Ch. 5 Rethinking Sami Agency during Living Exhibitions: From the Age of Empire to the Postwar World

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In the fall of 2008, the state-owned Norwegian Broadcasting Company (NRK), a non-commercial and highly-regarded channel, presented its new Saturday night show: 'The Great Travel'. The plot was simple. Three Norwegian families were sent into the 'bush' to live for three weeks with three different indigenous groups around the World. One of the groups, the Waorani in the Ecuadorian Amazon, appeared more or less naked on the screen. The show was an immediate success. Almost a fourth of the country's inhabitants, including myself, followed the first episodes. But it also immediately caused an uproar, especially among anthropologists. Many alleged that NRK had paid the Waorani, who normally wear western clothes, to appear naked. These critics asserted that the Waorani's authenticity had been 'staged'. Even the former president of the Sami parliament, Ole Henrik Magga, made a public statement claiming that the show degraded and toyed with indigenous peoples. Others explicitly called the show racist, and claimed that it represented an attitude towards native peoples that belonged to colonial times (Nordlys 2008).

NRK, somewhat astounded by the criticism since anthropologists had been part of the research team, rejected the accusations, and asserted that it had paid the Waorani to host a family for three weeks but not to appear naked. According to an NRK spokesperson no stipulations had been made regarding the Waoranis' appearance or performance (Dagbladet 2008). Apparently the Waorani had voluntarily taken their clothes off as part of performing their 'ethnic life', to stage their own 'primitivity' so to speak. However, none of the critics seemed inclined to attribute the Waorani's decision to their own agency.

Similar things occurred in Germany and Sweden a few years earlier. In Germany, plans to open an “African village” in the Augsberg Zoo from July 9 to July 12 2005, sparked scholars to issue an immediate appeal calling for public protest against the event; they considered the exhibit to be exploitative and humiliating, particularly because it was situated next to exotic animals in the zoo (H-Net 2005). In Sweden the following summer, Kolmården Wildlife Park, working in collaboration with a Kenyan safari park, hired a group of Masai to entertain their visitors. This display caused massive protests as well. The spokesperson of the anti-racism organization was furious, claiming that it reinforced prejudices and discriminating structures within society, and that performing among wild animals painted “a primitive picture of Africans.” The perspective of the performers themselves, however, was again conspicuously absent from the debate. In fact, the performers were surprised by the spokesperson’s statement and one of them, Daniel Ole Leuka, made the group’s task clear in a recording on Swedish Television: ”We are doing a good PR for our own country, we earn good money. We do not feel that we are being compared to animals. We are doing PR for our park and for Kenya in general”(The Local 2006).

The neglect of indigenous performers’ agency when staging ethnographic displays, or at least an unwillingness to acknowledge it, seems to be a common attitude, also among scholars. The performers are often perceived as victims who lack the ability to influence or benefit from their circumstances. Moreover, when their agency is considered, it tends to be dismissed as unfortunate. Similar attitudes are evident in scholarship on indigenous performances in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Much of the (European) scholarship on historic indigenous display contains many written assumptions about the exploitation of indigenous peoples and their lack of agency as participants in these performances. It is striking, for example, to see how such stereotypic expectations have shaped the analysis of Sami participation in the ethnographical exhibitions in Europe and

America during this period. This is true of scholarship concerning the performers but also for the go-betweens (exhibiters, agents and others). To a certain extent, indigenous people have accepted this position which has strengthened the view that they are victims.

There are, of course, historical precedents for adopting the position that indigenous performers are victims, and scholars have provided us with important insights into the machinations of colonial discourse and the socio-political context of the display of indigenous peoples. The lens of their observations, however, has become skewed, and despite the important insights gained, many have unintentionally contributed to the reproduction of the structures of asymmetry they criticize by representing ‘the Other’ as exclusively a client or a victim[1]. Or, as the historian Gunnar Broberg (1981-82:36) concluded in his work on Sami participation in these exhibitions, “[i]t goes without saying that these [the Sami’s] travels were convoys of prisoners more than anything else”[2].

In this paper, I challenge the dominant trope of victimization in the study of Sami exhibitions by sketching out a more complex history of these tremendously popular displays as they developed across the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. In doing so, I demonstrate that rather than being hapless victims, the Sami exploited these exhibitions for their own ends during a time when their way of life became increasingly difficult. I suggest that the circumstances and historical context of the Sami participation in these exhibitions have much in common with North American Indian participation in Wild West shows (see for example Deloria 1982; Moses 1996; Kasson 2000). Here too, the nomadic lifestyle of herders, hunters and gatherers was relegated to the past, even as these people continued to exist in the present. This made reindeer herding groups of Sami, much like the North American Indians from the Great Plains, attractive to entrepreneurs engaged in commercial ethnography. I show that a comprehensive and persistent network of performers and entrepreneurs emerged, and demonstrate that a culture of Sami performance took shape, one that continued through the post war period and has resurfaced more recently.

The Sami as subjects in living displays

The Sami, an indigenous people inhabiting areas of northern Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, hold a unique position in European cultural history. While their nomadic lifestyle, based mainly on reindeer herding, hunting and fishing, represented something fundamentally different from the sedentary, farming and developing industrial societies, it was sustained on the European continent well into the nineteenth century (and, in fact, never ceased to exist), in contrast to the big game hunting among the North American Plains groups that ended in the late nineteenth century. During the first half of the nineteenth century, this radical otherness made some Sami, notably Sami who practiced or engaged in nomadic reindeer husbandry, attractive to entrepreneurs who sought them out as subjects of their "living displays." This was an exhibition practice in which representatives of so-called savage peoples from all over the globe were brought to various urban stages in the west where they performed their everyday life in reconstructed 'authentic' settings[3]. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, close to four hundred reindeer herding Sami - or approximately thirty troupes, most of them families – travelled with their tents, dogs, sleds and reindeer from their homes to European and North American cities, where they stayed for shorter or longer periods, some for more than two years, travelling from city to city.

