

WHEN ETHNIC IDENTITY IS A PRIVATE MATTER

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the change of articulation of ethnic boundaries on the coastline and the fjord areas in Finnmark, Northern Norway in the post-World War II period. From being a 'social stigma' in the 1950s a Sámi identity is today something that can be expressed in certain cultural constructed spaces. This change can be described as a result of socio-economic changes in the region, the populations' firmer integration in a Norwegian culture and the ethno-political struggle of some Sámi that corresponded with a general development in the view on indigenous people in the Western world. Even if great changes have occurred there are still some resemblances with ethnic processes 50 years ago. A spatial ordering of ethnic boundaries and pragmatic assumption of Norwegian culture being neutral norm are among those features perpetuated until today.

KEYWORDS: Sámi • ethnic boundaries • identity • cultural spaces

Harald Eidheim's (1969) article, 'When Ethnic Identity is a Social Stigma', is probably the most influential work on Sámi identity in Northern Norway (Eriksen & Høem 1999: 127; Stordahl 2005). Based on his fieldwork in a small fjord area in Western Finnmark around 1960, he demonstrates how people attempt to hide an ethnic identity such as Sámi when Norwegians are present. A Sámi identity is only expressed in, what Eidheim describes as, closed mono-ethnic Sámi spheres. A Sámi identity becomes a stigma that guides interaction in all spheres because, due to local knowledge and highly local symbols, locals are always able to dichotomise between Sámi and Norwegians (Eidheim 1971: 50, 62). Since ethnic background was supposed to be a private matter and shame, turning this into an explicit topic in the public sphere or actually mixing cultural spheres was a breach of conduct for both Norwegians and Sámi (Eidheim 1971: 65). Eidheim's (1971: 50) article thus demonstrates how ethnic categories organise interaction and create ethnic boundaries in a context where an attempt is made to hide ethnicity in the local community and make it invisible for outsiders. A Sámi identity was a proper basis for interaction only inside what Eidheim (1971: 60) terms a 'closed Lappish sphere'.

Following Eidheim (1971), the aims of the article are, firstly, to point out some socio-economic changes that have had an impact on ethnic relations in the area where Eidheim did his fieldwork more than forty years ago. Previously this was an area where people lived in small local communities scattered along the fjords of the coastline because they could make a livelihood from a mixed adaptation to farming, fisheries and, after World War Two, seasonal work in the region. Today the majority of the population lives in larger local and regional centres. In these centres ethnicity is no longer a private matter, in the sense that it is supposed to be kept out of multi-ethnic social contexts because of the stigma attaching to the individual recognised as Sámi. Local social interaction is

regarded as a pragmatic matter where everyone has mastered the local culture that is defined as Norwegian.¹

Secondly, I suggest that, even if dramatic changes have occurred in the socio-economic as well as discursive relations between Sámi and Norwegians in the last forty years, there is continuity in the way the conceptual difference is upheld. During Eidheim's fieldwork, the Sámi way of living was looked upon as something that belonged to the past. The future was to be integrated in the developing welfare state by becoming Norwegian. Today, when the overwhelming part of the population, regardless of ethnic belonging, have the cultural skills necessary for a career in Norwegian society, the dichotomy between Norwegians and Sámi must be based on a different conceptual ordering. While the conceptual order was previously based on a temporal order on the coast, today it is based upon an organisation of space. What Fabian (1991) calls a denial of coevalness between the modern and the traditional has, in the case of ethnic relations in Finnmark, altered. In his Foucauldian analysis, Fabian points out: 'The significance of time can be eliminated altogether by its reduction to space, real or classificatory space ...' (1991: 198). I shall argue that expression of a Sámi identity in most apparently Norwegian communities in Finnmark is restricted to spaces – real or classificatory – that imply that it has no impact on the quotidian or on those who prefer to live their everyday life as modern Norwegians in the population centres.

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL CHANGES

Both theoretical changes in anthropology and empirical changes in Finnmark have occurred since Eidheim wrote his article. With his attention to ethnic boundaries, Eidheim played a part in the Wenner Gren workshop that resulted in the seminal work *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Barth 1969).² Although influential, this perspective on ethnicity is contested and supplemented by perspectives that emphasise belonging as well as differences (Baumann 1996; Cohen 1985, 1987, 1994a; Jenkins 2004; Schiffauer, Baumann, Kastoryano & Vertovec 2004). Since the 1960s it has developed views on ethnicity that 1) promote fluidity, multiculturalism, situationality, power, heterogeneity and differences between discourses (Barth 1994; Baumann 1996; Clifford 1997; Cohen 1994a, 1994b; Eriksen 1993; Rosaldo 1989; Werbner 1997), and 2) point out the actor's perspective of fixed ethnic belonging (Bentley 1987; Caplan 1996; Gil-White 1999) as well as 3) emphasising the impact of the nation-state, which enforces clear-cut boundaries (Baumann 1996; Comaroff & Comaroff 1992; Donnan & Wilson 1999; Duijzings 2000; Eriksen 1993; Malkii 1995).

Eidheim's theoretical aim was to show how ethnicity was articulated and maintained in social interaction, in particular in a context where few if any physical and cultural traits or distinct economical and political arrangements were attached to the separate groups. The reason for this apparent homogeneity is that parts of the coastal areas of Finnmark have been economically integrated in national and European economy since the twelfth century. This economic integration was later followed by a political integration, and both these processes have resulted in a permanent Norwegian presence in the area. Nevertheless, it was not before the middle of the nineteenth century that there was any conscious policy of assimilating the minorities of the Northern areas into Norwe-

gian culture (Niemi 1994). Because of a closer socio-economic contact with Norwegian society and the coastal Sámi being judged as more acculturated than 'the Noble savages' of the tundra, this policy had its strongest impact on the coast. At the time Eidheim (1971: 50) did his fieldwork, the particular fjord area was what he calls a 'transitional zone' with a large degree of homogeneity among the population. The population was apparently on their way to becoming Norwegian. Still Eidheim was able to show how local knowledge and local symbols always made it possible for locals to categorise other locals as either Sámi or Norwegian and, more important, this categorisation had an impact on social relations where the Sámi had the inferior role.

From a different theoretical angle – and with the passing of time – such a 'transitional zone' can come to appear as a 'cultural borderzone' that is 'always in motion, not frozen for inspection' (Rosaldo 1989: 217). These zones are sites for creative cultural production and areas for creative identity processes that refuse to fit into neat entities, or cultures, with clear-cut boundaries and claims of authenticity (Rosaldo 1989: 207–208). In such zones, identity processes in the quotidian deny order and reflect people's creativity in the way they express themselves as individuals. As Rosaldo puts it: 'In rejecting the classic "authenticity" of cultural purity, [they] seek out the many-stranded possibilities of the borderlands' (Rosaldo 1989: 216). As will be elaborated later, these changes in theoretical emphasis also correspond to an ontological shift among the people living in Finnmark. Such a shift is partly the result of changes in the way ethnicity and indigenous peoples are approached in Western culture, in general, and in Norwegian national politics, in particular.³ In the last forty years, the idea of cultures dying has, in the case of the Sámi, given way to cultural revitalisation and the granting of, often modest, political rights. To understand this development, not only macro- and median-level processes are important. An understanding of the local context in which such processes come together as a lived context for individual activity and interpretation is necessary in order to understand the creative processes, their denial and their necessary admittance (Barth 1994: 21). As Eidheim put it: 'We must bear in mind that it is the general character of *local* ecology and society which provide the meaningful context in which a Lappish/Norwegian ethnic dichotomy is articulated' (1971: 67; italics in the original).⁴ The local ecology and society of the area today allows 'many-stranded possibilities', while the local social organisation give directionality to their articulation. In a lived context, many processes promote the classic authenticity of cultural purity.

