A Form of Entrepreneurship[1] Unique to the Sámi People

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Abstract

Pastoralism among the Sámi people involves a unique form of entrepreneurship. While animals are individually owned, herding is an activity shared communally by herders. Rather than acting independently as might entrepreneurs in other contexts, self-employed reindeer herders co-operate in a network of inter-dependent entrepreneurship. While reindeer herders are attracted or pulled to this form of self-employment, many are forced or pushed into secondary enterprises, because of increasing reliance on the non-Sámi economy.

Introduction

The reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus*[3]) has historically been important to the survival of several peoples of the Arctic, including the Sámi people. In former times, a subsistence herder had approximately 250 reindeer; a greater number of animals meant more wealth and power. The reindeer were useful throughout their lives, and when harvested every part was used; there was no waste. Technological change has transformed the sector; the snowmobile and the helicopter facilitate herding, and in theory it has become easier to manage more animals more easily than ever before, but giving rise to a cash society. An increase in state intervention has been complicating matters, applying food industry norms to the handling of semi-domesticated and their meat. Mainstream business strategy attempts to view herding as an industry. Important is the fact that this profession is more successful when the animals are not managed in farms, but when man follows the herd in a natural setting. For the Sámi people the reindeer remains a traditional symbol. Where the Indigenous population's traditions and forms of production meets the institutions of the market economy, conflicts are on the rise.

Given the nature of reindeer herding, co-operation has been and continues to be essential; this form of self-employment is thus community-based, and an expression of traditional local culture. It corresponds to what Peterson described as the Communitarianism Prototype: "The community is more than the sum of the individuals in it…The relatedness of all things is recognized (1988, p. 2)."

Scheinberg and Macmillan (1988) found significant differences across cultures in motivations to launch a new business. A problem identified by Davidson and Delmar (1992) is

[1] Say defined the entrepreneur as the agent who "unites all means of production and who finds in the value of the products…the re-establishment of the entire capital he employs, and the value of the wages, the interest, and the rent which he pays, as well as the profits belonging to himself (1816, pp. 28-29)."

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[3] *Rangifer tarandus* in Eurasia refers to reindeer; in North America, the Micmac word "caribou" has become the standard (Anderson, 2004).

that most studies have concentrated on entrepreneurs and ignored the general population from which these entrepreneurs emerged. An empirical study comparing Indigenous and non-Indigenous entrepreneurs concluded that the perception of opportunity is a function of culture (Dana, 1995); findings showed that people from different ethnic backgrounds had been exposed to dissimilar cultural values, and this was reflected in their respective entrepreneurship models. Entrepreneurship is therefore *not* homogeneous around the world. Unfortunately, however, mainstream systems often pressure minorities to conform to models that ignore cultural variables.

In contrast to fishermen and industrialists in Norway, who tend to obtain considerable financing from banks, reindeer herders tend to avoid large loans. The average equity held by herders is 80%, considerably higher than is the case in other industries. It should be noted that only Innovation Norway (formerly the Norwegian Industry Development Fund) gives loans on herds.

The objective of this study was to observe entrepreneurship activities of Sámi people, in the light of Sámi culture. This led to a focus on traditional self-employment among the Sámi reindeer herders, for whom life traditionally revolved around reindeer, while the extended family was the work unit; traditionally, there have been long discussions during which parents transmitted expertise to their children. This form of production involved sharing and specialising, but without markets and without right of land ownership defined by modern Western society. A single individual did not need to know everything, since it was group knowledge that was important, as discussed by Freeman (1985). Decisions were often made by individuals, on behalf of others. When people had plenty (*e.g.,* more food than they could consume before it lost its freshness), a common practice was to share, without accepting monetary compensation.

The Sámi

The Sámi people are the Indigenous nation of Sápmi (formerly known as Lapland), covering northern Finland, Norway and Sweden, and Russia's Kola Peninsula. Although Clarke (1824a) wrote of "the borders of Lapland (p. 261)," there is no such political entity. Paine emphasised that "The Saami …are not immigrant groups but autochthonous – a fundamental distinction affecting their perceived context and values of ethnicity (1984, p. 212)."

Müller-Wille explained, "Originally, the various Sámi populations, living by hunting, fishing, gathering and herding in maritime and terrestrial ecosystems, obtained their food with high protein and fat contents from edible mammals… such as wild reindeer, elk (moose), bear, beaver, fisher, squirrels, and to a lesser degree, from hare, glutton (wolverine), lynx, marten (excluding clearly wolf and dog), and marine animals such as seals, beluga whale, walrus (2001, p. 91)." In time, these people evolved from being a food-extracting society to a food-producing society. There is debate, however, as to when this happened. Laufer wrote, that according to the Norwegian scholar, A. Frijs, "the Lapp of the ninth century were not yet reindeer-nomads, but merely hunters and fishermen, whose only domesticated animal was the dog (1917, p. 101)." Storli suggested "that reindeer pastoralism was well established by A.D. 900 (1993, p. 1)." In contrast, Vorren (1960) speculated that Sámi reindeer hunting was replaced during 16th century, by domestic reindeer management.

Until the 1960s, draught reindeer were given names. When too old to travel, they were slaughtered and eaten. As noted by Turi, "The importance of reindeer breeding in the Arctic areas cannot be overstated (2000, p. 131)."

Today, there are over 80,000 Sámi people, of whom more than half reside in Norway (Sara, 2000). The Sámi people are not homogeneous. Fisher distinguished among three groups: "the poorer sedentary Lapps who make a living chiefly by fishing; the mountain Lapps, who carry on reindeer culture; and the forest Lapps, who live in the forest district and have settled down to a large extent with their reindeer herds (1939, p. 641)." Ohlson discussed five groups: "mountain Lapps, forest Lapps, river Lapps, lake Lapps of Finland and sea Lapps (1960, p. 28)."

About the mountain group, Pelto and Müller-Wille wrote, "Mountain People saw themselves as more independent, more economically successful, and in other ways superior to the people who had come to settle in marginal agricultural homesteads (1972/3, p. 123)." In contrast to the Mountain People, who engaged in reindeer herding as a principal occupation, the Forest Sámi, who have long had permanent homes, earned their livelihood from fishing and agriculture. The Water Shore People had "a strong commitment to fishing as a basic aspect of subsistence (Pelto and Müller-Wille, 1972/3, p. 123)," while "the reindeer herders were seen (especially by themselves) as having much higher prestige and economic power (Pelto and Müller-Wille, 1972/3, p. 123)."

