RETHINKING SÁMI CULTURES
in MUSEUMS
CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Venue: University of Oslo, Blindern campus, Eilert Sundts hus, Auditorium 7 (Wednesday and Thursday) and Eilert Sundts hus, Auditorium 2 (Friday)

Wednesday 26.11.14

Venue: Eilert Sundts hus, Auditorium 7

8:30 – 9:00 Registration – coffee
9:00 – 9:30 Welcome and introduction
9:30 – 10:30 Keynote: Christina Kreps: Appropriate museology and the ‘new museum ethics’: honoring diversity

Christina Kreps is Associate Professor of Anthropology and Director of Museum and Heritage Studies, Museum of Anthropology at the University of Denver, USA. She has carried out research on museums and worked on heritage related projects in Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Europe, and the United States. Her publications include Liberating Culture: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation, and Heritage Preservation (Routledge 2003). She is co-editor of the Routledge series Museum Meanings with Richard Sandell of Leicester University, UK.

10:30 – 11:05 Early modern/colonial relations – Introduction

Cathrine Baglo: Exhibiting Sámi before the age of the museum: tropes, trends and transmissions?

Abstract: During the nineteenth century new practices emerged in the western representation of cultural otherness. A significant manifestation was the ‘living exhibitions’ of native and exotic appearing peoples in zoological gardens, amusement parks, world’s fairs and at other urban stages in Europe and North America. Here they performed their everyday life in realistically built settings. Entire milieus were often reconstructed on the basis of brought along buildings, animals, objects, painted back-drops, etc. Reconstruction as trope of display would also become dominant in the later, but mostly parallel, development of the folk-ethnographic display, especially in Scandinavia. Nevertheless, the living exhibitions have not been regarded influential for this development, nor has their role in contributing to create a genre for the representation of the Sami and Sami culture in museums been explored. Important in this regard is the transnational context the Sami performers were recruited from – Norway, Sweden and Finland – as well as the international context the living exhibitions took place in. Last but not least, there are some important lessons to be learned from the living exhibitions as disciplinary technologies and colonial agents. Were they as ‘instrumental’ as often perceived and how does this compare to the museum?
Cathrine Baglo received her Ph.D. from the University in Tromsø/Tromsø University Museum in 2011 with the dissertation *Samer på ville veger? Om levende utstillinger i Europa og Amerika*. She is currently employed at Tromsø University Museum where she holds a personal post-doctoral research fellowship from The Research Council of Norway.

11:05 – 11:30  
**Coffee break**

11:30 – 12:00  
Jonas Monié Nordin and Carl-Gösta Ojala: **Collecting Sápmi: early modern collecting of Sámi culture**

**Abstract:** In this paper, a new research project *Collecting Sápmi: Early Modern Globalization of Sámi Material Culture and Contemporary Sámi Cultural Heritage* will be presented. The project is financed by the Swedish Research Council during the years 2014–2018 and includes participants from Sweden, Norway, and Finland.

The aim of the project is to examine the early modern collecting of Sámi material culture and early descriptions of Sámi culture, primarily in the 17th and 18th centuries. In the project, we aim to study early modern international networks of scholars and collectors who were interested in Sámi material culture, and to investigate how and why the collecting of Sámi objects was conducted, as well as to follow the movement of the objects between different collections and collectors in the Nordic countries and elsewhere. Furthermore, the aim of the project is to study the importance of the early modern collecting and the collected objects in today’s society. Here, a number of critical issues are raised concerning the colonial history and colonial relations in Sápmi, the motivation and ideology of collecting over time, as well as issues dealing with the right to Sámi cultural heritage and its management today and in the future.

In the paper, we will present an outline of the project, focusing on the history of the early modern collecting and its consequences and importance today, as well as some of the challenges that museums and researchers are facing when dealing with these contested material histories.

