

# Knowing a coastal Sámi landscape in Finnmark: transmission and regeneration of knowledge and identity across three generations

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## ABSTRACT

This article discusses the role of knowledge and practices related to the natural environment in constructing and regenerating identities as Coastal Sámi across generations. The discussion draws on empirical material from a local community on the coast of Finnmark in northern Norway. To what extent are coastal Sámi identities today related to knowing specific landscapes? We explore how *knowing a landscape* through practical engagement and livelihood-related tasks in the local environment is part of identity regeneration in succeeding generations – from grandparents to grandchildren. Our discussion is situated in a growing field of academic and ethnopolitical contributions exploring Sámi knowledge and relationships to local landscapes and environments, drawing upon some key concepts in the broader literature on local knowledge and relational conceptions of knowledge and knowing in inter-generational transmission. We show how this transmission is performed as active re-generation through shared lived experiences of practice, as well as through narratives transmitted across generations. The empirical material analyzed here consists of narratives collected through interviews with members of three generations in eight families belonging to a predominantly coastal Sámi community in coastal Finnmark during 2018–2019.

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## Introduction

My life is here [in the landscape], here are islets and ponds ... here are lakes.  
My life is ... it's going on outside now. It's my whole life  
(Niels, age 78, lives at a smallholding in a fjord in Finnmark, Norway)

When Niels tells about his life, the setting is his home in one of the fjords in Finnmark, northern Norway. He sits by the window in his kitchen and points out how the

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smallholding has changed through some generations. “I was born and raised here [...] and this place, it’s old. It is registered in the real estate securities of Finnmark County in 18xx.<sup>1</sup> My mother was coastal Sámi, she was also raised here”. From the window, he can see fields running down to the fjord where he used to fish salmon and cod, and further out in the fjord, there are small islands where the seagulls and eiders lay eggs every spring. Through his eyes and stories, the landscape comes to life with all its possibilities. Niels has children and grandchildren. They live in a nearby town and often come to visit, staying in their cottage in his yard. His grandson Arne is Niels’ companion in different practices outdoors.

The coastal Sámi have long historical lines in the area where fieldwork was conducted during 2018–2019. In 1861, nearly 80% of the inhabitants were categorized as resident and nomadic Lapps by Friis (1861), who published an ethnographic map of Finnmark. In our study, which is three-generational, most of the 26 participants regarded themselves as coastal Sámi. Coastal Sámi livelihoods were until the 1950s based on a combination of fishing, animal husbandry and harvesting resources such as wood, berries and herbs from the landscapes outside the core settlement, and hunting birds combined with fishing in lakes and the sea (Sametinget 2016). Today the local population is not directly dependent on what nature can provide, but their use of nature goes back to a traditional Sámi harvesting culture like Niels expresses. The usage of nature is closely connected to local knowledge that has been practiced for thousands of years. The fjord used to be rich in fish and sea mammals – cod, saithe, haddock, flounder, seal, and porpoise – that is why the settlements are placed close to the best places for fishing. Since the 1970s, the stocks of fish in the fjord have fallen dramatically (Andersen 2006; Andersen and Persen 2011), while the king crab fishery has increased the numbers of young fishers. But traditional uses of nature inland, like berry harvesting, lake fishing and other activities, are still a very important part of the community’s life.

In this article, we relate the current debates on the role of the natural environment and conceptions of local knowledge and knowledge transmission across generations to empirical material from this coastal community. Sámi knowledge and relationships to the environment in local landscapes have over the last decades created increasing interest among researchers (e.g. Benjaminsen, Eira, and Sara 2016; Joks, Østmo, and Law 2020; Sametinget 2016; Schanche 2002; Valkonen and Valkonen 2014; Valkonen and Valkonen 2019). A number of contributions identify and discuss Sámi people’s relations to and uses of landscapes in northern Norway as key elements in their identity construction (Joks and Law 2017; Nergaard 2019). A related set of important contributions is concerned with knowledge transmission and regeneration across generations (Balto 2005, 2021; Cajete 2017; Hoëm 1986; Nymo 2011; Balto in Haga 2023).

Against the backdrop of a much-cited status paper on Sámi selfhood from 1992 (Eidheim 1992), the focus on people-landscape connections emerges as a more recent research trend. Eidheim described how Sámi people, as a relatively fragmented ethnic minority threatened by cultural extinction, had managed to redefine themselves through a process of ethno-political mobilization during the 1970s and 1980s. Yet he only briefly referred to qualities of life experienced in traditional Sámi lifestyles as aspects of Sámi identity processes (Eidheim 1992, 26). At present, we see a growing range of contributions discussing such qualities and how they are related to identity. Several works bring in alternative epistemological positions, such as phenomenology

(Ingold 2011a; 2011b; 2019) and actor-network theory (Joks, Østmo, and Law 2020; see Law and Hassard 1999), aiming to better reflect Sámi experiences of living in the landscapes of the north. Furthermore, several current contributions reflect a broader movement of decolonization (Fjellheim 2020; Santos 2018), where a focus on “landscapes experienced as home” provides access to continuity and connection in ethnic identities (Kramvig 2020, 88). Writing about the power of the landscape, Bjerkli argued for the importance of differences in expressions of Sámi belonging and identity, seeing these as “embedded in complex social ecologies” (2003, 217). Writing on Finnish Sámi, Valkonen and Valkonen emphasize that: “Our interpretations of nature are mediated by *various practical and localized interactions*” (2014, 29, our emphasis). This position, they hold, is supported by numerous empirical studies of Sámi relationships to the natural environment, producing descriptions of “particular communities and their practices in a certain area” (Valkonen and Valkonen 2014, 38).