The Sea Sámi exist in Norway only. Paine wrote that Norway's "Coast Lapps…are now settled fishers and farmers (1958, p. 168)," and he elaborated that pastoralism among these coastal people "was probably never on a large scale, and is most worthy of note for the husbandry of reindeer *as well as* sheep and cattle. The reindeer had been especially valued as decoy and transport animals; later, wild reindeer hunting became less common, so the tame reindeer came to be valued for their milk products and as one source of meat supply (1958, p. 171)." Anderson confirmed, "There are no resident coastal reindeer-breeders, as this occupation is reserved by law to that portion of the Saami population dependent on reindeer through several generations, corresponding roughly to the thousand persons from the interior township now practicing that livelihood (1983, p. 180)."

In order to be registered as a Sámi in Norway, one must have at least one grandparent or great-grandparent who was a Sámi. Lehtola provided a comprehensive definition, "a Sámi is defined as a person of Sámi origin who feels themselves to be Sámi and who has Sámi as their first language or at least one parent or grandparent who had Sámi as their first language (2002, p. 10)." As explained by Brantenberg, "The term 'Saami' does not exist in the Norwegian administrative terminology. Instead, governmental reports refer to the so-called 'Saami-speaking Norwegians,' excluding those who have lost their native language (1985, p. 45)." When determining Sámi ethnicity, an important criterion is indeed the use of one of the Sámi languages.

Graves (1968) incorrectly reported that there were 50 different Sámi dialects. According to Lehtola (2002), nine Sámi languages, all part of the Finno-Ugric branch of Uralic languages, are spoken today. Most Sámi speakers use North Sámi, which is spoken in Finland, Norway, and Sweden. A few thousand people speak Lule Sámi, in Norway as well as in Sweden. Kilden Sámi is less common. A few hundred people in Finland use Inari Sámi. Skolt Sámi was common in the Kola Peninsula, until the land was annexed by Russia, at which time most of the local Sámi people moved to Finland. South Sámi is used a few hundred people across Norway and Sweden.

Language reflects culture and epistemology, and these are in turn influences by language. Epistemological truth is generated via jokes, discussions, negotiations and story telling (Helander and Kailo, 1998). Not having been a fighting nation, the Sámi have no traditional word for war or for peace. The Sámi people do have a rich vocabulary for that which matters to them. A Sámi word for mountain is *várri.* A mountaintop may be referred to as *čohkka.* More specifically, a

rounded mountaintop is *oaivi.* The term for a mountain area covered with small, flat stones and no vegetation is *rášša.* Central to Sámi life is the reindeer, and the language *reflects* this. Jernsletten and Klokov explained that although "the number of reindeer in Norway has decreased from around 218,000 reindeer in 1992 … down to 165,000 in 2001 (2002, p. 90)," there are still over 2,500 reindeer owners in Norway. Lee, Press, Lee, Ingold and Kurttila elaborated, "Unlike in Finland, where reindeer are controlled by fences, in Norway reindeer are allowed to roam freely and are less protected from predators (2000, p. 103)."

Whitaker explained the traditional cultural importance of reindeer, "Marriage is not undertaken until it is deemed that one has sufficient property in the form of reindeer with which to support a family. This is usually set at about 200 hundred for the combined herd of husband and wife… (1955, p. 40)." Given the centrality of reindeer, to Sámi life, Collinder (1949) asserted the existence of thousands of words describing reindeer herding. Beach wrote, "There are about 150 words for snow and an equal number for reindeer (1993, p. 5)." The following are several words used to distinguish among reindeer: *áldu* (adult female reindeer with a calf); *čearpmat:* (reindeer between the age of six to 14 months old); *goaistos* (five-year old male reindeer); *heargi* (reindeer used for work); *miessi* (reindeer up to the age of six months old); *sarvvis* (reindeer that has not been neutered, during autumn); *varit:* (two-year old male reindeer); and *vuonjal* (two-year old reindeer cow). These words are still central to the Sámi people. In contrast, comparing sheep raising in England with the same occupation in Scotland, Malden wrote, over a century ago, "the terms used to distinguish older sheep are becoming more or less obsolete; but in Scotland and in hill districts generally, where the feeding is not so much forced, the distinguishing terms are still required as much as ever (1899, p. 28)."

For centuries, the Sámi people lived a sustainable nomadic life, following their herds and trading with non-Sámi people, with little concern for national boundaries; reindeer traditionally migrated across international borders (Elbo, 1952). As explained by Ruong, "By nomads one means pastoral peoples whose herds require large tracts of open country. From this it follows that the nomad must migrate and frequently change his place of abode. The frequency of migration and the degree of permanent settlement are convertible terms and thus different aspects of the same phenomenon, inasmuch as a low frequency of migration implies a high degree of permanent settlement and vice versa. One may thus speak now only of the frequency of migration and now only of the degree of permanent settlement (1956, p. 105)."

The right of land ownership was substituted by traditional usage rights to certain areas, often sequential; land was neither bought nor sold. Likewise, in former times, manpower was not a good that was bought for cash; the economic system was based on mutual exchange of services within the clan. Clarke wrote of the Sámi "in their dealings demand specie, refusing the paper-currency of the country whenever it is offered Clarke (1824b, p. 169)." The social system[4] was such that Whitaker explained, "It is the reindeer that moves, and the human being that follows, rather than Man who is the leader (1955, p. 73)." *This is fundamentally important – the essence of reindeer herding.*

The traditional Sámi way of life stresses the need to live in harmony with nature, refraining from leaving physical marks on the land. In the words of Lehtola, "Nature has provided the sources for both their material and spiritual culture. This base sets Sámi culture apart from industrial or agricultural civilizations…A common thread for all Sámi groups is the adaptation of their way of life to the yearly cycle of nature and to the specific local natural

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[4] Parsons and Smelser defined a social system as "the system generated by any process of *interaction,* on the socio-cultural level, between two or more "actors" (1956, p. 8)."

environment…Because their way of life is based on respect for Nature, Sámi have been very frugal in their use of natural resources…Sámi religious belief reflected this close link with nature. According to the traditional Sámi beliefs, the world was inhabited by spirits. Human beings could only successfully make their living by cooperating…It was essential not to damage nature (2002, p. 88)." As the Sámi people did not mark the territories upon which they lived, government authorities acted as if these lands were unclaimed. Non-Indigenous farmers took possession of land traditionally used by the Sámi people, reducing the area available for reindeer. In 1965, the Norwegian *Statlige Selskaper* law allowed[5] the state to take over unregistered land in Finnmark (Magga, 1985).

