, red, and blue, the colours of Sápmi. Such transformations and their endlessly sophisticated expressions bore witness to co-existence, respect, and reciprocity, centring on Sámi loss, Sámi rights, and the many necessary expressions of sovereignty.

## Conclusion

*NewArctic* took place following Bååstede, "the return," to further pursue the decolonizing openings the repatriation offered. In acknowledgement of the position of museums as memory institutions, our group started with an ambition of renegotiating the Arctic as a foundational concept. Conceptualization took place through open conversations involving Sámi and non-Sámi scholars, acknowledging each other's knowledges and backgrounds, with awareness of different approaches to knowledge and consideration of how to concretely contribute to shared learning. Members of the group, as well as their extended networks, brought films, photographs, and objects that further contributed to the conversation. We sought to complicate the Arctic, as illustrations or stories of dreamlands do, by bringing new depth and understanding to what Indigenous Peoples have long known: that homelands and

dreamlands often are inherently conflicting. Through our collaboration with Steinsholm's design, we wanted to amplify Arctic stories of knowledge, expertise, innovation, complex and sustainable forms of survival, and human–animal relations founded on reciprocity and respect. Our ambition was to stir wonderment and feelings of emotional intimacies, but also disconcertments and perhaps even sparking new reflections and visions. It is difficult to know if *NewArctic* succeeded in this, but the exhibition's subsequent travels from one Sámi museum to the next is at least a sign of interest in the experiment. As it moved throughout Sápmi, the original themes were both confirmed and expanded, becoming more complex through new depths of language, knowledge, and vision. As it metamorphized, the exhibition's colours also became more vivid.

We do not currently know how the exhibit will end. There may be a new but more permanent *NewArctic* in the future. In the meantime, we hope to further distribute gifts given and received, extending to everyone an invitation to learn, reconsider, and renegotiate a new response-able Arctic.

## Notes

1 A project of the Centre for Advanced Studies at the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, initiated by PI Marianne Lien; members included Heather A. Swanson, John Law, Knut Nustad, Natasha Fijn, Robert Losey, Frida Hastrup, Sverker Sörlin, Gisli Palson, Britt Kramvig, Liv Østmo, Solveig Joks, Hugh Raffles, Marisol de la Cadena, Andrew Matthews, Diane Gifford-Gonzalez, and the author.
2 Southern Sámi for "return."
3 Over a period of six years (2013–2019), the Norsk Folkemuseum and Kulturhistorisk museum negotiated with six Sámi museum institutions regarding the return of approximately 1,500 objects. The author of this chapter represented the Kulturhistorisk museum in the process. For more on the Bååstede project, see Gaup et al. (2021), as well as Schøning (Chapter 1) and Johansen (Chapter 2) in this book.
4 The author would like to thank the New Sámi Renaissance: Nordic Colonialism, Social Change and Indigenous Cultural Policy project (NESAR, 2021–2024, NRC), as well as Principal Investigator Laura Junka-Aikio, editors Rosella Ragazzi and Trude Fonneland, and especially Liisa-Rávná Finbog for her precise analytical contribution.
5 Efforts to renegotiate a Norwegian Arctic have been undertaken by the University of Tromsø's Polar Museum through its temporary exhibition *Queer Polar History* (*Polarhistorie på skeiva*; Gaupseth and Hauan 2022–2023).
6 Northern Sámi term referencing landscapes, explained in more detail in the Six Themes section.
7 Central contributors were Marianne Lien, Liv Østmo, Britt Kramvig, Frida Hastrup, Natasha Fijn, and myself.
8 Personal communication, Liisa-Rávná Finbog, 27 June 2023.
9 These themes were later further developed and published in the edited volume *Domestication Gone Wild: Politics and Practices of Multispecies Relations* (Swanson, Lien and Ween 2018).
10 The image was a still from footage filmed by archaeologist Rob Losey working together with Indigenous groups in the Baikal region.

11 On loan from Hvitserk (named after Viking clothing), a travel agency for "explorers" specializing in tourist re-enactments of polar adventures.
12 See Guttorm and Idivuoma (2022).
13 Dir. Jessica Oreck (2013).
14 Dir. Jan Helmer Olsen (2015).
15 Film by Liv Østmo, working with Andreas Utsi and Karen Ellen Marie Siri Utsi.
16 Filmed by Tatiana Nomokonova and Robert Losey, edited by Losey and Natasha Fijn.
17 The Mittimatalik Arnait Miqsuqtuit Collective was instigated by Sheila Katsak in Mittimatalik and Nancy Wachowich at the University of Aberdeen, and offers masterclasses in sealskin curing and sewing, mostly in Inuktitut language (Katsak and Wachowich 2022).
18 By Olav Strand at the Norsk institutt for Naturforskning.
19 "Om prosjektet," Ä'vv Skoltesamiskemuseum, accessed 5 June 2023, https://koro.no/prosjekter/%C3%A4vv-skoltesamisk-museum/.
20 See also Kramvig and Gomez (2019).
21 These films were also shown in their entirety as a special film screening.
22 The composition was first exhibited at the second Dark Ecology Journey, 26–30 November 2015, commissioned by Arctic Encounters and Dark Ecology and curated by Hilde Mehti and Sonic Arts.
23 See chapters by Caufield (Chapter 6) and Rugeldal (Chapter 7) in this book for further explanations of duodji and dáidda.

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# 9

# GÁLLOGIEDDI CAPUT SÁPMI

*Erika De Vivo*

"Mo beassat márkomennui?"

This Márku Sámi sentence (translated on the English version of the page as "How to get to Márkomeannu?") towers above the information page of the Márkomeannu festival website.[1] It is a deceptively simple question with a multitude of answers, each stemming from specific ideological and political views. The question encapsulates a century-long struggle for cultural survival and recognition. How people in the Márku[2] choose to answer this question is grounded in local history and can reveal individual and collective socio-political attitudes regarding linguistic and cultural practices, as well as of in/tangible local heritage. Sámi toponyms have emerged as crucial symbols in Sámi cultures and central elements of intangible Sámi heritage. Toponyms transmit cultural values and foster emotional attachment between communities and the landscape, and their importance is such that their visibility in the landscape became a locus of political contestation in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Throughout Sápmi, local cultural activists' strenuous work to reverse assimilation processes and language shift have helped bring plural Sámi identities back into public arenas, fostering contemporary Sámi Indigenous efflorescence (Roche et al. 2018), of which Márkomeannu festival is but one of its numerous articulations. Indigenous efflorescence has multiple manifestations, acknowledging not only the presence but also the thriving of Indigenous Peoples – within and despite ongoing colonial practices and attitudes – and their active engagement in creating a future for themselves. It implies economic prosperity, cultural creativity, agency, and, more broadly, cultural blossoming. This concept also encompasses the idea of transnational

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ethno-political collaboration among Indigenous Peoples across the globe, and the use of digital media as a tool for Indigenous empowerment as well as sovereignty. Indigenous efflorescence regards acts of resurgence not as re-iterations, re-interpretations, or re-actualizations of past practices, but as new practices grounded in the past but tailored to the present and projected into the future. Among the numerous expressions of Indigenous efflorescence, linguistic revitalization and toponymic activism are two deeply interconnected cultural phenomena constituting acts of decolonization.

The aim of this chapter is twofold. It seeks first to examine contemporary Márku Sámi language[3] visibility and prestige in the Márku Sámi area by critically discussing the linguistic landscape of the Márkomeannu festival, and second, to go beyond the analysis of how languages are displayed at Márkomeannu in order to address the symbolic functions of the local linguistic landscape. Through an in-depth reading of the linguistic signs visible during the 2018, 2019, and 2022 festivals, this chapter provides an account of both current language attitudes and socio-cultural transformation epitomized by the local linguistic landscape. Such analysis is possible because Márkomeannu is a shared social space where Márku Sámi identities are negotiated constantly – partly through language – and where language fosters place- and identity-making processes simultaneously. My analysis is based on recent developments in linguistic landscape studies (Gorter 2018), and on the acknowledgement that linguistic landscapes are cultural spaces produced and experienced through interactions among various actors.

## Linguistic Landscape in the Márku

"Linguistic landscape" as a concept was first delineated by Landry and Bourhis (1997, 23) and refers to the "visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region." The linguistic landscape of a place creates and conveys ideas and notions about not only linguistic and cultural belonging, but also diversity (Coupland 2010).

As Gorter (2006) explains, people often do not pay attention to the linguistic landscape which surrounds them. Language, however, is everywhere, simultaneously reflecting and influencing people's linguistic attitudes. At Márkomeannu, it is Márku Sámi language that permeates the area through its textual manifestation, shaping the festival's linguistic landscape. This landscape thus emerges as a core element of the festival, its relevance revealed in the importance that the linguistic landscapes have in creating a sense of belonging and connection across generations, as well as between the community and the region they inhabit.

Sites such as Márkomeannu differ greatly from the majority of those usually studied in linguistic landscape research, most of which examine urban contexts, focusing on roads, streets, and institutions. Nevertheless, Márkomeannu can be considered a suitable location for a linguistic landscape

analysis since it falls within what Pietikäinen et al. (2011) describe as an important research site for the study of an Indigenous Sámi linguistic landscape. This festival is a meaningful cultural site for the local Márku Sámi community (Mathisen 2002; O. Myrnes Balto 2006; Myrnes Balto 2016; Berg 2014; De Vivo 2022b; Danbolt et al. 2022), and Márkomeannu's linguistic landscape is inscribed in a long tradition of local linguistic activism, with local Sámi place-names and (Márku) Sámi words having been a focal point of Márkomeannu since its first edition in the late 1990s.

Linguistic landscape pertains not only to our physical surroundings but also to virtual ones. In this case, Márkomeannu's website[4] and social media offer clear examples of online linguistic activism with tangible offline premises and consequences.

In this chapter, I examine the materiality and locations of signs, rather than their fonts, colours, or design. While non-fixed mobile signs (e.g., t-shirts) and online contexts are an integral part of the festival's linguistic landscape, I shall focus here on a specific material element of Márkomeannu's linguistic landscape: the festival's waymark, "[…] a material object fixed in place, where the place-name itself meets the landscape" (Puzey 2009, 1).

This chapter examines materials I collected while carrying out fieldwork in Sápmi between 2018 and 2022 through the lenses of cultural anthropology and linguistic landscape studies as outlined by Landry and Bourhis (1997) and developed by Cenoz and Gorter (2006), Gorter (2018), and Puzey (2009). From a methodological perspective, this chapter is grounded in a qualitative, ethnographic approach based on in-depth interviews, the majority held in the Sámi/Norwegian city of Romsa/Tromsø, and on participant observation in the rural Márku context. Furthermore, spatial analysis as delineated by Cocq et al. (2020) has proved crucial in understanding the meaning-making process behind linguistic signs at Márkomeannu, a multidimensional research site that extends itself into the Internet through social media and webpages (Cocq and DuBois 2019). I collected textual information mostly through the analysis of signs with orthographic language as reported on websites and/or public social media accounts, or documented by video or photography while doing fieldwork. With a time gap of three years, such visual documentation, in conjunction with my fieldnotes, I was able to address the linguistic landscape across several editions of Márkomeannu, allowing me to perceive details whose meaning was not immediately apparent. Finally, interviews with former and current *čávva*[5] allowed me to examine Márkomeannu's linguistic landscape from a diachronic perspective while also addressing issues pertaining to the ideological foundations of language policies of the festival.

## The Farm by the Boulder: Gállogieddi – Myrnes

To say – and write, as on the festival's website – that Márkomeannu takes place at Gálloggieddi is a political statement and an instance of active

decolonization. "Gállogieddi" is the original Sámi name of a 19th-century farm[6] known as "Myrnes" in Norwegian.[7] The story of this farm, and of why it has two different names in two different languages, embodies the colonial pressure exerted over the Sámi people through toponymic policies. In 1883, brothers Ole Andreas and Nils Peder Johansen inherited Gállogieddi, dividing it into two separate but interdependent farms which shared some of the facilities, such as the fire-building, a small edifice in which the family built a baking oven. The first farmhouse was erected in 1890, followed by a second one built in 1895. The latter is the one which today stands at the centre of the farmyard and acts as the central building of Gállogieddi (Myrvoll 1995), which today is an open-air museum run by the Sámi museum Várdobáiki (Myrnes, Olsen, and Myrnes Balto 2006). Ole and Nils' time at Gállogieddi saw not only the division of the land between the two of them but also the implementation of policies designed to prevent Sámi cultures from appearing in public arenas. When the farm was divided between the brothers, this was noted in public documents, with Gállogieddi farmstead now mentioned as divided into two different units: "Myrnes Søndre" and "Myrnes Nordre." Myrnes is a Norwegian compound toponym composed of two fairly common components: *myr*, meaning swamp or marsh, and *-nes*, a generic term meaning headland or promontory. This change in name was the consequence of the implementation of then-new regulations demanding that all farmsteads be registered under Norwegian names. It also conceals an active policy of assimilation through the elimination of all manner of evidence of Sámi presence in Norway. Given their cultural relevance and their connections with history, practices, and worldviews, place-names were a primary target of these eradication policies. The family, who bore the Norwegian name of the farm as their surname, continued to live in Gállogieddi, even if its name was now Myrnes (either Søndre or Nordre) until the mid-1960s, when a new road was built lower down the hill. Further new regulations at the time required farms to be close to the road and, consequently, many farms were abandoned and relocated closer to the roads – among them, Gállogieddi/Myrnes, whose original site was hence abandoned. The buildings at Myrnes Nordre were later demolished, and today only some ruins are still visible. Myrnes Søndre was left empty until the 1980s, when it was selected as the site of an open-air museum which would focus on telling the stories of ordinary Márku Sámi people, standing as a testimony of the history of the Márku.

As mentioned, from the 1800s onwards, Norwegian authorities consciously substituted original Sámi toponyms with Norwegian names on maps and documents, systematically implementing toponymic silencing through the active exclusion of Sámi place-names from official road signs and maps (Helander 2005, 2009, 2014, 2016).[8] This removal of the original Sámi toponyms deprived the local people of elements of their intangible

Indigenous Sámi cultural heritage. As is often the case with Sámi toponyms, Gállogieddi[9] encapsulates a particular local worldview while conveying information about the location it defines and describes. The word translates to "meadow by the boulder" by combining two words: *gállu*, which refers to the large, erratic rock standing in what today is the farm's field, and *gieddi*, a meadow resulting either from reindeer herds grazing in the space who consequently fertilize the soil, or from farmers otherwise cultivating the area. The toponym Gállogieddi thus mirrors the local natural elements and represents an oral map in itself. At the same time, the toponym – and the natural elements to which the name refers to – is interwoven with Sámi worldviews, with local tales telling of an *ulda* living beneath the boulder.[10] Toponymic silencing also means the erasure of a place's Sámi past from the present, and hence the future. For Sámi communities, local place-names are a legacy of the past, encapsulating previous generations' collective memories, their visibility symbolizing the visibility of Sámi cultures. They are names dense with history, themselves elements of cultural history. Not only do place-names hint at or recall past events, they may also help to visualize the landscape by evoking its features. Furthermore, since the landscape is populated with entities who are agents dwelling in it, place-names are often reminiscent of the relationship between humans and these entities. In Sápmi, numerous toponyms bear witness to such relations (De Vivo 2022a). In Stuornjárga, the peninsula on which Gállogieddi is located, a deep hollow in a river – *jorbmi* – named Čuoppomáddojorbmi, is associated with numerous stories about Čuoppomáddu, the Mother of Frogs. Čuoppomáddu is the guardian spirit of frogs, protecting her offspring and presiding over them, as late primary school teacher, educator, and political activist Asbjørg Skåden notes in her homonymous 1994 book (Skåden 1994, 2008; Skåden and Skåden 2011).[11] Toponyms carry the memory and layered experience of multiple generations and, as such, have the intrinsic power of connecting the past with the future. In fact, toponyms are more connected with the future than with the past they recall, for they allow future generations a sense of belonging and help them position themselves in a cultural continuum. Furthermore, they embody both the constant changing of the local society as well as its deep roots in the past. For all these reasons, to silence and obliterate Indigenous toponyms is a violent act of colonization and cultural eradication. In recent decades, toponymic colonialism in Sápmi has often been contested, for instance by means of artistic expressions such as the decolonial maps drawn by Sámi artist Keviselie/Hans Ragnar Mathisen (Stephansen 2017). Mathisen's work has paved the way for other artists and activists to engage in forms of toponymic reclamation. At the same time, projects documenting – and hence preserving – Sámi place-names have been occurring across Sápmi and, in the Márku, converged in the publication of a rich volume edited by Skåden and Skåden (2011).