Like Ingold (2011a) and Valkonen and Valkonen (2014), we have in this article chosen to use the term *local knowledge*; other authors prefer to employ terms such as “traditional knowledge,” “traditional ecological knowledge” or “indigenous knowledge” (Berkes 1999; Berkes and Berkes 2009; Guttorm 2011; Joks 2015; Kalak and Johansen 2020). Berkes (1999, 8) has a working definition of “traditional ecological knowledge”. It contains basically two elements: one refers to a body of knowledge “... evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations ...,” the other is “... about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment”. Further, Berkes recognizes that we can conceive of several levels of analysis in what he calls a “*knowledge-practice-belief complex*” (Berkes 1999, 13; italics in original). The core element in this complex is “local knowledge” of phenomena such as land and animals, and we would include plants, water, and weather conditions. The second level refers to “resource management systems” including practices, tools, and techniques.

In this article, we focus on these two levels in Berkes’ (1999, 13) knowledge-practice complex in our use of the concept of local knowledge, as well as the relationships of humans with one another – particularly across generations. We are concerned with the process of knowing local landscapes through practices of use and harvesting of natural resources, and the inter-generational transmission of knowledge and practices as important elements in identity (re)construction across generations. Our analysis indicates that the relations between grandparents and young generations are of particular importance in knowing local landscapes through practice. We also show the importance of identity generation through grandparents’ engagement with their grandchildren in different practical activities of knowing the landscape and the local environment.

In contrast to Berkes and Berkes (2009), we use both *knowledge* and *knowing* – in line with Ingold (2011a) and Valkonen and Valkonen (2019). When Joks, Østmo, and Law (2020, 312) use this distinction, they see “knowing as process on the one hand, and knowledge as (aspiration to) material abstraction and consolidation on the other”. We believe this to be a useful analytic distinction, and when we use it, we employ *knowing* to refer in particular to inter-generational knowledge transmission and (re-)generation, and *knowledge* when referring to the descriptions and narratives provided by our coastal Sámi informants and research participants.

We believe that the study presented here is relevant to a wider field of knowledge construction on the role of local environmental knowledge in constructing and regenerating

local identities through inter-generational knowledge transmission (e.g. Gaini and Sleire 2023; Spyrou, Theodorou, and Stylianidou 2021), as well as to present debates on local – indigenous, traditional, ecological – knowledge and Sámi rights to land.

## Materials and methods

The material presented here is structured through use of the concept *generation*. Qvortrup (2003, 5) defines a generation as:

... those who receive the same impressions throughout their formative years and in that sense consists of a generation of a narrow circle of individuals who form a holistic unit through their dependence on the same historical events and changes that they experienced growing up regardless of other differences.

Following Nilsen (2014, 476), “a generational unit is formed when peers are not only exposed to the same phenomenon but also respond in the same way as a collective”. Spyrou, Theodorou, and Stylianidou (2021, 3) use generation in researching identity construction, seeing it as “a process that is also informed by the past (through intergenerational relationships with one’s family) and extends into the future (through an understanding and recognition of what one may aspire to given perceived current realities)”. They claim this offers “a more dynamic and nuanced understanding of contemporary identities and attachments to place/space and profession”.

Grandparents, parents and children are common terms to denote different succeeding generations; replacing children with youth, we draw on these categories when structuring our material. The generational units are useful to seek out common themes within and across units in our empirical material and to explore both changes and continuities over time when it comes to knowing and performing practices in a local landscape. One of the advantages of a generational analysis is that it allows us to include a time – and in this sense a historical – dimension in the analysis (Antikainen et al. 2012). In our study, the research participants in each generation are genealogically related through kinship. The generational framework presented below thus contains both synchronic and diachronic dimensions. We will use it to show how participants experience their identity and how identity is related to knowledge and knowing local landscapes from 1945 to the present.

The empirical material collected for this study is based on interviews with family members belonging to three generations in eight families in a coastal Sámi community in Finnmark (Table 1). All interviews were carried out by the first author during 2018–

**Table 1.** Generational framework, with ethnic identity based on self-identification of participants.

Generation	Age	Gender	Rural area	Town	Language	Ethnicity
Grandparents (G1)	71-94	Men: 4 Women: 4+1	9		Sámi: 8 Kven: 4 Norwegian: 9	Sámi: 7 Kven: 1 Norwegian: 1
Parents (G2)	40-62	Men: 4 Women: 4+1	3	6	Sámi: 3 Norwegian: 9	Sámi: 9
Grandchildren (G3)	17-22	Men: 2 -1 Women: 5		7	Sámi: 2 Norwegian: 7	Sámi: 5 Norwegian: 2

2019. To catch the generational dimension, it was decided to address one *youth* (G3, age 17–22 years), one *parent* (G2, age 40–62), and one *grandparent* (G1, age 71–94) in each of the eight participating families. One parent and one grandmother were added because it was indicated in the interviews that they absolutely should be interviewed since they possessed important knowledge and experiences that should be included in this study. One youth had to leave for medical reasons. In total 26 participants were selected and interviewed.