One change in contemporary local society since Eidheim did his work is the emergence of a strong Sámi ethno-political movement that has had its centre of gravity in the interior of Finnmark. This political struggle has emphasised the reindeer-herding culture that has always differed from the settled Sámi communities on the coast in their symbolic manifestation of a Sámi identity. In this political struggle, ethnicity has been singled out as the important ordering principle. Not only people of Sámi descent have attempted to retrieve a past; the Sámi ethno-political struggle has also had a strong impact among Kvens.⁵ The strategy has also been productive in the Foucauldian sense that the Sámi ethno-political struggle has been the pivot for other identity processes that are seldom organised at a political level. As Foucault (1978: 95) writes, resistance in various forms is an immanent feature of power relations. Power is a productive force because it provides spaces for a multitude of contestations. (Foucault 1980: 119). These heteroglot processes, as contestations, or parallel operations, or oppositions to the political Sámi

movement, have often emphasised the differences, the particular, the local and heterogeneity in this 'cultural borderzone' (Kramvig 1999; Olsen 1997: 239–240).

As of now, seven municipalities in Northern Norway have declared themselves Sámi. This implies that the Sámi language is used in the public sector on equal terms with Norwegian, a Sámi national learning plan is in use in the schools and they can receive funding reserved for Sámi communities. The Sámi culture has become more visible, and an increasing number have registered on the Sámi electoral rolls so as to be able to vote for members of the Sámi parliament.⁶ This parliament, even if restricted in authority, has had quite an influence and has been a strong advocate for Sámi land rights. Previously Crown lands, 95 percent of the county of Finnmark has been transferred to a board made up in equal numbers of members from the Finnmark County Authority, representing the total population, and from the Sámi Parliament. Perhaps the main influence of the ethno-political movement is that the Sámi culture can be regarded as having a future on the coast as well. Many people have acknowledged a Sámi past, and some of them have chosen a Sámi future or have articulated this as part of their history. Still, the dominant discourses are strong agents, promoting the boundaries that make 'pure' ethnic categories viable for social action in a political field (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992: 62–63).

A second characteristic of the local ecology and society that has changed since Eidheim did his fieldwork in the late 1950s and early 60s is that the area was then under pressure from the conscious policy of Norwegianisation. Even if this policy was officially abandoned after World War II it continued to be conducted locally and to be reinforced by development of the welfare state that fully integrated this area in the Norwegian nation-state.⁷ This was quite a different policy from the contemporary one, which promotes the revitalisation of Sámi culture, and not only as a museum object. Furthermore, the local socio-economic framework too has changed. This area in a remote part of Europe has become, and one might add always has been, thoroughly integrated in global processes that are given a local shape. Even more important, political and economic changes in Norwegian society mean that patterns of settlement and occupation have totally changed in the last forty to fifty years.

THE ALTA FJORD AREA 40 YEARS AGO AND TODAY

Eidheim (1971) did his fieldwork in a coastal Sámi settlement, Lille Lerresfjord, in a fjord in Western Finnmark in the late 1950s and early 60s.⁸ When he arrived in the municipality, he did not recognise any cultural features that reflected a split within the apparently homogenous population (1971: 51–52). Instead, the locals emphasised their Norwegian identity, their competence in modern fisheries and farming, their modern housing, kitchens, and their cleanliness in accord with Norwegian hygienic standards. All conversations were held in Norwegian – even if it was often slightly broken. In the course of his work, Eidheim (1971: 54–55) recognised that, even if it was quite impossible for outsiders to see differences, locals could classify peoples in the whole district – starting point in their own community – as either Norwegian or coastal Sámi. The district, from the individual person's point of view, was an area within a radius of 30 to 50 kilometres from their home. In Lille Lerresfjord, where he lived, only 6 out of 150

inhabitants were classified as Norwegian by the locals themselves. The rest of the population were coastal Sámi and recognised as such by locals. After demonstrating some fluency in the Sámi language, he also discovered that Sámi was used at home in 40 out of 50 households and when locals met other Sámi in the district. When Norwegians were present or on occasions defined as public, the Sámi language was never spoken. In the administrative centre of the region, which at the time of Eidheim's fieldwork was Talvik, on the opposite side of the fjord, only 20 out of approximately 300 people living there were Sámi.⁹ These settlements represented two ends of a continuum of what locals categorised as ethnic belonging.

After a while, some of the inhabitants, mainly middle-aged men, did tell him that they were 'a kind of Sámi'. Until World War II the settlement was dominated by the Sámi style in housing, clothing and traditions. All buildings in this area were burnt down by the German Army in 1944 as it withdrew in the face of the advancing Red Army, and the rebuilding was done exclusively in Norwegian style. Furthermore they also told him in confidence that Norwegians ridiculed them because of their lack of Norwegian cultural competence. For many, too, the lack of economical prosperity in the settlement was seen as a result of the Sámi heritage. In spite of not being regarded as equal by other Norwegians, they often used their meetings with reindeer-herding Sámi from the interior to demonstrate their Norwegianness and regarded the reindeer herders as inferior. Like most settlements in the fjords of Finnmark, whether or not they are predominantly Sámi, seasonal work outside the district was necessary to make a living. They competed in this regional labour market and were part of a sphere in which Norwegians and other Coastal Sámi in a similar position as themselves were present and acted according to a Norwegian cultural code. Their dilemma, as Eidheim (1971: 56) pointed out, was, in order to gain access to the economy and the possibilities in the developing Norwegian welfare state, they had to hide their Sáminess. They attempted to hide their Sámi identity because social ambitions were directed at an apparently mono-cultural Norwegian society where Sámi cultural skills were of no use.

Nor did these communities have any contact with the emerging ethno-political movement among the Sámi in the interior of Finnmark. In the interior the Sámi were a majority, making up between 80 and 90 percent of the population. A minority of this population were occupied in reindeer herding, while the majority got their main income from dairy farming. The few Norwegians living in the interior were employed mainly in public service. In the coastal areas, the coastal Sámi combined farming and fisheries, like the non Sámi-speaking majority that made up about 75 percent of the population. Only in two fjords were Norwegian and Salami speakers equal in number.

Compared to Eidheim's description (1971) of more than forty years ago, the present situation in the area is characterised by changes in many of the determining features of the local ecology and society emphasised by Eidheim. The situation described forty years ago was that of an economic adaptation in which the men of households in small settlements combined fisheries, farming and seasonal labour migration. Today such an adaptation is not representative of the majority of the coastal population. More characteristic for the major part of the population – in particular in the area where Eidheim did his fieldwork – is that such settlements have been depopulated and people have moved to other places all over Norway or to regional centres. Such regional centres, as in the case of Alta, are inhabited in part by first- and second-generation descendants

of the informants Eidheim describes. Often the generation Eidheim (1971) described have followed their children and settled in such centres (Eikeseth 1998: 360 ff.; 2003: 24). Here people earn their living in the public sector or in the service industry, which dominates such centres all over Norway. In a regional centre like Alta, they meet people who have moved from other parts of Northern Norway, from the interior of Finnmark, from Southern Norway, and from many other European and non-European countries. Approximately half of the residents in municipalities in Finnmark were not born in the place where they live and a relatively large proportion, an average of 25 percent, come from other places than Finnmark and Northern Troms (Munkjord 2006: 8).

Even if coastal settlements are still found – many in the process of becoming holiday resorts and some as still-thriving communities – they are not representative of the everyday life of the majority of the population in the area; or in Eidheim's (1971: 67) terms, of the local ecology and society where most ethnic processes unfold. Still there is a persistent tradition in Norwegian anthropology that Sámi studies should be conducted in small places or in the interior. Paine (Komagfjord and the interior) and Eidheim (Polmak, Lille Lerresfjord, and the interior), firmly in the tradition of social anthropology of the 1950s and 1960s, seem to have set a standard whereby others have come to regard the small local community as the most suitable arena for the study of Sámi ethnicity.¹⁰ Hence, Vangen (2005), in her analysis of Manndalen, has demonstrated that a theoretical stress on belonging rather than on differences means that ethnicity often is of little importance in local interactions in such small places. Internal belonging and homogeneity are points usually seized upon by other authors (Thuen 2003; Paine 2003; Bjerkli 1997), but are combined with a theoretical perspective on ethnicity that emphasises differences to other categories, overshadowing other organising principles (Eriksen & Høem 1999: 129).