As noted by Vorren (1973), domestic reindeer management is, and probably always has been a minority occupation. Yet, reindeer are owned by Sámi people who have other full-time occupations. As observed by Anderson, "Reindeer-owning, entailing breeding, herding, and harvesting of the animals, is built into the consensual stereotype of the Saami… virtually all Saami accept and manipulate the coin of reindeer when dealing with strangers (1991, p. 200)."

While herding continues to be a communal activity, the individual ownership of each reindeer remains private. A system of ear-notches is used to identify reindeer; it is based on the reindeer earmarks that the owners are identified. Bjørklund (2004) explains that these earmarks are significant cultural devices that tell stories about social relations among reindeer owners. Whitaker described, "all reindeer found will be brought to the main herd, even if they include a percentage of animals strayed from the herds of neighbouring or of other communities. These will be returned to their owners through separations in the corral (1955, pp. 28-29)."

Theoretical Framework

Pioneers of entrepreneurship theory include Cantillon (1755) and Mill (1848), both of whom discussed the risk-taking aspect of being self-employed, and Eli and Hess who defined entrepreneurs as "the ultimate owners of business enterprises, those who make the final decision and assume risks in such decisions (1893, p. 95)." Likewise, Knight argued, "When uncertainty is present and the task of deciding what to do and how to do it takes the ascendancy over that of execution, the internal organization of the productive groups is no longer a matter of indifference or a mechanical detail (1921, p. 268)." He then explained, "Uncertainty thus exerts a fourfold tendency to select men and specialize functions: (1) an adaptation of men to occupations on the basis of kind of knowledge and judgment; (2) a similar selection on the basis of degree of foresight, for some lines of activity call for this endowment in a very different degree from others; (3) a specialization within productive groups, the individuals with superior managerial ability (foresight and capacity of ruling others) being placed in control of the group and the others working under their direction; and (4) those with confidence in their judgment and disposition to 'back it up' in action specialize in risk-taking (Knight, 1921, p. 270)."

Fraser (1937) associated entrepreneurs with the management of a business unit, profit taking, business innovation and risk-bearing. Risk was also central to Oxenfeldt (1943) and Cole (1959). Cochran (1968) discussed risk as a distinguishing feature of the entrepreneur. Shapero concluded that in "almost all definitions of entrepreneurship, there is agreement that we are talking about a behavior that includes…the acceptance of risk (1975, p. 187)." Zaleznik and Kets de Vries specified that the entrepreneurial personality includes "the urge to take risks, and the stubborn resistance to change (1976, p. 23)." Kets de Vries elaborated on the importance of the "risk-taking functions (1977, p. 37)." Brockhaus (1980) focused on risk propensity. Gasse

[5] Jebens (1999) showed that Norway's judicial "right" to annex inner Finnmark as no-mans-land was weak.

(1982) noted that entrepreneurs are generally risk-takers. Shapero and Sokol (1982) found risk-taking to be central to the entrepreneurial event, and Stanford (1982) mentioned moderate risk-taking as an entrepreneurial trait. Tate, Meggison, Scott and Trueblood defined the entrepreneur as "a person who organizes, manages and assumes the risks of a business venture (1982, p.576)." Gasse (1985) elaborated on the importance, for the entrepreneur, to have the capability to take personal risks. According to Stevenson and Gumpert, "An X-ray of the entrepreneurial organization reveals these dynamic characteristics: encouragement of individuals' imagination, flexibility and a willingness to accept risks (1985, p.88)." Timmons, Smollen and Dingee (1985) also referred to risk, and Burch explained that the role of the entrepreneur is to assume "all or a major portion of the risk (1986, p.4)." In contrast, Schumpeter suggested that, "Risk taking is in no case an element of the entrepreneurial function (1934, p. 137)." Schumpeter focused on the innovative function of the entrepreneur. Later, Belshaw argued that innovation is not a necessary criterion, but expansive management is (1945, p. 147)."

Although such contributions have been central to the evolution of the study of entrepreneurship in mainstream society, these theses do not apply as well to the Sámi people. Self-employed reindeer herders refer to their entrepreneurship as community-based. A harsh climate contributes to uncertainty, and the Sámi people have learned to tolerate risk, mastering the art of herding, *largely by following cues from the animals, rather than by taking dominion over them.* Collinder elaborated, "The life of the reindeer nomads is regulated by the migrations of their reindeer (1949, p. 105)." Yet, Sámi people generally do not like risk. As the domain of the lynx has spread north, reindeer husbandry entails an increase in risk, and Sámi herdsmen therefore diversify in second enterprise, to reduce risks.

As suggested by Anderson and Giberson (2003), it is a challenge to find a theoretical approach that is appropriate in the context of Aboriginal people. Blunt and Warren (1996) demonstrated that many programs have failed to recognise the validity and effectiveness of existing social structures.

A Symbiotic Relationship

Winters in Sápmi are long and cold. Extended durations of extensive snow-cover result in floods during the thaw. Summers are short and cool. Areas of permafrost are extensive. Vegetation is generally sparse. Cereals cannot grow here, and the harsh conditions limit opportunities for animal husbandry.

Reindeer pastures comprise about 40% of Fennoscandia[6] (Turi, 2002). Well-adapted to the harsh environment, reindeer do not require indoor feeding during the winters. Their diet includes various species of lichen, easily digestible food, rich in carbohydrates (Lee, Press, Lee, Ingold and Kurttila, 2000). As noted by Barth, "The reindeer lichen that covers much of the mountain plateau is usually crumbly, but becomes very elastic when wet. It has high food value (1960, p. 84)."

