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Chapter 3

Young City Sámi in Norway and Sweden

Making Space for Urban Indigenous Identities

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This chapter explores how urban Sámi identities are constructed and negotiated, focusing on the experiences of young, urban Sámi in Norway and Sweden. There are differences in the identity-negotiation processes that develop among Sámi in the four northerly states that have divided Sápmi, and indeed within the same states, but we also find some remarkable similarities regarding the urban context and its relevance for Sámi identities. The chapter analyzes the qualitative interviews from Norway and Sweden, from the urban areas of Oslo, Trondheim, Bodø, Tromsø, Alta, Stockholm and Umeå (See Dankertsen & Åhren 2018 and the introductory chapter for details about methods and methodology).

Identity is an important concept in studies of Sámi culture and society (Dankertsen 2006; 2014; Eidheim 1969; Hovland 1996; Høgmo 1987; Kramvig 2006; Olsen 1997; Stordahl 1994; Åhrén 2008), and urban Sámi issues are becoming an increasing central topic in politics as well as in research (Berg-Nordlie 2018; Broderstad and Sørlie 2012; Dankertsen 2006; Gjerpe 2013; Høgmo 2015; Kielland 2013; Lindgren 2015; Olsen 2010; Pedersen and Nyseth 2015; Ulfrstad 1989; Uusi-Rauva 2000; Valkonen 1998). As Hilary N. Weaver (2001) points out, Indigenous identities is a complex and controversial topic, where there is no consensus regarding what "constitutes an Indigenous identity, how to measure it, and who truly has it" (Weaver 2001, 240). In addition, cultural identities also reflect race, class, education, region, religion, gender and

other categories relevant for the individuals. Indigenous cultural identities usually reflect some commonalities regarding values, beliefs, and worldviews of Indigenous people, but Indigenous cultural identities (as all cultural identities in fact do) has changed over time, both due to colonization and assimilation, and change du to changed circumstances within the Indigenous societies themselves. The concept of identity in an Indigenous context can be a problematic term because the concept of "identity" often leads to mistaken notions of purity and authenticity. This might be problematic in a situation where Indigenous people of today are trying to find a new common ground for cultural development and sense of community, after centuries of colonization and assimilation (Kuokkanen 2000, Dankertsen 2014).

It can be questioned if urban Sámi identities today differ so greatly from the identities of Sámi people living in other areas. The world has become much more complex and interconnected, as people move between places, maintaining regular contact with people in other places, and are influenced by education, the media, art, music, and the social media, to name a few. Is there such a thing as a specific urban Sámi identity? And is it possible to maintain Sámi language and culture in urban areas? These questions emerge frequently in connection with Sámi culture in urban areas. A precondition for the maintenance of Indigenous culture and community in urban areas is that the individuals themselves deem it possible to combine their culture and community lifestyle with city life.

This chapter consists of seven sections. First, I will give an introduction to the complexity of Sámi identities today, and how this can be understood in an urban context. Then, I will give a brief introduction to the differences and similarities between the chosen urban Sámi communities and cities that will be discussed in this chapter. After that, I commence with the analytical sections: "Young and Indigenous across the urban-rural divide: urban life, rural connections",

"Urban Sámi hypermobility", "Making space for urban Sámi identities", and "Different Sámi, same city". Lastly, I will end the chapter with a concluding discussion of the major findings and theoretical implications.

The Complexity of Sámi Identities

Sámi society today is socially, economically, and culturally complex. Urban Sámi communities reflect this complexity in a special way because the cities have often become home to Sámi people from many different Sámi areas. While some may have grown up in the city, perhaps in families that have lived several generations there, others have recently moved from areas considered to be traditional Sámi areas. Some have their roots in areas where Sámi language and culture have maintained a strong position—which also influences the way they see themselves in relation to the city. Others come from areas where Sámi language and culture have been marginalized, where many people have undergone an "identity shift" and no longer consider themselves to be Sámi (see Eidheim 1969; Olsen 2007; 2010). However, more and more people in these areas are now trying to find a way back to their Sámi roots and to revitalize the Sámi language and culture (see Hovland 1996) or are seeking to express identities that reflect the cultural complexity of both their community and their own background (see Kramvig 2005, Dankertsen 2014). This complexity means that there is not *one* way of being an urban Sámi, but many.

In her study of young Sámi and their identities in Sweden, Christina Åhrén (2008) describes how young Sámi in Sweden are valued differently depending on their heritage and cultural competence. Also in Finland, this leads to the question of who is Sámi and who is not, in the process of identity negotiation, in turn creating a cultural hierarchy where the cultural competences and identities of everyone may be questioned. We find similar issues in the

ethnographic material of Arild Hovland (1996), writing on Kåfjord (*Gáivuotna*) and Kautokeino (*Guovdageaidnu*) in Norway. These two Sámi municipalities are quite different, but they have long historical ties. Whereas Kautokeino is often described as "the most Sámi" place in Norway because it is a municipality where reindeer herding is still of fundamental importance for the general economy, in addition to being a municipality where the Sámi language maintains a strong position, the situation in Kåfjord has been quite different. From WWII up until the 1990s, the Sámi language and culture had become almost invisible in this coastal Sámi municipality, as in many other Sámi areas in Norway. Then, in the 1990s, some youth of Sámi ancestry mobilized and took back their Sámi identities. This process of re-establishing their Sámi identities in Kåfjord and other Sámi areas has led to a polarizing and emotionally charged debate on what it is to be Sámi, what a Sámi identity is, and who are entitled to call themselves Sámi. That being said, this debate in Norway has resulted in a more open and inclusive Sámi society today, by opening up for new ways of talking about Sámi identities in terms of complexity, ambiguity, and multicultural belonging. As Britt Kramvig (2005) points out, the refusal to define oneself in terms of clear-cut, dualistic categories can be seen as a form of resistance to the logic of nationalism imposed by the political institutions of colonial states in the past and present, and by today's Sámi political institutions, where identities are defined in terms of categorical boundaries—territorial, cultural, or linguistic. Instead of defining themselves in terms of dualistic categories, many Sámi now focus on relationships in their everyday lives and networks of interrelated people, where being Sámi is one, but not the only, component of those relationships.

It is impossible to talk about Sámi identities without taking into consideration the colonial situation and the historic and present-day marginalization of Sámi language and culture. Patrick Wolfe's (1999, 2006) account of settler colonialism as a *structure,* not an event, is useful in this

context. Within this framework, the distinction between colonization and settler colonization is that the former entails exploitation, whereas the latter leads to extinction; and the ways in which Indigenous people are defined are often chosen by settler colonial logic, not by the Indigenous people themselves. Indigenous people are often represented as unsettled, nomadic, rootless, etc., in the settler-colonial discourse, which legitimizes colonization by eliminating people's connection to the land and water, and limiting their possibilities for cultural change. This settler colonial logic has continued to shape how Indigenous people define themselves. As Rauna Kuokkanen (2007; 2010) reminds us, powerful colonial institutions have shaped people's minds, whether through education, economics, culture, or politics. It is impossible to impose a dualistic understanding of Indigenous identities without taking into the consideration how colonialism has shaped people's worldviews and their ways of thinking, living, and interacting with one another: "Even today, in the era of so-called postcolonialism, Indigenous peoples are the targets of various forms of internal colonialism and neo-colonialism" (Kuokkanen 2007: 412). Sámi identities are often defined, both by the majority society and by some Sámi people themselves, in terms of what they now lack due to forced assimilation and colonialism, or how they are different from the majority, rather than how the Sámi define themselves in terms of relationships with their own people, their land, and their language and culture.

How urban Sámi identities are defined must also be seen in relation to how Sámi culture is defined by the majority in terms of relations with the land. As Mikkel Berg-Nordlie (2018) points out, the situation of the Sámi must be understood in relation to their colonial history, where their homeland has been divided among Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia, and where the Sámi culture, language, and identity have been pushed to the margins by assimilation and resource alienation—geographically, economically, and politically. Today, Sámi culture remains

locally dominant in only a few rural communities, and their presence has largely been written out of history. Many areas where Sámi people used to live, including many locations that are now urban areas, are defined by the majority society.

This circumstance is something that the Sámi people share with Indigenous people all around the world. The challenges faced by urban Indigenous people involve more than prejudice and discrimination from the majority, or the precarious economic situations that may result from the combination of the former with rapid urbanization processes, or the cities' lack of experience with the needs of Indigenous peoples. Members of Indigenous groups that were once predominantly rural, or who have been "ruralized" through government policy and popular discourse, may experience problems in reconciling life in an urban community with an Indigenous identity with its deep connotations to rural places and rural lifestyles. Many Indigenous peoples have experienced strong associations being drawn between "authentic" indigeneity and rurality: the pervasive notion that Indigenous people and their culture "really" belong in rural areas (Andersen and Peters 2013, 379–380; Denis 1997; Tomiak et al 2019, 10-11). Chris Andersen and Evelyn Peters (2013b, 380) refer to this as a sense of "out-of-placeness" that affects urban Indigenous communities. As an internalized discourse, it affects the self-image of urban Indigenous individuals and communities, limiting their ability to integrate their urban and Indigenous identities. This can lead to a situation where "authorities either presuppose the illegitimacy of these communities or attempt to find in them stereotypical elements deemed sufficiently 'different' for governing purposes" (Andersen and Peters 2013: 380). In sum, the ruralization of Indigenousness makes it challenging to conceptualize urban Indigenous identity and culture, and frustrates attempts at encouraging decision-makers to take urban Indigenous needs into consideration and to create adequate and appropriate urban Indigenous policies.