Today Lille Lerresfjord is a part of Alta, the largest municipality in Finnmark. Alta has 17,359 inhabitants, making up 24 percent of the total population in Finnmark.¹¹ From 1980 to 2002, Alta's population increased by around 30 percent, which positions the town among the fastest-growing centres in Norway. The increase was mainly in the municipal centre where, today, 73 percent of the overall population lives. On the outskirts, where Lille Lerresfjord is located, there has been a decrease of 75 percent since 1960. This has happened in a period when the population of the municipality has doubled (Alta kommune 2003). The growth of the centre and decline of the outskirts is a long-standing process that has been going on for more than 40 years. Yet ethnicity seems still to be a matter that anthropologists are studying on the fringes.

THE CHANGED CONTEXT

Lille Lerresfjord was a small settlement where the majority could be traced to a coastal Sámi past. Alta is a much larger town, where Norwegians and Kvens previously were much more prominent than in the dominantly Sámi settlement of Lille Lerresfjord. Yet there are some resemblances. When I moved to the regional centre, Alta, in the early 1990s, I had an identical experience to what Eidheim had had in the fjord community thirty years earlier. For an outsider, ethnic differences were hard to see. The exceptions were that one could sometimes see older people in Sámi costume and that some people

presented themselves as Sámi. With few exceptions, all were originally from the interior of the area. Except for older people, who were usually dressed in Sámi clothing, everyone had a fluent command of Norwegian, exhibiting no more than the dialectal differences common in Norway. Even those who emphasised a Sámi identity very seldom stood out from the average Norwegians found everywhere. Due to the homogenising effects of the nation-state, people of my own age, born in the early 1960s, shared most experiences that I had had and the cultural knowledge I myself had gained when I was brought up more than 2,000 kilometres farther south in Norway. Like Eidheim (1971), after a while I also started to be told by people other than Sámi from the interior that they could be 'a kind of Sámi'. 'A kind of Sámi' in the 1990s refers to a quite different local ecology and society than thirty years earlier, to different experiences of a Sámi past and also to a different ontological understanding of the relationship between Sáminess and Norwegian identity.

Three characteristics of the local ecology and society are important for the way ethnicity was articulated and maintained in the 1950s and 1960s (Eidheim 1971). Firstly, local knowledge enabled people to recognise others as either Sámi or Norwegian in a relatively large district. Secondly, the time when people were Sámi was a relatively close past. Most people had lived in a community and led an everyday life that were regarded by themselves and others as coastal Sámi. Thirdly, the contact with other Sámi in the interior was only with the reindeer herders on their annual migrations to the coast. The emerging ethnic revival in the interior settlements and in academic milieus was unknown. Today, in the regional centre, people's knowledge of each other is much more fragmented. The Sámi past, conceptualised as such, is for most of the inhabitants the past of their parents, their grandparents or even further back. The Sámi language was spoken – if it was heard at all – by old people or reindeer herders, and was seldom passed on to younger generations. Also those who grew up in settlements in the fjords usually spent their childhood in settlements that were regarded by themselves and others as Norwegian. They made up a Norwegian population, in contrast to the Sámi population in the interior, even if they were different from the Southerners that often took central positions in the booming labour market of the 1960s and 70s. Last but not least, the ethno-political movement has made the Sámi culture in the interior today into a modern vibrant culture where there are a multitude of possibilities of expressing a Sámi identity in different ways. This is so even if ideas of authenticity that emphasise the culture of the minority occupation of reindeer herding and general ideas about indigenouness found in a global fourth-world discourse (Eidheim 1992, 1997; Thuen 1995, 2003; Stordahl 1996; Hovland 1996) are still predominant.

As already demonstrated, the settlement patterns have changed in Western Finnmark. In the regional centre where most people live, the everyday encounters are mainly with people you have less information about than in the fjord settlement. This is not to say that it is impossible to obtain personal information about one's neighbours and acquaintances. Much information is often easily accessible through social networks, but it is difficult to obtain accurate knowledge about a Sámi past. Since 1100 AD, the fjord areas have had a population of mixed ethnic origin. Norwegians, Kvens and other nationalities have made these areas heterogeneous. Multilingualism has been frequent, and changes of ethnic belonging have occurred at both collective and individual levels. To know that a person comes from a particular place in the fjords – to be a *Fjording* – might

indicate a Sámi identity but you seldom know for sure. It is a relational term seen from the individual's standpoint. People originally from different places may put different contents into the word. For some, it relates to Sámi, for others it might be neutral, and still others may attach a Kven identity to the word, all depending on purpose and context. Therefore, the label *Fjording* is a potential rather than a closing description.

Usually it is up to the person herself to make ethnicity relevant in social interaction. Compared to a background from Southern Norway or from the interior of Finnmark, belonging to the fjord areas is a much more open category. An exception may be particular places individuals know well, where they can categorise families as having been Sámi. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that a person from this family regard herself as Sámi today – even if some of his or her relatives may. One usually needs a personal statement, which may vary for each individual in the family.

Most people do not know much about their past compared to people from southern parts of the country. A famous name for the coastal population has been 'the people without a past' (Nielsen 1986). Those who experienced the change from Sámi to Norwegian seldom talked about what they had lived through (Høgmo 1986: 404). Their former identity as Sámi belonged to the past. This was an ontological ordering of ethnicity that also had a strong impact on those who grew up in Norwegian settlements. One example, of a person who grew up in a small coastal community close to Lille Lerresfjord, shows how the coastal Sámi identity disappeared and became attached to the past.

In this settlement the shift occurred in the late 1950s and early 60s. A man who was brought up in this settlement in the 1970s recalls that, even if he knew that many of his older relatives spoke Sámi, he, like the rest of his peers, never thought of themselves as anything other than Norwegian. Nor did he experience any problems because of what today is regarded as a Sámi heritage. People interpreted any signs that might point to a Sámi identity as belonging to the past. If such signs appeared in the present, as described by Høgmo (1986: 409) for a generation brought up thirty years earlier, they were rendered neutral or reinterpreted as Norwegian. As the man said: 'We were Norwegians! What else could we be?' The Sámi, or rather *Finnan* as the people living in the interior is referred to by locals, were reindeer herders, people of the interior, or a derogatory label put on those whose actions did not conform to the local culture. Someone could act like a Finn, but not claim a continuity with a Sámi past because this past had been left behind. In his childhood, when his mother – herself brought up in a Sámi family – once teased him by telling him that she intended to give her vote to the Sámi Party, he could not believe her because they were Norwegian and did not stand out from the local cultural community, in spite of what some older relatives said about Sámi being their mother tongue. Consequently, his Norwegian mother could not vote for a party that was supported by Finns only.

This example, as well as that of Eidheim (1971), is representative of the development in the coastal areas as well as indicative of the differences in individual stories. The example also points to the changes that have occurred in the last forty to fifty years. My informant experienced his childhood and youth as Norwegian, is fully integrated in modern Norwegian society, and has skills and an education gained in the Norwegian educational system. The small fjord settlement, as Sámi, is a part of his parents' past. For him it was a Norwegian settlement that he had left for the regional centres which offered employment and educational opportunities. For him and many others, their

relatively newly found Sámi past is a rather distant past that previously did not belong to them. They live in a contemporary society where the consequences of this past can be debated and negotiated primarily due to the Sámi ethno-political movement. The dilemma is that the dominant discourses, of which ethno-politics are a part, seldom offer a vocabulary that captures their experiences. Their reactions to this can be multiple. They can call themselves Finnmarking, Sámi, Coastal Sámi, Norwegian, a mixture, a cocktail, or mongrels, and few will oppose their own choice of belonging in a local context. Nor will such a choice have any consequences for social interaction in the local public sphere pragmatically defined as Norwegian. What makes it possible to reclaim this past, regardless of what one calls oneself, is that the ethno-political movement as a part of general processes in modern society has changed the way of thinking about a Sámi culture. Today for many Sáminess is a real opportunity for people in small settlements as well as in regional centres. What has changed most are the possible ways of expressing Sáminess.