### Language Shift(s) in the Márku

As the example of the Gállogieddi-Myrnes name shift illustrates, over the course of centuries, the Márku geo-cultural area had witnessed and endured toponymic silencing as a consequence of long-lasting pervasive assimilation policies implemented by the Norwegian authorities. Such policies contributed to a language shift from the local Duortnus/Torne variety of Northern Sámi to standard Norwegian Bokmål.[12] Over the course of a few decades, the linguistic soundscape of Stuornjárga changed dramatically, with World War II the turning point for language attitudes in the area. During the early 1940s, most Márku Sámi people chose to not speak the local Sámi language in public, even if the older generations still spoke Sámi among themselves. Many parents whose native tongue was Sámi chose instead to use Norwegian in daily interactions with their children to raise them in the hegemonic language, hoping to spare their children the stigma of their ethnic background. For these post-war children, Sámi was the secret language of their parents, grandparents, and elder relatives, a language that the children were not supposed to understand.

And yet they did understand it. Overhearing their family members speaking this idiom, the children developed a passive knowledge of their ancestors' language. So-called "kitchen Sámi"[13] was, for those growing up in the Márku during the 1950s and 1960s, the secret language of their family which assimilation had relegated to the private sphere, but had not managed to erase. As Emma Skåden explains:

> The *fornorsking*, the Norwegianization, deeply affected people, the generation of [our] great-grandparents. My grandfather and grandmother though… they were never in the closet, they had no shame on who they were. But they did not speak Sámi to my mother, my uncle, and aunts. They [the kids] learnt the "kitchen Sámi," the Sámi [their parents] spoke with the elders, with the visitors, and also when they didn't want kids to understand. And the kids did not let their parents know they understand [the Sámi language]. It was the heart's language.
>
> *(E. Skåden 2020)*

This "heart's language"[14] was at the core of the revitalization initiatives of the 1980s and 1990s carried out by local cultural activists, some trained as teachers. By the point, these children from the 1950s and 1960s had children of their own, and wanted to raise them with a positive attitude towards their Sámi heritage. This is why the Sámi kindergarten Sáráhká Sámemánák was first established in 1986 (Grenersen 2009; Myrnes Balto 2016). At the same time, these parents-teachers-activists introduced Sámi language as a subject in the local school. In the context of language shift, that is, "the partial or total

abandonment of a group's native language in favour of another" (Winford 2003, 15), language nests and language revitalization classes have proven to be extremely effective in counterbalancing the effects of linguistic assimilation and consequent language shift.[15] This successful model is grounded in the awareness that a child's early years are crucial in their development of language skills, and that daycare centres and kindergartens, together with the child's family and close networks, are extremely important in the strengthening and development of Sámi language skills (Hall and Øzerk 2012).

Educational environments with strong, positive attitudes towards Sámi culture were established in the Márku with the intent to raise the next generation of Sámi children in a setting that could make them feel confident of expressing their own Márku Sámi identity. Twenty years after the Sámi kindergarten and Sámi education in school were first established, those who were children in the 1980s were now teenagers or young adults in their early-20s and many of them walked in their parents' footsteps, publicly advocating for Sámi rights in the region as members of the local Sámi youth association, Stuornjárga Sámenuorak.

## The Stage by the Boulder: Inscribing Decolonial Signs in the Márku's Linguistic Landscape

In 1999, Stuornjárgga Sámenuorak established Márkomeannu as a Márku Sámi festival.[16] First held in Dyrskueplassen, since 2002 this festival has taken place at Gállogieddi, on the premises of the homonymous open-air Márku Sámi museum. Márkomeannu has proved crucial in the valorization of the local rural Márku Sámi identity, once based on a combined small-scale subsistence economy[17] and long-stigmatized by members of the Norwegian communities. Norwegians living along the coast regarded the Sámi people of inner Stuornjárga as being backward, and Sámi individuals did not feel welcome in the coastal settlements (private conversation with an elderly interlocutor who had grown up in the area). Stigmatization came not only from those who self-identified as Norwegian, but even from some belonging to Sámi communities from other areas of Sápmi. For many, reindeer herding and the Northern Sámi language variety spoken in areas such as Inner Finnmark, where herding was practiced, were considered to be the basis by which to measure other communities' Sámi identity. The growing normative character of this specific articulation of Sámi identity, as reindeer herders, led many to consider the Márku Sámi people as "not Sámi enough," since their culture was based on small-scale farming rather than reindeer herding, and the local Sámi language may have been similar, yet was very different from that spoken in Inner Finnmark. Furthermore, the consequences of state-led assimilation policies had led to the erosion of local Márku Sámi language and, to an extent, its culture. All these factors furthered the perceived cultural

distance between the Sámi of Stuornjárga and the reindeer herders from areas such as Inner Finnmark, contributing to both the further stigmatization of the former, and a perception of difference that, in the eyes of many, assumed inferiority of character. Reflecting on these issues, Márku Sámi author Sigbjørn Skåden refers to his community and its history as "an other Sámi story," further clarifying that in his youth he felt that the Sámi culture to which he belonged "was never given any space in the Sámi public sphere" (2020, 52).

Márkomeannu founders' engagement with linguistic and toponymic decolonial practices through a wide array of creative means was preserved through time, as the producers of the 2018 and 2019 festivals Anne Henriette Reinås Nilut and Magnus Storvoll Strømseth pointed out in interviews, as the organizers try to use Northern Sámi as often and in as many contexts as possible. Being a Sámi festival, Márkomeannu is a place and time suspended from the normal Norwegian-dominated daily life, in which openly embracing Sámi culture and Sámi heritage can put people at risk of verbal and even physical harassment. Márkomeannu aims to be a safe place and time, where and when Sámi from the Márku – as well as from across all of Sápmi – can easily access their own language, speak it with old friends and new acquaintances, use it in both daily life and for special activities, and express their Sámi identities freely, as various interlocutors from different areas of Sápmi mentioned during interviews and informal conversations. The focus on (Márku) Sámi as not just a living but a thriving language has made Márkomeannu a site of "linguistic activism" (Salo 2012). Furthermore, using art and activism as a means of ethno-political expression, the festival challenges stereotypical, normative, and essentializing tropes that curtail Sámi individual and collective agency by valorizing the local Sámi cultures, in/tangible heritage, identities, and the local Márku Sámi language.

At Márkomeannu, the festival's linguistic landscape is designed so as to be noticed and paid attention to. The presence and high visibility of the local variety of Northern Sámi, and the subordinate status of both Norwegian and English languages – expressed visually through the physical positioning of writings in these languages on posters and signage – fosters a sense of shared Sámi identity and encourages the use of Northern Sámi among festival-goers of all ages. Similarly, the prominence of local Sámi toponyms – epitomized by the 2012 Gállogieddi waymark and more recent bilingual road signs – reinforces the ethnic affiliation of places and spaces.

Even though every linguistic landscape case study examines a given context in a specific time period, hence addressing a time-bound linguistic landscape, the analysis of a festival's linguistic landscape constitutes a study of an inherently temporary setting that is destined to vanish as soon as the festival is over, in many cases leaving no physical traces behind. Festival merchandising allows festivalgoers to bring home souvenirs which, during the festival, constitute an element of the Márkomeannu linguistic landscape, and later

function as icons of the festival. Furthermore, in the case of t-shirts, mugs, or tote bags, by being brought home afterwards and used long after the festival has ended, the power of the festival is temporally extended, keeping its memory – as well as the activism it fosters – alive.

Similarly, Márkomeannu's website and social media accounts and posts bring the festival into people's homes, allowing them to engage with the festival and with fellow festivalgoers or čávva even before it begins, while the festival is still in the making, as well as after it has ended. Meanwhile, more permanent linguistic signs also fulfil important symbolic functions, as demonstrated by Márkomeannu's waymark (as discussed in the next section) and stage. The stage is an imposing structure with a shape reminiscent of local barns, with a pattern inspired by Sámi shawls decorating the upper structure. The name of the festival is carved in the tympanum and dominates the meadow, signalling the now-indissoluble intertwining of the festival and the area. The stage demonstrates the power of specific linguistic signs whose permanence in the landscape, independent of the festival, constitute a link between language and landscape.

## The 2012 Gállogieddi Waymark

A bright example of decolonial toponymic activism, the Gállogieddi waymark (see Figure 9.1) was built in 2012 during a time of heated debates over the official acknowledgement of local Sámi place-names and their inclusion on road signs in the Romsa area. In 2011, the proposal for the placement of bilingual road signs in Nordland and Troms counties – for instance, in Bådåddjo/Bodø or in Romsa – generated bitter controversies that revealed a wider phenomenon with a long history in Sápmi. In 1990, the growth in importance and visibility of Sámi cultures led to the introduction of the Stadnamnlova (The Place-Name Act). According to this act, in a "Sámi Language Administrative Area," Sámi languages are granted a prestige equal to that of the Norwegian language. To show the "[…] new acceptance of Indigenous toponyms that were previously denied official status" (Puzey 2009, 823), bilingual road signs replaced the old monolingual ones in selected areas. At the time, this change in status and visibility of Sámi languages was among the primary cause of conflict within multicultural communities in northern Norway. The 2011 proposal for bilingual Sámi and Norwegian road signs reignited the debate over the presence of Sámi languages and cultures in the public sphere. It is in this context of tension that, in 2012, Márkomeannu's čávva built a Márku Sámi-centred waymark displaying the Sámi names of various towns and villages in Sápmi. As of 2023, the yellow wooden waymark stands between the festival's main stage and the Naturlekeplassen, a playground built in 2022 by Sámi architect Joar Nango and Sámi artist Anders Rimpi out of what used to be an old abandoned barn. The seemingly decorative, homemade signpost could go unnoticed, but it works as a


**FIGURE 9.1** The Gállogieddi waymark on the left and the Áhkánjárga/Narvik waymark on the right (both as of July 2023).

*Source:* Photos by Erika De Vivo.

geographical and symbolic point of reference. It is no coincidence that the Gállogieddi waymark bears a strong resemblance to one of the symbols of the nearby town of Áhkánjárga/Narvik, where a yellow metal signpost stands indicating major localities in Norway and around the world, along with their distance from Áhkánjárga/Narvik (see Figure 9.1). Many of the places noted on the Áhkánjárga/Narvik waymark are located within Sápmi and count among their residents numerous people who self-identify as Sámi – towns such as Kiruna, Tromsø, Trondheim, Hammerfest, Harstad, Nordkapp, Boris Gleb, Rovaniemi, and Narvik itself. None of the names of these localities are written in any Sámi language, however – only exclusively in the local hegemonic language. The same is true of the only locality with a Sámi majority population reported on the waymark, Kárášjohka, which appears in its Norwegian name: Karasjok.

Although the Gállogieddi signpost was inspired by the one in Áhkánjárga/Narvik, it is not just a reproduction of a recognizable symbol of the nearby town; it is also a decolonial instrument which, by appropriating the visual colonial language, aims at overturning it. S. Skåden explains the connection between these two signposts and the programmatic decolonial nature of the Gállogieddi waymark:

> [The Gállogieddi waymark is] like a famous icon of Narvik, so we sort of colonized the Narvik icon. There was a guy on the staff who has grown up there in Narvik, and was irritated… I guess about the Narvik mentality.

> Yeah, he suggested that we make a solid version of [the waymark]. The one in Narvik shows the road to Moscow, St. Petersburg, New York, Berlin, Tokyo…. We made our Sámi version of it – just small Sámi villages, from the point of view of [Gállogieddi].
>
> *(Skåden 2019)*

The Gállogieddi waymark displays the names of both the festival and the farm in the exact same spot where the Narvik waymark exhibits the name of the town and how far it is from the iconic Nordkapp. Below the its titular name, numerous arrows point in different directions, each with the Sámi name of a village, town, or city written upon it, along with its distance from Gállogieddi noted in kilometres. Each toponym is written in the language of its Sámi inhabitants.[18]

These Sámi toponyms also have Scandinavian, Finnish, or Russian counterparts, but most of the toponyms refer to small villages or areas that are seldom mentioned on Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, or Russian maps. S. Skåden continued to explain how the Márkomeannu 2012 Board came up with the idea of using the waymark as the central element of that year's festival poster[19] and how, in doing so, Márkomeannu was taking a public stance on the issue of official acknowledgement of Sámi place-names:

> At the same time, we were working on the idea for that year's [2012] poster [*pointing towards the framed poster in his office*], of course. It was just after the political elections. Yeah, I felt… like that it [the debate on Sámi place-names] was an issue, that it was interesting or important to address somehow.
>
> *(Skåden 2019)*

Most of the settlements indicated on the 2012 Gállogieddi waymark and reproduced on the 2012 festival poster are either very close to the museum/festival site, or distant localities of great cultural relevance for the Sámi people. Exceptions to this are Romsa, Áhkanjárga, and Bådåddjo.[20] These relatively large towns, situated not far from Gállogieddi, are inhabited mostly by ethnic Norwegians but nonetheless have a strong and populous Sámi community. On the Gállogieddi waymark, these towns are indicated using their Sámi names as an act of protest and empowerment: Bådåddjo/Bodø was one of the towns involved in the 2011–2012 place-name debate. In having the name written in Julevsámegiella/Lule Sámi, the waymark expressed the festival's political view regarding the issue. Similarly, by including Áhkanjárga/Narvik, the very town from which the waymark was inspired, the festival pointed to the ethnic affiliation of that coastal area being very close to many Márku Sámi settlements. Many people living in Áhkanjárga/Narvik can likely trace at least part of their heritage back to local Sámi

communities, but many from that town have expressed ambivalence or even open rejection towards Sámi cultures and the Sámi people (Nygaard et al. 2019). Here, using the Sámi name of the town was a way to subvert these dynamics and carve a Sámi dimension which, even if it is rejected by many, is still part of the town's heritage. At the time that the waymark was constructed, the Sámi names of Áhkanjárga, Romsa, and Bådåddjo were not yet officially recognized on maps and road signs. However, when the Gállogieddi alter/native waymark was erected on the museum and festival premises, it inserted the festival visually and publicly into this place-name and language debate. By appropriating this symbol of Áhkanjárga/Narvik, the festival's organizers availed themselves of a colonial tool to reclaim the cultural and symbolical ownership of Gállogieddi. Moreover, this waymark made Gállogieddi a symbolic centre and point of reference for all Sámi out of a small and, by Norwegian standards, peripheral settlement, reversing the centre–periphery dynamics that continued to define many people's attitudes towards Sápmi.