Participants were recruited in two ways: by information from the Sámi centre in the municipality and from two women in a local *Duodjedállu*, a local institution where women make traditional clothing. On a visit to the *Duodjedállu*, the first author met two dressmakers who had close knowledge of local inhabitants and knew who identified as coastal Sámi. One of the dressmakers also helped recruit other participants. Participants were contacted by telephone and informed about the research project. Three families refused participation.

The participants decided on the place for the interview. Grandchildren and parents were mostly interviewed in nearby towns. The grandparents wanted to be interviewed at their smallholding. The first author saw this as an advantage, as the house and the nearby fjord often became a conversation starter for the interviews and gave a deeper understanding of their context. The grandparents spoke about memories of places in the landscape and activities that strongly influenced their upbringing and adult life. Some also showed homemade *duodji* products, such as scarves, rugs, and leather hats, and were also willing to show their Sami *kofte* or *gákti*, which often was self-made or sewn by a grandmother or mother. The interviews at home usually entailed a greater sense of control and security among the participants. Informal conversations before the interview in their own familiar environment created trust and a relaxed atmosphere and often revealed important information (Leyshon 2002). Visiting the settlement in the fjord at different times of the year offered important information about the seasonality of local practices among the participants. June was the time to learn about the salmon fishery in the sea and the local agriculture, while August was a time for cloudberry picking. In this way, the first author was introduced to place and time in a landscape that had been used by the coastal Sámi for generations and had her own experiences in the landscape as an environment of practical engagement.

The research design included two-step interviews informed by a biographic thematic focus. First, participants were invited to talk about their lives from childhood onwards in a narrative interview. In the second step, participants were encouraged to elaborate on experiences and reflections related to the objectives of the project, in this case, practices of local knowledge. The additional questions were based on what we wanted to explore in depth: (1) what do you practice together in the family and what is your motivation to pass on local knowledge? and (2) which experiences with local knowledge have meant the most to your own identity development? We further wanted to know how the participants experienced the social value of knowing local landscapes and how ruptures and continuity are shaped in three generations' stories about knowledge transfer. Thus collecting narratives was combined with more focused, but open interview questions.

According to Riessman (2003), the narrative method can provide a basis for the systematic study of personal experiences and meaning formation. The participants' experiences with identity-shaping practices are closely observed in their narratives. Our

empirical focus lies in how knowing has been performed through time across generations in changing tasksapes, and what meanings and values members of the different generations attach to their practices, especially with regard to research participants' identity. This empirical material is organized and explored thematically. Following Riessman (2003), the analysis involves personal experiences connected to local knowledge. Participants' narrated experiences have been organized into three main themes which also structure our presentation below: (1) identity related to landscape and landscape practices, (2) regenerating knowledge practices in *tasksapes* and achieving independence, and (3) change and continuities.

The interviews were conducted in Norwegian language, recorded, transcribed, and analyzed thematically. Both authors contributed to the analysis of the empirical material collected through this fieldwork and to the writing of this article. The study was notified to Sikt (former NSD) as a part of a larger research project through which the necessary ethical clearance was obtained. The research site and informants have been anonymized. Since this research was conducted with an indigenous population, we were concerned to emphasize respect for the vulnerability this may imply. Furthermore, as Sámi researcher Porsanger holds (2004), research should not only be an addition to the body of knowledge but also focus on the interests and needs of the community in which the research takes place. Taking this into account, the first author established an ongoing dialogue with the community in order to make the research available for the local community and others. The first author gave a presentation to the inhabitants of the fjord on a theme from her own coastal culture in June 2018. In November 2018, she held an information meeting at the coastal Sámi centre with a wide invitation to share the research that was done in their community and tentative findings. This initiative was meant to engage, shape dialogue, and receive feedback about participants' thoughts about the findings. The findings also gave interesting discussions, especially about identity. Based on the revitalization we see in the coastal Sámi community today, we also see it as desirable that research supports this ongoing process.

## Conceptual framework and analytic approach

In the developing fields of debate on Sámi knowledge of and relationships to the natural environment in local landscapes, we found several sources of theoretical inspiration in addition to those mentioned above. Tim Ingold is an anthropologist who over time has presented "relational" perspectives in a prolific and continuously developing scholarship concerned with livelihood, skill, knowledge, and description related to the environment (Ingold 2011a [2000]; 2011b; 2019). Ingold sees "environment" as a relative term: "relative, that is, to the being whose environment it is" (Ingold 2011a, 20). As long as life goes on, environments are "continually under construction" (Ingold 2011a, 20); our environments shape us as we shape them. Environments are in this way "forged through activities of living beings," and they are thus "fundamentally historical" (Ingold 2011a, 20). Ingold challenges a dominant conception in Western science of environment as an "objective world 'out there' ... [which] goes by the name of nature" (Ingold 2011a, 417). On this basis, Ingold developed a "dwelling perspective" in which "the landscape is constituted as an enduring record of – and testimony to – the lives and works of past generations ..." (Ingold 2011a, 189).