Jonas M. Nordin, Associate Professor in archaeology, is researcher at the Swedish History Museum (Historiska museet), Stockholm, and at the Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Uppsala University. His primary research interests deal with early modern globalization, colonial relations and modernity in a global perspective. He has conducted research on India, North America, Sápmi, and West Africa.

Carl-Gösta Ojala, Ph.D., is researcher in archaeology at the Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Uppsala University. His main research interests include Sámi history and archaeology, Russian and Soviet history and archaeology, cultural heritage management, and archaeological ethics.

12:00 – 12:15  
**Open discussion on early modern/colonial relations**

12:15 – 13:15  
**Lunch**

13:15 – 14:15  
**Keynote:** Gunlög Fur: **Swedish colonialism in Sápmi and the search for reconciliation**

Gunlög Fur, Ph.D. in History, University of Oklahoma, is Associate Professor of History at Växjö University in Sweden. She has published on colonial encounters and gender in Northeast America and Northern Scandinavia.

14:15 – 14:50  
**Collections and repatriation – Introduction**

Eeva-Kristiina Harlin: **Sámi collections and repatriation in Finland**
Abstract: In this paper I will discuss specific issues related to the collections of Sámi cultural heritage and their repatriation in Finland. For Sámi people it is a question of human rights to be able to administer elements of their own cultural heritage and to present these to the future generations in a way that is recognized and approved by the Sámi society. But for museums as ‘keeper of things’ repatriation composes a new role. Museums no longer only have responsibility towards the collections but also towards source-communities. Though challenging, repatriation gives a possibility to the museums to become an active part of society. But is the museum world and cultural heritage management sector ready for the new role? My aim is to discuss the special features and difficulties in Finland in relation to the situation in Norway and Sweden. Based on the material gathered in the repatriation project Recalling Ancestral Voices, I will present an overview of the Sámi collections in Finland with focus on the Sámi collections situated at the Pohjois-Pohjanmaan museo (the Northern Ostrobothnia Museum) in Oulu (Uleåborg). I will present how Finnish history has influenced on Sámi collections in Finnish museums and how it has a strong influence on the cultural heritage politics in Finland. In this context the question of Finland’s colonial past is still untold, almost forbidden and considered irrelevant, and the discourse relating to repatriation of Sámi collections is still nearly nonexistent. As I present some aspects relating to the collections I will try to verify my arguments of the situation in Finland presented above.

Eeva-Kristiina Harlin has a degree in archaeology at the University of Helsinki and in osteoarchaeology at the University of Stockholm. She currently works on her Ph.D. Sámi people and the repatriation politics of material cultural heritage in the Nordic countries at the University of Oulu, Giellagas Institute, Finland. Previously she has worked as a curator at the Norwegian Sámi museum, RiddoDuottarMuseat, and with repatriation issues in a Nordic cooperation project Recalling Ancestral Voices in the Finnish Sámi museum, Siida.


Abstract: In a changing political and social landscape where museums constantly discuss and re-define their roles and responsibilities, the questions of how to deal with Sámi topics present certain specific problems that need to be defined and discussed. This presentation will present some such issues, focusing on an on-going project of repatriation and the question of how to handle material which will not be repatriated but will – within the agreed framework of that project – remain in its current geographical and institutional setting. The project, Bäästede – Repatriation of Sami Cultural Heritage, was initiated in 2009 with participation from Norsk Folkemuseum, The Museum of Cultural History of the University of Oslo and the Sami Parliament, leading to an agreement to return half of the collection – some 2200 objects – to the six museums under the authority of the Sami Parliament. The other half of the collection will remain in Norsk Folkemuseum, intended, among other things, for future exhibitions in the two museums in the capital. How can the representation of Sámi issues past and present best be shaped, in the wider context of national museums as well as in the context of Sámi museums who in contrast often emphasize local and community perspectives? These are some of the important issues that need to be addressed in contemporary discussions about the role of museums in society.