The Gállogieddi waymark overturns the colonial organization of space, subverting the Norwegian – as well as Swedish, Finnish, and Russian – understanding of what merits being put on a waymark, what should be considered a destination or named as a reference point.[21] It subverts Norwegian toponymic silencing by attributing authority to Indigenous Sámi toponyms which are not only displayed in public but also used as reference points.

### Decolonizing the Local Linguistic Landscape: Handmade Signs in the Márku

In 1999, at a time of marked ethno-political tension, a performative protest sparked a heated debated in the Márku. Handmade Sámi toponym signs appeared on official road signs in what then was called the municipality of Skánik/Skånland (today: Dielddanuorri/Tjeldsund). This episode was closely connected with the wider political debates revolving around the presence/absence of Sámi toponyms from public and institutional spheres. The sociopolitical premises that preceded the appearance of the Sámi road signs were marked by tensions and conflict over the acknowledgement of the Márku as a Sámi area. The debate about Sámi road signs in the Márku Sámi villages in Skánik/Skånland characterized the last decade of the 20th century, not just at the administrative level (during municipal council sessions) but also in the public arena through newspaper articles and letters to the editor, such as those published in the local newspaper, *Harstad Tidende*. The community seemed to be divided into various factions. A small segment of the local Márku population opposed the use of Sámi toponyms in institutional settings, claiming that the area was not Sámi or that Sámi identity belonged to the past. Other members of the community – usually members of the SLF Samenes Landsforbund party – considered Sámi ethnic affiliation to be a private issue that

was not to be addressed publicly. Still others – mostly belonging to the NSR Norske Samers Riksforbund, the Norwegian Sámi association political party – considered Sámi ethnic affiliation to be a core feature of both past and present local identity, and that, as such, it should to be publicly addressed and acknowledged. This climate of tension led to the organization of campaigns promoting the interests of various opponents.

As Mathisen (2002) reports, a signature campaign was carried out in two of the villages that the Sámi association Iinná ja Biiras Sámiid Searvi (IBSS) described as being Sámi: Hoanttas/Nipen and Vuopmi/Kjønna. On 2 June 1999, members of these two villages' communities sent the Skånland municipal council a petition with 50 signatories entitled, "*Protest mot å likestille skilting på norsk og samisk*."[22] According to Mathisen, the document produced by the campaign proponents emphasized that the assimilation/Norwegianization process in Kjønna/Nipen had occurred many generations prior to the campaign, making the Sámi memory of the area dim and no longer relevant. Similarly, it pointed out that, in the neighbouring villages of Vuopmegeahči/Trøssemark and Husmeroggi/Husjord, Norwegian was used as a daily spoken language and that therefore, in their view, there was no need for Sámi road signs. Today this document is exhibited at the Arctic University Museum of Norway in a section devoted to Sámi place-names. A Sámi woman from another region of Sápmi who visited the museum with me told me that it was a shock for her to read the names of those who signed the petition the first time she saw it, as she knew most of the surnames. Many were the parents or grandparents of people who today were active members of the Márkomeannu Searvi. This document, along with her testimony, shows how much the context has changed in just a few decades. Over the course of only one or two generations, the same family shows completely opposing attitudes towards the public expression of Sámi identity. Two important aspects emerge from these reflections concerning place-names in the Márku: the temporal dimension – the passing of time – expressed by the concept of generations, and the linguistic dimension – the relevance attributed to the language spoken on a daily basis. Shortly after the road sign debate and the collection of signatures opposing Sámi road signs, homemade Sámi signs began to appear in the Márku. A few days after the petition against bilingual signs in the Márku had been presented, local politician Idar Reinås commented on the issue in an article written in Norwegian in the newspaper *Sagat*, entitled, "The War Over Sámi on Road Signs Continues in Skånland, Homemade Signs Set Up":

> Now, some Sámi enthusiasts have marked their position by creating a wooden homemade sign and placing it on the road to Nipen [the Norwegian name], or Hoantas as it is actually called [in Sámi]. This is probably done to show that the two initiators of the signature campaign

> and the signatories, as well as some others, are Sámi. Or do you just want to provoke?
>
> *(Reinås,* Sagat*, 17 June 1999, as quoted in S. Mathisen 2002, 81, author's translation)*

Over the course of that summer, several such homemade signs appeared across the Márku. These signs were an early instance of toponymic activism in the Márku. By the following year, in October 2000, another case of toponymic activism occurred when a leaflet was distributed to numerous households in Skånland. Signed by S. A. G. Samisk Aksjonsgruppe (Sámi Action Group), an anonymous group of local Sámi activists, the leaflet read:

> This is just a small reminder of the actual place-names and identities of the villages in Skånland. The last chapter in the case about the equality of "Sámi place-names" with Norwegian [ones] has not been written. The actions will "continue" until the tip of the *komager*[23] emerge from the snow.
>
> *(quoted in Mathisen 2002, 82, author's translation)*[24]

Following this statement, over 40 local Sámi toponyms were listed, matched with their Norwegian counterparts. As Mathisen points out, the list of Sámi place-names included settlements located along the coast of Stuornjárga. Those settlements had and still are generally considered as being Norwegian by both the people of the Márku and the people of the coast. By including them in a list of Sámi place-names, the S.A.G. activists made a point about the Sámi heritage of the coastal settlements while also claiming the right to use Indigenous Sámi names to refer to villages regarded as Norwegian. In an interview held at his office, S. Skåden described the tense climate as follows:

> […] back in 2011–2012 there was a big debate also in Tromsø […] about some of the names and places. Some of these places that we've put here [*pointing to the 2012 Márkomeannu poster*] are towns that they were debating about. […] In 2011, there was this big, political issue […] in the local *kommune*[25] elections […]. I think, just before the election, they decided to include Tromsø in the Sámi language area officially, to apply to get to be part of the Sámi language area, which also means that you're supposed to have bilingual road signs that were supposed to say also Romsa. The Right [Party], went to the election saying that "if you like us, if you vote for us, we're going to reverse [the inclusion of Tromsø in the Sámi administrative area]." It became a really nasty debate. I thought Tromsø would be, well, better than that. I think everyone was shocked, including the person who did become the new mayor from the Right Party. He was shocked to hear what was said in those days.
>
> *(Skåden 2019)*

The 2011 controversies regarding the inclusion of Sámi toponyms on road signs polarized the local multicultural communities, as the issue was primarily about the status and visibility of Sámi languages. For many, the public inclusion of Sámi toponyms on road signs was a welcome acknowledgement of the intrinsic value of Sámi cultures, however the proposal's detractors saw it as a source of stigma. In the Márku, the 2011 debate grew ugly. In the same interview, pointing once again at the framed poster in his office, S. Skåden stated:

> And this poster, […] it was that year we started working on the idea […]. We didn't know it wasn't only Tromsø… it wasn't only these places they had these really nasty debates back in 2011.
>
> *( Skåden 2019)*

The debate surrounding the adoption of Sámi language road signs – and their consequent presence in the public sphere, so opposed by some Márku Sámi people, as well as by many others with Sámi backgrounds throughout Sápmi – represented an opportunity for young local activists to reflect upon strategies for countering the pervasive power of the introjected stigma against Sámi cultures.

## Gállogieddi as Epicentre of Sámi Indigenous Futurism: Márkomeannu #2118

Unlike the Áhkanjárga/Narvik waymark, the Gállogieddi waymark does not display internationally famous reference points such as Rome, Moscow, or New York. Instead, by displaying Sámi settlements – especially small ones – it re-centres the geography of Sápmi. Gállogieddi becomes a point of reference from which the distances from the places mentioned are measured, making it a Sámi *caput Sápmi*.[26] This aspect is of extreme relevance, as the region and its Sámi culture based on small-scale farming and seasonal fishing had long been regarded as peripheral by the two local hegemonic cultures of Norway and of Sámi reindeer herders (Skåden 2020).

The central position of Gállogieddi in the contemporary Sámi cultural landscape was echoed in the 2018 edition of Márkomeannu, which imagined Gállogieddi to be the last Sámi place on a devastated future Earth. According to the 2018 scenario, the year was 2118, and Gállogieddi was a thriving Sámi enclave in a dystopic colonial wasteland.

> […] indigenous peoples have found a way to create their own sanctuaries hidden from the dark colonial power led by the power-hungry world chancellor Ola Tjudi.[27] The sami peoples sanctuary is at Gállogieddi, where they are trying to build a new world for themselves.[28]

The 2018 festival hinged upon an Indigenous science fiction plot that projected festival-goers 100 years into the future. This concept was implemented by means of site-specific sound installations and scenography (De Vivo 2022b) as well as linguistic signs which also functioned as references to contemporary challenges faced by Sámi communities across Sápmi. Festival organizers hung posters from previous Márkomeannu festivals on the rear walls of market stands. They also wrote over them with spray-paint, graffiti-style, to convey a firm political position against colonization and the injustices it fosters. Expressions such as "ČSV," "#2118," "#meannu2118," "#Ráfi Olggos,"[29] "resilience," "moratorio," and "together we rise" were scattered around throughout the festival area, positioning the festival in dialogue with transnational Sámi ethno-political struggles (see Figure 9.2).

The street-art-inspired graffiti embodied issues relevant to both the local and wider Sámi communities. The use of hashtags in the Márkomeannu 2018 linguistic landscape was meant to encourage festival-goers to engage with the festival on social media platforms, enhancing a dialogical relationship between the festival and festival-goers. Each word was specifically selected for the meaning it carries. The 2018 festival director Anne Henriette framed the concept of "resilience" as part of a wider discourse on self-determination and


**FIGURE 9.2** Politically-charged graffiti at Márkomeannu 2018.

*Source:* Photo by Erika De Vivo.

self-representation, connecting it to the history of Sámi oppression as well as to recent movements aimed at deconstructing colonial narratives concerning the Sámi. This concept – made visible through its inscription in the festival linguistic landscape – permeated the 2118 festival plot and resonated in other expressions stencilled across the festival area. The acronym ČSV was among the most easily identifiable and highly recognizable ones. In Sámi contexts, even those who do not master any Sámi language know the ethno-political meaning of these three letters and the message they carry. In the early-1970s, ČSV was developed as a political slogan by artists and activists in Sirma, in the Norwegian part of Sápmi, and percolated into various milieus throughout the course of the decade (Stephansen 2017). The polysemy of this acronym made it a particularly versatile symbol. Its most common reading is *Čájet Sámi Vuoiŋŋa*, meaning "show Sámi spirit." The underlying idea was (and still is) that, despite the oppression and marginalization endured by Sámi people in the past, today's young Sámi can and should be proud of their cultural background, an ideological premise of Márkomeannu itself.

In contrast to the long history of ČSV as a slogan, "Moratorio" is relatively recent, connected with *Ellos Deatnu* (*Long live Deatnu*), the Sámi resistance and resurgence movement from the Deatnu area opposing and demanding a moratorium on the exploitation of the Deatnu River by both tourists and the state.[30] This connection between Márkomeannu and Ellos Deatnu dates back to the origins of the movement when, in 2017, a delegation from the newly established movement had attended Márkomeannu displayed the Ellos Deatnu flag in the festival area. Just a few weeks earlier, on the summer solstice, the movement's proponents had set up a camp on the island of Čearretsullo in the Deatnu/Tana River, not far from the village of Ohcejohka/Utsjoki in the northernmost area of Finnish Sápmi. There, they founded the Čearretsullo *siida* and declared a moratorium on recreational fishing in the Deatnu while also proclaiming the autonomy of the island and surrounding waters (Holmberg 2018). Ellos Deatnu declared that it was now customary Sámi law, not the Finnish state, which could regulate life on and around the island. As Sámi scholar Rauna Kuokkanen argues, this declaration of Sámi sovereignty implied that fishing licenses purchased by tourists from the Finnish state were no longer considered to be valid by the members of the activists' siida. Instead, those who had purchased the Finnish-issued permits "were expected to ask permission to fish from local Sámi and especially those families whose traditional fishing sites are in question" (Kuokkanen 2021, 1). The proclamation of Čearretsullo's autonomy was, as Kuokkanen highlights, the first of its kind, as never before had a protest led by a group of Sámi artists and activists claimed Sámi sovereignty by declaring an area as autonomous.[31] By referencing the Ellos Deatnu movement through the "Moratorio" graffiti, Márkomeannu 2018 was implicitly declaring its position on Ellos Deatnu's cause.

A further connection binds Márkomeannu 2018 and Ellos Deatnu. The "Gállogieddi of 2118" scenario was one of a peaceful Sámi enclave within a wasteland, ruled by a centralized, absolute colonial power figuratively embodied by Ola Tjudi. This future Sámi enclave symbolized and epitomized Indigenous sovereignty manifesting itself through self-determination and Sámi pre-colonial decision-making models. In contrast to Ola Tjudi's tyrannical form of government, decisions in 2118 Gállogieddi were made collegially, involving all members of the community, while the elders were acknowledged as culture-bearers who offered guidance and wisdom rather than imparting orders.[32] By inscribing the Ellos Deatnu cause across the 2018 festival's linguistic landscape through the Moratorio graffiti, Márkomeannu 2118 also revealed the festival's ethnopolitical position, visible between the lines of the festival's futuristic scenario.

## Conclusions

Since its introduction in 2012, the Márkomeannu waymark has become a permanent, visible reference point inscribing the festival in Gállogieddi's linguistic landscape and becoming one of the symbols of the festival and the place it stands for. Through this waymark, Márkomeannu organizers and the čávva have shown that an alter/native geography does exist in Sápmi, and that the hegemonic values are not shared by everyone. Small places, important for Sámi communities but excluded from Norwegian maps, may be crucial nodes for the Sámi people living throughout Sápmi. Among them, Gállogieddi – a Márku Sámi farm once abandoned due to Norwegian regulations – has gained a role of prominence. As both S. Skåden and E. Skåden mentioned, one major goal has been achieved through Márkomeannu: Making the Márku a reference point in Sápmi or, in their words, "put the Márku on the map." This remark encapsulates the (Márku-)Sámi struggle for recognition while also pointing to the importance of Indigenous toponyms in Sápmi today, as well as in other "official" colonial nation states. The fight to have Sámi place-names such as Márku and Gállogieddi recognized has multiple articulations and manifestations – some of which have been addressed here – has led to the formal recognition of Sámi toponyms and their inclusion in top-down signage in numerous places, such as on official road signs.

