

NEW TIMES, NEW PERSPECTIVES?

Sámi Representation in Norwegian and Sámi Museums in Norway

By

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Abstract

The *Sámi* – the indigenous people of Fenno- Scandia and parts of Northern Russia – have long been subject of representation in museums. Today, this group is being represented in both Norwegian and Sámi operated museums - institutions that are differing both in size, cultural situation, geographical location, and ethnic relations. This thesis has explored how the Sámi people are currently represented in these museums, with emphasis on analysing how these representations relate to recent developments in museum theory and practice, and how they respond to the recent socio- political changes in society.

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is substantially my own work. Where reference has been made to the work of others the extent to which that work has been used has been duly acknowledged in the text and the bibliography. The length of this dissertation, excluding bibliography and appendices, does not exceed 15,000 words.

Monica Klaussen

Date

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1. Introduction

1.1 Museums and the representation of “others”.

During the last three decades, representing human cultures in museums has come to be a highly complex and difficult matter in the western world. Striving for the provision of both authentic and spectacular experiences to their audience (Ames 2005:44), museums are also affected by their obligations to serve society by constantly reflecting and responding to its current ideologies and values (Sandell 2002:18-21). However, combining these factors has proved to be a difficult task as many heritage institutions perceive the social obligations as more a restraint than a resource when presenting their collections, especially when displaying the cultures of “others”. Having served as the authoritative organisations in the conservation and presentation of cultural material, the means of representing human cultures have long been developed by western intellectuals whose conceptions of the world have differed from the views of those represented (Walsh 1992:32-35). As recent social and political revolutions have started to criticise this overpowering of cultural life and expressions, a new burden has been added to the curatorial weight. Since the 1960's several ethno- political movements have objected to the western discrimination of cultural and ethnic minorities and brought attention to cultural “othering” and the alien knowledge traditions which have long set the frameworks of cultural institutions like museums (B. Olsen 2000:13). Fuelled by these reactions intellectuals throughout the world have started investigating how museum practices affect – and are affected by – ideological and political streams and how power and authority is re- produced through cultural deterministic and Eurocentric presentations of non- western cultures (Kreps 2003:1-2). The findings of this work have initiated a scholarly critique which has had implications on museological work during the last three decades (ibid.). By acknowledging the importance of a social and political consciousness when representing cultures museums have increasingly welcomed new perspectives into their practice through cross- cultural cooperation and higher levels of social and cultural inclusion. Presenting cultures is no longer a task to be carried out by museum curators alone. Rather, museum presentations of human culture should be developed under the involvement of those who are being represented (Corsane 2005).

1.2 Representing Indigenous Peoples

Developments in museum theory of the last decades have had strong implications on the representation of indigenous peoples and other minority cultures of the world. The criticism against cultural discrimination and the ethnocentric traditions in museum work was in many ways inspired, and fuelled, by an indigenous cultural and political awakening initiated during the latter half of the 20th century (Smith 2004:16). Demanding not only the right of self-determination, but also the right of presenting their own culture, minority cultures from the whole world have played a major part in the recent developments in museum theory by actively engaging in the debates concerning cultural autonomy, establishing partnerships with museums and cooperating with the heritage sector, and taking part in the legislative developments on cultural and historic conservation and presentation (Kreps 2003:1-4, Simpson 1996). Additionally, indigenous and minority intellectuals have played an important role in the construction of indigenous/minority cultural knowledge. By providing new and different perspectives to the cultural sciences and taking responsibility of their own cultural heritage a democratisation of the museum profession is under development (Mpumlwana et. al. 2002). This has come in many shapes such as the establishment of indigenous museums, a growing number of indigenous professionals in the heritage sector, a stronger emphasis on indigenous involvement and cooperation in museum exhibition projects (Herle 1994, 2001, Kreps 2003, Simpson 1996) and an increasing abandonment of ethnographic displays of indigenous culture.

The museum tradition is not entirely western (Kreps 2003) but its current structures has nevertheless proved to be still directed towards the Eurocentric traditions which characterised the early European/North American museums of the nineteenth century (Riegel 1996). Therefore, despite the recent museological shifts, the ideological and methodological changes described above have still proved to be absent in many museums throughout the world, allowing for a continuous reproduction of ethnocentric values and inaccurate representations of minority cultures (Simpson 1996). This thesis will hence set out to explore indigenous representation in museums today and how recent museum and ideological

developments/changes are being considered in these heritage institutions when representing indigenous cultures.

As much research and work has been undertaken on the representation of the indigenous peoples in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA and other countries subjected to the European colonisation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Simpson 2001), the thesis will explore the representation of an indigenous culture which has been under less focus – at least internationally – in the museum representation debates, namely the *Sámi*. This cultural group is known as the indigenous people of Norway, Finland and the Kola Peninsula in Northern Russia, and as an ethnic minority in Sweden. Their status as indigenous people is due to the extensive colonisation of the *Sámi* areas, *Sápmi*, by the ethnic majorities of the respective countries during the 13th century (Hansen and Olsen 2004:151-158). The *Sámi* and their cultural history has been represented in European museums for centuries, typically in ethnographic exhibitions displaying the rich material culture of pre- modern times. However, in line with the recent developments in the international museum sphere, the ethnographic exhibits have been under harsh critique and a greater focus has hence been placed on the necessity of presenting the *Sámi* culture in a more reflexive, non- stereotypic manner (Olsen 2000a; 2000b, Bjørklund et. al. 2002). During the last three decades a growing number of *Sámi* intellectuals and other academics with a special interest in the *Sámi* culture have initiated and participated in the re- shaping of how *Sámi* are represented in society. As well, a recent emergence of *Sámi* museums and cultural centres (with a museum section) has provided this group a possibility to represent their own culture in a museum context (Olsen 2000a). With these ideological and methodological changes in mind, the thesis will try to explore how the *Sámi* are being presented in the current museum milieu. It will set out to reveal how well museums have responded to the new museology, the *Sámi* cultural and political revival, and other developments which have managed to set new light on the issues of representing indigenous peoples in museums and any other media of society.

1.2.1 Sámi representation and the museum debate

In the last decade the issues of museum representation have come under debate in Norway. During summer 2006 a debate has been running in the largest Norwegian newspapers, where both members of the cultural elite and the overall public has criticised the Norwegian university museums' lack of quality representations of culture (Eidem 2006a, 2006b). Also, the Sámi people have recently reprimanded some of the major museums in Norway for their inaccurate and degrading representation of their cultural history (Ege 2006). Previous to this discussion a number of scholars from the field of archaeology, anthropology, and tourism have explored how museums choose to present the Sámi culture and history to the public today (Olsen 2000a, Levy 2006). In this, several museum categories have been up for review; Due to their ethnographic backgrounds *Norwegian museums*, (in this study defined as museums in Norway which research, document, and present culture with special emphasis on the Norwegian cultural history) have been under special pressure to provide up- to- date, accurate and non- ethnocentric exhibitions, not just when representing Sámi culture, but in any representation situation. Therefore, much attention has been given to exhibition projects where the Sámi are exhibited from a Norwegian perspective (Berg 2002, Olsen 2000b, Matland 2000, Mathisen 2000, Schanche & Krogh 2000). Also, in line with the recent establishment of Sámi museums and cultural centres, a new and different exhibition category has been in focus; exhibitions developed by the Sámi themselves. As these projects represent a step forward in indigenous museum representation, they have been reviewed by both media and scholars to explore the quality of Sámi self- representation in a museum context (Olsen 2000a).

This study will follow a similar path offering a review of Sámi representation in museums and museum exhibitions in Norway. However, different to most of the work previously undertaken in the area it will be located at the intersection of the two debates described above, namely Sámi representation in Norwegian/ Nordic museums and Sámi self- representation in indigenous museums. The reason for this approach is simple; To date, reviewing museum representation of the Sámi has typically been undertaken by either exploring individual museum exhibitions or a set of similar exhibitions to find out how the Sámi are being represented by either an

individual institution (see Matland 2000, Mathisen 2000, Schanche & Krogh 2000) or by a particular museum category (Olsen 2000a). Most studies have thereby been undertaken from a very narrow, almost micro perspective. This study will, however, move beyond this approach. It will be looking at representation from a somewhat different sample, as it aims to explore how the Sámi are represented in museums, whether representation differs between institutions displaying Sámi culture, and if so, which factors may have caused such a difference. Instead of focusing on a very homogeneous sample, i.e. museums within a certain ethnic, cultural or structural category, it will try to research Sámi representation *across* museum categories, ethnic backgrounds and geographic situation. In the following paragraphs the cultural, socio- political and theoretical background of this study will be further explained to provide a more complex and detailed picture of the project. Firstly, a brief introduction of the Sámi and their cultural history shall be offered.

1.3 The Sámi

The Sámi are, as previously mentioned, the indigenous people of Northern Russia and the Nordic countries. To date, it has been difficult to give an exact number of Sámi people and there are hence no official estimates on the size of this group. However, according to numerous studies there is reason to believe that they count about 40- 50 000 individuals (Eidheim 1995). Traditionally the Sámi people have inhabited a geographical area stretching from the northern half of *Fenno- Scandia* (Norway, Sweden and Finland) and up to the eastern point of the Kola peninsula in Northern Russia, a territory which up until historic times had not been officially claimed by either of the surrounding nations and was hence regarded as the Sámi homeland (Eidheim 2000:3). After the establishment of the frontiers in the northern areas in 1751 these territories were claimed and split amongst the four above-mentioned countries. The Sámi are therefore currently situated within four different nations and live according to different cultures, legislations, and political systems.

Despite having been geographically divided by nation state borders for more than three centuries, the Sámi people are culturally and ethnically connected through a common language and by similar customs and material culture. Historically, this people was a semi- nomadic people living as hunters and trappers, and was socially

organised within the *Siida*- system, a non- hierarchic economic and legal system of relatives which shared and used a common land area (Hansen & Olsen 2004). According to recent archaeological and historical studies, the Sámi hunting/gathering lifestyle was left for a reindeer husbandry economy in the 17th century. In some Sámi areas, however, hunting and trapping was combined with a farming and fishery lifestyle (Lorenz 1981:41). Also, since historic times the Sámi have been an important part of the trading communities of the Norse, Finnish and Russian societies. Judging from various historic sources the Sámi were long the main providers of fur, antlers and other natural goods to the eastern and western European traders (ibid:44-45).