Ruotsala explained, "Growing up in a particular environment we receive as a 'legacy' the knowledge of how to benefit from the resources of that environment. We also receive the cultural pattern of how to experience, appreciate and interpret our own living environs (1999, p. 41)." The Sámi people thus developed a subsistence economy, around the domestication of reindeer. A Sámi legend recounts the story of Háhcešeatni and Njávešeatni, two sisters, each of whom were

[6] According to Riseth, "This geographical term encompasses the northernmost regions of Norway (Nordland, Troms and Norway's most northern province, namely Finnmark), Sweden (Norrbotten) and Finland (Lapland). *Nordkalotten* is the widely-used Norwegian equivalent (2003, p. 229)."

said to have had reindeer that came freely to be milked. Háhcešeatni was unkind to her reindeer, and these left her and gave rise to the wild herds. In contrast, Njávešeatni's one of reindeer remarked, "I will never leave here. My mistress is much too good to me. She strokes me gently when she milks me. I do not have the heart to leave her to starve alone (Bergsmo, 2001, p. 11)."

Paine (1988) explained that reindeer have their own social organisation. Beach elaborated, "Herders sensitive to these aspects of reindeer social life are able to use them to control the deer…Traditional herders do not force the reindeer if need be, but they often know how to achieve the desired result by utilizing the herd's own propensities and instilling in it the desired behaviour pattern (1990, p. 258)." Fisher suggested, "Here we find the usual order of things reversed, man's life being ruled by an animal's needs (1939, p. 641)." *However, humans benefit best from respecting an animal's needs.*

Weber observed, "Reindeer thrive under conditions and on fare that would quickly exterminate less hardy animals (1939, p. 481)." Well-adapted to the hard climate which they are used, rather than drink water in winter, these animals eat snow. Furthermore, "The reindeer, although independent by nature, is amongst the easiest of animals to tame. It is of gentle disposition, of manageable size, and appreciative of the comforts that association with man can provide (Ingold, 1980, p. 97)." Beach elaborated that the reindeer "has been tamed as a decoy animal to lure its wild brethren into the hunter's grasp. It has been used as a pack animal over bare ground and as a sled-pulling draft animal in winter (1990, p. 255)." Descendants of wild mountain reindeer, and a game animal in former times, reindeer came to provide transport as well as milk, meat, and material for clothing and other uses. Olson described reindeer transport, "In descending a very steep grade, the reindeer is hitched behind the sleigh. The animal resents being pulled by the head and digs his forefeet into the snow, thus providing effective breaks (1938, p. 512)." Shor and Shor noted the speed of reindeer, "In winter the splay-footed beasts pull Lapp *polkas* 10 miles an hour on long trips, easily reach twice that speed on shorter stretches (1954, p. 280)."

Fisher observed, at the time, "When a reindeer is killed, every part of the carcass is utilized (1939, p. 648)." Bones and antlers were turned into utensils. Beach explained, "The reindeer grows a new rack of antlers each year, and is the only cervid in which both females and males possess antlers (1990, p. 258)." The economic value comes from the fact that "Reindeer antler, when mature and hardened, affords a strong material for innumerable uses (Beach, 1990, p. 255)."

Central to traditional reindeer herding is a symbiotic relationship between man and reindeer. Paine elaborated, "A process of reciprocal learning occurs between animals and herder (1994, p. 29)." The Sámi economy depended on the reindeer, and the latter were offered protection from wolves and other predators.

Reindeer herding is practiced by at least 20 ethnic minorities spread across the northern circumpolar region (Turi, 2002). Among the non-Indigenous people to engage in reindeer herding are Finns, Jakuts, Komis, Norwegians, and Russians. The activity takes place across Sápmi, and also in Alaska, Canada, China, Greenland, Mongolia, and Scotland.

Malden wrote about the sheep business, in 19th century England. "The time to buy is when there is a fair chance of profit, and not when there is little likelihood of gain. The skill of the farmer comes in buying at the right time; he must watch the markets closely, and buy in accordance with the trade… (1899, p. 3)." Reindeer herding has its differences, as well as similarities. In the words of Ingold, "Whereas pastoralism recommends a man to slaughter only

the minimum of deer needed to maintain his family, stock-rearing requires him to leave alive only the minimum needed to maintain his herd (1978, p. 121)."

Ruotsala explained, "Often an important factor is that this is a profession passed down from generation to the next, primarily from father to son, which is carried on in the same place as the previous generation (1999, p. 43)." Bjørklund elaborated, "Traditionally, Saami cultural arrangements had taken care of recruitment into pastoral society. Animals were allocated to children during certain ritual occasions… Along with the gift also came the responsibility of being a reindeer owner. Children learned how to take care of their animals and were thus socialised into the world of reindeer pastoralism. When the time came to marry, both spouses were in possession of knowledge and enough animals – together with the animals given to them as wedding gifts – to make it possible to establish themselves as their own husbandry and perhaps herding unit (2004, p. 133)." Helander (1999) discussed how reindeer herders were trained on the job.

Whitaker noted, "The natural basic unit of Lappish society is the elementary family (1955, p. 37)." The family is in turn central to the family business. In the words of Jääskö, "it should be noted that the most effective and most durable economic unit in reindeer herding is not the reindeer woman or reindeer man, but the family (1999, p. 36)." Turi (2002) elaborated that a crucial element in the organisation of reindeer herding is that working community consists of one or more families; this is what the Sámi language defines as *sii'dâ,* the plural of which is *siidât*. Manker explained "Siida is a normalized form of the Lappish term for 'the group', a group of families who migrate together, have their reindeer in a common herd and their dwellings in the same place (1953, p. 13)." Nyyssönen clarified, "*Siida* is Northern Sami, and means a Lapp or reindeer village. It refers both to the area and the people living in the autonomous area of *siida* (2003, p. 252)." Whitaker described the *sii'dâ* as, "the herding unit. It is basically a group of reindeer owners who cooperate for the purposes of maintaining their herds together as a single working entity and dividing the work of herding among themselves, but the term is also used to connote the tents and persons as well as their herd (1955, p. 54)." He elaborated "that the individuals retain all property rights over their reindeer, and their right to leave the unit at any time (Whitaker, 1955, p. 54)." Helander (1999) called this a kinship group. More recently, Bjørklund explained the term as referring "to a group of reindeer owners who live and migrate together, and to the herd of reindeer owned and herded by them (2004, p. 125)." He added, "the *siida* represents a flexible cooperative unit between people and animals (Bjørklund, 2004, p. 126)." In the winter, when a pasture might not sustain a specific herd, a Sámi strategy is frequently to divide the herd into smaller ones and to move each to a different area. "The strategy of the pastoralists is never to be in a position where the size and composition of the herd is not in proportion to the available labour and pasture (Bjørklund, 2004, p. 126)." In summary, the *sii'dâ* is an informal institution uniting people for symbiotic interdependence. It does not claim to be democratic; rather, solutions are reached by consensus and for this reason co-operation is essential.