The first important display took place in London in 1822, when traveller, naturalist and antiquarian William Bullock brought Sami herdsman Jens Thomassen Holm, his wife Karen and their little child to his London Museum along with many of their belongings and several reindeer. Thousands of visitors turned out to see the native performers drive their sledge round the "spacious plains" of one of the museum halls (Altick 1978:273-74). Their canvas tent was assembled against a painted snowy backdrop, with artifacts mounted on the surrounding walls. Although primarily known for his showmanship, Bullock was also an important museologist and one of the first to introduce “habitat displays” or dioramas to Europe. Specifically, he developed the innovative design which exhibited figures (more specifically animals preserved by taxidermy while other exhibiters would also include wax mannequins) surrounded by appropriate vegetation, arranged in representative scenes, and set against a background evoking the special locality in which the specimens are typically found. Bullock had come across the Sami couple in Stavanger, a city on the South West Coast of Norway, far from traditional Sami settlement areas. This was, as Phillip Deloria (2004) would put it, a rather ‘unexpected place’ for Sami to be. The Thomassen-Holms, originally from the Røros area further north, were involved in a project initiated by a local entrepreneur of establishing reindeer husbandry in mountain areas not far from Stavanger during the early nineteenth century, and Bullock was intrigued by these efforts (The Literary Gazette 1822). In fact, Bullock’s original plan was to introduce reindeer herding in England, and this may very well have appealed to the Thomassen-Holms and coincided with their own interests. Although the story ended differently, it was not necessarily a bad experience for the family. Several sources indicate that as a result of this endeavour, Thomassen-Holm became a prestigious person in his local community. More than fifty years after his death, he was still remembered as ‘English Jens’ by the inhabitants (Løøv 2001).

After this early and singular display, Sami were not exhibited before the 1870s when numerous groups began to travel, entering new arenas of performance that were emerging across Europe parallel to the popularization of commercial ethnography. Central among these performance venues were the World’s Fairs and large international expositions that spread across Europe and North America. Sami were displayed in connection to the World’s Fair in Vienna in 1873 as well as in Paris in 1878 and 1889, although not as a part of the official programme. They gained their most prominent position at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in 1893, where a 'Lapland Village' constituted one of the attractions on the Midway Palisades. More frequently, however, Sami exhibitions were to be found in zoological gardens, amusement parks and circuses. The animal trader and zoo owner Carl Hagenbeck was critical in this regard. His Hamburg-based firm was enormously successful at organizing travelling 'anthropological-zoological' exhibitions, which toured most European cities for more than half a century. In fact, his very first showing of exotic people in 1875, a date that can be seen as a watershed in the development of ethnographic performances, consisted of a group of six Sami from Karesuando in Sweden accompanied by thirty reindeer and three herding dogs. As Eric Ames (2008:63) has recently noted, despite many scholars' assumptions about such displays, the *anthropologisch-zoologische Austellungen* did not assert the idea of a biological continuum between humans and animals. Rather Hagenbeck and other impresarios followed a model similar to Bullock's, which grouped foreign peoples together with their exotic animals within the same display space. Through Hagenbeck, such methods became widespread. Although Hagenbeck's human displays never featured at world fairs or international expositions and his relationship to them was indirect and largely unacknowledged, he became a highly influential entrepreneur also in this context as he exported a series of shows from Hamburg to the *Jardin d'Acclimatation* in Paris between 1877 and 1887. These displays set the stage for the *Exposition Universelle of 1889,* which some scholars (for example Greenhalgh 1991:85) see as a defining moment in the exhibition of exotic peoples.

The living displays of Sami reached their height with the 1911 Northland Exhibition held in Berlin and sponsored by Hagenbeck. More than fifty Sami from Northern Sweden performed along with other 'Polar inhabitants' (Inuit, Nenets, and Swedish folk dancers) and various 'polar animals'. The last time Sami seem to have been displayed in this particular manner was in 1933-34, when a group of Southern Sami were hired by a Danish circus director to travel Central Europe and demonstrate the Sami way of living (Waage Danielsen 2007).

The development of the 'living displays'

The pattern of displaying Sami conforms to displays of other indigenous peoples in the same time period. Before the 1870s, the pattern was still taking shape. Sporadic shows took place on both sides of the Atlantic but London was the indisputable capital (Altick 1978; Durbach 2008). In addition to Sami, various African groups, American Indians, Inuit, South Sea Islanders and others made appearances in Europe before the mid-nineteenth century (see for example, Debrunner 1979, Feest 1989, Sturtevant 1989). Although the idea of hierarchical differences between peoples certainly constituted a condition for these displays, we should also bear in mind that these shows preceded and persisted through the emergence of popular and scientific evolutionary and racial frameworks. They became dominant only later in the story.

Hierarchical patterns began to emerge during the 1870s, when a model of exhibition took shape in which race became one constitutive element. This was particularly true during larger performances, such as the universal and colonial exhibitions, but some independent performances evidenced this pattern as well. Indeed, toward the end of the nineteenth century, exhibitions of exotic people became integral to colonial displays through the emergence of the so-called 'native village' (*Village indigene*) model (Paris 1889, see Greenhalgh 1991). These compartmentalised displays hierarchically organized non-western cultures for comparative purposes. Race typology, geographical and/or evolutionary principles grounded the spatial organization of the villages at the universal exhibitions.

The use of typologies and other scientific classifications were, however, less articulated and more random in commercial shows such as those organized by Hagenbeck, which initially merged with scholarly interests and sometimes facilitated anthropological research by providing “objects” for (physical) anthropological examinations. That partnership worked in multiple directions; the involvement of anthropologists provided the shows with ‘scientific validation’ even as the shows became regarded as sites of research and ‘instructive education.’