1.3.1 Cultural and political change

The Sámi culture is highly dynamic and has been under constant change for thousands of years. However, the years between 1870s- 1960s have been deemed as a particularly destructive period for the continuation of Sámi traditions and cultural life. In the 19th century, due to an increasing poverty in Sámi communities and the Nordic societies' growing interest in theories of social Darwinism, the Sámi started being perceived as culturally underdeveloped by the western societies (Lorenz 1981:77). As a result the Sámi was segregated from these communities and subjected to special legislations and schools systems (ibid:88). In the after- war period the Sámi communities still suffered from poor economic and social conditions, and as an attempt to “save” this population from cultural downfall the Norwegian government launched an aggressive *assimilation* policy to include the Sámi into the western culture. This work, currently called the “Norwegianisation process, resulted in a massive obliteration of the Sámi culture and language in many regions (Olsen 2003:4). After the World War 2 this policy gradually softened (Sinding Aasen 2004:466), and the “Norwegianisation” policy shifted its aims from annihilating the Sámi culture and language, to a concentration on preserving and rescuing it. This did however represent a problem in some areas, as “Sáminess” was at this stage regarded by some as something which belonged to the past and should therefore not be a part of the modern society (Olsen 2006:40-41).

In the late 70's a Sámi cultural and political revival brought new attention to the repression of the Sámi population. This movement led to over two decades of fighting for the rights of being one people with common rights, cultural and natural autonomy, and ultimately the right of complete self- determination (Sinding Aasen 2004). In 1989 a Sámi Parliament was established, marking an important shift in the Sámi political development. Despite some conflicting response from the Norwegian government, the Sámi gained status as indigenous people in Norway in 1990 by the ratification of the ILO convention (ibid.).

Currently, the situation in Sámi society is on an upswing – both culturally and politically. Since the late 1980's the Sámi people have experienced an increasing recognition as a people with the right to develop and preserve their own culture. Culturally, the Sámi are expressing themselves in both new and more traditional ways, through music, art, literature, theatre, media and festivals. Traditional symbols of Sáminess are still being reproduced, and are important aspects in regards to the Sámi identity and the “nation- building” process which is currently being undertaken. An increasing amount of people have decided to join the official Sámi census, and many have taken an active part in the political work for Sámi rights (Eidheim 2000:3).

1.3.2 Sámi representation in Norway

The Sámi people have been a popular theme of ethnographic museums for centuries, and today they are one of the major tourist attractions of the Arctic north. Their strong iconic ties to reindeer herding and a semi- nomadic lifestyle has proved to be a powerful instrument in promoting the Sámi culture (Bjørklund et. al. 2002:126, Olsen 2003), and is often thought of as an “exotic” contribution to the Nordic/ Norwegian culture (TMU Sápmi exhibition catalogue 2000:15). Historically, Sámi representation in (Norwegian) museums has been of a strong ethnographic character. Widely promoted as the last nomads of Europe (Olsen 2003:39), the Sámi culture has, since the sixteenth century, been studied, documented, and written about by scholars in a variety of disciplines. The “primitiveness” of their culture have been of interest to both scholars and the general public, and in the nineteenth and twentieth century not only was the Sámi culture was a popular theme in museum exhibitions and, in some parts of Europe, they were also subject of ethnographic

“live” exhibits and fairs (Olsen 2006:39).

This trend continued throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, although with far more political connotations attached. As in the earlier periods, the Sámi were largely promoted as primitive and exotic, but in line with the above - mentioned assimilation process the culture was given the status as on a downfall and hence belonging to the past. These perceptions initiated a strong museum tradition in Norway – a tradition which excluded the contemporary Sámi culture and presented it as pre-modern, static, and non- existent in the contemporary society.

In the 1960s these long- held perceptions began to be challenged. During the last four decades an ideological shift has become evident in the western world, a shift which has gradually opened up towards a more pluralistic society (Evjen 1999:18). A Sámi ethno- political revival initiated in the after- war period strengthened the Sámi position in society and brought focus to the cultural and political oppression which this cultural group had suffered. At the same time an economic upswing in the Norwegian society led to that all people, also the Sámi, were given the opportunity of higher education in Norway, and in the following years an increasing number of Sámi intellectuals started entering the Norwegian academic milieus (Salvesen 1984:42). As the studying of Sámi culture had long been undertaken by non- Sámi intellectuals, the Sámi academics started objecting to the “outsider perspectives” which had dominated this field of research and demanded that Sámi culture was studied by the Sámi themselves. In line with these demands of self- representation more and more Sámi museums were established in the 1970s and 80s. As well, new attention was given to the representation of this people in Norwegian museums, leading to a growth in new exhibition projects and critical evaluation of the traditional Sámi displays (Olsen 2000a, 2000b). During the 1990s Sámi cultural centres were established in many parts of the “Norwegian” Sápmi, and an increasing number of Sámi academics were given the opportunity to represent their own cultural history from an “insider- perspective”.

Addressing this recent development, the main focus of the analysis underlying this dissertation will be to evaluate how the Sámi people are currently being represented in museums in Norway. As the museum milieu in this country has recently changed

from being run by the Norwegian cultural majority to also include museums and cultural centres operated by minority cultures, it may be vital to explore how such developments have affected the ways in which the cultures of “others” are promoted in these different institutions. Additionally, although many museums in other parts of the western world has – and still is – experiencing extensive political, theoretical and methodological developments in regards to indigenous representation, little effort has been directed towards the evaluation of how museums in Norway adhere to these new perspectives. Therefore, by determining whether the cultural, social and museological changes have had any impact on the indigenous representations in the museums, the project aims to generate new knowledge and understanding of how these institutions respond to social change and how they interpret and implement these perspectives into the exhibitions.

The underlying aim of this thesis is to explore how museums represent the Sámi through different types of museum work. This will, at the one hand, include an evaluation of their exhibitions and how these represent the Sámi through the use of objects, images, and text. The research will set out to reveal which methods of displaying are used when presenting this people in the exhibitions, and how these affect how they are being represented. It will try to determine which views and perceptions are being promoted in the displays, and how these are located within the theoretical and socio- political traditions. The exhibitions will hence be evaluated according to their theoretical, methodological, and political standpoints. On the other hand, the thesis will aim to explore how these institutions work to ensure (in their mind) the best possible representation of the Sámi people. This will be to investigate the museums' practices and policies towards Sámi representation, and to explore how the museum exhibitions were planned and how they are managed today.

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 Research sample

The analysis of the heart of this dissertation is based on a research conducted in Norway during April and June 2006. Five museums within the Norwegian borders, two Norwegian and three Sámi, were studied and evaluated through exhibition visits and short interviews with key members of the museum staff. Due to the nature of the project, four out of five museums are situated in the Sámi area, *Sápmi*, and one is located in Oslo, the capital of Norway. Museums were chosen based on a number of criteria which will be further defined and explained in chapter three. The main criterion for inclusion in the analysis was that all museums in the sample must have a permanent or long-term exhibition presenting the Sámi people. Also, in order to best avoid a sample bias, case studies were limited to more “conventional” exhibits, i.e. consisting of mainly object/image/interpretation displays within a confined exhibition area, and must be dedicated to present the Sámi people specifically. Thus, this analysis will include interior display-based exhibitions; Open-air exhibitions will be excluded from this study.

1.4.2 Research methods

As indicated above, the methods used in this project will largely consist in evaluating exhibitions and interviewing key members of the museum staff. The evaluations were undertaken by the author, and will be discussed in relation to a set of criteria which is presented later in the project (see chapter three and appendices). The interviews all were semi-structured and, with one exception, undertaken face-to-face. In one instance, due to geographical constraints, one interview was conducted by e-mail correspondence.

1.5 Thesis structure

In this dissertation the subject of Sámi representation will be explored throughout a total of seven chapters. In this chapter the background for the study has been presented and discussed. It has set out to explain how this research is located within a national and international context of heritage studies and how such a study may provide new perspectives and knowledge to the subject of representing indigenous peoples in museums. The chapter does also provide a brief introduction to the Sámi culture and the history of Sámi representation.

The second chapter will offer a review of the literature regarding museum representation of “other” cultures. The aim of this chapter is to explain when the concept of representation was introduced in the museum and heritage literature, and how this notion has played an important role in the museological developments regarding the presentation of “other” cultures and indigenous people.

In chapter three the methodology of the thesis will be presented and discussed. It will give an account of which museums have been researched in the study and why they were chosen amongst all institutions of representation in Norway. It will also set out to explain which methods were employed in the museum research and how these are expected to help provide a valid, researchable data set which will eventually set new light on how the Sámi are represented in the museums.

Chapter four will offer a brief presentation of the case studies of this study, and will hence work as an introduction to the presentation of the research results which can be found in chapter five. Here the findings of interviews and the exhibition evaluation process will be presented to form a solid background to the subsequent analysis.

In chapter six the research findings presented in the previous chapter will be analysed with view on determining how the Sámi are being represented in the museums explored in this study. By drawing on the information provided in the previous chapters, it will try to locate the museums' theoretical, methodological, and political standpoints in their representations of this people. In the final, seventh chapter the conclusion of this study will be presented.

2. Literature Review

In order to assess the ways in which the Sámi people are currently represented in Norwegian and Sámi museums, it will be necessary to trace the theoretical developments related to the museum representation of “other” cultures throughout the past four or five decades. The aim of this review is to establish when the notion of representation first became central to museum work and the presentation of culture, and what role this concept has played in the development of museum presentation theories of indigenous peoples. The review will explain the various trends within the field of museum representation and outline the theoretical developments concerning the representation of indigenous peoples in museums.