Within this framework, Ingold introduced the notion of “taskscape” to draw attention to the relationship between landscape, time, and practice. In this context, a “task” is “any practical operation, carried out by a skilled agent” (Ingold 2011a, 195). In our analysis, we will show how specific tasks are central to “knowing” the local landscape, and thus central elements in knowledge transmission across generations. Following Ingold, we conceive of a “taskscape” as referring to a web of opportunities (cf. Hoëm 1986, see below) for meaningful practices. The “tasks” are performed in a *landscape* and/or *seascape* in the context of known features and resources (Brattland and Nilsen 2011; Maurstad 2010). Among the authors who have drawn upon Ingold’s notion of “taskscape” are Joks, Østmo, and Law (2020) in their discussion of the Northern Sámi term *meahcci*. This concept can be understood as a landscape known – and in this way made cultural – through practices involving movement and harvesting – typically hunting, fishing, and gathering; activities referred to as *meahcásteapmi* in Northern Sámi (Sametinget 2016, 10).

Ingold’s perspective on *local knowledge* emphasizes that *knowing* and acting within a local environment as a “taskscape” provide a portal to seeing how the learning process involves a re-generation of meaning on the part of the young generation. Ingold is in this context concerned with the “keys” provided by knowledgeable elders, and in his perspective, these serve to “unlock the doors of perception” of the new generation (Ingold 2011a, 22). Ingold thus points to the importance of shared intergenerational experiences, and in this way, different generations also shape their mutual relationships through common experiences. By sharing the process of knowing through everyday activities, the young generation is encouraged to incorporate elements of local tradition into their own identity construction (Ingold 2011a, 138, 145).

Our material reveals that the notion of “home” is central for the research participants when they talk about local knowledge and knowledge transmission across generations. The grandchildren and their parents as well are closely connected to the grandparent generation’s homeplace. We find that *home* for the research participants across generations is in the grandparents’ homeplace and the surroundings of their smallholding in the fjord. This is also their main arena for practising local knowledge, keeping connections, and building relations with family, ancestors, and landscape. The fisher-farmer settlements by the fjord are important for all three generations although they express different approaches to home as we will see in the empirical analysis. In geography, perceptions of home are discussed by Blunt and Dowling (2006, 11), holding that: “Home, in contrast to a house, is saturated with the meanings, memories, emotions, experiences and relationships of everyday life”. Further, Dowling and Mee (2007, 161) claim that home “... is ambiguous and multi-faceted. For many people, home is a place of belonging, intimacy, security, relationship, and selfhood”. Based on material from Finnmark, Nergaard (2019, 55) considers coastal Sámi smallholdings as “cornerstones in Sea Sami traditions and a cultural fortification where self-understanding, identity and belonging can be nurtured by keeping local traditional activities alive”. In Ingold’s perspective, “home may represent a certain perspective on the world” (2011a, 330), which he calls the perspective of *dwelling*. Here, home is “that zone of familiarity which people know intimately, and in which they, too, are intimately known” (2011a, 330).

Working with data material that primarily consists of narratives, we have seen that some elements in the narratives transmitted to us appear in stories that are told and retold in intergenerational communication within families, indicating that stories – not

only shared experiences – play an important role in knowledge transmission across generations. According to Cajete (2017, 114) stories can “present deep insights into the affective dimension of human learning, socialization in community, and the role of story in the transfer of cultural knowledge and values”. Stories represent traditional indigenous education, while experiences are revitalized when parents and grandparents are telling, according to Cajete (2017).

Guttorm (2011) focuses on Sámi notions of local traditional *knowledge*, but underlines the importance of the inter-generational dynamics and points to aspects of *generational change of traditions or practices*:

If we consider traditional knowledge within tradition, it is the knowledge in the tradition which is transmitted. *Árbevierru*<sup>2</sup> has been repeated and passed on from generation to generation. People pass on what they have in some way inherited themselves. This implies that a tradition requires repetition, but that in time the tradition will also change, cf. the concept of “traditions then and now” which of course alludes to change over time. The general sense of tradition is that of a social practice, belief, institution, or object that is passed on from generation to generation. (Guttorm 2011, 65)

In order to do justice to our empirical material, we believe it is necessary to include a conception of tradition in the sense that it is central to inter-generational knowing processes. Another central notion in Sami childrearing is *birgejummi*. Nymo (2011, 275) explains it as: “ways of doing things, that is, practices and activities, to show that problems and challenges are met with here and now solutions and with longer-term plans”. *Birgejummi*-thinking means striving to get by, but also “to have sufficient solutions for one’s everyday life” (Nymo 2011, 275), thus mastering challenges in their life.

Hoëm (1986) has, over time, researched children’s socialization and learning processes, and part of his research was carried out in Sámi environments. He describes Sámi children’s close connection to both harvesting and usage of nature goods as an arena for learning, and how different seasons lay the foundation for which tasks to carry out in local landscapes (1986, 46). He shows how it became important for the children to learn the signs of opportunities in their natural environment, and to seize the opportunities at the right moment. Thus learning to interpret the landscape was an important part of knowing (Hoëm 1986). According to Balto (2005), the main goal in Sámi childrearing is preparation for life; to develop *independent individuals* who can survive in a given environment (*birgejummi*), and give children *self-esteem* and joy and zest for life. Children are exposed to situations where they can get experiences to build self-confidence.

