“This is not a wilderness. This is where we live.”

Enacting nature in Unjárga-Nesseby, Northern Norway

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Note on languages and words

Throughout the thesis, Sámi terms, place names and names on animals and plants are presented in the North Sámi language according to current orthography. In several cases, however, the Unjárga-Nesseby dialect has been decisive for terms and names included (see e.g. table 1).

In cases where both Sámi and Norwegian names, terms and expressions are referred to directly in the text, without further explanations, they are written in italics, included in brackets and divided by a forward slash. The Sámi term is referred to first, followed by the corresponding term in Norwegian, e.g. outfields (meahcci/utmark). Occasionally only one of the languages is referred to in the text, dependent upon the language preferred by my informants in the particular situations.

The denomination Sámi can be spelled in several different ways, as Sámi, Sami or Saami. In this thesis I have chosen to use the variant Sámi.
1

Nature and the North – an introduction

This thesis is about nature practices in Unjárga-Nesseby, a coastal Sámi community in Northern Norway, and the various ways these practices conjoin interrelations of humans, animals, plants, seasonality and weather. The analysis is based upon ethnographic data encompassing harvesting practices, food production activities, the sharing of food products and ways through which change is perceived and explained.

With its Arctic location, Unjárga-Nesseby belongs to a region of particular relevance to climate change research. In my study, everyday activities and conversations related to the Unjárga-Nesseby landscape serve as a basis to explore the concept of nature and investigate how the notion of global climate change actualizes nature in new ways. Nature thus provides the unifying theme of this thesis. Or rather natures do. As my thesis focuses on the processes through which nature is produced, or enacted, I show how different natures are brought into being through the interaction of people and landscapes, including weather and seasonal variations, as well as through materiality and discourse. I further look at how nature and weather is up-scaled in climate change research contexts to represent global phenomena.

Addressing how knowledge may be enacted as local, through specific nature practices, as well as global, by evoking universalized understandings of nature and climate, I examine the fluidity of knowledge.

“No one lives in the world in general,” Geertz (1996: 262) states, and our experiences and understandings of the world, and hence of nature and climate, depend upon our position in it. With the words of Bender (2002: 106), “[d]ifferent people, differently placed, engage with the world in different ways,” or enact different worlds. Through practical engagement with our surroundings, regardless of type, as well as the flows of socio-material connections being part of this engagement, our nature relations are created, maintained and transformed. Within this relationality, weather and climate may also play their part in the making of realities.
As this thesis focus on practices, and how natures come into being, it allows for particularities involved in Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants’ nature-based activities. Rather than focusing on ‘a local community’s nature relations’, which would not only prove less tangible but also present a more generalized picture, this perspective encourages the bringing of multiplicity and variability into view. With practices related to nature-based activities as my point of departure, I am able to investigate how specific practices enact specific natures and how these practices and natures take part in constituting Unjárga-Nesseby as a place.

Particularities and multiplicity, I argue, need to be included in investigations of human-nature relations. “If reality is enacted into being in particular orderings of diverse material, textual and social practices and relations, then it follows that alternative orderings are generative of alternative realities” (Lavau 2008:43). This is not a relativistic stance, but a relational one (Bingham and Hinchliffe 2008). If we, following Lavau, are aware of this multiplicity, and take it into account, it may open up for new ways of accounting for particularities of nature.

Nature in anthropology

Throughout the history of anthropology, the concepts of nature and culture have been essential to anthropological research and theoretical development.1 During recent decades, the nature-culture divide has been critically examined, within anthropology as well as in other disciplines. The present focus on increasing global challenges of aggregated environmental threats has initiated a renewed interest in nature as a source of anthropological investigation.

The notion of nature is complex, with a multitude of meanings attached to it. These range from materiality, via process (evolution or ‘life itself’) to representing cosmos or the life world (e.g. Coates 1998, Macnaghten and Urry 1998, Dove and Carpenter 2008). Nature is further an etic, or analytic, notion within the natural and social sciences as well as an emic term of importance for people’s structuring of the world. In both versions, the notion of nature is often seen in contrast to the notion of society.

In historical terms, the juxtaposition of nature and society in the ‘West’ reached its fullest development in the nineteenth century (Macnaghten and Urry 1998). Modernity at this

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1 I do not attempt to chronologically outline a complete history of the nature debate within anthropology, as it is too huge to be dealt with here. For historical accounts on nature within anthropology, see e.g. Cronon 1995, Descola and Pálsson 1996 and Franklin 2002. See also Coates (1998) for a review of western attitudes to nature throughout history.
time involved “the belief that human progress should be measured and evaluated in terms of
the domination of nature, [a view that] presupposed the doctrine of human exceptionalism:
that humans are fundamentally different from and superior to all other species” (ibid.: 7).
These ideas were primarily influenced by concepts that evolved within the Judeo-Christian
tradition and Cartesian thinking, separating body and mind. Only humans were believed to be
endowed with capacities and qualities such as mind, reason and free will, and thus capable of
attributing meaning to all phenomena (Casimir 2008). “Not realizing that these phenomena
themselves are products of human cognition, these attributed meanings were then related to
different values attached to specific types and clusters of phenomena” (ibid.: 2). Accordingly,
also the environment was imbued with value-meaning, and ‘nature’ came to be thought of as
the opposite of ‘culture’.

This divide influenced the early theoretical developments within the field of
anthropology, where a focus on the social resulted in classical texts regarding nature “as a
linguistic and symbolic framework for the social and as an other to the social” (Franklin 2002:
60). Pálsson (2012) further sees this nature-society divide echoed in present day academic
structures and disciplinary boundaries, such as the separation of social and biological
anthropology.

looks into the universality of “capital-N Nature.” While many things are said to be universal,
Tsing argues that “the two most historically successful universal claims – which continue to
form exemplars for all universality – are still God and Nature” (ibid.). Tsing presents the
historical connectedness of the two concepts, dating back to the European Renaissance where
scientific methods required theological explanations: “Only because God was known to be
universal could Nature be depicted that way.”

Following the emergence of the new sciences of physics, astronomy and mathematics
in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the study of nature shifted focus to become the study
of how nature is materially constituted (Macnaghten and Urry 1998). Scientific methods no
longer required theological explanations, and with the Enlightenment and Romanticism, ideas
of ‘natural laws’ of nature evolved alongside ideas of the natural as original innocence.
Eventually, “the division between nature and society increasingly came to take a spatial form,
with society in and at the centre and nature as the ‘other’ pushed out to the margins” (ibid.: 14).
This way of locating nature outside the social domain has ultimately brought about ideas
of human superiority, exploitation and degradation, but also of humans as managers and possible saviours of nature as wilderness.2

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, notions of nature as ‘out there’ came to influence ‘western’ societies in general and the sciences in particular. Still, such views can be recognized, amongst others, in environmental management practices and in the idea that natural resource based livelihoods are more ‘natural’ than urban ways of living. Since the 1990s, though, anthropologists, as well as other social scientists, have challenged modern intellectual traditions working from the dualistic premise that society and nature are non-overlapping domains of reality (see e.g., Haraway 1991, Latour 1993, Arnold 1996, Ellen and Fukui 1996, Descola and Pálsson 1996, Milton 1996, Macnaghten and Urry 1998, Ingold 2000; 2011).

These studies have highlighted the need to explore “more nuanced understandings of the ways that humans live in, understand, and shape their environment and the non-human species with which they share their world” (Peterson 1998:179). Furthermore, they have underlined the importance of looking at the engagements between people and their environment as flexible, ongoing and mutually constitutive relations. With ethnographic data providing empirical counter-examples to universalistic ideas on opposing categories such as nature and culture, ‘Western’ assumptions about the ‘objectiveness’ and ‘naturalness’ of these terms have been challenged.

Tim Ingold’s (2000) way of trying to bridge the conventional divide between nature and culture is exemplified in his phenomenologically inspired unfolding of the concept ‘environment’. By recognizing how we as humans are never external to our physical surroundings, Ingold acknowledges the processual, indivisible totality of organisms and environments (ibid.). As this means that the environment is continuously under construction, it is further intrinsically temporal: “[E]nvironments, since they continually come into being in the process of our lives – since we shape them as they shape us – are themselves fundamentally historical” (Ingold 2000: 20).

In Ingold’s notion of the environment, nature is neither separated from humanity nor history. During the last decade, several studies have expanded on this perspective to show that, in addition of being a cultural construction, the nature-culture divide is “enacted into being – and refracted through – material-semiotic practices” (Lien and Law 2011: 69, see also Mol, 2002, Law 2004; 2007 and Lavau 2008). In the next section I give a more thorough

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2 For a critical discussion on nature as wilderness, see Cronon 1995.
presentation of the theoretical attempts to overcome the nature-culture dichotomy and the idea of a singular nature separated from social practices and human experience, which have inspired my research.

**Phenomenology and the weather-world**

The main arguments in this thesis are built on theoretical approaches from two main sources of inspiration; phenomenology and material semiotics. Evolving in the different fields of philosophy and science and technology studies respectively, both theoretical approaches challenge the nature-culture divide and give room to include sensorial experiences and materiality in studies on nature. By keeping bodily experiences at the centre in studying peoples’ life worlds, both phenomenology and material semiotics acknowledge the human body as the basis from which our sensorial experiences with the world occur (Ween and Flikke 2009). Furthermore, none of the approaches are social constructivist, as they acknowledge the world to be more than social concepts in the human mind. While sharing the preconditions for theoretical thinking mentioned above, the two approaches differ in the way they constitute relations between people and nature, their analytical focus and their terminology (ibid.).

Drawing on phenomenology, Ingold (1996: 26) underlines that human intentions and actions are grounded “within the context of an ongoing and mutually constitutive engagement between people and their environments.” This statement is based on phenomenological notions of the world and of human reality as ontologically inseparable. In an attempt to overcome the dualistic way of thinking, where mind is separated from body and culture is separated from nature, the attention is turned towards an understanding of humans as directly involved in our surroundings, by “being-in-the-world” (Heidegger 1962:107). Consequently, the relationship between humans and our surrounding environments is, according to phenomenology, dialectical. This dialectical relationship forms the basis of our life world, from which we acquire direct knowledge (see e.g. Heidegger 1962, Merleau-Ponty 1962, Gooch 1998, Ingold 1996; 2000, and Willerslev 2007).

Merleau-Ponty (1962) sees the world as the area of experience in which we find our self and in consequence are part of. At the same time, he is careful to stress that the world is not only an aspect of the human consciousness. The world is already there. Still, this world is
not a static and unchangeable whole. Our understanding and experience of the world is dependent upon our place in it:

[T]he system of experience is not arrayed before me as if I were God, it is lived by me from a certain point of view (…) I am not a spectator, I am involved and it is my involvement in a point of view which makes possible both the finiteness of my perception and its opening out upon the complete world as a horizon of every perception” (Merleau-Ponty 1962:304).

In this way, Merleau-Ponty opens up for an understanding of the world as both a preobjective, authentic lifeworld and as generalized knowledge in a particular worldview (Gooch 1998).

In the following chapters I draw on phenomenological approaches, and in particular those of Ingold (2000; 2011), in examining the connection between practical and sensorial experiences, activities and interactions in and with nature, and people’s perceptions of and ties to their local environment. Rather than being passed down from one generation to another, practical knowledge about nature “undergoes continual generation and regeneration within the context of people’s practical engagement with significant components of the environment” (Ingold and Kurttila 2000: 192). These components are not only terrestrial, Ingold (2011: 135) reminds us, emphasizing that we do not live on the fixed ground, but “in the swirling midst of the weather-world.”

In this thesis, weather and climate are included as significant components in human-environment practices. In addition to phenomenology and Ingold’s weather-world, I am inspired by Actor Network Theory (ANT) and Latour (2005), as Latour argues that all science of the social has to begin with an explanation of who and what participate in action, even though this might mean letting in non-human elements. In what follows, I will show how weather and climate, as well as other non-human actants, have agency in the sense that they are “presented in an account as doing something, that is, making some difference to a state of affairs” (Latour 2005: 52, original emphasis).

Ingold would likely not have approved the linkage created between his and Latour’s approach. In his article ‘When ANT meets SPIDER’, Ingold (2011) clearly distances himself from an ANT perspective. The article communicates a philosophical discussion between an ant and a spider, where both present their understandings of the world and their place in it. ANT stands for Actor Network Theory, here taken from the position of Latour. SPIDER, on

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3 “The term ‘actant’ is used to capture the importance of looking beyond the activities of human beings. (…) Things also have agency, they are not simply the passive ‘objects’ of human attention, but also variously enable and support, or resist and disrupt human intention” (Harvey 2012: 117).
the other hand, represents Ingold’s own position, “the position that Skilled Practice Involves Developmentally Embodied Responsiveness” (ibid.: 94).

While I understand Ingold’s resistance to ANT’s principle of symmetry among all things in the world, I nevertheless find the opposition he describes between ANT and SPIDER to be exaggerated. Rather than attributing agency “to objects that do not grow or develop, that consequently embody no skill, and whose movement is not therefore coupled to their perception” (ibid.: 94), Ingold argues that agency should only be ascribed skilled practitioners whose movements are attentive: “It is the attentiveness of this movement that qualifies it as an instance of action and, by the same token, qualifies me as an agent” (ibid.: 94, original emphasis). While Ingold’s definition of agency distances him from an ANT perspective, I find this to be an unnecessary move. Within Latour’s broader definition of agency, there remains room for different distributions of intentionality among the various actants contributing in “making some difference to a state of affairs” (Latour 2005: 52). For my purposes, I therefore find these two ways of thinking to be compatible, providing complementary perspectives useful for my investigations.

In my following analyses, I combine Ingold’s phenomenological approach to human-nature relationships with a Latour-inspired sensitivity to the non-human elements involved in these relationships. This provides me with an analytic tool that allows for a more thorough discussion of the complexity of my Unjärga-Nesseby empirical material. From my initial investigation of the data it became evident that my theorizations and analyses would benefit from adding a more material-oriented perspective to my phenomenological approach, and so material semiotics developed as my other main source of theoretical inspiration.

**Material semiotics and nature enactments**

Material semiotics evolved within Science and Technology Studies (STS) and, corresponding to phenomenology, this approach rejects the foundational division between nature and society. Material semiotics confronts the conventional assumption that there exists a singular reality out there, beyond our selves, independent of and preceding our actions and thoughts (Lavau 2008). In other words, the assumption that the world is a constant whole is rejected.

Consisting of a set of theoretical and methodological practices that comprise relationality, heterogeneity and performativity, material semiotics sees the world as continuously generated by socio-material relations (Law 2007). Realities are constantly
enacted rather than reported or interpreted. “To posit realities as enacted or produced, however, is not to infer them as simply the product of human action,” Lavau (2008: 40) states, illustrating how a material semiotic approach differs from classical anthropology.

John Law (2004: 140) sees the world as “an unformed but generative flux of forces and relations that work to produce particular realities”. Simultaneously, Law is careful to distance his ‘out-thereness’ from a static, distant, pre-formed ‘out there’ (ibid.). Instead, the world is seen as an unformed and formative field of possibility. “In this heterogeneous world, everything plays its part, relationally” (Law 2007: 11). This is not to say that a material world does not exist in its own right, but that the ontology of the world, and thus also nature, is “brought into being, sustained or allowed to wither away in common, day-to-day socio-material practices” (Mol 2002: 6). Similar to phenomenology, such an approach to the world and to nature calls for a focus on everyday practices.

“If practices are foregrounded,” Mol (ibid.: 5) states, “there is no longer a single passive object in the middle, waiting to be seen from the point of view of seemingly endless series of perspectives. Instead, objects come into being – and disappear – with the practices in which they are manipulated.” Enacting realities into being is, from the perspective of material semiotics, still not just about practices, actions and doings. Also stories are performative:

If we neglect stories in our accounts of producing realities, then people start to resemble mute machines and the performative power of words goes unacknowledged. Furthermore, giving voice to the stories and metaphors that run alongside and through practice keeps us alert to the possibilities of the same act, told in different ways, as producing alternative realities. Thus we need also attend to the narratives and imagery through which people justify and make sense of all this activity (Lavau 2008: 40).

The inclusion of narratives and communication in the enactment of nature permits the material semiotics approach to also encompass the discursive/articulated aspects of peoples’ nature relations. Not only do our relations to nature influence the way we give voice to these experienced interconnections, but discourses on nature (local as well as national and international) may also influence the way nature is performed in practice.

“If practice becomes our entrance into the world,” Mol (2002: 157) states, “ontology is no longer a monist whole. Ontology-in-practice is multiple.” The focus on difference or multiplicity within material semiotics leads to the question of how things are made to hang together: “Layering realities, smoothing them together into a single narrative, translating one reality into another, rationalizing inconsistencies, and performing hierarchies of realities:
these are just some of the possibilities for coordinating multiple realities, making them cohere to maintain the commitment to singularity” (Lavau 2008: 45, see also Law 2004, Mol 2002). But it is also possible to make realities mutually exclusive, name realities as different objects, create composite objects, and locate realities in different places (Lavau 2008, Lien and Law 2011). Various coordination strategies are therefore needed in order to make multiple versions of an object hang together as one, like ‘nature’ or ‘climate change’.

An increased anthropological interest in knowledge practices and questions of ontology rather than representation has led to a recent diversity of anthropological studies inspired by Actor Network Theory and material semiotics (see e.g. Tsing 2010, Abram and Lien 2011, Harvey 2012, Lien et al. 2012). STS-inspired anthropology has revealed the productivity of such an interdisciplinary approach, but has also shown where the disciplines diverge, amongst others when it comes to ways of relating to context.

While the material semiotic perspective I build upon from science and technology studies does not focus on context – except from how contexts are created – I still find the anthropological emphasis on context relevant to my work. In order to treat my ethnographic material with due fairness, the way it seems right to me, I thus navigate within the field of social anthropology, while simultaneously following paths from STS when they lead me to what I consider to be the most relevant analyses of my data. A performative approach is significant both in my data gathering and in my analyses, but I still acknowledge my body as a reality and as a fieldwork tool. Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants’ bodily engagement in their weather-world activities further encourages a focus on the senses and the mutual constitution of people and natures.

In addition to phenomenology and material semiotics, I am inspired by multispecies ethnography (e.g. Haraway 2008, Kirksey and Helmreich 2010, Tsing 2010), evolving from the ‘species turn’ in anthropology, initiated by Donna Haraway’s work ‘When species meet’ (2008). Within multispecies anthropology, organisms that have previously been marginally included in anthropological accounts as part of the environment, as human food or as symbols, have been foregrounded in order to highlight the coexistence of humans and organisms to show how “encounters between homo sapiens and other beings generate mutual ecologies” (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010: 546). Throughout the thesis, such a multispecies ethnography is included in the various discussions on the Unjárga-Nesseby intermingling of humans, animals and plants.

Foundational for my ethnographic and theoretical investigations, independent of sources of inspiration, is a ‘lateral approach to knowledge-making’ (Hastrup 2011: 437),
through which I aim to show “an excess of perspectives, of cultivating differences, of making ever more things appear, as figures, perspectives and practices bumble into one another in collective life” (ibid.: 427). By acknowledging that no external position of overview exists, the various knowledge productions presented in this thesis, as well as the thesis itself, are found to be equally valid theorizations of the world, together forming a multiple reality enacted through a variety of socio-material processes. Rather than presenting different perspectives on nature and knowledge, I am interested in showing how different natures and knowledges are done.4

**Knowing nature(s)**

The multiple ways of relating to nature in Unjárga-Nesseby are, as we shall see, evident in people’s practical engagement with the environment and are further articulated in local discourse. In these particular activities and conversations, though, nature represents an abstract term preferably exchanged for specifying words like the mountains, the forests, the plains, the fjord and, in particular, the outfields.5 Here, various natures are constantly created in the actual, practical activities going on in a multitude of overlapping localities, or in storytelling and discussions about these places.

The diverse ways of relating to nature, and thus the diverse Unjárga-Nesseby natures, can be seen as an essential part of the ‘known’ people feel at home by. Through the creation of a composite object of local nature, the multiple natures are made to hang together. In this way they are also shared. In other words, knowing nature in Unjárga-Nesseby, in all its diversity of experiences and enactments, contains the personal and the collective, the material and the discursive.

Marchand (2010: 2) recognizes knowledge-making as “a dynamic process arising directly from the indissoluble relations that exist between minds, bodies, and environment.” In

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4 This formulation is inspired by Mol (2002) and the way she approaches the body and its diseases.

5 Throughout the thesis I use the term *outfield* as a direct translation of the Sámi word *meahcci* and the Norwegian word *utmark*, as *utmark* was the word used by my informants during nature-based activities and conversations about such activities in the Unjárga-Nesseby landscape. Here, outfield refers to ‘common land’ and is used in a broad sense, to denote the local landscape that people in Unjárga-Nesseby have some sort of attachment to, be it through own experiences from a variety of activities or through narratives, stories and myths. For a thorough presentation and analysis of the term, see chapter 4. For a presentation and discussion on my choice of using *outfields* rather than *nature* in conversations with my informants regarding their various outdoor activities, see chapter 3.
line with Marchand I see the making of knowledge as ongoing processes, but with my fieldwork data as a point of departure, I want to show how minds, bodies and environments are mutually constitutive and that the existence of the one presupposes the existence of the others.

In his introduction to the edited volume ‘Ways of knowing’, Harris (2007: 1, my emphasis) writes, “a ‘way of knowing’ is the movement of a person from one context to another, rather than (...) different kinds of knowledge.” Harris further explains that the phrase ‘ways of knowing’ is chosen “to remind us that any knowledge is inevitably situated in a particular place and moment: that it is inhabited by individual knowers and that it is always changing and emergent” (ibid.: 4). Harris’s approach to knowledge, as well as Marchand’s (2010: 12) emphasis on the state of ‘knowing’ as “one of constant flux, update and transformation”, have served as sources of inspiration in my investigation of the enactment of knowledge.

An approach to knowledge as situational and fluid rather than detached and fixed is presented in several examples throughout the thesis. Not only when it comes to nature-related knowledges, but also as regards the enactment of knowledge as Sámi, Norwegian, gender-specific, age related, connected to profession or a combination of more of these as well as other linkages. As we shall see, different elements are included while others are left out, in order to enact particular knowledges relevant to the story being told. Choosing this point of departure for investigating knowledge is not to say that a ‘way of knowing’ is not Sámi or Norwegian or whatever other connection(s) it may evoke. Rather, my ethnographic data reveals the importance of highlighting the fluid boundaries between the different elements various enactments of knowledge may include or exclude, depending upon the context in question.

While a large proportion of the ways of knowing included in the following chapters is related to practical activities, knowledges are also expressed in narratives and discourse. This thesis shows how a detailed analysis of human-nature relations and a processual knowledge approach provides an opportunity to move beyond the local-global dichotomy and investigate the processes resulting in enactments of knowledge as either particular or abstract.
CAVIAR research in Unjárga-Nesseby

Within the circumpolar IPY-consortium Community Adaptation and Vulnerability in Arctic Regions (CAVIAR), the overarching project within which my PhD was a constituent part, a move from the locally specific to the generalizable formed a key element within the consortium’s research. Through an interdisciplinary collaboration between the eight Arctic nations, the broad goal of CAVIAR was to enhance the theory, empirical understanding and practical application of processes that shape vulnerability and adaptation in communities across the polar region (Smit et al. 2010). The project addressed how social, cultural, economic and political processes operate at multiple scales and affect adaptive capacity with regard to changing climatic conditions in Arctic communities (ibid.).

Local participation and engagement was seen as a prerequisite for the consortium, so as to ensure that research was founded on the experiences of local residents and findings to be relevant to local ways of living (Smit et al. 2010). The results of the collective CAVIAR research are “place-specific in its provision of insights in each community case study, and regionally generic in its systematic comparison and integration of findings over many communities in the Arctic” (ibid.: 17). This scientific move from the locally situated to more general forms of knowledge, constitute an interesting dimension in the examination of the flow of knowledge, and is included in the research discussions within this thesis.

Within the frame of CAVIAR, my PhD research focus was grounded in an interest in grasping the broad and complex picture of people’s relations to nature. Being one among four municipalities in Northern Norway interested in participating in the CAVIAR consortium, Unjárga-Nesseby evolved as a possible field site for my investigations. Outwards, the municipality is presented as a small community close to nature (www.nesseby.kommune.no). In addition, it is defined as a bilingual coastal Sámi community where “the Sámi and the Norwegian languages are placed on equal terms” (ibid.). Being in search of a fieldwork location, I found Unjárga-Nesseby interesting as a point of departure to further investigate the common notion of a clear division between a Sámi and a Norwegian way of relating to nature,

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6 The International Polar Year 2007-2008 had the aim to “exploit the intellectual resources and science assets of nations worldwide to make major advances in polar knowledge and understanding” (International Council for Science 2004:7). Distinct from the former International Polar Years, a focus on human dimensions was included amongst the IPY 2007-2008 research themes (see also Krupnik et al. 2005).

7 See in particular chapter 8.

8 The three others being Hammerfest municipality and Kjøllefjord in Lebesby municipality, both in the county of Finnmark, and Vestvågøy in the Lofoten Islands, Nordland County.
as it is often presented in the Norwegian media, accentuated in natural management
discourses and emphasized in processes of identity formation. Provided with the possibility to
stay one year in this municipality, I was interested to see if, by participating in actual nature
practices performed, I could move behind the common words and expressions used to
describe peoples’ nature relations. Furthermore, Unjárga-Nesseby appeared as an interesting
site for looking into the commonly assumed division between indigenous, local and scientific
knowledge (see e.g. Berkes 1999, Magnussøn 2011).

With a view on knowledge making as situated, ongoing processes, I wanted to be open
to the heterogeneity and fluidity hidden from view in such defined categories as the ones
above. This, I hoped, could provide an understanding of the interdependency of contextual
conditions and enactments of knowledge, by revealing in what situations, through which
practices or on what explanatory basis knowledge would be enacted as being of a particular
kind. Furthermore, I wanted to investigate the mutual influence between place-specific
discourses in Unjárga-Nesseby and scientific discourses, to see if the seemingly distinct
debates unfolding in the community of Unjárga-Nesseby and the scientific communities
respectively were not so far removed after all. The thesis will show that by paying attention to
the processes through which the different debates are produced, interconnections and gradual
transitions become apparent. Here climate change research serves as an entrance for looking
at how enactments of knowledge and scale-making processes, whether ‘up-scaled’ or ‘down-
scaled’, take part in producing different nature realities.

**Weather, seasons and climate**

Weather fluctuation and seasonal variation constitute a central aspect of Unjárga-Nesseby
living. The following ethnography will show how weather phenomena and seasonal rhythms
are conditions for action, just as much as they are interactants in processes of world
formation. Being used to a weather-world where a certain degree of predictability is
recognized within the seasonal variations, Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants interact flexibly with
both expected and unexpected shifts in their surroundings, throughout the year, as well as
from one year to another.

Within anthropological research, the weather conditions characteristic to the
researcher’s study area unsurprisingly influence the degree to which weather is included in
written accounts. In those cases where anthropologists have paid attention to the weather as
something more than a backdrop to their investigations, it is often in order to shed light on food production cycles and settlement patterns (e.g. Evans-Pritchard 1969 [1940], Bruijn and van Dijk 1995), or to show how the weather influences peoples’ harvesting activities (e.g. Dahl 2000, Nuttall 2009). The way the informants themselves relate to or interact with the weather has nevertheless seldom been foregrounded in anthropological studies.

A reason for the relatively scarce focus on weather in more recent anthropological accounts may be, as suggested by Taussig (2004), that the weather is no longer a divine mystery or pure force, but has become “a ‘floating signifier’, the empty chatter with neighbors in the elevator” (ibid.: 47, see also Strauss and Orlove 2003). While this might hold true in some urban, ‘western’ settings, there are still several situations and contexts where the weather is perceived prominently, and plays a significant part of peoples’ everyday life, like Taussig (2004) himself so sensuous describes in ‘My cocaine museum’ (see also Low and Hsu 2007, Lien and Spjuth 2009). As we shall see, choosing weather as a topic of conversation in Unjårga-Nesseby is not an act of avoiding more personal or unpleasant conversations. Instead, the omnipresent weather and seasonal variation, which influences natural recourses and outdoor activities, comprise an essential part of what constitutes the Unjårga-Nesseby inhabitants life-worlds.

Ingold (2011: 73) reminds us that “the inhabited world is constituted in the first place by the aerial flux of weather rather than by the grounded fixities of landscapes.” Furthermore, the different seasons of a year play a significant role in how outfield activities and seasonal variations in Unjårga-Nesseby are interconnected. As experienced by Krause (2012: 13-14), from his fieldwork by the Kemi River in Finnish Lapland; “[s]easonal variations seem to belong to life, just like the variations any person experiences in the course of growing up and ageing. Rather than as a series of discrete states, these socio-ecological seasons are experienced as ongoing transformations.” This thesis provides a presentation of life in Unjårga-Nesseby through seasonal activities enacted in, together with, or in other ways related to, the weather-world.

Experiencing the weather is highly sensorial. Climate, the way it is defined meteorologically, on the other hand, “can neither be experienced directly by our senses, nor measured indirectly by our instruments. Unlike the wind which we feel on our face or a raindrop that wets our hair, climate is a constructed idea” (Hulme et al. 2009:197, see also

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9 “Given its centrality to life and experience, the absence of weather from anthropological accounts of human ways of being and knowing is little short of extraordinary” Ingold (2010: 132) writes. In 2007, however, in a special issue of the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, the whole volume was dedicated the topic of wind.
Hastrup 2008, Ingold 2011). A parallel to the singularization of nature presented above can be found in the relatively recent singularization of the global climate (Heymann 2010). In his investigation of historical processes influencing different ideas of climate, Heymann shows how the term moved from representing local characteristics in the 19th century, to characterize a global phenomenon by the end of the 20th century (ibid.).

The emerging recognition of human activity as a ‘driver’ of global environmental change, together with ‘natural’ phenomena such as solar forcing and volcanic activity (Palsson et al. 2012), makes the climate change discourse an important context for present understandings and explanations of particular, local events. Whether a linkage between specific phenomena and global climate change is established, rejected or partly acknowledged, this thesis will show how the investigation of processes through which different climate related narratives are produced, serves as an entrance for exploring issues of knowledge production and scale making (e.g. Harvey 2007, Lien and Melhuus 2007, Tsing 2005). The various climate-associated narratives presented in this thesis, can be seen to make up equally legitimate enactments of overlapping as well as diverging nature realities.

Nature, ethnicity and flexibility in anthropology of Northern Norway

In addition to the theoretical inspirations mentioned above, also regional literature has influenced the work presented in this thesis. This influence spans from historical accounts where the physical environment of Northern Norway held a prominent position, to recent studies on the diversity and fluidity included in identity formation among people in the region.

For the early Norwegian anthropology, evolving in the 1950s, Northern Norway became an important area for studying small, local communities. Based on extensive fieldwork, these studies primarily focused on ecological adaptation, household dynamics, interethnic relations and cultural change in what was then considered peripheral localities.

Being among the first to use anthropological methods in the study of the Coastal Sámi, the British anthropologist Robert Paine spent two years of fieldwork in western Finnmark from 1951 to 1953 (Eyþórsson 2008). Through a focus on ecological adaptation and identity, Paine’s studies resulted in a detailed portrait of economic and cultural processes of change in a coastal Sámi community in Northern Norway in the 1950s (Paine 1957; 1965). During the

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10 See in particular chapter 8.
same years (1952-1953), the Norwegian anthropologist Harald Eidheim gathered data to his study on ethnic identity and living conditions further east in Finnmark (Eidheim 1958).

Based on his interest in the ethnic differences, Eidheim became the first social scientist to analyse the relation between Sámi and Norwegians. As stated by Ramstad and Thuen; “[his] contribution to the development of analytic tools in the anthropological study of the Sámi population and its relations to the Norwegian majority can hardly be overestimated” (ibid.: 240). Eidheim’s work focused on asymmetrical power relations and the Sámi minority situation in Norway, and in his early research he considers local and ecological premises to be important for his findings (Eidheim 1971).

The importance of local ecology is also prominent in the household analyses of Ingrid Rudie and the centre-periphery studies of Ottar Brox from the 1960s. Rudie’s work, based on fieldwork from Skallelv by the Varanger Fjord in Eastern Finnmark, is a study of social and economic change in a small community of farmers and fishers. Local households’ utilization of the natural resources, both in the fjord and on land, functions as Rudie’s point of departure: “Through specific decisions people seek solutions that are as favorable as possible in relation to a given ecologic situation” (Rudie 1969: 185). Recognizing Skallelv as a part of Norway, she additionally analyses the local situation in relation to Norwegian society at large. This leads her to include the national market situation in her definition of the ‘ecologic change’ to which local household members have to respond (ibid.: 186).

Ottar Brox (1966) writes about social and economic change in small communities in Northern Norway as well, but in more general terms, with a focus on the tension between centre and periphery. His book ‘What happens in Northern Norway?’ was a contribution to the discussion on Norwegian regional policy of the time, and was interpreted as an argument for strengthening regional development in the Norwegian north. In the study, based upon his research into households on Senja in Troms, Brox argues that the modernization processes of the Norwegian state had failed to recognize the viability of northern communities through long-term adaptation to the local environment.

Studies on social and cultural change in local communities, seen in relation to the Norwegian society as a whole, continued to be central to anthropology of Northern Norway in the 1970s and 1980s, where peoples’ ways of living locally were seen as active manoeuvres within a frame of national premises (e.g. Thuen and Wadel 1978, Holtedahl 1986, Lien 1987). These studies all focused on boundaries, until Marianne Gullestad’s work (1984; 1989) presented a regional approach where Norwegian everyday life was analysed within more flexible and permeable borders (Gullestad 1984).
Since the 1980s, equality has served as a key concept in anthropological research on Norwegian conditions, after Gullesstad (1989) presented ‘equality as sameness’ as a general expression for Norwegian social practices (see also Lien, Lidén and Vike 2001). Within Sámi Norwegian research, however, difference has been a central topic (Kramvig 2006, see also Hovland 1996).

In their study of Norwegian research on differences, Eriksen and Hoëm (1999) distinguish three stages within Norwegian Sámi research: The ethnological/ethnographical phase, where cultural Sámi expressions were recognized through explicit cultural differences, the system-theoretical phase, focusing on how boundaries between different ethnic groups were maintained through time, independent of a changing content, and the battle of the notion of culture showing how ethnic incorporation was based on a multitude of strategies that opened for various ways of being Sámi (ibid., see also Kramvig 2006).

In addition to the three phases above, Kramvig (2006) adds a fourth phase to the Norwegian Sámi research, a phase characterized by place, landscape and ethnic border-experiences (ibid.). According to Kramvig, this phase represents a reorientation within the Sámi research milieu, where diversity becomes more explicitly articulated. Quite a few studies portray ethnicity as just one among several categories of difference through which collective identification is articulated (e.g. Bjerkli and Thuen 1998, Minde 2000, Ween 2005). Some studies also illustrate how ethnicity is re-coded and included in more place-specific and locally entrenched categories (e.g. Kramvig 1999, Bjerkli 2000, Gaski 2000). My own studies contribute to this particular research phase, by representing place and landscape through my focus on local nature practices, and by showing how the relevance of ethnicity fluctuates and is highly contextual dependent when it comes to enactments of the Unjárga-Nesseby nature realities.

Coastal Sámi identity is no longer a social stigma in the way Eidheim (1971) reported in the early 1960s. This is not to say that the question of Sáminess is without relevance today, but the difference between the Sámi and the Norwegian is no longer treated as a straightforward, unambiguous divide (see e.g. Lien 1987, Klausen et al. 1995, Stordahl 1998, Hovland 1996, Kramvig 1999; 2006, Ween 2012a). Instead, identity among people in Finnmark is continuously negotiated.

In the majority of the Sámi identity studies referred to above, nature has not been an explicitly articulated theme of investigation. Nevertheless, I argue that nature is highly relevant to the research of such studies of identity. Based on the common notion of Sámi nature and culture as intertwined, and nature as an imperative premise for Sámi identity
formation, literature on Sámi ethnicity and identity can implicitly, to a greater or lesser degree, be seen to include nature (see also Gaski 2008). The following chapters will contribute significantly to this regional literature, by providing detailed empirical descriptions of contemporary life in Unjárga-Nesseby analysed in accordance with recent theoretical orientations.

The structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of a total of nine chapters. In chapter 1, that is now about to be rounded off, I have presented the thematic and theoretical background for my PhD investigations.

Chapter 2, ‘Unjárga-Nesseby – Spatial and temporal trajectories’, give a presentation of my fieldwork location that includes a biophysical and historical background for the following chapters, as well as an introduction to the present social and ethnic situation in the municipality. Even if my fieldwork has been place-specific, a main point of this chapter is to show what we may gain from treating the locality and community of Unjárga-Nesseby as continuously created, rather than regarding the municipality as a pre-existing bounded entity.

In chapter 3, ‘Methodology’, I turn to my methodological approach and introduce the methods used during fieldwork. This is further the chapter where I position myself and discuss the methodological challenges I encountered during fieldwork.

In Chapter 4, ‘This is not a wilderness, this is where we live’, I discuss the notion of place and introduce the reader to the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields. Illustrating how the complexity of the Sámi word meahcci disappears in the Norwegian version of the term, utmark, I further show how the two terms represent different juridical aspects. By including historical processes and environmental management regulations influencing peoples’ present day use of the Unjárga-Nesseby landscape, the chapter illustrates how ‘culture’ and ‘nature’ and ‘tame’ and ‘wild’ are dichotomies of limited relevance in the inhabitants’ use-oriented nature practices, through which people feel at home.

The following two chapters reveal how peoples’ activities in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields are intimately seasonally entwined, and draw attention to the multiplicity of seasonal nature practices and harvest activities performed throughout the year. In chapter 5, ‘Enacting nature(s) in seasons of snow’, various seasonal activities in the snow covered Unjárga-Nesseby landscape exemplify how practical activities in the outfields prove important to peoples’ identity formation and constitute an essential way of belonging among the
inhabitants. I furthermore show how outfield practices may function as an entrance to shared communality for visitors and newcomers. The chapter demonstrates how Unjárga-Nesseby is constituted in various ways, through different activities, in variable weather, within diverse temporalities.

Chapter 6, ‘Enacting nature(s) between snowmelt and snowfall’, gives a presentation of outfield practices carried out in seasons without snow. With the spring thaw a new landscape emerges, enabling other kinds of movements and activities than the ones performed in seasons of snow. Based on the practices presented in the chapter, I discuss the concept of domestication and show how activities in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields may represent a gendered landscape. Additionally, I demonstrate how various activities play their part in sustaining a feeling of continuity in outfield use, even if this use is continuously changing and given new meaning.

Chapter 7, ‘Food, living resources and the in-between of wild and tame’, focuses on the bodily, culinary and social practices closely connected to the harvest activities presented in the two preceding chapters of the thesis. Along with a presentation of seasonally influenced food preferences, and how preparation, consumption and sharing of food are activities through which individual and communal identities may be enacted, I describe and discuss various ‘ways of coping’ through circulation of food gifts, in reciprocal processes of providing and receiving a helping hand, and from different ways of gaining additional income. These findings lead to the chapter’s final discussion, questioning commonly taken for granted divides between ‘work and leisure’ and ‘the tame and the wild’.

In chapter 8, ‘Stories of environment transitions - Enacting nature(s) through talk and texts’, I examine how changes in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields and natural resources are experienced and acted upon. Here a tiny insect, the moth larva, serves as a point of departure for investigating the fluidity of knowledge and the linkages between the particular and the abstract, the way they unfold in a context of climate change related debates.

Finally, in chapter 9, ‘Multiple natures’, I sum up the main findings of my research, and argue that multiplicity and particularities should be taken into account in nature investigations, as this opens up for new ways of accounting for particularities of nature. Furthermore, in demonstrating how anthropology can contribute to the study of climate change, I show how a broad anthropological focus on nature practices may illuminate the way global abstractions become verified through the establishment of connections to particular places and specific events. By directing attention to such processes, it is possible to reveal how the global phenomenon of climate change can be recognized as real also through
experienced specificities. I further argue that by being aware of the ontological multiplicity in the world, also within climate change research, we can open for solutions to our present climate change challenges based on the variability that characterizes life on earth, rather than generalizations that do not fit peoples’ various realities.
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Unjárga-Nesseby
– Spatial and temporal trajectories

The municipality of Unjárga-Nesseby, with its 908 inhabitants\textsuperscript{11}, is located at 70°N and 29°E in Finnmark, the most northern and eastern county of Norway. Already surrounded by the municipalities of Vadsø, Deatnu-Tana and Sør-Varanger, Unjárga-Nesseby also shares a short border with Finland. The Russian border is barely a couple of hours car drive away (see figure 2).