2.3 Representation and the developments in museum theories

Since the notion of representation started emerging in the museum literature in the 1960s and 70s (see ICOM 1993), an increasing number of scholars have started reflecting on the role of representation in museum work, and how this concept both *relates to* and *differs from* the notion of “exhibiting”. In the article “Reflections on Representations” Howard Morphy (1986:24) claims that “[r]epresenting other cultures is what anthropology museums are (for the most part) about, even if in the past they felt they were only exhibiting them”. When dividing between the concept of exhibiting and representation, the author points out that there is something “else” behind the field of representation than just displaying something objectively. Such implications are often seen in the museum representation literature, and have become integral to the studies of representation. For instance, some scholars refer to representation as a process of subjective selection. Durrans (1992:11) claims that like any other engagement with the world, museum representation “selecting what is relevant to the purpose in hand and rejecting what is not”. Following the same path, Morphy (1986:24) explains that “[t]he representation of any subject, be it a single artefact, a religion, or a culture, involves decisions about which ways to represent it, whose perspectives to adopt, what audience to aim for”.

These statements, where the concept of representation is seen as a highly subjective action, have had large implications on the field of exhibiting culture. As exhibiting

culture have long been perceived by the modernist museums as an objective action where the objects have only one interpretation and therefore speak for themselves (Hooper- Greenhill 2000:126), Pearce (1987:182) disputes this view in her article "Exhibiting Material Culture. She states that "be a Fine Art exhibition never so "impressionistic", or designed with the positive intention of just allowing the objects to speak for themselves, the reality, as with "stream of consciousness" or "slice of life" novelists, is that the designing originator is merely a veil or two away". Instead, she states, "exhibitions are built around subjective judgement" (Ibid:183).

Perceiving exhibitions as subjective constructs has had implications on the studies of material culture. Inherent in this field of heritage study is the concept of "multiple meanings" of things. As stated by Julie Cruikshank (1992:5):

"Increasingly, museums face (...) challenges about the use of things to represent culture, particularly when material objects displayed in exhibits convey conflicting symbolic messages to different audiences (...) Material objects, especially the portable kind found in museums, can have meanings read into them quite different from those their makers intended, but those meanings tend to be framed, interpreted, understood in words."

Such understandings of representation and the meanings of things has not only had implications on how museums understand the ways in which exhibitions and objects are interpreted. By realising that cultural material have multiple meanings (see Vergo 1989), there has been a realisation that not all views been given the chance to be uttered. According to Durrans (1992:11) particular views – the views of the exhibition developers – have long been favoured and put before other perceptions. Therefore, by acknowledging the *power* of representation, the concept of exhibiting has gained *political* significance. As pointed out by Hooper- Greenhill (2000:19) subjectivity, meaning, and history are all integral to cultural politics, and in the case of museums these institutions are powered by their rights to name, represent common sense, and to create official versions of the world. According to both Durrans (1992:11) and Pearce (1987:182) museums tend to misuse these special opportunities by oppressing the cultures they represent. By carefully selecting elements from the cultural material of these people and composing them into messages which are to them meaningful, they construct representations according to their own ideologies

and not according to the perceptions of those represented. Also, as claimed by Durrans (1992:11), these presentations appear as the “truth” and do not give the public the possibility to explore other perspectives.

2.4 Indigenous Peoples and museum representation

Acknowledging the power and politics of representation, the debate of exhibiting has culture has – in some sense – taken two turns. On the one side, there is a growing realisation of the kind of effect museum representation may have on a society. Richard Sandell states that “alongside increasingly sophisticated conceptual development in the area of representation there are now increasingly bold and explicit claims that are beginning to explore the museum’s impact on the lives of individuals and communities (...)” (Sandell 2002:3). A number of scholars have – and still are – looking into the subject of museum representation and how their perceptions may have large impacts on both the discourse of “other” cultures and on the presented communities themselves (see Kelly 2000, Simpson 2001, Sandell 2002). Common to these studies is that they are highly relevant to – and mostly about – the representation of *indigenous* people and other minority cultures. Ever since the subject of representation emerged in the museum literature the museum presentations of such cultural and ethnic groups have been criticised for exhibiting indigenous cultures in an inaccurate, irrespective, and stereotypical manner (see Houtman 1985, Olsen 2000a, Kreps 2003). In 1985 an exhibition representing Amazonian Indians at the British Museum was harshly criticised. As stated by Harris & Gow (1985:1) “it locates Amazonian societies within the framework of *our* fantasies (...) Instead of providing a human perspective on the tropical rainforest, native Amazonian people become another aspect of the forest’s alien existence.

One can see from this that the power of representation and the subjective dimension of displaying culture are central subjects in the debate concerning the representation of indigenous peoples. However, as previously stated, the debate regarding the power of representation has also taken a different turn. In Britain, one can see that the subject of social inclusion in museums is highly debated. According to Mpumlwana et. al. (2002:244) there has been a discussion in Britain about making museums more respondent to societal concerns, where the notion of inclusion is one

of the most central concepts. In the article the authors explore the “debates around the social role and purpose of museums (...)” (ibid), and plead for a more democratic museum structure where the minority cultures are included in the meaning making – and decision making – processes. Inclusion is also the subject of Anita Herle’s articles concerning the representation of indigenous or tribal peoples at Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (Herle 1992; 2001). Throughout these papers she asserts that the understandings of sacred objects, ownership, and heritage differ immensely between the curators and those represented. Therefore, by developing the exhibitions and the storage spaces in collaboration with the indigenous peoples the information associated with the collections were greater and the museum had the chance to represent the peoples in a more respectful manner.

The focus on indigenous inclusion is also present in Australia, North America, Canada, and other countries subjected to European colonisation (see Bush 2005, Kelly 2000, Moira Simpson (2001) and Christina Kreps (2003), for instance, both discuss the need for a more alternative museology where the voices of the indigenous peoples are emphasised. In a publication about the Maori and their relations to museums in New Zealand, Butts (2002) discusses the need for involving the Maori in the museum development and management processes. He concludes that there have been fundamental attitudinal shifts in the relationships between the Maori and museums. These representational institutions have started to acknowledge the links between the indigenous peoples and those cultures represented in their exhibitions, and they have in also shifted from presenting this people in a typological and static manner (ibid: 241).

The increased focus on indigenous inclusion may be due to the fact that has since the early 1990s the concept of representation and cultural autonomy have moved beyond the museum debate and entered the national legislations of several of the above mentioned countries (Simpson 2001). In North America the Native Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA 1990) have started considering the indigenous people’s rights of controlling their own heritage. Also in Canada and Australia national legislations and charters have started acknowledging the need for laws which secures the cultural interests of indigenous peoples (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Australia ICOMOS 1999). This trend may have had implications on

the concept of indigenous *self-representation*. As McLoughlin (1999:238) puts it - the increased energy of “Indian politics” there has been an increasing need for aboriginal peoples to define themselves in society. This wish has also been articulated by indigenous scholars and professionals; In the proceedings after a symposium of Indigenous and other curators the need for Aboriginals to express their own culture on their own premises was boldly articulated; “Museums must “...cease patronizing indigenous and aboriginal groups by assuming a right or role in speaking for such groups or fighting the battles for them.” (Mercury Series Directorate Paper 8:vii).

As indicated in this chapter, the concept of representation has had great implications on how scholars in museology, anthropology, and other fields occupied in studying human culture, have come to understand the politics of exhibiting culture – and especially the cultures of “other”. In the following chapters the subject of Sámi representation in museum exhibitions will be researched and explored, seeking to reveal how Sámi and Norwegian museums represent this cultural group.

3. Methodology

This thesis will be based upon a research undertaken in Norway during spring and summer 2006. During this period five museums were visited with a view to evaluate how these institutions represent the Sámi people through different museum work. In order to derive such information several aspects of the museum system have been studied, and the research is therefore divided into two sections. The first part will set out to evaluate the Sámi exhibitions and how the museums have chosen to represent the Sámi people through objects, images and text. The main focus of this section is to establish how the museums communicate this culture to its audience and how these institutions have adopted to recent developments in museum theory and practice. The second part will set focus on the museum systems and how these institutions work to ensure a quality representation of minority cultures through policy developments, co- operation with local people, and staff training.

3.1 Choice of methods

To date, there are no established methods for investigating the ways in which museums and other heritage sites communicate meaning to the public (Garden 2006:395). However, in previous studies on the communication and representation in museums and heritage sites certain methods have proved to be successful in retrieving useful information on the subject. In a research on how Sámi museums represent the Sámi people and their cultural history, the archaeologist Bjørnar Olsen (2000a) analysed the museums' exhibitions and which messages they convey both visually and in writing. The researcher used the method of "looking" and interpreting the different features of the exhibitions, and compared these observations with what knew about recent developments in museum representation of cultures. As "looking" and is not something which can be done objectively because such an activity implies some type of interpretation (Hooper- Greenhill 2000:15) which will ultimately be shaped by our preconceptions (Hodder 1999:36), one can see that the exhibition assessment in this study was undertaken from the view of a *specialist* whose interpretation was based on his knowledge of the contemporary developments in museology and indigenous representation. As this thesis will attempt to find out how the museums have adapted to recent museological developments, a similar method