The Márku area, falling within the Dielddanuorri suohkan/Tjeldsund Municipality region, became an official part of the Sámi administrative area in 2020 after decades of painstaking work by local activists. This achievement – making place-names visible both on maps as well as in the minds of the Márku population – should be recognized as a collective success, resulting from the continuous efforts of numerous segments of local society, including committees, cultural workers, volunteers, and the local population. Public – both bottom-up and official – displays of local Sámi languages and

toponyms have a strong symbolic value in Sápmi's multilingual and multicultural contexts. Politically engaged artistic practices challenge the status quos that reinforce subjugation and asymmetrical power relations. Through art and activism, exponents of Sámi cultures engage with issues such as these, often in provocative ways, attempting to bring to light what has been made invisible through normalization processes that have obscured imbalances in power relations while also reinforcing hegemonic narratives. Today, Indigenous Sámi place-names and words dot the Márku Sámi linguistic landscape, some permanently while others only during the festival week. Toponyms in particular embody intangible cultural heritage at the core of a community (in this case, of the Márku Sámi) reflecting how it engages and has engaged with, experienced, and interpreted the landscape. Toponyms also contribute to the creation and strengthening of cultural and historical identities as they embody the historical memory of the local community passed down through generations. They all constitute important repositories of identity for the local Márku Sámi, connecting the community with its past through the language of its ancestors while also projecting Sámi identities and languages into the future for generations yet to come.

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## Notes

1 My heartfelt thanks to all my interlocutors, in particular Sigbjørn Skåden and Emma Skåden for sharing with me their memories, reflections, and thoughts concerning Márkomeannu. I would also like to thank them for their support, their kindness, and their feedback on my work. *Ollu giitu*.

2 Márku Sámi and Márku (Norwegian: Markasami and Marka) used to be generic terms, both derived from the Norwegian *markebygd*, "the outlying fields." Márku can be translated into English as "outer fields," and refers to small settlements situated in the inland areas of northern Nordland and southern/central Troms counties, far from the coast (Storm 1993), which today are dominated by Norwegian-speaking communities, often with Sámi origins. Márku Sámi in turn refers to the Sámi people dwelling in Márku settlements. In this chapter, I use the

emic term Márku to refer to the geocultural area, and Márku Sámi for the Sámi language spoken there.

3 Márku Sámi is a local articulation of the Čohkkiras Sámi language, belonging to the Duortnus/Torne Sámi language, itself a variety of Northern Sámi. Márku Sámi also displays elements of Lulesámi, the language spoken in the nearby Tysfjord cultural area (Kejonen 2020).

4 Http://www.markomeannu.no/.

5 Čávva is a Márku Sámi and Duortnus Sámi word meaning "a person who lies to work a lot and for a long period of time," which is translated into Norwegian as *stab* in festival materials (e.g., webpages, online posts), meaning "staff" in English.

6 Written sources referencing Gállogieddi (e.g., censuses, wills, official records regarding the farm) report that, in 1840, there were two barns, a hayloft, and a shed in addition to the *goahti* used by the family (Myrnes, Olsen, and Myrnes Balto 2006).

7 In the second half of the 19th century, Jens Andreas Friis (1821–1886), a Norwegian philologist, linguist, and expert lexicographer in Sámi languages, published a series of cartographic maps of Northern Norway, reporting the ethnic affiliations of the local households and the language spoken by their members. These maps have become useful tools when studying the history of language and ethnicity in localized areas. In Friis' 1861 map of Finnmark and Troms counties (https://www.dokpro.uio.no/friiskartene/1861/1861oversikt.html), Gállogieddi is identified using the Norwegian name Myrnes, but the settlement dwelling structure (as well as of others nearby) is noted as a *lávvo,* indicating the Sámi ethnic affiliation of the family living there. A further graphic sign indicates that both the husband and wife could speak Norwegian (Hansen and Niemi 2001).

8 Official state-produced maps from the 19th century did not record any Sámi settlement place-names; such toponyms were used only to identify inner mountain areas. Only from the end of the 20th century were Sámi toponyms included on official maps.

9 An alternative toponym attested to in sources, and which is still part of the oral knowledge, is *Gállogoahti*, "the goahti (turf hut) by the boulder."

10 Often called "the little people" or "the little people of the underground" (fieldnotes of Skánik, 25 August 2018), the *ulddat* are also referred to as the *gufihtar*, *ganeš*, or *háldi* (Solbak 2000). The ulddat are other-than-human beings belonging to the vast and complex Sámi folklore, and are important entities populating the landscape where the Sámi themselves dwell. These subterranean/invisible beings often recur in Sámi storytelling, both in the past and today.

11 While a teacher at the local primary school, Asbjorg Skåden embarked on a pedagogical and documentation project, instructing her pupils to interview members of the older generations about the areas around their homesteads. She also encouraged the children to ask about stories connected with such places.

12 No data is available regarding how many people speak Márku Sámi. Linguist Olle Kejonen estimates that approximately 1,000 individuals speak Čohkkiras Sámi, the endangered language variety Márku Sámi belongs to. In his view though, the number of native Čohkkiras speakers in the Norwegian part of Sápmi may be as low as only a few dozen (Kejonen 2020).

13 Olmmáivággi author Gerd Mikalsen wrote a novel based on her own family experiences in relation to language shift. Mikalsen examines the social dimension of "kitchen Sámi" or "the adults' language." The novel, evocatively titled *Father's New Mother Tongue* in English (*Farsmålet* in Norwegian, 2016, and *Áhčigiella* in Northern Sámi, 2017) addresses the trauma and the scars caused by assimilation processes in a village where Læstadianism (a conservative branch of Lutheranism founded in the mid-19th century by Sámi pastor Lars Levi Læstadius) and social

stigma against Sámi identities dominate people's lives. The novel also addresses the healing that comes from "taking back one own's language" and cultural identity in the community where Riddu Riđđu, another important Sámi cultural festival, has taken place since 1991 (Mikalsen 2019).

14 On Sámi as a "heart language" at Márkomeannu, see http://www.markomeannu.no/giellabargit-17; also https://lovdata.no/static/NOU/nou-2016-18.pdf.

15 Language nests in particular have proven effective in various contexts, as in Aanar/Inari, in the Finnish part of Sápmi (Pasanen 2018).

16 Stuornjárgga Sámenuorak, founded in 1999, was discontinued in 2007 when the Márkomeannu Searvi (festival association) was founded.

17 Until at least the 1950s, subsistence strategies in Stuornjárga followed the differentiation of the local resources and their exploitation. Different patterns of resource exploitation were charged with ethnic features: along the coast, groups who identified as Norwegians engaged primarily in fishing, while inland, small-scale farming and, in some cases, small-scale reindeer-herding, were the bulk of the local Sámi economy. During winter, the men of the inland Sámi families were often engaged in some form of paid work or went fishing in Lofoten and/or along the Finnmark coast to supplement their income (Storm 1993; Andersen 2005). Meanwhile, the women were left in charge of the farms, making decisions regarding their management. Written records show that the family living at Gállogieddi owned their own reindeer until after World War II, in addition to cows, goats, and sheep, as well as having horses for heavy workloads (Myrvoll 1995).

18 The names of places located within the Russian border are written using the Sámi-adapted Cyrillic language employed to write eastern Sámi languages (excluding Aanar Sámi).

19 Just like posters from previous and later editions, the Markomeannu 2012 poster contains the crucial details of the festival: dates, location, and information relating to the programme. The lower third of the poster is presented as white text on a teal background, with the festival name written first in large, white, capital letters, as it appears over the stage's tympanum during the festival itself, and then below, also in white, the names of the year's artists and various organizations (i.e., publishing houses, associations, small local businesses) which contribute to the festival in their respective capacities. The top two thirds of the poster use a light orange background, the same colour as the waymark's painted wooden planks. Silhouetted outlines of two singers, stage lights, and young people dancing are shown in aqua green or dark orange surrounding the dominating image: a stylized black and white reproduction of the wooden waymark as it stood in 2012. The only difference between the physical waymark and its reproduction on the poster is that, on the actual waymark at Gállogiedi, the second plank from the top displays the name of the festival, while in the poster, this plank shows the festival dates.

20 Later additions to the waymark have reflected Márkomeannu's continued engagement in Sámi ethno-political activism. For example, Tråante was added in 2017, the centenary of the first Sámi National Assembly held there in Trööndelage/Trondelag county, while the 2023 addition of Fovsen (also in Trööndelage) referenced Markomeannu's stance in the ongoing Fovsen/Fosen windfarm case (Broderstad 2022; Ravna 2022; Senel et al. 2023).

21 The same process applies to the handmade wooden road signs set up in the dead of night throughout the Márku 10 years earlier (Mathisen 2002). These signs were bottom-up, counter-hegemonic elements of the local linguistic landscape. At least one of these signs was later collected by museum workers and is currently among the Sámi items preserved in – but not currently exhibited at – the Arctic University Museum of Norway collection in Romsa/Tromsø (private conversation with Dikka Storm).

22 Translates to "Protest against equating signs in Norwegian and Sámi."
23 Norwegian for *gápmagat*, Sámi leather shoes.
24 "Detta er bare en liten påminnelse om bygdene i Skånland sine egentlige stedsnavn og identitet. Siste kapittel i s[a]ka om "Sámiske stedsnavns" sin likestilling med norsk er ikke skrevet. Aksjonene vil «fortsett» helt til komagtuppene stikker frem fra snøen."
25 Norwegian for "municipality."
26 Borrowed from the Latin *caput mundi*, which originally referred to Ancient Rome. It translates literally as the head (*caput*) of the World (*mundus*), meaning "capital of the world," and refers to Rome's symbolic central position at the height of Roman power while hinting at the cultural prestige exercized by Roman culture over those living under Roman rule and its sphere of influence.
27 In 2018, Márkomeannu staff decided to give the future evil chancellor of the festival plot the culturally meaningful name Ola Tjudi. The title of "chancellor" was intended to evoke science fiction scenarios, such as Supreme Chancellor Palpatine from *Star Wars*, while the surname "Tjudi" bears strong connection to Sámi cultural heritage, referring to the *čuđit* (also spelled *tsjudit*), enemies who loom over Sámi *siiddat* (social units) in Sami folklore. The čuđit have become an important repository of meaning and a culturally-specific symbol connecting contemporary Sámi experiences to Sámi pasts and oral traditions. (For more on čudit legends in contemporary Sámi contexts, see De Vivo 2022a.)
28 As published on the English version of the 2018 Márkomeannu website, https://www.markomeannu.no.
29 Northern Sámi for "Peace out."
30 On 21 June 2017, Ellos Deatnu released a statement entitled "Čearretsullo moratoria/Moratorium in Čearretsuolu"; the English text reads, "A Moratorium is declared in the area of Čearretsuolu island regarding the new fishing regulations for the Deatnu (Tana/Teno) river, as the new regulations threaten the wellbeing of the Saami from the Deatnu valley." (See https://ellosdeatnu.wordpress.com/ for more information.)
31 Prior to the Ellos Deatnu's Moratorium protest, Sámi artistic activism had engaged in staged-sovereignty protests, such as *Golden Aja* (2015) and *Mearrariika* (2017), two art projects and participatory perfomances held in Romsa/Tromsø and designed by Sámi author and cultural worker Sigbjørn Skåden (among Márkomeannu's founders) and Sámi architect and visual artist Joar Nango.
32 In the festival scenario, the elders were represented symbolically by three Sámi political activists from the past: Elsa Laula Renberg (1887–1931), Anders Larsen (1870–1949), and Jakko Sverloff (1894–1977), played by Nina Valkeapää, Ánte Siri, and Aleksi Ahlakorpi, respectively. Referred to as *ofelaččat* (Northern Sámi for pathfinders), they were regarded as collective ancestors to the Sámi in the post-apocalyptic 2018 festival scenario (De Vivo 2022b).

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# 10

# THE SACRED MOUNTAIN

## The Heritage-Making of Sálašoaivi/ Tromsdalstinden

*Giacomo Nerici*

### Introduction

This chapter delves into the heritage-making process revolving around the mountain of Sálašoaivi/Tromsdalstinden[1] during a "public re-emergence" of memories tied to the cultural landscape of the Romssavággi/Tromsdalen Valley reindeer-herder community. Despite their seasonal use of the area at the beginning of the 20th century, these herder communities had dispersed by World War II. However, in 2004 Romsa/Tromsø began to prepare a bid to host the 2014 Winter Olympics which drew media attention to the "sacred" characteristics of the mountain and past existence of ritual practices which had, until then, been kept within the personal, domestic, and biographical spheres. Faced with the potential construction of a ski facility on the peak of Sálašoaivi, the Sámediggi (Sámi Parliament) mobilized to gather testimony of conceptions of "sacredness" from the old local reindeer herder communities, to use these as evidence for the recognition of the site as a Sámi cultural heritage location.

Although I was only partially familiar with these events, a series of rather unexpected field experiences during my first stay in Romsa in 2015 led me to realize that the heritage-making went well beyond the matter of this Olympic bid. During a fortuitous conversation with Roald Kristiansen, religious historian at UiT The Arctic University of Norway, I became aware of the presence of a *sieidi*, a sacred place, that he had found on Sálašoaivi. After visiting it, I met with Sámi artist Hans Ragnar Mathisen who had taken part in the vicissitudes in defence of the mountain, who shared with me his deep affective bond towards the mountain, and taught me the importance of observing certain ritual behaviours in the presence of sieidi.[2] These encounters in 2015

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thus prompted me to return to Romsa three years later to investigate both the cultural-historical context of Sálašoaivi and the contentious issue of heritage preservation, meeting some of the main protagonists and researching the archives of the Arctic University Museum of Norway. While some complained of the markedly political intentions of heritage preservation and considered the conception of the sacred to be enmeshed within secularized interpretations, others were convinced that the Sámediggi had given new value to the memories of the bearers of herding traditions, simply by rendering a story public which had, until then, remained under the radar.

Following a chronological thread from past to present, this chapter begins with a historical overview of Romssavággi and its Sámi inhabitants to relate the demands, requests, and claims later expressed by those who joined alongside the many voices calling for the conservation of Sálašoaivi as a heritage site. The Winter Olympics bid was a turning point for Sálašoaivi, providing a context to reveal a whole assemblage of narratives, positions, and stakes that influenced and at times conflicted with one another, generating controversy around the issue of the "sacred" mountain. By retracing the various phases of this story, exploring more recent developments and examining the authority of the arguments of the various protagonists, the aim is to show how Sámi cultural heritage can become a touchstone for a broader discussion on ethnic identity and its political repercussions. In the conclusion, I try to express how the construction of an idea of heritage, as well as the whole of anthropological knowledge, are both based on the unpredictability of the encounters, revelations, and misunderstandings inherent in ethnography, and how similar conceptions of reality thus hinge on interpretative knowledge and process dynamics.

## History, Memory, and the Cultural Experiences of Reindeer Herders in Romssavággi

The historical and geographic context of the human landscape around the city of Romsa is here taken into account by mainly considering the groups of reindeer herders who over time moved across and seasonally inhabited the Stuoranjárga peninsula. In particular, I am interested in the *siida* communities which existed in Romssavággi up until World War II, and spotlight one of their members in particular, Ola Omma, whose words were recorded in the archaeological survey and oral memory compilation carried out by Norwegian archaeologist Stine Benedicte Sveen. I was able to interview both Sveen and the Sámi reindeer herder Isak Tore Oskal[3] several times during my research.