This is highly relevant in connection with Sámi identity and culture in urban areas. For many people, the "authentic" Sámi are the reindeer herders, even though only a small fraction of Sámi people today follow this lifestyle, and the Sámi culture has also historically encompassed many other livelihoods as well. Kajsa Kemi Gjerpe makes this point clearly in stating, "many people are forced to become inauthentic in order to be authentic" (Gjerpe 2013, 82):

> I maintain that the notion of Sámi as one people is not wrong. But being one people does not stop us from being diverse. As one people, we are both reindeer herders and fishermen. We are doctors and teachers. Some spend their holidays travelling to foreign countries; others spend their holidays on the plateau. [1] Similarly to countless peoples all over the world we have experienced a severe assimilation policy and have fought our way through it. However, we cannot expect to come through such a process unchanged.
>
> (Gjerpe 2013: 93)

This binary polarization, and the creation of the "otherness" of Indigenous peoples, is an issue of relevance not only in an urban context. As noted by Rauna Kuokkanen (2000), who writes from a Sámi perspective, the link between Indigenous people, traditional knowledge, and "authenticity" is highly problematic because it paints a picture of the so-called traditional life of Indigenous peoples as frozen in time and space. In fact, traditional knowledge is a body of knowledge that "encompasses cosmologies, spirituality, relationships with the natural environment and the use of natural resources" (Kuokkanen 2000, 418): that what constitutes tradition in the Sámi context is something that is connected to nature and natural resources.

In this way, our perspective on Sámi urbanity stands in contrast to what often is considered to be "typical" Sámi. This picture of Indigenous peoples as frozen in time and space denies their cultures the opportunities for development and change, necessary to sustain a living

culture (see Kuokkanen 2000). It also ignores the reality that many Indigenous peoples today live in urban areas with lifestyles not very different from those of the majority population. The idea of the "real" Indigenous identity as something linked to a traditional, rural life can also be traced to a colonial hierarchy where the West, by definition, is viewed as pure and authentic, whereas the Others are always understood as colonized, impure, and "inauthentic" (Bhabha 1994). This stereotyped presentation of non-Western people creates a hierarchy between those cultures that are denied development and change and those that can change without being understood as "damaged" or "inauthentic". For example, being Norwegian is seen as perfectly compatible with having an urban lifestyle, even though most Norwegians up until quite recently lived in rural areas—but an urban lifestyle is not necessarily seen as compatible with being Sámi. Numerous scholars and activists have begun to challenge the idea that it is impossible for Indigenous people to participate in the modern world without "losing" their culture and identities (Denis 1997; Peters and Andersen 2013, 5; Starn and de la Cadena 2007). As Anne McClintock argues (1995: 40), Indigenous cultures are still, from a mainstream point of view, understood as something prehistorical and inherently out of place in modern times. To be an urban Sámi is thus conceptually opposed to what is the mainstream perspective sees as being Indigenous, and thus is incomprehensible.

An obstacle to the construction of a distinct urban Indigenous identity, noted with specific reference to the Sámi situation, is what Kjell Olsen calls "public spheres for the articulation of ethnic differences" (Olsen 2007, 86). He refers to Harald Eidheim's (1971) description of Sámi identity as a social stigma in coastal Finnmark in the post-war era, and to Eidheim's distinction between the Norwegian public sphere on the one hand, and the Sámi identities relegated to the private sphere on the other. Here Olsen holds that today the order of the spheres of interaction is

quite different: that, because of changes in the socio-economic and discursive relations between the Sámi and the Norwegian population, the organizing principles of Sámi identities are no longer linked to shame. However, he also points out that there is still an unspoken social agreement: there is a public sphere with a joint identity—whereas distinct articulations of Sámi identities are restricted to private spheres and specific zones classified as Sámi, such as Sámi centers or other Sámi institutions, or to specific dates, like the Sámi national day, February 6th. However, in an urban context, where there are many Sámi from other areas and where people do not necessarily know each other personally, some may feel a need to find ways of signaling to other Sámi in discrete ways that they too are Sámi.

Heterogeneity is another aspect of urban Indigenous communities. The urban Indigenous community is not just a part of the city's multicultural mosaic, but is often itself a multicultural community, with representatives from different ethnic groups or different sub-ethnoses of the same group. Andersen (2013, 54) has noted that urban Indigenous communities work actively to organize across divides based on culture and identity. In some cases, this work is made more difficult because of hostile or suspicious attitudes among various groups, or at least certain representatives of different groups. Failure to establish an overarching Indigenous identity among Indigenous urban dwellers can reduce the capacity to work together to further their interests. This also causes what might have become one larger community to remain several sometimes very small communities. On the other hand, there are limits to how far a community can be expanded to encompass different cultures without losing one of the original goals of having an urban Indigenous community—namely that of practicing and preserving a shared culture. This applies also in the Sámi context. Even though there is a state-border-transcending pan-Sámi society, there are still real linguistic, cultural, historical, and geographical differences

among the various groups of Sámi, differences that become important for social classification and social interaction in urban areas (Berg-Nordlie 2018; Olsen 2007; 2014, see also Chapter 1). Such differences can disrupt community building and institutional and political development.

While the issues discussed above pose serious challenges to urban Indigenous identity construction, all of them can be overcome through pragmatism, creativity, and activism. This chapter focuses on young Indigenous people in urban areas who are in a phase of life where creative experimentation with identities and culture is common. The city is a place where young people come to get an education, to work, and to take part in everything that urban life has to offer. This part of their life-cycle has a huge impact on how they lead their lives and define themselves. It can be posited that young Indigenous people may be particularly able to treat their culture actively and creatively in the encounter with other Indigenous communities and within an urban lifestyle. As Stuart Hall writes:

> Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning. Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position, which has no absolute guarantee in an unproblematic, transcendental "law of origin," (Hall 1990:226)

Hence, identities are not just a reflection of the past, but just as much a constant reconstruction of our points of identification linked to history, culture, and power. Identities are a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being" (Hall 1990, 225). The urban context, where there is no clear space for articulation of Indigenous identities, is also a space for creativity and construction of new ways of belonging to one's nation. Urban Indigenous lifestyles and identities therefore become a border life, or an in-between space, as Homi Bhabha puts it, where "the 'beyond' is

neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past" (Bhabha 1994 2). He describes cultural complexity as "a moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identities, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (ibid.). For young, urban Sámi, this means that the collective production of urban Sámi identities takes place in a culturally complex urban space where it must be renegotiated and redefined what it is to be Sámi. This involves both challenges and possibilities for cultural creativity.

Given that identities today are usually theorized as multiple, situated, and contextual, urban Indigenous identities must in some way reflect the specific urban Indigenous context. For many Indigenous people living in urban areas today, their lifestyle can also be categorized as a kind of "hypermobility," understood as a migration pattern between the city and the rural areas where their family originated. This disrupts the separation of the urban and the rural space, from an Indigenous point of view (Anderson 2013, 60; Hull 1984; Norris and Clatworthy 2003). For many young Indigenous people in urban areas, this means that they can maintain strong connections to their homeland even though they live in the city. As this chapter will show, hypermobility has become an element in the identity formation of young, urban Sámi.

Urban Sámi Identities in Different Cities and Different States

There are differences between the cities and between the four northern states in which Sámi live, but also some similarities. We analyze these similarities in terms of the experienced lack of space for urban Sámi culture, both in urban society and in wider Sámi society. As will be shown in Chapter 2, some cities have relatively large Sámi populations while others have small communities; in some towns, a sizeable share of the population identify as Sámi, while in others the Sámi are among the smaller ethnic communities. Some present-day cities were built on old Sámi lands, where the presence of Indigenous people has often been written out of history by the

settler colonial power; other urban Sámi communities find themselves in a situation of "domestic diaspora," being outside the Sámi homeland yet within their state of origin. The presence or absence of institutions of higher education is also a relevant difference. As many young Sámi move to the city in order to study, campuses become places of daily socializing, where they can reinforce – or lose – their Sámi identities. Finally, in connection with urban intra-Sámi multiculturalism, where members of the urban Sámi population come from many different Sámi areas, it should be noted that some of the cities examined here have a more culturally complex Sámi population than others.

There are also differences among these cities as regards the history of Sámi organization and visibility. Moreover, during the project period that resulted in this book, we found that many of the cities we studied were undergoing processes of change regarding urban Sámi policymaking, with new possibilities for urban Sámi. From being almost invisible in some cities, Sámi identities and culture had now been elevated to something the urban municipalities had on their agendas, if not necessarily prominently so (see also Berg-Nordlie 2018, Chapter 2). This in turn has expanded the experienced space for being urban *and* Sámi, involving a reconceptualization of what it is to be Sámi. As explained in the introductory chapter, Sápmi is divided among four states, in which the Sámi populations have a range of different histories of urbanization and where various Sámi policies apply. This has an impact on identity politics and identities. The states in focus in this chapter, Norway and Sweden, are arguably the most similar among the four.