Most displays took place in continental Europe and were mainly based in Germany, France, Switzerland, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Britain. Outside Europe, the United States and Japan experienced similar shows, while other countries (such as Argentina, Australia, Russia, South Africa, even Hanoi and present-day Burkina Faso) were involved. During the 1880s and 1890s, commercial ethnography developed into a full-fledged ‘industry’ with its own codes and professionals. The business rose steadily until the beginning of World War I, and the growing number of troupes and international exhibitions generated a tremendous increase in the opportunities for western spectators to see exotic, native peoples. Indeed, there appear to have been as many as 2,000 to 3,000 individuals employed every year as ‘native performers’ in the dozen or so countries that hosted such displays by the turn of the twentieth century (Blancard et al. 2008). After World War I, exhibitions of native peoples became less frequent – only four travelling Sami troupes can be identified after the War.[4] By that time, the interface with anthropology – the study of authentic natives – and the associated scholarly interest had gradually evaporated.[5] As anthropology started to reorient towards social and cultural fields, the display of human bodies increasingly became insignificant and even threatening towards its new identity as a discipline concerned with *social* relations. Moreover, as fieldwork became established as a disciplinary imperative and anthropologists went *to* the natives in their homes, rather than the other way around, such displays lost their scientific allure and became relegated to the realm of popular entertainment and education (see Baglo 2011). Nevertheless, a more ‘plebeian’ version of these exhibitions, to use Anne Maxwell’s wording (1999:17), continued in a rather unaltered state in zoological gardens, circuses and amusement parks well beyond this time. Relegated largely to the realm of mass entertainment by the 1930s, ethnographic displays became part of a cultural industry unfolding in opposition, and even as a possible threat, to high arts, science and scholarly interest.

The notion of the Sami as “authentic”

A central feature of the living exhibitions was the reconstruction of the peoples’ “natural habitat”. Although exhibitions were effected by the expectations of local audiences, by the type of peoples that were displayed and by the spaces in which they were presented, they invariably featured a domestic scene set with a dwelling containing implements that were deemed ethnographically appropriate. Living natives represented themselves, but their ‘authenticity’ was confirmed through the accompanying dwellings, costumes, equipment, animals and sometimes even plants. A statement in a contract between Hagenbeck’s Norwegian agent Adrian Jacobsen and a South Sami performer in 1926 makes this abundantly clear, “The person concerned is committed to carry the costume and things Hagenbeck’s representative imposes her to, and which shall mirror the Sami costume in earlier days and places” (*skal gjengive Samernes dragt i tidligere tider og steder*) (contract, Hagenbeck Archive). Moreover, the fact that most of the living displays took place in the open air was regarded by many organizers as adding authenticity to them – and the huts and tents set up by the performers were deemed “natural” extensions of the troupe and its way of life. Moreover, performances were highly standardized, featuring regular attractions and entertainments. As such certain elements and activities were incessantly repeated in Sami exhibits -- the pitching and disassembling of the camp (most often the *lavvu*, the conical tent used by herders while staying out with the herd or on the move across the tundra), the *komse* (the cradle made out of a hollow tree trunk), catching the reindeer with lasso, driving the sledge and skiing – were paramount means of authenticating their display.

First and foremost, the exhibitions staged the lifestyle of nomadic reindeer herding, and with few exceptions the performers were exclusively recruited from reindeer herding communities.[6] The majority of Sami who had become sedentary, subsiding on more mixed economies (including sheep, goat and small scale cattle herding), were not considered "authentic" enough for these modes of representation. They had lost the "nearness to nature" and their "natural" animals. The reindeer herding Sami, on the other hand, were widely regarded as representing the "authentic" Sami lifestyle, a view that was frequently asserted by Sami too.[7] As stated in a booklet published in relation to Bullocks exhibition in 1822, "The proper Laplanders … are constantly wanderers" (Lapland Sketches).

Again, it is important to bear in mind that this notion of authenticity (and of the Sami as primitive) was not initially based on race. Rather, their nomadic lifestyle, which was perceived as primordial for all peoples, identified them as authentic primitives (Baglo 2001a). Other adaptations were seen as deteriorations or 'hybridizations'. With the emergence of a modern discourse this notion was more or less systematically related to evolutionism and Social Darwinism (Baglo 2001b) and the concept of (physical *and* cultural) "type" became implicit in the displays.

Another important feature of the Sami displays, as well as the displays in general, was the family unit which, since Bullock's display in 1822, was central to the organization of the exhibitions. As an element of display, the family provided an inviting framework that had the advantage of being understood by all potential audiences, it constituted the familiar within the strange. Indeed, despite the fact that collective cultural difference was the primary concern in these exhibitions – lifestyles that deviated from the most prominent modes of existence in Western societies, they also retained elements of sameness and a concern for the authentic and original in a rapidly modernizing world.

The Lapland Village at the Chicago Fair exemplifies these notions of Sami authenticity. The Village, advertised as “a miniature reproduction of a Lapland settlement and a source of knowledge of people whom few care to visit,” was open daily from 8:00 am to 9:00 pm. While open, the visitors could experience musical performances, dancing and traditional singing (*joik*). Performers also demonstrated their skills at making handicrafts, which they offered for sale to the public for their own profit. Perhaps most importantly, as one journalist noted, the village also served as an illustration of the “mutual dependency” between the Sami and the reindeer, and as a result a calf that was born during the exhibition, and consequently given the name “Columbia”, became a central attraction (Chicago Daily Tribune, 1983).