The consequences of the change of socio-economic context since Eidheim's (1971) study are, firstly, that, in contemporary local ecology and society, people have less knowledge of each others' backgrounds, and peoples' backgrounds are rather heterogeneous. Secondly, there is the possibility of attachment to different identities. Thirdly, what can be seen as a Sámi past is more remote and much more heterogeneous than what Eidheim describes for the fjord settlement. And finally, people master the Norwegian culture fully. These empirical changes also coincide with an ontological change in the way ethnicity is thought of by large parts of the population in the area.¹²

The privacy of ethnicity described in Eidheim's work is a result of, firstly, a temporal ordering of ethnicity in the fjord areas and, secondly, a spatial organisation that separates the coast, the fjord areas and the interior. At the time of Eidheim's (1971) writing, people were on their way to becoming Norwegian, and what belonged to the past had to be kept private as a private shame or inside a distinct sphere, and caused stigma when made public by some peoples' lack of cultural competence. Today a spatial organisation of ethnicity still separates the interior, the coast, and the fjord areas. What, in the institutionalised discourses, are symbols of Sáminess are features that, on the coast, are regarded as belonging to the interior. The change is that the temporal organisation on the coast has broken down. It has been eliminated by its reduction to real or classificatory spaces (Fabian 1991: 198). The establishment of such real or classificatory spaces means that ethnicity is still a private matter. But the reason for this privacy has changed, too. Today being Sámi is seen as a private choice that has no implications for others but only in certain spheres can a Sámi identity be expressed without having such an effect. The problem is that the boundaries between these spheres often break down.

SPHERES OF INTERACTION

The changed local ecology and society, and the altered ontology have led ethnicity to organise interaction in a new way, in other spheres with other codes, themes and values than previously. The temporal organisational principle has had to give way in most contexts, except for a few institutionalised settings in a public sphere. Inspired by Erwin Goffman's sociology, Eidheim (1971) points out three separate spheres of interaction:

a public sphere, a closed Norwegian sphere and a closed Sámi sphere. All three spheres were organised differently according to ethnicity. Today, in the regional centre, the organisation of ethnicity is best understood with reference to: 1) a public sphere where some spaces allow expression of a standardised Sáminess that uphold a temporal division 2) a public Sámi sphere where a collective Sámi self-understanding has hegemony; and 3) private spheres where the clear-cut boundaries of the two former usually are rejected and identities continuously are under negotiation.

THE PUBLIC SPHERE

What Eidheim (1971: 58–59) describes as a public sphere in the fjord areas can be understood as ordered by temporality. The Sámi culture and identity did not belong in contemporary modernity even if everybody knew which people had such a past. To bring Sámi identity into a public sphere resulted in huge social costs (ibid. 63). As long as Norwegians were present or in Norwegian arenas like the local shop or school, the language was Norwegian and nothing pointed to an ethnic division among the population. Even if it was expected that no one signalled a Sámi identity in public in the fjord settlement or the area as a whole, all inhabitants knew who was of Sámi descent. Such local knowledge was based upon the ability to attach identity to signs such as certain living places, what was regarded as a Sámi ‘physical appearance’, the accent and to behaviour like passivity in public meetings, which was perceived as lack of reliability and ‘keeping to themselves’. According to Eidheim (1971: 59), the consequence was a local community where initiative in the public sphere belonged to those who fully mastered the Norwegian code, or said in an other way, the Sámi past had no place in the present.

Compared with the regional centre of today, few of these signs can be used by locals to predict a Sámi identity. Physical appearance and descent from certain fjord communities known as Sámi might be an indication of the person having a Sámi identity. But people seldom have thorough knowledge of the same areas. Therefore this is not, as previously, a collective knowledge. The mobility of people means that local knowledge is always fragmented. One’s own background, growing up in a certain area, may give people the ability to ascribe others as belonging to certain places or families with Sámi identity, but this only is a partial knowledge of some areas. This is not knowledge one can expect other people to share even if they may have similar knowledge of other areas. The only exception relates to the division between the coast and the interior, which also often implies a certain dialect. Nor is people’s conduct in a public sphere something that today can be used as an ethnic marker. The local culture has long been conceptualised as Norwegian only showing the local differences as every other place subsumed under the label of Norwegian culture. Nor is ethnic belonging a part of the interaction in local public spheres. As long as everyone is assumed to be familiar with the local culture, ethnic belonging becomes a non-topic for ordering social interaction if not no one insists on that ethnicity matters.

A short encounter with a neighbour shows how ethnic belonging is a non-topic in the community, whereas it structures the relationship between ‘us’ – the locals – and ‘them’ – the interior. In the autumn it is common to buy reindeer meat directly from

the reindeer herders. Knowledge about where, when and from whom is usually a kind of information provided by more experienced friends and acquaintances even if such information is sometimes found in the adverts in the local papers.¹³ Information from other buyers is usually the best because they will know about the expected quality of the meat, and your relationship with them will hopefully give you an advantage by forming a relationship with the seller. To buy from someone you know may also be regarded as favourable because such transactions not necessarily involve the Tax Office and the Public Health inspector. One neighbour told me that the meat she had bought this autumn was of particularly good quality and she said that she could make an arrangement for me with the seller next autumn. The meat was of such good quality that she intended to buy dried meat from the same seller, a woman she knew quite well. The reason for this good quality was that the meat was tenderized so well and as she put it: '... *Finnan* do not do this.' Such an ethnic reference must be understood both as a text, i.e. an expectation about my local cultural competence, and as a part of a context, i.e. the social setting in which this reference to ethnicity was uttered.

People in this area use the word *Finnan* as a name for the predominantly Sámi people from the interior in general, and for the reindeer-herding Sámi in particular. It is based mainly on a distinction between 'us', the people on the coast, and 'them'. A literal translation would probably equate *Finnan* with a – sometimes derogatory – term for the Sámi; but in local speech the latter meaning is too broad to cover the intended meaning in more restricted encounters in Alta. Sámi people living on the coast would usually not be called by the singular *Finn*, but more probably be referred to as *Fjordfinn* or by the open ethnic marker *Fjordfolket*, people of the fjords. The latter terms are also used to make a distinction between 'them' and 'us', but in this case a more specific knowledge about who 'we' are and who 'they' are is necessary. To fully apprehend the cultural content of categories, one needs first of all to know something about the two people involved, i.e. the local ecology and society.

The woman who said that *Finnan* do not tenderise their meat is herself among those who could be referred to as 'from the fjord'. Her background from a small settlement in a fjord in Finnmark makes it very likely that she herself fulfils most of the criteria for inscription on the Sámi election rolls. By earlier references to her mixed background, she is well aware that I know about her being probably of partly Sámi descent. Being from the fjord herself, and my being a Southerner, implies that the word *Finnan*, in this particular context, refers to the boundary between the reindeer-herding population of the interior and us, who live in Alta. The word *Finnan* thus refers to a certain way of living and settlement in a particular geographical area, something that in most cases is also a marker of ethnicity, but one that does not cover all Sámi people. My neighbour is excluded by this usage, but would have been ethnically characterised by the term *Fjord Finn* and to some degree by being called a person 'from the fjord'. What is significant is that such terms can be used by people of Sámi descent – or persons like herself who can claim to be partly Sámi – to make a distinction between *Finnan* and themselves. The terms used relate to ethnicity, locality, and certain assumed ways of behaving and to way of life. The local discourse cannot therefore be easily translated into the official discourses of ethnicity in public institutions.¹⁴ Encounters between neighbours enable the individual perception of him or herself to take prominence and defining relationship in the particular context. Experiences that have no access to dominant discourse

may be included in concepts that change meaning in other contexts. What in dominant discourse appears as ethnic differences between my neighbour and me does not in the contexts of everyday life become a hindrance to creating other communities guided by other organising principles. In this particular context, we, as well-educated parents living in Alta, are what are important. This is what we feel, irrespective of the differences that can be constructed by the ethnic vocabulary. Therefore people contest the dominant discourses that insist on ethnicity as a major ordering principle. Nevertheless, the dominant way of ordering ethnic relations is always a potential that may contest other ways of creating communities.