In Russia, the historical policy of forced relocations led to geographical redistributions of Sámi sub-ethnic groups. New communities were formed from people originating in different parts of Russian Sápmi and there has been sizeable intergroup mixture. When the cultural

revitalization movement began in the 1970s, a choice was made: to focus on revitalizing only one of the five Sámi languages historically present in Russian Sápmi (Afanasyeva 2013; Overland & Berg-Nordlie 2012; Berg-Nordlie 2017).[2] Sámi identities in Russia do not seem to have focused on sub-ethnoses as much as in the other states. They have a more pan-Sámi character, where different Sámi groups have actively chosen to consolidate for strategic purposes, making urban Indigenous multiculturalism less of an issue. On the other hand, the ruralization of Indigenousness is a definite challenge. Closeness to nature, fishing, and reindeer herding are vital identity-markers for Sáminess, and the parts of Russian Sápmi officially recognized as "Places of Traditional Inhabitance [etc.]" are all non-urban (Berg-Nordlie 2017; see also Chapter 1 and Chapter 4).

The situation in Finland is also unique in some aspects. The definition of the "Sámi Domicile" as consisting of rural municipalities in the extreme north of Finland (see Chapter 1) has effectively constructed an association between the Sámi and this specific area with its non-urban characteristics. It is not uncommon to see the Domicile presented as being coterminous with Finnish Sápmi, despite the historical primacy of the Sámi in areas far to the south of this zone. Finland also stands out because of the intensity of the ongoing debate around Sámi identities. Persons who are not registered as voters in the Sámediggi, but who are of Sámi descent, are often described and socially treated as non-Sámi (see Introduction, Chapters 2, 4). Some persons who have not been allowed to register in the Sámediggi Electoral Roll refer to themselves as "non-status Sámi," echoing the discourse of "non-status Indians" in the Americas (Saarivara 2012, 12). The Finnish-Sámi debate on how to determine who is Sámi and who is not, with no easy answer, spurred by the need of both the Sámi and Finnish political institutions for clear-cut boundaries, has had an impact on the construction of urban Sámi identities in Finland.

It places people in cultural hierarchies where competences and identities can always be questioned. Thus we see how the colonial presence still affects how Sámi people view themselves and how the state defines them in terms of categories.

While Norway and Sweden are in many ways the most similar among the four states, there are differences in Sámi policy highly relevant for the question of urban identities. In Sweden, the state pursued a dual policy of segregation and assimilation, from the late 19th century up until the post-war period. Rural and reindeer-herding Sámi communities were the only ones officially deemed "pure" Sámi, and there were targeted policies aimed at keeping them socially and culturally separate, whereas other Sámi were not recognized as such and experienced assimilation pressure. This has led to a strong association in Sweden between Sámi ethnicity and not just rurality, but reindeer herding in particular. Even today, much of the Swedish state's Sámi policy is focuses on the reindeer-herding industry, a fact that is a source of political contention within Swedish Sápmi (Lantto 2014).

In Norway, official state policy towards the Sámi aimed at assimilation into the majority culture ("Norwegianization") from the mid-1800s until the mid-1900s. Since then, policy has shifted to the point where the state has formally committed itself to protect and facilitate Sámi culture, language, and community (Minde 2010). Except for some special laws and regulations for those involved in the reindeer-herding industry, the Norwegian state does not distinguish between reindeer-herding Sámi and other Sámi.[3] Also in Norway, reindeer herders are often stereotypically presented as "the real Sámi", but there are also strong Sámi communities with long associations to other traditional industries such as fishing and farming. While these are all rural industries, it still fosters recognition of the Sámi population as more complex and

multifaceted than in Sweden, in turn arguably more conducive to the innovations necessary for building a specifically Sámi urbanity.

That being said, in both Sweden and Norway, the individual's degree of connection to reindeer herding is thematized when Sámi identities are discussed, in addition to the connection to rurality and degree of competence in a Sámi language. The latter has become thematized in discussions in both states about Sámi identities because Sámi of certain areas and economic niches were more affected by the assimilation policy than others. There are fewer language users among descendants of non- reindeer-herding Sámi, and those from southern or coastal locations. This shows how state policies also contribute to the way the Sámi themselves categorize their own people, and how they limit Sámi possibilities for the future because of stereotypes produced by settler colonial logic.

Young and Indigenous Across the Urban-Rural Divide: Urban Life, Rural Connections

Interviews with young, urban Sámi show that the link between Sámi identities and rural places is still highly relevant. The colonial states' historic and present-day politics towards the Sámi, the nationalistic ideology of having clear-cut boundaries between people, culture, and territories, and the need of present-day Sámi political institutions to define who are to be considered as Sámi— all this has an influence on how Sámi people perceive themselves and others, and how they are perceived by the majority society. Even though a considerable number of Sámi today live in cities, there is still a kind of "out-of-placeness," as Peters and Andersen (2013, 379) describe it, related to the idea that urban Sámi culture is not "real" or "authentic" Sámi culture—precisely because Sámi culture remains so strongly associated with rural areas. Even though young Sámi

of today have opportunities to learn their language, culture, and traditional knowledge, they have grown up in communities where the colonization and assimilation of Sápmi still has a tight grip on those living in Sámi areas and who might have hidden Sámi ancestry. Moreover, people tend to associate political Sámi symbols with Sámi language and the lifestyle of reindeer herders and other traditional Sámi livelihoods such as fishing, hunting, and gathering. An urban lifestyle is often deemed "un-Sámi" by default due to the persistence of this close association between the rural and Sámi culture.

As our interviews with young, urban Sámi showed, these young people are trying to make space for an urban Sámi identity, where "being Sámi" is something more than following a rural lifestyle. Their active ways of performing an urban Sámi lifestyle, and their creative ways of making space for new ways of being Sámi that challenge the stereotypes of what it is to be Sámi, can be seen as having emerged in resistance to narrow discourses of what it is to be Sámi. Powerful colonial institutions have shaped people's minds and the ways of defining what it is to be Sámi, but the youth in this study are actively resisting these ways of defining Sámi-ness. Their ways of being Sámi in the city exemplify what Kramvig (2005, 46) has called a form of "resistance against categories of identity that are experienced as too narrow or exclusive." Through their everyday lives and their creative use of old and new Sámi symbols and events, and their active use of social media, they challenge the idea that Sámi culture "really" belongs in rural areas, or is a culture that must be understood as something that existed a long time ago and now can be found only in museums. These young people have grown up in a time when they, to a much greater extent than earlier generations, can take their cultural rights for granted. Indeed, many young Sámi possess a cultural confidence that earlier generations could only dream of.

However, young, urban Sámi are not a homogeneous group, and the different locations examined here vary with respect to their Sámi histories and how Sámi language and culture are integrated and accorded space. Some have moved to the city quite recently, while others are second and third generation urban Sámi. For young Sámi in places like Alta, where the language and traditional knowledge have disappeared or have a weak position, young people can find it difficult to relate to these "official" Sámi symbols, whereas others actively connect their Sámi identities to these symbols. In Alta (*Áltá*), there are youth with close connections to Sámi communities in the interior of Finnmark County, some from reindeer-herding families, and there are also youth from other municipalities in Finnmark with ethnically mixed or ambiguous families. While young Sámi from reindeer-herding families may experience prejudice against their lifestyle and background, youth from communities with more culturally complex or ambiguous everyday lives may feel that they are not considered "good enough" to be accepted as real Sámi. These ways of evaluating self and others in terms of narrow categories show how the colonial frames still influence how people define what it is to be Sámi: these young people's identities are defined in terms of what they lack because of colonialism, forced assimilation, and marginalization—not in terms of what they are today and their specific relations Sámi land and their families, friends, and communities. In turn, this way of defining creates a social dynamic where conflict or avoidance often become the sole options when talking about Sámi issues. This resembles the dynamic that Kramvig describes:

> Both in political and academic debates, this emphasis on differences has developed into a situation where ethnicity has become a question of purity: either Norwegian or Saami, you cannot have both. For ethnically mixed families in multi-ethnic communities in the region this has resulted in a situation of ambiguity (Kramvig 2005: 59)

This ambiguity has involved various aimed at avoiding tensions in everyday life. For example, young people from Sámi, Norwegian, or ethnically mixed or ambiguous families may downplay Sámi issues in their everyday lives in order to avoid conflicts or tension because these matters are so contested and ambiguous. In turn, Norwegian language and culture become the norm for interaction in the everyday lives of young people in Alta. For young Sámi who choose to ignore this norm, everyday life may sometimes be quite difficult. As Márjá (16) explains, she often experiences situations where she feels that she has to justify her right to be Sámi. She says that she has been called touchy, sensitive, and easily offended, even by teachers at her school. She says that she has felt the need to point out that she was Sámi, because she felt like a minority.