The harshness of the climate in which the Sami lived was another feature that was typically emphasized by the organisers. This frequently caused performers to dress in inappropriate ways – with fur boot and mittens – for the midsummer heat. Often times the organisers would make fake snow and many a Sami performer had a good laugh from entrepreneurs’ more or less successful attempts at staging the contexts for the expression of their indigeneity. A Sami from Malå in Sweden who had been working for the impresarios (Emma) Willardt and Böhle during a two year period in the early 1870s recalled an impresario’s ingenious invention:

> ”Well, it was in 1876, and I was 12 years old. A German came along, and since we could not understand a word he was saying he was accompanied by an interpreter. He [Böhle] promised a lot of money. Nor was it going to be difficult; we were only to walk around and look nice at an exhibition ... Two sledges were also brought along, but geez, I say, there were no snow down there, only summer.

> But Bö[h]le knew what to do: he attached little wheels underneath the sledges. Then we drove across the pavement stone so that it clattered between the houses. People looked at us in astonishment. And then they swarmed to the exhibition" (Manker 1939:211).

Spectators sometimes expressed disappointment when performers did not confirm to their expectations. A visitor to the Lapland Village reported in the *New York Times (*1893), "There is a painful incongruity in discovering that one whom you are entitled to take for a native of Lapland speaks English with an accent blended of Stockholm and Chicago." Signs of cultural adaptation, especially modern technology, could be similarly disturbing. The same journalist complained about the reindeer being "washed with a garden hose." Performances typically conformed to the spectators' expectations, however, catering to the wishes of scientific and popular audiences alike. According to the young performer from Malå, the impresario thought the troupe "did not look sufficiently wild so we were told to paint our faces and dress like Eskimos" (Manker 1939:211). And indeed they did. Several advertisements show the same illustration: Four individuals dressed in anoraks and in the background we see igloos while a kayak lies in a lane through the ice in front of them (Die Neue Preuβische (Kreuz-)Zeitung; Illustrirtes Wiener Extrablatt 1875).[8] Other times the performers, who of course were cognizant of, or soon noticed, these expectations, consciously staged the very cultural fantasies that they were supposed to (naïvely) embody.

These sorts of adaptations were not unique to the Sami. As Eric Ames has demonstrated, the records of the Berlin Phonogram Archive offer compelling evidence that, the "Death Song" sung by a group of Hopi Indians recorded during a special performance at Cirkus Schumann in Berlin in 1906 where Kaiser Wilhelm II and three hundred members of the Berlin Society for Anthropology were among the audience, proved to be fake. Although the song itself was authentic, funeral chants were not part of Hopi culture. The title had been invented for the sake of the audience. The performing Hopi had probably been advised by their manager to offer the Emperor, who had expressed the desire to obtain war songs for his private collection, the types of songs he expected. Consequently the informant, a member of the troupe who understood German, wrote the following annotation to the recording (and under which label it was later archived): “Death Song, very old” (Ames 2000:142-145).

However, although performances undoubtedly were contrived to meet audience expectations, and some more than others, they were not fake simulations. They were cultural enactments, self-representations in new situations The performers brought their own biographies, material expressions, practices and voices to the performance even as they were engaging in popular displays and conforming to observer’s expectations. The outcomes of these encounters was never a given. Outcomes were negotiated. To borrow a distinction from Bruno Latour (2005:39-40), the performers were not transparent *intermediaries*, who obediently transported meaning without translation. They were rather *mediators*, agents who transformed, translated, distorted and modified.

Professionalization and agency

The establishment of the Lapland Exhibit Company, the organizer of the Sami Village on the Midway Plaisance in Chicago in 1893, offers an example of the professionalization of the living exhibitions that took place in the late nineteenth century. This Kansas-based company resulted from collaboration between a group of loc]l businessmen and two Swedish immigrants. Captain Patrick Henry Coney of Topeka -- a lawyer, writer, publisher and Civil war veteran – managed the company with his wife Emma and the Swede, Emil Arner (“Amer” in American sources) from Salina, was the vice-president He had made contracts with the performers in Sweden and Norway, and he brought them and their things to Chicago.

The use of contracts from the late nineteenth century onwards suggests a new perception of shared interests and a relative levelling of the relationship between the organizers and participants. It seems to be a well-kept secret that, from the very beginning of their operations, both Carl Hagenbeck and William F. Cody, or Buffalo Bill, formally contracted the participants for their performances. Several examples exist that demonstrate how Sami negotiated – even dictated – the terms of their contracts. They required, for example, that salaries be paid to substitute herdsmen for the period of their absence, that a guide chaperone them to the town or church whenever they wanted, and that they should stay in first class hotels during the journey. In one case, a group of Sami went on strike in Budapest in order to get their money after the impresario left them (Svenska Dagbladet 1913). It may sound surprising, but some of the performers even preferred to be displayed in zoological gardens rather than at other venues because their reindeer received proper care at the zoos, where they could be looked after by a veterinarian. Others have emphasised the tranquillity of the zoological garden which made it a more attractive place to lodge than other venues.

The performers in the Lapland Village at the Chicago Fair exemplify Sami's skill as contract negotiators. Nils Thomassen Bull, or 'King Bull' as he was referred to by the American press, is a good example. As many of the Sami in Chicago Thomassen Bull was an experienced traveller and performer who had been a part of a group that was contracted by the *Jardin d'Acclimatation* in Paris in 1889; a contemporary source describes him as a lively person who "knew his business well" (Chicago Daily Mail 1893). Bull was one of the most popular personalities of the village, if not on the whole Midway. He was billed as being 112 years old (he was actually in his late 40s), and the troupe's advertisements played up his personality. Thomassen Bull had brought his family to Chicago on his own choosing, not accompanied by 'eight generations' as one book claimed, but by his wife and "two rebellious children" (Scott 1991:331) and he demanded and received good treatment. While the other performers in the group were paid by the week, he and his wife negotiated a contract that specified a salary of 12 Kroner a day. In comparison, the second highest salary in the troupe seems to have been 28 Kroner a week (contract, Coney Collection).To put this in perspective, the average payment a widow would receive from the Poor Relief Fund in Norway (which would have been the alternative source of income for some) was 5 Kroner a month! The Lapland Exhibit Company also had their own physician to care for the performers' health.