In general, Balto holds that Sámi childrearing is characterized by generosity, positive expectations, and understandings towards the child (2005, 89). She believes this model of learning is only possible with the support of an extended network of grandparents, siblings, and other relatives. Balto (2005) underlines that close links between nature and humans are manifest in Sámi thinking, including a holistic view of co-operating with the natural forces in local environments. According to Balto (2021, podcast), “nature is a relative whom we treat with great respect and with whom we negotiate”. She urges Sámi people to vitalize this thinking and this way of relating to the landscape when harvesting resources. She further points out the strength of *relationality*, shaping when knowing takes place – involving people, animals and their environments, as well as the cosmos. Balto highlights the role of these relations in indigenous research (cf. also



Cajete 2017), and she urges older generations to pass practices involved on to new generations (Balto in Haga 2023).

## Empirical findings and analysis

In the eight families of three generations in our empirical material, all grandparents live in smallholdings in the fjord, close to the sea. Six of the parental generation have moved to small towns nearby, and three live close to or in their parents' home in the fjord. The grandchildren have all settled in towns for education and work. Yet all three generations express a close connection to *home*, referring to the smallholding where their parents or grandparents are settled. In the interviews, it became clear that home can be extended to encompass the surrounding environment, including taskscapes at land and sea.

### *Landscape practices and taskscape-related identities*

Niels (G1, age 78) has memories from his childhood when his father introduced him to places and practices: "When I retired in 2008, I took up the hobby that I had put on hold; snaring of grouse. It was the old man [his father] who taught me that in the 1950s". His historical and social connections to places in the landscape give him a deep relation (Balto 2021; Cajete 2017) to the surroundings as taskscapes: "My life is here [in the landscape], here are islets and ponds ... here are lakes. My life is ... it's going on outside now. It's my whole life". His identity is integrated with the landscape and his tasks there, it is "his whole life;" and as we shall see below, Niels is now occupied with transferring his knowledge to his grandson Arne.

Jon (G2, age 53) works in a nearby town but spends much of his time at the smallholding in the fjord with his parents and considers the landscape his home: "This spot does not mean much [his house in town]. Dad was a hunter [...] we were hunting for at least 10 years in these mountains. If I travel by car; as soon as I get over the highest point and I see the fjord landscape, it says home, then I know I'm home".

Jon has acquired an intimate knowledge of this landscape from hunting with his father. His father introduced him to his and his ancestors' taskscapes. He knows every part of the landscape and thinks of it as his home, which gives him a deep sense of belonging. Both Niels and Jon express a deep connection to the landscape and its taskscapes; their experiences are expressed as "my whole life" and "home". Thereby they also express a "relationality," which embraces everything in their landscape (Balto in Haga 2023).

Ada (G2, age 60) lives close to her parents' homeplace in the fjord. Most of her leisure time she performs different tasks in the landscape: "I live close to the sea, close to the mountains, the fishing lakes, the berry bogs, the forest ... you start from the living room door, and you can choose where you want to go". She identifies with the surrounding landscape and describes why she seeks outdoor life: "Feeling safe, I think, the well-known, or finding myself if I can, because that is what gives security, this is me". She says she is the landscape, and through her "taskscape" engagement, the landscape *is* Ada. She identifies strongly with what she considers safe places and known, safe practices, and seeks out different places to carry out tasks – regenerating the taskscape. The relationship with the landscape and the different practices provide security and identity for her. This feeling of security is like the safety and secure feeling in a family, a home

(Dowling and Mee 2007), where she is treated with care by her relatives in nature, and she “negotiates” with nature (Balto 2021).

Berit (G3, age 20) studies in a town further south, but she uses every occasion to be with her grandparents in their smallholding: “There’s a peculiar smell, it’s just like you get ... that inner peace, you feel in a way happy, it’s like that there is complete freedom, you just can’t resist going there [laughter]. It’s home. It’s nice and safe there and well-known and free, very much freedom”. Berit achieves feelings of well-being, communicated as inner peace and freedom as she putters around her in her grandparents’ smallholding and its surroundings: “There is a lot of my identity here, I’m Sámi. I feel it is connected to the place, so, you have freedom and can do so much, go hiking and fishing, there has been a lot of outside life with grandma and grandpa”.

Like Berit expresses, Nergaard (2019) holds the importance of smallholdings for nurturing identity and traditional activities. Berit considers the grandparents’ house and landscape her own, despite her parents having a house in a nearby town. The landscape gives her freedom, she “shut[s] down the mobile phone” and seeks her free space with her grandparents and the taskscapes they have introduced her to. Berit meets another world than educational institutions and quite different demands in her grandparents’ home.

Marit (G3, age 18) feels the same: “Well, my house [in town] is here, but my heart belongs out there”. The parents and grandchildren who are living outside the fjord establish a “home” together at the smallholdings and settlements in the fjord together with the grandparent generation (Dowling and Mee 2007; Nergaard 2019), a home where their identities are given foundation and nurtured. The stays there involve practices like fishing, wood chopping, and picking berries. The smallholding opens a taskscape with great relational importance where grandchildren are bonding with parents and grandparents. Ana (G3, age 19) honours her upbringing in this environment and has a clear opinion of where she formed her identity: “It’s still what you have at home, your family is the ones who teach you to be who you are”. Studies from other Sámi communities confirm that local knowledge transmission is often what creates relationships between the generations (Balto 2005; Cajete 2017; Guttorm 2011). Furthermore, the processes involved in knowing local taskscapes are also central to the re-creation of a common home.