The toponym *stuoranjárga* (Northern Sámi for "large nest" or "large peninsula") refers to an area the size of which tends to vary depending on the context and the interlocutor. While Stuoranjárga as a regional name is

generally used to refer to the mainland, in current government administrative lexicon it refers to Districts 27–28 (or "District IX" between 1800 and 1900) of the pasture zones of local reindeer herders (Sveen 2003, 88). In this chapter, Stuoranjárga refers to the largely mountainous peninsula that covers an area of more than 1,000 km$^2$, surrounded by two stretches of sea, Báhccavuotna/Balsfjord and Olggosvuotna/Ullsfjord. Despite the fact that these coastal areas were already characterized by cultural exchange dynamics, a wave of Norwegian settlers in the 1730s and Kven groups in 1750s greatly increased the local population, inspiring comparisons to northern "frontier," referencing the American frontier myth (Aas 1998).[4] Many of these settlers were farmers, who soon found themselves in conflict with Stuoranjárga's numerous siida who already existed in the region.

I focus specifically on the Romssavággi/Tromssen siida (today called the Tromsdalen siida), to which the Omma family of reindeer herders belongs. Based in Gárasavvon/Karesuando, their presence is first mentioned in a land registry from the mid-19th century[5] when the peninsula was divided into three *siiddat*: Romssavággi, Goahtevuopmi,[6] and Leaibbáš[7] (Sveen 2003). Confirmation of this division is found in the memoirs of Ola Omma, whom Sveen relied upon when reconstructing the historical vicissitudes of the Romssavággi siida.

Born in 1922, Omma was a reindeer herder from childhood, and was able to provide Sveen with invaluable information on the settlement of the Romssavággi area, based on stories he had heard from his father, Morten. Omma reported that his siida had its own summer pasture zone near Dalheim and, when he was a child, the siida had included not only his family but also members of the Labba, Pilto, and Lango families (Sveen 2003, 103). An official document dated 1867 counted eight families with a total of 2,780 reindeer in the valley, who stayed there for four to five weeks on average every summer (quoted by Sveen 2003, 103). According to a 1913 Renbeteskommissionen (Reindeer Breeding Commission) document, the division into three *siiddat* was annulled due to policies instituted by Norway at the time of the 1888 redefinition of the border with Sweden. The same document also seems to confirm Omma's memories of having heard about the presence of a *goahti* with a corral in Dalheim on the valley floor, where several members from the Romssavággi siida camped in summer. The dwelling was abandoned in the early 20th century, when these people moved to a location closer to the sea, near a longstanding local café – Sport Café – where, according to Omma, there must have been three *goađit* (turf huts) that were later destroyed by an avalanche in 1942 (Sveen and Oskal 1998–2002, Appendix C). The decision to move was probably related to tourism, an important resource for the local economy, as attested by the 1914 creation of an itinerary for foreign visitors (Sveen and Oskal 1998–2002). In fact, as early as 1870, the Sámi camp in the valley was considered to be an important attraction for cruise passengers

stopping in Romsa as they heading towards Nordkapp (Baglo 2015; Sandnes and Jensen 1994). Touristic popularity – evidenced by the circulation of vast numbers of photographs and postcards – was paralleled by ethnographic interest, "as the reconstruction of an inhabited Sámi camp became a component of the General Exposition for the County of Troms held in Tromsø in 1870, which formed the basis of the establishment of Tromsø Museum (now the Arctic University Museum of Norway) two years later" (Baglo 2015, 60). Despite the prominent positioning of the Sea Sámi in the industrial exposition, this display category became marginal in the 1894 exposition, where reindeer herding culture was presented as the only genuine and authentic icon of Sámi culture (Baglo 2019). From 1907 to 1908, Danish ethnographer, writer, and artist Emilie Demant Hatt followed the seasonal migrations of reindeer herders moving from Gárasavvon to Romssavággi, and reported on tourists' "indecent" demands to purchase any object they were interested in, and the difficulty the Sámi families had in refusing, despite their meagre earnings from the sales. Tourism was a business that many of the Sámi disliked because "it was as if, for foreigners, the Laplanders were just a bunch of

**FIGURE 10.1** Nils Henriksen Omma and two of his children (front) posing with tourists and crew from the Olaf Kyrre coastal ship visiting Romssavággi sometime between 1887 and 1893.

*Source:* Photographer unknown/Perspektivet Museum.

'sweet' odd animals" (Demant Hatt 2013, 149). But as Omma recalled, when he was a child, English, German, or American visitors would give him and his siblings small sums of money – 25 or 50 øre (Norwegian "cents"), which was enough to pay for the ferry ride to Romsa (Sveen 2003).

In addition to his anecdotes regarding tourism as well as a large number of toponyms, Omma also specifically recalled that, when his father Morten would cross Sálašoaivi in summer, he would typically refer to it as a *bassivárri*, meaning "sacred mountain" (Sveen and Oskal 1998–2002, Appendix C). The old herder had also heard it said that one must never sin nor yoik on or near the mountain, otherwise evil spirits would spread sickness and death among the animals and people. Moreover, Omma continued to believe that the mountain was sacred, because it guaranteed protection to the Sámi inhabitants of the valley, who enjoyed good health and a certain level of well-being (Sveen 2003, 106). Omma had no recollection of sacrifices taking place on the mountain, despite considering it a bassivárri for the Romssavággi siida. However, such habits and the traditional meanings imprinted on the landscape had been brusquely interrupted when the border with Sweden was closed during World War II. For this reason, Omma said, he had not set foot in Romssavággi since moving his reindeer herd through there in the summer of 1941 (Sveen 2003, 8–9).

In the 1950s and 1960s, with the Swedish community no longer migrating from Gárasavvon each summer, Romssavággi's pastures were settled by the reindeer herders of the Oskal family who came from the Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino region. The Oskals continued to interact with tourists, residing for an average of three weeks in a camp consisting of two lávut and an enclosure for the animals. Isak Tore Oskal, born in Guovdageaidnu in 1947, was just a boy when his family moved to the Stuoranjárga peninsula in 1951, after his father had heard of abundant pasture lands there (Oskal 1991). The Oskals found various traces of previous settlements in the landscape, including the remains of hearths, stone structures, and remnants of paths followed during transhumance (i.e., reindeer herd migrations). Rather than re-establishing a continuity with Romssavággi's past, however, the Oskals repopulated it, introducing new tracks, bivouacs, and reindeer-pasturing methods to the region.

During the post-war period, Sámi language toponyms fell out of use and their traditions were not perpetuated for two reasons: the Norwegianization of Sámi communities, and the interruption of transhumance from Sweden, which allowed for other Sámi families to settle in the valley (Mathisen 1991; Sveen 2003). Both corresponded to a hiatus in the transmission of knowledge, *savoir-faire*, and orders of meaning tied to the landscape. This break in the "chain of memory" (Hervieu-Léger 2000) made it necessary to rely on the last bearers of the traditions to shed light on the pre-war history of Romssavággi. However, in the early 2000s, an opportunity arose to give

voice to these venerable witnesses and make concrete use of their valuable testimonies, when plans for a Winter Olympic bid precipitated a need to shine a spotlight on Omma's reminiscences in order to protect Sálašoaivi.

### The Olympic Affair and the Resurfacing of Mountain Memories

On 3 December 2003, an article appeared in the Norwegian national newspaper *VG* titled, "Are the Tromsø Olympics Being Planned on a Sacred Mountain?" (Nielsen 2003). This revelation by Martin Urheim, then-president of the Romssa Sámi Searvi – Norgga Sámiid Riikkasearvi (RSS-NSR; Sámi Association of Tromsø – Norwegian Sámi Association), suggested the possibility that the mountain could have "sacred" status, mentioning possible presence of ancient sacrificial sites on Sálašoaivi. To determine and validate their existence, he petitioned for prompt action from the Sámediggi:

> We have no evidence that sacrificial ceremonies were carried out in ancient times at Tromsdalstinden. We will ask the Sámediggi to investigate. If this can be documented in writing, it will be difficult for us as an association to recommend the use of the mountain as a ski slope. In that case, the mountain will have to be entrusted to the Norwegian and Sámi cultural heritage authorities.
>
> *(Urheim, quoted in Nielsen 2003, author's translation)*

This was the first public mention of the possible existence of a religious practice that could place Sálašoaivi as a Sámi cultural heritage site. However, the series of events leading up to this statement had begun earlier that year in May, when Romsa's candidacy as a site for the 2014 Winter Olympics was first proposed. In preparing the proposal for the Norwegian Confederation of Sport (today the Norwegian Olympic Commission), the Tromsø Municipal Council instituted an executive committee called Tromsø 2014 AS (Kielland 2012, 84), despite opposition in the months prior to the Olympic bid by some members of the far-left Rød Valgallianse and far-right Framskrittpartiet parties (84). The public debate surrounding city's candidacy bid only began to be a matter of public debate in autumn 2003, as indicated by several surveys and articles that appeared in the local newspapers and other media channels, which seemed to reveal a certain annoyance towards the idea of Sálašoaivi, an extremely symbolic site for the city's residents, hosting alpine ski competition facilities. Giving an account of the public debate, Siv Ellen Kraft (2010, 50) highlights the use of religious language to exalt the unique, spectacular nature of the mountain, with articles describing it as "magical," "eternal," "Tromsø's most important icon," and "a symbol of the city." An article published on 2 March 2004 in *Nordlys*, a local newspaper, also noted practices and customs that lent particular importance to the mountain, which

was a destination for romantic outings, socializing with friends, or practising sports. Reflecting on the possible harm that could come to the mountain, journalist Knut Engelskjøn asserted that,

> Any interventions with bulldozers and dynamite will mean violating Tinden. It will be destroyed as a symbol and limited as a resource for physical and spiritual renewal. Tinden's uniqueness lies in the fact that it has until now been spared any modern technological intervention. Leave it unspoiled! […] Tromsdalstinden is "sacred" to the people of Tromsø. Sacred in the sense that it is inalienable, special, precious, important, and essentially inviolable.
>
> *(Engelskjøn 2004, author's translation)*

The mountain had to be kept safe from any human intervention, which was perceived as being subversive and destabilizing. By using the phrase, "sacred in the sense that it is inalienable," Engelskjøn was evoking meanings and tones often used to describe elements of cultural heritage in which the collective identity of a community is concentrated. The emphasis on the inalienable bond between the local citizens and the mountain also reflects a lexicon reminiscent of contemporary alternative spirituality spheres, seemingly intending to elevate an ancient, authentic history imprinted on places unsullied by human hands.

In the ensuing media discussion concerning Sálašoaivi, some intervened to express a general disagreement with the instances and claims of the Sámi. Among the few who participated in the debate there were conservative politician Øyvind Hilmarsen, who was already vocally against bilingual road signage and the idea of considering Tromsø as "an Indigenous city" (Hilmarsen 2004). Meanwhile, supporters of the Olympic bid included adherents of the city council staff and the two mayors who succeeded one another in office in Romsa during this period, as well as newspaper editors, leading sports figures, and members of Sámi organizations (Kielland 2012, 92).

To return to Urheim's previously mentioned article challenging the use of Sálašoaivi, his words were not in sharp opposition to the idea of the Olympic candidacy, but rather he was carefully avoiding coming out prematurely in favour of it without first obtaining evidence of sacred elements on the mountain, writing:

> Some of our [RSS-NSR] members are in favour of the idea of using the mountain for the Olympic Games, while others are strongly opposed to it. We believe that the view from Tromsdalstinden would be quite spectacular and make for good visuals on television. However, we believe it is wise for the Tromsø Olympic Commission to investigate other locations for this initiative.
>
> *(Urheim, quoted in Nielsen 2003, author's translation)*

Several academic and cultural figures were also among those who had expressly rejected and opposed the Olympics' use of Sálašoaivi (Kielland 2012, 92). One of the major players on this front was Hans Ragnar Mathisen, who was then a member of Tromsdalstindens Venner (Friends of Tromsdalstinden) and known for his important role in the foundation of the Máze Group, an art collective which had supported the causes of the Sámi Movement. Mathisen was also known as a creator of maps with native toponyms, and an editor of brief educational publications on the cultural heritage of the area around Romsa.

Confronted with plans to construct a ski facility, on 17 November 2003, Urheim had invited a few representatives of the Sámediggi to RSS-NSR offices to discuss what was known about the mountain, and what was at risk of being lost or damaged in the construction process. The work done by Sveen and Oskal was recounted, underscoring the value of Omma's oral accounts referencing the mountain as a "bassivárri." The Troms office of Birasgáhtten ja kultursuodjalanosso (BKO; Sámi Cultural Heritage Office) began to plan an expedition to Sweden to gather and record the memories of the reindeer herders now based there.

According to Article 2 of the Kulturminneloven (Norwegian Cultural Assets Law), cultural heritage is defined as "all traces of human activity in our physical environment, including places concerning historical events, beliefs or traditions."[8] In the absence of any sort of written source or document, the only proof to support the hypothesis that Sálašoaivi was a "sacred mountain" were the stories narrated by "bearers of tradition." These receptacles of memories in oral form would allow the Indigenous authorities to attest – in accordance with Norwegian law – to the presence of a place to be protected as "cultural heritage." Thus, the Sámediggi organized a four-day mission, from 28 to 31 January 2004, to send Jon Petter Gintal (member of the Tromsø BKO) and Mathisen, who was chosen for his cultural and linguistic knowledge of the region.

In the next section, I focus on the latter, showing how, beyond the gathering of testimony aimed at verifying the mountain's value as a heritage site, Mathisen also developed a sentimental attachment so strong that he felt compelled to protect it. "Everything I have worked for," he noted in one of his statements at the time, "will have been useless if Tromsdalstinden becomes the location of a ski slope" (Mathisen 2004, author's translation).

## In Defence of the Mountain: Hans Ragnar Mathisen's "Salvific Mission"

On 30 January 2004, Gintal and Mathisen visited Omma at his home in Dálvvadis/Jokkmokk in the Swedish part of Sápmi. In the "Kulturhistorisk Rapport" (KR; 2004)[9] drafted at the end of the mission, both of them reported

the same version of history that the elderly herder had previously told Sveen, that while moving the animals, the herders stopped with their herds for three days each time as they headed east over Sálašoaivi towards Goahtevuopmi/Tønsvikdalen (Sveen and Oskal 1998–2002, Appendix C). Omma also stated that he had heard his grandfather speak of the custom of removing one's hat and waving it when taking leave of the mountain. "It was an old habit, it was always like that… My grandfather told me about it" (KR 2004, 8). Although he was aware of sacrificial practices still in use in his day, Omma did not specify places on Sálašoaivi where such ceremonies may have taken place. As to rituals he had observed at the time, however, Omma said that,

> …you had to pass below [Sálašoaivi] but not too close to it. But my brother and I climbed to the top of the mountain anyway, looking into the distance from there, to the west, and we could even see Sážžá/Senja. The old folks said you shouldn't go on top of the mountain or disturb the peace that reigns there, you shouldn't swear or argue there, so we didn't do that. You didn't speak while passing through, except to wish for good luck. The old folks would say a few words and take off their hats as a sign of respect. They wanted to be treated well for the rest of the summer until they left in the autumn, to have good health and to keep the animals safe from predators. It wasn't the custom to leave offerings. They would ask for good health and no sickness – that was what they feared the most – along with food and the good health of the herd.
>
> *(Omma, quoted in KR 2004, 8, author's translation)*

According to the elders, transgression of ritual customs would have fearsome consequences. "If you didn't follow the old custom of giving a sign of respect or saying some prayers to the mountain, something bad might happen. For example, you might not be able to come back the following year, or something would happen to your herd the following winter" (9). Sveen also told me that Omma had told her, "Evil spirits could be provoked if a yoik was sung near the mountain, an idea which may have been linked to Christian beliefs that had prohibited traditional songs, turning them into a religious sin" (Stine Benedicte Sveen, in conversation with the author, 13 December 2018).