Advertising even created imaginary links to another, by then deceased, native celebrity, Sitting Bull, the famous Hunkpapa chief whose log cabin was displayed opposite the Lapland Village. Sitting Bull, the most prominent North American Indian leader to appear in Buffalo Bill's Wild West shows had also been well aware of his commercial value and effect on the audience. Not only did he demand a salary of fifty dollars a week, with two week's pay in advance and a bonus of $125 for the participation on his first show in 1885, he was also to be accompanied by no less than nine other people including his own chosen interpreter – and all were to be included on the payroll (contract, Middle Border Bulletin 1943). In addition to salary and terms related to transportation, health care and lodging, other special 'exhibition conditions' could be demanded by performers, such as refusing to perform in hot or bad weather, or calling for supervisory care for animals on rest days. Performers such as Sitting Bull and Thomassen Bull, in other words, evidenced a significant amount of agency in negotiating their contracts and showed that they were savvy participants in these exhibitions who put themselves on display for a host of reasons.

Motives: Crisis, pleasures and desires

From the middle of the nineteenth century on, the Sami communities in the Nordic countries were under constant pressure. Processes of colonization, increasing state control, and forced assimilation were rampant. By the beginning of the twentieth century, their social and cultural positions had been radically weakened. Sami language was prohibited in most schools, freedom of movement was restricted through the establishment of guardian 'Lap officials,' and traditional pastures were gradually lost as national borders were closed to Sami traditional migratory patterns. Many reindeer herding Sami were forced to move, change their citizenship or give up their nomadic lifestyles. Those who became 'sedentary' (and subsisted for example on farming, fishing, hunting, mining or construction) lost their legal protection and were no longer considered Sami by nation states. In Sweden, for example, a strict distinction policy ('Lapps should be Lapps') barred the reindeer herding Sami entry into the growing industrial society. The situation was especially severe in the southern Sami area where the majority of the performers were recruited from the end of the 1880s and onwards. This suggests that the crisis in reindeer husbandry – a situation that only worsened in the 1920s and 1930s – made participation in living exhibitions a viable economic alternative for some. It was also a natural alternative; mixed or alternating economies in times of crisis were by no means new to these communities.

Although economic gain was an important motivation for most of the Sami participants during this period, it was not necessarily the decisive factor. Nils Nilsson Skum, for example, was a wealthy man with nearly two thousand reindeer in his herd. According to a local Norwegian newspaper the Sami troupe that performed at the Alexandra Palace in London in 1885 were all "relatively well off and seem motivated as much by travelling excitement as profit" (Tromsøposten 1885). In fact, one of the performers, Ole Nilsen Ravna, embarked on a new journey three years later, this time as 'native advisor' on Norwegian polar hero Fridtjof Nansen's expedition to Greenland, and then again with the Danish explorer Knud Rasmussen to the same place in 1905. Three of the five adults in the group performing at Alexandra Palace stated that they were sedentary" (Keane 1886). Recognizing that their traditional way of life was threatened may also have motivated some Sami to perform their culture. Members of other indigenous groups performed culture for this reason and their reasons, like the Sami's were quite compatible with salvage anthropology and the exhibiters' motives (see for example Deloria 1982, Moses 1996, Raibmon 2006).

In addition to financial compensation, travel opportunities and the demonstration of cultural distinctiveness, participation in these exhibitions may – paradoxically – have meant greater freedom and the possibility of being treated as equal human beings, than participants experienced in their respective home countries. In fact, quite a number of participants returned repeatedly – at times across generations. This was the case of Daniel Mortenson who performed at the Lapland Village in Chicago in 1893 along with his wife, Brita, the daughter of a rich reindeer herder, and their children. Mortenson was a teacher, catechist, reindeer-herder and later a well known Sami rights advocate. He was also the founder of the Sami newspaper *Waren Sardne* ('news from the mountains'), characterized by its strong social commitment. He often used it as a means to report from exhibitions of Sami, and in 1910, he published a poem, *The Sami People*, which illustrated the precariousness of their situation.

The poem tells about Norway, his beautiful mother country who deserted him and the Sami people: "You are my mother and I belong to you. But tell me then, why don't you love, embrace and protect me? Am I not like the others?" Then he recalls times when the Sami were free roaming "reindeer owning people":

"I know you once loved me – and loved me a lot
with pure love from above
Yes, I do remember – if only this could satisfy my soul!
But is this any comfort at all?
Oh, I wish I could make you love me before
my days of sorrow are gone.

Oh, I wish I could only own that part of the land which – as is known –
was meant for me." (Waren Sardne 1910)[9]

But that would prove difficult. Performance, however, remained as a possible means of employment and economic gain, and two of Mortenson's children continued to participate in exhibitions with their own families in the 1920s and 30s (Waage Danielsen 2007). When Mortenson died in 1924 a monument was raised in his honour with the inscription: "The fearless leader of the Sami." His story is a poignant reminder of how inadequate the all-too-common client image of the victimised Other may be.

One of the reasons that Mortenson and other Sami were able to take advantage of these performing opportunities was the mobile and flexible technology that these groups lived with, and their long experience with travel, trade, and inter-cultural contact. Their willingness to adapt to and embrace new ways had also prepared them for the experiences they encountered as performing travellers. Indeed, this knowledge smoothed their negotiations with entrepreneurs and allowed them to translate these putatively colonial situations into hybrid constellations – something that also served their interests and made their situation livable. As James Clifford (2001:471) reminds us, tribal peoples have never been faced with simply choosing one or the other, tribe or city, tradition or modernity, but of sustaining a livable interaction as part of an ongoing struggle for power.