Riseth (2003) listed the regulatory principles of Sámi herding society: (i) the autonomy of the husbander, in "that all husbanders are their own masters (p. 232)"; (ii) the social bonds of the extensive kinship system, resulting in "a network of mutual obligations through genetic and social kinship (p. 232); (iii) partnership and *sii'dâ* solidarity; (iv) dialogue and consensus; and (v) responsibility toward the land and the spirits.[7] While the *sii'dâ* is the traditional unit of

[7] Man, society and nature are viewed as interconnected.

reindeer herding, the husbandry unit (*driftsenhet*) is the legal basis of husbandry organisation in modern Norway. The individual is still interconnected with society and nature, to this day.

Why have reindeer herders specialised in this occupation? Anderson suggested one explanation, "the reindeer still functions as a cultural focus with which all Saami identify (1983, p. 180)." Among the causal variables motivating Sámi people to be reindeer herders is "for the freedom (Bergsmo, 2001, p. 132)."

"The position of reindeer breeding in the northern areas is unique. No other land-based agricultural branch in northern areas has such long traditions in the Arctic as this economic activity…Domestic reindeer breeding represents not only sustainable exploitation of the marginal nature resources in the North, but is also the cultural basis of the many small tribal societies of the North (Turi, 2000, p. 131)." Unlike entrepreneurs who compete against one another in other cultural contexts, the success of each Sámi reindeer herder has traditionally been dependent on the mutual cooperation of reindeer herders.

Change from Subsistence Pastoralism to Motorised and Market-oriented Entrepreneurship

Clarke described the traditional way by which reindeer were slaughtered, "attended with the least pain to the animal, and the greatest profit to its possessor. They thrust a sharp-pointed knife into the back part of the head, between the horns; so as to divide the spinal marrow from the brain. The beast instantly drops, and expires without a groan or struggle, as if it fainted. The blood is not suffered to flow; but is collected afterwards into a pail from the stomach, yielding about two gallons: it is then used for food (1824b, p. 173.)" *Nothing was wasted from the reindeer carcass.* Today, external rules are being imposed on these people, reducing efficiency. Socially, this also causes tension between different groups of people.

Whitaker wrote about one Lainiovuoma *sii'dâ* that was, during the 1950s, "fully nomadic, having no fixed house (1955, p. 31)." Traditionally, reindeer herding was prominent among the Sámi people, and "Indigenous land use was based on locally available resources (Müller-Wille, 1987, p. 352)." Burgess (1999) mentioned that reindeer herding, fishing,[8] hunting, berry picking, "have supported whole societies and their cultures, yet their impact on the landscape has been minimal (p. 43)."

Paine (1964) portrayed Sámi pastoralists in the 1960s. Müller-Wille wrote, "one can refer to the modification of the reindeer economy in northern Fennoscandia with the use of the snowmobile and the motorcycle between 1962 and 1968; this meant a considerable financial outlay for the Lapp reindeer herder and led to a reindeer meat industry oriented to a market economy (1978, p. 110)." Thus, traditional subsistence herding yielded to a dependence on the market economy. As discussed by Ruotsala (1999), until the 1970s, the reindeerman was directly dependent on reindeer, fishing, hunting, and picking berries. However, traditional occupations "can no longer support the population growth (Anderson, 1977, p. 368)."

In 1978, the Norwegian government passed the Reindeer Management Act. The new, Norwegian law made it necessary to have a permit in order to own reindeer, and in the 1980s, authorities stopped issuing new permits.[9]

Anderson summarised changes, "Where the herder's life once revolved entirely around the reindeer, which provided not only meat and milk but also materials for garments and tools,

[8] A noted by Paine, "Families fished for home consumption primarily but also for a commodity of barter (1958, p. 171)."

[9] Later, Paine (1994) studied the impact of such legislation and analyzed attempts by non-Sámi people to regulate and rationalise Sámi pastoralism.

now the animals more and more are handled as a cash crop. Today the reindeer Lapp needs folding money to buy ever more abundant processed foods, ready-made clothing, automobiles, television sets, and radios (1977, p. 371)." Pelto (1978) described such change as the de-localisation of resources. As was the case with other Indigenous people, activities "became dependent on goods produced outside their sphere of influence, and introduced into their area of residence by external forces (Müller-Wille, 1978, p. 112)." In the words of Riseth, "The production system changed from subsistence pastoralism to a motorized and market-oriented industry, moving away from a near-complete dependence on animal and human muscle power to a degree of dependence on motorized vehicles (2003, p. 231)." Herding activities became increasingly mechanical as the reindeer economy became a meat production business.

Meanwhile, Jääskö suggested that, "cloth weaving machines in India and sewing machines in Portugal reduce the need for work power and the value placed on handicraft within the reindeer household (1999, p. 37)." This is partly true, as reindeer herders report that no synthetic is comfortable to work in while temperatures are colder than 50 below zero.

Methodology

Ever since the 1920s, anthropologists and sociologists have benefited from the Chicago school of qualitative inquiry. In contrast, entrepreneurship research has traditionally been quantitative in nature, and dominated by the logical empiricist paradigm, assuming absolute knowledge, independent of cultural, social and political factors; findings which are not directly linked to the predetermined hypotheses are usually ignored. However, hypotheses may have a cultural bias, and cultural variables are open to interpretation (Geertz, 1973; 1983). Furthermore, surveys and short interviews run the risk of obtaining socially desirable responding (Adair, 1984; Arnold, and Feldman, 1981; Arnold, Feldman and Purbhoo, 1985; Crowne and Marlowe, 1960; Golembiewski and Munzenrider, 1975; Rahim, 1983; and Zerbe and Paulhus, 1987).