Although evangelization had already begun intensively during the 17th and 18th centuries, it was the pietistic movement of Læstadianism in particular, from the parish of Gárasavvon in Sweden, that spread among the reindeer herders. Omma had underscored the importance of preserving beliefs linked to Sálašoaivi in the familial, domestic dimension. In fact, as he saw it, revealing them in public might have led to negative repercussions and risked invalidating the symbolic efficacy of the practices themselves. "The Sámi don't tell the Norwegians about them [these ritual behaviours and the associated transgressions] because otherwise they [the practices] would have

lost the sacredness on which their success depended" (KR 2004, 9, author's translation).

The possibility of the Olympics was thus something that seemed particularly upsetting to Omma since, as he said, "If they spoiled the mountain by building a ski lift, the sacredness would be destroyed and the definition [of bassivárri] would be lost" (KR 2004, 9, author's translation). The priceless testimony of this bearer of tradition clarified customs and knowledge that were deeply engraved in local memory. History that had long been "submerged" and entrusted solely to oral transmission was, for the first time, being transcribed in an official report. This is an important point, testifying to the fact that today oral contributions must inevitably be recorded in written documents for authentication and to avoid the risk of invisibility when sites are threatened, for example by acts of vandalism or by construction projects (Norberg and Fossum 2011, 212).

Summarizing their findings, the two candidates sent to Sweden by the Sámediggi asserted:

> The conclusion drawn from the interview with Ola Omma confirms that people do have a faith-based relationship with Sálašoaivi. This belief dates back much further than one hundred years, therefore Sálašoaivi is to be protected as Sámi cultural heritage, cf. Section 4 of Kulturminneloven. Sálašoaivi can be considered a sacred mountain.
>
> *(KR 2004, 12, author's translation)*

Relying on these and other similar conclusions, the Sámediggi demonstrated the existence of "historical events, beliefs or traditions" that, in accordance with Article 2 of Kulturminneloven, would classify a site as "cultural heritage."[10] Sálašoaivi was thus included in the list of places protected by the Sámi political body, thereby impeding any alterations of the area, and forcing the Olympic bid committee to abandon their plan and choose another location. However, this verdict also brought about an epiphany for Mathisen, as he told me in one of our last conversations, reflecting what Malighetti (2004, 67) has referred to as the "complex and fragmentary process of building anthropological knowledge" (author's translation).

Thanks to numerous encounters and shared moments in his most significant places in Romsa and the surrounding landscape, I was able to build a very intimate degree of confidentiality with Mathisen. This made it possible for me to reconstruct his biography, listening to his stories about his Sámi heritage and, over time, being witness to such a moving experience as that concerning Sálašoaivi.

> I want to tell you about something that happened many years before the events concerning the Winter Olympics. When I was young, I had a dream about the mountain, I was the protagonist of a vision… In the dream,

> the mountaintop was covered by dark clouds that blocked the view… I remember having to go up against the Municipality of Tromsø, and after an intense battle, the clouds broke and the peak appeared, shining and golden… At that point I woke up, bathed in sweat, unable to understand the meaning of what I'd experienced. But in any case, that was how a connection was made between me and the mountain. The meaning became clear as soon as the Winter Olympics case came up, because the images of that vision came back to me, and I interpreted it as a true call to save the mountain, to protect it from a threat that came from the Municipality of Tromsø.
>
> *(Hans Ragnar Mathisen, interview with the author, 26 September 2018)*

The idea of the "call" to save Sálašoaivi helps us to grasp the importance of sentimental connection in the conception of heritage and in the legitimization of one's attachment to places and the history they contain. In other words, it suggests a living heritage in which the past is not the subject of a philological re-proposal aiming to attain the status of scientific authoritativeness, but instead is "perceived" on the basis of values and needs developed in the present (Lowenthal 1996). Mathisen's extraordinary vision fits within this category of a "devotional" attitude towards the past, which underlies informal heritage-building practices. This attitude is not intended here to allude to the definition adopted "by policies carried out at the international level by UNESCO, through defining agreements and the creation of lists and recognition procedures for various types of cultural assets" (Dei 2019, 27, author's translation). Rather, it refers to the sort of vernacular and creative forms of commemoration, use, and rediscovery of the past that had marked the transformation of heritage conservation efforts into a "popular crusade" (Lowenthal 1996).

Mathisen's deep bond with Sálašoaivi had begun at a young age when he was adopted by a nurse who had taken care of him during a long hospitalization, and went to live at her house in Romssavággi. Over the years, throughout his well-known artistic career and amidst his political commitment to the Sámi Movement, he had gathered stories and created works depicting the city's icon. His art, imbued with pan-Indigenist imagery inspired by his experiences with native communities he met in his travels around the world, provided him with the opportunity to work with multiple expressive techniques and languages, giving rise to a special connection with the places of his homeland. Although he was chosen by the Sámediggi to take part in gathering stories of Sálašoaivi from the herders for the reasons already mentioned, the Sámi artist had felt this "call" as the fulfilment of a mission he had been unable to fathom when it first presented itself to him. Finding "evidence" that would warrant the safeguarding the mountain as a sacred

**FIGURE 10.2** *The Old St. Hanshaugen*, a woodcut by John Andreas Savio (n.d., circa 1930) depicting Sálašoaivi/Tromsdalstinden as seen from the Romssa city centre.

*Source:* Photo by Mari Karlstad/The Arctic University Museum of Norway.

place, he demonstrated his opposition to the Olympic threat and, through the dreamlike frame of his vision, personalized the positive outcome of the situation. Such experiences "became indelible signs of the authenticity of his own rediscoveries and the authority of his own knowledge" (Aria 2007, 41, author's translation), making him a "bridge-maker" between the present and of a past at risk of vanishing. The salvific actions inspired by his vision allowed Mathisen to paint himself as a "defender" or "custodian" of Sálašoaivi and, in the link between the Olympic bid event and specific moments and places in his own biography, to conceive the idea of living heritage, in which official registries blend with everyday experiences, imagery, and commemorative practices.

## Discourse, Controversy, and Stakes in the Heritage-Making Process

The official identification of Sálašoaivi as a bassivárri was not the only element that determined the "sacred" connotation of the mountain in public narrations. Mathisen himself, in the photographic book *Tinden – Portraits* (2006) by artist Arvid Sveen, describes the mountain as "impressive but not frightening, dangerous but not dreadful, sacred but without being haughty, lovable without lacking respect" (quoted in A. Sveen 2006, 76). In his

depictions of Sálašoaivi in maps, portraits, and posters which appeared following the Olympic bid affair, Mathisen generally presented an image of nature coloured by environmentalist values and Neo-Romantic tones, which also contributed to feeding a secularized line of interpretation, alongside Sámi traditions. Kraft's aforementioned chronicling of the Olympic bid affair (2010) in fact points out how various "secularized" conceptions of the sacred came into play during the heritage-making process, amalgamating an idealized representation of the mountain as a setting for leisure activities – as espoused in media by Norwegians – with Sámi cultural concepts. Moreover, in her view, "the unveiling of sacredness had the added advantage of demarcating as Sámi the central icon of Tromsø – a place that literally towers over the landscape and can be seen from all positions in the town and its environs" (Kraft 2010, 58). For this reason, the "sacred" must be understood in accordance with the construction of a Sámi nation, and the claims of an ethnic identity rooted in the cultural history of the landscape. As she observes, "the recent interest in 'sacred places' may also be connected to processes of Sámi nation building and to what I have referred to as pan-Indigenous discourse" (Kraft 2010, 59). In this sense, "heritage can thus be understood as an important political and cultural instrument for defining and legitimizing the identity, experiences, and social/cultural position of various groups […] as well as an important resource for challenging them" (Smith 2006, 52). By protecting and promoting Sámi cultural heritage for its importance in building Sámi community,[11] the Sámediggi thus recognizes places "immutable over time and fixed in place once and for all, which define a collective political subject (the Region, the Nation) and become the material and symbolic support for strong identities" (Palumbo 2003, 32, author's translation). In the case of Sálašoaivi, then, I argue that the collective political subject is Sápmi, and the strong identity that of being Sámi.

Sámi institutions have conceived of heritage sites as reinforcing the nation-building process on the grounds that "sacred places provide an alternative mapping – an appropriation of particular landscapes and thus a demarcation and visualization of Sápmi" (Kraft 2010, 57). Beyond suggesting a convergence between the rediscovery of memory and the valorization of identity-building elements at the ethno-political level, the conservation of the heritage of Sálašoaivi today does not entail safeguarding it by adhering to the rules reported by the elderly herdsman. Although it prohibited the building of any structure on the mountain, the Sámediggi did not establish any public restrictions consistent with the caveats mentioned by Omma. The ritual practices his ancestors followed fit in with a worldview that has been since abandoned in the more recent context of the recovery, salvaging, and valorization of the memory of the "sacred mountain." Today no one would think of respecting the sense of place that Omma evoked when he spoke of not climbing the mountain's peak, behaving in accordance with specific ritual rules, or using

decorous language to avoid risking bad luck. However, within this process there was a substitution of norms linked to the moral or, broadly speaking, religious sphere with other more strictly juridical, secularized ones pertaining to contemporary legislation regarding cultural heritage. Moreover, Kraft remarked that the continuity of religious traditions (i.e., the version of the Sámi spiritual traditions espoused by newspapers or the *Kulturhistorisk Rapport*) had already been disrupted when Omma was a child, as his memories would have been strongly influenced by Læstadianism. Consequently, due to such a different semantic framework and a more secular form of the sacred, the "broken chains of memory" might be explained as "connected to colonialization and forced assimilation, and their restoration, accordingly, becomes a matter of national duty" (Kraft 2010, 59).

To explore these religious aspects and reduce the risk of interpreting the heritage conservation process from merely a political perspective, Roald Kristiansen, associate professor in history of religion, has proposed a different interpretation of the events surrounding the Olympic bid, taking a position leaning much more towards that of the Sámediggi. He was convinced of a strong, existing link between the sacredness of Sálašoaivi and past religious practices and beliefs, with much less of a secular connotation linked to the concept of heritage. He had articulated his deductions in an article (Kristiansen 2007) that, together with our conversation concerning sacred places and Sálašoaivi, had piqued my interest in the debate on heritage-making which took place after the Olympic bid events and, more generally, around interpretations of local history. My meeting with Kristiansen was also of great value to me, as it gave me the opportunity to learn how respect should be shown towards sieidi, and the importance that these places still hold in Sámi cosmology. With this in mind, then, following his directions marked on a map, I set out in October 2015 to visit a rock formation he had spotted on the mountainside.

Based on Omma's statements to Sveen as well as to the two writers of the "Kulturhistorisk Rapport" Kristiansen hypothesized that there was a religious site located on the mountain historically used by reindeer herders for sacrifices. Although Omma had maintained that sacrificial practices at sieidi were a thing of the past and not pertinent to his lived experience, responding to a direct question from Kristiansen (2007, 46), he had admitted that that sacrifice had been practiced regularly in Stuoranjárga up until World War II. Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to assume that Læstadianism's demonization of Sámi traditions and the consequent secrecy surrounding them may have been behind Omma's reference to respecting Sálašoaivi in a general way – "It's always been like that" – and his indication that it was dangerous to divulge such details – "The Sámi didn't tell the Norwegians about all of this." Pondering the possibility that there may have been a place where sacrifices were once practised, Kristiansen rejected the hypothesis that they may have

occurred at the only already-documented sieidi in the area, located in Finnbergan, as mentioned in the memoirs of Anna Eversen. Born in 1913 and raised on a farm in the valley, Eversen recalled that, as a child, she had seen the Sámi who sojourned near the Sport Café go to the Finnbergan sieidi with a reindeer, "singing and talking to the rock."[12] Although it is hard to imagine what sort of ritual this would have been and how long it continued to be practised, Kristiansen believed it was a domestic religious cult not connected to herding, as it took place too close to the settlements in the valley while too far from the pastures where the reindeer herds usually grazed (Kristiansen 2007, 50). But, according to Kristiansen, two elements in Omma's stories may have suggested the presence of a sacrificial site on Sálašoaivi: first, the routine of stopping for three days while crossing the mountain, and second, the fact that certain ritual behaviours were already described as occurring elsewhere during this time by missionaries and scholars.[13] If a location for religious practices did exist, where was it located in the valley, and what sort of natural formation might have identified it for rituals?

Suspecting that such a place did actually exist, and that it could be located in an area far enough from inhabited zones but near enough to the mountain to ensure its protection, Kristiansen set out on foot through Romssavággi up to the Moskojávri/Tromdalsvatnet lake. It was just above the lake that he noticed a rocky profile, probably created during a rockslide provoked by glacier movement. He believed that this rock formation was a *bassiuksa*,[14] a "sacred door" which would sometimes be associated with a sacrificial site set

**FIGURE 10.3** The rock formation on Sálašoaivi identified by Kristiansen as a potential sieidi.

*Source:* Photo by Giacomo Nerici.

immediately below it, and identified a spot where the rock had split in half into two large blocks, making it a likely candidate for a sieidi. On the side facing the bassiuksa, Kristiansen conjectured that the stone slab resting on the two rocks at the base had been erected intentionally as a place to lay offerings, and that a circle of stones near the formation was in fact a fire circle. According to his thesis, it was also plausible that the nearby creek, which flows down the slope towards the lake, may have been used to wash away blood shed during sacrifices.[15]

In his article, Kristiansen did not propose any hasty conclusions confirming that the rock formation identified in the area may have effectively been a sieidi. Rather, he framed it as a worthy candidate for consideration as a sieidi, proposing that while Sálašoaivi may once have been a site of sacrificial practices, that these were largely abandoned with the rise of Læstadianism around the mid-19th century (2007, 50). What prompted him to submit his observations as possible evidence of the sacred in the landscape, however, was the notion of politically motivated conservation of heritage, imbued with secularized stories that diminished or reduced the memories of the bearers of tradition to pure instrumental expedience. During one of our conversations, Kristiansen clarified this, stating, "For me, heritage-making isn't at all, as has often been suggested by Norwegians, a 'construction,' but a public 'recognition' of the sacred, of something that already existed as such for the Sámi community" (Roald Kristiansen, interview with the author, 24 September 2018).

His search for a location on the mountain, however, seemed to go beyond wanting to prove the existence of the sacred with material evidence that would substantiate the oral evidence used by the Sámediggi. Imagining that a concrete place may have existed, where sacrifices had been carried out in the past, Kristiansen had looked for and eventually found it, interpreting a series of references in the landscape using his knowledge of historical sources.

> Knowing a few early Swedish sources, I knew that there is almost always a sacrificial place near a "sacred door," so I said to myself, "It must be down there, otherwise I understood nothing of the old Sámi religion".
>
> *(Roald Kristiansen, interview with the author, 24 September 2018)*

This reasoning, outlined meticulously in the form of a scientific article, lent authority to the Norwegian scholar's deductive schema. The academic form gave credence to the idea that the elements in the landscape identified and interpreted on the basis of ancient texts could be considered credible corroborations of his dissertation. Elevated to the status of proof accredited by knowledge of the discipline, these signs legitimately substantiated the assertion that the rocks Kristiansen had sought and found could be a sacrificial

sieidi, although the lack of alternative arguments or options also made his assertion impossible to confute. Without any other types of evidence to support his hypothesis, due to the absence of written accounts or oral testimony about that particular rock formation, it was difficult to ascertain the veracity of Kristiansen's suppositions, or to refute them and assert a divergent one. His article concluded with the hope that the thesis would be examined by the Sámi authorities in charge of recognizing and cataloguing Indigenous heritage. In the meantime, Kristiansen told me that each year he would take students from his university course to visit the possible sieidi on Sálašoaivi. Although he did not allow himself to assert that the place was in fact a sieidi, he nonetheless made a point of standing near the spot while imparting lessons on the importance of religious respect.