Leif Pareli is a social anthropologist working since 1984 in Norsk Folkemuseum, where his responsibilities are indigenous (Sámi) and minority issues. He was the curator of the current Sámi exhibition in Norsk Folkemuseum and was a member of the working group preparing the repatriation project Bäästede. He has been active in museum politics as President of ICOM Norway and co-founder of the International Blue Shield organization. He also participated in the founding in 1989 of The Sami Museums Association (Samisk Museumslag) and was acting chair of that organization 2006–2007.

15:20 – 15:40  Coffee break
Eva Silvén: From ‘home’ to ‘home’: repatriation pictured in two cases of Sámi sacred objects and their biographies

Abstract: My paper is about some objects of Sami origin and their movements between different museum contexts in an historical and contemporary perspective. The study forms a part of my ongoing research about the Sami collections at the Nordiska Museet in Stockholm, the national museum of cultural history. The objects are a sieidi from Sieberboullida and the human remains of the ‘Shadow man’ (Soejvengelle) which were brought from Sápmi to Stockholm in the 1900s, but now have been returned. The biographies and trajectories of these objects are used to describe and analyse the sociomaterial dynamics of museum collections, and how artefacts can work as actors in social networks and contribute to construct and maintain power relations between peoples and institutions.

Eva Silvén holds a Ph.D. in ethnology and works as a curator at the Nordiska Museet, Stockholm, today with focus on minority and indigenous issues. Other research interests are museums and cultural heritage, material culture, contemporary collecting, social and material dynamics of collections, work and occupations. She was involved in the permanent exhibition Sápmi (2007) and her next book will be Frictions. Ernst Manker, the Nordiska Museet and the Sami cultural heritage (2015, in Swedish).

Open discussion on Collections and repatriation

Dinner at Samisk Hus
Thursday 27.11.14

Venue: *Eilert Sundts hus, Auditorium 7*

9:00 – 10:00 **Keynote**: Birgitta Fossum: *Where is the Sámi village and where are the Sámi and their reindeer? Sámi culture in museums*

Birgitta Fossum holds a doctoral degree (Dr. philos) in archaeology from the University of Umeå, Sweden. Her research interests are in the field of Sami prehistory and Sami cultural heritage, and she has been working with archaeological documentation, investigations, and excavations in Northern Fennoscandia. Since 2010 Fossum has been the director at Saemien Sijte – South Sami Museum and Cultural Centre in Snåsa, Norway.

10:00 – 10:35 **Sámi materialities – Introduction**

Gyorgy Henyei Neto: *Sámi materiality exhibited: how different spaces provide specific agendas for significance and value of material heritage*

Abstract: The present research will investigate the path that significance and value travels from humans to non-human things, regarding specifically the material heritage of Sámi in Finland. To achieve this goal, three aspects of the exhibition of material significance will be looked at: the insertion of objects and artifacts in museums; the perception of value and heritage by Sámi artisans and craftsmen; and the evaluation of objects in people’s homes, and how that can be seen as a curatorial process, intended to promote the individual agenda of self-assessment. To achieve those objectives, the fieldwork proposed will take part in Inari, Finland, where three aspects of exhibition of material significance will be dealt with. During the time in Inari, the investigation will be located to the Siida museum, for an inside view of museum experience, handicraft learning and apprenticeship. To provide a first-hand approach to the process of making traditional artefacts, the investigation will be carried out together with inhabitants of Inari and nearby villages, giving a personal perspective on the debates and questions of citizenship, identity, significance, heritage, and sovereignty. This is part of a larger research, comprehending the whole Ph.D. program at the University of Aberdeen. The research is on its initial stage, meaning that it has not yet underwent long-term fieldwork experience.

Gyorgy Henyei Neto is a first year Ph.D. student at the University of Aberdeen, working on Sámi material heritage and exhibition of handicraft. His fieldwork during 2015 will be in Kautokeino and Inari. He also has a Master in social anthropology, by the University of Aberdeen, and a Master in Religious Studies, from Brazil.