Due to the municipality’s location, surrounding the inner part of the Varanger fjord, a combination of coastal fisheries, agriculture, reindeer herding, hunting and gathering has been of fundamental importance to the population in Unjárga-Nesseby for centuries. Today these combinations of activities no longer provide the same level of livelihood sustenance. Nevertheless, natural resource based activities and different kinds of harvesting still remain greatly significant for the residents, as a contribution to the subsistence economy, for recreation, in identity formation and in people’s sense of belonging.

The coastal Sámi municipality is bilingual, with Sámi and Norwegian as official languages, and was the second municipality in Norway to receive a bilingual name (following Gouvdageaidnu-Kautokeino in inner Finnmark). Since 26\textsuperscript{th} of April 1989 the official name of the municipality has been Unjárga-Nesseby, merging its Sámi and Norwegian name. According to Statistics Norway (2008), about 70\% of the population is considered to be Sámi. The rest of the population consists of people of, amongst others, Norwegian, Kven,\textsuperscript{12} Finnish, Russian, Philippine and Swedish ethnic background.

\textsuperscript{11} Statistics Norway 2012.

\textsuperscript{12} Finnish immigrants to Northern Norway from the 1600s up until the 1900s, and their descendants. Since 1998, the Kven have been officially acknowledged as a national Norwegian minority.
Figure 1: Map of Sápmi. Source: Winfried K. Dallmann.

Figure 2: Map of Eastern Finnmark. Source: Winfried K. Dallmann.
Figure 3: Map of Unjárga-Nesseby municipality. Source: Winfried K. Dallmann.
Upon arrival

To reach Unjárga-Nesseby, it is common to go by plane or ferry (Hurtigruten) to Vadsø or Kirkenes, two cities respectively located 50 and 125 km away from the municipal centre of Unjárga-Nesseby (figure 2). From these cities, it is necessary to travel by car or bus for the last part of the journey. The road from Vadsø is scattered with small villages and clusters of houses, as it winds through the landscape, close to the shore of the Varanger fjord. The route from Kirkenes is not only longer, but is also more varied, as it does not follow the fjord all the way. Instead the road winds back and forth between bays, barren mountains, birch covered valleys and vast marshes. There are long stretches without a building to be seen, suddenly interrupted by small villages, houses and cabins.

A third approach to Unjárga-Nesseby is by bus or car from the west. Whether coming from Finland or passing through inner Finnmark, you will eventually follow the Deatnu-Tana river through the Deatnu-Tana valley, before crossing the Seida mountain. As you pass the top of this mountain plateau, the Varanger fjord comes into distant view ahead of you. In just a short while you will reach the traffic circle in Vuonnabahta-Varangerbotn, the Unjárga-Nesseby municipality centre.

All three roads, from Vadsø, Kirkenes and Deatnu-Tana, meet at the roundabout in Vuonnabahta-Varangerbotn. This ensures that the slogan ‘the junction of Eastern Finnmark’ is a popular phrase in Unjárga-Nesseby municipality announcements and proclamations. The petrol station, the grocery store and the tavern Varangerkroa are located close to the roundabout. All three places are frequently visited by Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants, as well as by people passing by.

Vuonnabahta-Varangerbotn is further the location for the municipality’s kindergarten and elementary school, the city hall, the municipality service centre, the Coastal Sámi museum Várjjat Sámi Musea, a department of the Sámi Parliament, a Sámi language centre, a slaughterhouse, a silversmith, a couple of hair dressers and an ASVO workshop and outlet. Furthermore, an Italian restaurant and a fitness centre have recently opened in Ishavssenteret (the Arctic Ocean Centre) which also houses the grocery store.

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13 In Norwegian: Knutepunktet i Øst-Finnmark.

14 ASVO offers job training and facilitated work for persons outside the ordinary labour market. ASVO companies are found across the country.
A few kilometres east of Vuonnabahta-Varangerbotn, on the northern side of the fjord, the healthcare centre is located. The centre includes retirement homes as well as medical, dentistry and midwifery practices. The church in the village of Unjárga-Nesseby, farther east on the same side of the fjord, provides a landmark due to its position on the peninsula from which Unjárga-Nesseby received its name. Visible several kilometres away, from the east as well as from the west, the church is a frequently visited and photographed tourist attraction. The church dates back to 1858, one among the few buildings in the municipality that were not burned towards the end of World War II (see section on history below). Close to the church, the municipality’s fishing harbour and fiskemottak, a fish landing facility, is located. This is where the Unjárga-Nesseby fishers deliver their catch and moor their boats after the day spent hauling nets on the fjord. At the fiskemottak, the fish is frozen for domestic sale and export (see chapter 5).

In addition to the fjord, rounded ridges, barren cliffs and birch-covered slopes dominate the Unjárga-Nesseby landscape. Hay fields are scattered around the inhabited areas, but most of the land is uncultivated in the agricultural sense of the term. During the short summer, wild flowers bloom and numerous migratory birds inhabit the area. At this time of

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15 The Sámi term for peninsula is njárga while the Norwegian is nes. Both the Sámi and the Norwegian name of the village – and the municipality – refer to ‘the settlement on the peninsula’.
the year, European visitors and eager bird watchers often park their vans and cars on the sharpest bend of the road in order to secure the perfect photo. In winter the landscape is covered by snow. Despite sparse settlement, a large number of streetlights have been provided to supply an alternative source of light at a time of year when the sun does not rise above the horizon.

The number of inhabitants is a recurring concern for the future survival of the municipality. Following 1900, the highest number of registered inhabitants in Unjárga-Nesseby municipality was recorded in 1950. That year, the population amounted to 1511 persons (Hoëm 2007). Since then the population has fluctuated around 1000 inhabitants. The present count is roughly 900 persons. As the municipality spans 1 369 km$^2$, each inhabitant of the present population has 1.6 km$^2$ of the Unjárga-Nesseby landscape at their disposal.

![Houses by the fjord.](image)

**Picture 2:** Houses by the fjord.

**The Unjárga-Nesseby people**

According to my Unjárga-Nesseby informants, approximately 70% of the roughly 900 inhabitants in the municipality currently consider themselves to be Sámi.\textsuperscript{16} Corresponding numbers for 1930 and 1950 were 68% and 65%, respectively (see Hoëm 2007). The concept of Sáminess among Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants is however dynamic and situated, and being

\textsuperscript{16} This corresponds to the number from Statistics Norway referred to above.
Sámi does not necessarily exclude being Norwegian or Kven/Finnish, or holding some other kind of ‘mixed’ identity as well.

More than half the Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants speak or understand both Sámi and Norwegian (Unjárggaielda/Nesseby kommune 2011). Among the Sámi residents who did not learn Sámi in their childhood, several now make an effort to reclaim their Sámi language by attending language courses. In the kindergarten, the staff has experienced an increase in applications for the Sámi speaking department. Applications are also from parents who do not speak Sámi themselves and wish to give their children the opportunity to learn the Sámi language at an early age, even though it is not their spoken language at home. Among the 42 children in the Unjárga-Nessey kindergarten in 2010, 31 were registered by their parents as Sámi (Slaastad 2012). This amounts to 74 % of the kindergarten children, reflecting the ethnic composition of the population in general.

While there exist challenges connected to bilingualism in the kindergarten, and the school, and though these are recurrently discussed among Unjárga-Nesseby parents and politicians, ethnicity is in general not an issue when it comes to the municipality’s industries and workplaces. The exception is the reindeer herding industry, involving approximately 60 persons in total, as only persons of Sámi ancestry are allowed to have their own reindeer mark and own reindeer in the Sámi reindeer herding area (Lov om reindrift 2007, see also Sommerseth 2011). Non-Sámi spouses and helpers are however also actively involved in the Unjárga-Nesseby reindeer herding industry.

The Unjárga-Nesseby farmers and their families make up approximately the same number as the reindeer herders. The municipality’s agricultural sector consists of 13 sheep farms with over 1300 sheep combined, and one dairy farmer. Inhabitants of Sámi, Norwegian and Kven/Finnish descent are represented among the farmers.

In 2008, 12 fulltime fishers (guolásteaddji/yrkesfiskere), Sámi as well as Norwegian, were registered in Unjárga-Nesseby. The average age of the fishers at that time was approximately 50 years (Olsen, pers. comm.). However, in the last couple of years four young fishers have been recruited, bringing renewed optimism to the industry.

Among representatives of the primary industries, some combine two or several jobs, such as fisheries and carpentry or farming and teaching, in order to cope economically. During the times of the year where natural resources are scarce, or demands within the

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17 In northern Gudbrandsdal and Valdres, in the south of Norway, non-Sámi reindeer herding is organized in ‘tame reindeer associations’ (tamreinlag) (Ministry of Agriculture and Food 2002).
different primary industries are at a minimum, beneficial supplemental income can be gained from additional occupations (see chapter 5 and 6). In many families, with one adult employed in one of the three primary industries, the spouse often maintains an additional source of income.

During the last 50-60 years, the municipal service sector in Unjárga-Nesseby has grown steadily. Most current employment positions are connected to the service and public sector, examples of which are the municipal administration, the school and kindergarten, the Sámi parliament division and the museum. Other jobs are found within the carpentry profession, the tourist industry, the trade sector and the aquaculture industry. Some Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants also commute to jobs in Vadsø or Deatnu-Tana.

Compared to the number of inhabitants in the municipality, the amount of Unjárga-Nesseby clubs and associations is impressive and includes, amongst others, four village associations, three sports clubs, a marching band, garden club, hunter and fishing association, choir, shooting club, cabaret group and a club of trap racing enthusiasts (travlag). Less organized activities include skiing, ice fishing, snowmobile driving, ptarmigan snaring, dog sledging, river angling and berry picking. In addition, spare time can be used on a variety of cultural and social happenings throughout the year, including concerts, theatre productions, flea markets, exhibitions and sports arrangements.

Not all grown-up residents in Unjárga-Nesseby have their days divided into working hours and time of leisure. According to the statistics, 3 % of the Unjárga-Nesseby workforce is unemployed. On a national level the corresponding number is 2.4 % (NAV 2013a). Furthermore, 13.6 % of the population between 18 and 67 years of age are recipients of a disability pension. By comparison, the national statistic is 9.5 % (NAV 2013b). When it comes to educational statistics, 42.2 % of the women in Unjárga-Nesseby have higher education, while the equivalent statistic for men is 22.9 % (Slaastad 2012). Moreover Unjárga-Nesseby is categorized within the group of Norwegian municipalities with low average income, corresponding to an average annual wage below 150 000 NOK (NRK 2008).

Reading these numbers in isolation would give the impression of a municipality affected by social challenges and a relatively high degree of personal difficulty. This depiction is however far from representative of the Unjárga-Nesseby you meet as a visitor or co-villager. As we shall see, people primarily have what they need, and do, by and large, seem satisfied with their situation. The reason for this is partly to be found in the harvesting

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18 In Norwegian bygdelag.
opportunities of the seasonal variations and a persistent, historically based pride in self-sufficiency.

**Climatic conditions**

Being located in the north-eastern most part of Norway, Unjårga-Nesseby is climatologically defined to be a sub-Arctic community, with a limited amount of precipitation and an average temperature slightly above 10°C in the month of July (Karlsen 1997). According to The Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management (2010), the Várnjárga/Varanger peninsula, where Unjårga-Nesseby is located, is the most Arctic part of mainland Norway.

During winter, the average temperature in Unjårga-Nesseby is about -7 °C (January) while the average summer temperature is about 12 °C (July). Temperatures may however descend to -35 °C during winter and, on rare occasions, rise to +35 °C on the warmest days of summer. Snow is expected to arrive in October, November or December, stay throughout winter and early spring, and start to melt in April or May.

From the 22nd of November the polar night sets in and lasts until the 20th of January. After the winter darkness gives way to the rising sun, day length increases steadily until 18th of May, when the sun no longer sets under the horizon. The midnight sun keeps the nights bright until the 26th of July, whereupon the darkness gradually increases as the day length shortens, until only twilight remains as the polar night once again returns towards the end of November. During the polar night, the sky is frequently brightened by the northern lights (Aurora Borealis), displaying a range of colours and formations.

Despite the high latitude location and relatively low average temperature, Varanger is an area of abundant natural resources on land as well as in the sea. This is due in part to the climatic conditions, and ensured by the area’s geological features and the characteristics of the Várjavuonna/Varanger Fjord.

**A biophysical presentation of the landscape**

Glaciers have been decisive in shaping the Norwegian landscape, but in contrast to the other fjords in Norway, the Várjavuonna/Varanger Fjord was not created from glacial movement during the last ice age. Instead it was formed from dislocations taking place in the middle of the fjord. These dislocations caused the southern bedrock to rise, and later ice ages have rubbed away the overlying sedimentary rock types. As a consequence the bedrock on the
south side of the fjord is dominated by gneiss and granite. The Varanger peninsula on the north side, on the other hand, is geologically dominated by sedimentary rock types such as sandstone and slate (Luondo 2009).

The Varanger Fjord has historically been rich in fish and sea mammals (VSMČ 2005). Due to the Gulf Stream, only the innermost part of the fjord is covered by ice during winter. Furthermore, the open character of the fjord ensures a high primary production as there is no shallow threshold to stop the circulation of deeper layers of water. As the only Norwegian fjord which opens up towards the east, the Varanger Fjord is connected to the rich spawning grounds of the Barents Sea. This makes it one of the most important feeding grounds for several of the commercial fish stocks in Norway, such as Atlantic cod (Gadus morhua), haddock (Melanogrammus aeglefinus), pollock (Pollachius virens) and Arctic herring (Clupea harengus) (Nakken 1987). The Varanger Fjord is also a spawning ground for capelin (Mallotus villosus), and constitutes an important area for Atlantic salmon (Salmo salar) due to the many salmon rivers flowing into the fjord.

In Norway, two different cod populations are present, the Northeast Arctic cod (in Norwegian skrei), and the more stationary Coastal cod (in Norwegian kysttorsk) (Myksvoll et al. 2013). While some coastal cod are caught in the fisheries of the Varanger Fjord, it is primarily the migratory cod that constitute the greatest proportion of the catch during the cod fishery season (Nakken 1987).

In addition to the fish species mentioned above, the Varanger Fjord hosts, amongst others, shrimps (Pandalus borealis), lumpfish (Cyclopterus lumpus), Atlantic halibut (Hippoglossus hippoglossus), Atlantic wolffish (Anarhichas lupus), sea trout (Salmo trutta trutta), blue mussels (Mytilus edulis), sea urchins (Echinus esculentus) and various seal species. The fjord is also frequently visited by different species of whales. Furthermore, the increase in water temperatures in the Barents Sea over recent years has resulted in Unjárga-Nesseby fishermen catching more warm water tolerant species such as mackerel (Scomber scombrus), and monkfish (Lophius piscatorius) in their nets.

Since the early 1990s, a new marine species has become abundant in the Varanger Fjord. The red king crab (Paralithodes camtschaticus) was previously found only in the Northern Pacific Ocean near Kamchatka but was introduced by Russian scientists into the Murmansk Fjord in the 1960s. Following this the crab spread towards the east, as well as

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19 For Sámi and Norwegian name on all species mentioned in the chapter, as well in the thesis as a whole, see Table 1 in the appendix, page 267.
westwards to the southern Barents Sea. So far little is known about the effects of this species upon the ecosystems it has entered. The red king crab was initially detested, as it caused problems for the fishermen when caught in their nets, dramatically reducing the catch. However, the king crab now forms an important source of income in the Unjárga-Nesseby fisheries (see chapter 5).

Varanger also has an abundance of land based natural resources. From a botanical perspective, the Várnjárga/Varanger peninsula is seen as a highly interesting area due to its many rare species and diverse flora. A combination of geological variation and differences in both mean summer temperature, and the range between warmest and coldest months, ensures multiple niches for diverse species to thrive: “It is most likely that we can find close to 450 species of flower plants and ferns [on the peninsula], which is a high number for a location this far north” (Karlsen 1997: 152, my translation). Due to the parameters just mentioned, the area can accommodate plant species that are more commonly separated by considerable distances. Southerly plants that require a relatively warm climate, easterly species in need of inland climate, more coastal bound flora, as well as Arctic species can all be found in the vicinity of the Várnjárga/Varanger peninsula (ibid.).

The deciduous woods in the area are among the most northern in the world and are mainly dominated by plants often referred to as mountain flora, like heath, grass, salix, mountain birch (Betula pubescens) and dwarf birch (Betula nana) (Karlsen 1997). Among the berries that grow and are harvested in the area include cloudberries (Rubus chamaemorus), blueberries (Vaccinium myrtillus), lingonberries (Vaccinium vitis-idaea) and black crowberries (Empetrum nigrum). While the relative warm summers and the midnight sun are favourable to Unjárga-Nesseby hay production, grain cultivation is not viable.

Archaeological finds show that several animal species, which are still present in the area around Unjárga-Nesseby today, could be found on the Varanger peninsula during the Mesolithic (from approximately 10 000 – 4 500 BC). This includes the reindeer (Rangifer tarandus) and sea birds such as seagulls, terns and white breasted guillemot (Uria aalge) (Luondo 2009). Other animals, which in earlier periods were widespread in the area, are now few in numbers or completely absent. Beaver and walrus disappeared in the 1700s, while the non-flying garefowl (Pinguinus impennis) became completely extinct in the 1800s. The moose (Alces alces) disappeared from the Varanger peninsula in the 1600s and was not observed again until the beginning of the 1900s. Currently, moose is common in all forested areas in Varanger and for a large section of the inhabitants of Unjárga-Nesseby the autumnal moose hunt is an annual highlight (see chapter 6).
In addition to the already mentioned reindeer (which is now semi-domesticated) and moose, the terrestrial animal life in Varanger at present consists of both easterly and Arctic species, such as arctic fox (*Alopex lagopus*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), wolverine (*Gulo gulo*), lynx (*Lynx lynx*), hare (*Lepus timidus*), lemming (*Lemmus lemmus*), ptarmigan (*Lagopus lagopus* and *Lagopus muta*), rough-legged buzzard (*Buteo lagopus*) and gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*). Along the fjord, the white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) is a common sight throughout the year. From time to time during summer or autumn, a brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) might occasionally pass by.

The following chapters will illustrate the diversity of the nature-based activities practiced among Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants. These present-day activities are not carried out in temporal isolation, but are attached to a historical awareness of peoples’ activities in the landscape in the past.

**Unjárga-Nesseby in history**

The history of the Várnjárga/Varanger area shows that the first humans to settle in the inner part of the Várjavuonna/Varanger fjord arrived more than 10 000 years ago (see e.g. Nilsen 2009, Hoëm 2007, VSMČ 2005, Schanche 1988, Vorren and Manker 1957). Numerous remains, dating from and subsequent to the first settlements established shortly after the end of the last ice age, are to be found along the coast of the Varanger peninsula. At the location of Ceavccageađgi/Mortensnes, in Unjárga-Nesseby municipality (see figure 3), once provided with information from a small-attached museum, visitors are encouraged to take a walk in the organized cultural heritage area to explore “more than 10 000 years of interaction between man and nature” (Luondo 2009).

Small signs inform visitors about the ancient remnants as they follow the winding paths through the cultural heritage area. You can freely move around in the open terrain. At the beginning of the cultural heritage trail you can see tent ring remnants from early Mesolithic dwellings. By walking farther down the terrain the signs inform you how you are moving ahead in time. Not only do the remnants become more recent as you stroll from the car park and down towards the fjord, you also learn that you are following the sinking shoreline as the land continued to rise after the last ice age. While walking among remnants from early settlements and remains of religious practices, you get to experience “one of the richest and most distinctive areas for ancient monuments in Scandinavia, particularly
distinguished for the considerable length of time it has been inhabited and used, and [its] large number and variety of ancient monuments” (ibid.).\textsuperscript{20} In addition to accentuating the more than 10 000 years of continuous habitation, as well as the close historical connection between Ceavccageadgi/Mortensnes residents and the natural resources in both fjord and on land, the presentation of the site’s cultural remains also highlight their essential position in the emergence of a Sámi ethnicity.

Norwegian archaeologists commonly argue that Sámi ethnicity became a significant identity marker approximately 2000 years BC (Hansen and Olsen 2004, see also Ween 2012a). The Varanger area has played an important role in research regarding the emergence of a Sámi ethnicity. As illustrated by Sámediggi, the Sámi Parliament, (2013: 7):

archaeological studies have revealed [how] Varanger holds a unique position in the cultural history of the Sámi. Socio-cultural processes and developments that took place here appear to have been decisive for the formation of a number of Sámi cultural features that later were more widely adopted and thus became defining for Sámi culture and ethnicity at large.

At Ceavccageadgi/Mortensnes, this is exemplified by excavation finds of ornamented ceramics, house type remnants and a large number of scree graves. Eventually Ceavccageadgi/Mortensnes came to be located within the borders of the Várjjat siida, the social organisation of the Varanger Sámi and the areas they collectively utilised.

Historical sources show how the various resources in the fjord and the abundance of wild reindeer were of fundamental importance to the Várjjat siida (e.g. Nilsen 2009, Odner 1992, Vorren and Eriksen 1993, Schanche 1988). The combination of fishing, hunting and gathering continued to form the basis of Varanger Sámi livelihoods up until the 1400s. Remnants of large, stone built trapping corrals for wild reindeer are found in the interior of the Varanger peninsula. They are thought to have been used over a period of several thousand years, and from written sources it has been revealed that some of these trapping systems were still in use in the 1500s (Sámediggi 2013). Technologically, these stone built trapping corrals, with long drive lines to guide the reindeer into the enclosures, are related to the wooden

\textsuperscript{20} Among archaeologists, Ceavccageadgi/Mortensnes has been recognised as a cultural heritage site since the mid 1800s. In 1988 the site was protected by the Ministry of Environment, in order to secure a “controlled development of the area’s potential as an excursion site, an attraction and a research object” (Sámediggi 2004: 7, my translation). Since 1988, Várjjat Sámi Musea has been responsible for the practical administration of Ceavccageadgi/Mortensnes, while the responsibility of its management is held by the Sámi Parliament. In 1993, the cultural heritage area was provided with a cultural trail, a museum building, a reconstructed turf hut and a written guide.
corrals and fences used within the reindeer husbandry of the present (ibid.). In addition to the corral systems in the mountains, pitfall systems were used for trapping wild reindeer in lower areas and valleys (ibid., Vorren 1998, Odner 1992).

From the 1400s onwards, the Varanger Sámi increasingly combined fishing, hunting and gathering with animal husbandry. Domestication of sheep and goats can be traced back to the 1200s, while the earliest archaeological finds of cow bones are dated to approximately 1500 (Odner 1992). The first Norwegian source referring to the domestication of reindeer was, however, written in the 800s A.D (Nilsen 2009). This early form of reindeer domestication probably involved only a few tamed animals, used as decoy for hunting wild reindeer (ibid., see also Vitebsky 2005 on early domestication of reindeer in Siberia).

A combination of farming, fishing, small scale reindeer husbandry and hunting activities constituted the basis of existence for the Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants up until the 16-1700s. At that time a certain degree of differentiation evolved, as parts of the population increased their reindeer herds and began following their animals’ migratory routes between the inland and the coast. While ‘the Varanger Mountain Sámi’ came to represent reindeer herding as we know it today, the rest of the population, ‘the Varanger Coastal Sámi,’ primarily combined fisheries and small-scale sheep and cow farming. Both groups nevertheless maintained a versatile form of resource utilization (Odner 1992, see also VSMČ 2005). Furthermore, the Mountain Sámi and the Coastal Sámi cooperated closely, an example being through verddet relations.

In Unjárga-Nesseby, the verddet system, “a relational exchange system where items and services circulate” (Kramvig 2005: 55), was practiced in several ways. Whilst the entire families of the Mountain Sámi migrated long distances between summer and winter settlements, their small flocks of sheep would be cared for by their Coastal Sámi verddet during winter (Nilsen 2003). Verddet relations further ensured sufficient manpower was available during particular times of the year, such as during the slaughtering season or for ear marking the reindeer calves. Payment would be given in reindeer meat, milk or by some other kind of reciprocal arrangement. Some Coastal Sámi verddet could also own animals in the herd of their Mountain Sámi companions, and information of a reindeer herder’s meat caches in the mountains could further be shared to ensure food safety for his verddet (ibid.).

As the combination of fjord fisheries and small-scale farming evolved among the Varanger Coastal Sámi, seasonal migration was practiced between summer and winter

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21 This is still a current practice, see chapter 6.
settlements. In the summer people lived inland or farther out on the Varanger peninsula in order to best utilize the seasonal resources of these areas. During winter they resided in the inner parts of the Varanger Fjord, where access to firewood was assured. This residential pattern ensured that Varanger Sámi were able to follow the resources throughout the shifting seasons and thus extensively utilize vast areas (Nilsen 1990). Initially, the summer settlements were located outermost along the fjord, however as Norwegian villages gradually increased in size and number along the coast, even Varanger Sámi summer settlements were relocated closer to the inner fjord. While most Varanger Sámi had settled permanently by the end of the 1800s, a few maintained seasonal migration up until the outbreak of World War II (VSMČ 2005).

Historical sources describe how the Norwegian colonization of the Finnmark coast started at the end of the 1200s, with a northward expansion in fisheries activity caused by an increased demand for Norwegian cod in European markets (Pedersen 1994). During the 13- and 1400s, Norwegian newcomers first settled along the coast of the Varanger peninsula, establishing fishing villages like Várggát/Vardø and Čáhcesuolu/Vadsø (Niemi 1983, see figure 2). Regional historical literature emphasizes how the Norwegian settlers made a living from trade and fisheries, while the Sámi population combined fishing, hunting and gathering (e.g. Niemi 1983, Nilsen 2003; 2009, Hoēm 2007). Nevertheless, among both Norwegian and Sámi the Pomor Trade would eventually represent an important form of access to external resources.

The Pomor Trade denotes the trade connection between Northern Norway and North-western Russia, lasting from the 1700s up until the beginning of World War I (Pedersen 1994). The trade started off as a barter trade where Norwegian fish, primarily pollock, was exchanged with Russian rye flour and, to a certain extent, other commodities like hemp and canvas. From the second half of the 1700s, also money was used in the trade. Around 1835, it was estimated that 75% of the imported grain and flour produce to Finnmark came from Russia (ibid.). In Unjárga-Nesseby, as in Finnmark in general, the Pomor Trade ensured a possibility of profitable summer fisheries that otherwise could not have been utilized during suovsaáíge/makketida, that is; during the time of year when catches would likely be destroyed by fly larvae (Pedersen 1994, Nilsen 2009).

The current borders of Finnmark County were established by 1826, in a process which started from the early 1600s, before the period of the Pomor Trade. The present borders are a result of the Kalmar War between Denmark-Norway and Sweden, the border treaty with Sweden in 1751 and the border convention with Russia in 1826 (Pedersen 1994). Up until this
determination of the land borders, Finnmark had been a common area between the three countries.

In the middle of the 1800s the Norwegian government set an objective to increase the Norwegian population in Finnmark. Ethnical Norwegians were supported by the state in a colonial effort to settle certain parts of the county (Pedersen 1994: 81). Simultaneously, national regulations served to hinder agricultural development in Sámi areas (ibid.). In several early studies of the settlement history of Northern Norway, the Sámi presence is described as irrelevant or even excluded altogether (Krogh 2004).

Reflecting on presentations of Sámi history and prehistory, Krogh (2004) describes how the famous Norwegian historian Munch was unable to accept the Sámi inhabitants as the first inhabitants in Norway, whereupon he chose to redefine their significance in Norwegian prehistory the following way: “Norway was in some way inhabited, but not settled until our ancestors arrived. And it is only with the first settlements that the actual history of a country begins” (Munch 1852: 4 in Krogh 2004: 163, my translation).

While Munch excluded the Norwegian Sámi from his presentation of national history, Sámi life still proceeded, in Finnmark as well as other parts of Sápmi (for map, see figure 1). In Unjárga-Nesseby, both Coastal Sámi and Mountain Sámi inhabitants now lived more or less permanently in the main villages within the inner parts of the Varanger Fjord. These villages were located in the vicinity of rich fishing grounds and where boats could easily be landed (Nilsen 2009). While fish was an important exchange good, the decline of the Pomor Trade resulted in a loss of monetary income, needed in addition to the Varanger Sámi subsistence economy (Hoëm 2007).

The occupational specialization that characterizes the economic life in Unjárga-Nesseby today began to evolve in the 1920s (ibid.). Formerly, the combination of resource based activities that constituted the coastal Sámi livelihood was seen as a necessity, as the activities were highly integrated. However from the early 1900s, a progressive transition from Sámi subsistence to a market oriented economy evolved, influenced by Norwegian societal and modernization processes. Construction work became an important source of income, and eventually the telegraph and the local port facilities created year-round employment for both men and women in Unjárga-Nesseby. At this time, the fishery, being the greatest source of

income, was seen as the most important activity among the Sámi resource based industries (Hoëm 2007).

The movement towards occupational specialization continued throughout the 1930s. However, during the years of World War II people partially returned to the Sámi subsistence economy, as a response to the scarcity of essential commodities. According to Hoëm (ibid.), the years from 1940 to 1945 promoted a strengthening of the Sámi community life, an actualization of self-sufficiency, and consequently an increased focus on Sámi culture as well as Sámi economy. In other words, the Norwegian authorities’ Norwegianization policy, from 1850 to 1940, did not manage to fully subvert and assimilate Unjárga-Nesseby’s Sámi character (Nilsen 2009, Hoëm 2007).

The Coastal Sámi in a Norwegian historical context

From the last half of the 1800s until the German invasion of Norway in 1940, the official aim of the Norwegian authorities, with respect to the country’s Sámi population, was assimilation (Eidheim 1971, Gaski 2008, Stordahl 2008). By the mid 1800s, the state organized missionary activities of the 17- and 1800s had already sought to abolish the Sámi animistic religion, characterized as idolatry, superstition and sorcery, and partly introduced Danish-Norwegian as the language of religious proclamation (Hansen and Olsen 2004, see also Hoëm 2007).

The Norwegian state’s efforts to assimilate the Sámi have been “extensive, long lasting and determined” (Minde 2003: 133), a process resulting in a radical decline in the number of people identifying themselves as Sámi. “[T]ogether with poverty, political powerlessness and lack of knowledge about their own history, many Sami experienced feelings of inferiority” (Gaski 2008: 220). During these years, being Sámi was regarded as a hindrance, associated with experiences of humiliation, inadequacy and inferiority. With such experiences fresh in the mind many Sámi speaking parents chose not to pass on the Sámi language to their children. This continued up to the 1970s, 80s and even 90s (see e.g. Hovland

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23 When the Germans withdrew from Finnmark in 1944, people were forced to evacuate and buildings were burned in order to deprive the Russians the opportunity to take advantage of possible resources left behind by the Germans (see e.g. Ruud 2008). As with elsewhere in Finnmark, some of the Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants refused to leave. Instead they fled the village to live in turf huts (goahti/gamme) in the mountains until they found it safe to return to the village. Due to the extensive destruction of the region during World War II, relatively young buildings characterize the municipality’s current architecture.
1996). This was also the case with Unjárga-Nesseby Sámi, but nevertheless, as stated by Hoëm (2007), the Sámi language still maintained a strong position in Unjárga-Nesseby compared to other coastal Sámi communities.

Hoëm refers to the municipality census in 1930 in order to demonstrate that 663, of a total of 1065 inhabitants, considered themselves to be Sámi and had Sámi as their primary language (Hoëm 2007: 417). Among the 130 who were registered as Sámi-Norwegian (19), Norwegian-Kven (28) or Sámi-Kven (83), 95 inhabitants had Sámi as their first language (ibid.). By 1950, the last year ethnic criteria were used in the Norwegian population census, 976 persons among the 1511 inhabitants of the municipality registered as Sámi (895), Sámi-Kven (2) or Sámi-Norwegian (79) (Hoëm 2007: 419). Missionary work, educational policy and other laws and regulations promoted by Norwegian authorities inevitably influenced peoples’ choice of ethnic identity, also in Unjárga-Nesseby.

Among the Sámi population, the first attempt to organize Sámi interests in Norway came in the early 1900s, but the efforts were unsuccessful due to the overwhelming opposition faced by the state and the government (Gaski 2008). After World War II, though, the Social Darwinist and nationalist ideologies, upon which Minorities policy was built, were discredited or brought into disrepute (Stordahl 2008). Furthermore,

[t]he commitment that Norway made to the United Nation’s work with the Declaration of Human Rights was another nail in the coffin of assimilationist ideologies. A democratic and humanistic nation which had committed herself to the idea of equal rights in the Declaration of Human Rights, could not risk being perceived as not fulfilling these ideas within her own borders. There were, however, some years to come before these new ideas would become politically binding vis-á-vis the Sami in Norway (ibid.: 253).

In the 1950s the Sámi movement formed an alternative basis for expressing their identity: “Their goal was to forge a new Sami self-image, a new relationship between Sami and Norwegian society, and to create a self-concept of the Sami as being a distinct people who had lived in the area before the present states came into existence and drew their national borders” (Gaski 2008: 220). Furthermore, the Sámi elite made contact with other indigenous groups, played an active part in the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, and campaigned to ensure an increased focus on indigeneity within Sámi politics (ibid.).

In 1979, the Norwegian Government decided to build a hydroelectric power plant in Sámi core areas by damming the Alta-Kautokeino River. This decision resulted in extensive Sámi demonstrations at the site of construction as well as hunger strikes outside the
Norwegian Parliament in Oslo. The conflict ended in the Supreme Court three years later, where the Norwegian Government prevailed. Despite the lost case, and the consequential damming of the Alta-Kautokeino River, ‘the Alta case’ marked a turning point in relations between the Norwegian State and the Sámi population. The events empowered a Sámi civil society and led to the establishment of the Sámi Rights Commission and further to the inclusion of the Section 110a, ‘the Sámi Act’, in the Norwegian Constitution (Ween 2012a). The act states: “It is the responsibility of the State to enable the Sámi to preserve and develop their language, their culture and their way of life” (Ministry of Municipal and Regional Affairs 2000: 28, my translation). In 1989 the Sámi Parliament was established as a democratically elected body for the Norwegian Sámi.

The aim of the Sámi Parliament is to promote the recognition of basic Sámi rights as a foundation for preserving and strengthening Sámi culture, language and way of life, and the existence of different Sámi traditions (Sámediggi 2012a). In order to be entitled to vote in the election of the Sámi Parliament, or to be elected, a registration in the Sámi electoral roll is necessary. To register the applicant is required to be a self-ascribed Sámi and a) to speak Sámi, or b) to have a parent, grandparent or great grandparent who speaks or spoke Sámi, or c) to have a parent presently or previously registered in the electoral roll (Sámediggi 2012b).

In the Sámi Parliament election of 2009, 13 890 persons were registered in the Sámi electoral roll. This number represented an increase of 1 352 people from the 2005 election (Sámidiggi 2012c).

The basis for the Sámi movement presented above was political, but the process of ethnic revitalization was also expressed in other ways, such as through art, music and education (Gaski 2008). During the 1970s and 80s “the process began to take on the characteristics of nation-building and the movement created different symbols that represented a nation – a Sami map and flag – and they transformed the negative stigma associated with Saminess to more positive markers of Sami identity” (ibid.: 220). Simultaneously, the Sámi revitalization, like the Norwegianization process, emphasized difference in a way that made ethnicity a question of purity. In these contexts you could either be Norwegian or Sámi, but not both (see also Kramvig 2005). Even if the revitalization movement was both emancipatory and unifying, its processes did not produce a coherent system of cognitive identification for the Sámi people as a whole (Gaski 2008).

Among the markers of Sámi identity established during the revitalization, the inland Sámi reindeer herding symbols came to form the most prominent ones. In some Sámi and multi-ethnic communities in the Sámi area, the political Sámi symbols are still “considered as
being connected exclusively to the life form of the reindeer herders, the language and the past life of the Saami people. People in these communities find it difficult to relate their own experiences to the concepts at hand” (Kramvig 2005: 60, see also Hovland 1996). Similar statements have been presented to me by Sámi residents in Unjárga-Nesseby, when explaining that they do not see their own coastal Sámi background reflected in the reindeer herding symbols advocated to represent the Sámi population on a national, as well as international, level. A man in his early thirties once said that he felt reindeer herding had become synonymous of being Sámi, not only to people in the south of Norway and visiting tourists, but also among the Sámi themselves. “I don’t know anything about reindeer herding, nothing at all, but that doesn’t make me less Sámi” he reasoned, before continuing:

I am Sámi. Coastal Sámi. But sometimes when I talk to other Sámi people from the inland, it’s as if I’m not accepted as a real Sámi. Once I was talking to a guy at a festival, in Sámi, and then he said “you don’t really know how to speak Sámi, do you?” And I got so angry! ‘Cause the way I speak is the way we speak Sámi here. Our dialect is quite particular, and not so many know it anymore. And then people like this guy question our way of talking, and he was even Sámi himself! First we had the norwegianization. And when that period finally ended… Now we have a situation where suddenly the Sámi are against each other. Sometimes I feel it’s like we, the coastal Sámi, are not Sámi enough for the inland Sámi. And we even came first.

This man’s final statement refers to the Sámi history, from which I have presented parts in the section above, where reindeer herding is shown to have evolved as a form of specialization from the Coastal Sámi versatile use of the natural resources (Nilsen 2009; 2003, Hoëm 2007). When this historical development from time to time was referred to by some of the Unjárga-Nesseby Sámi, it was always in connection to a feeling of not being recognized for his or her Coastal Sámi background.

In spite of the ethnical identity issues still being addressed in Unjárga-Nesseby today, local historical literature emphasizes that “compared with other Coastal Sámi villages, the Sámi language and culture have been very well sustained in Unjárga-Nesseby” (Nilsen 2009: 30, see also Odner 2000). Nilsen (2009) illustrates how both language and local ways of living, in terms of combining husbandry and fishing, hunting and gathering, was maintained up until the beginning of the 1960s. It is further argued that the local cultural belonging and livelihoods must have constituted solid foundations for the population, “despite the close contact with other people and cultures earlier and to a higher degree than was the case in many other fjords in Finnmark” (ibid.: 31). The contact referred to includes amongst others
how different ethnic groups have inhabited the area for centuries, as well the importance of
the Pomor trade with the Russians.

Similar to Nilsen, Eyþórsson (2008), in his book about the coastal Sámi struggle for
resource management rights in the northern Norwegian fjords, refers to Unjárga-Nesseby as
the least norwegianianized coastal Sámi municipality in Finnmark. While working as a
consultant in the municipality for two years in the beginning of the 1980s, Eyþórsson received
“an involuntary crash course in ethnic relations in the Finnmark fjords and the effects of the
norwegianization on both local communities and individuals” (ibid.: 218, my translation).
Although he did not experience local attempts to hide ethnic identity in everyday situations,
and found the Sámi language in active use in both formal and informal settings, the question
of how, and to what degree, a coastal Sámi identity should be articulated appeared highly
controversial within the municipality. The political divide in Unjárga-Nesseby at that time did
not follow the traditional divide between the ‘right’ or conservative side and the ‘left’ or
radical side: “The line that appeared to split the inhabitants of the municipality into two
approximately equal parts was with respect to Sámi political questions – especially whether
people would articulate their own and the municipality’s Sámi identity towards the
surrounding world” (ibid.: 217, my translation). However by the 1990s these rigid divisions
were gone, Eyþórsson writes, as it was by then uncontroversial for all political parties to
emphasize the municipality as a part of the Sámi central area.

In Eyþórsson’s view, the early start and rapid revitalisation of Sámi identity following
the Norwegianization process in Unjárga-Nesseby, was made possible by the relatively ‘mild’
results of the assimilation policy within the municipality. It’s non-Sámi, as well as Sámi
inhabitants generally acknowledge the Sámi history and identity of Unjárga-Nesseby.
Nevertheless, as already shown, this does not mean that differing and divergent views on the
topics of ethnicity and ethnic identity were absent from conversations and discussions among
the Unjárga-Nesseby residents during my own stay in the municipality, close to 20 years later.

Unjárga-Nesseby place enactments

This chapter has presented introductory information about the location of Unjárga-Nesseby
municipality, the inhabitants, their occupations and present day living, the biophysical
characteristics of the landscape and the history of the area. This ‘Unjárga-Nesseby
introduction’ appears, like most anthropological descriptions of ‘the field’, as matter-of-fact;
“constructed as a truth that emerges from somewhere outside the specific locations of its production” (Law in Lavau 2008: 27). As I am neither in the possession of a view from nowhere, nor a view from everywhere, the stories presented in this chapter (as well as the thesis as a whole) should be seen as examples of Unjárga-Nesseby enactments. This means that the narratives presented are treated – and should be read – as contributions in constituting Unjárga-Nesseby as a place of a certain location, with a distinctive geological and historical background and present day conditions, both different from and similar to other places.