> It is okay here to say that "I distance myself from Sámi culture" or "I don't want to identify as Sámi in any way." That is so provoking for me, and then there are lots of people who don't like it that I let myself be provoked. And I'm easily provoked when people talk about Sámi issues, or if someone offends Sámi culture. (Márjá, 16, Alta)

This quote shows how the complex ethnic dynamic creates conflicts in school for young Sámi like Márjá who do not want to submit to the norm whereby Sámi language and culture should be hidden or downplayed in public. When she stands up for herself and for her culture, and refuses to hide her identity but instead displays it in public, others interpret that as her being an "agitator." Settler colonialism is still lurking; people have adopted settler colonial ways of defining themselves, thus participating in the elimination of their own culture. When others provoke Márjá, they interpret her being provoked as a way of expressing conflict, or that she is easily offended. For Márjá, the fact that they claim to distance themselves from Sámi culture, even though they may have Sámi ancestry themselves, is even more provocative. Martin, a

former high school student in Alta and a member of the Sámi youth organization Noereh, explains:

> In Alta there was a lot of talk about Sámi issues. The high school is located close to the [Sámi] kindergarten. You often could hear friends make comments about it [the Sámi kindergarten], that the best thing would be simply to burn the building down and get it over with. […] I don't like to hear things like that, but I didn't say anything, because I didn't know what to say. (…) You get used to not thinking about it (Martin, 22, currently Oslo).

Even though young Sámi today have grown up in a time when Sámi language and culture are much more accepted and appreciated than before, young Sámi still experience racism, hateful comments, and jokes about their language and culture. The fact that many Sámi people themselves participate in these practices shows how the logic of elimination of settler colonialism continues to haunt people's lives in Sámi societies. As Martin explains, this kind of discrimination in everyday life is something that even young Sámi have to learn to ignore. Nasty comments may come even from friends, as this quote demonstrates. According to Martin, this was quite common when he attended high school in Alta. He chose to ignore it, because he did not know how to deal with it. Instead of challenging his friends about their discriminatory comments, he simply ignored them and tried not think about them, as a way of getting through the school day. Martin and Márjá have different strategies regarding how they negotiate their identity in public and how they react to discrimination in their everyday life. Martin further explains:

> I have a theory about why it's easier in Oslo and Trondheim—that it has something to do with the history of Norwegianization in Alta. So many people have spoken Sámi and

Kven and Finnish. And many people have changed their whole identities. The Sámi

identity got repressed more severely. The shame of having another ethnicity than

Norwegian may be stronger in Alta, since the people there have actually changed their

identity over the last hundred years. (Martin, 22, currently Oslo)

Martin's thoughts about the differences between Alta, Trondheim (*Tråante*), and Oslo (*Oslove*)

are similar to what researchers like Dankertsen (2014), Kramvig (2005) and Olsen (2007) have

written about Sámi communities that have experienced severe Norwegianization. This ambiguity

may be the reason why Sámi identity has become such a complex matter, where public

expression of Sámi identities sometimes generates conflicts between different groups of Sámi,

and between Norwegians and Sámi. Whereas racist attitudes towards the Sámi do exist in both

Oslo and Trondheim, the issue is more complex in places like Alta. People in Trondheim and

Oslo often consider Sámi culture and language as something exotic and fascinating, and not

something experienced directly in their own everyday lives. For people in Finnmark, Sámi

language and culture are hardly something distant or exotic, because most of them have long

been acquainted with various aspects of Sámi life, and many have Sámi ancestry themselves.

Due to the complex history of Finnmark County and the Norwegianization process, making

space for Sámi identities in urban Finnmark may generate conflicts between different groups of

Sámi, between Sámi and Norwegians who may feel excluded, and between persons with a strong

Sámi identity and others who themselves may have distant Sámi ancestry, but who now identify

as Norwegians.

These conflicts can often be linked to how Sámi identities are socially defined: to who

gets to be defined as Sámi and who does not. This is an issue found in all four countries. While

young, urban Sámi try to make space for urban Sámi identities, Sámi identities are still strongly

associated with the use of natural resources through traditional activities like berry picking, hunting, fishing, and reindeer herding. We find this "out-of placeness" of an urban Sámi identity among young, urban Sámi in other interviews as well, as with 16-year-old Márjá from Alta:.

> There are about ten of us [in class] who have Sámi as our first language. But, since the school has one thousand students, it sometimes feels like I'm the only Sámi there. You never hear Sámi spoken in the hallways, and I seldom have a chance to use Sámi. Of course, there are many Sámi pupils there, but not that many who speak Sámi. That's why it's good to attend the Sámi class and be able to speak Sámi. It's a very special feeling, to walk into that class. Walk into my own "bubble" and speak my native tongue. It's so relaxing. But then, as soon as I leave the classroom, there is not a single Sámi word to be heard anywhere. (Márjá, 16, Alta)

The quote shows how lonely Márjá sometimes feels as a young, urban Sámi, because her urban everyday life is so detached from her own Sámi culture and the language, with little space for her to articulate and perform her Sámi identity. Sámi class becomes a haven in a city where there is not always space for Sámi culture and language. She clearly says that it is "so relaxing" and gives her "a very special feeling," which is her way of describing her sense of belonging to Sámi language and culture. At the same time, she says that being Sámi at school can feel quite lonely. Even if Alta is the largest town in Finnmark, a county that is deeply associated with Sámi culture even in its name, the invisibility of the language and culture are striking. As Márjá says, it sometimes feels like she is the only Sámi in school, even though it is a school with a thousand students, many of them Sámi.

Márjá's experience shows how important Sámi classes are for young, urban Sámi. Such classes, in addition to language training, *make space for developing a Sámi identity in an urban*

context. We can thus analyze the lack of space for urban Sámi identity as made clear in the interview with Márjá. This is also relevant for the public administration of Sámi issues in urban areas. John, an advisor working for the County Governor of one of the three northern counties of Norway, says that Sámi politicians sometimes can be a bit narrow-minded; they should focus more on urban Sámi, not since because more and more Sámi are settling down in cities. "It's is better to survive in the city than to die in the countryside," John says. He also mentions that there are many young Sámi in cities nowadays who do not have strong connections to the rural areas in Sápmi. For instance, second- or even third-generation Sámi in the city may not have close relatives in the traditional Sámi areas, and may not have the same feeling of belonging to the areas where their parents or grandparents originally came from.

"Does this mean that they cannot feel a sense of belonging among the Sámi?" John asks rhetorically. It is necessary to prioritize the urban Sámi, not only with language training and festivals, but in politics as well. John mentions the Tromsø/Ullsfjord *gákti* as an example. A *gákti* is a traditional type of Sámi clothing, and how it's made shows where the wearer or their family comes from. Some parts of Sápmi have lost their traditional *gákti* patterns due to Norwegianization, and among them is the Tromsø (*Romsa*) area. During the current Millennium, though, a *gákti* has been designed especially for Sámi in Tromsø, based on knowledge about *gákti* traditions from the surrounding rural areas. This is something that can be done in other cities as well, as a way of creating an *urban* Sámi identity. Alta also has its own *gákti*, likewise by way of rural *gákti* traditions in the greater district where Alta lies. In this way, the politicians and the Sámi residents of Alta and Tromsø have *reconceptualized the cities as Sámi places, not only as Norwegian cities where Sámi people live.* In this way, they have made space for Sámi

urban identities. The local *gákti*s are an example of how Tromsø and Alta have become places where Sámi can feel that they belong, not only in a Norwegian sense, but in a Sámi sense as well.

<Insert Image 3.1 here>

Image 3.1.— **Tromsø/Ullsfjord *gákti*s**. A *gákti* is a type of traditional Sámi clothing. It shows what district of Sápmi the wearer or their kin is connected to. Some local *gákti* traditions were lost during periods of particularly hard discrimination and assimilation. The Tromsø/Ullsfjord *gákti* is a modern reconstruction based on local tradition, a *gákti* for Tromsø city (Romsa) and the nearby rural area Ullsfjord (Moskavuotna/Vuovlevuotna), and other rural areas surrounding Tromsø, Norway. *Gákti*s and photo by Lone Beate Ebeltoft.

<Insert Image 3.2 here>

Image 3.2.— **Oslove Noereh ("Oslo Youths")**. A non-partisan organization for Sámi youth in Norway's capital Oslo (*Oslove*). The photo is taken at the Oslo Sámi House in front of a mural by the Sámi graffiti artist Anders Sunna. The flag is the "Sámi Pride Flag", which merges elements of the Sámi national flag and the LGBTQ+ "Rainbow Flag." The "Sámi Pride Flag" has been used since the first "Sápmi Pride parade", which took place in 2014 in the town of Kiruna (Giron), Sweden. Photo by Mads Suhr Pettersen, property of Oslove Noereh.

Urban Sámi Hypermobility

As Paul Pedersen and Torill Nyseth (2015) point out, with specific reference to the phenomenon of urban Sáminess, the increased mobility of people in our times also has an impact on place identities and belonging, where people can have feelings of belonging to several places at the same time. The urban space enables complex and multilocal place identities as well as new ways of articulating Indigenous identity in a culturally complex urban context.