Nor are such labels regarded as derogatory per se even if they may well be so. In the same way as the use of the word *Finnan* supposes local cultural knowledge, its meaning is dependent on a mutual understanding of the social context. Since neighbours are aware that I am familiar with these terms, they can use them with me, but as most middle-class people in Alta know, the meaning changes in other social contexts. Brought into a public discourse or with Southerners who do not know the local culture, the word could have been regarded as a derogative term. Hence the word becomes ambiguous. She would probably not have used it in front of Sámi people she did not know well and in contexts where they would not fully comprehend her intended meaning. Simultaneously, once again this implies a mutual understanding about who 'we' are and who 'they' are, but this is an understanding that can be contested by evoking new plots. Such contestations are important in everyday life because the kind of plot that gains hegemony has consequences for one's own and others' understanding of individuals' past, present and future. In this example, as in most social interaction in the local public sphere, there is an emphasis on belonging to the local or the Finnmark culture. Shared cultural competence and symbols that are pragmatically defined as Norwegian become the frames for social interaction. Equality is emphasised, but this is a fragile communality. Insistence on the dominance of the institutional discourses alters the way interaction is organised. Insistence on the right to use one's mother tongue, the radical difference represented in museums, tourism and political discourse, all emphasise differences, or in Eidheims terms (1971: 79): dichotomy and complementarity. The 'us' created among two neighbours could have, by bringing the dominant discourses into play, been altered to an 'ethnic' encounter. This fragility also implies a certain power relation long embedded in the relationship between the North and the South because the local way of categorisation never gains access in dominant national discourse.

PUBLIC SPHERES FOR THE ARTICULATION OF ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

In spite of a local culture that often appears to be pragmatically Norwegian – 'everyone' has these cultural skills, and the use of Sámi codes and language will only make trouble – several spaces are available for the expression of Sáminess.

People, usually from the interior, who speak Sámi often use the language in conversation with people who have the same language skills. It is not uncommon to hear Sámi in public places, but it usually signifies an origin in the interior. The same applies to those who use traditional Sámi costume in an everyday setting. Usually those who wear such dress in daily life are not only from the interior but also of an older genera-

tion. The same does not apply to special occasions, like the national celebration on the 17th of May, weddings, baptisms or confirmations. Here one can see many young people and adults who do not necessarily come from the interior wearing traditional Sámi costumes. Traditional coastal Sámi costume is commonly seen, even if not as frequent the costumes from the interior. On these occasions, such an identity marker can be used by people who, in everyday life, have never claimed a Sámi identity because it was never meant to be significant for ordering interaction among locals. Having mastered the local codes fully, they need to make a particular claim that their ethnic identity should be taken under consideration in everyday matters. In making such a claim they would have made a political statement that contests the assumed neutral practical ordering of the public everyday life.

It is not only at public celebrations that some spaces are reserved for expressions of Sáminess. Public institutions like the schools provide education in Sámi culture and language for those who themselves, or whose parents, choose this as a part of the curriculum. Alta has a local Sámi association, and Sámi traditions can be observed as artistic expressions at several public events. After several years of struggle, the Sámi flag is now raised on the Sámi People's Day, the 6th of February, and recently the local authorities have decided to use Sámi names on road signs where Sámi names have been in local use. Signs in the Northern Sámi language also are recognisable on public governmental buildings but always in addition to Norwegian. Few of these gains have come without a struggle.

Compared with Eidheim's (1971) earlier description of a public sphere, the present context differs in many respects. Yet there are some resemblances. As Eidheim (1971: 63) points out, there seems to be an agreement on a public sphere with a joint identity. Ethnicity is not something that is meant to order interaction because everyone is supposed to be familiar with the local code and language that is defined as Norwegian. The main difference from Eidheim's old description is that today certain spaces in the public sphere are made available for the expression of a Sámi identity. This can, in Fabian's (1991: 198) terms, be understood as classificatory spaces where such an identity and the past can be made visible without interfering with everyday life. People's past or personal ethnic belonging do not matter in everyday encounters. If they choose to express such an identity, they can do it in classificatory spaces without interfering in the pragmatic coping with everyday life. One of the reasons for this is that these expressions of a Sámi identity are usually effected by means of symbols that belong to dominant discourses. Such symbols have emerged through what Eidheim calls the development of a joint '... "vocabulary" with which to speak of oneself internally as well as inter-culturally' (1992: 3). Stordahl describes this development of 'a joint vocabulary': 'We witnessed a "symbolic warfare" [...] against everything Norwegian and the symbols that were chosen to be markers and represent the Sámi society externally, were as described earlier, simple us/them categories and stereotypes' (Stordahl 1996: 152; my translation).¹⁵ It is this vocabulary, which promotes ethnicity as an organising principle, that is perpetuated by institutions through their dominant discourses. In addition, the way Sámi culture is represented in these spaces is ordered by the dichotomy between indigenous and modern, and by a temporal dimension, in a way that sets it apart from modern everyday life. An expression of ethnicity usually becomes problematic only when others feel it has been forced upon them. This might be felt as a threat when the spatial arrangement becomes altered.

Eidheim (1971) described a closed Sámi sphere that does not penetrate into the public sphere. Signs of Sámi identity were supposed to be kept out of public spaces by both Sámi and Norwegians. What was an emerging Sámi ethno-political movement in the interior had no impact in the fjord settlements. A contemporary public Sámi sphere in the interior of Finnmark has been discussed by Stordahl (1996). She describes a dynamic field where the definition of a modern Sámi identity – or rather identities – is emerging as a result of several groups contesting the symbolic expressions making up what Eidheim (1992: 5) calls a collective Sámi self-understanding. The latter is primarily the result of the ethno-political struggle that aimed for a contrast and complementarity to Norwegian national culture as promoted by public institutions. At certain points in this struggle, the global discourse on fourth-world peoples also became an important asset for symbolic productions. This discourse, which relies heavily on the difference between a single modernity and traditional peoples, becomes contested in the identity processes Stordahl (1996: 148 ff.) describes in the societies in the interior of Finnmark. Still it is this cultural symbolism that presently dominates the spaces organised for expression of a Sámi identity in the public sphere in the regional centre. Traditional costume on certain occasions, traditional symbols such as joik, *lavvo*, etc., and the institutional framing of museums, public school and cultural events turn these spaces into expressions of an official image of differences. In many ways these images are also quite alienated from what has been local Sámi culture along the coast.

This means that, firstly, the public Sámi culture visible on the coast and the fjord areas often appears as a political statement. It is the result of an ethno-political struggle in which symbols that could relate to indigenouness and make a contrast and form a complement to Norwegian culture were promoted. Usually this symbolic expression reinforces the old spatial difference between coast and interior. People in coastal communities have often defined themselves in contrast to the interior, and this is still done today. This symbolic division is also present in the following example.

Some years ago I by coincidence read the script called 'Big Same in Kautokeino' made for a revue number by some school girls in Alta. It was a rephrasing of the then-popular TV-program 'Big Brother'. The content of the script was mainly stereotypes about the Sámi of the interior. In the coastal tradition, it was full of jokes about reindeer, joik, traditional costumes, naïve Sámi, and the naming tradition of the interior, where people often have several first and middle names (F. Eidheim 1993: 54–56). It was not the content of this revue number that interested me most, though. Rather it was the names of the actors and the script-writers that amazed me because I was aware that several of them had a background which – when they turned eighteen – qualified them to register on the Sámi electoral rolls. They were fully aware of this fact themselves, and some of them had followed the Sámi curriculum in school. What is interesting is that, among many who make up the Sámi coastal population, the symbolic spatial difference is perpetuated by the same symbols as previously. Yet the ethnic vocabulary of the dominant discourses does not coincide with the way they present themselves.

The seemingly radical difference between Sámi and Norwegian is attenuated in many private spheres. A description of a discussion among some of the same adolescent girls who were responsible for the 'Big Same' revue number reveals some of the charac-

teristics that can be found in such private spheres. Four of the girls were discussing the important matter of how to dress for their coming confirmation. In Norway this is an important question, in part because for girls this is often an occasion for getting a Bunad – a costume based on Norwegian folk tradition. The outfit is rather expensive, and to save money skilled older relatives often take on the time-consuming work of sewing these dresses. Not only the expense for these often once-in-a-lifetime outfits is of interest. The Bunad differs from region to region and sometimes between local communities. It is often assumed that the owner should originally come from the same place, or at least have some family connections with the place where the Bunad originated. The need for a family relation to the place one's Bunad comes from is probably a tradition that the young girls' mothers – or most likely the mothers' older relatives – are keener to uphold than the young girls themselves. Even if this informal rule limits one's choice, most young people have a family background that can satisfy the idea of descent from several places. The Bunad that is protected by copyright is not the only option; the less-formal Drakt is open to greater variety, and the possibility of nice dresses makes such discussions important and time-consuming events.