“A critical understanding of spatial narrative,” Christopher Tilley (1994: 32) argues, “requires that we investigate precisely why we prefer some plots or configurations of things rather than others. In other words attention must be played to the manner in which the story is creatively orchestrated, how it guides, and what it passes through”. He continues:

Narrative is a means of understanding and describing the world in relation to agency. It is a means of linking locales, landscapes, actions, events and experiences together providing a synthesis of heterogeneous phenomena. In its simplest form it involves a story and a storyteller. In its mimetic or phenomenological form narrative seeks to capture action not just through description but as a form of re-description. Events are given meaning through their configuration into a whole requiring the emplotment of action. A narrative must of necessity always be written from a certain point of view. In relation to the past and written from the standpoint of the present, narrative structures play a similar role to metaphor – they describe the world in fresh ways, bringing new meanings and new senses, and the productivity is, in principle, endless. (…) Spatial stories are about the operations and practices which constitute places and locales (ibid.).

Following Tilley, the narratives on place included in this chapter are in the end configured into a whole by the anthropologist. The reader is thus introduced to an Unjárga-Nesseby I take part in enacting. From my inclusion and exclusion of what I find important or irrelevant for creating a background for further reading, my particular ‘point of view’ is decisive to the selections presented in this final text.

Simultaneously, several other ‘points of views’ are included in the text as well. Whether the narratives I reproduce are written sources or stories shared with me during conversation, they all take part in their own various enactments of Unjárga-Nesseby as a place. In this production of reality, temporality plays an essential part. “[N]arratives introduce temporality, making locales markers of individual and group experiences,” Tilley (1994: 33) writes. While he refers to naming as an act of construction of landscape, I adopt a parallel
view when I approach place narratives as contributors in enactments of a variety of Unjárga-Nesseby realities. In this process, different markers of individual and shared experiences are either highlighted or kept in the background, when connecting the past and the present in particular ways, for particular purposes.

Different historical events, spanning from prehistoric times until today, are evoked and included in a dynamic history with importance to peoples’ self-understanding and ways of relating to the present. As stated by the geographer Kirsten Simonsen (2008: 22): “Places do not offer unification or stability but include different times in their discontinuous processes of becoming” (Simonsen 2008:22). Various localities are incorporated as well. Rather than recognizing Unjárga-Nesseby as a locally bounded unit, I hope to have given a glimpse of the multiple temporalities and localities this place consists of. One example is the Ceavccageadgi/Mortensnes heritage site.

With the words of Ashworth and Graham (2005: 222), “[h]eritage draws upon elements of history, memory and selective relict artefacts as resources to effect a self-conscious anchoring of the present in a selected time context.” Ceavccageadgi/Mortensnes opens for a history that includes other stories than the ones commonly told from a national perspective. For Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants, the main historical features accentuated at Ceavccageadgi/Mortensnes might serve to exemplify the continuation of natural resource use in the area and peoples’ ethnic decent. Furthermore, it serves to present a meaningful connection between the past and the present, where also the cultural history of the Sámi is included as essential, to the early history of the area in particular and in Norwegian history in general.

The Unjárga-Nesseby ethnography presented in the following chapters will in various ways exemplify the relevance of history to peoples’ current nature-based activities and juridical right discourses. Furthermore, it will illustrate the interconnections of weather, seasonality and the landscape in people’s resource-based activities. However, before turning to the anthropological data drawn from my research, I will present and reflect upon my methodological choices and fieldwork methods leading to this thesis’ empirical material and theoretical discussions.
3
Methodology and methods

It was dark, really dark. The temperature was just slightly below 0°C and there was barely any snow on the ground. In all honesty, this did not fit my midwinter expectations at 70° north and 29° east, in the northernmost part of Norway. As I arrived in Unjårga-Nesseby on a late afternoon in the middle of January 2008, I once again had to remind myself of my limited experience in this northerly part of my own country. Several times during the three days car ride, covering 2149 kilometres from the streets of Oslo, along the east coast of Sweden, through the deep Finnish forests to the Varanger Fjord, I had tried to prepare myself for whatever I could meet when I reached my destination. Openness? Indifference? Aloofness? Curiosity? Shyness? Hostility? The closer I got, the more my excitement was mixed with concerns regarding the experiences awaiting me. My concerns were mainly related to the reception I might receive in Unjårga-Nesseby, particularly regarding the social aspects of the community that I was about to visit, uninvited, and to live in for a year. Although I had met a few people when arranging my fieldwork half a year earlier, I had yet to really get to know anyone. Through all my speculations and in all my excitement, thoughts about the physical environment remained in the background, as I was convinced my Norwegian-ness would be good enough preparation for elements connected to the physical landscape and the shifting seasons. I was wrong. Luckily.

My fieldwork in Unjårga-Nesseby, lasting from January 2008 to January 2009, was conducted with the aim of acquiring insights into the multiple socio-material and relational practices involved in bringing different natures into being. My personal background undoubtedly influenced the research focus of my PhD project, but also had consequences for the fieldwork results. Additionally, with phenomenological thinking as one of my main theoretical inspirations, an emphasis on bodily experiences and the importance of the senses in peoples’ experience of the world has influenced the choice of methods in my research. Through this approach I hoped to achieve insights I would otherwise have overlooked, and more closely
approach the sensorial world of the people I was to live with throughout the seasonal variation of the year ahead. Several methodological challenges arose during my work, of which most were connected with the implementation of a ‘fieldwork at home’. In addition, questions regarding my own positioning, language related implications, time limits and general ethical considerations have had an effect on my investigation.

**Entering the field**

After a three days car ride I finally parked my tightly packed car outside the house that was going to be my home for the next year. Between the moment I opened the door and left the warmth of the car, until I followed the friendly local authority employee and entered my new home, I registered the sound of the gravel beneath my feet, felt a faint smell of salt in the chill – not cold – air against my face, heard a remote dog bark, and noticed that the outer walls of the house were… yellow. Several days later, due to the steady increase in the amount of daylight, I realized that the colour of my Unjárga-Nesseby home was actually salmon pink, not yellow. Looking back at this initial dark afternoon, I remember these distinct, sensorial experiences, as if being engulfed in the moment of arrival had put my excitement and anxiety on hold.

Why did I find this arrival so challenging? I was prepared for the fact that I neither knew the area nor a single person. In that respect I had positive experiences from former fieldwork to lean on. But somehow I found it more frightening to conduct fieldwork “at home”, in my own country, than had been the case in Greenland, a few years earlier, in connection with my Masters degree. In Greenland I was just as much an “uninvited stranger” (Hicks 1984) as I was now, but it nevertheless scared me more this time. After thinking this through I realized that my positive experience from Greenland did not give me comfort, it rather enhanced my concerns.

During the initial phase of my Greenlandic fieldwork there was a clear shift in attitudes toward me when people realized I was Norwegian and not Danish, as they had immediately expected. Especially among the grown-ups in the community, several openly expressed positive thoughts on my Norwegian-ness and described people from Greenland and Norway as kind of similar, while they characterised Danes as “different” (Rybråten 2006). This made me understand that despite the rescinding of Denmark’s colonial rule over Greenland in 1953, changing attitudes to former colonists is a lengthy process.
Considering the historical relations between Norwegians and the Sámi in parallel to my experience of the Danish-Greenlandic situation, I would have found it comprehensible if people in Unjárga-Nesseby had met me with scepticism. As a Norwegian, I could be seen to represent a nationality with a history of dominating the Sámi population for several decades. As a southerner, I could be seen to represent the Norwegian centre of power in the south. Despite Norway being seemingly permeated by an ideology of egalitarianism (e.g. Vike et al. 2001), the Sámi versus the Norwegian, the north versus the south, and the rural versus the urban are just some examples of dichotomizing relations that are still profoundly negotiated within a national context (see e.g. Lien at al. 2001 for an exploration of equality and difference in the Norwegian society).

By moving to Unjárga-Nesseby I rather expected to be categorized as a søring (i.e. ‘Norwegian southerner’), a term commonly used among people in Finnmark to refer to persons from the south of Norway (see e.g. Lien 1987; 2001 and Eidheim 1993). What the term refers to more specifically varies from one situation to another, but in general it describes a lack of knowledge or ignorance of ‘the Finnmark ways of living.’ This may include poorly understood mind-sets or attitudes, or lack of knowledge of specific activities. While stereotypes like the søring category are rather easily overcome due to their simplified generalisations, it is nevertheless in the hands of those labelled such to prove they do not fit the stereotype. In order to gain a more thorough access to people’s everyday lives in Unjárga-Nesseby I too would have to prove a dissociation from at least some of the søring characteristics. Nevertheless, even if my concerns of doing research “at home” were not groundless, they were evidently exaggerated. As the first weeks of fieldwork passed by and the people I met were welcoming and curious about my work, I gradually started to lower my shoulders.

Initially, I used the words “people’s relations to nature” (in Norwegian: folks forhold til natur), to explain my main research interest and the reason for my stay in the area. I often followed this up by telling of my hopes of being able to look into local relations to nature through practical engagement and participation in everyday nature-based activities. After listening to this explanation, many of my early conversation partners replied that they understood what I meant by saying “oh, you are interested in utmarksbruk (i.e. the use of the outfields).” Some also added that with such a focus I had made a good choice regarding

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24 As my Sámi was and still is limited, most of the conversations during my fieldwork were in Norwegian. When I choose to translate the Norwegian word utmark and the Sámi word meahcci to outfields in English, it is after several discussions with English speaking colleagues, concluding that outfields as a term is probably as close as I
research location: “Nature is all we’ve got here, so everybody makes use of the outfields,” I was told. On the basis of these early responses, I found it beneficial to replace ‘nature’ with *utmark* when explaining the reason for my stay in the community. This way I felt I better approached the Unjárga-Nesseby reality, as *utmark* was commonly used to refer to areas where resources are harvested and activities take place, while ‘nature’ was mainly used as a term referring to more general or abstract aspects of the non-human part of the world. On the other hand, this choice may have placed some constraints on my informants ‘nature associations’ in later conversations. I will later return to this issue, in the section ‘Language and Words’ where I problematize my choice of using the *utmark* term in conversations with my informants.

As I arrived in Unjárga-Nesseby during the season of the polar night, the first people I met warned me about a general low level of activities among the inhabitants at this time of the year. Yet, in just a few weeks the light would return and I was ensured that the community would come to life again. A local government employee, whilst helping me install myself in a town hall office I was to borrow during my stay, told me that he was pleased the polar night was about to end: “It is nice in the dark period as well, but in my opinion it lasts one month too long.” He continued to explain that the areas around the community meant *a lot* to people living there and that from now on, as the days grew longer, I would surely experience an increasing level of outdoor activities. “Just you wait and see!” My next challenge, then, was how to actually get access to these activities. In this regard, I experienced that the length of my fieldwork appeared as an advantage.

**A question of time**

The merging of my research interest in human-nature relations, and the commonly articulated importance of nature-based activities locally, immediately appeared as a good match that would ease my first steps in developing contacts among the Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants. But even if most people were interested in my stay and found my research topic appealing, I nevertheless experienced a certain initial, and highly comprehensible, reluctance to get involved.

get to the original words *utmark* and *meacchi*. The way it is used throughout this thesis, the term *outfields* refers, in general, to common land that can be accessed by everyman. Thorough descriptions of the Norwegian and Sámi terms are given in chapter 4, together with analytical discussions on the use of the Unjárga-Nesseby *outfields*. 
Unjárga-Nesseby is in no way an under described locality within the sciences. Along the coastline of the Varanger peninsula numerous remnants from the first settlements following the last ice age and subsequent inhabitants (see chapter 2) have inspired several researchers to produce knowledge concerning livelihood formations, settlement structures and social conditions, from prehistoric time until the 1600’s (e.g. Simonsen 1961; 1963, Odner 1966; 1992, Olsen 1984; 1994, Schanche 1988; 1994, and Schanche 2000). A main interest among studies focusing on the time after the 1600’s, has related to the many changes in Varanger society, including changes in religion, economy and social structures (e.g. Niemi 1983, Hansen and Olsen 1994, Odner 2000; Eyþórsson 2008 and Nilsen 2009). While some of these researchers have had a close connection to the Unjárga-Nesseby community, the local population is still used to people coming and leaving, as their home place is seen to represent an area of certain archaeological, historical and anthropological interest.

The positive reactions I received from my first acquaintances, when asked how long I would stay, and I answered a year, were not always pronounced in words. I nevertheless interpreted them as supportive. Some people reacted by changing their pose, lifting their eyebrows and smiling in surprise, while others were more verbal. One man I met at the grocery store spontaneously responded by saying: “then you may actually understand something!” A woman employed in the local government was more diplomatic in her response, but told me her opinion about the tendency for a few local ‘talkers’ always to have their opinions heard and stories told when new visitors arrived. “By staying a year you will hopefully get the possibility to talk to those who need a bit more time to open up as well”, she said. These responses, and different subsequent experiences, gave me an understanding of the importance of time, not only in the context of my research, but also from my informants’ point of view.25

My relatively long stay in Unjárga-Nesseby made it possible for me to avoid (at the very least) one label attributed to the typical southerner, a stressed person always in a hurry.26 Nature based activities are necessarily weather dependent, influenced by seasonal variations

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25 Throughout the thesis, I have chosen to use the term informants when referring to the people in Unjárga-Nesseby who have generously provided me with information during my stay and while writing up my thesis. While I am aware of the term’s hierarchical connotations, more ‘even’ terms like research partner or collaborator provide, on the other hand, an illusion of juxtaposed cooperation. I therefore find informant to be the less misleading and thus the most respectful word to use in my PhD thesis.

26 The following expression was typically used to humorously illustrate this point: “You know what we use to say: ‘If you’re in such a hurry, why didn’t you show up yesterday?’ (Hvis du har det så travel, kaffår kom du ikke i går?)”
or unforeseen events, and may rely upon, or be affected by, the actions of other participants. In research investigations and appointments regarding outfield activities, a certain degree of flexibility is thus essential. Setting aside certain days for cloudberry picking in the autumn, for example, may not prove to be fruitful if the berry ripening has not occurred as initially expected.

On the other hand, I also experienced that when I requested an interview, at a time suitable for the interviewee, I got the response: “Sure! You can come now.” Once, I visited a sheep farmer to ask whether or not he would be interested in talking with me during my stay, whereby he replied that I could come inside for a talk right away. He told me that he had waited for me to get in touch with him, as he had read about my research project in the local newspaper shortly after my arrival. “Actually,” he said, “I wanted to contact you myself, but then, you know, the days pass. So it is great that you just showed up. Step inside!”

To me it felt important to have the flexibility to follow the rhythm of my informants, as they welcomed me to join their activities and share their experiences, thoughts and stories. Having time both to wait and to quickly alter my plans seemed necessary to really be able to value the insights that were shared with me during my stay in Unjár- gá-Nesseby. For this project, I therefore experienced time to be of great importance (see also Howell 2011).

**Fieldwork and participation**

In selecting one year of fieldwork, ensuring that I was present throughout all seasons, I chose a position close in line with the traditional anthropological view of a long-lasting fieldwork as the main entrance to thorough insight in a (foreign) community and its peoples’ way of life. Conventionally, the single sited period in the field is seen as representing “intensive, close engagement of a limited duration, in which through the employment of various techniques and strategies (…) the anthropologist is able to engage in different styles of learning and understanding, acquiring discursive and practical knowledge, being simultaneously ‘in’ but not ‘of’ the other culture” (Watson 1999: 2). A long-lasting fieldwork, where the anthropologist participates in one setting over a longer period of time, has typically been considered essential in order to get as thorough insight into the field of study as possible. The question of time, within a defined area, has thus been considered essential, in order for the anthropologist to gain a deep felt understanding of local conditions and have the opportunity
to test out his or her findings in new spatial and/or temporal situations within the frame of the single sited location.

Close to a century after Malinowski (e.g. 1922, 1935) emphasized the importance of long lasting anthropological fieldwork, with in-depth participant observation, this approach still holds a prominent position within several branches of anthropology. Gupta and Ferguson (1997), however, criticize anthropologists’ methodological fieldwork commitment for fetishizing the concept of ‘the field’ and for taking ‘the local’ for granted. In our world of movement and interconnections, Gupta and Ferguson call for methodological strategies that rather “foreground questions of location, intervention, and the construction of situated knowledges” (ibid.: 5). In line with Gupta and Ferguson’s critique, the anthropological focus on the locally bounded fieldwork has been regarded as of limited value when investigating globalizing processes (Lien and Melhuus 2007), and since the 1990’s, shorter studies and less traditional ways of conducting fieldwork have, to an ever-increasing extent, gained ground (Marcus 1998). In line with Lien and Melhuus (2007) I will argue that a way to avoid compartmentalizing the various processes included in the term globalization is to investigate the empirical grounding of these processes. While this does not have to be done through ‘traditional’ fieldwork, I nevertheless think it is possibly to carry out a physically limited fieldwork without necessarily reproducing the inadequacies outlined by Gupta and Ferguson.

For my own research, I found it necessary to conduct place-specific fieldwork and cover all seasons in the Unjárga-Nesseby year, but at the same time my study follows less place-bound threads (or networks) in order to grasp the connection between enactments of locally situated nature realities and enactments of less place-specific nature.27 Globalizing processes will explicitly be dealt with in chapter 8, nevertheless throughout my thesis I hope to show that even when describing particular Unjárga-Nesseby located phenomena, these do not take place in ‘local isolation’. Furthermore, as the next chapter demonstrates, I do not treat Unjárga-Nesseby as a locally bounded unit, but rather recognize its multi-locality and fluid borders.

Although the anthropological fieldwork of today has become a fairly wide category compared to how it was traditionally defined, participant observation is still the preferred entrance to anthropological knowledge in most cases (Frøystad 2003, Howell 2011). As I consider the production of local nature realities to be closely connected with actual activities, my informant’s practical tasks in the outfields have been an important source of information

27 See chapter 4 for a discussion on the concept of place.
in my research. During my stay in Unjárga-Nesseby I therefore tried to take part in as many outdoor activities as possible throughout the year. Through this participation I hoped for an insight in the significance of seasonal variations, the ability to follow the concurrences and discrepancies between actions and words and gain access to peoples’ tacit knowledge. I also thought of it as the best way to understand peoples’ nature realities by following the processes through which they come into being.

Anthropology, Ingold (2011) reminds us, is not a study of, but a study with:
“Immersed with [people] in an environment of joint activity, [anthropologists] learn to see things (or hear them, or touch them) in the ways their teachers or companions do” (ibid.: 238). Living with people in Unjárga-Nesseby, I was given the possibility to take part in a variety of activities and tasks conducted at certain times of the year.28 While the specific outfield activities are seasonally dependent, year-to-year regulations, equipment availability, weather conditions, and the actions of others, also influence when activities are undertaken. Even if certain activities take place at approximately the same time in a season, year after year, they will not occur exactly the same way from one year to another. Neither will the people involved have exactly the same experiences of the activities from year to year, as their point of departure one year is necessarily other than it was a year before, in addition to the activity itself being slightly altered.

Due to the time frame of my PhD project, my fieldwork could at maximum last for one year. This rendered it impossible for me to systematically investigate the variation between similar seasons from one year to another. Bearing in mind the particularities present within the different activities and situations I shared with people in Unjárga-Nesseby, I still found participation through all seasons of a year, if only one of each, to be essential to my research of how nature comes into being. In this way I was able to experience the seasonal shifts that occur more or less regularly throughout the year, making up an essential element in the production of local nature activities (see chapter 5 and 6). One of the questions here is to what degree I managed to take part actively in the socio-material nature practices I was invited to join.

28 These activities included, amongst others, ptarmigan snaring, ice fishing, skiing, dog sledging, snow scooter touring, angling in rivers and lakes, checking up on sheep on summer pastures, picking berries, cutting wood, gathering sheep, slaughtering reindeer and fishing for cod on the fjord. Several of these are thoroughly described in chapter 5 and 6.
Personal background

While we all, as people, experience the world through our senses, we are simultaneously individually influenced by our various backgrounds and positions. In this way it is possible to argue that two persons can never fully share an identical sensuous experience. Sharing the same sensory apparatus, though, makes it possible for us to share close to identical experiences. What determines the degree of unification, I will argue, is contextual dependent and influenced by the degree of resonance (Wikan 1992) between people and our openness towards other’s life worlds. My own personal background has clearly influenced my research interests and the results of my PhD investigation, and provided me with both advantages and challenges during my Unjárga-Nesseby fieldwork.

As I was born in Finnmark and my parents and I lived in Kárásjohka-Karasjok until I was three years old, stories from this part of my life have followed me throughout my childhood and youth, up until today. The period comprised an important part of my parents’ early-shared living, and the stories drawn from their reminiscences have been innumerable. Their enthusiastic narratives have undoubtedly had an effect on my interest in experiencing this part of Norway. Furthermore, when moving south my parents chose a rural location for our new home, and from the age of three I grew up on a mountain farm in a village with approximately 200 inhabitants. As for most of my Unjárga-Nesseby informants, ‘my nature’ has been less of the aesthetic kind than representing various locations where specific activities have taken place and resources have been harvested. The first time I heard an Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitant talk about the feeling of being at home in nature, I came to think of an episode from the time when my parents decided they would finally give away their sheep, after 30 years of sheep farming.

When, in the late spring, we last walked my parents’ sheep to their summer pastures, my father told me that he worried he would not continue to have the same relationship to the mountains anymore, after the sheep were gone. He felt that when he would walk these mountains in the future, he would never again be in possession of the feeling that his sheep were grazing somewhere in a mountainside, a valley or a birch forest. And that made him worry that he would not experience the mountains to be ‘his’ in the same way anymore. He, or more directly him through his sheep, would not use the mountains the same way any longer, and thus he was afraid that these mountains, that he used to have such a close attachment to, would become like any other less known mountain that you can visit and enjoy, but not have a feeling of being at home in.
My reasons for including this digression are these: First, it gives an example of the nature I grew up with, where, like in Unjárga-Nesseby, the mountains were not only for walking, in order to enjoy the view, but also important resource locations. This means that the harvesting aspect of peoples’ relations to nature that was so explicitly expressed by my informants, both orally and in practice, was something I could easily relate to. “Sharing a world with others means learning to attend to it in the same way,” Wikan (1992: 471) writes, and when it came to attending my informants harvesting activities, I experienced that my background provided me with some advantages. By being a ‘harvester’ myself, at least to a certain degree, I experienced that I was particularly aware of the specific diversities in peoples’ nature practices. This familiarity does in no respect mean that my fieldwork was without surprises, feelings of alienation, misunderstandings and enlightening moments, but nevertheless, in the nature-based activities I took part in, I could mainly focus on the details rather than struggling with understanding why they were practiced in the first place.

Secondly, this part of my background was occasionally accentuated by me or my informants, consciously as well as unconsciously, as a way of decreasing the distance between us and making me less of a southerner in their eyes. In the early part of my stay, for example, when a person asked how I felt about living in such a small place as Unjárga-Nesseby and I answered that the size was not a problem since I grew up in an even smaller place myself, I experienced that the questioner thought we had more in common after this conversation, than he or she assumed in advance when considering me a more ‘typical southerner’.

On another occasion, I was invited by a reindeer herder to join a meal of gumppus (a bit similar to meat balls, but made of reindeer blood and rye flour) and blood sausages. When he asked if I really wanted to taste the food he had prepared, and I assured him I did, he said; “that’s right, you grew up on a farm, so then you are used to a lot of different food stuff.” By referring to this part of my background, this man found a way of including me in a common ‘we’ where an identity-bearing dish is acknowledged and appreciated rather than regarded as strange or even distasteful.

As a third example I want to present a situation where the accentuation of common traits came as a surprise to me. A group of people from the municipality’s technical staff came early one morning to inspect the apartment I had rented for the duration of my stay. The apartment was recently built and any mistakes or flaws had to be reported ahead of the warranty expiration. When the first man entered the apartment, he walked straight towards me, took my hand to shake it, and said with a smile; “congratulations!” I thanked him bewilderedly, probably looking like a question mark, whereupon he said: “Don’t you know
why I congratulate you? Because you are from Østlandet [the eastern part of Norway] and you haven’t locked the door.” His reasoning shows his impression of a person from the eastern part of Norway as one who always locks the door during night and when away from home. In Unjárga-Nesseby, on the other hand, it is not uncommon to leave the door unlocked or even leave the key in the door if people are only away for a short while. “If someone wants to visit us and we are not at home, they can just enter the house and wait until we return,” a woman once told me, explaining why she hardly ever locks her door.

The examples above can be seen to support Gullestad’s (1989) idea of ‘equality as sameness’ as a characteristic for the establishment and maintenance of social relations among people in Norway. This idea refers to the need for people to be ‘the same’ in order to feel equal, and implies that mutual confirmations of sameness, whilst ignoring differences, make up important elements in social interaction among Norwegian inhabitants (see also Vike et al. 2001). These three examples have shown how particular similarities and shared experiences were highlighted between my informants and me, particularly in the beginning of my stay, in order for me to gain entry into the Unjárga-Nesseby ‘we’. My ethnographic material will however demonstrate how the logic of equality, as presented by Gullestad, is not a necessity for creating a sense of community among the Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants. Rather, as stated by Lien (2001) and Kramvig (2005: 55) referring to other parts of Finnmark: “Equality created by the gift tends to be seen as more important than equality as sameness.” Throughout my stay, I thus had to find ways of navigating in the flexible form of gift exchange system practiced between people in Unjárga-Nesseby.29

Perhaps less relevant to my ways of engaging in the Unjárga-Nesseby community than my personal background, but at least as important to my research focus, is my academic background. My first university subject was biology, but I quickly came to miss the inclusion of humans in the picture. Thus as I fulfilled my bachelor degree, I realized that I wanted to combine biology with social science. It was not evident that social anthropology would be my choice in this regard, but I wanted to give it a try. When I came across the course ‘nature and society’ during my first year of anthropology studies, I realized I had found my field. All the way I had been interested in human-nature relations, and here I had the opportunity to pursue this interest academically.

Inspired by phenomenology and material semiotics, as described in chapter 1, with a particular focus on everyday practices, my choice of practicing anthropology ‘at home’, in my

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29 See in particular chapter 7.
own country, requires me to face the challenge of ‘home-blindness’. In order not to miss out on essentials, ‘naïve observation’ (Wadel 1991) is thus needed (see also Frøystad 2003). This is where I find the methodological benefits of my material semiotics approach to prove particularly useful. Rather than focusing on the ‘whys’, material semiotics explores the ‘hows’ (Law 2007). As stated by Lien and Law (2011: 69) in their study on farmed Atlantic salmon, an attentiveness to practices and performativity

sharpens our awareness of processes whereby (...) fundamental ways of knowing are being reproduced in a society which is, at the same time, so familiar to us that there is a constant risk of not noticing the many ways in which realities constantly come into being. Put differently, we suggest that material semiotics offers an analytic tool to deal with the challenge of home-blindness.

In practice, this enhances the focus on the various elements such processes consist of.

In rounding up this section regarding my personal background and some of the ways my earlier experiences have influenced my data collection in Unjárga-Nesseby, I turn to Wikan (1992: 476) and her concept of resonance as an orientation useful in explaining how we, as people in a shared world, can understand each other. “‘Resonance’ connotes a faculty, a feeling-thinking engagement,” Wikan states. Furthermore, she defines it to be a concept grounded in practical action that allows for difference but renders it rather insignificant: “We need not have the ‘same experience’ to be able to attend [a shared world] in the same way. But we must dip into the wellsprings of ourselves for something to use as a bridge to others” (ibid.). What really counts in this respect is shared human potential, Wikan argues, and thus to dismiss presumptions of ‘others’ as essentially different form ‘us’. Simultaneously, I acknowledge the continuous production of multiple realities.

In accepting my body both as a reality and as a fieldwork tool, I agree with Wikan that “[a]n attempt to develop greater resonance would mean implicating ourselves, actively and emotionally, in the other’s world” (Wikan 1992: 474). At the same time, I was interested in investigating the various practices I took part in or observed as ways through which nature in Unjárga-Nesseby is constituted. Combining these two different approaches for investigating human-nature processes was what I aimed at during my stay.
One year of Unjárga-Nesseby living

Just before Christmas, a few weeks before I would leave for fieldwork, I received a message from the Unjárga-Nesseby municipality offering me one of their apartments to rent. Based on my choice of research I had decided to live by my own during my Unjárga-Nesseby stay, as my interest in looking closer at peoples’ practical nature-based activities did not necessitate living with a family. Furthermore, by choosing to live alone, I would avoid the likely danger of being too closely associated with a particular family and in that way miss out on potential informants due to possible inter-familial disputes. I was, of course, aware that this kind of issue would inevitably occur during the time of my fieldwork once I started to know people and relationships with my informants were eventually established, but at least a close connection to particular people in the community would not be my fieldwork’s point of departure.

As my main interest was to gain insight in local nature practices, I found participation in the different nature-based activities throughout the year to be most important in my information gathering. In addition to the advantages of participation mentioned above, people remember and tell things connected to practical activities that they might not recall when sitting by the kitchen table. Through participation, I also had the opportunity to ask questions that perhaps I would not have thought of if I hadn’t been engaged in the activity myself.

At the same time as I tried to involve myself in as many outdoor activities as possible, it was also important to participate in other activities, and in other community settings, than just those directly connected to nature. Nature-based activities are not conducted in isolation from other activities, nor are people practicing nature-based activities constantly throughout the year. Knowledge of other aspects of life in Unjárga-Nesseby was also essential for my understanding of the local production of nature realities. In addition, by participating in cultural activities and other kinds of events, I could also experience how nature and nature-based activities were talked about in supplementary settings. This could prove as useful correctives to things being said during outdoor activities, it could add valuable information to my data, or it could shed light on interesting differences between peoples’ actions and words.

Although I did actively structure and plan my fieldwork, I find Olsen (2010: 39) to be spot on when he writes that “living in a small town in Norway is, whether one likes it or not, a way of participant observation. Not necessarily in the sense that the anthropologist consciously tries to get involved in different contexts, but rather the opposite. Increasingly one becomes involved in new and challenging contexts that make up a local community”. I
experienced the same during my Unjárga-Nesseby stay. From early presentations of the reason for my stay, resulting in invitations to join specific nature-based activities such as ptarmigan snaring and cod fishing, I gradually became a member in the choir, was hooked in as a volunteer at dog races and sport events, joined a training group, enrolled in the jazz club and volunteered at the regional jazz festival, attended open meetings and cultural activities that took place during the year, and, when my fieldwork ended, entered a short-time position at the museum. In between and through these activities friendships evolved, and I fell in love.

Although I started my fieldwork by living alone, I left Unjárga-Nesseby in a relationship that I am still a part of. Our relationship became established about halfway through my fieldwork, and it inevitably brought about some changes in my data-gathering situation. These changes were however mainly of a positive kind. The particular connection that was established between my partner and me, and thus also between his family and me, did not lead to any withdrawals from my established informants. Neither did I experience our relationship to be a hindrance for making new acquaintances, although this is something that I cannot know for sure. What seemed clear to me was that this situation provided some of my still unknown co-villagers a new – and more personal – way of positioning me. “Are you the one that’s with Geir?” people could ask me and add “then I know who you are,” before we continued our conversation. This move from being ‘that scientist’ to being ‘Geir’s girlfriend’ clearly made it easier for the Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants to include me in a common ‘we’. Both directly and indirectly people let me understand how they now thought of me as being more connected to their home-place, and less the ‘yet another bypassing researcher’.

Early in my fieldwork I realized I would have to find a way to take part in the Unjárga-Nesseby gift exchange practices and reciprocal processes of providing and receiving a helping hand between the inhabitants (see particularly chapter 7). This proved important throughout my stay, irrespective of my relationship with Geir, but while I was afraid of making mistakes and messing thing up in the beginning, I gradually found ways of providing gifts and favours in return, that was not limited to my early home-made cakes. Eventually I also learned that the Unjárga-Nesseby gift exchange relations does not necessarily require a gift or a favour in return, but depends upon an acknowledgment of the other party’s worthiness as a giver or a receiver (cf. Lien 2001: 97, see also Kramvig 2005). Before I got as far as experiencing this one of my neighbours gave me an invaluable helping hand in entering these exchange relations by offering to lend me a 40 litre freezer. “There is hardly room for anything in the small freezer above the fridge,” she said, making it clear to me how I would definitely be in need of more freezing space than that as the weeks would pass. Due to this
prescient woman, that by chance had an excess freezer, I was able to thankfully receive the various food gifts I was offered throughout my stay. Typically, gifts were provided in combination with visits.

While I was often told how people in Unjárga-Nesseby used to be a lot more social in ‘the old days’, before the television started to occupy peoples’ time, I found that people still visit each other much more frequently here than I am used to from where I grew up, and other places I have lived. Furthermore, these visits were commonly not a result of an invitation, people just showed up. While I highly appreciated it every time I was the lucky receiver of a visitor dropping by, it took some time before I managed to practice this gesture myself (see also Eidheim 1993 and Lien 2001 for similar experiences from other parts of Finnmark). As time passed, though, it gradually became easier for me to do what I had initially been encouraged; “to actually just drop by at any time.” When I was not taking part in outdoor activities or other kinds of events, I thus ended up spending quite some time visiting people. Nevertheless, most of my time was spent outside in order to join my informants in activities, mostly nature based, that were of significance to them.

Field methods and data gathering

In order to give a broad picture of the multiple ways different natures are brought into being among the Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants, my fieldwork covered an extensive area of investigation and involved several people. Even if I experienced a high resonance between the explicitly expressed importance of outfield activities locally and my research interest, I am aware of the fact that I do not represent all the inhabitants of Unjárga-Nesseby in this thesis. Most of my informants are between the age of 25 and 75 years old. Furthermore, in my material on nature practices there is inevitably a considerable bias towards active people engaging in outdoor activities. Additionally, even if Unjárga-Nesseby with its approximately 900 residents is a rather small municipality, not all local practitioners of nature-based activities have participated in my research. As I am not intending a statistical selection, but rather an informative one, I do not consider this to be a problem.

What I want to show in the following is the specificities of human-nature relations, creating nature realities that are highly particular. In order to do this, I have paid attention to the (socio-material) processes in which my informants take part, and through which specific nature realities are brought into being. In order to get to these particularities, a certain ‘low
level’ of investigation is called for. Rather than presenting ‘the nature of Unjárga-Nesseby’ to
the reader I want to show the multiplicity included in such a depiction. While it is easy to
think of small communities as possessing a congruent relationship to nature, the following
shows that by moving down below the ‘community level’ a multitude of nature realities
appear.

When I use the term Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants or people of Unjárga-Nesseby in
this thesis, it is a simplified way of referring to the individuals among the Unjárga-Nesseby
population whom I spent most of my time together with and whom I know the best. Together,
these individuals provide examples of a wide spectrum of nature practices, spanning those
connected to the nature based industries of coastal fisheries, sheep farming and reindeer
herding to different kinds of harvesting and recreational activities. The degree to which
ethnicity is evoked in these activities – if at all – varies, as we shall see, from one particular
situation to the next.

The majority of my informants are ‘fully’ or ‘partially’ Sámi, as reflects the
composition of inhabitants in the Unjárga-Nesseby municipality (see chapter 3). I do not
always refer to the ethnicity of the persons described, as whether they raised ethnicity as a
theme themselves was highly contextual dependent. The following ethnography will show
how ethnicity in general was more strongly evoked in other situations than the ones connected
to the nature-based activities I took part in during my stay.

Most of my informants make use of their environment in a variety of ways throughout
the year, while a few mainly relate to the outfields through certain activities. Some use vast
areas, while others restrict their activities to certain locations. Several of these multiple nature
based activities overlap either in time or place, while others even occur at the same time at the
same place. In addition to conversations taking place in connection with an outdoor activity, I
also gathered information through more structured interviews.

Besides participation, observation, informal conversations and more formal open-ended interviews, I took part in local meetings, seminars and workshops, followed debates in
local newspapers as well as in the Sámi and regional television news, and utilized literary
sources to enable historical contextualization of my present experiences. Additionally,
baseline information was gathered in advance of, as well as during, the fieldwork period.

Shortly after completing an interview or an activity during my fieldwork, I worked
further on my notes to write them out the same day. As I did not use a tape recorder during
interviews, I wrote down these conversations with pen on paper. At no point did I experience
that note taking was a hindrance to people in relaying what they wanted to say. The interview
notes have been subsequently translated into English. In cases where I feel that the Sámi or Norwegian meaning of a word (or a sentence) is not satisfactory presented through the English translation, the original word (or the sentence) is kept in the text, either in brackets or as a footnote. While this kind of direct translation is difficult enough, even more challenging issues of translation had to be dealt with in the field.

**Language and words**

Norwegian, my mother tongue, served as the language of communication throughout my fieldwork. Even though I took part in Sámi language courses during my Unjárga-Nesseby stay, my Sámi is still not good enough for use in proper communication. All Sámi inhabitants in Unjárga-Nesseby speak Norwegian, and thus for my data gathering not possessing a full knowledge of the Sámi language was not detrimental. Consequently I never required the use of an interpreter. Furthermore, at most of the public arrangements I took part in during my stay, Norwegian was held as a common language of communication. I thus never found my Norwegian language to be a problem for communicating with my informants.

While a few of my informants would probably have preferred to speak to me in Sámi, our Norwegian conversations never seemed to limit the freedom of speech of my interlocutors. On some occasions, during an interview or an activity, I would be told by my informant that he or she did not remember a particular Norwegian word, or a Sámi word, that he/she was searching for. Sometimes the word showed up, other times we moved on without it, but these incidents never really stopped the flow of the conversation.

As my field notes were written in Norwegian, I have met several challenges when reworking my Norwegian material into an English text. Not only is the translation process itself difficult, but I have also continuously been in need of readjusting my mind, moving back and forth between the two languages. Simultaneously, this exercise have proven useful in the way the English language creates a distance to my material and forces me to be more aware of what exactly it is I am writing. In other words, the use of English as the written language of my thesis has served as a method helping me to pay more attention to situations, expressions and words I could otherwise have taken for granted and chosen not to explain or analyse further.

As referred to earlier in this chapter, I chose to exchange the term *nature* with *outfields* (in Norwegian; *utmark*) when talking about my research interests with my informants, as this was
the world people commonly used when talking about the Unjárga-Nesseby landscape. While I found this form of translation to be useful in the way that it made my research less abstract, it may simultaneously have added some constrains to further communication. In chapter 4, the differences between the Sámi term *meacchi* and the Norwegian term *utmark* are discussed. As we shall see, the two words are used complementary but differ semantically. By my use of the Norwegian term, the Sámi understanding of *meahcci* was therefore placed in the background. Furthermore, some people connected the *utmark* term with activities performed in relation to the primary industries, and so I had to explain that I was just as interested in the activities that would not fit such a category.

This being said, I still found my choice of exchanging the word *nature* with *utmark* to be for the better rather than the worse. As chapter 4 will show, what is commonly associated with the *utmark* term among people in Unjárga-Nesseby is closer to the understanding of the Sámi term *meahcci* than to the general ‘Norwegian’ understanding of *utmark*. By replacing *nature* with *utmark*, the way it was used by my informants, I experienced a distancing from the abstract notion and moved closer to an understanding of the (broad) utilization aspect of Unjárga-Nesseby nature-based activities.

**Ethical considerations**

All the Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants that appear in my thesis have been anonymised. Although several of my informants told me that they would not mind being presented by their real name, I chose to follow the recommendations from my department of social anthropology and the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). Still, I have no illusion of absolute anonymity for the people represented in this thesis. Unjárga-Nesseby is a small community where people know each other, and even if names and family relations are altered in the text, my informants may still recognize themselves as well as others. Bearing in mind the problems Scheper-Huges (2001) faced as the anonymisation of her informants made her include more sensitive data in her analyses than she would otherwise have passed on, I have chosen not to include statements or events if I am the least in doubt that such an inclusion could harm any of my informants.

While some institutions have been given pseudonyms, anonymising the entire community of Unjárga-Nesseby would not have been feasible nor a desirable act. Not only would characteristic features related to the geography be lost by such a choice, it would also be
difficult to accord my analysis with the CAVIAR project where all circumpolar field locations are included with their actual names. Furthermore, interviews in the local newspapers where my project was described, as well as presentations given in different local and regional settings (like open meetings in Unjárøg-Nesseby and a seminar at the Sámi Parliament in Kárásjohka-Karasjok), would make it difficult, perhaps even inappropriate, to try to anonymise the grounding of my research. By presenting the real name of my fieldwork location I am also continually reminded of the importance of a thoughtful consideration of what to include and exclude in my analyses.