Crozier and Friedberg (1977) suggested a research strategy involving an inductive approach with qualitative interpretation, which leads the way to an understanding of culture and society. Bherer, Gagnon, and Roberge (1989) argued for specialised instrumentation. While the post-modern moment was shaped by a refusal to privilege any method or theory (Richardson, 1997), the current seventh movement (of the early 21st century) has been calling for the social sciences to become sites for critical discussions about class, community, globalisation, nation-states and race (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003).

In describing Sámi people, Whitaker wrote, "there are several cases of daughters being given a handsome number of reindeer as a sort of dowry by wealthy parents; the actual amounts involved are however seldom divulged (1955, p. 40)." A big herd provided people with security, but actual numbers were not discussed with strangers. In fact, asking a Sámi person how many reindeer he has may be perceived as socially insensitive. Indeed, "Asking questions and getting answers is a much harder task than it may seem at first (Fontana and Frey, 2003, p. 61)."

Leaning toward the naturalistic-ecological perspective (actions are influenced by the setting in which they occur), it was deemed appropriate for this study to rely on naturalistic inquiry (Willems and Rauch, 1969; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). With the methodological mandate to be contextually sensitive, the technique of being a participating observant (Bruyn, 1966; Jorgensen, 1993; and Spradley, 1997) was an ideal means of grasping an understanding of entrepreneurship and its social context. This approach seeks to comprehend the catalysts to various activities. Rather than observe an environment from outside it, the researcher's approach is to interact with its players, observing and recording their respective behaviors. Being immersed in the same host environment in which the entrepreneur functions, the researcher can better understand motivations

and responses to stimuli. “Learning takes place through participatory activities in work (Helander, 1999, p. 25).”

It is important to understand the context of enterprise, and the epistemology that surrounds it. When René Descartes proclaimed, “I think, therefore I am,” he articulated a premise central to European and Euro-American epistemology, *i.e.,* that the individual mind is the source of existence and knowledge; for other peoples, the individual’s existence is contingent upon relationships[10] with others (Ladson-Billings, 2003).

Methodology for this study included participatory observation; this is consistent with Sámi epistemology, according to which an individual is a part of society and the individual’s survival is dependent on the society. As explained by Whitaker, a “requirement of this method of research is that the field-worker shall not merely observe, but shall also participate (1955, p. 11).”

For the purposes of this study, Sámi identity was based on self-identification. Interviewees were identified via snowball sampling. As explained by Müller-Wille and Hukkinen, “In snowball sampling of interviewees, those already interviewed identify who else they think should be interviewed (1999, p. 47).” As discussed by Goodman (1961), interviewing stops only when the last respondent can only suggest individuals already named by others.

An awareness of the Sámi concept of knowledge is very useful when asking questions among these people. The concept of knowledge in their culture is society-based and it is formed by means of discussions. The culture often has many truths within a given topic, with no right or wrong answers. Rather than giving one’s personal opinion, Sámi individuals often use the term ‘we’, rather than ‘I’ or ‘you.’ The Sámi interviewee tends to provide a consensus of knowledge, based on previous discussions. Interviews were conducted by Sámi reindeer herder Elen Solbritt Eira and Elin M. Oftedal of the Bodø Graduate School of Business, in the presence of the principal author. Interviews took up to twelve hours. These were tape-recorded and transcribed.

Interviewees were helpful in identifying entrepreneurs, their role in the community, the nature of entrepreneurial activities and their products as perceived by the consumers. As the research team became accepted into the community, individuals became increasingly open. Direct on-sight observations were supplied by several sources of data. Triangulation was used to cross-validate across these (Patton, 1982; 1987; 1990).

Findings

In Inner Finnmark, where the Sámi comprise the majority of the population, the economy is largely rooted in reindeer herding. In contrast, in the Bodø area (where the Sámi people are a minority), livelihood is based more on fishing and farming. Yet, the reindeer is central to Sámi culture, in both regions, and it appears that the cultural values of a society determine the desirability of different forms of economic activity. Findings suggest that entrepreneurship, or more precisely self-employment, is embedded in the cultural and social heritage of society. Reindeer herding is central to Sámi culture, whether or not it is the primary source of income.

Being a good herdsman is perceived to be a prestigious occupation, and esteem is enhanced in proportion to the number of reindeer owned. Subsistence resource harvesting has an intrinsic value that is not measured in currency.

[10] Barth wrote, “the entrepreneur must initiate and coordinate a number of inter-personal relationships in a supervisory capacity to effectuate his enterprise (1963, p. 5).”

Findings of this study indicate that Sámi women continue to be economically independent from men; while herding is a communal activity, each individual of the community – including young girls – owns reindeer.

While Sámi reindeer herders act on account of their families, and they create jobs for family members and express interest in their children's futures, there appears to be less concern about growth of their enterprises. Some non-Sámi interviewees felt differently. Norway has six Reindeer Pasture Areas, divided into a total of 90 Reindeer Pasture Districts, in which only Sámi people are permitted to herd. For non-Sámi people who wish to take part in reindeer herding, there are special Concession Areas in southern Norway. Findings indicate that Sámi respondents are less likely to express interest in growth-oriented strategies, than is the case with mainstream Norwegians. It is not surprising, therefore, that herding by Sámi people involves less debt than other activities, such as fishing. Sámi maintain their traditional orientation around the family.

Sámi interviewees emphasised Sámi culture and tradition. A common comment was, "I follow the footsteps of my father." Fathers are very much looked up to for the skills. In contrast to non-Indigenous entrepreneurs, Sámi entrepreneurs focused discussions on the fact that they "belonged" to their people, and that being self-employed was a requirement in order to remain on their traditional homeland and to preserve their cultural heritage.