Being an urban Sámi today is linked to hypermobility and belonging to many different places at the same time. Because rural areas are still such an important part of being Sámi, many young Sámi spend considerable time traveling back and forth. Hypermobility thus becomes a way out of the "out-of-placeness" of urban Sámi identities: people can stay connected to rural areas while spending their everyday lives in the city. Indeed, young Sámi may not necessarily define themselves as having an "urban Sámi" identity even though they live in a city. Many of the young Sámi interviewed for this project feel that urban life is important to them, but they all describe their Sámi identity in relation to one or more rural places of origin. Thus, we can say that they have *multilocal identities performed through Sámi hypermobility*. As Nyseth and Pedersen (2014, 147) write: "Urban Sámi identities are being 'stretched out' across particular places and territories. In that sense we could say that they are carriers of dual identities." Lene, a young Sámi woman living in Oslo says: "I am not a city Sámi. I have lived in the city for only two years*,*" (Lene, 20, Oslo).

Lene distances herself from an "urban" Sámi identity. She explains that she grew up in a rural Sámi area, and connects her Sámi identity to this place. However, in her everyday life there is a distinction between the urban and the rural, which can sometimes be blurred by what can be characterized as *urban Sámi hypermobility*, involving as patterns of migration between cities and

rural areas (Pedersen and Nyseth 2015). This movement between the urban home and the rural home communities creates complex situations where identities transcend the traditional idea of identities as mono-local. In fact, multi-local identities are common among Indigenous people and diaspora populations in general (Anderson 2013, 60; Hull 1984; Norris and Clatworthy 2003), challenging the idea of identities as place-bound, closely linked to one homeland and one community.

For many young Sámi in urban areas, traveling back and forth between the homeplace and the urban home is an important part of being Sámi today. Mikkel, a young Sámi man, lives in Bodø (*Bådåddjo*/*Buvdda*) but is originally a rural area in the greater district. The interviewer asks him if there is a big difference between living in Bodø and in his homeplace, to which he answers that there is no difference. He has the same friends, and they all drive back and forth between his place of origin and Bodø. Some of his friends live in Bodø and visit their homeplace on weekends, while others still live in their place of origin but pay weekend visits to Bodø. Mikkel also likes to attend Sámi festivals and meetings, so he spends a lot of his free time traveling to Sámi "happenings" all around Sápmi. He explain that he is not very politically active or interested: he does this only because it is fun to meet young Sámi from other places. Participating in festivals and meetings has become an important part of his Sámi identity. His story shows that hypermobility is a central element in being Sámi for young people today, and that *hypermobility in itself is a performed Sáminess.*

Kristin (20) grew up in the interior of Finnmark County, and her life story shows us how Sámi hypermobility is important to understanding Sámi identities today. Both Kristin's parents are Sámi, but they come from different Sámi areas, and neither of them has any family background in the municipality where Kristin grew up. She and her brother speak North Sámi

because they had Sámi in school and grew up in a municipality where the Sámi language has a strong position. However, neither of her parents speaks Sámi because in the places where they grew up the Sámi language did not have a strong position. Kristin now lives in Tromsø, and both of her parents have moved away from the municipality where she grew up. She says she cannot imagine herself moving back to the municipality where she grew up, mainly because neither of her parents originally came from there. She does not have a place that she calls "home" anymore. However, she still has many friends from the place where she grew up. In addition, Kristin has a boyfriend from another Sámi region. Kristin's Sámi identity is thus multi-local and complex, where hypermobility is an important part of her performed Sámi identity and where she *connects her Sámi identity to many different places at the same time.*

Hypermobility is perhaps even more important for those who come from families with a strong connection to reindeer herding. Lina was born in Stockholm (*Stockholbma*) but has always had strong linkages to reindeer herding and Sámi traditional knowledge. Even though she has always lived in the city, she does not define herself as an urban Sámi, due to her strong connections and sense of belonging to reindeer herding and her family's place of origin in the interior of northern Sweden. These ties to traditional knowledge and traditional Sámi livelihoods are central to her Sámi identity, even though her everyday life always has been in the city. For many young, urban Sámi with family ties to rural areas, especially to families who practice reindeer herding, hypermobility becomes a way of combining a traditional Sámi lifestyle with an urban one: they can be both urban and rural at the same time. For these young people, the impact of the urban and the rural on their Sámi identities is quite complex. It is situational and contextual, because the distinction between the urban and the rural Sámi population is unstable and situational. Some of the young informants in our project have lived in several urban and

rural places and have parents who have moved between places. For them, multi-local Sámi identities have become the "new norm."

Making Space for Urban Sámi Identities

While there are differences between the case-study cities in the four Sámi countries, the challenges that young Sámi encounter in the cities are similar. In all four countries, young, urban Sámi are all trying to find ways of making space for Sámi identities in an urban context where there is often little room for articulations of Sámi culture and identity. Being a young Sámi in an urban context can be quite lonely for some. Others, however, make space for Sámi identities in various ways, where the cities not only represent an obstacle to Sámi identities, but also offer new ways of being and becoming Sámi.

As Marianne Gullestad (2006) has argued, equality in a Nordic context is often framed as *sameness:* people need to see themselves as more or less the same in order to maintain a sense of community and a sense of equality. This often results in a communication style where commonalities are emphasized while differences are downplayed. When some individuals are perceived as too different, that becomes a threat to the social order, and those who do not "fit in" are excluded in order to restore the sense of sameness. For young Sámi, showing their identity or using the Sámi language can in itself be perceived as a threat to basic values in the majority society. In order to make space for an urban Sámi identity, they need relevant others who can support them. Thus, they have to find strategies for making a space for their difference, and ways of establishing commonalities between themselves and the majority population in the city.

In the project reported here, we have interviewed teenagers as well as young adults in their twenties. Being a teenager can be challenging in and of itself, and being Sámi does not always make this easier. We find a difference between our younger informants (aged 13 to 18),

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and those who are older regarding the space they have for expressing their identities. Many urban Sámi activities such as concerts and parties also involve alcohol, which excludes minors. For the youngest ones, school and family are still the major Sámi arenas.

Maria, aged 13, describes her urban everyday life as quite ordinary, not differing from that of her classmates, except for the fact that she learns Sámi at school and wears Sámi dress on special occasions. When asked what she likes to do after school and in the weekends, and if she likes to do anything Sámi, she said that she does not do anything special: she does her homework, listens to music, and likes to read. She reads mostly fantasy literature, and the music she listens to is mostly international pop music. Maria spends most of her time with non-Sámi friends, except for her cousin. She sometimes listens to Sámi music when she is alone or with her family. Occasionally they visit relatives and her mother's homeplace, but her everyday life is generally not so different from that of others at her school. According to Maria, the most important thing is to be proud to be Sámi.

Also the two siblings Robert (16) and Christina (13) say that school and family the most important Sámi arenas. They now live in Tromsø with their mother. Their grandfather grew up in a more rural part of the coastal Sámi area, but left when he was young. Their mother grew up outside the traditional Sámi area but feels a strong connection to Sámi culture today, which is partly the reason why Robert and Christina also feel connected to Sámi culture. Robert and Christina have no connection to their Sámi family's place of origin, and they have never visited the place where their grandfather came from. Moreover, most of their family members have now moved away from that place. However, Robert and Christina lived for a while in a municipality in the core Sámi area where they still have friends. They see this as an important time regarding their identities, even though they have no family connection to that place.

Christina and Robert spend their afternoons doing homework or spending time with friends. Christina used to be on a roller-derby team; Robert likes table tennis. With the exception of Robert's Sámi language class, Christina's interests in *duodji* (Sámi handicraft), celebrating the Sámi National Day wearing *gákti*, and sometimes listening to Sámi music with their mother, their everyday life does not differ greatly from that of other youth in Tromsø, where they live. They once attended a Sámi political meeting with their mother, but said that they do not care much about politics. When asked about participation in youth activities, they said they did not know much about the opportunities for people of their age: activities tend to be for university students and adults, not the under-18s.

For the younger Sámi, such as Maria, Robert, and Christina, who are still in junior high and high school, Sámi organizations seem somewhat irrelevant to their everyday life, nor are there many activities that appeal to them or include them. For the youngest Sámi interviewed in connection with the project, we can thus say that *there is a lack of space for Sámi identity performance*, which in turn can affect urban Sámi identities. School and Sámi language training and family are the most important arenas for Sámi identities for them. Indeed, Sámi language training in school is a very important arena for the youngest informants. As regards urban Sámi identities, here it should be borne in mind that some young Sámi have grown up in the city and do not have strong connections to the rural areas where their parents, or grandparents, originally came from. A new generation of Sámi is growing up in settings where the urban lifestyle matters the most, and they feel that they belong in the city. For those who do not have living grandparents or close family ties to the rural areas anymore, the urban life is the only possible life for them. Especially for those youth, it is important that there are *urban spaces for Sámi culture* where they can express their identities and can make space for an urban Sámi life.