As with the challenges associated with anonymisation, time also has its ethical dimensions. On the one hand, as already mentioned, people seemed to give me credit for my one-year fieldwork, emphasizing the positive effect a long stay would probably have on the understanding I could gain during my fieldwork. Hopefully I managed to live up to these expectations. On the other hand, a long lasting fieldwork which necessarily gives room for many overlapping roles, both for researcher and researched, may blur the line between personal and professional relationships to a higher degree than several short visits might have resulted in. I could, for example, join an activity where I had beforehand decided to be off duty, but nevertheless the experience offered me information that seemed relevant for my research. When this happened, I would write down my field notes as soon as I got home, and then ask the persons involved if they would allow me to use the information I had gathered in my study. These requests were almost always granted.

On a few occasions I was told things my informants wanted me to know, but still did not want me to include in my notes. In those cases I respected their wish and have left out the stories or comments they did not want me to pass on. Those occasions can be seen as an example of how the line between being a researcher and being a fellow human being can become blurred during a long stay, overlapping different activities and gatherings. In situations where I became unsure whether or not the people involved in an activity or a conversation would recognize me as a researcher at work, it was necessary to ask if I could use information from the actual situation in my research. In this way people were reminded of the initial reason for my stay. Since I did not live together with a family it was easier to avoid people forgetting the reason for my stay. As for activities and communication I shared with Geir and his family, these are primarily left out of the thesis. Where a few exceptions are made, I have received permission to include the particular examples in question.
During the early stages of my fieldwork, I realized the importance of being able to give something to people in Unjárga-Nesseby in return for the contribution of time and information towards my research project. As a reindeer herder once told me:

There have been so many researchers passing by, gathering information. And people have spent a lot of time on them as it takes time to inform and explain, particularly if the person has no knowledge of reindeer herding in advance. And when you can’t even recognize yourself in the result afterwards… [-Then it’s frustrating].\(^{30}\) It has happened so many times that people say one thing and then end up with something totally different, and then you have invested time and efforts in it, fed the researchers bouillon with a fork, that’s how thoroughly you need to explain how things work, without getting anything in return.

I have no difficulty in understanding that people may become weary of explaining and showing their ways of life to passing researchers, eager to gather what they need in order to fulfil their research plans. My informants have nevertheless been impressively including and have patiently brought me along to view and participate in their outfield activities, as well as sharing their thoughts, knowledge and opinions in numerable conversations, and for this I am deeply grateful. I hope I have been able to communicate this along the way, and managed to give at least something in return during my stay, be it memorable episodes, insights or home-made cakes. I further hope it is possible for those included in this thesis to recognize life in Unjárga-Nesseby in what I have written. This is a main objective of this work. Nevertheless, as stated by Mol (2002: 155, original emphasis) “no knowledge is beyond critique. (…) Methods are not a way of opening a window on the world, but a way of interfering with it. They act, they mediate between an object and its representations. One way or another. Inevitably.” This thesis is not, and could never be, the complete story of the multiple nature realities in Unjárga-Nesseby.

\(^{30}\) The woman did not finish this sentence, so this is my interpretation of what she meant based on the speed of her words and the tone of her voice.
What do people make of places? The question is as old as people and places themselves, as old as human attachments to portions of the earth. As old, perhaps as the idea of home, of “our territory” as opposed to “their territory,” of entire regions and local landscapes where groups of men and women have invested themselves (their thoughts, their values, their collective sensibilities) and to which they feel they belong. The question is as old as a strong sense of place – and the answer, if there is one, is every bit as complex.

Basso 1996: xiii

In aiming to take part in the various nature-based activities, practiced by the Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants, I experienced a need to move away from the rather abstract term ‘nature’ and make use of more specific terms such as the forest, the mountains and the outfields, in order to get closer to peoples’ nature practices. In the first half of this chapter I start by giving a brief presentation of my theoretical entrance to places and landscapes. I then move on to describe and discuss the concept of outfields, through the Sámi word meahcci and the Norwegian word utmark, as these were the terms mainly used by my informants when talking about the more general areas in and through which their nature-based activities were practiced.

In the second half of the chapter I will present historical processes as well as written texts in the form of juridical legislation and environmental management regulations, as they significantly contribute to the context for peoples’ present day use of the Unjárga-Nesseby landscape. Diverging definitions of the outfields can be recognized within the different
theorizations influencing today’s activities. Local notions of the Unjårga-Nesseby *outfields* include, as we shall see, a more active human engagement with nature than is usually associated with the term in today’s agricultural and natural management context at the national level. This comprises local experiences of belonging which cover large areas. In the viewpoint of national authorities, these areas are commonly defined as wilderness. On the other hand, for those moving in, utilizing and knowing these areas, the *outfields* rather strengthen people’s sense of belonging.

**Nature as place and landscape**

The early responses I received after my arrival in Unjårga-Nesseby, voicing people’s shared interest in my research into nature practices, as presented in chapter 3, were acknowledgements of my choice of research location. “Nature is all we’ve got here, so everybody makes use of the outfields,” I was told. As one informant after the other replaced ‘nature’ with ‘outfields’, or more accurately *utmark*, I became interested in the meaning of the Norwegian and Sámi terms used by people to refer to the Unjårga-Nesseby landscape. Furthermore, I started to wonder about the role of the outfields in peoples’ sense of place and experience of Unjårga-Nesseby as a home place.

The notion of place has, together with the concept of space, figured centrally in anthropological debates over the last couple of decades (see e.g. Nuttall 1992, Tilley 1994, Hirsch and O’Hanlon 1995, Basso 1996, Casey 1996, Feld and Basso 1996, Gray 2000, Ingold 2000, Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003). In recognizing the importance of the spatial in social life, attention has been paid to “the processes through which people create places and imbue them with significance” (Gray 2000:6). Hirsh (1995) argues that the notion of *place* has characteristically been linked to a specific, or subjective, vantage point, whereas *space* has been seen as detached from such a subject position. This polarity between space and place can also be recognized in two aspects of understanding place itself, as “a relatively objective, naturalistic conception of place and a relatively subjective, existential sense of place” (Simonsen 2008: 14). Here Simonsen refers to the difference between a naturalistic understanding of place as descriptive, emphasizing the material and the cultural, and an existential understanding giving emphasis to experience and meaning.

As with the notion of place and space, also landscape has been an issue of anthropological debate, in particular since the 1990s (see e.g. Nuttall 1992, Bender 1993;
2002, Hirsch and O’Hanlon 1995, Ingold 2000). Hirsh (1995: 1-2) recognizes two ways that ‘landscape’ has traditionally been deployed in anthropological accounts. The first is the ‘objective’ landscape, “the landscape of a particular people”, while the other refers to “the meaning imputed by local people to their cultural and physical surroundings (i.e. how a particular landscape ‘looks’ to its inhabitants).” Hirsh further presents the connection between these two anthropological notions of landscape:

There is (…) the landscape that we initially see and a second landscape which is produced through local practice and which we come to recognize and understand through fieldwork and through ethnographic description and interpretation (Hirsh 1995: 2).

By referring to the painterly origin of the landscape concept within the English language in the late sixteenth century, Hirsh moves on to emphasise the importance of this origin, as “[w]hat came to be seen as landscape was recognized as such because it reminded the viewer of a painted landscape, often of European origin” (ibid., see also Ingold 2000).

Okely (2001: 103) criticises the legacy of the landscape term’s painterly origin for privileging “the distant gaze, with its implicit position of power and control through detachment.” Okely distinguishes looking from seeing, and finds looking to represent the distant overview of the spectator, while seeing contains the participatory, engaged visualization where all the senses are included (ibid.). According to Okely, people that live, work and eat in a landscape visualize their surroundings in quite different ways than people without an experience-based relationship to the landscape would do. Still, this position leaves us with two landscapes that are ‘already there’, the ‘near’ (or local) and the ‘distant’ (or detached).

Bender (2002: 106) opens up the concept of landscape to a greater extent, when she states:

Landscapes refuse to be disciplined; they make a mockery of the oppositions that we create between time (history) and space (geography) or between nature (science) and culture (anthropology). Academics have been slow to accept this and slow, too, to notice the volatility of landscape. A person may, more or less in the same breath, understand a landscape in a dozen different ways.

When the term landscape is used in this thesis, I follow Bender’s understanding of landscapes as “created out of people’s understanding and engagement with the world around them. They are always in process of being shaped and reshaped” (ibid.: 103).
In order to overcome the polarity between an abstract, objective space (or place, or landscape) and an experienced, subjective place, phenomenological perspectives have been adopted to describe human consciousness in its lived immediacy. Here human being-in-the-world is seen as fundamentally a being-in-place (e.g. Ingold 2000, Casey 1996, Tilley 1994).

According to Tim Ingold (2000: 199), “the forms of the landscape are not pre-prepared for people to live in – not by nature nor by human hands – for it is in the very process of dwelling that these forms are constituted.” By adopting a ‘dwelling perspective’, Ingold wanted to overcome the division between ‘nature’ and ‘society’ and show how humans move along with the world, rather than acting upon it (ibid.). Within this perspective, human beings, other organisms and the environment form a total field of mutual involvement through which landscapes are brought into being.

In his recent work, Ingold (2011) prefers to exchange the concept of dwelling with the less loaded notion of habitation, as he finds habitation to better encompass the movement inherited in the continuous becoming of the world, in which all living beings are immersed (ibid.): “[H]uman social life is not cut out on a separate plane from the rest of nature but is part and parcel of what is going on throughout the organic world” (Ingold 2011: 8). Terming the embodied experience of peoples’ movement in the world wayfaring, Ingold acknowledges lives to be led “not inside places but through, around, to and from them, from and to places elsewhere” (ibid.: 148). In this view, human existence is rather place-binding than place-bound, as places are found to constitute meeting points (‘knots’) where inhabitants meet and trails are entwined (ibid.). Places are however also produced and achieved in other, less experience-near ways.

As we shall see, Unjárga-Nesseby is produced as a place also by information circulating in the public sphere, through statistical numbers in national registers, from particular climate change indicators in circumpolar investigations, and by me, the anthropologist, as I pick and choose topics to include in my writing (see also Ween 2009). I will turn to this multiplicity of place in the following chapters, and chapter 8 explicitly deals with how various Unjárga-Nesseby place enactments overlap and divide. In the following sections, however, I return to how notions of place-related experiences, represented by socio-material practices, knowledges, narratives and meanings attached to the Unjárga-Nesseby landscape, are exemplified by my informants’ notions of the outfields.
Nature as outfields

In Norwegian, *natur*, like the English ‘nature’, is commonly used to refer to either the ‘inner nature’ of all living beings or to our physical surroundings. In Sámi, the corresponding term is *luondu*, generally used today to cover the same two understandings of nature. Historically, however, *luondu* was used to refer to ‘inner nature’, while *luohtu* was used to refer to the physical world, independent of human movement and use (Schanche 2002). A third Sámi word for ‘nature’ is *meahcci*. This applies to the natural landscape in which people are actively engaged (ibid.).

When people in Unjárga-Nesseby talked to me about their local landscape in general terms, they used the Norwegian word *utmark*, although I soon experienced that what my informants, Norwegian as well as Sámi, included in this concept corresponded better with the Sámi term, despite the Norwegian term being generally regarded as equivalent. The Sámi word *meahcci* and the Norwegian word *utmark* are used complementarily to refer to the same areas, the common lands or ‘the outfield’. The semantic meanings of the words nevertheless differ.

Schanche (2002) argues that the divide between nature and culture that constitute the organizational principle of the official Norwegian natural management regime, is inconsistent with the local Sámi way of thinking about landscapes and nature. She refers to *meahcci* as related to active use, and quoting one of her informants it is “a landscape where the natural resources are found” (ibid.: 163, my translation). Additionally, Schanche highlights the absence of definite and permanent boarders between nature and the human place in the world within Sámi perceptions of nature. “These borders fluctuate, and a communication and exchange between them are constantly taking place. The wilderness exists, not as a foreign place, but as a place in which you can become at home” (ibid.: 169, my translation). In other words, *meahcci* is related to movement and use, something that is communicated when the term is combined with the resource being harvested in a specific location. As an example, *luomemeahcci* refers to the place you pick cloudberries, *guollemeahcci* is where you fish, and *muorrameahcci* is the place you chop wood (Riseth et al. 2010, Schanche 2002).

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Throughout this thesis, I use the English term *outfield* to refer, in general, to common land that can be accessed by everyman. Vergunst (2012) uses the word *outbye* as the English equivalent term to the Norwegian *utmark*, but after several discussions with English speaking colleagues, I have landed on *outfield* as the English translation of *utmark* and *meacchi*. In the Oxford English Dictionary, *outfield* is defined as “the outlying land of a farm” (http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/outfield).
The Norwegian term *utmark* is, as opposed to *meahcci*, highly related to agriculture as a livelihood. Mæland (2006) sees the concept pair *innmark* (the fields) and *utmark* (the outfields) as initially evolving from a world-view with cultivated and uncultivated land as its point of departure. The Norwegian Ministry of the Environment distinguishes *innmark* to include country yards, house sites, tilled land, meadows, cultivated pastures and planted woodlands, plus “similar areas where everyman’s passage would exert undue pressure on owner or user” (Lov om friluftslivet 1957: 1). Which land to consider ‘similar areas’ has to be evaluated in each single case, with local conditions taken into account (Ministry of Environment 2007).

All uncultivated land that is not *innmark* is, according to The Norwegian Ministry of the Environment, designated *utmark*. By establishing *utmark* as “a rest category of everything that is not included in the *innmark* definition” (Reusch 2012: 197, my translation), *utmark* includes areas that may not immediately be thought of as outfields, like rivers and lakes, shores, marshes, forests and mountain areas. Following this ‘negative definition’ (i.e. “everything but *innmark*”), more that 90% of Norway’s 305 470 km² land area consists of *utmark*.

Drawing lines back to the Middle Ages (from approximately year 1000 to the 1500s), Stang (2004) describes how Norwegian farms of this period were highly dependent upon outfield utilization (*utmarksbruk*) to sustain the permanent farming systems of the time. In using as much of the arable land as possible for agricultural production, the outfields provided important pasture as well as additional areas for fodder harvest. Moreover, the outfields were used extensively for collecting materials for tool production, gathering berries and plants, chopping wood, logging timber, catching fish and hunting wild animals. In this way, the interests of the farmers were not only directed towards the cultivated fields, but just as much towards user rights in the outfields; in the forests, mountains, and marshes, and in rivers and lakes. Everything outside the fenced fields was regarded as outfields or *allmenning*; common land. During the Middle Ages the term *allmenning* referred to all non-cultivated land for which farmers had user rights, and so the areas outside and between the farms were considered *allmenninger* (ibid.).

After strong population decline in the late Middle Ages caused by plague and climatic changes leading to crop failures, Norway experienced a new population increase throughout and beyond the 1600s. During this period, new livelihood strategies evolved. One strategy was to rebuild settlements from the Middle Ages, while others established farm allotments,
arranged cotter contracts (husmannskontrakter), or cleared new land in the outfields (Stang 2004). As a result villages grew and the state obtained more taxpayers. Throughout the 1600s the Norwegian authorities introduced a public registry (matrikler) of owned properties. The registers would detail information as to the name and number of the farm, its owner’s name, and the production capacity upon which the farms tax level would be based (ibid.). Following increased privatization of Norwegian land, the national authorities decided also to regulate and tax the use of the outfields. As a result, farmers expanded their area of utilization by asserting rights and clearing ground, and the villager’s common use of the outfields was reduced (Stang 2004). There may be several reasons why the same process did not occur in Finnmark. One may be attributed the fact that a national sovereignty was still not resolved for all parts of Finnmark at the time, another that no tradition for land assignments existed (Ravna 2010).

The registration of owned properties was concluded in most parts of Norway by 1725. In Finnmark, on the other hand, ownership of private land was not made possible until the first law on land sale was passed in 1775 (Pedersen 1994, Nilsen 2003). As for Eastern Finnmark, the first registrations of privately owned properties took place in the 1800s. In Unjårga-Nesseby the oldest registered Sámi properties date from after 1850 (Nilsen 2003). Several conditions may have influenced the late formalization of agricultural land use in Finnmark. Firstly, as presented in chapter 3, the Sámi population still practiced seasonal migration between two or three settlements throughout the year. Being restricted to one permanent settlement would therefore be unbenefficial for Sámi livelihoods at that time. Secondly, the Sámi siida organization used the siida area as common ground. Individual proprietary rights did not exist. According to common practice, people knew the borders of their own utilizable land, as well as which land areas were utilized by their neighbours. Other people’s land areas were thus respected and avoided (Pedersen 1994). With the new national regulations and rules for land sale after 1775, farms in the Varanger area also became objects for purchase and ownership. The outfields on the other hand, were still regarded common land for which formalization was deemed superfluous (Nilsen 2003).

In the south of Norway, a gradually increasing amount of outfield forest properties, pastures and areas for future cultivation became privatized during the 18th and 19th century. The government perceived this as easing the outfield management policy, as well as securing the farmer’s user rights (Stang 2004). Throughout the 20th century, agricultural development in

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32 The borders were established through treaties with Sweden in 1751 and Russia in 1826.
most parts of Norway became increasing reliant upon cultivated land, and simultaneously the importance of the outfields declined.

Still, during the same period, the combination of activities and extensive outfield use, particularly the harvesting of animal feed fodder, continued to be of substantial significance to the farmers in Finnmark and thus cultivated land was less important. Furthermore, Finnmark’s geographical location and climatic conditions impeded grain farming and made the production of vegetables uncertain due to potential summer frost that could spoil the crop. Up until the 1930’s, the fields in Unjárga-Nesseby were only used as pastures and hayfields and gave relatively small yields (Nilsen 2003). In the outfields, on the other hand, grass was harvested on forest meadows, marshes and river headlands, and in addition willow, heath, seaweed and kelp was gathered and used as fodder for the animals throughout the winter (ibid.).

Today, the outfield harvest for fodder does not have the same prominence as it used to for Unjárga-Nesseby farmers. The agricultural development in Finnmark has followed a similar path to the rest of Norway, and the numbers of farms have increased while land expansion, technological improvements and increased efficiency ensure higher production. Despite new remedies and more intensive cultivation of the land, the agricultural sector is still generally smaller in Finnmark than in the rest of the country. Only 0.2 % of Finnmark’s total land area is cultivated land. In comparison, the corresponding national statistic is 3.1 % (Finnmarkstatistikken 2009). The agricultural area, the number of farms, and the number of sheep and dairy cattle in the county constitute approximately 1 % of the Norwegian total (ibid.). Alta and Deatnu-Tana are the largest agricultural municipalities in Finnmark, and together they comprise more than half the county’s agricultural area.

Geographical location and climatic conditions continue to limit agricultural possibilities in Unjárga-Nesseby. Except from one single dairy farmer, the agricultural industry in the municipality during the year of my fieldwork comprised sheep farming only. This is still the situation in 2012. For today’s sheep farmers in Unjárga-Nesseby, as for sheep farmers in other parts of Norway, the right to let their animals loose in the outfields during summer plays an important role in providing the sheep with nutritious fodder from outside the farm while the fields are harvested. This kind of resource use is but one among several ways local sheep farmers jointly utilize the outfields. Additionally, the sheep farmers share the outfields with other Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants. The local outfields are still ‘areas where

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33 Recall that Finnmark is the largest county in Norway, representing 15% of the Norwegian territory (http://www.ffk.no/fakta/default.aspx?mid=38).
natural resources are found’, and throughout the different seasons people’s various activities overlap in time and/or space (see chapter 5 and 6). In this context use is related to user rights, not owner rights, and as the following and the next chapters will show, clear divides between private and common, tame and wild, home place and ‘wilderness’ are often irrelevant to the activities in question.

**Outfield belonging**

People’s individual perceptions of their local environment depend upon personal background and particular relations to the landscape, as well as the influence of memories and narratives. Additionally, according to Bærenholdt and Granås (2008: 3), “[p]laces are not constructed out of nowhere but involve materialities, politics and imaginations, comprising people’s engagement with their physical-material environment.” For the inhabitants in Unjárga-Nesseby, the outfields are a part of their life world that they actively and participatory relate to in their everyday life. Knowledge of the outfields is gained through lived experience, narratives and memories. Based on story-telling and different activities taking place in the outfields, ‘place-making’ (Basso 1996, Gupta and Ferguson 1997) is performed.

People’s sense of belonging in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields is clearly connected to using and knowing the areas. In this context, there seems to be no need of strict divisions between what is considered ‘cultivated’ and what is considered ‘wild’. Returning to Schanche (2002), the boarders between nature and the human place in the world within Sámi perceptions of nature are permeable and fluid. As the following chapters will show, a similar fluidity can be found in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfield resource use, resembling the historical situation Hågvar (2006: 276) describes for the settled inhabitants of inner Finnmark in his study on Sámi right formation:

> [A]n increasingly settled population made a living from what nature could offer: game, fish, berries, often combined with a small livestock and a few reindeer in the herd of the nomadic reindeer owners. ‘Outfield industries’ (utmarksnæringen) is not a good description of this nature adaptation, as the cultivation of the land was not necessarily carried out to the extent that the division field/outfield (innmark/utmark) became important. In essence, the crux was in

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34 Here Hågvar (2006) refers to that part of the inner Finnmark population that did not become nomadic reindeer herders, once this livelihood specialization evolved, and also those that later left a nomadic livelihood.
finding the combination of activities that would sustain those dependent upon them (Hågvar 2006: 276, my translation).

While *utmark* is the Norwegian word closest to *meahcci*, and thus used in written sources, as well as among people in Unjárga-Nesseby when talking to me about their local nature-based activities, it blurs the multiple lived experiences and feelings of belonging to these actively utilized areas. In other words, the complexity of the Sámi word disappears in the Norwegian translation. Furthermore, the two terms represent different juridical aspects.

The opposite word to the Norwegian *utmark* is, as already mentioned, *innmark*. This makes the concept pair strongly connected to ownership and proprietary rights. Within a ‘traditional’ Sámi understanding of rights to land, on the other hand, user-rights rather than proprietary rights are emphasized: “We Sámi have never owned land in the way people in the West otherwise do. We have not, like in the West, cultivated the land and put up fences around it (…), but in our use of nature we have left traces, tracks and marks as well. A trained eye can see where grass has been cut, where people have rested” (Buljo, quoted in Riseth et al. 2010: 51, my translation).

The opposite term to the Sámi *meahcci* is *báiki*, whose meaning includes residence, refuge, farm and home (Riseth et al. 2010, Schanche 2002). Drawn from Schance’s ‘residential’ informants in Guovdageaidnu-Kautokeino, *báiki* refers to the farm courtyard with buildings and land, as well as the nearby landscape with meadows and hills, while “*Meachcci* starts when you have passed a few hilltops and can no longer see the farm buildings” (Schanche 2002: 166). But while *meahcci* and *báiki* represents oppositions, Schanche shows how the use of the terms implies possibilities of flexible redefinitions. As with *meahcci*, also *báiki* can be connected with specific activities, like *luomebáiki* (where you pick cloudberries) and *guollebáiki* (where you fish). “The way these terms are used in Guovdageaidnu-Kautokeino, they mark the difference between the general use of meahcci and the use of own, specific areas by single persons or families, like their fishing-*báiki*” (ibid.: 166). This use was regulated through prescriptive user rights, and the locations where different families or people from the village could carry out harvesting activities were carefully complied with (Schanche 2002). This was also an important principle of rights in Unjárga-Nesseby, extending into the 20th century (Nilsen 2009).

This regulation is to a certain degree still evident and complied with among Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants when it comes to particular people or families ‘own’ cloudberry locations.

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35 In Norwegian: *hevduvunnede bruksrettigheter.*
(see chapter 6). A similar form of regulation was exemplified by an Unjárga-Nesseby sheep farmer without Sámi background, something he made clear himself, as he emphasized the importance of knowing and respecting different famers’ user rights locally: “In the south of Norway you need grazing rights connected to your property to be able to have your animals on outfield pastures. Here in Finnmark you are allowed grazing rights for as many animals as your farm can nourish.” He continued to explain: “People here don’t want paper on these issues. The outfields are for everyone; we have them in common and have to share them. No right to the outfields should be disputed, as would happen automatically once you need a paper for it. People have this right. And nobody states that this is mine and this is yours.” 36

The way meahcci can become báiki, before once again turning into meahcci, is an illustration of the flexible, permeable divides within the Sámi understanding of nature. Such an understanding of nature is nevertheless not restricted to the Sámi, but can also be recognized among non-Sámi inhabitants in Unjárga-Nesseby and in the rest of Finnmark (as well as in other rural areas of Norway, such as the village where I grew up). As stated by Ween and Lien (2012: 100): 37

Nature practices might manifest identity practices, but not necessarily. Diverse nature practices may occur in the same family, or even be engaged in by the same individual. Sometimes nature practices clash, particularly when resources are scarce. Often they do not. In Finnmark, nature, as identity practices, must be approached envisioning a foundational fluidity.

This fluidity, or flexibility, regarding nature, will be explicitly and/or implicitly exemplified by empirical data throughout the rest of the thesis. Furthermore, the pairing of meahcci and báiki illustrates that in the term meahcci is included a larger area than that commonly included in the Norwegian term utmark. It can be farther away and it can cover areas that, from an outsider’s perspective, could be seen to be unmarked by human presence. But as referred to above, even where historical alterations to the landscape have been minor, ‘a trained eye’ can see where different activities have been conducted.

36 Based my own experiences and participation in Unjárga-Nesseby outfield use, I agree with his statement about the division of outfield pastures among the farmers. When it comes to other kinds of resource use and outfield activities, on the other hand, the division between “who has the right to use what” is, as I will show, not always that straightforward.

37 See also Kramvig (2005).
Negotiating degrees of wilderness

“This is not a wilderness. This is where we live,” an Unjárga-Nesseby woman once said with frustration, referring to how she experienced national management representatives regarding the local outfields as ‘wild’. While maps of the municipality area are dominated by ‘nature’ (see e.g. figure 3) and Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants commonly highlight the importance of nature-based activities in their everyday life, they do not consider this nature to be a wilderness. The woman’s statement exemplifies a view on a ‘significant other’, here represented by national management authorities, possessing a distant gaze on the local, or regional, nature. Tourists visiting Varanger, to take part in “an Eldorado for wildlife experiences and outdoor life in one of Europe’s most northerly and untouched nature areas” (varanger.com 2012a), represent another group of such ‘significant others’.

As written by Christine J. Walley (2004: 2) in her analysis of nature conservation in the Mafia Island Marine Park off the eastern coast of Africa, the ‘remoteness’ of Mafia has “according to a certain symbolic logic [come to symbolize] not hardship but the ‘pristine’ nature (…) – a situation attractive to both conservationists and the international tourism trade.” A parallel is found in the Varanger landscape, referred to as remote and untouched in the international tourist brochures. Among Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants, the ignorance among some of the visiting tourists occasionally serves as the basis for a good story and a laugh. However a feeling of being neglected and overrun by the centre of power in the south of Norway may be harder to bear. For some such feelings were brought to the fore during the process of establishing the Varanger peninsula national park.

For the inhabitants in Unjárga-Nesseby, the outfields are a part of their life world to which they actively and participatory relate in their everyday life. In a national management context, on the other hand, the same areas are part of an integrated Norwegian nature: “The suggested Varanger peninsula national park makes up a large coherent and substantially untouched nature area virtually free from technical interventions. For this reason, the area is proposed established as a national park, pursuant to § 3 in the Nature Conservation Act” (Royal Resolution 2006). From the process of the establishment of the Varanger peninsula national park (Várnjárgga álbmotmeahcci/ Varangerhalvøya nasjonalpark) in 2006,38 different landscape theorizations can be recognized.

During an early phase of the consultation prior to the formation of the national park, the Unjárga-Nesseby municipality provided the following comments to the consultative draft:

The municipality finds it appropriate to ask the question – and seek clarification – if the drawn area set aside for the national park [within the boarder of Unjárga-Nesseby municipality] fulfils the criteria to be interpreted as a larger coherent untouched, or substantially untouched, nature area, as stated in white paper nr. 62 and § 3 in the Nature Conservation Act (Unjárgga gielda/Nesseby kommune 2003, my translation, emphasis in original).

The municipality suggested that this area be protected as an ‘area of landscape conservation’, 39 “the mildest form of area protection according to the Conservation Act, relevant for nature areas with a higher degree of human impact than is accepted within a national park” (ibid.). Such a conservation designation would better correspond with the actual conditions in the area, it was stated.

One could argue that the comment from Unjárga-Nesseby municipality, regarding the establishment of the national park, may represent a fear of losing current benefits. That may well be a part of it. Nevertheless, from the ethnographic data presented in the following chapters, I would argue that the comment is a highly relevant objection to a process perceived as producing a wilderness out of known locations, locations used by people through practical nature-based activities and known through narratives from earlier generations. Juhan, a Sámi retired carpenter in his 80’s, exemplified this during one of our conversations: “The outfield is what we’ve got here. We’ve been used to utilizing this area, but suddenly we’re not allowed to do that anymore. They’ve placed the national park up here, just behind us,” he said, pointing towards the hillside behind the house. “Earlier on we used the mountains all the time. Now we’re closed off down by the fjord.” 40 From this statement, as well as from the municipality comment referred to above, it is possible to trace a feeling of exclusion through a redefinition of areas considered to belong to the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields. While movement and activity is still allowed inside the borders of the national park, its establishment led Juhan, and others with him, to experience the outfields as transferred into ‘nature’ in the form of untouched wilderness.

39 In Norwegian: Landskapsvernområde.

40 In original: “nu e vi stengt inne ned mot fjorden.” Juhan’s statement provides an interesting contrast to what both Lien (1987) and Spjuth (2007) found in the fishing community of Batåsvrjord, on the north coast of the Varanger peninsula. Here people rather experience it to be the mountains that ‘close in’ and the sea that ‘opens up’: “Even if more is needed in order to move on the sea, it seems closer to peoples’ lives, something that can be deduced from the fact that the sea, with all it brings, is what made it possible for people to make a living at this location” (Spjuth 2007: 58, my translation). An interesting point here is that Bätsfjord is regarded a Norwegian settlement. In Unjárga-Nesseby, where the Sámi affiliation is prominent, it is the combination of resource use from both the fjord and the land that is highlighted as the foundation for local way of life, in archeological sources as well as in present day communication.
While some Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants feared constraints being placed upon resource use and freedom connected to harvesting activities, by the establishment of the Varanger peninsula national park, the Ministry of Environment (2006) highlighted the importance of allowing “a continuation in the local community’s traditional use of the area”. In the press release to announce the establishment of the national park, we can read how the ministry found it important to “secure an area that consists of the Arctic-most part of mainland Norway. Both the particular land formations and deposits from the last ice age, as well as the plant- and animal life with easterly, southern and Arctic elements, are of great national value” (Ministry of Environment 2006). Following a presentation of the unique traits of the local geology, flora and fauna, historical human activity in the area is acknowledged in the following way:

Findings of cultural remains on the Varanger peninsula show a long and continuous presence of humans in the area. The oldest cultural relics are dated back to the Mesolithic. The Varanger peninsula is an old Sámi harvesting area where, amongst others, several Sámi sanctuaries and sacrificial sites are to be found. The utilization of the outfields has formed an important part of the Sámi culture for generations, and the area is still of major importance to Sámi tradition. The minister of environment emphasizes that it has been important to develop the conservation regulations in a way that enables a continuation of the traditional use conducted by the local community. It is particularly important that Sámi livelihoods, especially the reindeer herding, can continue as before (ibid.: unnumbered).

There is a clear contradiction between the description of the proposed Varanger National Park as an area of “large coherent and substantially untouched nature” (Royal Resolution (2006)), and the acknowledgement by the Ministry of the Environment that in establishing the park, the ‘continuation of traditional use’ by local inhabitants must be ensured. Given these contradictory assertions of essential aspects of the area and its protection, it is not surprising that some of the Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants have raised questions regarding their future access to outfield activities inside the borders of the national park.

Schanche (2002) refers to a parallel issue when she shows how the Norwegian national focus on protecting ‘valuable natural landscapes’ on the one hand, and ‘valuable cultural landscapes’ on the other hand, makes it difficult for Sámi landscapes to fit either of

41 In Norwegian: verdifulle naturlandskap and verdifulle kulturlandskap, respectively.
the categories (Schanche 2002: 158-159). The first category attributes value to a lack of human activity, while the other attributes value to human made structures and interventions. This means that areas in which human utilization have occurred, without transforming the landscape or leaving distinct marks behind, are excluded from both classifications. This type of historical land use, Schanche argues, has not left strong enough traces to be acknowledged a cultural landscape by the conservation authorities. Present and future land use is however regarded a problem if such areas are to be defined as a natural landscape worthy of protection (ibid.).

In relation to the establishment of the Varanger peninsula national park, and implementation of associated rules restricting land use, some of my informants found it to be a paradox that it is partially the minor alterations caused by historical human activity in the landscape that have led to the authorities’ present designation of the area as a natural landscape worthy of protection (See also Riseth et al. 2010, Ween and Lien 2012). While official documents state that ‘traditional use’ of the national park areas should continue, a definition of the landscape as a ‘substantially untouched nature area’ still locates humans on the ‘outside’, as potential visitors that are welcome if certain precautions are met.

While some Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants experienced the establishment of the national park as creating a wilderness out of known and used locations, others found it to provide the area with important nature protective guidelines. A few even mentioned their wish for more rigorous regulations of the landscape, especially regarding motorized transportation. There were also those that told me they were positively surprised by the few changes they found the establishment of the park actually brought about. In the discussions preceding and following the establishment of the national park, several different ‘we’s’ were therefore evoked in disagreements regarding the kind of nature-based activities people should practice or avoid in the national park in particular, and in different parts of the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields in general. In the discrepancies I witnessed, or was referred to, during my stay, ethnicity was seldom highlighted. Instead, people tended to identify with their preferred practice, and were therefore likely to represent, for example, the reindeer herders or sheep farmers, cabin owners or moose hunters, skiers or snow mobile drivers, berry pickers or dog mushers.

Despite both minor and major disagreements regarding particular locations where user conflicts may arise, Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants still agree on the outfields as being biosocial areas of use. When juxtaposed with ‘the others’’ way of theorizing the Varanger peninsula landscape as untouched nature or wilderness, or when presenting Unjárga-Nesseby outwards,
a more overarching common ‘we’ can be recognized, in which coherence is sought between the various nature practices. By way of contrast however, the enacting of the Finnmark Act, a year before the establishment of the Varanger peninsula national park, brought intense debates and ethnic dissent.

**The Finnmark Act**

As already mentioned, the right to *use* the land, not the right to *own* land, has historically been the main basis for juridical aspects of resource utilization in Sámi areas (Pedersen 1994). In 2005, the Finnmark Act was passed by the Norwegian parliament, marking the end of 25 years of close cooperation between the Sámi Parliament and the Finnmark County Council. The Act intends to afford the Finnmark population a higher degree of influence in cases regarding land use in the county. The Act was seen to be necessary in order to clarify the State’s relationship to the Sámi people:

> The Finnmark Act recognises that the Sami people and others have rights to land and natural resources in Finnmark. Other people's corresponding rights elsewhere in Norway were recognised a long time ago. A natural process of evolution has taken place in which the use of natural resources over generations has given rise to ownership rights and rights of use. This natural process of evolution never took place in Finnmark. This is largely due to the fact that the use of natural resources in Finnmark has overwhelmingly taken the form of hunting, fishing, trapping and reindeer husbandry, while elsewhere in Norway it has taken the form of agriculture to a greater extent (The Finnmark Act 2010).

> Still, the Act is structured to ensure ‘possibilities for all Finnmark inhabitants’ (Ministry of Justice and the Police 2005). The objective of the Act is to “ensure that the land and natural resources in Finnmark are managed in a balanced and sustainable way, in the best interest of the residents of the county, and especially as a foundation for Sámi culture, reindeer herding, use of the outfield, industrial operations and social life” (Ministry of Justice and the Police 2005, my translation). While Sámi ethnicity and indigeneity is presented as a justification for the legal redefinition of the region, acknowledging Norway’s obligations in accordance with the ILO Convention no. 169, the new legislation nevertheless applies to all residents of the county, regardless of ethnic identity (see also Ween and Lien 2012).

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Prior to the establishment of the Finnmark Estate Agency, 96% of the land in Finnmark (about 45 000 km²) was state owned. This land was transferred to local tenure, defined as a joint ownership, shared by all Finnmark residents. The board of the Finnmark Estate consists of three members appointed by the Sámi Parliament and three members appointed by the Finnmark County Council. This is in accordance with the requirement that both Sámi and non-Sámi inhabitants of the county should be equally represented, and possess identical rights. Furthermore, the board’s voting procedures are diversified in the following way: “[T]he Sami Parliament appointed representatives are attributed weight on issues regarding inner Finnmark (i.e. Sami core areas), while County appointed representatives would have a final say on issues regarding coastal areas, where most of the non-Sami population live” (Ween and Lien 2012: 103). This being said, all national regulation still applies on the Finnmark Estate land, thus restricting the influence for the Finnmark Estate (ibid.).

A brochure about the Finnmark Act, distributed to all households in Finnmark in 2005, emphasized that “[a]ll inhabitants in Finnmark will have the right to utilise the natural resources on the property of the Finnmark Estate” (Ministry of Justice and the Police 2005, my translation). Further, “the Sámi, through a long established use of land and water, have developed rights to the Finnmark property. Also other inhabitants in Finnmark may have developed such rights. A commission will be established to map these rights. There will further be set up a special court of justice for settling disputes over such rights” (ibid.).

The Finnmark commission was given the mandate to map the extent and content of existing rights, pertaining to groups and persons, on the property of the Finnmark Estate. The purpose of which was to eventually legally acknowledge said rights, thus affording protection against intervention. While county residents can submit claims to have their prolonged use of an area legally approved, the Commission also has to clarify legal rights issues in cases where no claims have been proposed. The conclusions of the Commission may be appealed to the Finnmark Court of outfields (utmarksdomstolen i Finnmark), and further to the Supreme Court (ibid.).

Unjárga-Nesseby was among the first municipalities in which the Finnmark Commission started its work. In March 2009, an open meeting was arranged in the municipality in order to discuss some early responses to the Commission’s forthcoming work. The commission itself did not arrange the meeting; rather the initiative came from FNF, Forum for Nature and Outdoor Life (Forum for Natur og Friluftsliv). FNF is a cooperative network for voluntary nature related organizations at the county level, focusing on issues
relevant to nature and outdoor-based activities. The purpose of the Unjárga-Nesseby meeting was to discuss how the interests of the general public could be considered and attended to in the future work of the Finnmark Commission. One Commission member and two Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants were among the speakers, and about 15 other people had found their way to the town hall for the meeting.

After the welcome and a presentation of the Finnmark Commission and its mandate, an Unjárga-Nesseby farmer and local historian was the next to speak. He first explained how essential it was for the Commission to gain an understanding of the area’s history and then started his presentation by sketching the historical lines of the local settlements, going back to the Sámi siida organization. A map of the extensive Várjatsiida land use up until the 1700s was presented. Here we could see how the siida comprised almost the whole of the Varanger peninsula, in addition to parts of the Tana Valley, areas that now belong to Finland and an extensive piece of land on the southern side of the fjord.

Two points were emphasized during the first part of the presentation. The first regarded the discrepancy between today’s municipal borders and the historical use of the area. Historically, we were told, the geographical range of the siida was defined by several factors, such as topography, water systems and access to resources, to which the siida members had user rights within their own area. Following the national border stipulations during the 1700s, the areas of the Varanger Sámi became more restricted. When the municipality borders within the county were drawn in 1865 they followed the watersheds, without any attention being paid to the peoples’ user traditions in the area, a decision the local population and municipal politicians protested against several times thereafter.

The second point concerned the historically based user rights to land, rather than owner rights to land. Here the presenter explained how seasonal migrations made ownership of land less important to the local population. Rather, they harvested what they needed from their extensive use of the area. As so many of the resources were harvested on ‘common land’, the need for privately owned fields was also limited: “the farm’ was the whole area in which people moved.”