### ***Regenerating knowledge-practices in taskscapes and achieving independence***

In the interviews, the grandparents emphasized that they wanted their grandchildren to learn practical skills, endure different tasks and situations, and meet demands, even though they knew that this was not part of their grandchildren’s (future) professional life. The skills are mainly linked to the traditional forms of livelihood. Survival skills such as harvesting from nature are still passed on to the next generation. Grandparents and parents perform different tasks together with children and grandchildren, where the youngest generation learns different skills, even if they are not needed in terms of living. Often these “knowing” practices start with stories told in the family. According to Cajete (2017), stories are vehicles for meaningful learning; in them lies history, and knowledge is contextualized in living experience. Stories can thus be considered integral to traditional indigenous epistemologies in Cajete’s view. As we see it, stories complement shared inter-generational experiences in our material on coastal Sámi knowledge

transmission. By including the role of stories/narrative, our perspective moves beyond (or departs from) the main perspective in Ingold's work (2011a and 2011b).

Arne (G3, age 22) tells: "I have always had a close relationship to my grandfather. So, it gives me ... I don't know if I should call it security? It is very nice to just sit and chat and just listen to stories. About his life and childhood, yes, there have been a few stories over the years". Arne will gradually know his ancestors' story and stories about the landscape, together with knowledge about fishing, hunting, gathering and harvesting performed in different tasksapes. Both are integral to the grandfather's passing on values and traditions (Cajete 2017; Guttorm 2011). Arne's relation to his grandfather will also come together with relations to all living creatures and their surroundings (Balto in Cajete 2017; Haga 2023) in the local taskscape (Ingold 2011a).

Niels (G1, age 78) and grandson Arne talk about their joint experiences in the different landscapes they visit. The grandfather's smallholding, the home in the fjord, is the centre of their activities. Niels tells about their joint activities in autumn and winter: "We [he and Arne] travel to the lakes when it is cloudberry time ... drive up and pick cloudberries and fish at the same time. In winter we do grouse snaring". Arne talks about the challenges when he was a child: "I skied for miles with him [Niels, grandfather] to check those damn grouse-snares. Ha, ha! I used to feel like dead when I was a kid, after 7-8 hours of skiing".

The grandparents are not afraid to push their grandchildren, to make them feel both their strengths and their limits. Anna (G1, age 78) tells with pride about the strength shown by her granddaughter when she was doing heavy tasks like carrying firewood:

She took two big ones [pieces of wood] under her arm. And then I say: Svanhild, dear Svanhild, why have you taken so much? It's heavy! She responded; "I can do it when I am a little angry!" she said. Ha-ha-ha, she was only eight years old, you know ... tiny and small.

Stories like this communicate and confirm the value of performing these tasks and are shared with pride by the older generation. Here, Anna demonstrates her upbringing to shape Svanhild's independence (Balto 2005) and further her *birgejupmi* (Nymo 2011).

Niels and Anna share that they are teaching their grandchildren different skills. Hoëm (1986, 46) points out that such skills in using nature and interpreting signs of opportunities are part of Sami children's socialization. Niels tells:

I have taught Arne make fly-fishing lures, I will not be dependent on it, he must be able to do it himself, therefore he has learned it, but I have also tested him: "You must show me if you can do it!" I don't give up until he can. "Now you are trained, now it's okay!"

Knowledge about the weather could mean life or death, and this knowledge is still in use:

We learned a lot about weather signs at home when I was a child. We didn't have a radio and then when you were planning to go to the mountains, you would notice clouds, how the clouds moved, what color of the clouds and wind direction. If there was wind, what direction did it come from? If it was completely quiet, and dark clouds, then you knew that there could suddenly be quite a lot of wind ... I have passed that on, to our son, and he has probably passed it on to his girls. (Anna G1, age 78)

The parent generation also passes on skills and knowledge to children and youth as they must be able to perform and master different tasks and the main goal is independent

action (Balto 2005; Nymo 2011). A wide range of knowledge and practice of tasks has shaped Steinar's (G2, age 59) identity. Steinar has worked on his parent's farm since he was a boy. He followed his father everywhere on the farm and in the fishing boat, doing different tasks. With reference to practices in farming and fishing, he says: "This has in every way [shaped me] ... it is the person I have become today. So, I have gained confidence, you can master most things, no matter what happens, you can master it".

Steinar's self-esteem and identity are closely connected to practical work (Balto 2005). He has two sons and one daughter and states: "I have tried to do it in the same way as my father" and continues: "My boys who have these scooters ... I can repair them, but I don't want to do it alone, they must participate. 'Yes, I will help', but if they are not participating, then nothing will be done". His daughter Ana (G3, age 19) joins her father in salmon fishing and her mother in reindeer herding: "We didn't have our parents around us all the time, we could go out without them hanging around, there was a lot of free rein. Even though we did some mischief now and then, we learned from it". Here, Ana narrates how the children were allowed to make their own experiences in a world which the children shaped for themselves – furthering *birgejupmi* and independent problem-solving (Balto 2005; Nymo 2011).

Jon (G2, age 53) tells how he learned to fish, and more importantly, how he managed to do this independently:

I rowed out on the sea and fished. They [grandparents] watched me with binoculars. I thought it was great that I was allowed to go alone. Eventually, I could row out fishing, go to the fish delivery station and come home again. He- he, a lot of good lessons from that. It is very useful, no matter what subject or profession you are heading for!