10:35 – 11:00 **Coffee break**

11:00 – 11:30 Sandra Bogdanova: *Rethinking the burdens of famine food. A case study on an ancient tradition of Pinus Sylvestris L. Scots pine’s inner bark harvest for food among the Sámi of Northern Finland*

Abstract: This project examines the relationship between plants and people, as well as cross-cultural communication through the ancient tradition of *Pinus sylvestris* L. (Scots pine) bark-peeling which is the key core of the study. It is taken as an example of traditional ecological knowledge about the living environment and as a method of subsistence for livelihood. Ethical dimensions of collecting, exhibiting, and curating Sámi material regarding representation of this tradition are important to discuss. My intention is to contribute to the politics of appreciation of Sámi cultures, including a choir of native voices both in a historical and contemporary perspective. I want my research to convey the understanding that a single museum may play a significant role in shaping the knowledge of the audience on Sámi heritage and the way the portrayal affects the indigenous people in focus.
An interdisciplinary approach to the subject aims to draw from the forest history of a particular part of Northern Finland as well as to provide the overview of the tradition in the Barents region and other circumpolar areas. Primarily I will be analysing archaeological records, textual data, archival images, and local exhibitions at the regional museums. Hopefully, the project will contribute to informing the encounters between peoples in the North, reveal and heal the burdens of history, suggest new approaches to curation of Sámi heritage, as well as revitalize the tradition to a greater degree through cooperation among local indigenous institutions.

Sandra Bogdanova is half-way receiving her Master’s degree in Indigenous studies at the Center for Sámi Studies, University of Tromsø–The Arctic University of Norway. Her academic background is archaeology, studied at the Vilnius University in Lithuania. She is a member of APECS (Association of Polar Early Career Scientists), writes reports for Forum for development cooperation with indigenous peoples and is contact person for Lithuania within the NGO Western Sahara Resource Watch.

11:30 – 12:00 Daniel Winfree Papuga: Music or ritual? Problems in presenting Sámi drums in museums

Abstract: The presentation of ritual objects in museums is more complicated than many other types of object, due to their often having ties to many sensitive layers of intangible culture. This paper uses the example of Sámi drums at Ringve Music Museum to explore the process of collecting and exhibiting ritual objects. I wish to problematize Sámi drums in two museum contexts: The first is the process of creating an audio guide for the permanent ‘exhibition in the barn’, where a drum made by Jon Ole Andersen from Karasjok was one of 50 objects chosen for expanded audio presentation in four languages. Given the limitations of the medium, what dilemmas does one face in describing the object itself, its role in historical contexts, and its diverse meanings for contemporary communities?

The second example is from the Ringve 2010 temporary exhibition Is music sinful?, where photographs and descriptions of the drum used as evidence during the 1692 witchcraft trial of Sámi Anders Poulsen formed a backdrop in the comparison of a number of religious and moral world views. How can we communicate what this drum represents for our understanding of Sámi religion – and for Christian discrimination against the Sámi?

Daniel Winfree Papuga works as a curator at Ringve Music Museum, Norway, with duties tied to music research, exhibition development and education. His background is in social anthropology and musicology.

12:00 – 12:30 Eva Ahlström: Freeze-drying: a conservation method for controlled drying of Sámi historic costumes. Can conservation treatments be developed from traditional Sámi knowledge?

Abstract: A collection of Sámi costumes from the middle of the 20th century came to Ájtte, the Swedish Mountain and Sámi Museum, in Jokkmokk in 1996. The objects were very moldy and soiled, and during handling we needed to use protective masks. The caring of the collection gave rise to several questions. Cleaning, in some way, was necessary, but cleaning in water and subsequent air drying could cause problems and damage the material. Freeze-drying as an alternative drying method has often been used for wet archaeological and marine objects, but more seldom for historical materials.