In concluding his presentation, the farmer and historian remarked that the local population would hopefully have more influence on today’s user right decisions than was the case in the 17- and 1800s. He further emphasized that even if the present day use of the
Unjárga-Nesseby outfields is of another kind than during previous generations, resource harvesting and outfield activities still form an important part of people’s livelihoods.43

The member of the Finnmark Commission reminded the audience about the ethnically neutral mandate for the Commissions work, and none of the Unjárga-Nesseby presenters explicitly emphasized personal ethnicity in their talks. Their Sámi identities were however implicitly included and communicated. Both in Unjárga-Nesseby and in the county in general, the Finnmark Act and the establishment of the Finnmark Commission caused non-Sámi fear of ethnic discrimination and the exclusion of certain user groups. However concerns were not only limited the non-Sámi population. Amongst Sámi inhabitants a fear of being excluded from previously utilised areas for the benefit of other Sámi outfield practitioners, regarded as more ‘righteous users’ of the same locations, could be recognized. For example, some of my Sámi informants outside the reindeer herding industry were concerned about losing user rights to the reindeer herders. In case of future coinciding claims regarding the right to use common areas, these people found the likelihood of outcompeting a whole industry to be inconceivable.

Even if the Finnmark Act emphasizes both Sámi rights and equal treatment of all inhabitants in the county, fears of ethnic discrimination still occasionally surface in public debates and social media (see also Ween and Lien 2012). Furthermore, people still question the approach of the Finnmark Commission in the manner it categorises land use claims. When people in Unjárga-Nesseby received the Commission questionnaires necessary for those seeking to have their user rights claims legally approved, several of my informants found the criteria problematic. Some expressed a difficulty in rating the intensity of their activities in different areas. To others, it seemed wrong to personally claim their rights to areas they indeed use, but which they find to be used just as much by co-villagers. Filling out the questionnaire, I was told, would be like ranking their own use of the outfields above the use of others.

Another point to mention in this regard is how such a categorization of people’s nature-based activities represents fixity, where certain activities are coupled with specific areas. While such couplings do indeed occur in practice, Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants are

43 The next Unjárga-Nesseby speaker, a politically active woman, also had user rights as her point of departure: “Our inheritance (odel) is our relationship to the area through our use.” Her presentation was however much more personal as she referred to own experiences and feeling of local belonging through her familiarity with the outfields. The woman further articulated her thoughts on the Finnmark Commissions work, and expressed how people, she included, become scared of losing their previous rights when private and collective user rights are legally determined.
used to a flexibility and fluidity in their outfield activities that disappears from view in the Commission’s questionnaire. As we shall see, my informants, as with people in Finnmark in general (e.g. Ween and Lien 2012, Kramvig 2005), value the flexibility of their nature-based practices. This flexibility, or fluidity, implies not only the multiplicity of activities taking place, but also the possibility of shifting between activities and locations when seasonal variation, weather events, personal preferences or other elements make such a move convenient.

The discussions and questions that arose before, during and after the establishment of the Finnmark Act and the work of the Finnmark Commission in Unjárga-Nesseby, and throughout the county, exemplify peoples’ fears of restricted access to the outfields and worries about ethnic discrimination. Even if previously state owned land was transferred to the Finnmark Estate, the juridical guidelines that operate on this land are still determined by the national authorities. Within this legislation, nature in Finnmark is primarily categorized as wilderness. In other words; while presented with the possibility of influence in issues regarding land use in the county, the specific nature criteria which forms the foundation of this work fails to adequately correspond to the nature – or natures – enacted in peoples’ everyday outfield practices. This inconsistency might be an important reason for peoples’ frustration, directed both inwards and outwards, in land use debates. In rounding off this chapter, I will argue that the split between the different forms of nature enactments within national management practices and those performed by Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants can be linked to a divergent application of a nature-culture divide.

**At home in the outfields**

As described by the farmer and historian in the FNF meeting, historically the Varanger Sámi ‘farm’ comprised “the whole area in which people moved”. This forms an interesting comment to one of Knut Odner’s (2000) observations during fieldwork in Unjárga-Nesseby in 1993. Odner had a background in archaeology as well as anthropology, and in 1957 he conducted his first of several archaeological excavations in the municipality (ibid.). In 1993, however, his fieldwork was of an anthropological character, and in a presentation about Unjárga-Nesseby, Odner (2000: 319) writes the following:

[A]t first glance architecture in present-day Nesseby appears to resemble what is common elsewhere in Norway. On a closer look, it is possible to discover slight variations. Norwegians
commonly have well-tended gardens in front of their houses, with fences around them. There are some nice gardens in Nesseby, but they are exceptional, and few inhabitants bother about fences. Snowmobiles, broken-down cars and other machinery around the houses are a common sight. In Norwegian surroundings debris would not have been left lying around so conspicuously.

Odner uses this as an example of what he calls a superficial impression of ‘Norwegianization’ within the Unjárga-Nesseby society. He sees the Norwegian habit of beautifying the surroundings of a house as a way of ritualizing the importance of private property, and interprets a lack of such interest as “a negative reaction to the ritualizing of property” (ibid.: 325). From his stay in Unjárga-Nesseby, Odner experienced that people do appreciate ownership, but not, as he says, to the extent of ritualizing it. While I find Odner’s comment reasonable, I also think an explanation for this difference (which was less distinct but still recognizable in 2008) can be found in people’s nature practices and feeling of outfield belonging. How such an Unjárga-Nesseby ‘home’ is personally and contextually dependent, as well as fluidly and heterogeneous, was reflected in a conversation with Juhan, one of my oldest conversation partners.

Halfway during my stay, Juhan introduced me to the recently completed work of the association of retired peoples, where the members corrected local place names on the municipality map and sent it to The Norwegian Mapping Authority for correction. He did not find it strange that there were so many errors associated with the maps earlier on, he told me. “When it comes to the Sámi place names,” he said, “people had names for every little spot, be it a certain area, or a stone or a tuft of grass.” When talking about a place, it could therefore be accurately referred to by its name. Some places had (and still have) names shared by the people in the community. In other places people had (and still have) their own names on the features of the landscape.

“Younger people that utilize the outfields today use their own names on the different places that are important to them.” The way this was stated made me understand that Juhan did not see this change as undesirable, only that the association of retired peoples had started the mapping project to ensure that the old place names did not disappear. New utilization forms may result in new place names, while other names last and maintain a historical link to the home place, as continuity and change interlink in the everyday outfield activities.

Juhan’s statements, together with examples presented in the following chapters, exemplify how ‘homes’ are not necessarily restricted to a house and a garden, or a farm, but include much larger areas of use. The focus on private buildings and property thus seems less
prominent in Unjárga-Nesseby than is often the case in more conventional agricultural areas. When ‘home’ goes beyond the walls of the house and the borders of the property, fluidly including smaller or larger areas of the adjacent landscape, a split between ‘culture’ and ‘nature’ and ‘tame’ and ‘wild’ appears less relevant in people’s home-making. Furthermore, certain equipment and means of transportation is needed, or at least – by most – preferred, in order to move in and to harvest the home-place outfields. This means that snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles (ATV’s), sledges, caravans and equipment of a certain size are often stored outside peoples’ house. If activities in the outfields take part in creating ‘home’ to a larger extent than refurbishment of house and property would achieve, the prioritization of time might consequently be reflected in people’s residential area.

Unjárga-Nesseby is not only a coastal Sámi community in Finnmark, it is also a coastal community in Norway. As nature in Norway is identified as an important ingredient in our national identity (e.g. Ween and Abram 2012, Kalland and Rønnnow 2001, Witoszek 1998), nature practices would seem to be an apt area for the north and south, the local and the national, and the Sámi and Norwegian to meet. Nevertheless, questions regarding who has the right to make use of nature, and where, when and in what ways, are still often contested. Furthermore, the use-oriented nature practices carried out among people in Unjárga-Nesseby, as in Finnmark in general, are seldom valued in a national management context. As this chapter has shown, practices that occurred, and still occur, in Unjárga-Nesseby include other forms of biosocial relationships and notions of ‘the tame’ and ‘the wild’, or ‘culture’ and ‘nature’, than the ones that provide the foundational basis for Norwegian nature management policies.

In the next two chapters, empirical examples of biosocial engagement in the Unjárga-Nesseby landscape illustrate how people’s multiple nature-based activities turn outfields into home places and take part in, amongst others, inclusions and exclusions (that is; the creation of an inside ‘we’ and an outside ‘they’) and a gendering of the landscape. As the ethnography will show, several of these practices can be seen as examples of domestication processes, but only when a broadened definition of domestication is applied, where fluidity and a two-way process of biosocial relations are included. Furthermore, it will become evident that the hitherto presentations of Unjárga-Nesseby as a place are accompanied also by other more or less overlapping place enactments.
I had only been in Unjárga-Nesseby for a few days when I first heard for someone state, “We know where we live.” Throughout my fieldwork, I experienced this phrase as a common saying among people in the community when taking about the weather. It was often used in statements like “the eastern wind is sure rough today. But we know where we live” or “we don’t live here for the warm summers. We know where we live.”

While the “we know where we live” statement is mainly articulated in conversations about the weather, I argue that it can also represent recognition of the different ways of relating to the multiple nature realities in Unjárga-Nesseby. When people talk about the importance of nature based activities in their home place, and some even declare that “nature is all we’ve got here”, they do not refer to one nature. Instead they recognize various natures that are constantly created in the actual practical activities going on in a multitude of (overlapping) localities, or in storytelling and discussions about these localities. The diverse ways of relating to nature, and thus the diverse natures, can be seen as an essential part of the “known” people feel at home within. Seasonal variations and weather fluctuations form natural parts of this known life-world.

**Seasonality and weather**

By several residents, the climate in Unjárga-Nesseby, climatologically defined to be a sub-Arctic community (Karlsen 1997, see also chapter 2), is considered to represent something in between a coastal climate and an inland climate. In this context, ‘climate’ corresponds to the common, everyday meaning of the term, referring to weather patterns connected to geographical locations.44 A local tourist operator once advised me that when listening to the

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44 With this understanding of the term, a statement referring to “a dry inland climate” would point to an interior area with relatively scarce precipitation, cold winters and warm summers.
weather forecast on the radio, he would recommend that I pay attention to the projections for both Vadsø (on the coast) and Rustefjelbma (inland). I could then expect the weather in Unjárga-Nesseby to be at some mid-point between these two forecasts.

In addition to teaching me how to add and subtract temperature, wind strength and precipitation forecasts, to better fit the local reality, people were eager to forewarn me of a possible cold summer. On one occasion at the grocers, a woman told me with a laugh: “We might wait for summer throughout August and even until September, if the summer doesn’t show up in June or July. It is all about not giving up hope, you know! And if we don’t get any summer this year, we’ll probably get it next year.”

Anthropological investigations of seasonality started more than a century ago, and Mauss’ (1979 [1904-05]) “Seasonal Variations of the Eskimos” is still one of the most influential studies of its kind. In this essay, Mauss distinguishes between the social morphology of Inuit winter settlements and summer camps, from which he finds the transformation of social life to occur “every year with absolute invariability” (ibid.: 80). From his important investigation of seasons as both physical and social phenomena, Mauss’s essay can be seen as an early contribution to the questioning of the nature-culture dichotomy (see also Dove and Carpenter 2008). Simultaneously, there is, as pointed out by Harris (1998: 66), “a contradiction running right through Mauss’s essay concerning the relationship between environment and society: this relationship is presented alternately as one of strict determination or complex dependency.”

Evans-Prichard (1969 [1940]) is another early proponent of seasonality research through his famous description of the Nuer of Southern Sudan. Through his rich descriptions of the connections between land, cattle and humans, a seasonal analysis is integrated in Evans-Prichard’s study of Nuer society. Dividing the year into two main seasons, a wet and a dry, Evans-Prichard emphasized that the two seasons “only approximate to our division into rains and drought” and further argues that “the concept of seasons is derived from social activities rather than from the climatic changes which determines them” (ibid.: 95). In addition to the two main seasons, Evans-Prichard refers to two subsidiary seasons, found to be transitional periods between the main ones (ibid.). Through his descriptions, Evans-Prichard runs into a similar contradiction as found in the essay by Mauss; “A contradiction between ecological determinism and social constructivism, presuming that humans construct their

45 Vadsø weather station is located by the Varanger Fjord towards the east, 60 km from Varangerbotn, the municipality center of Unjárga-Nesseby. Rustefjelbma weather station is located in the inland, towards the west, 42 km from Varangerbotn.
worlds before they live in them, and yet that human beings are in some ways determined by these worlds” (Harris 1998: 67).

Rather than dwelling with the shortcomings of Mauss’s and Evans-Prichard’s studies, limitations I find to be expressions of the time in which their work was carried out, I draw on the inspiration that emanates from these anthropologist’s enthusiasm in approaching an analysis of seasonality in their texts. In more recent monographs dealing with human-nature relations in the northern hemisphere, a region of considerable seasonal variation, seasonality often tends to be confined to a limited section, rather than being presented as an integrated part of peoples life-worlds (e.g. Willerslev 2007, Reedy-Maschner 2010).

Through my choice of highlighting seasonality in the two most extensive chapters of this thesis, as well as making seasonal variations evident in other chapters as well, I hope to pay justice to how peoples’ activities in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields are intimately seasonally entwined. In this and the following chapter I furthermore show how Unjárga-Nesseby is constituted in various ways, during different seasons, in variable weather, within diverse temporalities. The multiple natures presented in the following are not only diversified as a result of peoples’ different activities, they are also influenced by the seasons and the weather. For particular activities to be carried out, both time and weather must be ‘right’. While the various Unjárga-Nesseby natures are constituted in innumerable ways, a certain degree of recurrence can be recognized from the socio-material processes involved.

Seasonal variation

Whereas Mauss and Evans-Prichard distinguish two and four seasons of importance among the Inuit and the Nuer respectively, a Norwegian year is typically divided into the four seasons of vår (spring), sommer (summer), høst (autumn) and vinter (winter)\textsuperscript{46}. Within Sámi tradition, however, a year consists of eight seasons; gidda (spring), giddasgeassi (spring summer), geassi (summer), čakčageassi (autumn summer), čakča (autumn), skábma (autumn winter), dálvi (winter) and giddadálvi (spring winter).

The eight Sámi seasons serve as a guiding principle to the following texts on seasonality, as I find this division to correspond the best with the outfield activities taking

\textsuperscript{46} Variations of these four seasons still exist, and it is not uncommon to use adjusting terms like forsommeren (the early summer) and senhøsten (the late autumn).
place in Unjárga-Nesseby throughout the year, as well as with expressed experiences of seasonal variability. This is not to say that all local inhabitants think of a calendar year as divided into eight seasons, although many do. One of the teachers at the school told me that she likes how the eight Sámi seasons are not only experienced and referred to in inner Finnmark, where she grew up, but that they are also part of life in Unjárga-Nesseby: “Like now, for example, it is obviously not spring, but it isn’t winter anymore, either. It is giddadálvi; spring winter.”

Further, I want to stress that my choice of giving the eight Sámi seasons a section each, starting in this chapter and ending in the following one, should not be seen as an expression of the seasons as temporal blocks, where one is strictly separated from another. Rather, the empirical data from Unjárga-Nesseby shows the fluid transition from one season to the next. Not only may the seasons blend into each other, as some outfield activities and ecological processes increase while others decline, but people may also possess divergent opinions as to whether a season has actually arrived or not.

The naming of the seasons is correspondingly dynamic as well, dependent upon the specific activity in question or the particular story being told. This is also what Krause (2012) finds in his study on seasonal variation on the Kemi River in Finnish Lapland. Whether his informants speak of “two, four, eight or even more seasons depends on the context they have in mind. Referring to the temperature extremes in the Lappish year, two seasons are sufficient; but speaking about the period of time when a certain fish species can be caught in a particular place, a more specific seasonal indication is necessary” (ibid.: 12-13). In addition, people in Unjárga-Nesseby may refer to specific harvesting activities as particular seasons, like bærsesongen (the berry season), slaktesesongen (the slaughtering season), jaktesesongen (the hunting season, most commonly indicating moose hunting) and torskesesongen (the cod season).

Regardless of names chosen to represent the different seasons of a year, seasonal variation constitutes a central aspect of Unjárga-Nesseby living. The following ethnography illustrates how outfield activities and seasonal variations are interconnected, resembling what Ingold (2000) calls ‘taskscapes’. In these taskscapes, equivalents to landscapes but focusing on the dynamics forming and transforming it, “[t]he rhythms of human activities resonate not only with those of other living things, but also with a whole host of other rhythmic phenomena – the cycles of day and night and of the seasons, the wind, the tides, and so on” (ibid.: 200). In addition to the wind, other weather phenomena take part in the processes forming, or confining, activities in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields.
The weather-world

The way I grew to understand peoples’ weather relations, during my year of Unjárga-Nesseby living, made me think of Taussig’s (2004: 66) interpretation of his informant’s relatedness to the materiality of gold panning in the rain forest of Colombia’s pacific coast: “[They] regard these things with empathy, loyalty, and some fondness, even while hating them. Such intimacy is beyond good and evil,” Taussig writes. The ubiquitous and highly sensate weather appeared to me to be intimately experienced by Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants as part of everyday life. Even if far less dramatic than the life referred to by Taussig, this intimacy seemed to transcend the issue of good versus bad weather, constituting an acknowledgement of the weather to be present everywhere, constantly, regardless of kind.

“We live with the weather surrounding us all the time,” Margit, a woman in her 50s, once said. Having spent most of her childhood and adult life living elsewhere in Norway, and abroad, we discussed her choice of moving back to Unjárga-Nesseby, her birthplace. She told me about the landscape and of the inextricable link between her outfield activities and the weather. Margit’s experience, the way it is presented in the quote above, seems to fit neatly with Ingold’s (2011: 131) ‘weather-world’: “a world in movement, in flux and becoming, a world of ocean and sky”. In this weather-world, Ingold finds the weather to be “not so much an object of perception as what we perceive in” (ibid.: 130, original emphasis). With the following ethnography I want to show how the weather can be a condition for action, as well as an interactant (Latour 2005) in the processes of world formation.

Daily interactions with the weather are sensorial experiences that go beyond observations through the vision only. While most of the literature on nature and landscape focuses on the visual and neglects the importance of the other senses in experiencing the landscape, Ingold (2010: 136) reminds us of “the body’s sensory entanglement in the lifeworld.” In another article he describes this entanglement the following way: “Rather than thinking of ourselves only as observers, picking our way around the objects lying about on the ground of a ready-formed world, we must imagine ourselves in the first place as participants, each immersed with the whole of our being in the currents of a world-in-formation” (Ingold 2011: 129). This entanglement necessarily involves all our senses.

47 For more details, see chapter 6.
When my informants practice their activities in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields, it is not only about carrying out specific tasks on the ground. It is also to visually and auditorily pay attention to changes in the wind, feel the response of the snow under the snowmobile, in order to adjust the route if necessary, enjoy the taste of freshly caught char fried on the fire, recognize the difference between cold feet about to get warm or cold feet about to freeze, catch the smell of warm heath in the autumn sun and detect partly erased ski tracks in a snowdrift. In other words, sight, hearing, touch, smell and, what Ingold (2010) does not explicitly include; taste, play their significant part in these weather-world activities.

The omnipresent weather, being part of local livelihoods and outdoor activities, makes up an essential element in what constitutes Unjárga-Nesseby as a home place. Complaints about the weather are obviously expressed in Unjárga-Nesseby just like everywhere else in the world, but during my stay I nevertheless experienced that people wholly accepted the local climatic circumstances, including the variability of the weather. “The one day is not like the other,” Iver said when he, Anna, their dog and I were weather bound in their cabin due to gale and snowdrift. “That’s how it’s always been.”

Although on occasion hindering movement, as in the situation above, a snowfall first and foremost holds promise of an open landscape where transportation on skis or snowmobiles can take place. ‘Reading’ the weather during summer makes it possible to predict the most likely locations for a successful berry harvest in autumn. Wind direction influences decisions about where to search for reindeer or sheep during gathering activities. The degree of cloudiness serves as a guide for which bait to use for angling. When moving in the landscape, rain or drought may cause one route to be more favourable than another.

Being used to a weather-world where a certain degree of predictability is recognized within seasonal variation, people interact flexibly with both expected and unexpected shifts in their surroundings, throughout the year as well as from one year to another. The yearly fluctuation between presence and absence of snow is a comprehensive, reoccurring change forming an essential part in the rhythm of local nature practices. Even if the arrival of the first snow, and the time of snow melt, may fluctuate remarkably from one year to another, the presence of snow supports outfield activities that cannot be carried out when snow is absent, and vice versa. In the rest of this chapter, attention is directed towards snow season activities. Not every Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitant takes part in all the activities presented, but most take part in some.

48 In Norwegian original: “Den ene dagen e ikke lik den andre.”
Dálvi – Winter (~ December – February)

At the time of my arrival in Unjárga-Nesseby the sun was still under the horizon. From late November to late January, the sun stays low behind the mountains on the southern side of the Varanger Fjord. Still, a few hours of twilight remained, and together with a brightening line above the horizon to the south it held promise of a temporary absence of the sun.

Once the November darkness sets in, snow is longed for among most people in Unjárga-Nesseby. Generally, people explained this longing for snow by referring to how a snow covered ground makes the polar night (skábma/mørketida) less dark and oppressive. The bare ground, uncovered with snow, absorbs light from houses, streetlights and cars into the darkness, whereas a layer of snow reflects any source of light and thus renders the landscape more alive, I was told. Even more importantly for many Unjárga-Nesseby residents, the snow is necessary for movement in the outfields during the winter months. In order to make use of skis and snowmobiles for exercising, excursions, ice-fishing trips, wood gathering and ptarmigan snaring, a certain amount of snow is needed. For house owners, local government employees, sheep farmers and reindeer owners, the snow also has other, pragmatic functions. The insulating effect of the snow may prevent water pipes and drains from freezing, and inhibit lumps of ice forming and obstructing movement on roads and trails. Snow covered fields reduce the chance of early ice damage to next summer’s grass crop, and a proper layer of snow on frozen ground may provide the reindeer with more easily accessible winter pastures.

“We used to get snow in September-October. Now we hardly get a decent amount of snow before January,” Anna told me the first time we met. Being in her early 70s, Anna is not only an active member of the elders association and the gardening union, but also an experienced and eager ptarmigan snare trapper. The polar night constitutes a favourable part of the year for setting snares, she told me. When the sun returns, it adds a further challenge to the art of ptarmigan snaring. This, she explained, is because the rays of sunlight can make the thin steel snare wire twinkle and become visible to the bird, causing it to keep its distance and avoid the area around the snare.

During years with little or late snow for early winter, the snaring season has had to be postponed. Anna illustrated it the following way: “With too little snow to secure that the snare is firmly attached to the ground, a caught ptarmigan could escape with the whole snare around
its neck, and that would be terrible. We can only wait for the snow to arrive”. Her little story shows how non-human agents, like snow and the technical installation of a snare, can serve as actants by “making some difference to a state of affairs” (Latour 2005: 52), that is, by bringing about an effect. The possible loss of a ptarmigan to which Anna refers is not a bodily felt experience. Rather, it is a potential event she anticipates, based on her knowledge of ptarmigan snaring, where the branch, the snare, the snow and the snarer work together in order to trap the ptarmigan. With the absence of one of the actants, the activity as a whole is affected.

Local dog mushers, similarly to Anna, long just as impatiently for the first snowfall once winter sets in. To them, the polar night makes up an important training period for both mushers and dogs, provided there is enough snow on the ground to support the dog sled. Although it is possible to train the dogs on bare ground, the choice as to whether to participate in one or more dog sled races that year is fairly dependent on an early start to the winter season. For the young boys, some of which have not yet obtained a snowmobile license, a combination of snow and winter darkness allows for snowmobile testing in the hills behind the residential areas, out of sight of neighbours or other fellow inhabitants who might question their age or validity of their licences.

Except from ptarmigan snarers, dog mushers, eager scooter drivers and skiers exercising along the illuminated ski track, the polar night is perceived to be a quiet time of the year in Unjárga-Nesseby, when it comes to outfield activities. With the northern light (Aurora Borealis) occasionally fluttering across the sky, people may go for walks and shorter trips, but save their longer excursions for later. Ellen, a retired woman in her late 70s, told me that she usually walks for one hour every day throughout the year. During evenings or nights when the sky is brightened by the northern lights, she is often accompanied by one of her friends. “Once,” she explained, “we were walking together when I suddenly realized that I had lost my companion. I turned around and there she was, several meters behind me. She was just standing there, looking up, enjoying.” Ellen truly understood why her friend was spellbound: “It’s so beautiful with the northern light!”

The northern lights appear as a common, much appreciated, phenomenon during the winter in Unjárga-Nesseby. While most people, like Ellen, take their time to enjoy it when it is there, and perhaps mention its formations and colours to colleagues at work, some recall their childhood feelings towards the northern lights when they look at it now, several decades

49 In Sámi guovssahas, in Norwegian nordlys.
later. A teacher in her 30s told me that she used to fear the northern lights as a child. She had heard from some of the elders in her family that the northern lights could feel teased and get angry if someone waved at the lights with something bright. Thus, if she was wearing white mittens when the northern lights appeared, she always tried to keep her hands still, to avoid the unknown but probably terrible consequences of teasing the wavy light in the sky.

_Skábma/mørketida_ is a time for relaxation and organized activities indoors. During the short days and long nights, more people show up at the youth club, for football training, at the choir’s song rehearsals, for the knitting club at the library, church services or to watch a film at the community centre. Several dark hours are spent by paying visits to friends, family and neighbours and, not least, watching television and sleep. People often explained to me how their energy level goes down and their need to sleep increases during the time of the polar night.\(^5\) For young people (and a few not-so-young people) having weekend parties at this time of the year, the difference between night and day is minimal, and likewise it may occasionally seem, is the justification for ending the party. From own experiences, as well as stories I was told, a Friday party could easily last until next morning, if not even until the morning thereafter.

Alcoholism is not an uncommon phenomenon in Unjárga-Nesseby, but most of the people defined as alcoholics (sometimes by themselves but mainly by others), are seasonal drinkers. From a social worker I was told about a local pilot project intended to help alcoholics out of addiction through a seasonal based approach: “You see, several of the men with alcohol problems work just fine during seasons where they are occupied with some kind of activity. It is the periods in between that cause the problems. And so these in-between-seasons (mellomsesongene) became the focus of our attention, to help them make these parts of the year interesting as well”.

Due to different unfortunate circumstances the project was not completed, but good results were achieved already in the early phases, I was told. These results were of no surprise to the social worker. Rather, she said, they were just another illustration of how seasonal variations reside in people’s bodies; “sesongan sitt i kroppen til folk”. Similar to the people by the Kemi River in Finnish Lapland, referred to by Krause (2012: 13-14), “socio-ecological seasons are experienced as ongoing transformations. Practicing one seasonal activity usually

\(^5\) During summer, on the other hand, some feel that just a short night’s sleep is sufficient to maintain a high activity level.
includes preparing for the next.” For some Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants, all seasons include distinct opportunities. For others, some of them serve as unfavourable transitions to the next.

Upon my arrival to Unjárga-Nesseby, several people told me that the best time of the year is when the light returns in the winter. Given the two months loss of sunlight, it is hardly surprising that the return of the sun is much appreciated. Once the sun returns, the amount of people practicing outdoor winter activities in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields gradually increases. Snowmobiles reappear from sheds, garages or from under textile covers, and skis and poles are fetched from their storage place, unless new ones are purchased. Couples, friends and families spend weekends in private cabins, where they enjoy shorter or longer scooter or ski trips, go ice fishing in nearby lakes, have a bath in the sauna, arrange a party, or just share meals cooked on the cabins’ gas jet, accompanied by old and new stories. Parents of children competing in cross country skiing (gilvočuoigan/langrenn) now face a couple of months of long distance weekend transportation to and from competitions, accompanied by much cheering of their children during the race. “It is fun while it lasts, but it is a relief when it ends as well,” a mother of two skiing children said when she saw my stunned reaction to the family’s tight weekend schedule for a couple of months.

Competitions are popular within Unjárga-Nesseby municipality as well, and during winter two different cross country ski races are arranged. Aldonrrennet (the Aldon race) is named after the mountain Aldon, by which the 25.5 km competition trail passes. The race takes place every year in the middle of March. People can choose whether to take part just for the exercise or join the competition, or as a final option, they can skip the skiing part altogether and just meet for the coffee and cakes afterwards. In early April, during Tana-Varangerløypas dag (the day of the Tana-Varanger trail competition), the most eager competitors start in Tana early in the morning and later pass Unjárga-Nesseby during the 90 km race to Vadsø. Others choose to only walk parts of the trail, or to ski up to some of the several ‘food stations’ along the route to socialize over a coffee, and cheer passing skiers, whilst commenting on the weather and the snow conditions.

For several Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants of both sexes, and various ages, ski trips during weekends, or after school or work, serve as winter workouts. For this purpose, light clothing and narrow skis are the preferred equipment. After the return of the daylight, the local ski clubs make sure the illuminated ski tracks are extended with several new kilometres of prepared tracks through the forest and up onto the mountain plains.

I quickly realized that as much as I enjoyed skiing I could not be taken seriously as being a local skier, since I was wearing my old, green anorak made of cotton and broad
mountain skis that failed to fit the prepared ski tracks. This meant I would have to walk in the loose snow alongside the trail, producing my own tracks while skiing in this area. “I guessed it had to be you,” Ingrid, a woman in her early 40s, told me one day I joined her and her colleagues at the Sámi parliament for lunch. “I have actually tried to ski in your tracks, but not only do you have broad skis, you also make such narrow trails,” she said with a laugh. She continued joking that now I know how people will remember me after I leave; the scientist with the broad skis and the narrow tracks alongside the ski trails.

Being born and raised in Unjárga-Nesseby, Ingrid told me that only a slight deviation from the local outfit would guarantee that people mistook you for a stranger. Still laughing, she recalled an episode from a winter when she was studying. During a visit back home she went skiing in the trail, wearing a red anorak and slightly broad skis – “not really broad but a little broad”. When she met a local woman she knew pretty well and they greeted each other, the women suddenly realized it was Ingrid she had met: “Oh, is it you, Ingrid? I thought it was a tourist!”

Even if my conversation with Ingrid was cheerful and far from the serious kind, clearly exaggerating the difference between locals and visitors, it exemplifies what I came to see as a common way of creating, maintaining, strengthening or eventually challenging a local ‘we’ among Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants. Through specific interaction with certain equipment and parts of the environment, a ‘we’ is enacted, often in opposition to another ‘they’. When it comes to skiing, most people in Unjárga-Nesseby ski for training or to reach a certain destination where something is done, like a cabin, an ice-fishing lake or a location for a gathering around a fire. Only to a limited degree, a ski trip is carried out for the trip itself; “people in the south [of Norway] don’t seem to understand these things: We don’t go out to get fresh air, we have nothing but fresh air here. We go out because there are things to be done”.

Practical activities in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields not only constitute an important way of belonging among the inhabitants. For visitors and newcomers, practical outfield activities may also function as an entrance to shared communality. The degree to which I managed to take part in the various activities I was invited to join during my fieldwork and the ways I related to time, weather and the landscape, turned out to be decisive for whether or not I was included in the communal ‘we’ or remained a ‘southerner’.
Giđđadálvi – Spring winter (~ February – March)

With the amount of daylight increasing throughout February and March, the variety of outdoor activities not only increases, they also gradually extend further into the evening and nights. The giđđadálvi season includes the celebration of the Sámi National day (Sámi álbumotbeaivi/Samefolkets dag) on February 6th, afternoon and weekend skiing, kiting on the mountain plains, cod fisheries on the fjord, snowmobile trips and ice fishing. During weekends, people may go with their children to fish on the ice on lakes close to the village, slide in the hills beside the lake and share a meal around the fire. Or people stay at home to watch sports on the television, use the Saturday for shopping in Vadsø, cross the border to Finland to buy less expensive meat and wine, beer and spirits, go visiting neighbours or help friends or family with smaller or bigger things to be done, such as preparing for a birthday or building a garage.

In what follows, I start by presenting the giđđadálvi activity of ptarmigan snaring. This practice has long traditions in the municipality, and serves as a clear example of the materiality involved in Unjárga-Nesseby outfield activities. Furthermore, the ethnography shows how ptarmigan snaring may take part in expressing ethnic or indigenous identity and belonging in one context, while no such connection is highlighted in another. In the last part of this section, I move on to describe and analyse Finnmarkslopet, an international dog sledge race and yearly event through which various enactments of Unjárga-Nesseby (as a place) are performed.

Ptarmigan snaring

On the first Monday of March, I was invited to join the 4th grade pupils and their teachers at Unjárga-Nesseby primary school during Anna’s course in snare making. I met the pupils and teachers by the boarder of the village in order to ski the last kilometre or so to a marsh where Anna was waiting for us. It was a light cloudy day with a temperature of -9°C. The most eager pupils were allowed to follow the ski track and they quickly moved up the hillside. Others were less keen, and as one of the girls lay down in the snow for a rest, she took a deep breath and sighed: “I am not a ski person (æ e ikke noe skimenneske).” No complaints were uttered on our way up though, and after a short half hour we were greeted by Anna as we reached the marsh.
“Oh, you have really old-fashioned skis” one of the pupils immediately said, commenting Anna’s footwear and ski bindings. “I do” Anna agreed, and explained how her nuvtohat/skaller, winter footwear made of reindeer skin, kept her feet warmer than any modern ski boots could ever do. While demonstrating the easy way of fastening and loosening the nuvtohat from the skis, slipping them under or free from a strapped piece of leather, she further explained that this equipment made the whole procedure of establishing a trap line more efficient to her, as she so easily got on and off her skis. Furthermore, as I had been told the course was part of the pupils’ Sámi teaching program, it formed a suitable stage for the enactment of Sámi indigeneity. This may as well have been a decisive reason for Anna’s choice of footwear this day.

Different degrees of interest as well as earlier experiences with ptarmigan snaring were expressed among the pupils during the introductory part of the course. Some, with pride, told that they had made snares before, together with an older brother, their father or grandfather. For others, this was the first time. As we all gathered in the snow behind Anna, she began to demonstrate the making of a ptarmigan snare (rievssatgárði/rypesnare). She started by telling us that the last years’ moth larvae outbreaks in the area had destroyed so much of the forest around the marsh that the snare material was adversely affected, and by bending a branch she showed us how the dead birch branches had lost their flexibility and easily broke. To be able to bend the snare branches the right way, on each side of the approximately 15 cm broad snare gate she had prepared, she had to force each branch carefully into the snow not to break them.

When the gate was made, Anna went on to prepare the snare loop (giella/snareløkke). She had a number of snare strings attached around her neck, so she could easily pick one string at the time and avoid them entangling. At home and in advance, she had made a tiny ring at the one end of all the strings. Now she showed us how to thread the other end of the string through this ring, to make a 12-15 cm loop. Holding the loop with one hand to keep it intact, Anna then used her other hand to fasten the string to an almost twig-less branch. “You have to make sure that the string will not slide on the branch”, she told us as she finished fastening the string. Then she placed the branch in the snare gate so the loop was located in the very middle of it. Close to the loop, but on the opposite side, she placed another branch, to further support the gate. “The loop has to cover the space between the branches, so the

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51 See chapter 8 for a thorough description of the moth larvae outbreak phenomena.
ptarmigan cannot pass beside it”, she explained. Additionally, we learned how the ring has to slide without friction to trap and kill the ptarmigan when it enters the snare.

With the limited daylight in January and February, the lowest part of the ptarmigan snare loop should be placed a three fingers width above the snow. However in March, when it is brighter outside, the ptarmigans move more upright on the ground, Anna told us. Hence, in the last part of the snaring season, the snare loop should be placed at a height corresponding to four fingers above the snow. It is further important that the snare gate is ‘cleaned’ all the way up. If twigs or branches converge above the snare loop, the ptarmigans will not pass. Moreover, the gate on the ground should be clean with patted snow, and rather than forming a dimple, it should rise a bit towards the snare loop. The combination of supportive snow and a slightly raised path through the bushes have been found to make a tempting route for a foraging ptarmigan.

Thus, to catch a ptarmigan in the snare, several material elements have to come together for a snarer to carry out the harvest activity. By looking closer at ptarmigan snaring through a focus on practicalities, materiality and events (Mol 2002), it is further possible for me, the anthropologist, to be more sensitive to all the elements involved for ptarmigan snaring to come into being, not only the human part of it. In the human and non-human network of
people, strings, birch branches, snow, temperatures and amount of daylight, all elements participate in the event that together form the socio-material process of ptarmigan snaring.

After Anna’s demonstration we all received a snare string and a branch so we could try to make a snare ourselves. “You will probably get cold fingers, but that is how it is to be a snare trapper,” Anna revealed to us. We all put our skis back on and followed Anna along the edge of the marsh, to the different locations she had marked out as good snare spots in advance by placing branches for snare fences on the ground. With Anna helping, all the snares were finally approved and ready for use.

Before the children and their teachers started on their way back to the school, one of the teachers told me that the pupils would check the snares regularly over the coming two weeks, up until the end of the snaring season on the 15th March. I joined Anna on her way back home, and as we skied she told me that if no ptarmigans were caught in the pupils snares, she would return to the marsh one of the last days before March 15th to place a couple of her own caught ptarmigans in their snares. “In this way the children get to feel the excitement of having caught their own birds,” she explained. Following the close of the season, they all meet again in April to slaughter the birds and prepare a meal from the snared ptarmigans.

Anna herself prefers to set up her ptarmigan snare lines close to her cabin, up on the plains above the Suovvejohka/Bergeby valley. During the snaring season, she normally checks her snares every second day. In her opinion this time frame is optimal, as trapped ptarmigans are not overly exposed to foxes and birds of prey. Additionally this ensure that the snares, and surrounding environment, are not disturbed too often. She and her husband often prefer to live in the cabin for weeks at a time during this time of year, as they have both retired. Occasionally, though, there are things to be done in the village. In such cases, when it is inconvenient to stay in the cabin, Anna goes by snowmobile from home to check her snares. One morning in the middle of March, just a few days before the end of the snaring season, I was invited to join her.

Anna and I had placed our skis, poles and backpacks in the snowmobile sledge outside her house, and just as we were about to leave, the clouds cracked and the sun came through. It was a mild day, with a temperature slightly below 0ºC, and thus the wind chill felt on the snowmobile was limited. During the approximate 20 kilometres ride from the village to the cabin, Anna stopped several times to tell me the Sámi names of the different rivers and creeks we crossed, inform about whose cabins we passed, point at distant fish lakes, and show me where good cloudberry marshes are to be found in the autumn.
When we arrived at Anna and Iver’s cabin, we were surrounded by extensive mountain plains, covered in white snow and scattered with grey coloured birch trees and bushes. Anna turned on the gas stove to give us some heat, and after a cup of tea and some of Anna’s homemade buns, we were ready to check the snare line. We changed from scooter equipment into lighter clothes, and put on our skis. This time Anna wore her ‘modern’ skis. The weather was not as cold as on the day of the ptarmigan snaring course, and we needed to walk a much longer distance than during the course. This may have been the reason for Anna’s choice of footwear this day. Alternatively, our trip might not have appeared as an arena where Anna found her ethnicity to be of particular relevance for our task at hand.

Anna’s two days old ski tracks were still visible in the snow, and so we followed them from the cabin to the first snares. Moving through the scattered birch forest we found one empty snare after the other. From time to time Anna made some small adjustments to the snares. The last couple of days of mild weather had made the snow subside, and some of the snare loops thus had to be moved slightly downwards. In some cases Anna also had to make sure that the small snare ring was free to slide on the string. “Now it’s so mild that white frost doesn’t settle on the snare ring,” Anna told me. Otherwise that could have been a reason for the ptarmigan to avoid the snare. “I have often been out, early in the morning, to knock the white frost off the string. The ptarmigan is so alert.”

Anna further explained how it is an advantage to put up several snares at different locations in the terrain: “If the sun makes some snares twinkle, others may be in the shadow. And if white frost settles on some, others may be at a more windy location. A tiny movement in the air is enough to cause the white frost to disappear,” she said. Several times during our snare check we observed loose ptarmigan faeces, and Anna explained to me that ptarmigans often get diarrhoea when there is a shift from cold to mild weather. She did not know the reason for this, but told me that she had heard it from older trappers and hunters as well as noticing it herself, during many years of snare trapping.

On her last snare check two days earlier, Anna had detected, from tracks in the snow, that a fox had stolen five snared ptarmigans and that a sixth was taken by a bird of prey. Her own catch thus amounted to only one single ptarmigan. I stated to expect a similarly limited catch this day, but finally, by the 25th snare, we found a trapped ptarmigan. The dead bird was slightly frozen and Anna thought it had been caught the previous evening, during its last search for food before it got dark. She showed me how to free the bird from the string and place the head of the bird under its wing, before she placed it in her backpack. This was not only done for practical reasons, she told me, for the head not to dangle during transportation:
“With the head under its wing it looks nicer when we get it from the freezer later on. And if we are to sell it, it looks more appealing for the ones who buy it as well.”