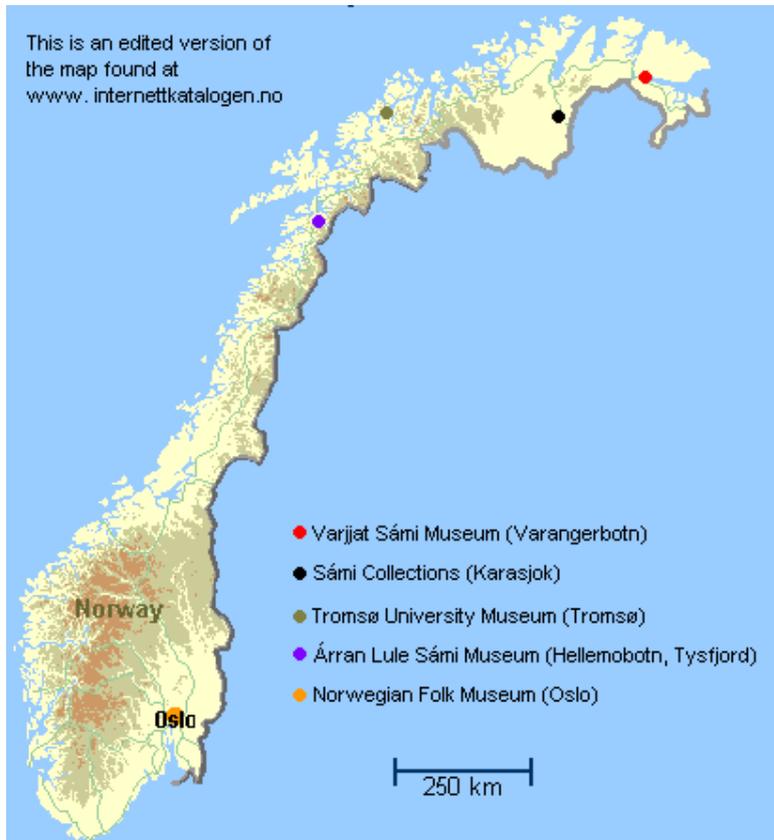
of exhibition analysis will be employed. Like Olsen's study, the Sámi representation will be assessed by analysing museum exhibitions and what meanings they convey through the use of objects and text. However, instead of only drawing solely on the author's perceptions the exhibitions will be evaluated using a set of criteria developed under the inspiration of the recent debates on museum representation of indigenous cultures. The criteria are presented in the appendix.

In a study where "looking" is one of the main methods of analysis, it is important to connect the observations with data relating to the same phenomenon, but which are retrieved using different kinds of methods (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983:198 in Palmer 2001:304). In an ethnographic study on the relationship between heritage tourism and English national identity Catherine Palmer (2001) used the method of triangulation by combining her field observations with interviews of key people working on the sites. A similar approach will hence be adopted in this study; interviewing key members of the museum staff may, on the one hand, help provide useful information on how the museum staff interpret their own presentations of the Sámi culture. As well, it may be an effective way of revealing information how museums represent the Sámi in terms of policy development and co- operation with representatives from the Sámi communities.

3.2 Museum sample

The museums which will be studied in this thesis were chosen based on several criteria related to geographical and cultural aspects. Two museum categories will be considered in this thesis; Sámi and Norwegian museums. Common to the institutions is that they all have a long- term or permanent Sámi exhibition which presents aspects of the Sámi cultural history. On the whole these exhibitions are conventional in nature, i.e. object displays, informational text boards/screens and images; some may also use multimedia techniques such as audio effects and video/animations in their presentations. In order to assess the methods of representation without adding too many variables the exhibitions in this sample were chosen on the basis of being similar in both structure and content. Although some of museums represent Sámi culture in outdoor as well as indoor exhibitions, this only applies for three out of five

of the institutions of the sample. Therefore, only indoor exhibits will be considered in this study.



The museum sample of this project consists of five institutions; three Sámi museums and two museums here classified as Norwegian. The Sámi institutions are; Varjjet Sámi museum, Varanger municipality, county of Finnmark; Sámi Collections, Karasjok municipality, county of Finnmark; and Árran Lule Sámi Centre, Tysfjord municipality, county of Nordland. These three museums are spread over a

geographical area of just under 1000 kilometres and represent three different Sámi districts within the Norwegian Sápmi. The Norwegian museums are; Tromsø University Museum, Tromsø municipality, county of Troms; and Norwegian Folk Museum, county of Oslo. Both of these institutions represent the cultural history of Norway, but with emphasis on their respective regions. Additionally, these are the only two Norwegian museums presenting the Sámi people in a permanent Sámi exhibition.

The two museum categories of this sample, Norwegian and Sámi museums, were categorised by a set of criteria which define these institutions and their managerial system. The Sámi museum sample follows the criteria set by the Nordic Sámi Conference in Inari, Finland, in 1976 (Nilsson 1982:85). Following the statements of the museum committee of this conference, museums must meet the following criteria to be defined as a Sámi museum;

1. the institution must be under Sámi administrative and academic leadership;

2. the exhibition emphasis is to present the Sámi cultural history;
3. the Sámi cultural traditions must be respected and studied from a Sámi perspective/viewpoint;
4. the museums must be situated within one of the main Sámi areas.

One of the institutions of the research sample is given the status as a “cultural centre”. These centres were established in the late twentieth century to ensure the continuation and conservation of the Sámi culture, language, and society of their respective areas, and are often involved in museum work as well as language education and other areas of community development (Árran 2005). Due to their many responsibilities these centres are perceived as somewhat different to other museums, but they do, however, follow the ICOM definition of a museum as they are “a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment. (...)”. Therefore, in this study the culture centre will be perceived and researched as a museum.

There are currently no official criteria which define Norwegian museums on the basis of their work and structures (<http://ssb.no/museer/om.html>, 2.8.06). In order to create a valid, researchable sample group which is comparable to the Sámi museum sample it was necessary to develop a set of criteria which allow all institutions to be defined on a similar basis. The Norwegian museum sample criteria have therefore been created by the author for this thesis exclusively, using a similar methodology as in the Sámi museum criteria of the Inari Conference.

The Norwegian museums of the research sample;

1. are situated within the Norwegian borders;
2. are traditionally developed to present and serve the cultural majority of the country;
3. focus on the cultural history of the Norse/Norwegian population of its area;
4. are largely under administrative and academic leadership by the Norwegian cultural/ethnic majority.

One of the major aims of this thesis is find out if the methods of Sámi representation vary between any particular institution categories or cultural/geographic regions. Therefore, in order to derive such information the museum sample must cover quite a wide range of institutional categories, regions, and cultures. However, the museums of the sample are also chosen based on their *similarities* (such as the exhibition content and structure, etc.) as it will be necessary to assess them on a relatively equal basis. The sample is therefore complex and is carefully balanced to include as many components as needed when researching how representation differs between the different categories. The museums which are about to be researched are, in addition to the criteria listed above, chosen on the basis of their cultural and geographic situation, as well as on the basis of what type of institution they represent.

3.3 Exhibition evaluation

In the study of Sámi representation the major focus will be the Sámi exhibitions located at each of the chosen museums. The museum exhibitions will be evaluated with view on examining how the Sámi people are being represented through the displaying of objects, image and text. The main focus is to clarify if the museum has allowed for the promotion of new perspectives on cultural representation and how this relates to their presentation of the Sámi culture.

The evaluation process has two stages and was first initiated by visiting every exhibition to get a general impression on how the Sámi people are being represented. Firstly, every section of the exhibition was photographed and notes were taken when necessary. The exhibitions were then evaluated using a set of criteria listing some important questions about the content as well as the techniques employed in the presentations. These have been used to help the researcher consider certain aspects of the Sámi representations which have in other, similar studies provided important information about what meanings are being expressed in the exhibitions. The list of criteria is presented in the appendix.

3.4 Interviews

In addition to evaluating the Sámi exhibitions a research has been undertaken to get a better understanding of how museums both perceive and deal with the subject of Sámi representation. It was done in the form of semi- structured interviews with museum staff who have been involved in the planning and development of the exhibition, and the questions were aimed at revealing different aspects of the museums' representation work. The interviews lasted typically one hour and the responses were documented by taking notes. In some instances the interview was undertaken partially as the informants was giving a guiding tour in the exhibition, and partially outside the exhibition area like in an office or in the museum cafeteria. Due to geographical distances and time constraints one interview was undertaken by e-mail correspondence. As the interviews were semi- structured, it was necessary to develop a larger set of questions which could be adapted to various themes and situations. A selection of the most typical interview questions can be found in the appendix.

The process of getting interviewees for the project was in four out of five instances solved by sending out a general request to the museums asking for interviews about their Sámi exhibitions. The decision on who was to be interviewed was therefore largely left with the museums themselves. It was, however, suggested that curators or other staff members who had been involved in the exhibition development may be able to provide the most relevant information. By making this approach one would be able to see who the individual institutions deem as the most appropriate for the task – and thereby get a better understanding the institution's individual management structure or any other unique qualities in terms of representing indigenous cultures. Additionally, it reduced the chance of the author acquiring an interview with a “wrong” - or less appropriate - member of staff.

As described above, the methodology of this study is complex and involves a wide range of methods relating to both the practical research (interviews and exhibition evaluation) and the process of creating a researchable museum sample. In the following chapters these practical and analytical tools will be implemented into the research and analysis of Sámi representation in Sámi and Norwegian museums.

4. Presentation of case studies

Before presenting and discussing the results of the museum research this chapter will provide a brief introduction to the five case studies and their Sámi exhibitions; Tromsø University Museum, Norwegian Folk Museum, Sámi Collections, Varjjat Sámi Museum, and Árran Lule Sámi Museum. With these follows a brief description of the Sámi exhibitions. A more detailed presentation of these will, however, be provided in the next chapter.

4.1 Tromsø University Museum

4.1.1 The Museum

Tromsø University Museum was established in 1872 and is the oldest scientific institution in Northern Norway. It is currently divided into six academic departments; geology, botanics, zoology, archaeology, modern cultural history, and Sámi ethnography. Every section is occupied in researching and documenting various aspects of the Northern regions, and holds large collections of research material collected during more than hundred years of scientific work (Tromsø Museum 2006a). In 1976 the museum was fused with the University of Tromsø and together these two institutions form the very spine of academic research in Northern Norway.

4.1.2 Exhibition: “Sápmi - Becoming a Nation”

The exhibition “Sápmi – becoming a nation” is a long- term exhibition project developed by the Department of Sámi Ethnography with view on “exhibit[ing] the modern situation of the Sámi people in Norway” (Brantenberg 1999:1). In 1998 the project was given a \$ 250.000 grant from the Norwegian Research Council, and after more than two years of full scale planning (Ibid.) the exhibition was ostentatiously launched in October 2000 under great attention from various academic circles, museums, the media, and the public in general (see Matland 2000, Mathisen 2000, B. Olsen 2000b, Krogh & Schanche 2000). The exhibition tells the story of the Sámi political and cultural revitalisation, and leads the audience through more than fifty years of Sámi culture, identity, and political life. It is made to be read like a narrative,

and the exhibits rely much on text, image, and multimedia. Objects and material culture is not emphasised in this project.