Practical experience from the Sámi daily life, when drying textile and skin outside during a degree of frost, has indicated it could be a way to get rid of mentioned problems. A pilot study in 2004 together with former conservator Elle Kuhmunen at Ájtte, addressed the issue, and seven case studies are reported. This study is an example where traditional Sámi knowledge of materials and technique can give ideas for developing conservation methods. Does the profession require specialized knowledge and understanding about Sámi historic
material and crafts methods? What is the line of thought in museums with Sámi collections?

Eva Ahlström is conservator at Ájtte, Swedish Mountain and Sámi Museum in Jokkmokk, specialized in textile and leather/skin materials. She has studied conservation of cultural property at the University of Gothenburg and ethnomology at the University of Stockholm. She has worked with ecclesiastical textiles at The Swedish National Heritage Board and Church of Sweden Luleå Episcopate, and with Sámi collections at Jämtland Provincial Museum, Östersund.

12:30 – 12:45 Open discussion on Sámi materialities

12:45 – 13:45 Lunch

13:45 – 14:45 Keynote: Stein Roar Mathisen: Dilemmas concerning the popularity of ethnic exhibitions

Stein Roar Mathisen is a folklorist and Associate Professor of Culture Studies at the Finnmark University College, Alta, Norway, where he teaches heritage tourism and media production. Major research interests include folk medicine and folk belief, the role of narratives for the constitution of identity and ethnicity, questions of heritage politics and ethno-politics, and the history of cultural research in the northern areas. Fieldwork in various Kven, Sámi and Norwegian locations in Northern Norway.

14:45 – 15:00 Coffee break

15:00 – 15:25 Representation, ethics and identity – Introduction

The historical legacy of race science and the ethics of research on human remains – two interlinked papers related to the project From racial typology to DNA sequencing, http://www.ethnicityandrace.com

Jon Kyllingstad: The measuring of Sámi skulls and the idea of a ‘Lapp’ race

Abstract: During the interwar years the Anatomy Department at the University of Oslo, under the leadership of Professor Kristian Schreiner, undertook numerous excavations of human remains from Sami burial sites in Finnmark. The collected skeletal material – mainly skulls – was deposited in the Anatomy Department’s anthropological collection, today known as the Schreiner collection. This collection has during the last couple of decades become a bone of contention. The racial anthropological research of the early 20th century is today often seen as a typical example of ethnocentric and racist attitudes against the Sami and other indigenous peoples. In the paper I will examine how Schreiner measured and analyzed Sami and non-Sami skulls, in order to construct/detect a biological difference between the Sami and the Norwegian population and establish the notion a ‘Lapp’ race. I will also discuss to what extent and in what way Schreiner’s research was characterized by racism. The paper will also compare pre-war racial research with post-war population-genetic research on Sami prehistory and origin, and discuss the question of continuity and discontinuity between old concepts of ‘race’ and new concepts of ‘population’ and ‘ethnicity’. I will conclude with some thoughts about how the historical legacy of race science is relevant to present debates about the curating, repatriation, reburial, or research on the Sami bones in the Schreiner collection and similar assemblages of human remains from indigenous peoples that are stored at museums and universities all over the world.

Jon Røyne Kyllingstad, Ph.D., is a historian and a senior curator at the Norwegian Museum of Science and Technology, specializing in the history of science, with particular interest in ideas about race and human differences. At the moment he is leading the NFR-funded project From racial typology to DNA sequencing: ‘Race’ and ‘ethnicity’ and the science of human genetic variation 1945–2012, and is undertaking the study Racial typology and
genetic research, and constructions of biological difference between Sami and Non-Sami Scandinavians (1945–2012). Kyllingstad is especially interested in ideas about race and human differences.