Young respondents were fascinated by the migrations. Every spring each family of reindeer herders travels to round up its reindeer and to earmark the calves; as the sun sets only for a little while (if at all) work is done day and night, with short rest periods in a tent. Each migration has its reason. Summer grass is better along the coast than inland. From June until August, the reindeer pasture unattended. As winter approaches, they migrate inland for food. On cold days, the herd can be located by means of the steam that it gives off. When the land is covered with snow, the reindeer use their hoofs to dig for fodder. The female reindeer are less good diggers, and it is quite helpful if the males dig for them. A problem expressed by interviewees, however, was that policy-makers are encouraging the culling of what the state considers to be "excess" males that are not needed for reproduction; although older males may not be required for breeding, *they serve a purpose* in the herd, especially during the winter when the ground is covered with snow. In the search for food below the snow-cover, female reindeer are poor diggers, when compared to the males. When there is an equal number of males and females in a herd, females can access food where males have dug through the snow. As the ratio of males to females decreases, the accessibility of food for females decreases.

As noted by respondents, reindeer-herding cannot be effectively managed in the same way as commercial cattle breeding. The eldest male reindeers, which policy-makers consider to be economically useless, serve as leaders for the less experienced animals. *Several interviewees expressed frustration at outsiders telling Sámi herders telling what to do, with little understanding of local culture, tradition, and practice.*

Interviewees indicated that, with a preference for work within the natural portion of the value chain, self-employed Sámi people have been *pulled* to reindeer herding because of social conditioning (including a close relationship with animals), but *pushed* into secondary enterprises, in order to make a living without leaving Sápmi. Furthermore, Sámi reindeer herders claim that they are *not* seeking risk and that they create secondary enterprises to *reduce* existing risk. The secondary new ventures are often related to existing skills.

In March and April, animal hides are nailed onto walls for drying, a process that takes about two weeks; once tanned, these are sold. Other secondary enterprises include the selling of handicrafts, and services provided to the tourism industry. While the unit of interest in herding

may be the collectivity, entrepreneurship in secondary enterprises often takes place at the level of the individual.

Interviewees emphasised the fact that nowadays, there is a perceived need for cash; traditional income is supplemented by other sectors, such as tourism. In addition, spouses often have a salary. Direct dependence on nature and on the traditional family business has thus been reduced. Fishing provides a supplementary source of income and food. A problem, however, is that substantial commercial fishing has overfished some waters. Some Sámi people must now buy fish and meat.

Sámi herders indicated to the author that, unlike Western-style meat-production, they viewed herding as an expression of traditional cultural values. For them, Indigenous entrepreneurship was different from other forms of self-employment in that Sámi herding is a communal activity revolving around the family. Ownership is established by cutting notches into the ears of a calf, and, in spring, when it is time to identify reindeer calves with a notch on the ear, the whole family takes part in the separation. A small group is separated from the herd and chased into a small enclosure. A lasso is coiled by hand, before throwing; this enhances its reach, as well as its velocity. Although the reindeer gallop at 20 kilometres per hour, the herders seldom miss their target. Children are keen to catch and to carry calves to be marked. Small children are given reindeer, as parents are happy to share their assets with the new generation. During interviews there were frequent references to the family, respect of elders, and love of children. The extended family was described as the functional collectivity, with less reference to nuclear family. Asceticism, frugality and thrift were brought up on several occasions.

Several interviewees expressed much concern about the state, which was causing changes in herding, reducing efficiency. There was much bitterness about the fact that hunters can kill moose in the wild, while herders were required to send reindeer to faraway slaughter-houses, resulting in expenses and waste. This supports the findings of Jääskö, who wrote, "the commercialisation and centralization of meat processing (including slaughtering) causes a decrease in numbers of people practising a reindeer economy as well as a decrease in opportunities for other local people to benefit from raw materials from reindeer. Not only does it result in reduction of jobs, but in impoverishment of the culture as well (1999, pp. 37-38)." As stated by Riseth, "the historical record is that the internal system has been functioning well for centuries and that the problems faced by the herders have had external causes (2003, p. 233)." Among these external causes are new requirements for meat processing. One interviewee explained, in English, "The governments are doing some good and some not so good things. They don't understand reindeer herding really. They restrict our opportunities. The strict laws on how to butcher for example. That shows that they really do not know what they are talking about. Nothing would be better than butcher the animals on the spot, rather than sending them onto the butcheries."

Other Sámi entrepreneurs in Norway complained that they were suffering from the fact that Finland and Sweden are becoming increasingly integrated into the European Union. Sámi entrepreneurs also complained about regulations[11] and about bookkeeping requirements imposed by the state. None expressed any interest in aggressive American-style marketing campaigns.

[11] The reindeer sector in Norway was regulated by the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, until jurisdiction was passed on to the Royal Ministry of Agriculture. All herding became regulated by Norwegian Reindeer Herding Act, and the Norwegian Reindeer Husbandry Association was made to report to the Royal Ministry of Agriculture. More recently, the Royal Ministry for the Environment has been involved. Several Sámi interviewees resented the fact that their livelihood was controlled by non-Sámi reindeer administrators who did not fully understand the local culture

In the competitive global environment, reindeer herding is not as profitable as other sectors. Neither are young reindeer owners supported any way, which causes some to shift to other occupations, forcing them to migrate from their homeland. Turi (2002) estimated that there remained only 100,000 reindeer herders. Pastoralists find themselves in a difficult dilemma. An article about Norway concludes, "He might either become a criminal, legally speaking, because laws and regulations often exclude established and well-proven forms of management, or he may be punished economically because the policy of subsidies only pays for those who manage their herds the way the state wants them to – and that is a way contrary to most Sámi values and customs (Bjørklund 2004, p. 135)."

Much literature has focused on the modernisation (Rostow, 1953, 1957, 1960) and dependency perspectives, both of which equate development with economic growth and industrialisation, and both of which assume that that evolution from a traditional to a modern society is essential, but problematic. In his discussion of the modernisation theory, Brohman (1996) suggested the existence of cultural barriers to modernisation, and Tucker wrote, "Other cultural formations were viewed primarily as forms of resistance to modernization which had to be overcome (Tucker, 1999, p. 3)." Yet, the Sámi have modernised smoothly, adopting the newest communications and positioning technologies, and in some cases using helicopters to herd reindeer. One interviewee explained in English, "We use cell phones and snow scooters and four wheel drive, and there is some new technology on the way…a little chip that we can transplant into the reindeer and then herd them just sitting with our computers. We'll invest in such equipment when it is here."