After a few more empty snares, we arrived by a small creek. Anna now trusted me to check my own lines, and suggested we split up to check the remaining snares more efficiently. In case I found a trapped ptarmigan or a broken snare, she equipped me with a couple of snare strings. “You just do it the way you learned it the other day. Just take your time and you’ll be fine”, she assured me, and sent me to check one side of the creek while she checked the lines on the other. I did not feel fully convinced I was worthy of her trust, being a snare trapper novice indeed, but I had no other choice than to do my best. Once Anna disappeared between the bushes, I followed her old ski tracks to the north, carefully searching all possible openings between the bushes in order not to miss a snare.

Again, snare after snare was empty. But then I finally saw a snare with a ptarmigan lying in the middle of the snare gate. I could feel my heart rate increase as I approached the bird. What if it was not yet dead? I knew sometimes that happens, if the bird, for some reason, does not die instantaneously. As I slowly approached I was relieved to see that the ptarmigan was definitely dead, and as I began freeing it from the snare loop I could feel it was cold. I carefully placed the bird’s head under one of its wings, as I was shown earlier on, and then tried to recall Anna’s instructions on how to construct a new snare. When I finally finished my snare by the creek, ensuring that the snare loop was placed four fingers above the snow, that the small ring would slide on the string, and that the snare branch was firmly secured in the ground, my hands were certainly cold – even in the mild weather. My first real snare was up and hopefully it would work as it should.

Anna and I ended up with a total catch of four ptarmigans that day, and Anna was pleased even though she had wished for some more. She still sells parts of her catch, as people knows she is an eager trapper and place orders with her before the snaring season starts. You never know in advance, though, whether or not the season will be good. This element of uncertainty is necessarily a part of the deal. Additionally, there are no discussions about the price of a ptarmigan, Anna told me: “When people ask if we have ptarmigans for sale, they never ask the price. They pay the cost.” In 2008, the price of one of Anna’s ptarmigans was 80 – 90 Norwegian kroner.
In earlier years every house had a snare trapper, Anna and her husband told me during a conversation several months after our visit to their cabin. Selling ptarmigans provided an additional income of great importance to the Unjárga-Nesseby households, and hence the knowledge was maintained. Today, only a few people practice snare trapping, mainly to get some ptarmigans for an exclusive and delicious dinner during Christmas or for other kinds of celebration. “Nowadays ptarmigan snaring is a hobby or a part of the schedule at school”, Anna said, and went on to explain how the pupils are keen to take part in her courses, but that it is difficult for them to continue on their own without someone to help them: “Even if they know everything about the snaring themselves, they nevertheless need a person above the age of 16, who has passed the hunting license test (jegerprøven), to be responsible for their snare line.”

Today, according to Norwegian regulations, you must hold a hunting license in order to go hunting or snaring. In addition, your catch must be reported at a local level (to the municipality) and a national level (to The Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management). On the Unjárga-Nesseby municipality home page, the following information regarding ptarmigan snaring is given (in Norwegian and Sámi):

Certain conditions are required for ptarmigan snaring. Snaring ptarmigans is allowed from 1\textsuperscript{st} November to the 15\textsuperscript{th} March. Before the snaring takes place, a written announcement has to be sent to the local administration at least 10 days before the start of the ptarmigan snaring. (…)
Notice: At the latest 10 days after the end of the ptarmigan-hunting season, the result of the catch shall be reported to the local administration (Unjárgga gielda/Nesseby kommune 2008, my translation).

A form for announcing and reporting local ptarmigan snaring can be downloaded from the municipality web site or people can pick one up at the town hall, or at the public service centre. “Everyone needs the hunting license nowadays,” Anna said, “and there you get all this information. You have to pay the hunting tax (jegeravgift) so you can get your hunting card (jaktkort). In the old days there was none of this, but that was way before I started with ptarmigan snares.”

In the process of ptarmigan snaring described above, several elements play their part whose connections are well established. As we have already seen, for Anna to be able to catch a ptarmigan she requires string, branches, snow and skis. Furthermore, forms and hunting licenses, as well as the absence of foxes, birds of prey and white frost or sunlight on the strings play their part as well. In Harvey’s (2012: 118) account on Actor Network Theory (ANT), she refers to how the ANT approach “proposed a way of thinking about the role of the non-human in the constitution not only of scientific facts but of knowledge practices more generally.” As illustrated by the ptarmigan snaring example, “[t]hings also have agency, they are not simply the passive ‘objects’ of human attention, but also variously enables and support, or resist and disrupt human intention” (ibid.: 117). It is through their interconnections, their assemblages of presence and absence, that the different elements or actants referred to above give meaning and produce what could be termed ptarmigan snaring complexes, ptarmigan knowledge practices or particular ptarmigan snaring realities.

While ptarmigan snaring is an old practice and the number of active practitioners are declining, the kindergarten, Unjárgga mánáídgárdi, have included ptarmigan snaring in their activity plan. The kindergarten’s main theme in 2008, “nature throughout the seasons,” was presented the following way in the kindergarten’s annual plan:

We will be outdoors in all kinds of weather. Through various activities the children will gain knowledge of how the nature changes, as well as learn how we can take care of it. The children will gain knowledge on how to use natural resources (naturressurser), and how to take care of natural materials (naturmateriale) and use them for duodji52 and other activities (Unjárgga mánáídgárdi 2008:21, my translation).

52 Sámi handicraft.
Additionally, coastal Sámi identity and bilingualism are areas of commitment addressed in the annual plan. Following the Sámi seasons, and emphasizing nature as an important basis for their work, *dálvi* is the time of year when the kindergarten activities are centred on the return of the sun, drying the meat that they bought in the previous autumn, while participating in reindeer slaughter, and setting ptarmigan snares and checking them regularly until the hunting season ends at March 15th. “It is much better for the children to go out and place the snares in the terrain, rather than just talking about it”, the manager explained to me. He also told me that they have a great ptarmigan terrain behind the kindergarten, and the previous year they actually snared three ptarmigans. This year they did not catch a single one, so the staff had to buy some and place them in the snares for the children to find when checking their trap line. The children are clearly eager and learn very fast during these kinds of activities, I was told. “They know a lot when they have finished a theme like, for example, ptarmigan snaring.”

The example from the kindergarten illustrates how coastal Sámi identity is enacted through the socio-material practices of ptarmigan snaring. In this process, the social and the material are mutually supportive. Together, the landscape and the snow, the annual plan and the snares, the humans and the ptarmigans, all take part in the production of an ethnic identity through “webs of heterogeneous material and social practices (…). It is these that are performative, that generate realities” (Law 2007: 12, original emphasis). The next section illustrates another performative winter practice, through which a more externally oriented Unjárga-Nesseby identity is enacted.

**Finnmarkslopet**

The dog musher milieu in Finnmark is active, and several regional dog races are arranged every winter. During my stay in Unjárga-Nesseby there were four dog mushers in the municipality, with the number of dogs in their kennels ranging up to 30 sled dogs. For these dog mushers, as well as for several other Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants, the annual dog race *Finnmarkslopet* is among the most important happenings to occur during winter. As we shall see, this event is not only a tough competition and capability test for the competitors; it is also an extensive celebration of the region and a way of establishing Unjárga-Nesseby and other communities along the trail as particular localities outwards; regionally, nationally and internationally.
Some years the ice settles late in the inner part of the Varanger fjord, or finally settles but then breaks again. If either of these situations occurs towards the end of February or beginning of March, it is of great concern to those individuals in Unjárga-Nesseby involved in Finnmarkslopet. A lack of solid ice in this part of the fjord in early March would result in a change to the trail for Europe’s northernmost dog sled race, and detrimentally affect one of the most popular events in Unjárga-Nesseby during this part of the year. Finnmarkslopet was organized for the first time in 1981, and since then it has steadily increased in size and popularity (Finnmarkslopet 2011). This international dog sled race, promoted to provide “magic and unique experiences in the last wilderness of Europe” (Finnmarkslopet 2012, my translation), includes competitors from several European countries as well as from the US, and hosts two classes. The FL-500 is 500 km long and is raced with up to eight dogs. The FL-1000 is 1000 km long and raced with a maximum of 14 dogs. Both classes start the same day in March (the Saturday of week 10) in the city of Alta (see figure 4). While the route for the FL-500 is mainly located upon the mountain plateau of inner Finnmark, the FL-1000 trail crosses the county all the way to Kirkenes in the east, before the dog sleds turn and race along approximately the same tracks back to the finish line in Alta. It is on their way back from Kirkenes to Alta that mushers and dogs in the FL-1000 pass checkpoint Vuonnabahta-Varangerbotn in the municipality centre of Unjárga-Nesseby.

Figure 4: Map of Finnmarkslopet. Source: www.finnmarkslopet.no.

The different checkpoints during Finnmarkslopet are staffed on a voluntarily basis, and during my stay in Unjárga-Nesseby, I volunteered to help out at checkpoint Vuonnabahta-
Varangerbotn. For several years there have been a lot of activities going on in and around Várjjat Sámi Musea, the museum where the checkpoint is located. On the museum web page (www.varjjat.org) there is a separate link to the Finnmarkslopet event, presenting the checkpoint as “a public checkpoint with continuous race information updates, a lot of activities and vibrant festivity” (my translation).

As I arrived at the museum checkpoint on the morning of the 12th March 2008 a huge polar fox, made of snow, resting on the top of the flagpole heap, immediately caught my attention. It was impressively lively as it lay down with its head lifted, gazing out to the fjord from where the mushers and their dogs would later appear throughout the evening and night. Pupils from the school had created the polar fox, as well as some other sculptures, together with a snow sculpturist. When I arrived, both pupils and children from the kindergarten were involved in a lot of different activities all around the area. The children could go dog sledding, throw the lasso, shoot with bow and arrow, and go sledding on some of the nearby hills. There was a big fire to sit beside in order to warm up and take food breaks.

In addition to the children’s activities, the local Red Cross had put up a tent from which they sold coffee and waffles, and the museum gamme (Sámi turf hut) and a lavvo (Sámi peak tent) were also open to the public. A few journalists were already present, taking pictures and conducting short interviews. Several fire barrels were scattered around the area and benches were covered with reindeer skin for people to sit on. In the nearby parish hall, mushers and handlers had the opportunity to rest and sleep during their checkpoint stay. In addition, the building housed a temporary 24-hour café.

Inside the museum another café was set up in the hall, and one of the meeting rooms was transformed into a press office. Close to the museum shop, two women sold duodji, knitted mittens and socks, blackberry juice, lefse and other homemade goods. An exhibition displayed a variety of photos taken by local photographers. Most of the pictures represented the Unjárga-Nesseby area through photographs of animals and nature phenomena such as the fjord, mountains, rocks and the light. The photographs differed clearly from the historical pictures presented elsewhere in the museum, which tended to include humans. Rather than presenting people from Unjárja-Nesseby, the recent photographs took part in an enactment of Unjárga-Nesseby primarily as ‘nature’. It is not unlikely that the pictures were selected with the interest of the audience in mind. It seems apposite to believe that the photographers would expect people interested in outdoor activities, and with a taste for nature photography, to comprise the majority of museum visitors during the Finnmarkslopet event. Furthermore, this
selection of nature-based scenes would not challenge the narrative presenting the dog sled race as taking place in an area characterized by its wilderness.

![Image](image.png)

**Picture 5:** Two mushers and dog teams arriving at the checkpoint.

My task during the day, evening and night consisted of checking the *Finnmarksløpet*’s web page and printing out the race results as the different mushers left checkpoint Neiden on their way to Varangerbotn (see figure 4). I was then to place the individual results on premade wooden plates, one for each competitor, and make them accessible to the public on a big board, outside in the checkpoint area. The first half of the board was marked “out from Neiden”, to show which mushers had left the last checkpoint, and at what time. About 5-7 hours later they could be expected to arrive in Varangerbotn, and when they did, their plate would be relocated to the other half of the board; “at the checkpoint”, with their time of arrival attached to the plate. For people coming and leaving, this system would make it possible for those interested in the race to follow its development.

The cultural program of the evening started with an African drum concert in the museum hall. As I had joined the local choir upon arrival in Unjárga-Nesseby and we were the next to perform, I unfortunately missed the drum concert due to the choir’s warm up. Among this evenings repertoire were a couple of songs the choir performed together with a regionally renowned artist. The final performance by the local rock band *The BlackSheeps*, resulted in thunderous applause and stamping. The four 13 and 14 years old school mates
handled instruments and microphones like young rock stars, and among the audience of the evening they certainly were stars. At this point of time none of us knew that they would, half a year later, win the Norwegian and the Nordic Eurovision song contest for children, with the Sámi-Norwegian song *Oro jaska beana* (‘be quiet, dog’).\(^{53}\) Or, for that matter, that they would become famous throughout the country, make a record and finally split up within the next couple of years. This evening we were all just impressed by these youngsters’ energy and musicality.

In contrast to the photo exhibition, the evening’s cultural program did not present Unjárga-Nesseby as nature, but rather as a vivid community of musical joy and artistic diversity. The amount of people among the audience and on stage, as well as the diversity in musical repertoire among the performers, represented a far more ‘human centred’ presentation of Unjárga-Nesseby, and thus indirectly of Finnmark as a whole, than the ‘nature oriented’ narrative promoting *Finnmarkslopet* nationally as well as internationally. While the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation describes the dog sled race as “wild, rough and beautiful. A lonely struggle against oneself and nature” (NRK 2013, my translation), the Unjárga-Nesseby cultural program exemplifies just how such an event presents an opportunity to show that the area hosts more than snow-covered mountain plains.

\[\text{Picture 6: Spectators at the checkpoint.}\]

\(^{53}\) Although not referring to a sled dog, the lyrics are based on an actual dog from Unjárga-Nesseby.
A large amount of people dropped in on the checkpoint throughout the evening and night. Some were genuinely interested in the dog race, while most seemed to find the event a good opportunity to participate in a positive, social experience, by meeting with others. At eleven o’clock in the night there were still groups of people chatting around the fire place, sharing coffee and stories in the Red Cross tent, or discussing the possible outcomes of *Finnmarksløpet* this year, while studying mushers and dogs at a distance. The first competitors to arrive at the checkpoint had long since re-joined the trail, while the last were yet to arrive. Among the mushers, some had already cared for their dogs and found a room at the parish hall to get a few hours’ sleep. Others had recently arrived and were in the midst of the mandatory veterinary check of the dogs, heating dog food, providing their dogs with straw to sleep on and blankets for cover, or massaging their hard working dogs.

In contrast to the high activity level earlier that day, the atmosphere was now somewhat tranquil. In the darkness of the night the area divided into small pockets of light, around a fireplace, an illuminated tent or a headlamp. No dogs were barking, no people shouting. Only experienced animals making use of their rest time, mushers working quietly in a practiced manner getting done what needed to be done, and the remaining spectators speaking in low voices. Finally, after a long day, and as my feet started to get cold, I decided to call it a night and leave the peaceful ambience of the checkpoint.

From my participation at the checkpoint Vuonnabahta-Varangerbotn I had the opportunity to experience the event as an impressive process in which people, animals and materials interacted and constituted Unjárga-Nesseby not only as a place of local engagement, but also as a distinctive place on the national and international map. “Who does the doing?” Mol (2002: 25) asks, before she answers: “Events are made to happen by several people and lots of things. Words participate, too.” The heterogeneous elements included in performing the checkpoint event consisted, amongst others, of dogs, signs, navigation systems, internet, computers, time schedules, loudspeakers, photographs, ice sculptures, museum facilities, people, fires and warm coffee.

For some, this event demonstrates the engagement and ability of the Unjárga-Nesseby community to make things happen, despite its limited number of inhabitants. For others, like some of the sleep-deprived mushers focused only on their dogs and their rest time, the checkpoint may just be like any other stop along the *Finnmarklopet* trail. While particular actions are taken in order to enact a specific Unjárga-Nesseby during the *Finnmarksløpet* happening, various Unjárga-Nesseby places, partly overlapping and partly diverging, will
nevertheless evolve among participants and spectators as inclusions and exclusions of elements are conducted in order for particular stories to be told.

**Gidda – Spring (~ April – May)**

At different dates from year to year, but mainly toward the end of March or the beginning of April, the snow buntings (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) arrive in Unjárga-Nesseby. The flocks of small, white birds are a reminder of the season’s ever increasing daylight and the approaching arrival of spring. Whether or not that year’s spring is considered to arrive early or late, is a recurring topic of discussion. Towards the end of April, I had a chat with a woman at the grocery, who told me that she – as well as others she had talked to – found April to be particularly cold this year. “It is exceptional to have -20°C as late as this,” she said, before moderating her statement: “Actually, I guess it’s not that special after all. It’s just that the latest winters have been so mild that we’ve got used to it.”

With spring follows the reindeer calving and sheep lambing. The Sámi name of May is *miessemánnu*, literally translated ‘the month of the reindeer calves’ but commonly referred to as the reindeer calving month. The weather during spring is typically considered to be unstable, and people expect rapid shifts between drifting snow showers and warming sunshine. The increasing temperatures make April a favourable month for ice fishing competitions, arranged by local village associations on easily accessible fish lakes. The competitions are announced by posters and newspaper advertisements, revealing the rewards for biggest and smallest fish caught, as well as lotteries and sales of coffee and cakes.

If the nights stay cold, the crust of snow may facilitate the extension of ski- and snowmobile activities into the first part of May. Mild weather, however, makes the snow become wet and unsupportive (*sievlla/råtten*) and thus unfavourable for transportation.

During a conversation with a woman, who told me about her frequent ice fishing trips during spring, she shared her worries that her grandchildren would not have a similar opportunity to go ice fishing in spring when they grow up. She had experienced that spring had begun to arrive earlier and earlier, and was afraid this trend would escalate in the years to come. Her

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54 In Sámi *allat*, in Norwegian *snøspurv*. See also Table 1, page 267, for English, Latin, Sámi and Norwegian name on species mentioned in this chapter.
concerns support a similar experience provided by one of the Unjárga-Nesseby tourist operators:

Earlier on, the melt started in May. During this melt, the ice would rise on the waters, causing the surface water to disappear. And then there would always be a cold period again, making great trips and ice fishing possible at this time of year. Now it’s like this: Once it has started to melt, it melts (hvít det først beginnen å tine, så tiner det). And then both snow and ice disappears, with no cold period in between.

In the next section, as the snowmobile activities of the winter and spring are just about brought to an end due to deteriorating snow conditions, we join an ice fishing trip to the lake Suovvejávri-Bergebyvann. Here, the ethnography serves as an entrance to investigate how Unjárga-Nesseby identity and inclusion are to a high degree connected to the practical execution of outfield activities. In the cod fisheries ethnography, ending the giidda section, the fjord fishery provides a context for discussing Sámi and Norwegian fisheries practices and highlight the connection between geographically delineated fisheries and the national and international market.

**Ice fishing at Suovvejávri/Bergebyvann**

Within Unjárga-Nesseby municipality, the lake Suovvejávri/Bergebyvann, on the northern side of the Varanger Fjord, is the most popular lake for fishing char (rávdu/røye) and trout (dápmot/ørret). Fishing takes place in the summer as well as during winter and spring. A local government employee once told me that an estimated 6000 fish are caught in the lake every year. “The size of the fish is pretty as well [i.e. not too small],” he said, “and as the catches are distributed throughout the local community, there is loads of great food in the different freezers around here.”

From time to time, several people living on the northern side of the fjord emphasized the importance of lake Suovvejávri/Bergebyvann for the local use of the area, historically as well as in the present. People on the southern side of the fjord, on the other hand, enjoyed making fun of it as the only fish lake on the northern side, emphasizing that there are numerous good fishing lakes on ‘their’ side of the fjord (see figure 3). While people occasionally make use of areas on the opposite side of the fjord from where they live, there is nevertheless a clear tendency for people to be most actively engaged in their nearby outfields.
Not only are there practical reasons for keeping the travelling distances as short as possible, there may also be more historical and emotional attachments influencing the choice of locations for outdoor activities.

In early May I was invited to join Jon, Sara (his sister) and Nils (Sara’s boyfriend) for a spring trip with snowmobiles to the lake Suovjejávri/Bergebyvann. For Jon and Sara, being in their mid- and early 30s, the lake had been a reference point in numerous family stories and formed a part of their home-place outfields since their childhood, they told me. For Nils, also in his mid-30s but from another Finnmark municipality, the lake became an important location for ice fishing after he met Sara and moved to Unjárga-Nesseby several years ago. With jobs to attend to during the week, this first weekend of May was likely to be a last opportunity for Jon, Nils and Sara to go ice fishing this season. For me, this was a great chance to experience the late spring fishing on ice I had heard so much about from Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants longing for spring during dark days of winter.

Suovjejávri/Bergebyvann is located approximately 30 km north of the village of Unjárga-Nesseby, and during winter and early spring most people use snowmobiles to get to the lake. This day, the 3rd May, spring had definitely set in. The snow was wet and heavy and during our ride from the village up to the lake, the snowmobiles had to be kept on the hard packed scooter trail to avoid them from sinking into the rotten snow. Even if it was a mild day with a temperature slightly above 0ºC, I could feel the wind chill through the valves of my scooter goggles. Jon had offered me a ride on his scooter, and his speed was a good deal faster than Anna’s when we drove the same trail a few months earlier to check her ptarmigan snares. Sitting on the passenger seat, I was partly protected against the wind by the windshield of the scooter as well as Jon’s body in front of me. My seat was higher than his, though, so my head was exposed to the wind. I followed the landscape as we moved along it, grateful that I had finally bought myself a balaclava, a pair of goggles and a helmet, basic requirements for scooter trips.

Moving rapidly along the marked scooter trail, we passed small hills and scattered birch forests before we entered the plains. For the time being the snow covered plains appeared bright yellow, slightly coloured by the glasses of my goggles. While the scooter ride was a transport stage in order to reach the location of today’s ice fishing activity, the trip occurred as a sensuous ‘weather-world’ (Ingold 2011) experience in itself, due to the wind, the occasional squirt of wet snow from the scooter belt, and the continuous small adjustments I had to make with my body in order to follow the movement of the ground through the scooter to keep in balance.
Similar to Kirsten Hastrup’s (2012: 21) experience of dog sledging on Greenland, “[t]he sensation of irregularity along the path settles as a muscular consciousness, and after a while one just knows when to flex the muscles or move the limbs.”\textsuperscript{55} The ground, just as much as the travellers, takes part in defining the trail, as do the seasonality and the weather. With the words of Ingold (2011: 135), this is due to the fact that we live “not on the fixed surface of the landscape but in the swirling midst of the weather-world.”

It was midday when we reached the lake, and upon arrival there were two couples already fishing on the ice. How could they distinguish the lake from the rest of the snow-covered landscape surrounding us? As far as I could see, there was no clear difference in elevation or degree of flatness marking out the contour of the lake, especially not in the flat light of this cloudy spring’s day. Still, there were obviously signs visible to a trained eye: “I don’t know how to explain it,” Jon said when I asked him later on, “but you see it quite well when you know it.”

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{Ice_fishing.png}
\caption{Ice fishing at Suovvejåvri/Bergebyvann.}
\end{figure}

We parked our two snowmobiles, and as I stepped down on the ice, my feet sank close to 10 cm down through the wet snow. When I moved around the scooter to loosen my backpack, my footsteps were immediately filled with water. Although the ice had loosened

\textsuperscript{55} Here Hastrup has borrowed the term ‘muscular consciousness’ from Gaston Bachelard (1964) (Hastrup 2012: 21).
(løfta seg) and the surface water would normally have disappeared if the temperatures were low enough, it was now so mild that the snow had started to melt. I hoped that my Gore-Tex scooter boots would stay dry for the rest of the day, and I noticed that Sara had chosen a different kind of footwear this day, the only one among the four of us. Under her water resistant gaiter boots, she wore nuvtohat/skaller, the traditional Sámi winter footwear made of reindeer skin, with thick woollen inner socks (kartanker). “Skaller is the best you can wear to keep your feet warm,” Sara told me. The footwear’s lack of reinforced soles makes the texture of the ground massage your feet as you walk. In combination with the insulating wool and reindeer skin, this contact with the ground makes skaller an outstanding alternative on cold winter days.57

While we unpacked our equipment at Suovvejávri/Bergebyvann, I was told that we had stopped on an area of the lake known by Jon and Nils as a good fishing spot. “Normally this is a location where the fish like to feed. It’s a small point of land stretching into the lake right here,” Nils told me and pointed at a slightly visible elevation on the ground nearby. “The fish often prefer to round this point on their search for food,” he went on. Later, I asked Jon how they knew this to be the best place to bore the fishing holes. “Through experience,” he answered, “and by asking older people who have been practicing ice fishing on this lake for a long time, like Iver. You know him and Anna and how familiar they are with this area. Iver

56 In Unjárga-Nesseby at present, skaller is not the single preferred winter footwear anymore, as many people find the modern alternatives to be just as good, if not better, for today’s use and weather conditions. A reindeer herding woman once told me that even if she found skaller to be the warmest, lightest and most comfortable footwear to use during cold, dry winter days, she had heard from snowmobile driving reindeer herders that skaller are not a good match with the scooter. The heat from the engine makes the snow on the footboard melt, they told her, causing the reindeer skin to absorb the damp. “That’s why they don’t use skaller when they drive the scooter,” she said. Instead, people often bring the skaller with them, to change footwear when they get off the snowmobile. Others, like Sara, have invested in gaiter boots to be able to wear skaller also while driving the scooter or when the snow is wet. For this purpose, skaller with a small tip more easily fit inside the gaiter boot. Some of today’s duodji practitioners have therefore started to make small tip skaller in addition to the traditional ones with characteristic, curved tips, as the demand for this kind of footwear has increased.

57 Dried and softened gamasuoidni/sennagress, a grass mainly consisting of the sedge Carex vesicaria, was originally used inside the skaller to keep the owners’ feet dry and warm (see also Nilsen 2009: 60). Anna once told me she remembers how the women used to cut sennagress in the outfields when she grew up: “The grass grows on marshes and in shallow lakes, and when cutting it the women often got wet to their waist. The water was definitely not warm, but nevertheless the women enjoyed these trips. They were there for themselves, made fires, boiled coffee and had a good time.” Several trips were needed during summer in order to harvest enough grass for all family members throughout the winter. While men could cut sennagress as well, they more commonly helped carrying it down to the village, Anna explained. In the 1960’s, kartanker made from tangled wool started to replace the sennagress as insulator in skaller and today sennagress is only used by the few. Not only are kartanker easier to get, as several duodji practitioners make and sell them, they are also easier to use as no adjustments have to be made for them to cover the foot evenly.
has shared his knowledge on where the good fishing locations are to be found.” Jon continued to explain that Suovvejávri/Bergebyvann is a typical mountain lake (fjellvann); shallow with high productivity. “But it is very shallow, and that makes it a special lake for ice fishing. You have to know it well (man må være veldig kjent) to be able to bore the ice correctly.”

When it was my turn to borrow the drill, Nils reminded me to be careful not to bore it all the way to the bottom of the lake. Given the short distance from the ice to the bottom, it could easily be done if I did not pay attention to it, he explained. If I did not stop in time, the result would be a fishing hole filled with muddy water through which I would see nothing until the mud had settled again. I would possibly ruin the drill as well. I prepared to drill carefully, before I realized that I had to use quite some force in order to make it through the compact ice. Finally, I managed to accomplish the task and was ready to test my new ice fishing equipment and develop my skills as an ice fisher.

I followed Sara’s advice to load the hook with maggots before I lowered the bait and the lure into the water. For the first time in my life I experienced lying down on the ice, looking through the hole, able to observe the bottom of the lake underneath me. From time to time I jigged the short fishing pole slightly, paying close attention to the hook in order not to miss any possible sign of a fish approaching it. After near enough to half an hour without any sign of a fish, I nevertheless lost my patience.

I felt like moving my body and decided to see if I could share a conversation with some of the unknown people on the ice. It turned out that the oldest couple had been at Suovvejávri/Bergebyvann for several hours, had caught a couple of fish and were now on their way back home. Shortly after they left they were followed by the younger couple, who also had limited success. At this point Sara had lost her patience with her different fishing holes as well, so we decided to light a fire and get something to eat.

Sara and Nils had brought some wood along on their scooter sledge, as there were no trees to use for firewood in the area. Sara set some pieces of birch bark on fire under the wood and observed the direction of the light breeze through the smoke before she made a decision on where to sit down. We had all found our place around the fire, and shortly after enjoyed a meal of bacon, chicken, bread and sausages, rounded off with tea or coffee and several pieces of chocolate. “I can feel an afternoon bite approaching (æ kjenner ettermiddagsbittet e på tur),” Nils said with a laugh. Although just a joke, he put into words what we all wished for. The food break had renewed our optimism and we returned to our fish poles to give our luck with fishing a new try.
Once again I lay down, watching the bottom of the lake, but there were still no fish to be seen. All of a sudden I heard Jon shout “fish”, and immediately after the fish was removed from the hook and his lure was back in the water, he caught another. Nils, Sara and I quickly moved to holes closer to where Jon was fishing, to see if that would help our luck as well.

Lying down on the reindeer skin with my forehead on the edge of the hole, I stared intensely down into the water as I occasionally slightly moved the bait. Suddenly I got a glimpse of a fish close to the hook. My pulse immediately rose and I had to force myself to lay still. Where did it go? Would it return? There it was again! The char returned with slow, gliding movements close to the lure and this time I could clearly see its grey head and red fins with bright, white lines along the edge. Without warning it made a quick twitch as it decided to go for the bait. I got it!

![Picture 8: From the catch of the day.](image)

Over the next two hours our fishing luck was extraordinary, and we ended up with a total of 55 fish. Neither Jon, Nils or Sara had ever experienced such a haul at Suovvejávri/Bergebyvann before and made clear they did not expect to see it again. Before we returned to the village, we gutted (sløyde) the fish, placed them in plastic bags and packed them on the scooters. “We can make a meal at our place when we get down again,” Sara said, adding that then she would invite her mother, grandmother and second brother as well.
That evening, six fish were baked in the oven and their fresh taste and red meat were praised several times during the meal. Most of the remaining fish were rinsed in cold water and packed in new plastic bags to be placed in the freezer. Of the five fish I caught I kept a couple, and a portion of our catch was given to Jon and Sara’s mother. Sara chose to make fillets from four chars, by salting and leaving them to mature for a couple of days on a tray in the refrigerator. When ready this spekefisk would be eaten on bread. The rest of our catch went into Nils and Sara’s freezer, to be consumed during common dinners in the months to come. Over the following seasons, when sharing a new meal of fish from Suovvejávri-Bergebyvann, our tremendous day of fishing was brought back to life. Whenever other people were invited to join one of these dinners they received a detailed retelling of the events of that day, whether they liked it or not.

The techniques I learnt, and the experiences I shared with Jon, Nils and Sara on the lake that day, served as an opportunity for inclusion in an Unjárga-Nesseby communality, facilitated by practical engagement in a particular outfield activity. A shared ‘we’ was enacted on the basis of relations between us and, amongst others, the season and the temperature, the snowmobiles and snow conditions, the drill and the ice, the jigs, the hooks, the bait, the trout and the char. Although my participation was based on a different premise to my three companions, all with personal and shared histories and proficiencies connected to area and activity, their invitation and my involvement and effort nevertheless provided us with an opportunity for a shared outfield experience.

Various ways of relating to the fluid and flexible elements of the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields through practical activities form important ways of belonging among the inhabitants. Simultaneously, there is room for incorporation of visitors and newcomers in this communality through engagement in the same, or in similar, practices. The communality established through the ice fishing activity described above, was further strengthened through the subsequent meal based on the day’s catch. Through this meal we could re-live the activity of the day and add our individual experiences to the common story.

How the sharing of meals and exchange of food gifts contribute to a sense of belonging among Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants, broadening the opportunity for inclusion, will be considered in detail in chapter 7. As for now, let us return to the Unjárga-Nesseby spring and join the cod fisheries on the fjord, where more factors than attempts to participate in net hauls are required in order to be accepted by the communality of fishers.
Spring fisheries for cod

The cod (dorski/torsk) is an important species in the Unjárga-Nesseby fisheries. For several fishers in the municipality, their main income throughout the year comes from the winter and spring cod fisheries. The fishery is not solely based on the two Norwegian versions of Atlantic cod alone, the migratory Norwegian-Arctic cod (in Norwegian skrei), and, to a minor degree, the more stationary coastal cod (in Norwegian kysttorsk). Rather, Unjárga-Nesseby fishers harvest a variety of accessible species throughout the year. The cod fisheries commonly start in the inner part of the Varanger fjord in December or January and may continue throughout April. During spring, lumpfish (runčuku/rognkjeks) is caught, before the arrival of pollack (sáidi/sei) and haddock (diksu/hyse) into the fjord in summer. The autumn fisheries include halibut (bálddis/kveite), flounder (finddar/flyndre) and king crab (gonagassazzareabbá/kongekrabbe), and then the cycle begins anew.

Picture 9: Fishing vessels in the harbour.

One day in early April, I was invited to join Olav and Anders for one of their last cod net hauls for the spring. Both Olav and Anders consider themselves to be yrkesfiskere, professional fishermen, and according to national regulations they are listed in the Fishing Register (fiskemanntallet) on sheet B (blad B) that lists fishers with fisheries as their main occupation. In order to be listed on sheet B, at least 20 weeks of fulltime employment in the fisheries is required for the following year, as well as a minimum income from fisheries
amounting to the National Insurance base rate (G), representing 70 256 NOK in 2008 (NAV 2013c). Furthermore, full time employment in another profession it is not permitted and at least 2/3 of the fisher’s total income must come from fisheries (NOU 2008: 5).\textsuperscript{58} The listing in the Fishing Register is used as criteria for allocation of quotas (ibid.). For the North Atlantic cod stock in the Barents Sea, jointly managed with Russia, Norway has established a right to approximately 45% of the stock’s annually agreed quota (Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs 2012, see also Hovelsrud et al. 2010).

Being professional fishermen does not mean that fishing is the only labour or source of income for neither Olav nor Anders. When Olav is not out on the fjord in his fishing vessel, he works as a carpenter. Anders, on the other hand, combines his fisheries with carpentry, reindeer herding, salmon fisheries and tourism. The first time I talked to Olav and Anders about the fisheries in Unjárga-Nesseby, Olav told me that there were 12 yrkesfiskere, all men,\textsuperscript{59} in the municipality at that moment. “But then I don’t count you,” he said teasingly, nodding towards Anders, “because you do so many things”.

In several written accounts, the combination of fisheries and other industries, such as farming or carpentry, is presented as a historically important coastal Sámi adaptation to the seasonal fluctuation of natural resources in and around Unjárga-Nesseby (e.g. VSMČ 2005, Hoëm 2007, Nilsen 2009). Olav’s father once explained that the combination of farming and the fisheries activity had been the common way of living in the municipality within recent history. He continued to describe how he himself started in the fisheries around 1952, at the age of 12-13:

At that time it was not to live from the fisheries, but the whole family had to work, in order for us to make a living. Everybody had to make their contribution, even the children, both in the fisheries, with the farming, when picking berries and so on. From my work, I could keep a little money for caramels, but most of what I earned went to my mother, for the household. Gradually, I joined the fisheries even more, as it was the main industry here at the time, in combination with something else. In our family, as in most others, it was combined with

\textsuperscript{58} Correspondingly, to be listed on Sheet A, referring to fishermen with fisheries as their secondary occupation, an income from fisheries amounting to half the National Insurance base rate (G) should be presumed for the following year. Furthermore, the income from another occupation should not exceed 4G. In municipalities included in the Sámi Development Fund (SUF) however, this income limit is 5G. (Within the SUF region, the Sámi Parliament may provide grants for initiatives of particular cultural, social and economic relevance to the Sámi population and the Sámi areas).

\textsuperscript{59} I was told that there used to be a female yrkesfisker among the Unjárga-Nesseby fishermen as well, but that she moved away a few years ago.
farming. We had 3–4 cows, 10–15 sheep, and a few hens that provided us with eggs. In my adult life, I have had fisheries and carpentering as a double job. In periods with little fish, I have worked as a carpenter.

Still today, the multi-species fisheries ensure flexible seasonal income (flere ben å stå på) should one species fail. Furthermore, the combination of industries ensures the fishermen have incomes during times of the year when the fisheries are less profitable. For some, a job, or several jobs, outside the fisheries is essential so as to be able to maintain a vessel and thus continue fishing. While Olav’s remark towards Anders regarding his status as a fisherman was uttered with a laugh, it may have reflected a view on how combining the fisheries with one or two other activities is legitimate, combining even more activities may blur the already fuzzy line dividing professional fishermen, those with fisheries as their secondary occupation (listed on sheet A in the Fishing Register) and those fishing for subsistence or recreation.

At the same time, it is possible to see Olav’s remark as an example of how formal distinctions between the different kinds of fishing activity defined in National regulations may have influenced fishing practices in Unjárga-Nesseby. As only a limited income from other forms of employment is permitted in order to retain the privileges of being a yrkesfisker, most Unjárga-Nesseby fishers restrict their additional sources of income to one or two other occupations. Anders, on the other hand, chooses to follow his various interests as the different seasons opportunities allow. Olav however owns the vessel, and thus has an income from the fisheries which constitutes a larger part of his total income than is the case for his companion. Anders expresses a high degree of satisfaction with his flexible and varied way of life. “I live like the coastal Sámi used to do, back in time, combining various activities depending on the time of the year and the resources available.” That this form of livelihood made him less of an yrkesfisker in Olav’s eyes did not seem to concern him. Instead, what was often seen as a concern among the fishers was their increasing average age, and the low recruitment to the industry.

In 2008, during my fieldwork year, the average age among the Unjárga-Nesseby fishermen was approximately 52 years (Olsen, pers. comm.). The high expense related to the purchase of a fishing vessel and a quota was found to discourage young potential entrants to the profession. The historical background for this situation was frequently linked to the national regulation system introduced to the cod fisheries by Norwegian authorities in 1990. At this time, individual vessel quotas were implemented based on previous years catches. In order to receive a vessel quota in 1990, a stipulated minimum catch from one of the three
preceding years was required. For a 10-11 meter boat, the requirement was a catch of 10 tons of cod during the qualification period (NOU 2008:5).

While the intention of the regulation system was to allocate a limited cod quota in a way that would also benefit the small vessels, the result was unfortunate for the fisheries in several fjords and coastal areas in Finnmark. As a result of invasions of Greenlandic seal through the latter half of the 1980s, net fisheries in the fjords during this period were almost impossible. As a response the fishers sought other income-generative activities until the fisheries recovered, but as a consequence they could not demonstrate the level of catch needed to be awarded a vessel quota, or, as it was called; fisheries in Group 1 (Eyjóórsson 2008).

Reedy-Maschner (2010) refers to a parallel situation in the Aleut fisheries in Alaska, caused by the introduction of The Limited Entry Permit Plan of 1973. In this case a certain number of salmon fishing permits were distributed based on prior participation in commercial fisheries. Similar to the Finnmark situation in the late 1980’s, salmon fishing among the Aleut had slumped in the years prior to the implementation of the plan, resulting in an exclusion of many long-time fishers who had adapted by taking other jobs in the years before the plan went into effect. Still today, these fishers have problems gaining entry to the commercial salmon fisheries (ibid.).

In the Norwegian cod fisheries, those that did qualify for a vessel quota according to the 1990 regulations received two benefits; a higher guaranteed quota than for those who were required to share a maximum Group II quota, and the possibility to sell their share under a transferable vessel quota scheme. This resulted in a market for selling quotas (NOU 2008:5). Today, if a person wants to become a professional fisher, he or she would have to pay for the access through both boat and quota. Entry possibility is thus only secured as long as a quota is available for sale and the total investment of quota and boat can be financed.

Returning to the April fishing trip, my alarm clock woke me up at 04.10 in the morning, to a blue sky and a temperature of – 13 ºC. The last time I joined these two fishermen on Olav’s fishing vessel was at the end of February, on a -16 ºC morning with a thick layer of frost fog covering the fjord. On this day the sun would undoubtedly increase the temperature throughout the day. I arrived in the harbour just before 5 a.m., parked my car and climbed on-board the vessel the way I had learned it last time. When I opened the door to the warm cabin, the smell of fish from the oilskins hanging on the pegs next to the door mixed with the scent of freshly boiled coffee. A few minutes later we left the quay, heading for the net chains set the previous day.
Instead of moving eastwards as we did back in February, Olav now steered his 35 feet vessel towards the south. Last time we followed the line on the GPS, which steered us to the five different net chains placed at 140-170 meters deep, about an hours sailing east of the harbour. The thick fog that day would have complicated the navigation were it not for the GPS. Today, though, we had good visibility, and although I had very much enjoyed my first experience of the cod fisheries, Olav told me he was pleased that I could have a complete view of the fjord from the boat this time.