15:25 – 15:45 Hallvard Fossheim: **Representativity, historical legacy and the ethics of research on human population**

**Abstract:** Collections of human bones, such as the Schreiner collections, that where originally established as tools for racial research, are now again in rising demand as source material for genetic studies of the biological history of human populations. In such studies, populations are normally defined by the researcher at the outset, and the data is gathered and organized on the basis of this definition. Human populations are usually delineated according to geographical, social, cultural, or linguistic criteria, based on the assumption of an overlap between socio-culturally and biologically defined human groups. This kind of research has a number of ethical implications. The researcher has a responsibility to acknowledge the fact that the relevant group identity is not simply the aggregate identity of the individuals involved, but is something which ought to be respected in its own right. Similarly, if the ethnic group in question is not on beforehand defined in a way about which there is broad consensus within as well as outside the group, the researcher has a *prima facie* responsibility to ensure that alternative understandings are appropriately acknowledged. These ethical dimensions of the relation between researchers and designated groups relate to and partly depend on the historical dimension of that same relationship. On a general level, ‘science’ or ‘research’ has been a central instrument in defining and controlling the relevant groups. This makes it pertinent to speak of a collective responsibility on the part of science. In my presentation, I will analyze which factors are relevant to such a historically bounded responsibility, and, not least, what a notion of collective responsibility in this case amounts to.

Hallvard Fossheim is Dr.art in philosophy, and until recently Director of The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and The National Committee for Research Ethics on Human Remains, which performs ethical evaluations of research on human remains. From August 2014, Fossheim is associate professor of ancient philosophy at the Department of Philosophy, University of Bergen, Norway. He is also involved in the NFR-funded project *From racial typology to DNA sequencing*.

15:45 – 16:00 **Open discussion on Kyllingstad and Fossheim**

16:00 – 16:15 **Closing discussion on the day’s presentations**

15:00 – **Annual meeting of the Sámi Museums Association (Samisk museumslag).**
Venue: Blindern, P. A. Munchs hus, room 489

19:00 – **Dinner at Den Røde Mølle, Grønland**
Friday 28.11.14

Venue: Eilert Sundts hus, Auditorium 2

9:00 – 9:15  Summary of the annual meeting of the Sámi Museums Association


Henrik Olsen is a Norwegian Sami politician and cultural worker. He is the managing director of the Center for Northern Peoples in Manndalen and was 2013 elected representative from Gáisi constituency to the Sametinget (Sami Parliament), where he represents the party Norske Samers Riksförbund. He has been elected as vice president of the Parliament and is also a member of Sametingsrådet. Olson is known for his efforts to revitalize the Sea Sami culture in Nord-Troms and for his involvement in the Sami music festival Riddu Riddu in Kåfjord.

10:15 – 10:45  Representation, ethics and identity – Continued from Thursday

Kajsa Kuoljok: Giela muitalusat/Giela gihto. The Sámi language – three generations tell

Abstract: Ájtte museum aims to increase the knowledge of Sami life and history in society. Children and young people are particularly important target groups and the museum has used different projects to put Sami youth in focus and highlight issues that are important to them today. Many young people are involved in traditional Sami activities at the same time as they are a part of modern society. To have a good familiarity with traditional Sami knowledge and their own cultural heritage provides a good foundation for their identity. The Sami language is the carrier of our Sami heritage and it can act as a key that opens the doors to understanding that heritage.

During 2012–2014 Ájtte museum has run the language project Giela muitalusat / Giela gihto. The Sami language – three generations tell with the goal of collecting thoughts and ideas about the Sami language from three generations. The Sami cultural heritage is not only the inherited traditions of the past but also contemporary and urban. The images of Sami culture and life as reflected in museums today need to be expanded so that more people can recognize themselves in them. In the language project the young have documented and shown in film and photography everyday life and thoughts about the Sami language and Sami culture in the local community today.

Kajsa Kuoljok is a curator at Ájtte Duottar ja Sámemusea, Swedish Mountain and Sami Museum in Jokkmokk. She works with árbediehto, Sami traditional knowledge, concerning the Sami language and the Sami cultural heritage.