On this occasion about nine months in advance of their confirmation in May, two of the young girls present could trace their descent to several places in the Southern part of Norway, while the two others could do the same to different places in Northern Norway. Aware of their mothers' limits in terms of descent, economy, time and skills within the family – even if they were not pleased at losing the opportunity to select what they found most pretty – they still had several options to choose among. One of them was a Sámi Kofte. At least they agreed that two of them could choose this traditional Sámi dress as long as they had a partly Sámi ancestry. One of them refused this opportunity because the coastal Sámi Drakt that she could wear because of her origin was not particularly nice. Her choice was a Finnmarks Drakt because of the possibility of different embroideries. She already had to decide because of the need to order it long in advance and because one of her aunts had promised to do the embroideries of her liking. The other girl with ancestors from Northern Norway would have loved to have a Kofte like her younger sister had. The problem was that her grandmother had been ill and did not have the time to make it for her. As she pointed out, it was a Sámi tradition that the Kofte was made by relatives, and it would not be the same to buy one. She had already ordered a Nordlandsbunad. All of them agreed that the two with family from the South could not wear Kofte even if they would have looked gorgeous. Due to the limitations outlined previously, both of the girls ended up with a dress. Aware of the prices of the traditional costumes, they agreed that their dresses should be expensive and that a trip to a larger city was needed to get the right ones. It is interesting to note that, even if one of the girls could also trace her ancestry to Russia, this was never mentioned in the discussion; and a Russian folk costume, which would have been easily accessible in Alta, was not considered.

What these discussions in a private sphere show is that a Sámi identity and its expression is just one of several possibilities for some of these children. Nor does the Sámi identity appear as a contrast to their identity as coastal. They refuse to make a choice among separate categories and are allowed by their peers to be ambivalent in this context. A crucial difference to the public sphere is that the private sphere renders the discourse much more open. The autonomous individual and his or her belonging gain a

position that is seldom allowed in the public sphere. What you feel you are, where you belong, becomes an authoritative statement that seldom can be contested. As in an inner-directed Western culture in general, the individual and personal feelings are cast in a power relation that, in the immediate context, takes priority. Therefore one's personal opinions can direct categorisations as in the following example.

At the end of June, I was helping a friend paint his house, which is situated in a row of houses in the centre of Alta. It was about 25° Celsius, and his neighbour, a woman in her 40s, was sitting on the veranda with a female friend. I had met them both before. As is the case of many of the inhabitants of Alta, they both came from other parts of Finnmark. The two women grew up in small coastal communities and after some years working in the Southern part of Norway they had moved back to Finnmark and settled in Alta. In the breaks in my work, I chatted with them; but when I was too busy, they talked to each other. Working at a distance of approximately two metres from them, I could not help but overhear their whole conversation, something the women were well aware of. The sequence I noted started with one of the women complaining about the weather. It was too hot, even if they sat in their bikinis! The other one replied that maybe they should put on more clothes. They could 'dress out' the heat like the *Fjellfinnan* – Mountain Finns, a word often used for the reindeer-herding Sámi living in the interior of Finnmark. In the interior the summers are warmer than in coastal areas. This remark was followed by stories about people – for them obviously Sámi people – who wore a lot of clothes in the heat. And they continued to talk about a fellow friend who always was very tan, even though she never took the sun. They were sure that she was Sámi and thereby connected to local stereotypes of physical appearance. Then one of the women said: 'We are all Sámi in Finnmark and a lot of other things too.' The other replied that though her friend might be a *Lapp*, she herself was pure Norwegian and she knew it for sure.¹⁶ Jokingly, her friend replied that maybe she was the only person born in Finnmark who could trace her ancestry exclusively to aristocratic Danish prisoners. Her reply to this was, at least she knew that she was not a Lapp. The teasing response her friend made in turn was to remind her that she was allergic to milk. Lactose intolerance is known to be common among Sámi, and not among Norwegians. Both of them laughed and started to talk about a fresh topic (Olsen 2001: 167–168).

INDIVIDUAL CONSTRAINTS AND LEAKAGES BETWEEN SPHERES

While a public sphere reserves certain culturally constructed spheres for the political expression of differences between Norwegian and Sámi culture, and the private sphere emphasises belonging in spite of individual differences, what Eidheim (1971: 62) calls unintended leakages may occur between the spheres. In Eidheim's material, such leakages occur between the private Sámi sphere and the public one. The reasons may be inter-ethnic quarrels, and in some rare cases – often with long-lasting effects – the Sámi were able to define situations and set standards (ibid.: 63). Nevertheless, Eidheim claims: '... the Norwegians have as a rule the last word in such quarrels and the Lapps are the losers' (1971: 62).

For the individual, leakages between the public and private spheres may be experienced as more dramatic. To express a Sámi identity in spaces organised for this purpose

in the public sphere may well be unproblematic for locals as long as it has no impact on them. This is far from being the case of 'the Old Aunties' – a euphuism for relatives with other opinions. Even if Alta is big enough to give a sense of individuality, it is small enough that many people are also seen as belonging to a family and kin group. Using a Sámi costume for the first time on a public occasion often prompts the question: 'What will the Old Aunties say?' By bringing your own private relation to a Sámi identity into public you also obliterate the privacy of your relatives. If your relative claims to be Sámi, it may imply that you and the rest of the family are also Sámi (Thuen 2003: 276–281). The expression 'Old Aunties' usually refers to the generation described by Eidheim, which sometimes still regard a Sámi identity as a stigma. Still, leakages between personal feelings of belonging and a public sphere where such feelings may have implication for others are not restricted to family. Why are you a Sámi when your past is identical to your Norwegian peers? As a man describes his and some friends reaction to what he labels the ethnic conversion of a childhood friend: 'Why should he be Sámi? He is just like us! If he was something else than Norwegian he should have turned out to be a Kven because that what he is.'

The consequences of an act such as bringing personal belonging into public can be the danger of being ridiculed. Relatives can jokingly refer to 'the Family's Finn', a relative claiming Sámi identity in an otherwise Norwegian family. Other such leakages can result in more serious conflicts among family members. The problem is that the private understanding of identity is brought into a public sphere where other defining powers are found. The heterogeneity and private specificity usually found in individual narratives among people on the coast give way to the dichotomy between the coast and Finnland in the interior, or the political idea of Sáminess. To enter the public spheres where a Sámi identity can be expressed is therefore a potential transformation of the way people look upon you as well as your relatives, as a person. This is not so much a danger in relation to friends or acquaintances, where a private opinion may have hegemony, as in relation to people who do not know much about who you are. The latter category is made up of many in the *Bygdeby*. Irrespective of their own ethnic belonging, they may put you into the category of *Finn* from the interior – an identity a coastal belonging rejects – or as 'a Born Again' in the framework of a collective Sámi self-understanding that usually belongs to the political realm. Put into the first category, you are asked to have the cultural competence attached to such an identity. Children in particular are in danger of being teased by their peers, who ask how many reindeer they have, ask them to joik and so on. Being situated in different social networks makes Rosaldo's 'many stranded possibilities of the borderland' also constraints. As Beck (1992: 99) argues, the subjective consciousness of autonomy is often not matched by objective realities.

Leakage between a private sphere and a public can therefore cause negative as well as positive reactions, or no reaction at all. If you insist on a Sámi identity as a public issue, only the identities as a Finn, the political 'Born Again' or the private and individual feeling of a heterogeneous Sáminess are viable options. Only in contexts where the autonomous individual is put forward – in a private sphere – is the heterogeneity that a Sámi identity may conceal able to unfold. In such contexts the political idea of Sáminess or the dichotomy between the coast and the interior disappears. Therefore many people refuse the label of Sámi because other labels are able to contain the individual and heterogeneous aspects of belonging. Such labels are easily included in the public sphere

of everyday life, where belonging and pragmatic solutions dominate and organise the public space. They do not interfere with social actions.