We were heading for an area between a peninsula on the south side of the fjord and a small island southwest of the harbour. “This is where the best fisheries are located at the moment”, Olav told me. He further said that at this time of the year they usually had good catches on the north side of the fjord as well, but so far this had not been the case. Within less than half an hour, we arrived at the fish site, and found a few other vessels already hauling their nets.

Anders and Olav’s net chains were located at about 70 meters. As we approached the first buoy, we had all dressed in oilskin and were ready for the haul. During the haul of the first net chain, several other boats appeared in the vicinity. Some of them drew in close for a brief chat. It was obvious that quite a few of the fishers were displeased with a fisherman from a nearby town who had placed his nets crosswise of what was commonly agreed upon as the ‘right’ direction. I did not really understand at the time what the exchange of words was about, but Anders explained all later on:

“In the inner part of the Varanger fjord, there is an unwritten law among the fishermen that everyone places their nets north-south, across the good fish grounds, in order not occupy all of the best fishing ground, and to avoid chaos,” Anders told me. The fisherman causing the disquiet this day had not only positioned his net chains east-west wards, he had also placed them immediately after each other, thereby covering the main part of the good fishing ground. Had he placed his nets in accordance with local common practice, several fishers could have utilized the site. This, Anders said, was the reason for what he regarded as highly legitimate frustration among the other fishermen.

Cod after cod appeared in the nets during the first haul, however the last two nets of the first net chain appeared to be full of small king crabs. This gave me an insight into how it must have been for the fishermen during the days of the king crab invasion in the 1990s (see also chapter 2). Their long legs and jagged bodies easily tangled in the net and proved time-consuming to free. “I’ll never place my nets at this location again,” Olav suddenly announced
with frustration, “it’s not worth it!” Nevertheless few crabs were caught in the next chains of nets. Instead we caught a lot of cod, and the mood of the fishermen rose once again.

With all nets on board and cleared of fish and crabs, Olav and Anders started to gut the cod. They worked with an impressive combination of speed and precision and it didn’t take long before we could return to the harbour and unload the fish. It turned out that we had caught 1100 kg of cod this day. While this was less than Olav and Anders had caught on previous days trips, “it’s been a really good winter this year,” Anders told me, they still found it to be a decent catch. Throughout the winter cod fishery the two fishermen had caught up to three tons a day. This meant their 20-ton quota was nearly filled, with about three weeks to go before the season ended.

Once inside the fish landing station (fiskemottaket), we placed the fish in big boxes, in layers according to size. Each layer was weighed before being covered by ice and a new layer added. With a thick layer of ice covering the top layer of fish, each packet was closed, marked by date and fish species, and placed in the cold storage. The cod would then be transported to the fishing community of Båtsfjord (see figure 2) for further processing. “We are lucky here, innermost in the fjord,” Olav said. “The weather is calm compared to how it is on the west-coast. There they place their nets on deeper banks and commonly have to transport the fish
longer distances. This means they don’t get as good quality fish for fillets. Here, there is little
damage to the fish from the nets. We can just place the fish on ice and send it to Båtsfjord.”

The cod was packed according to three weight classes; below 2.5 kg, between 2.5 and
5 kg, and above 5 kg. The price the fishermen were paid for their catch followed the weight
class of the fish. In 2008 the prices were as follows:

- 25 NOK pr. kg for cod weighing above 5 kg
- 22 NOK pr. kg for cod weighing between 2.5 and 5 kg
- 20 NOK pr. kg for cod weighing below 2.5 kg

Due to the differentiation in fresh cod prices, those Unjárga-Nesseby fishers that hang
fish for drying use the smaller less valuable fish. “Stockfish is and has always been good
business,” Lars, one of the youngest fishermen, once told me. “But it’s a game of chance,” he
added. Compared to the straightforward delivering of fresh fish to the fish landing, drying fish
is a lot of work. Lars explained the many factors that have to be present in order for the
stockfish (rággeguolli/tørrfisk) to achieve its optimal quality:

In Unjárga-Nesseby, the fish are placed on drying racks in April and are left to dry for
approximately three months. Low temperatures are favourable for the quality of the final
product, but too many degrees below zero (Celsius) would have a negative impact on the
process. Persistent frost can result in a film (njuovu/hinne) on the fish before it is fully dried,
which can spoil the stockfish’s ability to absorb water during cooking. Fog and dew may also
negatively influence the quality of the drying fish. Fog is however seldom a problem in
Unjárga-Nesseby during spring, and the fishers have found stockfish from this area to be
popular: “When we have stockfish for sale, fish merchants from Hammerfest, Tromsø and
Lofoten arrive and try to outbid each other.” Moreover, the Unjárga-Nesseby fishermen
referred to fish merchants coming all the way from Italy in order to check the quality of the
fish, and, as Lars said; “follow the product from start till end.”

Stockfish producing fishers deal directly with the fish merchants themselves and it is
generally a profitable business. “For premium quality you can be paid as much as 260 kroner
per kilo,” Lars told me. He added that every year several of the fishermen discuss sorting out
the smaller fish to hang on the drying racks, “but when there’s a lot of fish in the fjord there is
hardly any time for it.” This was also the explanation given by Olav and Anders as to why
they had not dried part of their catch during the current cod season.

After the day spent on-board Olav’s fishing vessel, I did not leave the harbour empty-
handed. Anders had provided me with four big, boneless cod filets and a bag of king crab
legs, together with instructions of how to boil them. Olav brought with him a couple of cod and a little liver and roe for his parents, while Anders refrained from taking anything with him from the catch, perhaps because he had already given me his ‘share’ for the day. According to the Norwegian Tax Administration, the value of private withdrawals of fish from vessels counts as taxable income. The withdrawal of fish for the fishers’ own use is set to 1 300 NOK per household member a year (Skatteetaten 2013).

The Unjárga-Nesseby fjord fisheries constitute an arena where Sámi ways of life, Norwegian national regulations, and global market mechanisms meet, and to a greater or lesser degree merge. “If you are going to live from fishing,” Lars told me, “you have to adjust to the continuous changes in quota size and other regulations. There’s an awful lot of bureaucracy in the fisheries. But fishers are usually good at adjusting to changes. And ever since the fisheries have been regulated, this is how it’s been.” Furthermore, the fishermen have to adjust to the variable and migratory resources in the fjord, the variability of the weather and the seasons, shifting fish and fuel prices, new technologies and tax regulations (see also Hovelsrud et al. 2010).

In the Unjárga-Nesseby fisheries, the summer months are a period where, as Lars put it, “the earnings do not correspond to the workload invested.” To ensure a more or less stable income throughout the year, Olav and Anders engage in one or more part-time jobs outside the fisheries. For Lars, a preferred solution would be to combine fishing with tourism, in order to increase his revenue during summer months. As the current national income tax and quota systems “restrict multiple incomes and encourage specialisation by requiring people to state a primary livelihood” (Hovelsrud et al. 2010: 45), the Unjárga-Nesseby fishermen have to adjust accordingly. Nevertheless, they take control where they can to ensure that the commercial fisheries form a meaningful and profitable part of their way of life.

In her book *Aleut identities – Tradition and modernity in an indigenous fishery*, Reedy-Maschner (2009: 144) urges anthropologists to “get beyond the subsistence-commercial dichotomy and start thinking about whole systems (…) in which people, relationships, hunting and fishing equipment, money and food are intertwined.” Similar to Reedy-Maschner’s experience from Aleut fisheries in Western Alaska, where subsistence and commercial fisheries are thoroughly connected, cultural continuity is maintained also within

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60 For children under 10 years and persons older than 70 years, this rate is reduced to the half (Skatteetaten 2013).

61 Starting in 2009, Lars’ tourist business was still running successfully during the summer of 2012.
the commercial fisheries in Unjárga-Nesseby. However, while the marine identity of the Aleut is “so strong that, especially for the younger generations, it partly excludes a broad knowledge of the interior land” (ibid.: 247), it is the combination of resources in the fjord and on the land that has proved essential for Unjárga-Nesseby living throughout history,\textsuperscript{62} and is still evident, even among the professional fishermen, obliged to obtain their main income from the fisheries.

In viewing the Unjárga-Nesseby fisheries as a whole system the way Reedy-Maschner requests, the commercial catch and sale of fish from the fjord cannot be set apart from the historical combination of activities, coastal Sámi adaptation strategies, the current need for a flexible income, the value assigned to a unconstrained way of living, and the non-monetary value of fish and fisheries. In addition to being articles of trade, fish from the fjord are valuable food, priced gifts, and form an important part of the Unjárga-Nesseby exchange system. As already mentioned, I will return to the topic of food as an essential prolongation of the resource harvesting activities in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields and on the fjord in chapter 7. First, however, let us follow the seasonal activities in the municipality as they stretch into the snow-free time of the year.

\textsuperscript{62} Recall the historical part in chapter 2, where finds from the late Mesolithic includes bones from fish and marine mammals from the fjord as well as reindeer from the inland.
As spring unfolds, and the light from the rising sun steadily extends into the evenings and nights, the temperature may still fluctuate from day to day. Hill snow, now exposed to the sun, melts rapidly, while shadowed snow beds may only vanish after several weeks. The snow and ice, which enabled transport on skis or snowmobiles across wide, snow-covered mountain plains, on snow packed trails through the forests or upon the frozen fjord, rivers and lakes, gradually disappears. With the spring thaw a new landscape emerges, enabling other kinds of movements and practices. While movement on frozen lakes is no longer possible and rivers become more challenging to cross, other areas are made accessible by the melting of the snow and ice.

With the appearance of bare ground amidst increasing temperatures and day lengths, new sounds, smells and weather patterns emerge. The weather is now ‘read’ in other ways than during the seasons of snow, and the wind tells different stories. Instead of providing signs of where to expect snowdrifts along a ski- or snowmobile trip, or whether or not it would be safe to leave harbour and take the fishing vessel out on the fjord, the strength and direction of the wind may now indicate where the best cloudberries are most likely to be found the coming autumn.

During spring, several Unjárga-Nesseby women, as well as some men, start to observe the weather with the subsequent berry harvest in mind. Reindeer herders and sheep farmers wait anxiously to see how the grasses in the summer pastures grow, salmon fishers wish for a decent amount of salmon to enter the rivers and ptarmigan hunters hope for a high reproduction rate and survival of the ptarmigan offspring. In short, people wish for a good summer to come, each with his or her specific criteria in mind.
In the following sections, I will first introduce peoples’ presentation of the Unjárga-Nesseby late spring and early summer, and then briefly describe the main seasonal related activities carried out at this time of year. I then turn to summer activities and evaluate how summer practices may serve as important elements in constituting a shared communality, providing a basis for a division between ‘us’ and ‘the others’. As the seasons move from summer to autumn, it becomes evident that activities in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields also represent a gendered landscape. Furthermore, the berry harvest, the sheep gathering and the reindeer calf earmarking, provide interesting ethnographic data for discussing the concept of domestication. The different activities play their part in sustaining a feeling of continuity in outfield use, even if this use is continuously changing and given new meaning.

**Giddasgeassi – Spring summer (~ May – June)**

Just after snowmelt, the ground emerges bare and wet. This is the time of year when most inhabitants who have moved to Unjárga-Nesseby from farther south, and even several of the locals by birth, find use of the landscape most limited. This may especially be the case in June, as there may still be snow in the mountains in May, allowing for an elongation of the ice fishing or skiing season. An Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitant, originally from southern Finland, told me that she found May and June to be terrible months in Varanger: “I think May and June are awful (motbydelige) months here. That’s the time of year when I always think I don’t want to live here anymore.” The rest of the year she is happy to be living in Unjárga-Nesseby, she said, “it’s just that spring never really sets in when it’s supposed to occur”. Instead she found spring to be cold, adding that the sleet falls in late spring always took her by surprise.

One of the school teachers, who had lived in Unjárga-Nesseby for 11 years, told me that she experienced the Unjárga-Nesseby spring to be very different from that she was used to in the inner part of Finnmark. “Actually there is no spring here at all,” she continued. “It is cold, the snow melts slowly and, all in all, the move towards summer is terribly slow at this time of year.” A man from Sweden, who had been living in Unjárga-Nesseby for more than ten years, told me that whenever possible, he would pay a spring visit to the area where he grew up, in order to avoid a ‘spring depression’. Others made sure they included an extended weekend to family members or friends farther south in Norway, or abroad, to ensure a warm spring break during May or June.
For those who told me they appreciated transition from spring to summer, signs of the early summer, other than warm, stable weather, were emphasized. Such signs could be the bright days, with the light stretching into the evening, or the arrival of lively migratory birds. Being defined as “probably the most attractive birding in Norway” by Norway Nature Travel (Din tur 2012, emphasis in original), the Varanger fjord is known by both national and international bird watchers for its high abundance of various bird species throughout the year. To several Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants, the arrival of the common Eurasian oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*), with its black and white plumage and long red beak, is a clear sign of early summer.

Another sign of the approaching summer is when the sea ice loosens from Varangerbotn, the inner part of the fjord. In 2008, this happened on the 5th May. A few days later, one of my reindeer herding informants told me that the reindeer migration from winter to summer pastures had started rather late this year. The reason given was the amount of snow remaining in the area. “It is still almost full winter on the Varanger peninsula, and trying to rush the reindeers is not worth it. The animals know when the time is right,” the herder said. This is also the case when it comes to the calving. “If the pastures are bad, the females can delay calving for a couple of weeks.” Due to the snow conditions in the summer pastures, the same herder thought the majority of this year’s calving could take place as late as the 17th May.

In mid-May, the sheep farmers in the municipality are fully occupied attending to lambing. While the white sheep (*vilges sávza/kvitsau*) are kept inside the barn during lambing, most of the Old Norwegian sheep (*dološ sávza/villsau*) lamb outside, normally with only limited need of assistance from their owners. In case complications arise, this relative recently introduced sheep breed is nevertheless attended to just as well. During May, grazing sheep

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63 Din Tur/Norway nature Travel, is a company that offers accommodation and guiding on “the best bird watching destinations and birding sites in Norway”. On their web pages, the Varanger peninsula and the Varanger fjord is introduced the following way: “The bird watching in Varanger is probably the most attractive birding in Norway. The list of exclusive birds is longer than anywhere else in the country. The number of species and birds is just remarkable, both in the summer and winter. Varanger is the only site in Europe where you can expect the Steller’s Eider!” By The official travel guide to Norway, the Varanger peninsula is described as “one of Europe’s premier birding areas” (Visit Norway 2012).

64 In Sámi *cagan*, in Norwegian *tjeld*. See also Table 1, page 267, for English, Latin, Sámi and Norwegian name on species mentioned in this chapter.

65 17th of May is the Norwegian National Day.
and bouncing lambs are scattered over the greening fields until the animals move to the outfields for their summer pasture.

May is furthermore the month for picking eggs from seagulls, for those who still practice this harvesting activity. One of my neighbours once told me that the children of her sisters had been out picking seagull eggs on a Saturday in late May. Afterwards they had knocked on every door in the neighbourhood, offering people the opportunity to buy eggs fresh from the nests. Unfortunately, I was away that weekend and thus missed the door sale.

Ahead of the celebration of the Norwegian National Day on the 17th May, various village associations take the lead in gathering people together to help clean up rubbish that has emerged from the melting snow alongside roads and walkways. In 2008, the National Day arrived in Unjarga-Nesseby with a grey sky, low temperature, wind and sleet. As usual this did not impede the celebrations, complete with parade, marching band, speeches and a volunteer-run café in the community hall. As stated by one of the women participating in the celebration, there was nothing exceptional with this day’s weather. Rather, she found it to represent “typical weather for the month of May.”

**Geassi – Summer (~ June – August)**

An unmistakable sign of summer is the arrival of mosquitoes. On the positive side they provide important food for the birds, such as the ptarmigans and their chicks, something Anna, among others, is concerned about. On the negative side, people find them annoying. Even though people talked about the mosquitoes long before they appeared, it surprised me to find that there were few mosquito nets hung in windows during summer. When I questioned this, people told me that there are far fewer mosquitoes by the Varanger fjord than is common in inner Finnmark. By rivers, lakes and up in the mountain plains, on the other hand, I could expect the mosquitoes to be more plentiful.

My fieldwork summer was rather cold and wet, and even during trips up in the mountain plains, I was not exposed to heavy swarms of mosquitoes. Although I noticed an increase in abundance from the village and up in the forests and mountains, I was assured that this was nothing compared to the amount I could have met: “We say that there are many mosquitoes when you cannot eat or drink without getting mosquitoes in your mouth. And if you take a deep breath you’ll get them in your throat. Only then would we say there are many mosquitoes.”
The statement above illustrates how ways of relating to mosquitos can influence the degree to which a person is considered to belong on the inside or the outside of an Unjárga-Nesseby communality. While I was clearly an ‘other’ in this respect, there was an opening for me to join a shared, relaxed attitude towards large quantities of mosquitos once I had experienced and coped with it. Ways of dealing with mosquitos may also serve as an ethnic statement, as was exemplified by a father who told me how his small children had impressed him by their calmness during a summer night in the mountains, totally surrounded by immense amounts of mosquitos: “They just sat there, totally still without a single move, and I became so impressed by their calmness in this situation. That moment made me realize I have Sámi children for sure.”

Mosquitos further form a co-species within in the entanglement of humans, animals, plants and insects that take part in constituting Unjárga-Nesseby as a place. Anna illustrated this when she explained to me her surprise at discovering a large amount of early cloudberries ahead of the berry season: “I found all the early berries to be abnormal, as there has been so little of everything else lately. There have even been few mosquitos over the last years. There are so many things that are interrelated, right?” The berries were later destroyed by frost, resulting in a meagre berry harvest, but Anna’s statement, together with the ones above, exemplify how even mosquitos are included and take part in the Unjárga-Nesseby place production.

From approximately 20th June to 20th August, the Unjárga-Nesseby primary and secondary school is closed for the summer. At this time of year, it is not uncommon to observe children playing outside through the bright summer nights until early morning. Summer is also a time for music festivals, and in the first weekend of July, the Skiippagurrafestivalen by the Deatnu-Tana River has been popular among the Unjárga-Nesseby youth since it was first arranged in 2003.66 In early August, the city of Vadsø hosts the yearly Varangerfestivalen, the largest jazz festival in Northern Norway. It is a popular event among Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants interested in music.

The numbers taking part in the summer sea salmon (luossa/laks) drift net fisheries have decreased steadily during the last ten years. This is true for Unjárga-Nesseby as well as in Finnmark in general (NOU 2008:5). The allocation of an area, where permission is given to net sea salmon, is dependent upon meeting the criteria for involvement in the primary

66 In 2011, however, the festival was closed down as it was no longer able to draw a sufficient number of visitors.
industries, for which fewer people now fulfil. Even if exemptions can be made, the average age of the applicants is steadily increasing (ibid.).

For the few Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants that still take part in the sea salmon fisheries in the Varanger fjord, season lasts from the 1st June to the 21st July (The Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management 2012). The sale of sea salmon formed an important source of income for Sámi along the coast of Finnmark in the 19th and 20th centuries (Prestbakmo 1994), but nowadays catches in Unjárga-Nesseby are primarily for private consumption. A few sea salmon fishers still sell a portion of their catch, but as the permitted catch is limited, it is first and foremost their family, friends and regular costumers to which the fish is given or sold. Salmon are not only fished by nets in the fjord, however. In the municipality’s two salmon rivers, both residents and visitors are allowed to fish salmon by rod and hand line (Finnmarksloven 2005).

**Knowing the river – Fishing for salmon in Suovvejohka/Bergebyelva**

Around nine o’clock in the night, the rain had finally stopped and I decided to go for a walk along the river Suovvejohka/Bergebyelva, to see if there were people out fishing for salmon on this bright night towards the end of July. I had walked some hundred meters along the river when I saw a man standing on the riverbank, looking at the running water in front of him. He had a fly-fishing rod in his one hand, and as I neared I noticed that the hook on the fly at the end of his fishing line was fastened to the rod. “Are the fish biting?” I asked when there were just a couple of meters between us, and the nearby waterfall could no longer drown out my voice. The man slowly shook his head, still observing the river, before he turned around, looked at me and started to talk. “Well, it’s not that the river is totally dead, I got one at four kilos (en firekilos) a while ago.” He obviously found no reason to specify the catch to be a salmon, since I was walking by the river in the middle of the salmon season. “Right now the bite is poor, though.”

The salmon fisher continued to explain that he had damaged his fishing rod a little, or actually his reel, when he caught the four-kilo salmon earlier on. He would probably have to get the rod fixed somehow, he said, before adding that he was not really in a hurry: “I’ve caught 70 salmon so far this summer. Last year I caught 76 during the whole season, and the year before that I got 109. But I’ve mainly got small salmon (smålaks) this year, except from
one at 12 kilos and a few other big ones. There are mainly small ones to be caught this summer.”

Upon my question the fly-fisher answered that he was from the village, living nearby. After I confirmed that I was the scientist he thought me to be (“e det du som e ho dær forskeren?”) and we exchanged names, we continued to talk about the river and the salmon. I wondered if all the water in the river negatively affected whether the salmon were biting, but Harald did not think this to be the case at the moment. “The water level is as it should be, but there has been so much rain lately that the water is muddy (grumsete)”. I mentioned that I thought of buying myself a fly-fishing rod to try fishing for salmon, but explained that fly-fishing seems difficult to me. “You should just buy a rod and get started,” Harald said. “It will probably take a season to figure things out, but mainly you will need the time it takes to get to know the river. That’s the most important knowledge to hold as a fly fisher.”

When we were about to round off our conversation, I asked Harald if there were many people out fishing in the river this night. “I haven’t seen that many yet,” he said, “except a few above the waterfall. But there have been a lot of people in the river in general this summer,” he continued. “Especially the Finns. They invade the river. They invade everything, those Finns (daem invadere alt daer finlenderan). As soon as they notice a small creek, they are there.”

This was neither the first nor the last time I heard someone complain about visiting people from Finland, presenting Finns as ‘significant others’ to disassociate from. In these occasions, people from Unjárga-Nesseby expressed frustration with what they regarded an overconsumption of natural resources and a lack of respect for local conditions. The ‘we’ that was established by those speech acts would in different ways emphasize the interconnections between the local environment and the Unjárga-Nesseby people.

When Harald left the river, I continued walking upwards along the riverbank in the quiet, bright night. I passed a waterfall and after the sound of the tumbling water had gradually faded behind me, I caught sight of three fly-fishers some hundred meters ahead. The three men turned out to be Jon, that I already knew, his uncle and, as the third person introduced himself, a ‘southerner’ who had recently bought a house in Unjárga-Nesseby. Once we had greeted he told me that after having spent several vacations in the area he now felt lucky to have his own place. This made it possible for him to come visiting as often as possible, “one week here and one week there”.

Jon’s uncle lives and works in the south of Norway, but every summer he returns home to fish for salmon in the river. This time he had only bought a one-way flight ticket. “I
didn’t want to decide upon the return in advance. You never know what the summer will be like. This way I can allow the weather and the river conditions to decide when to return to the south.” If the weather was bad and the salmon refused to bite he would probably just stay for a week or so, he explained. But in case of good weather and a decent catch he would stay for no less than two weeks.

Shortly after my arrival the three fly-fishers decided to have a break. We all sat down on the riverbank, close to what seemed to be a frequently used fireplace. No fire was made, as the weather was good and the men would only have a short break, but I was offered a cup of tea from Jon’s thermo bottle. While keeping an eye on the river, our conversation centred on the nights activity. Once again I was told that the equipment is not the most important factor for succeeding as a fly-fisher; knowing the river is.

Indeed, if I wanted to start fly-fishing, I would need a relatively good reel, Jon’s uncle said, as the reel is more important than the rod itself. A good reel provides smooth resistance once you have a fish on the hook, I was told, while cheap reels may have a tendency to tug (hakke). An even resistance in a strong line increases the chance of finally getting the salmon on land. I could probably get a decent one-hand fly-fishing rod with a pretty good reel for a price somewhere between thousand a couple of thousand Norwegian kroner. But without knowing the river, my catch would be limited, the three men agreed. The man from Oslo told me that he had been fly-fishing for three years, and still considered himself to be far from an expert. “The first year I didn’t get a single fish. Last year I got five and so far this year I’ve got eight. I am no good with the fly. To me it is just about getting the fly out on the water. The only reason for my progress is that I begin to know the river better from year to year.”

During our conversation I learned that knowing the river is mainly about recognizing the different locations where the salmon prefers to rest. Different salmon often stop at the same locations in the river, where the stream is favourable, where a preferred stone is to be found, or where the passage from shallow water to a deep pool (kulp) constitutes a desirable site for the fish. Experienced salmon fishers would probably find such sites whether they knew the river or not, Jon assumed, but he nevertheless considered it to be an advantage to know the river through practice: “If you know the river, you have learnt where the salmon prefers to stop, just as much as you know where it never stops. In this way you will not waste your time fishing in an area of the river where you will never be able to catch a salmon anyway.”
In contrast to the nearby salmon rivers of Deatnu-Tana and Neiden, boats are not used for fishing in the Suovvejohka/Bergebyelva, as the river is too small and wild to manoeuvre. Furthermore, the Deatnu-Tana River is one of few salmon rivers in Norway where net fishing is still legal (Ween 2012c), whereas only rods are allowed in the Suovvejohka/Bergebyelva, for Unjárga-Nesseby residents as well as visitors.

According to the Finnmark Act, all people have the right to fish with rod and hand line in rivers and lakes on the property of the Finnmark Estate (Finnmarksloven 2005). In cases where unwritten rules and regulations are practiced locally, without a direct foundation in national or regional legislation, visiting fishers may not be familiar with the unwritten laws, or they may choose not to respect them. In both cases, conflicts may rise (see also Prestbakmo 1994). Among the unwritten rules of the local fly-fishers in the Suovvejohka/Bergebyelva is one that prescribes a polite procedure of ‘waiting in line’, to ensure everyone gets a ‘share’. The rule particularly applies to the good deep pools in the lower part of the river, Jon explained, adding that occasional conflicts may occur among local fly-fishers and visiting ones, as the unwritten law may not be known – or acknowledged – by the visitors.

In addition to salmon, the Suovvejohka/Bergebyelva also hosts trout (dápmot/ørret), sea trout (guvžá/sjørret) and stationary as well as migratory Arctic char (rávdu/røye and valas/sjørøye). In 2008, the river was open for fishing salmon and sea trout from 24th June to 24th August, while the fishing period for migratory Arctic char was set from 24th June to 31st
July (NHJFF 2008a). Each summer, particular zones of the river are protected and fishing in the vicinity of a salmon ladder is never allowed. After the 31st July, “all wild salmon bigger than 3 kg/65 cm must be handled with care and released” (ibid.: 2). In addition to these restrictions, 24 hours of river protection a week (et fredningsdøgn) was introduced in the 2008 season. In order to further regulate the river fishery, no fisheries were allowed in any part of the river from Sunday 6 p.m. to Monday 6 p.m. The Unjårga-Nesseby hunting and fishing association had moreover decided to sell this year’s Suovvejohka/Bergebyelva fishing licenses at a higher price to visitors than local residents, in order to strengthen the local feeling of responsibility for the river (NHJFF 2008b). Included in the ‘local residents’ category were permanent residents or those with “close relatives such as mother, father, sister, brother, daughter or son living in the municipality” (ibid.: 1, my translation).

The additional protective measures undertaken in the 2008 season in Suovvejohka/Bergebyelva, were partly imposed and partly a local response to the warnings of reduced salmon stocks in most Finnmark rivers. The warnings came from natural scientists and environmental institutions, and were presented in the regional media throughout the preceding winter and spring (e.g. Forbregd 2008, Gundersen 2008, Trosten 2008). While the Unjårga-Nesseby fly-fishers, like fishers in general, were used to changing regulations from one season to the next, the argumentation behind the 2008 rules presented by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management (DN) and the County Governor of Finnmark were not automatically accepted. In questioning the rationale behind the new regulations for Suovvejohka/Bergebyelva in particular, and the Finnmark rivers and fjords in general, the Unjårga-Nesseby river fishers’ response resembles the Deatnu-Tana salmon fishers’ resistance against the environmental authorities’ fishing regulations established for the Deatnu-Tana River (Ween 2012c).

Based on conversations with Deatnu-Tana fishermen, spanning three summers of fieldwork engaging in fishing and other salmon-related activities in the area, Ween (2012c) shows the multiplicity involved in these fisherman’s explanatory models regarding the salmon fluctuations in the river. In the stories of the fishermen, scientific knowledge represents ‘the other’ as the fishermen regard it to be founded upon singular causal relations (ibid.). Compared to what the fishermen experienced to be a fixed and static knowledge within scientific practices, their local knowledge made room for multiplicity by its inclusion of several actors and multiple details. Urging the environmental authorities to “look beyond relations between man and fish” (Ween 2012c: 160), the fishermen included, amongst others,
various predators, cyclical relations, weather- and water conditions and salmon agency in their ways of enacting salmon knowledge (ibid.).

The two salmon ladders in Suovvejohka/Bergebyelva had recently been fixed, which according to members of the Unjárga-Nesseby hunting and fishing association, had led to a considerable improvement of the salmon conditions in the river. A dramatic decline in the number of salmon entering the river was therefore not what the fishers experienced through their daily encounter with salmon. According to Anna, the species distribution in the river had changed over the last ten years or so as the salmon had become more numerous and displaced the trout and the char from the lower parts of the river: “Earlier on, my husband and I used to go to the river after work, fish for trout or char, make a fire, and then return home when we had caught a couple of fish for dinner. Today, however, there are only people fishing for salmon in the lower parts of the river. If I go fishing for trout or char in the river these days, I venture farther up the river where I can be by myself.” For Jon, on the other hand, a gradual interest in fly-fishing for salmon had developed during the recent years, and this had more or less replaced his former activity of trout fishing in this river.

Anna and the Unjárga-Nesseby salmon fishers are aware that an increased number of salmon in Suovvejohka/Bergebyelva in no way disproves a decline in other salmon rivers in the county. Nevertheless, they question the fishery restrictions set by the environmental authorities in a similar way to the Deatnu-Tana fishermen referred to by Ween (2012c). Rather than constraining their experience of the river to the scientists’ one-dimensional human-salmon model, where fishers and anglers were responsible for a reduced salmon population, my informants highlighted other co-species relations that possibly influence the number of salmon entering the Finnmark rivers in general. As they found the sea salmon fishers to be the ones most severely hit by the new regulations, such as through reduced season length, the situation of the sea salmon fishers was the one most frequently discussed.

“Hardly anyone fishes for sea salmon anymore,” a salmon fishing reindeer herder once told me, “but still they put further restrictions on this fishery. You know, there used to be 30 meters between the Salmon lots around here, and now there are 5 mil [50 kilometres] between them! I really think it is wrong to let the few sea salmon fishers that are still left suffer for something for which they are definitely not to blame.” Another fisher told me how he found it strange to restrict the salmon fisheries without making any attempt to reduce the number of

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67 In a 2010 report from the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA), the Suovvejohka/Bergebyelva is included among the few Finnmark rivers found to fulfill its calculated spawning capacity target (gytebestandsmål) (Falkegård 2011).
seals along the coast, as he knew seals to catch a large amount of salmon. Others mentioned that the goosander’s (*Mergus merganser*) consumption of salmon smolt should be taken into account as well, in order to try to get an overview of the possible reasons for the salmon reduction.

Common to the objections presented by the Unjárga-Nesseby fishers to the new regulations placed on the salmon fishery, in particular those aimed towards the sea salmon fisheries, was their reluctance to see themselves as separate from other species influencing, and being influenced by, the salmon populations. Rather, a divide between humans and animals, or culture and nature, was disregarded in their communication, focusing on the co-existence of humans and animals in an ever-changing landscape.

Among the Suovvejohka/Bergebyelva fishers, Finnish tourists served as ‘others’ in the sense that they were not regarded to be sensitive to Unjárga-Nesseby ways of harvesting the outfields and sharing the rivers. Scientists and environmental institutions, on the other hand, became ‘others’ in the way they were found to ignore the interconnectedness of humans and animals when deciding upon regulations for the salmon fisheries. Both ‘others’, however, serve to strengthen the fishers’ experience of belonging in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields, where areas and resources are shared not only with other human beings, but also other species.

Čakčageassi – Autumn summer (~ August – September)

The berry season

“It’s the berry season that is our time of the year (*det e bærsesongen som e vårres årstid*),” Ingrid told me as we were packing her car, before heading for some blueberry fields approximately 50 kilometres east along the fjord. I interpreted Ingrid’s statement as referring to the connection between the berry harvest and women in Unjárga-Nesseby in general, and herself and her female relatives and friends in particular. The preceding years of extensive moth larvae outbreaks had destroyed the local blueberry fields in Unjárga-Nesseby, and Ingrid, her sister Heidi and their common friend Eva had therefore been in need of locating new, rich berry sites in order to secure their yearly blueberry store. With berry buckets, lunch

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68 For a detailed description of the moth larvae outbreaks, see chapter 8.
boxes and a coffee kettle for the lunch break fire, we were ready to gather tasty blueberries at one of these new sites before the frost would set in and destroy the berries.

After approximately half an hour’s drive Ingrid turned her car away from the main road. She had been berry picking at this location the previous weekend as well, and knew where to go. We followed a small gravelled road a few bumpy meters towards a small hillside, until we reached a plain surrounded by low shrubs. Ingrid parked the car, and after a few clothing adjustments and minor rearrangements of our backpacks, we were ready for the hillside in front of us. We had not walked far when the grass and shrubs under our feet were gradually replaced by blueberry heath. A few meters farther ahead, by the foot of the hill, we found what we were looking for, carpets of blueberry heath full of big, juicy blueberries.

![Picking blueberries.](image)

We left our backpacks at the bottom of the hill and although we started off picking berries quite close to each other, we ended up at separate sites, picking eagerly and in silence in order to fill our buckets efficiently. We stayed focused on the harvest for a couple of hours, and as the blue colour gradually intensified on my fingers, the level of berries in my bucket rose. Soon after, we became more interested in each other’s amount of blueberries than our own and realized it was time for a break. Ingrid had found a good location for a fire on a small ledge a bit farther up the hill, and on our way each of us gathered some dry branches to use for firewood to supplement the wood Ingrid had brought with her from home.
Ingrid’s sister lit up the fire, while Eva unpacked the coffee kettle and filled it with water. We had all brought our own packed lunches (matpakker) and after just a short while, we had freshly boiled coffee with our food. From where we sat, some hundred meters up the hill, we had a great view of the outer part of the Varanger fjord in front of us. While relaxing by the fire, our conversation touched upon this year’s cold and rainy summer before it turned to more private matters such as family life, children and the pros and cons of village living.

Compared to most other outfield activities I joined during my Unjárga-Nesseby fieldwork, this blueberry trip was among the few activities that allowed for immediate inclusion. In this setting, my gender and my interest in the activity appeared sufficient for including me in the communality of female berry pickers. Even if I did not know the women particularly well in advance, I had the feeling of being ‘one among them’ during this trip. Unlike my participation onboard the fishing vessel on the fjord, for example, where there was never any doubt that I had joined in as an anthropologist to gain an understanding of the Varanger Fjord fisheries, and as such could never become part of the fishermen’s ‘we’, the blueberry trip primarily made me feel like a fellow human being. Consequently, this trip was among the instances where I later asked for permission to include the activity in my thesis, as picking berries with these women made me feel so ‘off work’.

On our way back home in the evening, Eva told me that even if the newly located blueberry sites provided her with fine berries, she still missed her ‘own’ locations. “There is something particular with the old sites,” she said, “but there are fewer blueberries to be found in the vicinity of my home now than there used to be.” Eva continued to explain how this change was partly caused by the recent year’s moth larva outbreaks, but the blueberry plants were also affected by the decline in the number of grazing animals. “Less people keep livestock these days and so the vegetation is no longer maintained. Due to regrowth, there have not been blueberries close to my house since the 1980s. And a bit further up, the berry sites are now ruined by the moth larvae.”

As the areas that have provided blueberries to Unjárga-Nesseby women and their families through generations can no longer be harvested, new berry sites have to be located in order to secure the household’s consumption of berries throughout a year. While the new sites provide ‘fine berries’, they cannot compensate for the amount of memories and stories connected to sites that have been revisited year after year. In this way, the new sites do not support the same feeling of identity and nostalgia, as the women’s ‘own’ ones, at least not yet. Still, the berry harvesting activity does not seem to have lost its high value.
While Ingrid, Heidi and Eva also make use of the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields during other parts of the year, such as through skiing activities in the winter, berry picking constitutes their main outfield harvesting activity. This may be a reason for why the activity is still valued by the women to such a degree that Ingrid refers to the time of the berry harvest as the women’s season. Qeqertarsuaq women did not use a similar expression during my master’s fieldwork in Western Greenland, but the significance of these Qeqertarsuaq women’s gathering of black crowberries and angelica clearly parallels the Unjárga-Nesseby situation.

To most Qeqertarsuaq women, the harvesting of black crowberries (Empetrum nigrum, in Greenlandic paarnat) and angelica (Angelica archangelica ssp. Archangelica, in Greenlandic kuannit) constitutes one of the most important nature-related events during the year (Rybråten 2006; 2009). Already by January, several women had told me how much they looked forward to these summer harvesting activities. Both resources are used in a variety of recipes, and are gathered in such an amount that immediate consumption is possible, without limiting the household’s access to frozen berries or dried angelica throughout the following winter and spring.

Like in Unjárga-Nesseby, seasonal nature-based activities in the form of hunting, fishing and gathering are important identity markers among Qeqertarsuaq inhabitants. Furthermore, meals based on locally harvested resources serve to strengthen peoples’ feeling of belonging (Rybråten 2009). As most Qeqertarsuaq women have fulltime jobs in the service- or health sector, limiting their possibility of undertaking ‘traditional women’s activities’ like skin processing, the summer harvest of paarnat and kuannit provides an opportunity for these women to actively engage in their home-place landscape. Additionally, these harvesting activities contribute to a sense of continuity in contrast to several other areas that are characterized by alteration (ibid., see also Rybråten 2006).

Similarly among Unjárga-Nesseby women with fulltime jobs and a limited amount of time for outfield activities, the berry harvest may serve as a valuable break in everyday obligations and represent a meaningful way of engaging with the outfields. As we have seen, the Unjárga-Nesseby ways of being outdoors are mainly connected to harvesting activities or to ‘get something done’ (e.g. chapter 5). Among the women, the value of picking berries is not only in that it enables direct interaction with the outfields, resulting in the harvest of a seasonally limited, valued resource. The blueberry trip referred to above illustrates how berry picking may also be a social activity. Furthermore, as will be shown in chapter 7, the value

69 For the topic of food in an Unjárga-Nesseby context, see chapter 7.
ascribed to locally harvested berries makes them important elements in the Unjárga-Nesseby gift exchange system.

In addition to blueberries, also black crowberries (*muorjë/krøkebær*), lingonberries (*jokŋa/tyttebær*) and cloudberries (*luomi/multe*) are popular species among Unjárga-Nesseby berry pickers. Although so far depicted as first and foremost a women’s activity, men may just as well take part in this harvest. Insofar as men pick berries, however, they predominately go for the cloudberries. This is also the berry Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants in general value the most. Due to the high significance attributed to this berry and the narrow time frame through which it can be harvested, several women choose to postpone a portion of their summer vacation until the cloudberries ripen.

**Viddas gull – the gold of the mountain plains**

In the early summer the most eager cloudberry pickers start to look for cloudberry flowers on the marshes in the hope of estimating the following harvest. But as Anna taught me, even if lots of flowers are to be found, this does not necessarily mean there will be an abundance of berries in the autumn. Strong winds or heavy rainfalls can destroy the flowers and thus impede the berry production, while frost can spoil the quality of the berries once finally formed.

During spring and summer, Margit, a self-employed woman in her 50s, observes the weather with the ripening of the cloudberrries in mind. If there is a lot of wind during the flowering of the berry plant, it will most likely negatively affect the amount of berries produced later on, she once told me. If the wind mainly comes from a certain direction, she knows that a specific location will probably be no good, and instead of visiting this site she will look for berries in an area where she expects a better chance of a good harvest. A lot of rain during summer would result in similar kinds of considerations. And if there has been frost during the days when the cloudberries start to form, Margit will not look for berries on low lying, open marshes, but rather search for them in between shrubs or at higher elevations.