The dependency theory critiques the modernisation perspective and links the lack of development to capitalism and globalisation. In contrast, regulation theory (Scott 1988) analyses the global economy, in terms of development regimes of accumulation (Storper and Walker, 1989) and social regulation (Peck and Tickell, 1992). For some time, the world has been experiencing a shift to a flexible regime of accumulation (Komninos 1989). Sensitive to variations in demand, the flexible regime of accumulation calls for increasingly specialised workplaces and a greater reliance on subcontracting and networks (Dana, 2000). This coincides with a decrease in hierarchic control (Wright and Dana, 2003), and an increase in co-operation. In modern Western society, this is called the "New Economy." For the Sámi people, co-operation has traditionally been the essence of enterprise. "The most important characteristic of pastoralism is that it is a predominant economic activity in which the whole family participates (Tuisku, 2002, p. 101)."

In Sámi society, "individual decisions are valued …especially when it comes to reindeer husbandry (Bjørklund, 2004, p. 134)." In contrast to some peripheral communities that have been excluded from capitalism, the Sámi people have long practiced sustainable capitalism in an environmentally friendly way. Itkonen (1951) found that an average-sized family required 300 reindeer to support its members. Shor and Shor stated that "Twenty females are the minimum for a practical herd (1954, p. 269)." Whitaker noted that a Sámi by the name of N. M. Fjällström reported that "a family of 3 would require 20 reindeer for their own personal needs (i.e. food), apart from those sold to bring in income (1955, p. 35)." Siuruainen and Aikio (1977) calculated that a family would need to own 250-300 registered reindeer to exist without other income. In contrast, a shepherd would require many more sheep, and much land. Wrightson wrote, "A flock of a thousand ewes is unquestionably a valuable property. Such a large flock…is maintained

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and who governed in accordance with interests of mainstream society. The respondents claimed that agriculture was in competition with herding, thereby resulting in a conflict of interest.

upon about 1,000 acres of land…Where 1,000 stock ewes are kept 1,100 lambs may be reasonably looked for (1905, p. 195).”

While neo-Marxist literature claims that capitalism is exploitative, that practiced by the Sámi people is not so. Globalisation, however, may force Sámi people to move away from environmentally-friendly, sustainable capitalism. Until WWII, the Sámi people relied only on local sources, for their energy requirements. As of the 1950s, they became increasingly dependent on imported fuel, and the introduction of snowmobiles into reindeer herding in 1962 exacerbated the situation (Müller-Wille and Pelto, 1971; Pelto, 1973). Pelto and Müller-Wille explained that cash became increasingly important, “Before 1963, the costs for equipment to work in reindeer herding were essentially zero…Full participation in mechanized reindeer herding, on the other hand, means cash outlays for the snowmobile (1972/3, p.136).” It may be argued that these changes led to the encouragement of over-consumption and overdevelopment at the cost of the environment. Is Dube (1988) correct that development is a homogenising and irreversible process that results in the decline of differences between nations? Relating to the literature, observations suggest that the modernisation and dependency perspectives present incompatible views of the relationship between the Sámi people and the developed world; the modernisation prescription is mismatched with Sámi objectives relating to their traditions, culture and values, and the role that these are to play in development. As argued by Helander, “the time is ripe for a new paradigm when looking at the issues of Indigenous people (1999, pp. 26-27).”

Toward the Future

Using the words of Barth, “Let us therefore provisionally focus on the differing character of pastoral and agricultural activities (1973, p. 12).” Sámi reindeer herders, who were interviewed for this paper, are concerned that community-based, pastoral self-employment may soon be phased out in favour of agricultural reindeer business. As argued by Beach, “In the Soviet Union large-scale reindeer ranching already exists, but in Fennoscandia growth toward ranching can be painful for the Saami. They face a difficult dilemma: large market-oriented ranching businesses seem to promise the best economic return (especially in the light of state policies fostering this development), and, with a rapidly rising cost of living, increased profits are most attractive. At the same time, traditional Saami social relations, with private ownership of reindeer…do not support such a move (1990, pp. 295-296).”

Reindeer are sensitive with regards to what they eat. They prefer fresh natural food, and they have traditionally travelled looking for new fresh food supplies; hence they have not stayed in one place. On a ranch, they can be fed expensive pellets,[12] but there is still an issue of space. When crowded, reindeer catch contagious disease from one another. It is therefore preferable for them to be given more space per head, than is the case with other animals.

Whereas cash has gained very much importance with the relatively recent introduction of new “necessities” such as snowmobiles, mobile telephones, GPS technology, and Internet access, it could be highly beneficial to improve profitability in the sector, through increased value creation and vertical integration. Downstream integration would allow herders to profit from a greater portion of the value chain.

A value adding programme was introduced in 2001, governed by a committee comprised of representatives from the National Reindeer Herder’s Organisation, from the Royal Department of Agriculture and from the Sámi Parliament. Managed by the Norwegian Industrial and

[12] One herder said, “It is the reindeer who feed me; the day that I have to feed the reindeer then I’ll quit.”

Regional Development Fund, the programme focuses on sustainable processing with the use of technology, and without degrading pasture resources. The programme was evaluated by the Nordland Research Institute, Norut-NIBR Finnmark and the Norwegian Agricultural Economics Research Institute, and found to be successful (Rønning, Kjuus, Vesterli and Karlstad, 2004). Such programmes should be continued. Emphasis on marketing also appears to be appropriate. Marketing co-operation and networking (Dana, 2000) may also prove useful.

It appears, however, that some decision-makers do not fully understand the environment of the Sámi. New requirements for have caused unnecessary difficulties. A policy writer appears to have neglected the fact that cockroaches cannot live outdoors in Arctic winters. Rather than transport reindeer to the south (at a financial cost to the herder and to the discomfort of the animals), it appears to make more sense for reindeer to be processed in Sápmi.

It also appears that government has wrongly assumed that reindeer meat should not be smoked in a *lavvu* tent, for hygienic reasons. Sámi experts say this is unjustified, because the *lavvu* provides a sterile environment.

"Faced with differing national policies, the Saami, or Lapps, of Sweden, Norway, and Finland have had difficulty in forging a united front to protect traditional activities undermined by the resource-development projects of their governments (Judge, 1983, p. 149)." Vesilind observed, "They want to develop, most Saami say, but not as Norwegians (1983, p. 194)."

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