4.2 Norwegian Folk Museum

4.2.1 The museum

The Norwegian Folk Museum is located in Oslo, Norway. It was established in 1894 after being granted large collections of buildings and objects, and has long been the keepers of what is regarded the oldest open- air exhibition in the world, namely the King Oscar II's Collections (Norwegian Folk Museum). Over the years it has grown to be the largest museum of cultural history in the country, and is today comprised of both open- air exhibitions in which historic and contemporary buildings from all parts of Norway are displayed, and indoor exhibitions presenting collections of various themes and subjects. Additionally, the museum is administrating a range of other museums and historic buildings located in the same area (ibid).

The museum conveys the Norwegian life and livelihood from the time of the reformation (1537 AD) and up until present time. Its main activities are to collect, document, preserve and display buildings and objects belonging to this period. The museum is mainly concerned with representing Norwegian cultural history and is, including the Sámi Department, under Norwegian academic and administrative leadership.

4.2.2. Exhibition: The Sámi Collection

The Sámi exhibition was initially opened in 1958, seven years after the Norwegian Folk Museum established a Sámi department in its name. The collection was donated by the Museum of Ethnography in 1951, and has since then grown considerably in size (Norwegian Folk Museum). The exhibition as it stands today was made as part of a renewal process in 1990.

The exhibition is comprised of 20 different displays presenting the main aspects of Sámi culture and livelihood in pre- modern times. The display themes ranges from

Sámi costumes, traditional handicraft (*duodji*), religion/ cosmology (Christian and shamanistic), and dwellings, to economic adaptation and livelihood, trade traditions, the “Norwegianisation” process, Sámi literature, and Sámi politics. The material, which includes objects, literature, and images, is retrieved all parts of Sápmi, and most displays has text boards providing information about the artefacts and their historic context. The exhibition does also present some aspects of the modern Sámi life, although the main focus is on the traditional Sámi culture.

4.3 Árran Lule Sámi Centre

4.3.1 The Centre

Árran Lule Sámi centre is located in the northern parts of Nordland County, at the inner shores of Tysfjord. It was officially opened in 1994, and has since the establishment worked with securing and developing Lule Sámi culture, language and social life (Árran 2006). The centre has in recent years become a central Sámi institution in Tysfjord, and houses - in addition to its own premises - other Sámi institutions such as the local Sámi radio, a Sámi kindergarten, the public library of Tysfjord, and district offices for the Sámi parliament and Bodø University College.

The centre is currently divided into two different departments; section for research and museum activities, and section for language and education. Together these departments cover a wide range of cultural arenas and are currently occupied with archaeological surveys, historic collection and documentation, museum work, and linguistic education to schools of all levels (Árran 2006). The centre is mostly used by members of the local community but is occasionally visited by tourists (Informant --). It is currently under Sámi academic and administrative leadership.

4.3.2 The exhibition

The permanent exhibition at Árran Lule Sámi Centre was opened in 2004 (Informant 3) and is developed to present the cultural history of the Lule Sámi population in Sápmi. It is based on archaeological and ethnographic material from the local area, and covers aspects of both the current and the pre-modern culture using a wide

range of objects, images and text. The exhibition is located at two different levels and is divided into four main sections presenting Lule Sámi identity and language, local Sámi politics, and traditional Sámi livelihood (hunting, trapping and fishery).

4.4 Varjjat Sámi Museum

4.4.1 The museum

Varjjat Sámi Museum is situated at the inner shores of the Varanger fjord in the north- eastern parts of Finnmark County. It was established in 1994 with view on documenting the cultural history of the coast Sámi cultures in Varanger and other parts of Sápmi, but is also employed in preserving, collecting and supporting the tradition of *duodji*, Sámi craftsmanship (Varjjat 2004). The museum is a central institution for conveying culture in local community, gained status as the cultural community centre of Nesseby/ Unjárga (Varjjat 2004). The centre is built by the initiative of Nesseby municipality council and receives substantial economic support from the same institution.

The museum consists of four different exhibition areas; a permanent exhibition, a space for temporary exhibits, a children's activity area and an open- air exhibition area. As the museum is located outside the main tourism routes in Finnmark, it is mainly visited by people from the local community and the nearby municipalities. The centre is run by a small team of four museum professionals, and is, in line with the Inari Conference, under Sámi academic and administrative leadership.

4.4.2 Exhibition: “The Coast Sámi”

The exhibition “The Coast Sámi” was opened in 2000, and displays the cultural history of the coast Sámi with focus on the local Sámi culture. The exhibits are based on archaeological and historic material previously collected by Nesseby municipality council, and most artefacts are retrieved from the Varanger area. In the exhibition the historic material is complemented with interactive information screens, reproductions, “stage setting” devices, light and sound effects, and in some sections there are hands- on learning exhibits and activity rooms. The displays are - in most instances –

made of two different components: display cases presenting historic artefacts, and a contextual section exhibiting artefacts together in a larger structure or environment (a dwelling or another structure).

The exhibition presents the cultural history of Varanger from the end of the last ice age and up until today with emphasis on the coast Sámi culture. In chronological order the displays take the audience through more than 10 000 years of cultural developments and change in the area. In addition to the Sámi people the predecessor cultures are also displayed to demonstrate the cultural connections between the hunter- gatherer cultures of the Stone Age periods and the early Sámi societies.

4.5 Sámi Collections

4.5.1 The museum

The Sámi Collections is situated in Karasjok, a town in eastern Finnmark. The museum was established in 1972 and was for many years the only institution concerned with Sámi self- representation (Informant 4). It gained status as a national museum in 1995. Since the opening the museum has collected 4500 objects from the whole Sápmi area, and has since 1975 been regarded as the main Sámi museum in Norway as it holds the biggest collection of cultural artefacts than any other Sámi institution in the country. Additionally, the Sámi Collections are currently building a substantial collection of Sámi contemporary art and handicraft (*duodji*), and is also collecting art by other indigenous artists.

The museum is currently divided into three departments; cultural history, contemporary art and an open- air exhibition which also operates as a preservation section. It is currently run by seven professionals, and every section is under Sámi academic and administrative leadership. As the permanent exhibition belongs to the cultural history section the thesis will focus on the representation undertaken in this department. Other departments may, however, be mentioned in the analyses.

4.5.2. Exhibition:

The permanent exhibition at the Sámi Collections was developed in the mid 1980s with view on presenting objects of the traditional Sámi culture. The exhibition displays historic Sámi artefacts retrieved from all parts of Sápmi, and includes various kinds of costumes and clothes, fishing/farming/reindeer herding tools and facilities, jewellery, and Sámi handicrafts (*duodji*). The displays have been designed by a Sámi artist in cooperation with *duodji* experts, and the exhibition does therefore rely on the visual aspects of Sámi culture as well as the factual. Most exhibits are, however, of conventional nature, i.e. display cases, and the objects are largely organised in material categories. As the exhibition's main emphasis is on material culture the information boards provide only basic information on each group of artefacts.

At the time of the research, parts of the exhibition had been removed to make room for a contemporary exhibition. It is therefore currently lacking both the archaeological exhibit and the costume collection (Informant 4, 2006).

In the following chapters the five museums and their exhibitions will be evaluated based on their means of representing the Sámi people. In order to undertake such an assessment a more detailed description of the exhibitions will be provided in the next chapter.

5. Research Results

In this chapter the results of the museum research will be presented. In the first section the findings of the exhibition evaluation will be described, and in the second part the results of the interviews will be accounted for.

5.1 Visitor's Perspective

In this section the results of the exhibition evaluation process will be presented and discussed. The exhibitions will be mainly described in individual terms, but the main points/findings of all evaluations will be presented and discussed in the summary. Please note that the term “visitor’s perspective” does not refer to the views of the general audience. Rather, the author have taken the role as visitor in this research, acknowledging that the museum exhibitions will be studied from an “expert’s perspective”.

5.1.1 Árran Lule Sámi Centre: Sámi cultural History

The exhibition at Árran Lule Sámi Centre is organised in an almost reverse chronology, and starts off by presenting aspects of the modern, or contemporary, Sámi culture. The focus of this section lies on the current issues of preserving – or re- gaining – a sense of “Sáminess” in the Lule Sámi societies and does therefore present a wide range themes related to this subject; Lule Sámi identity, language, religion, politics, and material culture. The section is mainly comprised of text and images, although a few displays also use some objects in their presentations. In addition to presenting some basic information about the Lule Sámi culture, history, and territories, this exhibits include a high level of more “subjective” material which describes and discusses Lule Sámi identity from the perspectives of the Sámi themselves. Quotes and other statements about what it means to be Sámi in the contemporary society are presented with photographs of the interviewees (image 1), and in a different exhibit the strong relations between Sáminess relates to identity, language, politics, religion, and material culture. This material gives the exhibition a sense of conveying the “insider perspectives on Lule Sámi culture. By allowing the meanings of the local Sámi to be expressed, and by focusing on the Sámi’s efforts in developing and preserving their cultural and political status in society, the exhibition presents the culture a strong, proud, and dynamic.

In the ground floor the exhibition presents aspects of the pre- modern Lule Sámi culture, with emphasis on traditional livelihood and economic adaptation. This section is different to the upstairs exhibits as it is more focused on objects and the displays are hence a bit more traditional in their expression of Sámi culture. The local Sámi economies like fishery, hunting, reindeer herding, and farming are displayed using both historic and modern artefacts, and the strong relationship between nature and the Sámi culture is emphasised in a separate display in the staircases between the first and ground floor. In addition to the traditional means of livelihood the Sámi involvement in the European trade is given much space in the exhibition. By showing how the Sámi cooperated with the Norse traders in the shipping of dried fish to the Hansa union the exhibits manage to exemplify the relationship between the Norse and the Sámi population throughout history without presenting the Sámi as repressed or exploited.