Historians of Native American performers, such as Vine Deloria (1982) L.G. Moses (1996), and others have argued that performing Indians had much to gain from participating in shows such as Buffalo Bill's Wild West. They could display skills that reflected positively on their culture and give the audiences a more nuanced sense of Indian life; they also received good pay, secured leadership and were given the chance to travel and interact with others. For some, such as Sitting Bull, work in the Wild West shows, was literally an alternative to imprisonment. Moses, in fact, argues that the performances actually helped to preserve elements of traditional native culture. Despite being shaped to meet the expectations of non-Native audiences, Native American performances also became an arena for Native people to communicate information about their cultures to foreign audiences, to express pride in their heritage and traditions, to make a living, and to survive emotionally and culturally within a colonial context, and as Native American interpreters working at living history sites today, they often actively challenged the very same stereotypes they were expected to meet in the process (Peers 1999).

As a result, during a meeting at the United States Department of the Interior, where a commissioner expressed his displeasure with the Buffalo Bill’s Wild West and charged Cody and his partners with maltreating and compromising Indians, the Lakota performer Black Heart gave an impassioned defence of his employers and argued for the right of Indians to work for Wild West shows: “We were raised on horseback”, Black Heart argued, “that is the way we had to work. These men furnished us the same kind of work we were raised to; that is the reason we want to work for these kind of men” (Records of the Central Intelligence Agency, 1890). Playing Indian (Deloria 1998) allowed many of them to continue some aspects of their former lives, demonstrate their considerable skills, and prosper.

Another Lakota performer, Luther Standing Bear, who later wrote *My People the Sioux* (1928), was explicitly proud of his career. He had decided to travel to England with the Wild West show in 1902 after new Indian Bureau Politics made it impossible to support his family as a cattle rancher. Trained at the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, he worked as an interpreter and manager for the show Indians. Like several other native performers, Standing Bear and his wife agreed to have their newborn child exhibited on the show grounds, and they named her Alexandra Birmingham Cody Standing Bear, after Princess Alexandra of Wales who visited the show before the grand opening in London, the city where she was born, and their employer (William F. Cody). This was not unique. In a similar manner, the son of the Sami performers Signe and Elias Danielsen was baptized Samuel Paul Christian after the Christian prophet Samuel, the Danish employer Povl Neve, and the Danish King, (Christian X of Denmark), during an exhibition in Copenhagen in the 1930s. It both cases, such acts proved fortuitious. “It was a great drawing card for the show”, Standing Bear continued, pleased that the exhibition benefited both the Wild West and his family, since visitors dropped gifts and money for the baby. “The work was very light for my wife, and as for the baby, before she was twenty-four hours old she was making more money than my wife and I together” (Standing Bear 1928:266). The Sami performers on a tour organised by Hagenbeck in 1926 were equally enthusiastic about their experiences “and who would not bestow them” *Waren Sardne* reported, as it continued with an obvious knock towards local people’s prejudice against such shows; “considering the fact that they have visited no less than 37 German cities – and seen all their beauty and splendours and all kinds of strange things of which most narrow minded wilderness residents could ever dream” (Waren Sardne 1926).

Without doubt, the participants’ travels and encounters had a great impact on them as well as their native communities. They often returned with both financial and cultural capital. It is important to recognize, however, that their encounters were not limited to those between the people on display and their foreign audiences. Encounters also took place, and interfaces were created, among the indigenous peoples themselves. Particularly at the various world’s fairs, where the people on display typically lived side by side ”under normal conditions in their natural habitations” during the six months the fairs lasted.

Recognizing the existence of such contacts is crucial, because it reminds us that the global awareness among indigenous people of a broader commonality with similar interests and needs is not a uniquely recent or post-colonial phenomenon. There were significant precedents. Thus although Sami historian Henry Minde (1996:228) has argued that there are no examples from the period before World War I of the Sami comparing their situation with that of other indigenous peoples, there were clearly many moments in which that could and surely did take place. While there may be a dearth of written records of such a comparison and/or bonding, it is likely that the exhibitions constituted a new and globalized context that allowed the performers to realize that they were not isolated "instances" in a broader march of progress. Rather in many ways these encounters afforded opportunities for participants to recognize they shared histories with other indigenous people they met at exhibitions. Surely, the Sami's participation at the Lapland Exhibit at the Midway Palisades in Chicago in 1893 was crucial, and in at least one case it led to activism. In the beginning of the twentieth century Daniel Mortenson became central both in the establishment of a South Sami organization (*Nordre Trondhjems Amts Lappeforening*, 1908) advocating for the interests of reindeer herders and modernization of the industry, and played a leading role in the organizing of the first national meeting of Sami in Norway in 1917.

Of course, many people on display read the implications of their cultural performances. Some also acted on this and sought to control representations of themselves. In her innovative study *Authentic Indians* Paige Raibmon (2005) mentions that Standing Bear, dissatisfied with the plans for live displays of Indians at the Chicago World fair, had written to the Indian Commissioner asking him to arrange government funding for old chiefs who wanted to attend the fair. Standing Bear explained that he and his people would like to come to the fair but they wanted "to come as men and not like cattle driving to a show" (2005:47-48). Similarly, sixty-four leaders from the Brulé and Crow Creek Agencies wrote a petition to the World's Columbian Commission and the United States President asking to organize their own exhibit of Native American life and history since Columbus's arrival. Their people, they explained, were discouraged by the destruction of their herds and the failure of their agricultural attempts. And they knew the origin of their difficulties: "we are almost in despair," they wrote, and "our people trace the cause of that despairing to the very event which, with such large expenditing (sic.) of wealth you are about to celebrate." The group was anxious to demonstrate that their progress over the last four hundred years had been "much greater than usually supposed." Nor did they perceive it as "fitting" or "wise" to celebrate Columbus's arrival in America without considering what it had meant for their people, who were "once great in numbers, power and empire." However, the petition and the letter to the president went no further than the organizers' file.