Steinar and Jon underline that their participation in farming, hunting, fishing, and knowing the different elements of local taskscapes gave them self-esteem and confidence (Balto 2005). The early training and attention to tasks and perfection of skills also offered a foundation for self-confidence in other arenas, such as their working life in nearby towns away from their childhood landscape.

### **Change and continuities**

Since the 1960s, the composition of local livelihoods, especially in the fishery and agriculture, has changed in the small coastal Sámi community. Everyone talked about these changes, especially those in the fishery. Marie (G1, age 89) remembers how their community in the fjord once was a lively and much more populated place:

We had a grocery store, but in 1966 there was no more shop. Then there was a local fish delivery station. I remember, there was so much fish, they were hung on drying racks. But everything has changed. The local bus came down here, it carried mail and ... yes, stuff. Then, there have been schools here, a bakery, a local policeman and a post office have been here as well. The centre was here, all goods were unloaded here ... goods were also transported in the winter. When there was ice on the sea in the bay, the goods were unloaded on the ice as well, all the goods were brought to A and B and C [nearby towns]. They transported goods by horse and reindeer and each reindeer managed to pull 100 kilos!

Marie has lived in this place since she got married in the 1950s. Today she is a widow, and both of her daughters live close to her smallholding in the fjord. Her husband was a

fisherman, and she took care of their children and the small farm. She misses the life they had when she was younger; people have moved and “there are no lights in the houses like before,” she mourns. The grandparents have strong feelings about the changes, ranging from melancholy to anger. They look back to the life they had with neighbours and the different livelihood opportunities in the community. They describe their longing for times gone by, especially their connection to the sea. The grandfathers miss going fishing, and the grandmothers miss cooking traditional food like flounder and saithe. Marie explains:

When we settled here, in the end of the 1950s, there were fish in the sea. When I said [to the husband]: Now we shall have fish for dinner! Should be it saithe or cod, he asked. So, when I said: Now you can bring saithe, he came with big saithe, we boiled saithe with the liver. There was a lot of seafood. We had flounder in the bay. By the end of July to the middle of August, then the flounder was good and fat and ... yes also beyond September. We cooked it when he came ashore. I went to the potato field and picked fresh potatoes. The next day I could fry the flounder.

Peder (G1, age 83) tells about his experience of change:

Five rows with your oars out on the sea, then you could just drop the fishing-gear down and you got fish for dinner. But now it's empty, it's been fished out here. There came big trawlers, over 60 boats at the same time ... they were almost up on the beaches, and those trawlers they were looking for herring. It happened in the 1960s. There was so much herring, it almost spilled over in the fjord. This fjord was also very rich with capelin, lots of capelin came in.

Peder talks with agitation about the trawler fisheries that fished up the herring and the capelin as well. This commercial fishing had severe impacts on other fish stocks, he argues: “The cod is like humans, when the food disappears, people withdraw from a place. That's how it is [also for the cod]!”

Today, some young fishermen have a good income from the king-crab fishery, while several important fish stocks such as cod, saithe, haddock, and herring are in severe danger (Andersen and Persen 2011; Brattland et al. 2019). The sea-based taskscapes – seascales – have been reduced to a mere reflection of what they used to be for local livelihoods, for food, and for knowledge-based practices. Still, the strong relationships between humans and nature (Balto 2005; 2021) are vital and alive for the participants, and we see strong reactions when these bonds are threatened. In the bonds to the local natural environment lies the traditional foundation for providing food for one's self and the family. Peder expresses anger and maybe fear when he describes how trawlers emptied his fjord of fish; such harvesting was exploitation without consideration for future generations. Marie describes her melancholy connected to the loss of food and her neighbours as well.

Practices connected to the fishery and fish-related food traditions are eroding and may disappear when the generational transference ends because the conditions for new generations knowing these practices are no longer present. Local practices contain knowledge connected to place and time like Marie describes; she knows that the best way to make food of flounder is to catch it in late summer when it is fat (and her husband knew where to catch it). Practices have been developed and refined over generations in this particular locality (see also Joks 2015; Joks, Østmo, and Law 2020). Still, the

continuing regeneration of other elements of knowledge is going on through processes of knowing by new generations (Ingold 2011a). However, these processes may also end, and valuable knowledge will be forgotten and not generated further if their natural resource base erodes.

Local knowledge, constituting the core element in Berkes' (1999, 13) knowledge-practice-belief complex, is closely connected to the regeneration of key ecological elements and relations in local taskscapes (Ingold 2011a). But as Peder strongly holds, this regeneration is not only dependent on local practices. The seascape of this fjord is one example of overexploitation by external agents, leaving locals with an impoverished set of opportunities in the local taskscapes. The parents and grandchildren seem less affected by these changes. They are aware of how the fish stocks in the fjord have been lost, but most of them neither live in the fjord nor work on the sea or in agriculture, so the changes do not affect them in the same way.

Among the grandchildren only one wants to take up a traditional livelihood in fishery and agriculture, while others are interested in professions related to environmental management, precisely to be able to work as close as possible to the grandparents' home and local landscapes. Arne (G3, age 22), however, can see a future for himself in the fjord: "I could actually have lived here [on his grandfather's smallholding] and lived very simply. I grew up with all this hiking and fishing and eating and picking berries and eggs, and don't need so much, I don't need so many things around me".