5.1.2 Varjjat Sámi Museum: The Coastal Sámi

The Sámi exhibition at Varjjat is organised chronologically and in archaeological phases, and is therefore strongly characterised by the theories and practices related to the science of archaeology. Already in the first three sections the exhibition is breaking the old stereotypical views on the Sámi by linking this people to the predecessor cultures of the area. Earlier, the Sámi were perceived as immigrants from the east, whereas the Norse population were thought to descend from the pioneer settlers in Norway (Hansen & B. Olsen 2004:36-40). By making this approach the museum attempts to disprove these perceptions by maintaining the Sámi status as descending from the Stone Age cultures of the area - just like the Norse population.

The exhibits in the “Coastal Sámi”- exhibition are structured in a strict chronological order cultural change and development is in great focus. The displays presents the Sámi culture both in terms of livelihood/economy, material culture, religion, and social structure, and does therefore give a wide picture of the Sámi cultural history. As the exhibition displays culture from the Stone Age and up until present time the Sámi culture is not presented as “dead” or something belonging to the past, but as an

evolving culture which has changed and adapted to both nature and society throughout history. The Varanger culture is emphasised throughout the exhibition, and regional differences is therefore rarely considered.

As the exhibition is very archaeological in nature, material culture is largely emphasised. Intangible aspects (such as social structures, religion, etc.) of the early Sámi and predecessor cultures are presented on touch screens, whereas the intangibility related to the modern “Sáminess” , i.e. identity, is not mentioned at all. Neither are politically laden subjects like the relationship between the Sámi and the Norse. One may therefore suggest that the exhibition on the one hand reflects modern, contemporary theories (like the link between the Sámi and the predecessor cultures), but that the display techniques in some instances do not fit with this impression as they (largely) belong to the modernist tradition of displaying culture.

5.1.3 Norwegian Folk Museum

The exhibition at the Norwegian Folk Museum is largely organised by subject and consists of twenty sections, each presenting different “themes” relating to Sámi culture and livelihood. The exhibits are typically of conventional nature and most displays are made as reproductions or “scenes” which combine artefacts with mannequins, models, and other “stage- setting” devices to create a type of context to the collections which are being displayed. The exhibits do not follow any chronology, and few displays do therefore reflect cultural development to the visitors.

The Sámi collections at the Norwegian Folk Museum are almost incomparable in quality and size, and the exhibition does probably hold the most impressive evidences of Sámi cultural history compared to any other European museums holding Sámi collections. The displays are literally abound with cultural treasures from what is today perceived as “traditional” Sámi culture and this gives the museum the opportunity to cover a broad range of the cultural history of this people. However, the exhibition's clear focus on objects and the more traditional aspects of Sámi history has caused it to become quite ethnographic in its expression. In most cases the most unique and “unfamiliar” parts of the culture are emphasised – giving the impression of exoticism - and although the artefacts are displayed in a setting which

clearly explains their purpose and context, it is clear that the objects are the main focus of the exhibition.

As previously mentioned the exhibition aims to present aspects of Sámi culture and life as it was in the period from approximately 1860- 1960. The traditional markers of Sámi culture are therefore highly represented in most displays, but the exhibition has also included some more current aspects of Sámi history. In a separate section to the main exhibition area there are five displays - three of them presenting some features of what may be seen as belonging to the contemporary Sámi culture; Sámi theatre, politics, contemporary *duodji*, and modern reindeer herding. Although these sections may represent aspects of modern Sámi culture, they are dated, simple, and less informative than the pre- modern exhibits. As they are placed in a section separate to the pre- modern exhibits, one get the impression of them being almost “thrown in” as an attempt to upgrade the exhibition or even to create a more politically correct presentation of the Sámi. These rather confusing and half- hearted displays does, however, not present the Sámi culture as dynamic and evolving. Instead, it may be suggested that they are maintaining the theories belonging to the Sámi assimilation period (see chapter 1.3.2) where the culture was promoted as something belonging to the past.

5.1.4 Tromsø University Museum: “Sápmi – Becoming a Nation”

The project manuscript was, as previously mentioned, written as a narrative, and this is clearly manifested in the exhibition structure. It is divided into four different exhibits; an introduction, the main content - “All for Norway”, “Show you are Sámi”, and a final section presenting the current issues in the Sámi political sphere. Unlike the more “traditional” museum exhibitions the project does not use objects as the main source of cultural expression. Instead, the exhibits are largely based on the use of images, text, and multimedia when representing the Sámi people and the processes of becoming a nation.

Due to the political theme of the project the exhibition presents a quite narrow field within the Sámi cultural history. The purpose of the project is hence not to display the cultural development in full but to present the modern Sámi life in both political and

cultural terms. However, although the project's time scale stretches across merely fifty years of Sámi history the story is not static in nature. Instead, the changes and developments in the Sámi political spheres in the after war period is highly emphasised, and the exhibition's narrative- like structure helps the chronology of the story to remain clear and concise as any major shift in the process is marked by a new section or theme.

Sámi identity and self- perceptions are an important part of the exhibition, and this is clearly demonstrated in the introductory section. This exhibit starts off by presenting some facts about the Sámi people and their traditional territories (Sápmi), but the more intangible aspects of this culture is also given some space further into the section. Here Sámi people with different backgrounds, occupations, identities, and perceptions on Sáminess are presented through photographs and objects which each of them felt would represent their Sáminess. This display shows the great variations in Sámi identity and cultural expression, and that they lead very different lives despite their cultural connections. It also seem to present the Sámi culture as strong and

Due to the project's political theme, the exhibition emphasises the Norwegian Government's oppression and exploitation of the Sámi people. This is especially evident in the second section of the exhibition as it presents the "Norwegianisation" of the Sámi population in Norway and how this process affected the Sámi culture in many Sámi regions. Although the Norwegian – Sámi relationship (especially between the Sámi and the Norwegian government) is mentioned in negative terms, where the Sámi appear as the least "powerful" of the two, the third and last section disproves its own presentation of the Sámi image as "victimised". This exhibit conveys the Sámi success in regaining control of their political and cultural life, and does in a way rescue the exhibition of being condescending towards this group.

5.1.5 Sámi Collections: Sámi cultural history exhibition

The exhibition at the Sámi Collections uses conventional methods in their presentation of Sámi cultural history and most displays are hence composed of glass display cases, information tags/boards, and in some instances there are mannequins

or other “stage- setting” devices in the exhibits. Additionally, there are some exhibits where a range of objects – although belonging to similar categories - are put together and placed on a free standing rack. These “scenes” are quite artistic in nature and the visual aspect is evidently of great importance. The exhibition presents a wide range of historic artefacts like tools, Sámi handicraft (*duodji*), dwellings, religion, and costumes, and the objects are largely organised in categories, mostly by typology but also by use/purpose.

The collection presented in the exhibits is of remarkable quality, and it includes objects regarded as both rare and of special cultural importance. As it holds probably some of the finest examples of local Sámi material culture, the focus of the exhibition seems hence to be on objects. The exhibits display a large number of artefacts where only basic information is attached. Most of the material is organised in typological categories and there is no particular chronology in any of the displays, and few artefacts are hence located within time or space. Change and development is clearly under- emphasised, and the material in the exhibition is therefore presented as timeless and with no particular context.

The objects represent a broad spectre of historic cultural material and touches upon themes like historic Sámi livelihood, religion, and social life. However, as there is little information about the objects and their context the material is rarely useful as tools of explaining Sámi cultural history. Instead, the visual aspects of the material seem to be the main priority and in some instances the artefacts are almost presented as *art* rather than evidences of human culture. This approach gives the exhibition an image of being “one dimensional”, shallow, and quite ethnographic. Also, as the exhibition seems to emphasise the unique and perhaps most unfamiliar aspects of the Sámi culture it tends to present this group as exotic and completely detached from the western society as we currently know it.

5.2 Interviews

In this section the results of the interviews with key museum staff will be presented. As this material is substantial size, only the highlights of the five interviews will be presented by subject in the following paragraphs.

5.2.1 Sámi representation and museum policies

In the interviews with key members of the five museums, the informants were asked to describe how the museums – represented by the museum staff – work to ensure (in their view) the best possible representation of the Sámi people and their cultural history. Several questions concerning policy development, exhibition planning, choice of exhibition theme, cooperation with Sámi representatives, and means of exhibition assessment were asked to get a good view of how the museums have chosen to represent the Sámi people. In the following paragraphs the main results of this research will be presented. A more detailed version of the interviews can be found in the appendix.

5.2.2 Exhibition theme, background, and purpose

During the interviews several questions were asked about the exhibitions' purpose, background, and theme were asked. Judging from the answers provided by the interviewees, the five exhibitions of the research sample were developed to present quite different aspects of Sámi culture, and to serve relatively different purposes.

According to the informants at Varjjat and Árran the exhibitions were developed with view on presenting the richness and the development of the local Sámi culture to its audience. Both museums wish to emphasise the change and dynamics of Sámi cultural history and to contest the stereotypical perceptions on this cultural group (Informants 2 & 3, 2006). The Varjjat informant also asserted that the exhibition was made to inform and “provoke” the audience by presenting the Sámi in a slightly different manner than many other museums (Informant 2, 2006)

Change and development is also the main subject of the Sámi exhibition at Tromsø

University Museum, although with a stronger political emphasis. According to the informant the exhibition was developed to discuss the process of the Sámi political and cultural revitalisation in Norway. However, as this process has been subject for debate the last three decades in Norway the producers decided to develop an exhibition for the “informed visitor” - namely the audience who has followed the debate and has gained some knowledge about the subject (Informant 1, 2006).

The Sámi exhibition at the Norwegian Folk Museum was, on the other hand, built with view on functioning as a centre of *information* about the Sámi cultural history, mainly to the non- Sámi audience. Additionally, it is meant to be a cultural “treasure chest” to the Sámi visitors as it contains some of the best assets of Sámi cultural history (Informant 5, 2006).