Modern performances

After a period in which Sami cultural objects – most often in the form of handicraft – became more important vehicles for representing the Sami in public contexts (Scheffy 2001), live performances of Sami culture have again emerged. Performances organised by both non-Sami and Sami entrepreneurs have become common. In these performances, the *joik* singing, the *lavvu* reindeer racing (where racers stand on skis behind a specially trained reindeer) and in particular the often very elaborate Sami frieze costume, called *gákti* by Northern Sami (or elements from this), where cut, color, pattern, decoration and headdress vary from district to district, have gained an ever increasing importance. During the last thirty years wearing the *gákti* in public has become an important assertion of Sami identity. Old costumes are reconstructed, new variants are designed and the *gákt*i is used in an increasing variety of arenas such as The Sami People's Day, February the 6th, which is celebrated in both Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, and the music and cultural festival Riddu Riđđu which takes place in Kåfjord, Northern Norway. The Riddu Riđđu festival began as part of a movement by a group of Sami youth to revive their culture and language and has since the start in 1991 become one of the largest international festivals for indigenous peoples. In addition to musical performances, the festival encompasses the Indigenous Youth Camp, the Children's Festival, film screenings, plays, workshops, seminars, exhibitions, dance performances and outdoor activities (Riddu Riđđu 2010).

These are not isolated developments; during the last two decades Scandinavia has witnessed a boom in experience-based representations and enactments of history and culture. Reconstructions of Iron Age houses and boats, performances of historical plays and the establishments of ‘Vikinglands’ and ‘Laplands’ are all expressions of this phenomenon. Another example is Sápmi in the Sami center of Karasjok, Northern Norway – a theme park which the municipality’s English-language web page claims presents “Sami culture and history in an enthralling, informative and entertaining way” (Sapmi Park 2010). The performances and activities offered are adapted to today’s travelled audience with a particular emphasis on Sami Cuisine.

A third, non-Sami example, which has caused some stir within the tourist industry and communities in Finnmark in Northern Norway, is the newly established Lapland UK™ - located an hour drive south of London. Under the slogan “Christmas Magic for everyone,” elves and young Brits in look-alike Sami costumes will show you around the park and escort you to Santa’s log. This tourist attraction follows a display tradition of its own: Already in 1893, Nils Thomassen Bull and the Lapland Village in Chicago were associated with Santa Claus (“there was the storied reindeer, the jolly old king in furs, the sledge, everything except the Christmas presents”); the “Sami” are also conspicuously present at the internationally visited Santa Claus’s Village outside Rovaniemi in Northern Finland.

Sami’s presence in the Santa Claus Village caused a sensation, but less for the presentation than for the presenters. Last year, hundreds of Sami youth protested against the park’s employment of non-Sami in fake *gàktis*. They denounced the Finnish tourist industry’s exploitation of Sami culture in general (Gáldu – Resource Centre for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2010). Other nation states have taken notice. At the Skansen themepark in

Stockholm, for example, where a Sami encampment has been a part of the outdoor display since 1891, management started collaborating with the Swedish Sami Association in 2002. Among other things the collaboration resulted in the inauguration of a new camp consisting of reconstructed dwellings made by Sami craftsmen as well as the re-creation of a representational ‘mountain flora’ around the site (Nylund 2008). The Sami People’s Day has been celebrated in this location since 2003 on February 6, the date when the first Sami congress was held in Trondheim, Norway in 1917, and where Daniel Mortenson was one of the central figures. That celebration, however, also caused controversy within the Sami communities because of the setting and, as expressed by Lillian Mikaelsson, the leader of Stockholm Sami Association, because of Skansen’s association to wild animals, extinct traditions and tourism (Mikaelsson 2003).

The commercialized Sami camp has continued to be a popular – and not least portable – attraction both within and outside Fennoscandinavia. Indeed, the *lavvu* has become an important ethnopolitical symbol and is considered to be *the* real Sami dwelling by both Sami and Non-Sami alike (this in many ways presents a paradox as less than 10 % of the contemporary Sami population is involved in reindeerherding). According to Ivar Bjørklund (2009) the starting point of this was the Sami demonstrations against the hydro-electric development of the Alta-Kautokeino river around 1980 when Sami hungerstrikers put up a *lavvu* in front of the Norwegian Parliament. Since then, the figure of the *lavvu* has been adopted as a logo (or inspired its form) by all kind of Sami institutions and organizations including The Norwegian Sami Parliament (Sámediggi), The Swedish Sami Parliament (Sametinget) Ájtte Swedish Mountain and Sami Museum (Ájtte) and Árran Lulesami Center (Árran) while the architectural form of the *lavvu* itself has been adopted in a wide range of buildings, from parliaments (Sámediggi) to hotels, cafès and restaurants (Hotel Lapland, Lycksele). This phenomenon can be understood as “branding” as discussed by Comaroff and

Comaroff (2009) Parallel to this development, the *lavvu* itself was turned into an industrial product. A growing number of companies started to manufacture a high-tec version which in a few years became the standard tent for herders on the move as well as among the population in general. Today the *lavvu* is standard inventory in Norwegian schools, kindergartens and last but not least, different tourist enterprises. Most tourists to Northern Fennoscandinavia will at one point pass a Sami camp along the highway where they can stop and buy handicrafts, souvenirs, local products and foods. The family firm "Heia Adventures" have managed their camp in the uplands of Tromsø in northern Norway for more than a decade, and they have also sold their project internationally. In 1994, they arranged a camp during the Winter Olympic Games in Lillehammer where the internationally recognized Sami artist and performer Ailohaš (Nils-Aslak Valkeapää) *joiked* at the opening ceremony. It was also his *joiks* singing that, less than two decades earlier, convinced the Latin American delegates at the WGIA (World Council of Indigenous Peoples) meeting in Port Alberni, Canada that the Sami were in fact genuine indigenous peoples (Minde 2003:85).