Eidheim demonstrates '... how the stigma of Lappishness is related to performance on public stages as well as to unintentional leakages from their ethnically homogeneous closed stages' (1971: 62) as well as from inter-ethnic quarrels. The result of this stigma was that:

"The Lapp is often either a rather passive partner or he grants Norwegians extravagant role support by being servile and manageable. If he anticipates confrontations which may focus upon his identity he is apt to withdraw, avoid persons, or even to change his place of work" (Eidheim 1971: 63).

The local flow of interaction in Eidheim's study was not the result of an unbiased agreement on a joint identity but a result of the social costs attached to showing Sámi behaviour or promoting a Sámi identity. The techniques that were used to conceal the Lappish identity and keep up the boundaries between the spheres sustained a stigma that people were not able to escape (Eidheim 1971: 63–65).

I have demonstrated that this stigma no longer plays an important part in social relations in the municipality. This is because a change in 'the local ecology and society' has occurred since Eidheim did his work in Lille Lerresfjord. Instead of a public sphere where unintentional leakages and the lack of cultural competence signal a Sámi identity, creating a certain relationship between Norwegian and Sámi, the contemporary public sphere in the municipal centre is characterised by nearly all people having the competence needed as locals. In this sphere, belonging displaces previous emphasis on differences. In addition, this public sphere is defined pragmatically in such a way that both Sámi and Southerners in most everyday encounters – by context and purpose – can be included in the local 'us'. Mastering the repertory of social relations, as nearly all people do, relations can be based on a mutual agreement on a shared identity as belonging to a Norwegian culture. As Thuen writes: '... we see that "culture" as skills and performance is at the core of minority identity articulation' (1995: 262). The same applies to the articulation of belonging to a local majority culture. Skills and performances that do not ostensibly belong to other categories are lumped into the broad, flexible and dynamic category of modern Norwegian everyday life as it unfolds in a local context. Additional belongings can be expressed inside certain spaces in standardised forms or in private spheres that do not hamper the flow of everyday life. Those who do stand out or insist on difference can easily be assigned to the familiar roles of the ethno-politician or the old and familiar *Finn* from the interior. In all events, this fragile way of pragmatically defining a local culture can be upset for some by relatives and peers displaying a Sámi identity in public, or, for larger groups, by a public Sámi culture, with the help of national politics, entering the domain of Norwegianness.

PRIVATISATION AND VULNERABILITY AS CONSEQUENCES

The incongruity of discourses and the complexity of local society mean that one needs a firm understanding of the context and of the other to understand in what terms ethnicity can be talked about. This is because other people can be insulted and because of

political differences, but also because the choice of plot can have direct consequences for others' self-understanding. For example, when one person proclaims a Sámi identity, this does imply a plot that necessitates that other people reorder their own self-understanding. The similarity in people's heterogeneous background and the different possibilities of narrating this background mean that one's own choice of identity has an impact on the plot others choose. To claim to be *Finnmarking* both alters a political-social order in which ethnic purity previously had hegemony for self-understanding and contests the institutional discourses that necessitates a choice between Norwegian and Sámi.

The hidden character of ethnicity in everyday encounters, where such a clear categorisation is not supposed to matter, can therefore also be understood as a recognition of vulnerability. The general concepts in use might have direct consequences for the individual's particular experiences of self. Ascribing different social positions through formative statements in different discourses leads to certain orderings of identity. This is not only the case when it comes to the need to affirm a Norwegian or a Sámi identity. Inside the frames of what is labelled Sámi, both in local discourse and in institutional discourses, Sáminess is seen as a core that enables a grading of people according to their abilities to fulfil the assumed idea of Sáminess. This means that it is not only in the distinction between Norwegian and Sámi that vulnerability is generated. This vulnerability is also found among those who proclaim a Sámi identity because their personal experience of self can always be contested, both by Norwegians with a background similar to themselves and by those that the discourse situates at the core of a Sámi culture. This is because the categories and their assumed contents in dominant discourse seldom fit with individuals' consciousness of self.

The privatisation and zoning of a Sámi identity has other costs as well. Except for the standardised symbols, Sámi identity is in danger of being transmitted merely as a personal feeling, individual experiences and private symbols. As long as most spheres of everyday life are considered to belong to a local Norwegian modern culture, few arenas are left to the values of attachment that can be defined as Sámi. This causes a problem for many parents who are eager to pass on a Sámi identity to their children. In many ways this situation has changed diametrically from the time of Eidheim's (1971) writings. In Lille Lerresfjord many families prevented their children from learning Sámi and were eager to make them fully competent in the Norwegian culture. Today many parents who have reclaimed a Sámi identity belong to the generation that was kept from learning the Sámi language. Their mastery of the language may range from being fully fluent, to rather rudimentary, to non-existent, due to their individual past. The solution for those with a rudimentary or no knowledge of Sámi and unable to claim education in the child's 'mother tongue' is to enrol their children in the public schools' courses in Sámi language and Culture, or in Sámi as a second language. The challenge, or rather the nearly impossible obstacle, is that, except for these courses, few if any contexts in everyday life necessitate using the Sámi language. The two cultural spaces where Sámi can be used are the public space of the school, for a couple of hours a week, and the home if one of the parents speaks the language fluently. In addition Sámi is often taught in the Northern Sámi dialect of the interior, which can be quite distinct from that spoken in the parent's place of origin. Even for Sámi-speaking parents with relatives living in Sámi-speaking areas, it can be difficult to transmit a language for which the children

often have no or little practical need in daily life. The ordering of the spheres that make up the local ecology and society makes the Sámi language into an emblematic sign reserved for a certain space. The Sámi language does not become a part of the majority's everyday life as long as everyone masters the pragmatic local culture, due to the fact that everyone has aimed to 'qualify themselves as full participants in Norwegian society' (Eidheim 1971: 51). Nor does it become a part of many Sámi people's everyday life without a conscious attempt, and the possibility, to use it as a private language.

Therefore the transmission of an identity, conceptualised and symbolised as Sámi, between generations often takes the form of private narratives, memories and symbols. Outdoor life is important for many parents who want to transmit their identity to their children. That nature shall be used, and not just as recreation in the Southern Norwegian tradition, is something they want to teach their children. You need a purpose for the trip. This might be picking berries, hunting or fishing or just preparing for such activities later on. They also want to teach their children the skills needed for outdoor life in this area. Stories about places, memories of them and their family's relation to such places are something children should learn. Places, as Sámi places, become a part of this identity and they are usually found in nature and not as a part of modernity in the town centre (Andreassen & Nilsen 2003). The problem is that this belonging to places and skills in outdoor life does not differ from what is the common way of life in the area (Pedersen 1999). Everyone, or at least males, is supposed to be able to light a fire and to be skilled in the outdoor life that characterises this area; this is not reserved for a particular ethnic group. Consequently, such a private way of expressing ethnic belonging usually remains private and cannot be articulated as something that gives directionality to local social interaction.¹⁷ When Eidheim was writing, local ecology, as nature in use, did not create any division based on ethnicity either. This relation to nature, continued as outdoor life, still does not have any particular ethnic marking. As Eidheim puts it: '... if ethnic groups should not happen to coincide with contrasting economic systems or with firm and enduring political groups, there will always be the problem of "transitional zones"' (1971: 50). Today this problem extends to many parts of the private sphere, as in the case of outdoor life, where differences can be thought of only as an individual belonging and not made relevant for social action.

While vulnerability is one of the features of the everyday discourses of ethnicity in the area, this situation also provides a fertile ground for creativity. As Foucault put it: 'Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power' (1978: 95). Power can then be seen as a productive force that opens up spaces for resistance in various forms, but never as a mere reflection of dominance (Foucault 1980: 119). Many of these productive results of the discourses on ethnicity in Finnmark – at the moment – afford fewer possibilities for a collective expression that can gain recognition in the field of institutional discourses. This is because many of them depend on local knowledge, utilise the symbolism of the institutional discourses in their own way and rely on contexts where individual expression predominates.