Another of the grandchildren sees a future for herself in the fjord in the following way:

I hope that one day I can use it [my education] to come up and work with nature management or something else, because this is home and this is place I miss all the time. If I get children I will take them here, and do all the things with them that they [the grandparents] have done together with me. It would certainly feel natural to take them along, as it is for my grandparents and mum too, take me out to do things. But, because I am so concerned about it [losing traditions], it's a very conscious choice that I'm trying to bring back the Sámi way of living, and also that I want to show how it was before because I think it's very interesting. (Solveig G3, age 20)

Relations to local landscape-based knowing and practices have been nurtured among most of the grandchildren in our sample. They express how both their identity and well-being are closely connected to the local landscape and taskscapes they have engaged with through the keys provided by knowledgeable elders (Ingold 2011a, 22). They experience meaning and values, and connect the smallholding and home – their dwelling – in the fjord to meaningful activities and Sámi life.

## Conclusion

Current debates on Sámi lives, resources, and identities are taking place against the backdrop of former analyses focusing on ethnic groups and boundaries and the political struggles to confirm Sámi as an indigenous people during the 1970s and 1980s (cf. Eidheim 1992). Since that time, considerable changes have taken place, both in the natural resource base and in the local livelihoods in northern Norway in general, and Finnmark in particular. We also observed that analytic perspectives in several fields have shifted their focus towards the relationships between local lives, knowledge-based practices and identities, and the – changing – natural environment.

In this article, we have presented and analyzed narratives about relationships between three generations of coastal Sámi with a strong sense of belonging to their “home” settlement in one of the Finnmark fjords. Inland from the “home” settlement, there is a landscape of low trees, bushes, heather, and marshland, with some inland lakes – which can be referred to as a general level with the Sámi concept of *meahcci*. North of the “home” settlement stretches a seascape – *mearra* in Sámi – in the fjord and out to the ocean of the Barents Sea further north. The notion of “home” (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Dowling and Mee 2007) for all three generations interviewed, irrespective of the geographical location of their current place of residence, is the grandparents’ smallholding in the settlement in the fjord.

The changes in the natural resource base, especially in the different seascapes stretching out from the settlement in the fjord, have substantially changed the livelihood opportunities offered in the local landscapes. Together with traditional taskscapes, the community itself changes, as described by some of the grandparents. The old seascapes of the fjord have gradually disappeared, and new seascapes appear with opportunities in the king-crab fishery for some.

The analysis of our empirical material shows, however, that important elements in practices and landscape-related identities continue to be passed on. All generations look to the fjord, but for the parents and grandchildren, their knowing is more connected to the inland landscape than for the grandparents. Ingold (2011a, 22) points to the shared intergenerational experiences through joint attention to features of the local environment. Drawing upon Ingold’s dwelling perspective, the landscape, the places, and the practices in our material are essential links between the three generations. Dwelling can also involve (social) relations extending to include parts of the landscape as seen in narrations (Ingold 2011a, 33). Centred on home in the fjord, members of all generations are connected to local taskscapes, but these also change as a result of major transformations in resource management systems and associated ecological changes (Berkes 1999, 13).

All generations conceive of this landscape and place as providing opportunities for diverse activities that are passed on across generations. However, we see a change in meanings, revealing varying uses, and thus the generational re-creation of taskscapes: grandparents for food and livelihood, parents for livelihood and recreation, and grandchildren for outdoor life and recreation. When practices change, taskscapes change. Practices performed to sustain a livelihood two generations back are today to a large extent recreational activities for the inhabitants of this community and their families.

Nevertheless, we find that all generations construct part of their identity through developing relations between themselves and practices and places in the local landscape. They express a close connection to the landscape from childhood and to how different practices have been performed in local taskscapes and places (Joks, Østmo, and Law 2020). Grandparents and parents relate to a wide range of taskscapes both in the mountains and on the sea, and some consider these relations as “their whole life;” they extend their relations from their home to all living creatures (Balto 2021, 2023; Cajete 2017). What is referred to as *meacchi* is home for one parent while another feels an extremely close connection to the landscape and their landscape-related tasks, to the extent that she “is the landscape”. Grandchildren express how their Sámi identity is nurtured at their grandparents’ smallholding by the fjord (Nergaard 2019). The grandchildren are trained

in endurance and strength just like their grandparents were (Balto 2005). They acquire and adopt knowledge – by knowing experiences – together with parents and grandparents. This knowing shapes identities in which the use of nature and mastery of practical tasks are essential (Balto 2005; Guttorm 2011). These competencies can in turn be valuable resources in formal education and further working life.

The grandparents all emphasize their responsibility for passing on and maintaining a threatened form of traditional life, keeping a local culture alive through visiting places, using places, and carrying out the same tasks as their ancestors did. Grandparents and parents are aware of the values of mastering and performing practices for developing skills and achieving independence both in livelihood and in life. The aim is to foster self-esteem (Balto 2005) that follows from doing a task to perfection and by mastering different skills in the taskscapes surrounding the family homes in the fjord.

## Notes

1. Anonymized
2. “Árbevierru means that we have inherited customs, habits and usage. The traditional expression *árbevierru* covers the concept of tradition” (Guttorm 2011, 66).

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