Thomas is one of the young men whom we interviewed in Stockholm. He says that it is easy to be Sámi in the city because the city allows a different kind of freedom. He explains that he is not interested in the lifestyle in interior Swedish Lapland. While he was growing up, he was not interested in snowmobiles, reindeer, or other things that belong to that lifestyle. If you come from a small place, threatened by depopulation, he explains, and do not have the same interests as most people there, you do not gain self-confidence—it is as if the world is happening somewhere else. For Thomas, it is the world of popular culture that interests him. It is this world he wants to belong to, to live in, and to grow old in. At the same time, he claims that it is easier to succeed as a Sámi artist if you live in the city. There are more people there like him, it is possible to "get a voice" in a different way than in the rural areas, he explains. In this sense, we can say that Thomas is trying to find a way of expressing an urban Sámi identity that differs from both the rural Sámi identity and non-Sámi urban youth. *He thus makes space for an urban way of expressing his Sámi identity.*

For a long time, Thomas wanted to be someone else. He wanted to be "Stockholm cool." He did not feel that he was worth anything at all, as a person from rural Sápmi. However, today he has a different perspective. Now, being Sámi in Stockholm has a quality in itself, he says. We can conclude that in his own way he has *found a way of being a cool urban Sámi* and that being Sámi in itself is a part of what makes him "cool." Because Thomas did not grow up in the city, he finds it difficult to answer how young Sámi people who have grown up in the city experience being Sámi. However, he adds that he has met many young, urban Sámi in his work life, and he feels that they have a different kind of profundity, a broader focus, compared to "ordinary" Stockholmers. Being Sámi gives them something extra that other young people do not have.

However, Thomas says that young, urban Sámi often become invisible in the big city and that they want to be more visible *as Sámi.* City life is the norm, he says, and it is the voices and perspectives of the urban Stockholmers that count. He adds that young Sámi live in a society where it is the rural life that counts and is the norm, and where it is the urban life that is invisible. We can interpret this as a way of expressing that *there is not enough space for the urban in Sámi culture.*

In Thomas' story, the urban and the rural, the Swedish and the Sámi, represent diametrically opposed norms and lifestyles: Sámi culture is associated with the rural, whereas the urban is defined by Swedish urban culture. Many of those who struggle to define an urban Sámi lifestyle and culture become invisible, in Swedish as well as in Sámi society. For others, however, it can be easier to be Sámi in a big city. According to Susanne (20), who is active in the Norwegian Sámi Association (NSR), this is especially true for young Sámi who have grown up in places that have a more complicated relationship to their Sámi past and present.

> If you come from a place where Sámi [language and culture] lives, it [the culture] will probably be weakened. But for someone like me who grew up in a place where the Sámi [language and culture] has a weak position, almost dying, moving to a place where I can meet other Sámi people has given me more people to talk to [in Sámi], since it used to be only mum, dad, and my sister. It was worst in "Viknes" [the municipal center]. Here in Oslo you sometime encounter people who joik after you, but it is probably not malicious. People simply don't know that much [about Sámi culture], it is exotic. In [her place of origin] people often don't like Sámi people (…) In a way, I feel there is less racism in Oslo, since I come from a place where there is so much of it. In Oslo, you seldom experience racism against Sámi people (Susanne, 20, Oslo).

Moving from a place where there is still considerable discrimination against Sámi people, and where many still conceal their Sámi identity, to Oslo where there are many Sámi people from all over Sápmi can be a relief. While in her home village, Susanne could speak Sámi only with her parents and sister, in Oslo she meets Sámi people all the time. In a sense, she is closer to her own culture in the non-Sámi city of Oslo than in the place where she grew up, where many people have Sámi ancestry, but where the language is threatened and many still choose not to articulate their Sámi identity. She adds that it is easy to hide in a big city like Oslo, where no one knows who your family is, and that this feels like a kind of freedom. Further:

> In the city you can hide if you don't want to be recognized as Sámi. I often don't say that I'm Sámi because I want people to focus on something else. Everyone doesn't know that [family name] is a Sámi name. Many people believe that I'm from Greece or Finland. If they ask, then I answer, but not everyone asks. It is fun, in Oslo you can find new Sámi people everywhere. I always wear something Sámi like this (shows her shawl) so that others can find me. Some of us use things like this when we go out. I often see people with Sámi things like this, and then I walk up to them and say "hi." (Lene, 20, Oslo)

Paradoxically, the low knowledge about the Sámi among Norwegians in Oslo becomes something that gives young Sámi like Susanne a sense of freedom and flexibility as to performing and articulating their Sámi identity. The city is a place where she can meet Sámi from all over Sápmi, a place where she has better chances of preserving her own language and culture. When we recall how Sámi culture is still strongly associated with rural Sámi areas, and how young Sámi still link their Sámi identity and belonging to places in rural areas in the traditional Sámi territories, an "urban Sámi identity" becomes a paradox in itself.

This freedom that the city gives young Sámi is also relevant for minorities in Sámi society. For minorities, such as homosexual and trans-sexual individuals, the city can be a place where they can express themselves. Lina, a young lesbian Sámi in Sweden, says that it can be difficult to be LGBTQ in traditional Sámi areas, especially in traditional, male-dominated reindeer-herding communities. Lina was born in the city, but her family are reindeer herders, and herding is something that she also takes part in whenever she has the opportunity. She says that she has never lived in the Sámi countryside, but that she believes it is easier to be queer in the city. She talks about Queering Sápmi, a project that works for and with Sámi people and that challenges norms about gender and sexuality. Lina says that this project has been strongly connected with urban areas, perhaps because the queer movement itself is so strongly connected to the urban, even though many project participants live in traditional Sámi areas.

Káre, a young female student in Tromsø, is of mixed Sámi origin: her mother is from the Northern Sámi region, her father comes from the Lule Sámi region (see Chapter 1 for more on Sámi subgroups). She grew up in a third municipality where neither of her parents has any relatives, but where the Sámi language has a strong position. Káre links her Sámi identity to a culturally complex and multi-local world, not to one particular homeplace where she feels that she belongs. Moving back to the place where she grew up is not an option for her: she likes Tromsø and wants to stay there. Her description of her Sámi identity shows that there are ways of being Sámi that are not necessarily connected to a specific location: she feels connected with the Sámi people through practices and personal bonds. In defining Sámi identities like this, Káre also opens up for ways of being Sámi that also include being urban Sámi.

When we interviewed the leader of the Sámi student organization in Tromsø (*Sámi Studeanttaid Searvi Romssas*, SSSR)*,* he confirmed that there are not many active members in

the organization today: it is mostly the members of the board who are active. The SSSR still have two important happenings per year: They arrange a popular Christmas party in December, and they arrange a party during the Sámi cultural week in February in connection with the celebration of the Sámi National Day. These two arrangements are very popular among students and other young (or young at heart) Sámi in Tromsø. However, the level of activity in the organization is quite unstable. Some years, there is considerable activity, while other years there are few active members or activities. The SSSR leader explained to us that at the time they were in a period with few activities except for the Christmas party and the Sámi Cultural Week. The rest of the year, Sámi students mostly interact through private networks and ordinary student life, and not SSSR membership. However, many of our young informants say that they use social media to get in contact with other young Sámi. Many of the case-study cities have Facebook groups like "Sámi in Trondheim", where they share links to Sámi concerts and other events or plan gatherings. The social media have indeed become a game-changer for identity work in everyday life, making it is easier to get in touch with people with similar identities. Many activities that used to require formal organization can now be arranged easily through the social media.

John, an advisor on Sámi issues, says that he can see a change in Sámi communities in cities in Norway, even in Tromsø where Sámi organizations have had a strong position for decades. Not so long ago, the Sámi student organization had many members and activities. Today's students have other interests. He adds, however, that this is not necessarily a bad thing: it might that the young Sámi today have a strong Sámi identity and do not need an organization to preserve their identities. They have the confidence to do it on their own, and they have the networks in the city that give them a sense of Sámi belonging. The city is a place where Sámi

identity is a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being" (Hall 1990, 225), where individuals negotiate and find new ways of being Sámi. While some use organizations in order to meet other Sámi and express their Sámi identities, others have different networks. There is diversity among young, urban Sámi, just as there is among urban youth in general, with the city offering a range of ways for expressing their identities. Thus, there are many different ways of making space for urban Sámi identities, in turn opening up for new ways of being and becoming Sámi.

<Insert Image 3.3. here>

Image 3.3. — **Rural arts, urban setting**. Children at the Sámi kindergarten *Cizáš* ("The Sparrow") in Oslo (*Oslove*) are showed how to prepare a *goahppil* (female capercaillie) by a kindergarten employee who brought it home from hunting. Photo: Mikkel Berg-Nordlie.