In Lillehammer, the firm befriended Prince Albert of Monaco, and since then they have visited the citystate several times; they even arranged to set up a *lavvu* camp outside one of the city's casinos. In addition, during the Winter Olympics in Turin in 2006 the same firm arranged a camp in partnership with entrepreneurs within the Northern Norwegian tourist industry, including Lofoten Stock Fish Company and Norwegian Traditional Food. More than 7000 people visited the camp and approximately two and a half tons of reindeer meat was roasted and consumed during the event. "Sami Culture was our greatest winner during the Olympics in Turin", wrote *Dagbladet* (2006), the biggest newspaper in Norway, despite the fact that the country received 21 gold, 14 silver and 7 bronze medals!

Similar trends of performing ethnic or traditional life can be identified in the rest of the world – a tendency that has resulted in the rise of the disparaging term 'heritage industry.'

This industry unfolds independent of and in partial competition with institutionalised, public representations of culture, and many in the professional establishment look down on it. There is no question that sometimes these performances shift into bizarre, at times impolitic events. It is imperative however, to be circumspect in judgements and with our moral contempt, and to bear in mind that such living displays have a long history, which was never limited to a history of victimization. As Christopher Tilley (1999) has pointed out, such cultural performances are often seen as modern forms of alienation as a 'loss of soul' and authenticity, but as many Sami performers have shown for generations, that is not always the case. Indeed, that is a rather myopic reading of the history.

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NOTES

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[1] As pointed out recently by Ames (2008) and cautioned against by Clifford (1997), the focus on the historiography on ethnographic displays has been on structural and impersonal power relations. As a result, dimensions of agency have been closed off and the experiences of the native performers at shows and their roles as partners have been largely overlooked or reduced to footnotes and tables at the end of books. Such approaches are partly maintained in the work of Hilke Thode-Arora (1989), Werner Michael Schwarz (2001), Anne Dreesbach, (2005) and Pascal Blanchard et al. (2008). I too emphasize a scientific perspective in my

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article Samer på ville veger? Om "levende utstillinger", antropologi og vitenskapelige praktiser, Nordisk Museologi no. 1 (2006): 3.20.

[2] In all fairness, the exact Swedish wording in Broberg's otherwise excellent article, is: "Givet är ändå att dessa resor snarare var transporter i bur (transportations in cages) än något annat".

[3] Several scholars have described other groups being toured including Africans (Lindfors, ed. 1996), North Queensland Aborigines (Poignant 2004), North American Indians (Moses 1996) and South American Indians (1996). For a more general description of this exhibition practice see for example Human Zoos (Blanchard, Pascal, with Nicolas Bancel, Gilles Boëtsch, Eric Deroo, Sandrine Lemaire and Charles Forsdick)

[4] Ludwig Ruhe's "Lappenschau" (1924-25), Hagenbeck's Cirkus (1926), Carl Gabriel and Ludwig Ruhe's "Riesenpolarschau" (1930) and a tour organized by the Dane Povl Neve (1933 -34). (Baglo 2011). See also Min far har råkjørt med reinsdyr og slede – i Paris [My dad has raced with reindeer and sledge – in Paris] (Waage Danielsen 2007) and Samer på utstilling i Tyskland [Sami on display in Germany] (Hætta 2007).

[5] The support and interest of anthropologists seem to have lasted until 1885-90 in France and Britain, and some time later in Germany. In the reports in Verhandlungen [Transactions] of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte only two troupes are mentioned in the early nineteenth century: A Chinese group in 1905 and a "Tscherkessen-Troupe" which was examined in Berlin Zoological Garden in the spring 1900.

[6] Around 1910 a couple of Sami troupes from the lake Inari area in Finland participated on exhibitions in Germany, including one organized by Hagenbeck. The majority of these are identified as "fiskarlappar" – that is subsiding mainly on fishing. (Hufvudstadsbladet 1910)

[7] Or as Sami rights advocate and educator Torkel Tomasson wrote in a Swedish newspaper in 1911 regarding the Sami camp at Skansen, Stockholm: "There is something degrading in the display", and he continues: "A real Sami family would never lend itself to an exhibition of

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this kind, that is why Skansen has to content itself with non-reindeer owning Sami who are not in possession of the virtues, cleanliness and house-pride of the Mountain Sami”[En ordentlig lappfamilj lånar sig ej häller åt en förevisning af denne art, hvarför Skansen fått nöja sig med ikce-renägande lappar som ofta ej äro i besittning af fjälllapparnas framträdende dygder, renlighet och huslighet] (Uppsala Nya Tidning 1911).

[8] The troupe, ”Herr Böhle and Frau Willardt’s Laplanders” is also mentioned in an article by anthropologist Alexander Ecker where he testifies to their authenticity (Ecker 1878).

[9] [Jeg vet du har elsket – og elsket mig høit -, med kjærlighet ren i fra høid. Ja, dette jeg mindes – ak var jeg blot nøid!- Men gavner dog dette en døit? O, kunde jeg faa dig at elske førend, mine dage av smerte er endt. O, fik jeg blot eie den del – som bekjendt – av landet, som mig jo var tænkt].