> I am very concerned about conveying to the students a sense of respect, in the same way that we must approach every sacred place that conserves still-living religious traditions that have endured for centuries.
>
> *(Roald Kristiansen, interview with the author, 24 September 2018)*

While these outdoor lessons served to increase awareness and teach respect, particularly in anticipation of the public revelation of the existence of such sites which can sometimes be followed by their being damaged, they also ended up implicitly legitimizing the supposition that the rock formation in question was a true sieidi. Reading Kristiansen's article, Mathisen became convinced by this interpretation, telling me during one of our first meetings in 2015, shortly after my first visit to the rock formation, "Initially I didn't believe what he [Kristiansen] was suggesting. But going back there, I realized that that shape on the bassiuksa isn't covered by snow in winter, and that this slab of rock really does seem set up for offerings" (Hans Ragnar Mathisen, interview with the author, 13 October 2015).

The sieidi hypothesis was further legitimized by declarations made by Kristiansen in a 2010 documentary filmed by the NRK (Norsk rikskringkasting, the Norwegian national broadcaster), *Tindens hemmeligheter*, "*The Secrets of Tinden*."[16] Conveying the importance of sacred mountains to various social groups, the documentary examined the emotional bond between the citizens of Romsa and "Tinden." This special connection was evoked in part by highlighting the Sámi history of the mountain and the area, meeting with the protagonists of the more recent vicissitudes which included Urheim, Mathisen, and Kristiansen. Interviewed in front of the rock formation, which was presented as a presumed sieidi in the piece, Kristiansen greatly strengthened his own interpretation of the place and, voluntarily or not, making it known to viewers across the whole of Norway.

## Back on the Mountain Amid Archaeological Surveys and Ethnographic Considerations

In October 2018, I returned to the mountain with Sveen and Oskal to visit the rock formation identified by Kristiansen, to try to determine whether it was in fact a sieidi. When we reached the site, we first inspected it by walking around it, peering into crevices and making observations of the area in which it was located. Sveen, the archaeologist, then expressed a tentative but enunciative opinion:

> Without asserting this with certainty, I don't think this can be a sieidi. Rather, I think it may have been a shelter or a refuge for people who came here to fish. In fact, they could sit here [indicating the sacrificial slab], eat thanks to the fire pit, and be protected from the wind. It seems to me a fairly recent frequentation. What's missing to be able to consider it a true sieidi is the position, [in that a sieidi] usually dominates the surrounding landscape. This place can be glimpsed from a distance, but remains rather hidden. I strongly believe that a sieidi holds certain powers due to its being positioned in such a way that it can "see," protecting people and animals.
>
> *(Stine Benedicte Sveen, interview with the author, 4 October 2018)*

Both of my companions marvelled at the fact that the place had been interpreted as a sieidi without the use of evidence normally used by Sámi authorities to determine the recognition of cultural heritage. As Sveen told me, typically it was always necessary to attest to the presence of at least one of the following criteria: oral testimony from individuals with ties to the site, written sources, toponyms in Sámi language alluding to religious beliefs, or archaeological finds such as votive offerings. The archaeologist maintained that if a sieidi had ever existed for the Romssavággi siida, its most likely location would have been in Uvhrevággi/Offerdalen, the old name for a valley in which Omma did recall stopping with the herds. Today it is known as Divrevággi/Bjørnskardalen, a toponym which Sveen believes should be changed because *divis* means "bear" in Northern Sámi language, an animal which in Sámi tradition must not be mentioned by name (Sveen 2003, 43). The absence of references to sacrificial places in Omma's recollections, however, makes it difficult to prove the existence of a tradition which had already disappeared before his time, but could have been "embedded" in a particular spot on the mountain. As such, the possibility of its existence could merely be suggested, integrating his non-specific statements with elements that hinted at a cult linked to herding, and falling back on the accounts of priests and missionaries written in the early period of Christianization in the region.

Kristiansen had used this literature to reconstruct a broader historical background in which similar practices and beliefs were described, choosing

to interpret references of meaning in the landscape that gave him convincing reason to believe he could find a place that matched with his suppositions. His theory also depended on the authority of academically legitimized knowledge, validated by critical, rigorous consultation of sources. Called upon to make statements in a variety of public contexts – from on-site lessons with university students to the NRK documentary – Kristiansen had ultimately offered a conjecture, while the multiple avenues of its diffusion may have modified its status. Although archaeologists had been charged with the task of verifying these cautiously hypothesized theories, the broader communication context in which they had been spread participated actively in making their foundation in truth seem probable. While that real or presumed foundation in truth had not persuaded Sveen and Oskal to consider the rock formation a *sieidi*, Mathisen had been convinced of its sieidi status by reading an academic article and going to the mountain to see the place for himself. When I told Mathisen that I had inadvertently touched the rocks, he feared that I might have visions for having transgressed the ritual norms to be obeyed in the presence of a sieidi, further proof of the fact that Kristiansen's text had led him to interpret the rocks as being sacred. He was reassured to hear that I had tossed a coin into a crevice, appreciating this gesture of respect for the spirits and the mountain in general. In any case, I never experienced visions, probably because this is not something I generally believe in, or perhaps because I did not pretend to "go native" when I first visited the location in 2015. The offering that I had made was done as a sign of respect for the place, however it did constitute further evidence for interpreting it as a real sieidi. Without knowing at the time whether it was one or not, I had imprudently contributed to confirming Kristiansen's thesis by demonstrating that I believed his interpretation.

## Concluding Remarks

What does the whole series of events surrounding Sálašoaivi show us, then, and what points of reflection have we been given, in following its conservation as a Sámi heritage site?

Several archaeological studies have shown that the connoting of certain sites as "sacred places"[17] is relatively recent, and can summon forth a variety of interpretations and discourse about the past. In fact, numerous social actors are currently contributing to "rewriting" historical narratives, seeking to lend authoritative credit to their own position, sometimes coming into conflict with historians or archaeologists. The latter, responsible for the management of heritage sites, hold an institutional power that allows them to define which sites are worthy of registration on lists of cultural assets for protection. Their role also includes the possibility of refusing to investigate certain places, or avoiding making locations public when the intention is to

preserve secrecy surrounding a location's religious function and use by Sámi individuals or groups (Skandfer 2009, 92–93). On the other hand, in the past, scholars have often been the source of less-than-rigorous interpretations of historical and social contexts,[18] even creating – directly or indirectly – invented forms of worship or reactivating ones that had fallen out of use over time.[19] Alongside the official channels and procedures involved in ensuring the protection of heritage sites, recent years have seen the revival of practices such as making offerings to sieidi by various actors (e.g., Sámi youth, local residents, tourists, contemporary shamans) in a complex multitude of discussions and claims. In addition to entertainment or merely commercial purposes, revivalist intentions have also arisen, as have attempts to legitimize alternative narrations that challenge the authoritativeness of historians and archaeologists (Äikäs and Spangen 2016, 97). These academics have thus had to adapt to a democratization of history, with some admitting to being overwhelmed by a pluralization of claims and (re-)appropriations revolving around Sámi pasts.

The episodes I came across while delving into the Sálašoaivi affair testify to a link between logics and methods concerned with categories of history on one hand, and more generalized cultural heritage-making on the other. Although Lowenthal (1996) maintained that there was an irreconcilable divergence between historians and producers of heritage in terms of the elaboration of knowledge, the process of determining heritage status seems to nonetheless suggest a constant overlapping of attitudes, postures, and ways of examining the past between these two perspectives. In fact, as Lowenthal also asserted, unlike historians who intend to "transmit a consensually-known past that is open to examination and continuously tested," those who produce heritage "try to shape the past […], custom-tailoring it to suit the purposes of the present" (Lowenthal 1996, x–xi).

Although largely adhering to Lowenthal's distinction, in recounting these episodes regarding the sacred status of Sálašoaivi, I have ultimately sought to show a continuous interweaving of "history/archaeology" and "heritage." It is not merely a case of historians and archaeologists being dragged into the public sphere "as interpreters of a technical (i.e., non-political) and objective (i.e., non-rhetorical) view of the past only to find themselves 'competing' with other, vernacular arguments that claim devotional and subjective connections with [*the mountain*]" (Dei 2012, 183, author's translation, emphasis added). Indeed, my fieldwork reveals that these academic disciplines themselves include "a few aspects of mythicization, imprecision, and heritage; and heritage, for its part, would have no value if it could not in some way link itself to a legitimate academic discourse" (Dei 2019, 28, author's translation). My ethnography regarding heritage and the ties I wound up establishing with it "involve deep emotional levels, bringing into play our shared aesthetics, our idea of history and memory, a specific world view" (Palumbo 2003, 23,

author's translation). Like those who I spoke with and learned from, my participation in this process and the intricate web of arguments involved entailed "analysing how the games of the present had manipulated the memories of the past, and also explained their permanence and changes alike" (Malighetti 2004, 218, author's translation). By tossing a coin towards the rock I believed to be a sieidi as a gesture of offering, I may have involuntarily helped lend credit to a given interpretation of history. However, with this article I aim to support another version of this past which, as discussed, remains nevertheless a hazy, imperfect, contestable framework through which I have tried to interpret reality.

## Notes

1 The translation and the origin of this toponym is controversial, but according to Ola Omma, *sálaš* derives from *siellu* ("soul"), and could allude to "prey" or "catch" (S. Sveen 2003, 106). In contrast, Mathisen (1991, 85) interprets *sála* as the genitive form of *sálla*, meaning "furrow, fissure, deep crack in the rock or glacier." In one of our last conversations, Sveen actually told me that "Ola used several different names for the mountain. In addition to Sálašoaivi, he called it Sállas and Sállasvárri." Sveen also hypothesized that *Sálaš* might be "a diminutive grammatical form, signifying something small which can occur in connection with other sieidi – like 'small grandmother' and so on, probably because one should not mention the sacred by its real name" (Stine Benedicte Sveen, conversation with the author, 6 March 2023).

2 The Northern Sámi the term "sieidi," in the context of ancient religious beliefs, refers to certain often-natural formations (e.g., rocks, springs, trees, idols carved into wood or stone) which were distinguished by their particular forms or tied to specific events, and were considered to house particular entities, the manifestations of spirits, or even actual divinities (Hansen and Olsen 2013). Sieidi are divided into three categories: domestic or family-oriented sacred places, those for the more extended family group (siida), and those recognized by the wider community of a region or larger area (Rydving 1993, 97–104).

3 Sveen had begun her fieldwork as an archaeologist, and had been engaged by the Sámediggi to develop a classification system and draw up a list of the cultural heritage locations in the Romssa and Báhccavuotna/Balsfjord areas. Although initially interested in sacrificial cults and sacred places, Sveen's investigation ultimately consisted of examining the world and lives of the reindeer herders and their complex "cultural landscape" (Sveen 2003).

4 The arrival of settlers, the development of agriculture and maritime disputes over boundaries in territorial waters and hunting and fishing rights, along with a population increase, fuelled references to Northern Norway frontier, referencing the American "frontier myth." Between 1801 and 1900 the population of Northern Norway is calculated to have grown from 79,700 to 259,300, but this growth, although compared with Fredrick Jackson Turner's "frontier" concept (1893), was neither homogeneous nor exponential. Thus, "Ottar Brox's theories on Northern Norway as a frontier zone prove to be greatly oversimplified, temporally imprecise and too generalized" (Aas 1998, 40).

5 The land registry documents the purchase of a plot of land in the Gáranasvuotna/Ramfjord area by Henrik Anderson Omma. In 1874, he was forced to sell part of the land because the property was along the route used by reindeer herders who had pastures in Romssavággi (Birkelund 1991).

6 It is presumed that the name "Goahtevuopmi" was derived from the homonymous term used to indicate the location where the siida had its summer pastures, in Goahtevuopmi/Tønsvikdalen. At that time, there would have been four families there in summer, the Ponga, Blind, Kemi, and possibly the Hurri families ("There were many Hurris," reported Omma), who later moved on to Nieidavuovdi (Sveen 2003, 103).

7 The Leaibbáš siida had a summer pasture at Áddjitmuotki and, according to Omma, the group comprised several Bienni brothers, two Hoalsttá brothers, and a family known by the name Jovnnak/Javnnok. In his interview with Sveen, Omma underlined the fact that the families had strange names because they were of Finnish origin (18–21 June 1999, in Sveen 2003, 103).

8 In the case of rocks, mountains, forests, springs, or islands, heritage status for places of worship is recognized based on historical accounts that attest to sacred beliefs, practices, and ritual uses related to the location. In the absence of written documentation, Norwegian law allows the use of oral transmission, although the only normative premise for protection is that it must be professionally evaluated to identify the spatial demarcation of a site and attest to its use dating back at least one hundred years. (https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1978-06-09-50?q=Kulturminnelovens).

9 The document drawn up at the end of the expedition to collect the testimonies of herders and was used by the Sámediggi as official evidence documenting and validating the "thesis of sacredness," thus initiating the process of adding Sálašoaivi to the list of Indigenous cultural heritage sites.

10 Lov om kulturminner/Law on Cultural Monuments at https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1978-06-09-50?q=Kulturminnelovens.

11 Sámediggi/Sametinget. n.d. "Sametingets kulturminnevern." Accessed 7 April 2023. https://sametinget.no/kulturminne-og-bygningsvern/sametingets-kulturminnevern/.

12 The rock is about 1.8 m long and 1.5 m tall, and was in the past, as it is now, concealed from all directions by dwarf birch and fir trees (Sveen and Oskal 1998–2002, Appendix C).

13 On this point, Kristiansen cited an account by Swedish priest Pehr Högström (1714–1774). "When one approaches a place where divinity dwells, he removes his hat and kneels or bends down, crawling up to the rock where he lays the offering" (Högström 1980, 195, cited in Kristiansen 2007). According to the Norwegian scholar, similar descriptions were found in the writings of other missionaries, such as Samuel Rheens (1671) and Gabriel Tuderus (1670), informing us of the existence of widespread rituals that echoing those of Omma's childhood memories.

14 According to ancient beliefs, rocks, crevices, and mountain fissures were sometimes considered to be doors or entranceways that could lead to the otherworld (Hansen and Olsen 2013, 218).

15 Kristiansen's felt that water was a fundamental element for *noaidi* (Sámi religious specialists), and this seems to be confirmed by sources from the 1700s provided by Norwegian missionary Isaac Olsen, who used the term *Noide Jockomus* to refer to a drink that would allow the noaidi to divine where to find wild game or fish, as well as to ensure the hunters protection against inauspicious events (Kristiansen 2007, 50).