10:45 – 11:00  Coffee break

11:00 – 11:30  Liisa-Ravna Finbog: Gákti ja goathi – heritage work and identity at Várdobáiki Museum

Abstract: The last decade or so has seen a major change within museums exhibiting Sámi cultures. In particular within the indigenous museums that are located in Sámi communities. Since 2001 the Sámi museums in Norway have been under the jurisdiction of the Sámi Parliament. As a result an extensive reorganization and redefinition of the Sámi museums has been implemented. Mostly the focus has been on the role of the museum in establishing a Sámi identity, partly in areas where Sámi culture has been put under pressure to become Norwegian over a long period of time. One of these areas is the Marke–Sámi area in the northern part of the county of Nordland and the southern part of the county of Troms.
My paper aims at analyzing the role of one particular museum, Várdobáiki sámi guovddáš – a Marke-Sámi culture center which has the administrative responsibility of all the Marke-Sámi areas – in relation to the development and reinforcement of a Marke-Sámi identity in a museum practice. In particular I note that, whereas earlier exhibitions in general have been focused on Sámi reindeer herding, today one can see new and different centers of attention more suited to displaying the massive differences within the Sámi culture. Within Várdobáiki, for instance, I show how the use of ‘traditional/local knowledge’, ‘heritage objects’ and ‘strategic essentialism’ together form a sense of local ownership to the Marke-Sámi culture and an entitlement to participate in the creation of a modern Marke-Sámi identity amongst the local Marke-Sámi population.

Liisa-Ravna Finbog, University of Oslo, has recently completed a second Master thesis in museology (the first was a Master in archaeology), the subject of which was Sámi museums and their impact on local communities. As being of Sámi origin, she has a vested interest in understanding how Sámi culture in museums affects the Sámi people of today.

11:30 – 11:45 Open discussion on Representation, ethics and identity
11:45 – 12:10 Sámi exhibitions – Introduction

Nika Potinkara: Symbols of ethnic belonging: the construction of Sámi ethnicity in museum exhibitions

Abstract: At present, Sámi ethnicity is a contested subject. What does it mean to be a Sámi person, and who is entitled to Sámi status? These questions are frequently debated in Sámi communities today. In a situation where differences in the ways of life are disappearing or decreasing, ethnic boundaries between the Sámi and the majority populations are maintained by a limited set of cultural features. A few symbols – such as traditional handicrafts, reindeer herding, and relationship to land and nature – play an important role in this process. In this paper, I look at the ways in which ethnic boundaries are created and maintained in the exhibitions of two contemporary Sámi museums: Siida in Finland and Ájtte in Sweden. How do the museums participate in the process of constructing Sámi ethnicity when representing Sámi culture and history in their exhibitions? How are symbols of ethnic belonging represented by the museums, and do they contribute to the perception of the Sámi as a fairly homogenous group distinct from mainstream populations? The paper is based on a qualitative analysis of the permanent exhibitions of the two museums.

Nika Potinkara is a doctoral student in the Department of History and Ethnology at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Her research interests lie in the area of creating and maintaining ethnic boundaries. More specifically, her work examines the construction of ethnicity in the exhibitions of two Sámi museums.

12:10 – 12:40 Vidar Fagerheim Kalsås: Exhibiting an emerging nation: the representation of Sámi history in the exhibition Sápmi – becoming a nation at Tromsø Museum

Abstract: In the late 1990s, curators at Tromsø Museum found the museum’s history and continuing participation in the ethnographic genre problematic. By creating the exhibition Sápmi – becoming a nation, which opened in 2000, the curators wanted to mark a break with the exhibiting practices of the genre. When ethnographic museums break away from their past of representing the Sami as a people without history and start to exhibit historical change, as the exhibition Sápmi does, the question about what past is chosen and why it is chosen becomes a relevant approach to the study of ethnographic exhibitions.