At the Sámi Collections, the exhibition has an important role in both conserving and representing Sámi culture to future generations. The informant at this institution asserted that when the exhibits were developed the museum was concerned with collecting objects for preservation as much of the Sámi material culture had been lost during the World War 2 and the “Norwegianisation” process. The purpose of the exhibition was – and still is – to present those parts of the culture (objects, techniques, terminologies) that was almost lost and unknown to the Sámi communities (Informant 4, 2006).

5.2.5 The museums and their exhibitions

To clarify how the museums wish to represent the Sámi people in their exhibitions the informants were asked what the displays were meant to express. According to the Norwegian Folk Museum interviewee the exhibition is conveying the Sámi culture and life during the period from which the objects in the collections belong; 1860-1960. As many of the museum's visitors are international tourists who may not know much about the Sámi people, the displays must be kept simple and perhaps emphasise more on the “basic” information than many other Sámi exhibitions. However, the informant asserted that the museum works to not present the Sámi in an exotic and stereotypical manner, and does therefore display the culture objectively (Informant 5, 2006).

Similar to the Norwegian Folk Museum displays, the exhibition at the Sámi Collection was developed on the basis of the contents of their Sámi collections. According to the interviewee the museum is eager to display the varieties in Sámi livelihood and economic adaptation by presenting the contents of their *own* collections, and not the objects owned by other institutions. The informant was aware of the exhibition's rather ethnographic character, and that a more chronological presentation of Sámi history would be favourable. The museum is therefore currently planning to renew/replace the exhibition with a more modern presentation of the Sámi (Informant 4, 2006).

At Varjjat the exhibition was developed with view on both informing and provoking the audience. The museum informant asserted that the staff sought to produce a modern exhibition – both in terms of technical assets (touch screens, sounds, etc) and recent developments in archaeological/historical and museum theories (Informant 2, 2006). At Árran the modern aspects of the local Sámi culture has also been emphasised. When developing the exhibition the pre- modern cultural material was complemented with the museum staff started collecting material, although of the more intangible kind, from the local area by conducting interviews with members of the local (Lule Sámi) communities and asking people to donate objects which they felt defined their “Sáminess” (Informant 3, 2006).

A similar approach was undertaken by the developers of the exhibition at Tromsø University Museum; The project was made to display and discuss aspects of the modern Sámi culture and life, and the material presented in the displays were mostly products of anthropological surveys. The museum wanted to distance themselves from the ethnographic, object- focused tradition of exhibiting Sámi culture, and the displays are therefore not based on any of the museum's collections.

5.2.3 Exhibition planning and the inclusion of Sámi representatives

The development of the five exhibitions was undertaken by different members of the museum staff and under involvement by a wide range of scholars, designers, artists, and members of the Sámi communities. The exhibitions at Tromsø University Museum, Árran Lule Sámi Museum, and Varjjat Sámi Museum was developed by a

team of scholars in cooperation with photographers, exhibition designers, technicians, and some external academics and museum professionals (Informants 1,2 & 3, 2006). A somewhat different approach was taken by the Norwegian Folk Museum and the Sámi collections, where the exhibition manuscripts were written by the museum curators, and the displays were designed by Sámi artists and duodji experts (Informant 4) and an interior designer (Informant 5).

Besides the staff members, Sámi Collections and Árran Lule Sámi Museum did not involve any members of the Sámi communities in the exhibition planning process, and only Varjjat Sámi Museum included representatives of the Sámi communities in the exhibition planning committee and into the exhibition development (building and content) process. Both Tromsø University Museum and Norwegian Folk Museum did, however, consult a consensus of Sámi scholars, artists, and professionals in the culture sector before launching the exhibitions, although (in their views) with relatively poor results.

None of the museums have conducted any visitor surveys to reveal what the public felt about the exhibitions.

6. Analysis

In this chapter the results and findings presented in chapter five will be analysed with view on determining how the Sámi are currently represented in Sámi and Norwegian museums in Norway. In the analysis the results of the exhibition evaluations and the interviews will, in some instances, be complemented with information found in exhibition catalogues and other, relevant publications. The findings will be analysed and discussed in relation to the research problems posed in chapter 1, setting out to reveal how the five museums – Norwegian Folk Museum, Tromsø University Museum, Varjjat Sami Museum, Árran Lule Sámi Museum, and Sámi Collections – adhere to recent theoretical, methodological, and socio- political developments in their representation of the Sámi people.

6.1.1 Museum representation and socio- political change

In this section the museums will be analysed according to how the recent socio- political developments in both the Sámi and the Norwegian societies are conveyed in their representations of Sámi culture. This does not just mean if the modern Sámi culture and the ethno- political processes are presented; the analysis will attempt to find out if the museums are responsive to societal concerns and taken on board the new, post- modernistic ideas concerning indigenous representation. Four aspects will be considered in the following paragraphs;

- Dynamic vs. Static culture
- Ethnocentric/ stereotypical vs. nuanced views on the Sámi culture,

As mentioned in chapter 1, the Sámi culture have long been perceived and promoted as static, primitive, and, in some instances, as something belonging to the past. Judging from the museum research, these perceptions may still be central in some museum representations. Referring to the exhibition evaluations in chapter 4, one can see that only three out of five museums of the sample, namely Varjjat, Tromsø Museum, and Árran, have chosen to present the changes and developments of the Sámi culture throughout history. The same institutions have also included aspects of the modern Sámi culture in their exhibitions, emphasising the fact that the Sámi culture is strong and still evolving. Árran and Tromsø also discuss one of the most

important aspects of modern Sámi life, namely identity and self-perceptions, and they both present the current Sámi ethno-political processes. The Sámi Collections and the Norwegian Folk Museum are, on the other hand, emphasising on the pre – modern Sámi culture. Whenever the current Sámi life is mentioned, it is done in a way which may work against its purpose and portray the culture as on a downfall.

Stereotypical representations of Sámi culture is not an entirely “western” phenomenon. Although the Norwegian museums have long pursued ethnocentric views in their Sámi exhibitions, but even in cases of Sámi self-representation stereotypical images are expressed (Müller & Pettersson 2006). This may relate to a special emphasis on traditional costumes, handicrafts, or other, typical cultural markers of pre – modern Sámi life. In the evaluation of the five exhibitions, two museums were distinguished as somewhat stereotypical in their expression of culture. The Norwegian Folk Museum and the Sámi Collections rely much on the traditional cultural markers such as handicrafts, pre-modern tools, Shamanism, reindeer herding, and costumes are given much focus, and the less exotic parts of the culture, such as politics, identity, and other modern aspects of the culture are for the most part unmentioned.

The exhibitions at Árran, Varjjat, and Tromsø Museum all include some of these markers. However, they do also include subjects about the Sámi which directly oppose to what has been previously thought of as “typically Sámi”. This includes presentations of political work and the varieties in Sámi identity (Árran and Tromsø Museum), but also presentations of the cultural history of Norway/Sápmi where the Norse and the Sámi populations are given equally status as descending from the pioneer settlers within the modern Norwegian borders.

6.1.2 Exhibitions and recent theoretical and methodological developments

Inherent to the study of museum representation is the assessment of the different institutions' theoretical location in the field of representing indigenous peoples in museums. As explained in chapter 1 and 2 of this thesis, the recent debates

concerning the representation of “other” cultures have led to extensive developments in museum theory and practice. Amongst these is the increasing abandonment of object- orientated, ethnographic presentations where factual information is emphasised and the artefacts are thought to “speak for themselves” (Hooper-Greenhill 2000:49,143).

Revealing the theoretical location of the five museums may be useful in determining how culture is perceived and expressed through the museum managerial work as well as in the exhibitions. Three subjects will be discussed in the following paragraphs;

- use of objects in communicating meaning;
- who developed the exhibitions;

Referring to the exhibition evaluations, much indicates that the focus on and use/meanings of artefacts is inconsistent between the five institutions. Judging from the data presented in chapter 5, three distinct groups can be identified in the sample. The first group encompasses the exhibitions which are object- orientated and ethnographic in nature. The exhibitions at the Sámi Collections and the Norwegian Folk Museum are, as previously mentioned, quite ethnographic in nature and include a large collection of objects belonging to the Sámi culture of pre- modernity. At the Sámi Collections, and to some degree at the Norwegian Folk Museum, the objects are classified in typological categories and are often complemented with factual, classificatory information. These exhibitions do not present a distinct narrative, and the material often seem to be lacking a good context.

These indications are also supported by the data gained from the interviews; according to the informant at the Norwegian Folk Museum the exhibitions are supposed to present the Sámi life and culture from the *period represented in their collections* (-- 2006). Additionally, in an article about the exhibition planning, the curator asserted that although the exhibition developers initially planned to present aspects of the Sámi ethno- political processes, but that this had to be rejected as the collections did not include any objects related to this theme (Pareli 1994:354).

In both museums the displays were created by professionals within the field of visual art; at the Norwegian Folk Museum the exhibition was designed by an interior designer (Pareli 2006), and at the Sámi Collections the famous Sámi artist, Iver Jåks, and professional *duodji* makers were responsible for the exhibition design. By making this approach the visual aspects of the representation seems to be more important than the cultural history and the communication of meaning, and one may therefore suggest that the objects are given the status as “art” rather than evidences of historic human behaviour.

The remaining three museums of the sample seem to follow a slightly different path in their representation of Sámi culture. Tromsø University Museum and Árran (the “contemporary Sámi culture” section) are both expressing meanings in a manner which is comparable to what Hooper- Greenhill (2000:142) refers to as the “post-museum” tradition. Contrary to the modernist museums the post- museums aim to involve the audiences' feelings and imaginations in what is presented, and not to transmit only factual information. In such exhibitions the knowledge based on everyday human experience is as important as specialist knowledge, and the displays therefore present subjects which people can relate to and get emotionally involved in. In the exhibitions at Tromsø Museum and Árran such methods are employed when presenting the modern Sámi culture; In addition to the factual information they draw heavily on subjective information like quotes and statements made by the Sámi themselves, and discuss a subject which all visitors can relate to; Identity. They also include images and videos presenting the indigenous people in person. This way the exhibitions can reveal the more intangible aspects of Sámi culture – aspects which may not be possible to draw from objects alone – and provide more of an insider's perspective in the exhibitions.