<Insert Image 3.4. here>

Image 3.4.— Urban arts, rural setting. A traditional *lávvu* tent painted by graffiti artist @Illuzina (Linda Zina Aslaksen) from Alta (Áltá), at the international Indigenous festival *Riddu Riđđu* which is held annually in rural Manndalen, Kåfjord (Olmmáivággi, Gáivuotna). The piece shows Buffy Sainte-Marie, who performed at the festival in 2019, the year in which the photo was taken. Photo by Astrid Carlsen, Wikimedia Commons, CCASA4-licensed (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lavvo_painted_by_Linda_Zina_Aslaksen_at_Riddu_Riđđu_festival_2019.jpg)

Different Sámi, Same City

What constitutes Sámi urbanity? That is a complex question which is also related to the social and cultural complexity of the Sámi people as a whole. Urbanization of Sámi people involves a concentration of the diversity that exists throughout Sápmi, including negotiations of identities. Some cities are located in areas that traditionally have had Sámi settlement, such as Bodø, Alta, and Umeå (*Upmeje/Ubmeje*); other cities, such as Oslo and Stockholm, are outside of Sápmi. Sometimes the Sámi have moved to the cities; and sometimes cities have developed in areas that already had Sámi settlements. There are many differences between the cities and how they relate to Sámi culture and history (see Chapter 1 and 2). This is also reflected in how the cities profile their relation to Sámi culture, for instance, in official documents. According to the Cooperation Agreement between the Norwegian Sámediggi and the Municipality of Bodø:

> Likewise, it is ascertained that Bodø has had Sámi settlements from ancient times up until today, that the municipality has a growing Sámi population, that the municipality also is host to a number of Sami students (Municipality of Bodø/ Sámediggi 2015).

Here we can see how the city of Bodø connects this Sámi political initiative both to the Sámi history of the area and to the fact that many Sámi people have moved to the city. This perspective was also reflected in several official speeches in the opening ceremony of the Sámi Language Center in Bodø in 2018, where the local Sámi history of the area was mentioned, that many Sámi people from various areas have moved to the city, that a Sámi kindergarten section has been opened in Bodø, and that Nord University in Bodø started the "Senior Teacher in Lule Sámi" program the same year. We can here see how the municipality of Bodø and the Sámediggi are "rebranding" Bodø – or Bådåddjo, the Sámi name of the town – as a Sámi town, even though Sámi language and culture have been almost invisible for a long time.

Further, the cultural complexity of cities is linked to identity categories of the past and present and to colonial history. As Tahu Kukutai points out, "Statistical representations of Indigenous peoples are constrained by official identity categories that are socially constructed and historically contingent" (Kukutai 2013, 312). This also reflects ideas about who are to be included or excluded from these categories, which in turn is connected to what Kukutai describes from New Zealand as "colonial policies of racial amalgamation, with the expectation that Māori would eventually lose their separate identity and become absorbed" [into the dominant white Western society] (Kukutai 2013, 312). Likewise, as a result of assimilation policy, relocations, marginalization, and intermarriage, the Sámi today are a diverse population, ranging from those who identify solely as Sámi, to persons with a more complex Sámi identification.

The cities have also been important not only for the Sámi people who have traditionally lived in the specific geographical area where the city is now, but also as meeting points for trade, work, and education for people from different Sámi groups in the region. Because the cities often have people from several different areas, their linguistic, cultural, and colonial histories are quite different, and this in turn has an effect on identity negotiation processes in cities. The various subgroups used to be integrated into a complex socio-economic system where Sámi in different areas and with different livelihoods cooperated and were connected through reciprocal relationships—or *verddevuohta*/"guestfriend"[4]—through friendship, kinship, and practical aspects of everyday life, but state policies have weakened these old ties (Eidheim 1966:427). Often this can be a source of conflict and tension between different subgroups in Sámi communities living in cities, where Sámi from different areas with different colonial histories and perceptions as to who are the "real" Sámi may show a lack of solidarity with each other.

Such tensions are apparent in Sweden as well, where the idea that reindeer herders are the only "real" Sámi is far more pronounced than in Norway, where today there is a greater cultural diversity within Sámi society. To belong to a recognized *sameby* —a Sámi village, the juridical counterpart to the Norwegian reindeer-herding districts—is an important source of Sámi rights in Sweden, and thus an important factor in identity. Olle, a young Sámi living in Umeå, explains how he takes part in reindeer herding and how it feels like a part of the mountain life.

> I still consider reindeer herding as the "real" Sámi culture, and a lot of people do not want
>
> to cut the ties to their homeplace. (Olle, 21, Umeå)

Olle indicates that reindeer herding is still the most important symbol of Sámi culture in Sweden. This, he explains, has to do with the fact that Sámi rights regarding hunting and fishing are connected to the reindeer herders. Further, he thinks that many choose to live in Umeå because it is easy to travel home and take part in the activities connected to reindeer herding. Olle has family ties to the interior part of northern Sweden and to reindeer herding, but he grew up in the city. He says that even though he did not take part in that world, his roots, his connection to the land there, are an important part of his Sámi identity. He would like to build a small cabin in the area where his family originally came from. Olle thinks it is easier to be Sámi in the interior, in the traditional areas: but he also acknowledges that many young Sámi in reindeer-herding communities have committed suicide, so he does not know if it is easier after all.

On the other hand, Olle claims that Umeå has become an important part of Sámi society as whole, especially after the EU declared Umeå a European Capital of Culture in 2014. Here, even though reindeer herding is still an important part of what defines being Sámi in Sweden, the growing emphasis on Sámi culture in Umeå has changed this slightly, opening for new ways of

defining Sámi culture to include *urban* Sámi culture. A similar argumentation can be found in the interview with Sara, a young, lesbian Sámi in Stockholm who has ties to reindeer herding:

I do not see myself as a City-Sámi. My ties to the traditional areas have been so strong, and the Sámi [culture] is something that is connected to these areas and the activities there. The Sámi [culture] in the city is more difficult to define. But now I consider myself as being a Sámi in the city. (Sara, 20, Stockholm)

Sara grew up in the city, but her ties to the reindeer-herding communities make her feel Sámi. She says that she sometimes thinks it would be easier to take part in reindeer herding if she had not grown up in the city. She clearly connects her Sámi identity to reindeer herding, and her city upbringing makes her feel "less" Sámi. At the same time, she argues that because she is a lesbian it has been easier to be Sámi in the city: she feels that it is more difficult to be a lesbian in the male-dominated traditional Sami reindeer herding community. We see how the creation of this "new" Sámi subgroup—"the queer Sámi" —has opened up for urban ways of being Sámi, where this new subgroup is a way of defining Sámi identities that can include a more urban lifestyle.

Cities in areas that traditionally have had Sámi settlements are often areas where Sámi language and culture have for a long time been marginalized and made almost invisible. Alta is located on the western coast of Finnmark, an area that traditionally has had a quite large coastal Sámi population (Eidheim 1969, Høgmo 1986, Olsen 2010). Rolf, who works at Álttá Siida, the Sámi cultural center in Alta (cf. Chapter 4), comments on the frustration of some parents who could not get places for their children in the Sámi kindergarten:

Alta is a place where a lot of people have lost the [Sámi] language because of the Norwegianization policy. Then, their grandchildren and great-grandchildren apply [for placement in the Sámi kindergarten]. And I understand that. A generational ending to the

Norwegianization process. They want a place in the kindergarten to bring back the

language. […] it is a shame to have to say "no" because we do not have enough places.

(Rolf, Alta)

The focus on revitalizing Sámi language and culture has been an important factor throughout

Sápmi, especially since the opening of the Sámediggi (the Sámi Parliament, see Chapter 1) in

1989, with Sámi festivals such as Riddu Riđđu in Kåfjord as an important factor. However, the

largest and most dominant group is still the Sámi-speaking population in the interior of

Finnmark, where the Sámi are in the majority. Because Alta is the largest town in Finnmark,

with job opportunities and a university (UiT, The Arctic University of Norway, Alta campus),

people from all over the county move to Alta for shorter of longer periods, including people from

the interior. These individuals, with greater competence in Sámi language, have in turn been an

important and dominant factor in the development of Sámi institutions, organizations, and

activities in Alta. Kari, an activist who has worked with coastal Sámi issues for a long time, says:

I wonder if the coastal Sámi [culture] just got "too much attention". That is what I

believe. Those who are in the Sámi organization were mostly from the interior areas. (…)

Here, they were the ones who became "the Sámi" and could represent the Sámi [culture],

and then the language center came and focused on the coastal Sámi [culture]. (…) It is

difficult when you don't have people who can speak those dialects [the coastal Sámi

dialects], when you have to depend on people from other areas (Kari, Alta).

Kari points out that the competence of those from the interior part of Finnmark is needed, but

that there should also be a focus on the coastal Sámi language and traditions. She feels that the

reindeer herders from Kautokeino are seen as the "real Sámi" and that this is in conflict with the

focus on the coastal Sámi dialects and traditions. Here we see how the negotiation between

different Sámi subgroups in Alta is linked to hierarchies in Sápmi that serve to disrupt Sámi mobilization. In fact, there are not only negotiations between the coastal and interior Sámi as to what Sámi culture in Alta should be, but also negotiations of coastal Sámi identities and how coastal Sámi culture should be presented. Kari mentions the *Alta gákti* – the Sámi dress introduced in Alta:

> When it was sewn [for the first time], it was called *mearrasámegákti* [coastal Sami gákti]. It was based on an old model from Øksfjord. They call it the Øksfjord *gákti* over there, but here they call it the Alta *gákti*[5]. I've even seen it in use in Hammerfest. There are different opinions on that. Some like it, some don't. Some have changed it so much that it's become unrecognizable, and I think that is a shame (Kari, Alta).