In this paper I am analysing the representations of Sami history that Sápmi is conveying, in light of the ethnopolitical and museological contexts that the exhibition related to. By structuring the exhibition in the form of a narrative and by representing the Sami as political
and cultural actors in history, the exhibition marks a clear break from the earlier conventions in the ethnographic genre. The structuring of the past and the choosing of objects was made out of what significance they could be given in the story of an emerging Sámi national community and a national narrative. By the presentation of this narrative, the exhibition is dualistically dividing the recent Sámi past, where actors either contributed or counteracted in the process of building a national community.

Vidar Fagerheim Kalsås holds a Master in history from the University of Bergen, Norway, titled Minoritetar på utstilling: Framstillinga av samane og romanifolket sin historie på museumsutstillingar (2011). Since 2014 he teaches at the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion, University of Bergen.

12:40 – 13:40 Lunch

13:40 – 14:10 Tom Svensson: On the political strength of ethnicity and some thoughts about museum presentations

Abstract: In this paper I will argue for an extended approach when it comes to represent the Sámi culture in a museum context. In order to offer a fairly complete impression of contemporary Sámi everyday life, emphasis is laid on political and legal activities, and a notion of politics of difference.

Tom G. Svensson is Professor Emeritus at the Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo. He is originally from Stockholm where he had his basic academic training. He has been a staff member of the Ethnographic Museum, later the Museum of Cultural History, since 1970. He has conducted fieldwork among the Sámi, the Ainu, the Nisga’a, and the Hopi, and has special interests in ethnopolitics, legal pluralism, and æsthetic manifestations.

14:10 – 14:40 Silje Opdahl Mathisen: The Lappish Equipage and the Aesthetics of Ethnicity: Visual narratives and negotiations in Sami museum exhibitions

Abstract: How are Sami culture and history represented in museum exhibitions? How do museums present abstract concepts such as ethnicity and identity? Silje Opdahl Mathisen has examined 14 exhibitions that all present Sami culture and history, in 6 different museums in Norway and Sweden. These exhibitions were made between 1972 and 2007 and are a reflection of both the changing views of Sami ethnicity as well as of exhibition techniques used. Mathisen has analysed these exhibitions as located both in national and Sami museums, also glancing at the history of how the Sami were presented in exhibitions going back to the mid-19th century.

Museums have the potential to be meeting places that promote and facilitate intercultural understanding in an increasingly multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society. Mathisen studies how this is conducted and represented in the Sami exhibitions. She compares how the different exhibitions employ methods and techniques such as the diorama, photography, museum objects and maps. Many of these elements have a long history of use in displays both within and outside museum institutions. Several of them, such as the Sami shaman’s drum and the diorama Mathisen calls The Lappish Equipage, are iconic representations of Sami culture that shape and are shaped by changing views of Sami ethnicity.

Silje Opdahl Mathisen is a doctoral student at the Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages at the University of Oslo. She will defend her doctoral thesis The Aesthetics of Ethnicity: Visual narratives and negotiations in Sami museum exhibitions in December 2014. Mathisen has also studied art history and archaeology and has working experience from several museums and galleries in Norway.

14:40 – 14:55 Open discussion on Sámi exhibitions
14:55 – 15:15  Coffee break
15:15 – 16:00  Closing discussion
16:00  Departure

Selection and steering committee:
Silje Opdahl Mathisen, Marzia Varutti
in collaboration with Eva Silvén and Rossella Ragazzi

Sponsors:
the Norwegian Sámi Parliament; the Fritt Ord Foundation, Dep. Of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages (IKOS), University of Oslo, and the Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, Oslo

Organization:
Center for Museums Studies, IKOS, University of Oslo; Tromsø University Museum, the Arctic University of Norway; and Nordiska Museet, Stockholm

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Silje Opdahl Mathisen, Marzia Varutti, Rossella Ragazzi, Eva Silvén