6.1.3 Whose views? Sámi inclusion and self- representation

Presenting culture from the perspective of those represented brings us to the next subject; Sámi self- representation and cooperation in Sámi and Norwegian Museums. Integral to the museological changes in the western world is the growing recognition of the concepts of multiple voices, social inclusion, indigenous self- definition, and the implementation of indigenous museal practices (Kreps 2003,

Simpson 2001, McLoughlin 1999). Referring to the results presented in chapter 5, one can see that only one institution, Varjjat, included members of the local Sámi communities (except from the museum professionals) into the exhibition development process. The other museums have either consulted a selected group of Sámi professionals and academics after the exhibition was completed, or conducted (formal and informal) interviews with Sámi people as part of the exhibition material gathering process.

6.1.4 Interpretation and implementation of new perspectives

As indicated in this chapter, the five case studies in this study seem to have adopted very different traditions of museum theory and practice in their representations of the Sámi people and their cultural history. Firstly, in the case of expressing the recent social, political, and theoretical developments of society in their exhibitions, a clear division could be found between the five museums. On the one hand, the Sámi Collections and the Norwegian Folk Museum both seem to adhere to the more ethnographic museum tradition where the pre- modern and exotic aspects of material culture is prioritised and exhibited outside time and space. Additionally, judging from who developed the exhibitions, the material is almost perceived as art. The other three museums are, on the other hand, more focused on disproving these old perceptions on the Sámi and have all expanded the “time- line” in which the Sámi are often presented. The chronology of change is emphasised in these exhibitions (although a little less in Árran), and modern Sámi life is mentioned in all museums. Sámi identity and self- perceptions are clearly expressed in two of the exhibitions - only Varjjat have chosen to present the contemporary Sámi life in the form of material culture.

The museums' location within representation theory and practice has proven to a bit more difficult to determine. However, in a broad sense, the museums could be placed in two categories. Firstly, Tromsø University Museum and Árran (modern Sámi culture section) both seem to adhere to the post- museum tradition as their exhibitions combine factual information with some of the more subjective type of material. They both present the meanings and perceptions of Sámi people, and the exhibitions are thereby less dependent on specialist knowledge and allows multiple

voices to be heard. Varjjat and Árran (pre- modern culture section) are more object orientated in their expression of Sámi culture, but as the artefacts are presented in a context and complemented with extensive, written information, the objects function as characters in a narrative rather than as the attraction itself.

The Norwegian Folk Museum and Sámi Collections seem to be located in a different, more modernist tradition. In these institutions the exhibitions are object- orientated, and the visual aspects of the displays are often so emphasised that the Sámi artefacts are sometimes “reduced” to art. Much indicates that these museums have planned and developed the exhibitions on the basis of what can be found in their collections, and not on the story they want to tell to the audience. The theoretical and methodological background of these exhibitions belong, in essence, to the museum traditions of modernity, where the object are meant to speak for themselves.

6.1.5 Discussion: Different times, different perspectives?

Judging from the data presented in the previous paragraphs, the five Sámi representations can, in a broad sense, be divided into two groups. On the one hand, Tromsø University Museum, Árran Lule Sámi Museum, and Varjjat Sámi Museum, respond well to both the theoretical and socio- political developments of the museum world and the society as a whole. The other two museums, Norwegian Folk Museum and the Sámi Collections, are largely located (both theoretically and “socio- politically”) within a tradition which in many ways expresses obsolete perceptions on the Sámi “belonging” to the first half of the twentieth century. From these findings one can see although some institutions represent the Sámi in a politically correct manner according to post- modern theories and practices, this does not apply to all such institutions. But how can this information provide more extensive information about the state of Sámi representation in Norway?

According to a recent study of Sámi representation in Sámi and Nordic museums, there seem to be enormous differences between how these two museum categories represent the Sámi cultural history (Levy 2006). This study did, however, research *archaeological* exhibitions to see if the Sámi history was represented *at all* mentioned in pre- historic exhibitions, or if they were excluded from what had long been

perceived as a Swedish/Finnish/Norwegian history. As one can see from the “groups” previously presented, these results do not seem to apply to the study at the heart of this thesis. Contrary to what was found in the archaeological exhibits, there is no divide between the Sámi and the Norwegian institutions as the groups include museums belonging to both categories. Nor does it seem like representation differs between the different types of institutions (in relation to management, size, age, and structure), as the newly built, local museums are in the same groups as the older, regionally/nationally orientated institutions. However, if one consider a variable which has not been discussed to a great extent, namely the *age of the exhibitions*, there are patterns which may be useful in explaining how representation differs between museums. One can see that all those belonging to the first group were opened in the years close to the turn of the millennium, and those in the second group were established in the late 1980s/early 1990s. Do these findings relate to any occurrences which may have had implications on Sámi representation? As indicated in chapter 1, by this time the Sámi cultural and political revival had been going on for several decades. All museum exhibitions in this sample was nevertheless developed after this the debate emerged, and should therefore be equally affected by this debate. However, as can be read from the introduction (chapter 1) the debate concerning Sámi representation seem to have been first initiated in the late 1990s. At this time both Sámi exhibitions and museums were established, and during these developments a number of scholars and journalists started reviewing Sámi representation in museums (Olsen 2000a, Brantenberg 1999, Bjørklund et. al. 2002, Mathisen 2000, Matland 2000, Schanche & Krogh 2000). It may therefore be suggested that the debate concerning Sámi representation in museums have had some implications on how museums – both Sámi and Norwegian – are represented today.

7. Conclusion

This thesis has set out to explore how the Sámi people are currently represented in Sámi and Norwegian museums in Norway. The major aim has been to analyse how the different museum exhibitions represent this group according to recent socio-political developments as well as contemporary theories and practices of exhibiting cultures. Based on the findings of this analysis, the study have attempted to reveal whether the museum representations of the Sámi people differ from each other, and if so, which factors may have caused these differences.

In this study five Sámi and Norwegian museums, Tromsø University Museum, Árran Lule Sámi Museum, Varjjat Sámi Museum, Sami Collections, and Norwegian Folk Museum have been researched by evaluating their Sámi exhibitions and interviewing key members of the museum staff. The aim has been to find how the Sámi are represented in exhibitions, but also how the museums represent this people through other types of museum work. The findings of this research have been analysed by locating them within both theoretical and socio-political tradition, and then comparing the results in order to reveal patterns in Sámi representation.

The analysis reveals that the Sámi representations at the five museums in the research sample differ both in relation to theoretical and political standpoints. As some museums seem to be presenting the Sámi culture as dynamic and evolving, where Sámi identity and self-perceptions are seen as important features of this culture. Other museums are, however, presenting this people in a stereotypical and ethnocentric manner where the pre-modern culture is emphasised and the focus is set on the objects themselves rather than on the stories behind them.

Judging from the analysis, certain patterns of representation be found amongst the five museums. As Tromsø University Museum, Árran Lule Sámi Museum, and Varjjat Sámi Museum all seem to adhere to current theories regarding the representation of “other” cultures, and Sami Collections and Norwegian Folk Museum are expressing theoretical and political standpoints belonging to times of modernity, one can see that representation does not differ between ethnical categories,

managerial system, or geographical location. Rather, much indicates that exhibitions established in the late 1990s have adopted post- modern perceptions on representation, whereas exhibitions developed in the 1980s and early 1990s are presenting the Sámi in an ethnocentric and stereotypical manner. As a debate concerning Sámi representation emerged in this period, it may be suggested that this “shift” may highly related to the increasing awareness towards the political dimensions of exhibiting “other cultures”.

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Informant 1. 2006. Interview held at Tromsø University Museum, 07.04.2006.

Informant 2. 2006. Interview held at Varjjat Sámi Museum. 10.04.2006

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Informant 4. 2006. Interview held at Sámi Collections. 18.07.2006.

Informant 5. 2006. E-mail correspondence, Norwegian Folk Museum.

Appendix

Interview questions

Q1

What was your role in the exhibit development process?

Q2

What is the exhibition meant to convey?

Q3

How does the museum ensure a good representation of the Sámi people?

Q4

Does the museum have any policies regarding the Sámi representation?

Q5

Who has been involved in the exhibition development?

Q7

How does the museum perceive its responsibilities in the conveyance of Sámi culture?

Q8

How does tourism and economy affect the Sámi exhibition?

Q9

Has the museum conducted any visitor surveys to find out how the audience perceive the exhibition?

Historic coverage

Introduction

- The exhibitions should emphasise cultural development and historic change;
- The exhibition should avoid presenting the culture as “dead”;
- Regional differences should be (at least) mentioned;
- The historic presentations should be accurate and up to date.

Questions

- How is the Sámi cultural history presented? Static or dynamic?

Cultural aspects

Introduction.

- Depending on the exhibition theme/focus, the displays should try to give a wide picture on the Sámi culture. Should provide information which expands on or disprove the stereotypic perceptions on the Sámi life.
- The exhibitions should explain the Sámi social structures through history and religious life to provide a context;

Questions:

- Do the museums display only the most stereotypic and obvious aspects of Sámi culture or do the displays provide more depth to the audiences' understanding of this cultural group?
- Do the exhibitions cover social, political, religious and other structural aspects of the Sámi culture?
- What have they left out and how does this affect the presentation?
- Are the cultural aspects presented in a meaningful context?

Identity

Introduction

- The museums should emphasise the expression of Sámi self-assertion.
- The exhibitions should try to express variations in Sámi identity and cultural expressions.
- The displays should be emphasising on *both* the similarities and differences between the Sámi and Norwegian/Norse culture.

Questions

- How are the Sámi relations to the cultural majority presented? If it is mentioned in purely negative terms the Sámi adopt a role as repressed by the Norwegian population.