We can see here that people also negotiate as to what coastal Sámi material culture should be and the amount of space for cultural change that is deemed acceptable. In the period when our fieldwork was conducted, several courses for learning how to make the Loppa/Kvænangen/Alta *gákti* – Loppa (*Láhppi*) and Kvænangen (*Návuotna*) are nearby rural areas-s were held in the region, and especially young people wanted to get a *gákti* for themselves. The *gákti* became increasingly visible in social media, especially through the Noereh campaign "International Gákti Day", when young Sámi were encouraged to wear Sámi dress in their everyday life on a specific day and to share pictures in the social media. Although an increasing number of young Sámi are growing up in the cities, as urban Sámi from Alta or Tromsø, they still tend to point out that they "originally" come from specific rural Sámi areas.

The geographical area that constitutes the Municipality of Bodø is partly in the Pite Sámi area, where no one speaks the Pite Sámi language today, but where a growing number of people are becoming interested in their own Sámi past, and there are attempts to revitalize the Pite Sámi

language Further, the municipality is located in an area with reindeer-herding districts, where some of the reindeer herders are originally from the North Sámi region in Sweden. In addition, the municipality lies partly in the Lule Sámi area, and close to areas where the Lule Sámi language still has a relatively strong position. The Lule Sámi language is also one of the three Sámi languages with official status in Norway. Thus, even though Bodø is said to be on the border between the Lule and Pite Sámi area, the official name and road signs are in Lule Sámi—*Bådåddjo*, not *Buvdda*—and the language taught in the Sámi kindergarten and school and at Nord University is also Lule Sámi, because the Pite Sami language has not yet gained the status of an official language in Norway, and there are no active users of the language in Norway. This is a source of tension within the Sámi communities in Bodø, not only between the Sámi and the non-Sámi residents, but also between different Sámi groups, and between Sámi who want to make Sámi language and culture visible again and those who are more comfortable with a situation where local Sámi history, and their own Sámi history, can remain invisible.

Whereas Umeå, Alta, and Oslo have Sámi organizations and specific venues such as a Sámi center where people can meet, Bodø opened its Sámi center as recently as in 2018.[6] Moreover, active Sámi organizations have tended to recruit people from specific Sámi groups, and not others. The members of the main Sámi NGO of Bodø and the surrounding district, Sálto Sámesiebrre, are mostly from the Lule Sámi area, with some members from the North Sámi area and the reindeer herders there. The Pite Sámi have their own organization, in which most of its membership are from the municipalities of Beiarn (*Bájddár*) and Bodø. There is also a Sámi parents' network, but because the children who have Sámi training in school learn Lule Sámi, most parents are naturally also from the Lule Sámi area. The annual Sámi festival in February is the only time when Sámi people from different areas have an opportunity to come together (see

also Chapter 4 for more on Sámi civil society in the Bodø area). Mikkel from the Lule Sámi area

explained that he has little contact with other Sámi people in Bodø apart from those from the

Lule Sámi area:

> Bodø is a student city, and people come from all over Sápmi to study. There are new
>
> people coming all the time, but it is not that easy to keep track of them when there are no
>
> places to meet. Then it becomes mostly informal social networks and coincidences.
>
> (Mikkel, 21, Bodø)

He points out that while he thinks that Sálto Sámesiebrre does an important job, they do not do

that much in Bodø because most of the members are from the Lule Sámi area. He feels it is

important to have a place such as a center where Sámi from different Sámi subgroups can meet.

Mikkel describes a city where the Sámi are divided into different subgroups, with few places to

get in contact with each other. While there are Sámi people from a range of areas, this is quite

different from the situation in, for example, Oslo and Tromsø, where young Sámi to a greater

extent socialize with Sámi from other areas. Although this sometimes leads to inter-group

tensions, it also creates opportunities to develop solidarity and to mobilize across the different

Sámi subgroups, as Martin points out:

> It is very easy to be Sámi in Oslo. Here, there are actually a lot of Sámi. It's easy to
>
> establish a social scene, easy to make Sámi friends. Now, with Oslove Noereh,[7] I think it
>
> will be even easier. I have great hopes for Sámi [culture] in Oslo. The Sámi House,
>
> language courses, and other courses, events for old and young Sámi. […] And here,
>
> there's a much more diverse group of Sámi. Diversity is fun. (Martin, 22, Oslo)

However, Martin adds that there is a challenge, because there are so many Sámi from different

areas, and many speak different Sámi languages or do not speak Sámi at all due to

Norwegianization. They often have to speak Norwegian in order to understand each other and to include everyone. For him, this can be negative because he wants to use the Sámi language more. He wishes that there could be more arenas where the Sámi language(s) can be used.

Both Mikkel and Martin argue that it is a positive thing that the Sámi communities in the cities are more diverse. For Mikkel, though, the fact that the Sámi communities in Bodø are divided, with little interaction between the different Sámi subgroups in the city, is clearly a bad thing. Martin, however, appreciates that there is a quite diverse group of Sámi in Oslo, and that they can meet and learn from each other in organizations such as Noereh.

Conclusion

Even though the situation varies greatly in Russia, Finland, Sweden, and Norway regarding Sámi rights, policymaking, and the corresponding identity discourses, we can note some similarities. There is increasing urbanization among Sámi, and yet, being urban *and* Sámi represent a kind of "out-of-placeness," as being Sámi is still closely connected to the traditional rural Sámi areas. Urban Sámi identities involve complex and multi-local place identifications, with many Sámi living what can be categorized as a "hypermobile" life, migrating between rural and urban locations/settings, but with strong connections to the rural Sámi areas (Anderson 2013, 60; Hull 1984; Norris and Clatworthy 2003; Pedersen and Nyseth 2015). We can link the migration pattern to the strong association between "authentic" indigeneity and rurality, where the urban Indigenous identity becomes a kind of "out-of-placeness" in an Indigenous context, even though more and more Indigenous people live in cities (Peters and Andersen 2013, 379).

We argue that Sámi identities must still be understood within the rural/urban dichotomy, which in turn has an impact on how urban Sámi identities are negotiated. However, we find that young, urban Sámi are trying to find new ways of being Sámi, where being urban and being

Sámi are not necessarily incompatible categories. Being a young, urban Sámi involves a complex negotiation between the past, the present, and the future in a way that also opens up for new ways of being Sámi. In addition, the urban Sámi communities are diverse and culturally complex communities, with Sámi from different areas and with a range of interests and lifestyles. This diversity makes a space for cultural creativity.

To be young and Sámi in a city enables and presupposes cultural creativity, living in a place where people from different parts of Sápmi meet members of the majority population and other cultural minorities as well. Cities are places where young people come to get an education, to work, and to take part in everything that urban life has to offer. This lifestyle has a huge impact on how they live their lives and how they define themselves. Urban Sámi identity challenges the very definition of what it is to be Sámi. As noted in the introduction with reference to Stuart Hall (1990, 225), identities are a matter of "becoming" just as much as of "being." The urban lifestyle thus opens up for new ways of being Sámi. While previous generations often hid their Sámi identities, many young Sámi of today have a very different perspective. They live in a time when there is more space for being Sámi, when more and more people are proud of being Sámi, and they demand their right to be Sámi, also in an urban environment. This opens up for urban Sámi creativity because it requires reinventing what it is to be Sámi in an urban environment, and making space for Sámi identities in places where there has been little room for expression of Sámi identity.

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Notes

1. "The Plateau" here refers to highlands in the Scandinavian interior that are of high importance for many reindeer-herding Sámi groups, and that are symbolically connected to Sáminess, particularly by the non-Sámi majority. The Norwegian word, "Vidda", is elsewhere in this book translated as "The Plains." The corresponding term in North Sámi is *duottar*.

2. Four Sámi languages are generally considered as historically present in Russian Sápmi: Ter, Kildin, Skolt (Notozerskij), and Akkala (Babinskij). In addition, a coastal variety of North Sámi known as Fil'man has historically been spoken in the northwest part of Russian Sápmi (Leinonen 2008)

3. In Norway, the rights to influence over natural resources are realized through arrangements where not only urbanized Sámi are granted extensive influence over local natural resources, but also non-Indigenous persons who live on Indigenous lands (Skogvang 2017).

4. *Verddevuohta* is a concept that means "guest friend". This is an ancient and important way of collaboration between the settled and reindeer herding Sámi, which strengthened the mixed

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economy of the Sámi. The collaboration often involved lodging, boat transport, bartering of meat, fish, craft products. It was also historically, before this practice was banned by the state's authorities, common that the settled Sámi had reindeers in their verdde family's herd (Eidheim 1966).

5. Usually it is called Loppa/Kvænangen/Alta gákti, even though it has been reconstructed from an old *gákti* from Øksfjord (*Akšuvuotna*) in Loppa Municipality. However, some claim that the Alta version has changed that much in the last decades that it might be time to separate this from the *gákti* used in Loppa and Kvænangen, which is more true to the original design.

6. This center opened after the NUORGÁV researchers had completed their interviews for the project.

7. Oslo's chapter of the Sámi youth organization *Noereh* (see Chapter 4 for more on this).