CONCLUSION

As Eidheim (1971: 67, 50) maintained, it is necessary to analyse the local ecology and society as a meaningful context in order to understand 'how ethnic diversity is socially articulated and maintained'. I have shown how changes in the local ecology and society in Western Finnmark have caused important changes in the articulation and maintaining of ethnic diversity. Since Eidheim did his research in the area, the patterns of settlement have changed radically, the ethno-political Sámi movement has gained influence on the coast, and what was regarded as a Sámi past is now for most people a rather distant past. Furthermore, in a society where the apparent autonomy of the individual has gained momentum, more people look to their past in an attempt to understand the present. The processes of change emphasised here all extend to larger national and global fields, but they come together in a local context and shape identity processes. In a local context, identity discourses become ordered by ascribing a public Sámi sphere to the interior, while regarding the public sphere in the town as Norwegian. In Alta, certain public spaces that do not interfere with everyday interaction are reserved for the expression of a standardised Sáminess, while a Sámi identity is supposed to be a private matter. This enables the local culture to emphasise belonging within a collective identity that can embrace a multitude of heterogeneous experiences and belongings. In this discursive ordering, leakage between the spheres contests the disparate categories. This may come from dominant public discourses that promote either/or categorisations and have a different ordering of the relationship between the past and the present. For some such leakages are caused by individual's expressions of belonging that also can be transmitted to others in the public sphere. Nevertheless, the result of this ordering is that the Sámi identity in many ways remains private.

Therefore, even if changes in the local ecology and society undermine the social articulation and maintenance of ethnicity in the area, there are still important continuities. One of them is the spatial division between the coastal area and the interior. This division has been reinforced by the development of a collective Sámi self-understanding brought out in the ethno-political struggle. What has been most altered is the temporal division. It has changed and become strengthened by the dichotomy evoked between indigenous and modern, while the new continuity between past and present on the coast creates many possibilities that aim to reject the 'classic authenticity of cultural purity'.

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NOTES

1 Eriksen & Høem (1999: 129) criticise the Norwegian research on the Sámi because Norwegian culture is never taken into account. To them it seems like most researchers implicitly assume a particular Norwegian culture with certain distinct features to which the Sámi have to relate. I argue that it is the Sámi, and to a lesser degree the Kven, culture that decides what is regarded as Norwegian culture. The minority cultures in their emblematic form that one encounters on the coast are distinct and easy recognisable. Therefore Norwegian culture is what these bounded units are not. By this I mean that what is not explicitly Sámi or Kven is lumped into a contrasting Norwegian culture that does not have to be problematised in everyday life. Hence the communities shaped in these two contrasts are not necessarily the same. In contrast to Sámi culture, the local culture relates to modernity: while in contrast to the South, it relates to a colonial past in which the Sámi might also be included.

2 The article was first published in this book.

3 Bruner (1986: 140 ff.) argues that the shift from a story of acculturation to one of ethnic resurgence among American Indians occurred among both natives and researchers in the 1950s. Eidheim (1993: 257) describes this change in research among the Sámi (see also Eythórsson 2005). For a more contemporary account on *indigenisations* as a feature of globalisation processes, see Friedman 1999. Such a shift is also reflected in that the concept of ethnicity in many ways has been appropriated by politics (Baumann 1996; Malkki 1995; Duijzings 2000). In the case of the Norwegian Sámi, there is a strong degree of mutual understanding between researchers and public authorities in their understanding and conceptualisation of this highly Norwegian scholarly field (Eriksen & Høem 1999). Simultaneously the shifting policies have influenced the ethnic formations in the area. The modern nation-state is in need of a persona with a fixed identity. As Duijzings put it: 'Modern state-making presses toward single identities out of a situation of multiple and often diffuse identities' (2000: 23). Such emphasis on the power of the nation-state is also needed to modify and clarify the boundaries for the creative processes that may be found in such cultural borderzones.

4 In contemporary Norwegian society the label Lapp is regarded as a derogatory term. Since Eidheim's work, Sámi has become the politically correct term.

5 Kven is the name of people who spoke Finnish dialects. They migrated from what is now Finland and Sweden from the sixteenth century. In addition, people have also started to emphasise the relationship to Russia north.

6 A total of 12,538 people were on the electoral rolls for the Norwegian Sámi parliament. Of these 7,134 were living in Finnmark. 2,849 belonged to the 'Saami core area' made up by the two

municipalities of Kautokeino and Karasjok, which has a total population of 3,873 (<http://www.fifo.no/finnstat/befolkning/befolkningsendring/>). The electoral rolls do not necessarily tell anything about how many regard themselves to be Sámi. Neither do they tell anything about how many regard themselves as Sámi, and also feel to have other belongings.

7 It might be discussed whether or not the modernising processes, ultimately concluded after 1945, had a much stronger impact on the ethnic changes than the Norwegianisation policy. The latter has been studied mainly in relation to education and the Church, where it obviously had a strong impact. Hence, the impact of the need to become part of the growing welfare state as a driving force in this process has been of less interest than Norwegianisation in a research tradition emphasising indigenous revitalisation.

8 Eidheim never used the proper name of the place in the original article. In a recent interview, he confirms what most Norwegian anthropologist know, that the place was Lille Lerresfjord (Eythórsson 2005: 252–253).

9 Due to the merging of two former separate municipalities, Talvik, the administrative centre at the time of Eidheim's writing, is today just one small settlement among several others in the new municipality. The municipality, Talvik commune, Eidheim describes was divided into two parts by the Alta Fjord. Even if Sámi people were also settled in the western part where the administrative centre was, and some municipalities were dominated by Sámi until World War Two, the eastern part, where Eidheim's fieldwork was conducted, had a much stronger Sámi dominance. The two municipalities merged in 1963.

10 Manndalen (Bjerkli, Bjerkli & Thuen) Kåfjord (Hovland 1996) a small fjord settlement in western Finnmark (Høgmo), Smørfjord (Andersen), a small fjord settlement in eastern Finnmark (Odner), a small settlement in western Finnmark (Kramvik). In the interior; Karasjok (Stordahl) and Kautokeino (Hovland).

11 In the neighbouring county of Troms, the city of Tromsø holds 40 percent of the population. Here the main centre is not regarded as a suitable place for the study of identity either.

12 Ontology is used as defined by Bateson: 'Philosophers have recognised and separated two sorts of problem. There are first the problems of how things are, what is a person, and what sort of world this is. These are the problems of ontology. Second, there are the problems of how we know anything, or more specifically, how we know what sort of a world it is and what sort of world it is and what sort of creatures we are that can know something (or perhaps nothing) of this matter. These are the problems of epistemology' (Bateson 1972: 313).

13 Lien (1989) shows how the local distribution of food in non-monetary spheres is important for identity processes in some communities in Finnmark. Some types of food stuff, such as cloudberries and fish, cannot be bought in some communities. They are distributed as gifts symbolising integration in the local community.

14 For a discussion of these concepts in the context of the small town Honningsvåg, see Frøydis Eidheim (1993: 52 ff.).

15 In the Norwegian original: 'Vi var vitne til en "symbolsk krigføring" (Cohen 1985) mot alt det norske, og de symbolene som ble valgt ut for å være markører og stå for og representere det samiske samfunn utad, var, som vi har vært inne på tidligere, enkle vi/dem kategoriseringer og stereotypiseringer' (Stordahl 1996: 152).

16 In Finnmark today 'Lapp' is considered a derogatory term for the Sámi.

17 This argument relies on Gilbert Lewis' distinction between expression and communication: 'Expression is not the same thing as communication. You can express your feelings to a stone, yet it is unmoved. You could also, like the mystic Henry Suso [...] eat three-quarters of an apple in the name of the Trinity and the remaining quarter in commemoration of "the love with which the heavenly Mother gave her tender child Jesus an apple to eat" and unless you or Henry Suso told me, I would not, though I watched you twenty times, discern your symbolism or even that what you did was symbolical' (Lewis 1980: 1).