16 From the brief synopsis of the documentary: "In many parts of the world it is customary to worship sacred mountains, and this has also been the case in Norway over the years. Currently, however, the custom is more hidden than in the past, and modern society had nearly forgotten that Tromsdalstinden is one of our most sacred mountains. The NRK journalist Thoralf Balto walks up the mountain with Martin Rimpi in search of the secrets of Tinden" (https://tv.nrk.no/serie/folk/2010/SAPR67002110).

17 Although Christianization demonized and partially eliminated ancient religious cults in the Sápmi region, there has been a recent revival of the placing of offerings such as reindeer antlers, metal objects, crystals, or tobacco at sieidi by young Sámi, tourists, neo-pagans, and area residents (Äikäs and Spangen 2016, 97–98).
18 For example, a 1945 episode from Rennebu concerning an informant who, questioned by a historian about the ritual function of a stone structure, admitted, "It could be one thing or another." With no convincing testimony nor possibility of examining written sources, the historian nonetheless recorded the site as "sacred," referencing folk tales for support, and this sacred status has since remained in the general consciousness as well as enshrined in scholarly opinion (Spangen 2015, 78).
19 Travelling to Gálggojávri in 1973, ethnographer Ørnulv Vorren admitted he had not noticed signs of recent offerings or religious worship at the circular site. However, more recent findings of coins, bracelets, and necklaces in the ancient sacred place suggests that Vorren's visit rekindled some votive practices, with some local youths admitting in the most recent decade that they continue to throw coins there as a sign of respect (Äikäs and Spangen 2016, 107).

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# AFTERWORD

## Memory Institutions and the Cultural Politics of Appreciation

*Laura Junka-Aikio*

The social relations between Indigenous and majority societies are transforming, and nowhere else is this more visible as it is within the arts and culture worlds and, by extension, that of museums. Over the past decades there has been a significant surge of interest in Indigeneity resulting in the considerable prominence of Indigenous art, design, cultural heritage, and film, both nationally and internationally.

The revitalization and elevation of Indigenous arts and culture is rupturing colonial relations by contributing to the social and political standings of Indigeneity, as well as to the increasing pride that younger generations of Indigenous Peoples now take in their identity, language, and heritage. It is educating the majority society on the history of colonialism and the impacts of colonialism on Indigenous Peoples, creating better awareness of the colonial present and of the persistent need to decolonize contemporary societies. One could go so far as to argue that, along with Indigenous resurgence and revitalization, decolonization is becoming a part of the hegemonic discourse. While there once was the notion that collective revolutions were primarily the tasks of the colonized, and that such revolutions should aim to destroy all power relations that constitute both the colonizer and the colonized (Fanon 2005 [1961]), today it seems that everyone, both colonizer and colonized, is rather eager to take part in "decolonization" – or at least in a "lite" form of revolution which is not too much of a threat to the established social order.

Although the actual meanings and impacts of contemporary decolonization projects vary and are thus up for debate, one observable outcome of the hegemonization of decolonial discourse is the growing awareness of majority society of the need to avoid outright cultural appropriation. The term "cultural appropriation" is generally used to describe, criticize, and draw

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attention to asymmetric situations of cultural exchange in which one actor unilaterally exploits, appropriates, or makes use of elements of the culture of another, whose position is significantly weaker (e.g., Clifford 1983; Ziff and Rao 1997; Meyer and Royer 2001; Brown 2004). According to Nicholas (2018), cultural appropriation differs from "cultural borrowing," the latter being relatively benign and not involving the taking away of something from another. In his words, cultural appropriation involves:

> […] taking or using some aspect of someone else's heritage without permission or recompense in inappropriate, harmful, or unwelcome ways. The harms include diminished respect for what is considered sacred, improper uses of special or sacred symbols, and the commercialization of cultural distinctiveness. There may also be threats to authenticity or loss of both artistic control and livelihood.
>
> *(Nicholas 2018)*

In academic debate, theories of cultural appropriation have also been met with severe criticism, for example, for their presumed tendency to present culture as something that can and should be "owned" by a clearly defined group of people. According to critics, such a view is ontologically false and harmful, insofar as it reifies cultures and tends towards cultural essentialism (Asega et al. 2017). Others critique theories on the grounds that prohibition against using elements belonging to another culture curtails individual freedom of expression, a value particularly central and strongly held within the arts (Young 2008). Meanwhile, proponents of these theories have responded in various ways, such as by re-focusing attention on the socio-political context (Ziff and Rao 1997; Bradford 2017), or by re-centring the debate on cultural appropriation in the context of Indigenous rights (Åhrén 2010). Over the past decades, however, this notion has travelled increasingly outside the realm of academia, and today, popular and media debates on various aspects of cultural appropriation have become common in numerous regions and contexts. In the Nordics, cultural appropriation has come to be discussed in particular reference to the appropriation of Indigenous Sámi culture, with these debates often initiated by the Sámi themselves.

## From Cultural Appropriation to Cultural Appreciation

Indigenous critiques of cultural appropriation and majority society's growing awareness of the need to avoid it, in turn, have paved way for a broad shift from cultural appropriation to the logic of "cultural appreciation." The Oxford English Dictionary defines appreciation as "the recognition and enjoyment of the good qualities of someone or something." Appreciation is generally not associated with exploitation, disrespect, or invasion of any kind.

The notion of cultural appreciation is becoming increasingly used in both academic and popular debate, usually to describe either "better" alternatives to cultural appropriation, or when efforts have been made to move beyond it. However, as an academic term, it remains surprisingly undeveloped and open to numerous interpretations or lines of inquiry (Fragoso 2016; Han 2019; Howard 2020; Cattien and Stopford 2022; Morrisseau and Fowler 2023). Here, I define and use the notion of cultural appreciation in a rather narrow sense to describe new cultural policies, practices, and approaches designed largely to avoid the pitfalls of cultural appropriation, and to establish just – rather than exploitative – forms of cultural exchange between asymmetrically positioned peoples, cultures, or ethnic groups.

The shift from cultural appropriation to cultural appreciation has emerged in response to a broader decolonial trend, but this should not be confused with acts of decolonization. Despite practices, policies, and approaches aimed to strengthen Indigenous self-determination, one could argue that cultural appreciation emerges out of settler efforts and desires to reorganize cultural exchanges between settler and Indigenous societies in ways that allow present and future settler access to Indigenous life and culture in a new socio-political context, one in which outright appropriation is no longer viable nor politically correct. In other words, cultural appreciation can appear very much to be a "settler move to innocence," or an attempt to ensure settler futurity in a context of mounting critique, as theorized by Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang (2012). The line between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation, then, is a fine one, and deserves critical attention.

## Appreciation as Repatriation

As the chapters of this book demonstrate, the decolonial turn and transition from the logic of cultural appropriation to cultural appreciation is also central to discussions surrounding memory institutions such as museums and, in particular, their need to renegotiate their role vis-à-vis Indigenous Peoples and cultural heritage to regain their legitimacy as decolonial, rather than colonial, institutions. Perhaps the most tangible aspect of this change thus far is in the increase of repatriation practices becoming part of mainstream museum politics which, in the Nordic nations, is reshaping relationships between national museums, Sámi museums, and Sámi society (Aikio 2023; Nylander 2023). According to Eeva-Kristiina Nylander (2023), the concept of repatriation first emerged in Europe in the context of the post-World War II repatriation of both soldiers and cultural treasures to their home countries. Today, however, the term is used predominantly in reference to "the return of the colonial collections to their original owners, including Indigenous peoples" (Nylander 2023, 26). Nylander highlights Indigenous agency behind the repatriation process, describing it as an outcome of a two-way dynamic

between (Indigenous) struggles for self-determination and (majority society) appreciation of Indigenous rights and culture:

> […] it is fair to say that we are living in the age of repatriation in the Nordic countries and Europe, as several processes are being undertaken or at least discussed. Yet it should be noted that the Sámi have long actively demanded the right to their own culture, its management, and the presentation of their own narrative. In a sense, they were therefore working for repatriation long before the majority population began to adopt a positive attitude towards it (e.g., the statement Roavvenjárgga julggáštus 2008). This means two separate processes are at work. The Indigenous people have been proactive, which has also made the majority population appreciate the importance of the matter and take action.
>
> *(Nylander 2023, 24)*

Thus, as a social process, repatriation is based on a mutual recognition that the collection, purchase, appropriation, or outright robbery of utensils, clothing, handicrafts, and other items or cultural artefacts – the artefacts which today constitute the vast Indigenous and non-Western collections of national and imperial memory institutions – occurred in the context of highly asymmetric power relations of colonialism, war, and even genocide, and that these practices were never right to begin with (Lonetree 2012, 11–12; Aikio 2023, 27–29; Nylander 2023, 39). This does not mean that the outcomes of these collections have been only negative, as collections have also managed to conserve some aspects of Sámi cultural heritage that would have otherwise been lost today (Aikio 2023, 29). However, the continued storage and display of these artefacts today in institutions located far from the communities to which they once belonged, displayed for the jouissance of others, appears as a continued violation of Indigenous and colonized peoples' rights to their own cultural heritage. Repatriation involves the return of these collections – or at least parts of them – to their original communities and locations. Repatriation seeks to discontinue the histories and practices of colonial appropriation on which museum institutions and collections are founded, forcing and enabling museums to search for new foundations on which to base their contemporary roles and legitimacy.

Repatriation also brings up new kinds of practical, ethical, and epistemological questions. Does the transfer of an object from one glass museum showcase to another really imply that object's meaningful repatriation to the community to which it belongs? When the origin culture or community of an object no longer exists, how do we determine its relevant community owners today? How can repatriation take place fairly? Who has the responsibility of ensuring the Indigenous memory institutions receiving returned objects do in fact have the space, resources, and expertise to manage the repatriation

process in a way that is meaningful for the community or society to whom the objects are being returned? And, in the context of Sámi artefacts, what are the Sámi ways of managing, caring for, and making available cultural heritage if the very existence of a museum as an institution is based on colonial foundations? These and other questions posed by critical Sámi and Nordic scholars, artists, cultural heritage professionals, and community members (Aikio 2021; Finbog 2021; Nylander 2023, 52–54) highlight the fact that repatriation, decolonization, and the Sámification of museum institutions overall, cannot be simplified to merely being about the movement of artefacts from one place to another. As Aikio (2023) argues, decolonization, Indigenization, and Sámification all require the rethinking of current practices, structures, and social roles both within and about museums in tandem to consideration of the changing needs, interests, and realities of Sámi society. This line of critical decolonial thought is evident in the discursive shift from "repatriation" to "rematriation" (Nylander 2023, 30–31, 66–69). If repatriation articulates the politics of appreciation, rematriation moves beyond settler colonial change into the realm of Indigenization.

## Sámi Cultural Politics and Settler Colonial Change

Looking at the realms of the arts, culture, and memory institutions today, contemporary settler and majority societies seem much more disposed to decolonizing themselves and their relationships with Indigenous Peoples than they have been in the past. Across different fields, there are ongoing efforts to "appreciate" rather than "appropriate," to create new, restorative, or less-exploitative cultural policies and practices, often at the initiative of or in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples. These new policies and practices may not always be decolonizing in themselves, and sometimes their main impacts may simply be to ensure that these institutions or actors continue to have access to, or the ability to make use of, Indigenous cultures. This notwithstanding, the shift from appropriation to appreciation does seem interesting and merit further study, as it suggests that the relationships between settler and Indigenous societies are changing. What was considered to be acceptable before, passes no more.

So, what about the broader politics of these changes? Should the transition from the logic of cultural appropriation towards cultural appreciation lead us to an optimistic conclusion that contemporary settler societies at large are being decolonized, and that the present conjuncture should be understood as, above all, a moment of reconciliation and of Indigenous social, cultural, and political empowerment? Certainly not. First, although the status of Indigenous arts and culture has clearly improved within majority culture today, the same cannot be said of Indigenous land rights or traditional livelihoods. On the contrary, Indigenous Peoples, including the Sámi, continue to face a

formidable wave of very concrete colonial expansion unleashed in the form of land appropriation and extraction as a result of various resource rushes, energy transitions amounting to "green colonialism," urbanization, militarization, tourism, and other industrial and extractive developments which compete with and override Indigenous ways of using the land. Land has been, and remains, at the core of settler colonialism (Wolfe 2006); likewise, land is indispensable for Indigenous resurgence and survival. Thus, the colonial present will hardly go down in history as an era of decolonization; rather, what we see is the acceleration of settler colonialism driven by various forces, including global capitalism, extractivism, geopolitical competition, and neoliberal ideologies.

Second, majority society "appreciation" is also highly selective. In everyday popular and political discourse, colonial stereotypes, prejudice, and anti-Indigenous hate speech continue to flourish. The institutionalization of Indigenous rights and self-determination through national legislation and international law may have improved the political standing of Indigenous Peoples and supported cultural and language revitalization, but in Sápmi, as in many other settler colonial locations, such changes have also generated widespread popular backlash, articulated by locally based countermovements, populist politicians, and other individuals who oppose Indigenous rights or who, for some other reason, make use of and benefit from anti-Indigenous discourse. Hate speech against Indigenous Peoples and grassroot opposition to their rights is becoming even more widespread as social media greatly amplifies such voices (Lingaas 2021; Berg-Nordlie 2022; Junka-Aikio 2022). The experience of being Indigenous can therefore be highly divided and even contradictory; even as some aspects of Indigeneity are celebrated and appreciated, Indigeneity, Indigenous worldviews, and Indigenous ways of life simultaneously remain the object of settler marginalization, assimilation, erasure, epistemicide, and elimination in other spheres (Finbog 2021; Fjellheim 2023; Junka-Aikio 2023; Kuokkanen 2023).

The trajectories of change that we can observe within the fields of art, culture, and culture heritage thus appear oddly detached from the realities shaping Indigenous life on the ground, especially in the context of land-based livelihoods and Indigenous political and human rights. Indeed, it almost appears as if the settler colonial state and today's society is willing to undo some aspects of colonial dominance over Indigenous life, society, and resources, provided that it can continue to engage in colonization and colonial appropriation in other areas that may ultimately matter even more: land and natural resources. From this perspective, appreciation of Indigenous arts and culture alongside various truth and reconciliation processes could even be interpreted as a technique of distraction or a form of white-washing, directing attention to certain areas of life that are being "decolonized" while the appropriation of Indigenous land and natural resources continues unhindered.

Such an interpretation is not unjustified. However, to see it only as this risks missing out on potential for more profound change embedded in these cultural shifts. The fact is that, ultimately, the hegemonic struggles which take place within the world of arts and culture cannot be separated from other realms of society, including those of rights and politics. Artists and cultural workers have long stood at the forefront of emancipatory and liberation struggles, building new alliances and bringing together different struggles and groups under shared causes or ideas. This has also been the case in Sápmi and the Nordic states, where the "renaissance" of Sámi arts and culture in the 1970s was a central aspect of Sámi ethnopolitical mobilization and alliance-building which later led to the institutionalization of Sámi politics and rights. Likewise, today, the growing prominence and appreciation of Sámi arts, cultural productions, heritage, and "artivism" all have central roles in empowering the Sámi, educating the majority society on the colonial pasts and presents of the Nordic nations and building broader support for Sámi struggles, including those over land.

Even if majority society's appreciation of Sámi arts and culture may not in itself be decolonial, it can be harnessed and utilized to such ends. And, it is in this task that museums and other memory institutions, having the power to connect both Sámi and Nordic understandings of the past, present, and future, can play a significant role.

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**Note:** Pages in *italics* represent figures.