During my year of fieldwork the Unjárga-Nesseby cloudberry autumn was not particularly good. Berit, a retired woman in her early 70s, has over several years become accustomed to picking between 120-130 kilos of cloudberries per season. “Nowadays, there are not so many people who pick berries for others other than themselves anymore. But some of us pick until there’s nothing left”. In the autumn of 2008, however, her harvest only amounted to 19 kilos.
Berit has her certain places where she picks her cloudberry. “Although we say that there are enough berries for everyone, I have to admit that there is a little bit of competition going on,” she told me during one of our conversations. For Berit, there is something about the kick she gets when she picks cloudberry, she explained. One autumn, some years ago, she found a marsh with so many big, juicy cloudberry that she filled her bucket and her mouth at full speed, hoping that no one else would arrive. But after several hours and numerous litres of berries, her attitude changed: “Even though there were an enormous amount of berries in the marsh, I just could not leave any behind. And so I started to long for someone to show up and pick berries as well, to ease my workload”.

Berit’s description of the obligation she felt to pick all the cloudberry she had discovered so as they would not go to waste, resembles the sense of responsibility I recognized among the few Unjárga-Nesseby people who had planted strawberries in their gardens. They kept them under a protective warming cloth for large parts of the season, checked them regularly, provided them with the right amount of water and finally made sure all mature berries from their limited harvest were carefully collected. Berit and other Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants ways of feeling obliged to harvest the ‘wild’ cloudberry are thus not essentially different from corresponding feelings related to ‘tame’ or ‘domesticated’ plants.

As stated by Lien (2012a), ‘domestication’ is one of the grand narratives through which the history of human civilization is often told. The conventional model of domestication presents the Neolithic revolution as the transformative moment when humans began to control nature (ibid.). By paving the way for human population growth and state formations, domestication came to represent a strong divide between ‘culture’ and ‘nature’, the ‘tame’ and the ‘wild’.

Archaeology and biology are the two disciplines in which domestication as an analytic tool has been most commonly applied (Ween 2012b). Within biology, domestication has primarily been defined as a gradual process of selection where animals or plants are genetically changed for the benefit of humans (ibid., see also Leach 2003). Archaeological definitions have mainly focused on domestication as the radical transition when humans moved from hunting and gathering practices, to various combinations of agriculture, animal husbandry and taming (Lien 2012a).

Within anthropology, Ingold (2000: 63) has remarked how definitions, such as the ones above, presuppose humanity’s dominance over the natural world. Cassidy (2007: 11-12) further suggests domestication should be viewed not as a one-way process of domination, but as “an on-going relationship between people, animals, plants and the environment. This
relationship may be exploitative or mutual, intentional, or serendipitous, [and] it does not preclude reversals.” Recent and on-going anthropological research into domestication in the northern hemisphere, advocates a broadened view of domestication through their experiments with new ways of describing biosocial relationships. In these studies, we are shown how the entanglements of humans, animals and plants are much more varied and complicated than presented in the models referred to above (see e.g. Lien and Law 2011, Lien 2012a, Ween 2012b). Inspired by this recent research, I suggest that, as far as we follow Cassidy’s broadened description of domestication processes, the Unjárga-Nesseby cloudberries represent a species at the edge of domestication.

While the terms ‘tame’ and ‘wild’ were not used by my Unjárga-Nesseby informants in connection with cloudberries, the berries are considered to be ‘wild’ in the sense that they are not planted by humans and their growth and development is not interfered with. Simultaneously, cloudberries and humans clearly represent a biosocial entanglement. Long before the berries ripen, the berry pickers start to care for their seasonal development by paying attention to the temperatures, the wind and the precipitation influencing the berries’ maturation process. The berries, in turn, are important for the berry pickers’ feeling of belonging, and play a role in expanding their boundaries of ‘home’.

Jon once explained his feeling of belonging the following way: “I like many places. But, you see, it’s something special being here. This is home. Here I know everything, like where to find cloudberries and where the good fishing sites are.” In his way of talking about ‘home’, Jon did not refer to a particular house or a farm, but rather presented his home to comprise the areas in which his preferred outfield activities are carried out. Margit expressed a similar feeling when she explained her reason for moving back to Unjárga-Nesseby after living parts of her life elsewhere in Norway and abroad: “There is so much freedom here. There are hardly any garden fences, streets, or traffic. Rather there are vast areas that can be used.” She further explained that her interest in Sámi place names added an extra facet to her outfield activities. “The names become meaningful when I am out in the specific locations,” she said, and continued: “It is so exciting to walk in areas you feel a strong attachment to, because it gives the nature an other dimension than is possible when you do not know nature, and do not have these kind of references”.

The statements of Jon and Margit, as well as Berit’s obligation to ensure that the cloudberries in ‘her’ marshes do not to go to waste, exemplify how their ‘homes’ are not restricted to a house and a garden or a farm, but include much larger areas of use. The cloudberries are part of their meahcci, the areas where their resources are found. And as stated
by the woman referred to in chapter 4, the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields are not wild, but part of an extended home: “This is not a wilderness. This is where we live.”

Historically, cloudberry sales provided the Unjárga-Nesseby coastal Sámi with valuable source of monetary income up until the 1950s (Nilsen 2009). Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants often shared stories with me about the significance of cloudberries to the family economy in ‘the old days’. For some people the berries still provide additional income. Berit, for example, sells parts of her berry harvest (see chapter 7). In addition she keeps a larger amount than needed for her family’s own consumption throughout a year, so as to ensure a surplus from which she can provide relatives, friends or other acquaintances with a gift of self-picked cloudberrries.

That Unjárga-Nesseby cloudberrries may both be sold and given away provides an interesting contrast to Lien’s (1987) experiences from Båtsfjord in the middle of the 1980s. Among Lien’s informants, cloudberrries should only be distributed as gifts and the sale of cloudberrries was highly sanctioned (ibid.). At the time, due to the effects of the authorities’ former Norwegianization politics (see chapter 2), leading to a reluctance to identify as Sámi along the North-Norwegian coast, Båtsfjord appeared solely as a Norwegian community (Lien 2001). While a large part of the population consisted of people from other parts of the country, often without Sámi affiliation, those that knew they had Sámi ancestry kept it to themselves (ibid.). Only several years after Lien’s initial fieldwork did some of her informants discover they were of Sámi ethnic descent, and shared this newly acquired knowledge with her (Ween and Lien 2012).

The reason why cloudberry sales were so thoroughly sanctioned by mid-1980s Båtsfjord inhabitants is likely found in the way cloudberry sales appeared to be connected to Sámi livelihoods. In order to maintain their distance to Sámi ethnicity, the Sámi way of distributing cloudberrries through sale was consistently denounced. As Unjárga-Nesseby maintained its coastal Sámi identity throughout the years of assimilation and Norwegianization (see chapter 2), cloudberry sales have not been sanctioned in the same way among Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants. Instead, the current sale of cloudberrries serves to maintain a historic link to a traditional Sámi activity. Even if the revenue achieved no longer constitutes as significant a part of the seller’s economy, the ability to maintain an activity which was of great importance to previous generations’ livelihoods, may appear just as valuable. It is important, however, that the sale is externally oriented. While women like Berit
gladly sell berries to interested buyers from outside the municipality, her co-villagers would receive berries in the form of a gift.\textsuperscript{70}

The previous sections have shown how berry-harvesting activities may serve to strengthen Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants’ sense of belonging, as well as reinforcing peoples’ local, ethnic and gendered identity. Nevertheless, it is not always necessary to be involved in the harvest in order for the berries to play their part in maintaining peoples’ feeling of local belonging. As stated by one of my neighbours in his late 20s:

To know that you have the \textit{possibility} to go and pick cloudberries, even if you don’t choose to do so, that’s really important to people living here, I think. It’s about having the opportunity. Nowadays everyone can afford to buy food at the grocery. It’s not like before, when people had to harvest the outfields in order to survive (\textit{bærge sæ}).\textsuperscript{71} But clearly it is something else to eat berries you have picked yourself than berries bought at Rema [a grocery store].

Similar to the Qeqertarsuaq women in Western Greenland, most Unjárga-Nesseby women currently have jobs that limit their time available for outfield activities. But while harvesting practices no longer constitute a necessity for the survival of Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants, they prove to be highly important identity markers. The ability to respond flexibly to the opportunities the various seasons present is an important part of the picture. One year you might pick berries, and another year you don’t. But knowing that the outfields are within reach when desired, as part of what constitutes Unjárga-Nesseby as a home-place, seems essential. Nevertheless, as we have seen, there are women in the municipality for whom the berry picking is a longed for annual activity, prepared for weeks and months in advance. In order for the valued berries to be consumed, sold or circulated as gifts, they first have to be gathered. An exception to the rule of not selling cloudberries within the municipality is made in the case of local markets, such as the yearly \textit{Vuonnamárkanat}.

Every year since 2005 the \textit{Várjjat Sámi Musea} in Vuonnabahta/Varangerbotn, has arranged \textit{Vuonnamárkanat} on the last Saturday of August or the first Saturday in September. The market has a clear Sámi profile and permits the sale of handmade and homemade products and food items only (Várjjat Sámi Musea 2013). Throughout the years, the \textit{Vuonnamárkanat} has developed into Finnmark’s largest market for homemade products. Here, local as well as visiting sellers from other parts of Finnmark, as well as Finland and

\textsuperscript{70} For more details on Unjárga-Nesseby gift exchange, see chapter 7.

\textsuperscript{71} Here, my neighbor used the Norwegian term corresponding to the Sámi \textit{birget} (see chapter 4).
Russia, sell handicrafts of various kinds, including wood products, knitwear such as mittens, socks, hats and scarfs, jewellery, useable and decorative knives, skin products like hats and handbags, clothes and accessories, sheep skins, ecological products, short-travelled food, dried meat, herbs, this year’s berries, jam, juice and homemade pastry.

Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants that have been unable, or unwilling, to pick cloudbERRries during the berry season, thus have a last chance to buy some kilos of the ‘gold of the mountain plains’ through the organized sale at Vuonnamárkanat, where berries can be sold for money, even among neighbours. Those who wish to buy cloudbERRries at the market show up early, as they know the berries are among the first products to be sold out.

As with the Finnmarkslopet event, the Vuonnamárkanat also provides a setting for the enactment of Unjárga-Nesseby outwards. Where Finnmarkslopet forms a venue for presenting the diversity and cultural enthusiasm of the community, Vuonnamárkanat serves to publicize and strengthen the municipality’s Sámi identity.

Čakča – Autumn (~ October – November)

Despite the day length shortening, the level of outfield-oriented activity stays high among Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants throughout the months of autumn. This is the time of year when the sheep are gathered from their pastures, the reindeer are assembled in the reindeer fences for earmarking and slaughtering, and the popular moose hunt ensures that a large proportion of the municipality’s men and some women spend weeks in the forest. Due to the number of people involved in these activities, meetings, courses and seminars are seldom planned for the busiest time of autumn, but are rather scheduled to other times of the year.

Sheep gathering

The sheep in Unjárga-Nesseby commonly utilize outfield pastures from mid-June towards the end of September. During the rest of the year, they are kept on the farm, either in fenced land or in the barn. I had made an agreement with Jorunn and Tor to join them, on a Saturday morning in early October 2008, to help gather their two sheep herds from their summer pastures on Selešnjárga/Angsnes (see figure 3), in order to bring them home to the farms for the winter. Both farmers keep the Old Norwegian Sheep breed. In Sámi the sheep are termed
dološ sávza meaning ‘old (kind) sheep’, while the Norwegian name villsau means ‘wild sheep’. The breed was introduced in Unjárga-Nesseby in 2002, when six farms jointly bought a total of 30 sheep. The number of Old Norwegian Sheep farms increased to ten within few years, with more than 800 sheep let loose on outfield pastures during summer (Bjørkli 2008). Close to 400 of these sheep were to be gathered this Saturday in early October.

The previous afternoon, Jorunn and I had decided to meet at her place around 8.30 in the morning. “By that time I guess we will have decided on who should go where” she told me. Several people, in addition to her family, had volunteered to help with the gathering, and to make the process efficient. We would be divided in smaller groups to cover as much of the pasture area as possible. As luck would have it, Saturday brought beautiful weather. It was cold, about – 5 ºC, but there was no wind and not a single cloud in the sky. Already when scraping ice from the windsreen of my car, I could feel the warmth from the sun in my face. I felt comfortable in my woollen underwear and windproof outer clothing, but realized I would probably have to make some adjustments later in accord with the rising sun and expected activity level as the sheep gathering began.

When I parked my car in the courtyard of Jorunn’s farm, the yard was not full of cars and people as I had expected. Instead everything was quiet. Were they still asleep? Had they already left? I knocked the door and opened it without waiting for an answer. Finally I had learned how to make the entrance I was expected to, when visiting people I had got to know. In the hall I was greeted by Jorunn’s youngest daughter, about to get dressed, before Jorunn’s husband appeared in the door from the living room and told me that Jorunn had to fix some things in the village before they could leave. We thus decided that I should go to Tor’s farm, from where the gathering would take place and where the distribution of tasks could be agreed. ”Just tell the others that we’ll be there in a few moments”, Jorunn’s husband said before turning to finish packing the bags and getting the children dressed.

Outside Tor’s farm, a group of people had already gathered in the courtyard. Some of the faces were familiar to me while others were not. After a presentation round and a small chat about the wonderful weather and the tasks ahead of us, Tor invited us in for coffee. We all got a chair around the kitchen table, and during the next hour, as people came and left, there was a smooth exchange of seats to accommodate the latest arrivals. More people entered the house than left it, and in the end the kitchen was full of people sitting and standing wherever there was room for it, discussing the gathering tactics of the day. In addition to family members, the people present were friends of one or both of the sheep owning families. Heidi, a friend and former teacher colleague of Jorunn, had even brought her sister and her
sister’s husband to help, as they were visiting for the weekend. “It is nice to be able to help”, she told me, “and physical exercise is always good, isn’t it?”

When Jorunn arrived, she handed out a pile of photocopied maps to give us all an overview of the area. With the maps as a basis, specific challenging areas were pointed out, ideas were presented, and different theories on what went wrong during last year’s gathering and what could be done differently this year were discussed. A new fence was already put up against the marsh above the upper houses in the village, Jorunn told us, because it had been difficult to cut off the sheep from the marsh the previous year. Hopefully the fence would make it easier this year.

Based on another of last year’s experiences, Jorunn and Tor decided that several people should be located in another challenging area; the plain near the village and close to the fjord. For some reason the sheep had shown a tendency to cut away from the village down towards the fjord, and then move out towards the pastures again. “Two years ago we got the sheep into the village on the fourth attempt. Last year we managed it the third time,” Jorunn said. She and Tor jointly decided that Tor would be the caller of the sheep this time, and thus carry the bucket with grain feed and a bell. The rest of us would then be divided in two groups; those following the animals to make sure they would all join Tor to the village, and those guarding particularly exposed or challenging areas.

Finally it was decided that two men and three young boys should start from the other side of Angsnes and search the area on the northern side of the headland. The rest of us would then start from the village where we would split into smaller groups.

“The Old Norwegian Sheep follow the wind, just like the reindeer” Jorunn told me as we were about to leave Tor’s kitchen, “but today it is calm, so we can’t really use the wind to help us locate them.” She had looked for the sheep in her binoculars on her way along the fjord to Tor’s place, but she had not seen a single animal on the northern side of Angsnes that morning. On the other hand a taxi driver that dropped by, just before we left Tor’s farm, claimed to have seen some animals on the southern side quite early in the morning. Irrespective of the mornings’ absence and presence of observations however, the two sheep owners were sure the sheep would not be far away, as Tor had observed a flock rather close to the village when he looked for them the previous evening.

As we split up in smaller groups, Heidi and I were asked to follow Tor. This meant we were given the task of making sure the sheep, that would hopefully soon come running to their owner and the bucket of grain feed, would follow him back towards the village. Keeping our eyes and ears open for the sight of a sheep or the sound of a sheep bell, we still managed
to keep a conversation going during our walk outwards along the peninsula. Tor told us that almost every week, throughout the whole summer, he or Jorunn goes out to check that the sheep are healthy and well. “On my rounds, I always bring grain feed and this old bell.” Once upon a time the bell belonged to the leading reindeer in a local reindeer herd, we were told. Tor continued to explain that this teaches the sheep to recognise the bell sound. “When I get close to the sheep, ring the bell and call them, they come to get the snacks in the bucket. When I stop ringing, and when the bucket is empty, I can easily leave again”. If he just talks calmly to the sheep while he departs, they will let him go without following him, he explained.

After a total walk of about one hour, we suddenly discovered some sheep in the forest right in front of us. Tor immediately started to ring his bell and call the sheep, and suddenly the forest appeared to be alive. On all sides of us sheep emerged from between the trees, running determinedly towards Tor and his bucket.

Picture 13: Tor and the sheep.

As the sheep gathered around Tor, we could see the men and boys who had started from the northern side of Angsnes approaching us. Tor wanted us to wait for them to get closer before returning to the village with the sheep: “The more people to ensure that the sheep follow me, the better.” It did not take long before we discovered that it would have been advantageous to have more than the seven of us at the back.
At first everything went smoothly. Tor started walking towards the village with the whole herd following him, while we tried to keep not-too-close and not-too-distant from the animals. Could this be the time we managed to get the sheep to the farm on one try? Suddenly, however, a part of the herd decided to leave the rest, heading at top speed for the hill towards the north. We managed to get some of them back to the herd, but a few were too fast for us to catch and disappeared behind a ridge. Some minutes later the same thing happened once more, but this time all the dissenters were caught up with and led back to the others. As we approached the temporary fence close to the marsh above the village, all sheep seemed once again to be under control. Unexpectedly, though, a large part of the herd turned sharply towards the fjord, impossible to stop. I ran as fast as I dared, so as not to stumble down the steep hill, to try to get in front of the sheep as they moved down towards the shore, but I had no chance of getting there in time. As the people that had waited by the shore were also unable to stop the determined sheep, all we could do was to catch our breath and ready ourselves to start all over again.

After yet another failed attempt to bring the sheep home from their pastures, we finally managed to get a flock of approximately 170 animals all the way to Tor’s farm. Pleased and tired, and in the vanishing light of the dusk, we congratulated each other for the achievement, before we were all invited back into Tor’s kitchen for Jorunn’s ‘hunters stew’ and homemade buns.

Once again the kitchen was crowded, but this time we all managed to squeeze in around the table. During the meal different theories about what was done when, and with what kind of consequences, were presented and discussed. We all had our ideas and opinions about what could or should have been done differently, or what would nevertheless have happened no matter what precautions were taken. Everybody was in a cheerful mood, and as people gradually became sated from the warm, tasty meal, a tired bliss spread in the room. Before going our ways, we agreed upon meeting again at approximately 9 a.m. the next day, to gather the remaining sheep from the pastures. “This is the first time we have had to use more than one day to get the animals back for the winter” Jorunn told me on our way out after dinner. “It’s because we get more and more animals and the herd continues to grow bigger” she explained. “Actually I guess we just have to include that in our time plan from now on. With more animals we need to set aside more time for the autumn gathering, I think.”
Different reasons were given for the establishment of Old Norwegian Sheep farms in Unjárva-Nesseby. Among the Sámi farmers, some referred with fondness to the old local sheep they grew up with, regionally called ‘the Sámi sheep’. As this breed disappeared between the 1960s and the 1980s, the *villsau* constitutes an acknowledged replacement. While new to the area, it resembles the traditionally held Sámi sheep breed, and in this way the recently introduced Old Norwegian Sheep can be seen to represent a continuation of the historical small scale farming activity, emphasized as an important element in the traditional Coastal Sámi livelihoods in the area (see chapter 2). Accordingly, this ‘new’ sheep breed may serve to strengthen the ethnic identity of some of the farmers, as their animals come to form a link between Coastal Sámi living in the past and the preferred farming activities of the present.

While the non-Sámi Old Norwegian Sheep farmers in Unjárva-Nesseby were less concerned with a historical link between their present sheep and the former sheep breed of the area, both Sámi and non-Sámi farmers referred to the Old Norwegian Sheep as possessing valuable original instincts, particularly a strong flocking instinct which means they seldom fall prey to predators. Furthermore, the females are found to have few problems during lambing and take good care of their lambs. For Jorunn, a special and personal experience from her childhood formed the basis of her decision to start sheep farming:

*Picture 14: Heading for the village.*
In 2002 one of the local farmers here asked me if I wanted to join in and get some villsauro to
the village. As he gave me a description of their appearance and their temper, I immediately
got a picture in my head and broke out: “That’s gofihtarsávzzat [sheep of the little people]!”
You see, when I was just a girl I once helped my grandmother, áhkku, debarking sallow
branches to use the bark for tanning hide. Suddenly we could hear sheep bells outside the
window, and áhkku said: “Jorunn, come here and have a look.” Outside, between the trees, I
could see an old woman surrounded by sheep with beautiful colours. “That’s gofihtaráhkku,”
my grandmother told me as she looked at me with a smile. I peeked out again and could see
more sheep emerging, coming up from the ground, gathering around the old woman. In the
end there were about ten sheep around her. It was so beautiful to watch! But at the same time I
found it a bit scary, because it was one of those moments when you see something and then it
disappears again. Later on I understood that this moment was a gift from my grandmother.
And then, years and years later, I receive this phone call. And shortly after I have such
beautiful sheep myself! I like to think of them as a gift from the gods…

Due to the expense of farming villsauro Jorunn is in need of supplementary income. In addition
to the income from her husband’s job, she earns extra money from part time teaching in the
school. Jorunn has three young children, and eventually one of them may wish to continue
sheep farming when Jorunn gets older. However, she doesn’t want to put pressure on them,
she told me. “Having these sheep is my dream,” she emphasized, “and I just want to be a
sheep farmer as long as it feels meaningful and right”.

Part of what makes sheep farming meaningful to Jorunn, Tor and other Unjárga-
Nesseby famers, is the way the harvest of local resources and active use of the outfields
nurture a feeling of belonging. For Tor, being able to combine a part time job at the health
centre with sheep farming, as well as other outfield based activities such as fishing and berry
picking, provides him with the kind of life he wants to live, as he said, sharing thoughts with
me during the sheep gathering. Today, Tor’s sheep graze in areas in which he explored,
played, picked berries and went hunting and fishing while he grew up, and so the different
locations he utilizes, moves through or passes at a distance in his outfield activities, evoke
memories and bring to mind stories connected to various specific sites. Some of these
memories and stories are shared, while others are individually held. “Memory is a way of
articulating the relationship between community and landscape, or between the landscape and
the individual,” Nuttall (1992: 57) writes. For Tor, his historical attachment and belonging to
the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields is strengthen by earlier lived experiences as well as stories
connected to present day areas of utilization.
Jorunn did not grow up in Unjárga-Nesseby, but moved here from another Sámi village in Finnmark after she met her husband. For her, the use of the local outfields is not as much connected to personal or generational experiences and stories from earlier times. Instead she finds that by actively taking part in outfield activities and resource use, she develops an attachment to the area that moves it from being foreign to a place in which she feels at home. “As I have become familiar with the pastures of my sheep, learned to know where I can find cloudberries, located good spots for collecting duodji material, found my own ‘thinking stone’ – it all becomes much more ‘mine’, you know. It makes me feel that I belong here.”

Experiencing and knowing the outfields, in their own, personal ways, thus become important elements in the feeling of belonging for both Tor and Jorunn. As they walk the ridges, valleys and forests of the summer pastures of their sheep, they experience the ground, plants, animals, smells and sounds of these outfields in variable weather conditions throughout the season. By paying attention to the wind direction and the weather when seeking their sheep, the farmers know where they can expect to find the sheep. If it is warm and windy, the sheep are most likely to be found on the top of Angsnes, on the ridges, where the wind can cool them down and reduce insect harassment. With an easterly wind, they are expected to be close to the tip of the headland, while a westerly wind would likely move them closer to the village.

As they walk the outfields, the farmers do not only search for their herd. They also check the quality of the pastures, examine the regrowth of birch trees and ground vegetation after the recent years birch larvae outbreaks, and look for cloudberry flowers and unripe berries on the blueberry, mountain cranberry and black crowberry heaths, so as to get an impression of the amount of berries to expect in the autumn. They pay attention to birds of prey, in order to locate remnants of a sheep, should it have died and is being scavenged upon. Being an eager moose hunter, Jorunn also observes tracks and grazing signs from moose, as an indicator of the size of the moose population.

Tor and Jorunn’s relation to their sheep, as well as other animals and plants in the outfields, serve as an illustration of how humans and other organisms generate mutual ecologies, a topic central to research conducted by multispecies ethnographers (see Kirksey and Helmreich 2010). In his investigation of the multispecies interface between humans and monkeys in Bali, Fuentes (2010: 618-619) urges anthropologists to “retain our gaze to include other beings, and their diverse sets of physio-behavioral-ecological realities, as part of our

72 See chapter 8.
questions about humans being with other beings.” For Jorunn and Tor, their activities at Angsnes are not only influenced by the seasons, the weather and the instincts of their sheep, but also by the farmers’ entanglement with a variety of different organisms. Through mutually influencing each other’s lives, Jorunn, Tor and their companion species all take part in the multispecies system of the Angsnes outfields.

Walking the areas regularly, knowing them not only as sheep pasture but also as locations in which other activities takes place, the outfields, with their various plants and animals, become an expansion of the local environment in which Tor and Jorunn feel they belong. As with Gray’s (2003: 233-234) shepherds in the Scottish borders, they “extend the bounds of their homes to include the sheep (…) as well as the topographical and climatic conditions that affect their flocks and their movements.” Other kinds of multi-species engagement and other forms of outfield use further strengthen this feeling of belonging among the farmers.

As presented in chapter 2, domestication of sheep in the Varanger area can be traced back to the 1200s (Odner 1992), while domestication of reindeer may go even further back in time (Nilsen 2009). Reindeer herding, as we know it today, however, evolved in Varanger during the 16-1700s (ibid.). In the next section, ethnographic data from a day of reindeer calf earmarking and reindeer slaughtering form the context for a further discussion of the concept of domestication.

**In the reindeer corral**

In the middle of October, I was invited to take part in the Unjárga-Nesseby district’s gathering of reindeer for division, marking and slaughtering. During this autumn gathering, the reindeer calves born in spring receive their earmarks. Throughout the summer these calves have followed their earmarked mothers without any visible signs on their own bodies indicating whom they belong to. During the autumn gathering this is changed.

I had met Ánde, one of the young reindeer owners, through common acquaintances earlier this autumn, and as he could use an assistant (*su reangalen dreng*), I was given the chance to participate in the marking of the reindeer calves. Since early October, I had been ready and prepared to jump in the car and head for the reindeer enclosure in Ganesnjárga/Krampenes, as soon as I was told that it was time for the reindeer gathering. I
knew I would most likely have to be ready on short notice, as I had heard that right timing calls for immediate action.

The autumn slaughter is normally performed in September, Ánde told me. This year’s late gathering was influenced by several factors. First and foremost, the mobile reindeer slaughter facility was fully occupied in other parts of the county and only ready for use in Ganešnjárga/Krampenes in October. Additionally, a date for the work within the reindeer corral could not be set until the reindeer were gathered from their pastures on the Varanger peninsula, residing in the vicinity of the reindeer enclosure. Furthermore, I learned that the weather always has its say in the timing of the marking and slaughtering of the animals. This year, several days of rain preceding the gathering postponed the activity, as the ground inside the enclosure was too wet and muddy to ensure favourable working conditions. It thus needed time to dry. On occasions such as these, reindeer owners and assistants can only wait for the water to evaporate or the frost and snow to arrive. Finally, I received an SMS from Ánde, telling me that the gathering and division had started.

Detailed directions for where to turn off from the main road ensured I found the right way as no signs marked the location of the reindeer fence. When I arrived, a lot of cars were already parked around or close to the fence, but there were no people to be seen. The physical structure was not a single fence as I had expected it to be. From the outset it was difficult to see the composition of the corral as it was behind a tall wooden railing, but as I got closer I could distinguish several large and small compartments within the outer wall. I walked back and forth along the fence for quite a while, unable to find the entrance. I could clearly hear the sound of running and grumping animals and people talking and sometimes shouting out small commands somewhere behind several layers of wooden fences, but I just could not figure out how to get in.

The lack of other facilities or signs indicating the location of the reindeer fence and how to enter it, led me to understand that this was a place for those who knew it. In contrast to the announcements preceding events like the Finnmarksløpet dog sled race (chapter 5) or market days like Vuonnamárkanat, events founded on the desire to gather people from near and afar and create publicity, clearly there was no such intent with the reindeer gathering, marking and slaughtering. While I knew that the different schools in the area pay visits to the reindeer corral during the autumn gathering, the site was first and foremost a workplace for the reindeer owners and their helpers. To them, any sign or outward publicity would indeed be superfluous to the task at hand.
I continued searching for the entrance, but every time I thought I had found an opening in the fence it just led me to a small enclosure with neither people nor animals. I must have seemed both lost and confused when a woman taking a break from the work discovered me. She told me to pass the trailer accommodating the mobile slaughter and enter the corral on the opposite side from where she found me. As I rounded the trailer, I finally saw an opening in the fence, partly covered by a piece of burlap. I bent underneath it and entered a kind of a corridor that led to a large enclosure to the left and a wooden gate to the right. Through the gaps between the planks in the gate, I could catch a glimpse of running animals. The girdnu, the core, was finally located.

I waited by the gate together with a young boy, the present gatekeeper, watching the interaction between animals and people. Children, granted two weeks off from school in order to take part in the reindeer gathering, youth, adults and elders worked to catch and mark the individual reindeer moving round and between them. Unlike the practice among reindeer herders in the river valleys of Kalix and Torne in Northern Sweden, referred to by Jernsletten (2007), neither lasso nor rod with noose are used to catch the reindeer at Ganešnjárga/Krampenes. As the girdnu is small and dense, it is easy for herders and helpers to reach out for individual animals selected for marking or slaughtering (see also Ravna 2007). During the selection, animals were commonly caught by their antlers but could also be stopped in their circular movement by a steady grip under their mules.

*Picture 15: In the corral.*
Some animals were removed from the *girdnu* into other compartments through different doors in the wall of the fence. When I asked the boy next to me which animals were removed and why, he explained that some of them were animals to be slaughtered, while others were males (*sarvvis*), females without calves (*rotnu*) and young animals (*varit* and *vuonjat*) to be let loose again. Only females with offspring (*alddut*) and their half year old calves (*čearpmat*) were kept and marked in order for their owners to distinguish which calf belonged to which female. With this resolved, the calf would receive its’ owners earmark and finally the owner would decide whether the calf should be slaughtered or not.

Whilst I had watched the activity in the *girdnu* for approximately 10 – 15 minutes, all the selected females and calves were marked and ready to enter the large enclosure I had noticed when I entered the fence. I was told to step aside, and as the gate was opened the group of animals rushed out through the opening. Within few seconds there were only people left in the *girdnu*. While a group of youngsters went to fetch new animals from the grazing enclosure to be brought into the *girdnu*, I was greeted by Ánde and asked to help some of the women and children with the *gilkor*, the numbered leashes of the calves. With a bunch of number leashes on my left arm, from the hand to the elbow, my task would be to provide those who caught a calf with a leash for marking.

A new group of reindeer were chased into the *girdnu* and entered at high speed. The woman next to me told me to stay close to the fence until the animals had settled slightly. As I was not yet familiar with the body language of these animals, partly tame and partly wild, I was more than happy to follow her advice. The gravel on the ground rattled under their hooves and their scent filled the air as the reindeer passed by me at high speed, impressively careful to avoid the people. After a couple of rounds in the *girdnu* the animals seemed to accept the new conditions and slowed down a bit.

As referred to in the previous section on cloudbERRIES, biological and archaeological definitions of domestication commonly represent ideas of human control and cultural specific notions of production and land tenure (see also Ween 2012b, Ingold 2000). But as stated by Ween (2012b: 262, my translation), “too strict definitions take our attention away from the fact that domestication has never been an unproblematic project.” Rather than abandoning the term all together, however, Ween suggests broadening the definition in order for it to include the variability found within human-animal relations.

The Unjárga-Nesseby reindeer herders would consider their, by definition, semi-domesticated animals tame in the sense that they are individually owned, and that the owners
have the ability to determine the herd size through controlled slaughtering (see also Sommerseth 2011). Furthermore their reindeer would be referred to in general as *boazu*, denoting domestic reindeer, while the corresponding Sámi term for wild reindeer is *goddi*. Nevertheless, the reindeer herders have no illusion of being in complete control of their animals. The herders’ control of their animals’ breeding, for example, is clearly constrained given that the reindeer move freely in the terrain also during the mating season. Through selective slaughtering the herders may still indirectly influence the breeding of their reindeer, although to a very limited extent.

Not all remote valleys can be searched during the autumn gathering, and as Ánde told me it is often the case that some animals escape the reindeer fence at Ganešnjárga/Krampenes. Hopefully, these animals will be among the ones gathered in the reindeer fence at the Seida Mountain, when the animals are on their move towards the winter pastures. It nevertheless happens that some animals refuse to leave their summer pastures and spend the following winter at the Varanger Peninsula. This means that a reindeer owner cannot guarantee a complete overview of the herd and the flock structure from year to year.

In the transition from wild reindeer hunting to pastoralism in Varanger, the shift in human-animal relations can be seen to represent continuity rather than a radical break. Sommerseth (2011: 118) sees “the continuity between wild and domestic reindeer as an accumulation of knowledge that resulted from the fact that the Sami hunting and gathering societies also kept tame reindeer on a smaller scale” (see also chapter 2). Furthermore, the remnants of large, stone built corrals for trapping wild reindeer in the interior of the Varanger peninsula are technologically related to the corrals used within current reindeer husbandry (Sámediggi 2013). “In order to manage these complex constructions in relation to the migration patterns of the wild reindeer,” Sommerseth (2011: 115-116) argues, “a precise terminology and knowledge of the reindeer’s ecological cycles and land use had to be established, and much of this knowledge has been transferred into modern reindeer herding.”

As stated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (2002), reindeer herders are dependent upon animals that have maintained their abilities to survive through a capability of finding food all year round, as well as seeking protection from insects and predators. The owner’s assignment has been to assist the reindeer in this, not to take over the tasks. Reindeer owners would therefore lead their herds to areas with rich pasture and good snow conditions,

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73 As there are no wild reindeer left in Northern-Norway, crossbreeding between semi-domesticated and wild reindeer is not a matter of concern for the reindeer herders in Varanger, as it is among reindeer herders in Siberia (Vitebski 2005). Here, “a passing wild herd can sweep away a domestic herd never to be seen again” (ibid.: 25).
and either let the herd spread or provide additional fodder if grazing conditions are uniformly poor (ibid.).

Rather than representing a one way dimensional relation in which the reindeer are “bred in captivity for purposes of economic profit to a human community that maintains complete mastery over its breeding organization of territory and food supply” (Clutton-Brock 1989: 7), the current Varanger reindeer husbandry represents a mutual and dynamic relationship between humans, animals, the weather and the outfields. The history of the area and the link between the previously wild and the current semi-domesticated reindeer and their inter-species co-existence with humans form parts of this present picture as well.

At Ganešnjárga/Krampenes a new round of selecting and marking reindeer began, and in silent cooperation with a woman and a young girl, I did my best to fasten a leash as soon as a calf was caught and a gilkor was needed. Occasionally, some leash carriers had to leave for more leashes outside the girdnu. Those of us with leashes left would then move around the whole girdnu to fasten leashes where needed. In this way the process ran as smoothly and quickly as possible. As the calves were marked with leashes, their mothers were numbered with either marking spray or paper tags fastened in their antlers, with different colours representing different reindeer owners. Their owners or their helpers efficiently selected the females, according to the incision of their earmarks. To my untrained eyes, it was hard to notice the slight differences in the design of the marks, especially as the animals were always on the move. It was obvious, though, that a trained eye could recognize an incision at a distance.

According to Norwegian legislation, all reindeer within the Sámi reindeer herding area must be marked with their owners registered mark by the 31st October, in the same year as the animal is born (Reindriftsloven 2007). In exceptional cases, this time limit may be exceeded, “but under no circumstance beyond 31st of May the following year” (ibid.: § 33). Ravna (2007: 154, my translation) describes reindeer earmarks the following way:

To earmark reindeer is an ancient tradition that probably dates back to the time when the first reindeer were domesticated. The reindeer mark is more than the owner’s signature on the animal. It is in several ways also an identity verification. Similar to material property, the reindeer mark is subjected to allocation and inheritance. Consequently, it may have followed the family for generations. Unlike the transient animals that a parent may transfer to a son or daughter at a particular time, the mark is a far more enduring legacy, similar to a property or the grazing land that is inherited from father or mother to daughters and sons.
The earmark also displays family affiliation. Within the family, the earmarks have particular shared main incisions, in Sámi *mearka-oalli*. Among adjacent siidas, it will be generally known where this main mark belongs. The various family members’ individual mark is derived from the *mearka-oalli*. This means that the main cuts from a parent’s mark is kept, while simultaneously applied a modification, a *rievdadus*. When a family member is given a new earmark, a *rievdadus-mearka*, this happens by agreement with the other members of the family who own the same *mearka-oalli*.

I had totally forgotten about time during the activities in the reindeer fence, but one marking round lasted probably 20 – 30 minutes. After a couple of hours, all animals held within the grazing area had gone through the *girdnu*. It was now time to move on to the next task of observing the females and the calves in the big enclosure, where separated mothers and calves had been given time to find each other again.

After a short food break, Ánde’s aunt provided me with a piece of paper and a pencil, and explained how the observation was to be performed. As I was to focus on Ánde’s reindeer, I should pay attention to the females with red tags on their antlers. By watching them carefully, I should register the number of the individual females and the number on the leash of the calf following each of them. Afterwards, those of us working with Ánde would compare our lists and agree upon the number match between mothers and calves, before reporting a final list to be added to the common sheet for all the reindeer owners.
The *kikling*, looking in binoculars, required full attention in order to sort out the correct numbers of the single animals in the constantly moving herd. People were moving back and forth at different distances to the reindeer, to make the animals move and change posture so that their numbers came into view. From time to time people gathered briefly to compare their lists or to have a chat, but mostly attention was focused on the reindeer. Eventually people had filled out their columns. After Ánde, his father and his aunt and I came together to compare our lists, and agreed on the same count, Ánde left to have the numbers registered on the common sheet. After a couple of hours both reindeer and people could return to the *girdnu* for the next task, the earmarking of the calves.

In 2005, a new addition was made to the regulations on reindeer earmarking, requiring that the ears should not be removed from the skin when reindeer are slaughtered outside slaughterhouses. Furthermore, the skin should be stored in such a way that the ears are not damaged, in order to ensure owner identification (Ministry of Agriculture and Food 2005). The reindeer herding agronomist may give consent to the separation of the ears, only if the skin is intended for purposes that require it (ibid.). The background for this adjustment to the regulations was the industry and the government’s shared desire to reduce the possibility of reindeer theft and strengthen the opportunities for control (NRL 2005).

Based on stories shared with me, I had learned that an unmarked calf may ‘escape’ the category of private property if it is not accompanied by its marked mother, or if it is discovered by someone who takes the lack of earmark as a sign of ‘free access’. Occasionally, unmarked calves in the mountains may be caught and earmarked by other reindeer owners, and animals may intermittently be hunted by people outside the reindeer herding industry.

In the Ganešnjárga/Krampenes, the calves’ first round in the *girdnu* can be seen as a ‘wildening process’ in the sense that the temporary division of the mothers and calves, results in no visible indication as to who is the calves’ rightful owner. However by assigning each mother and calf with a number, a process begins in which the ownership of the calf may be decided upon, should no disputes arise, and as long as both mother and calf are among the larger group of gathered animals. By transforming the animals to numbers, they can be plotted and paired in order that ownership can be established. Thus during the next round in the *girdnu*, the calves are transformed into private property through the permanent marking of their ears.

It was about to get dark as the whole flock of females and their calves were herded back into the grazing field, and the diesel generator was started to provide electricity to the
lamps around the corral. Once again smaller groups of animals were moved into the *girdnu*. This time the females were let back into the big enclosure, while the calves were caught and their number read out. From their seat upon a small extension of the fence, two women with the common list of calf numbers in front of them could see who owned the calf in question. The number, primarily recited in Sámi but sometimes also in Norwegian, was thus followed by the women’s reply where they called out the name of the owner. The numbered leash was removed from the calf, as it was laid down on the ground and held still in order for the owner’s earmark to be cut with a sharp knife. Several of the calves were then sent through the gate that led to the enclosure in front of the slaughter facility, while others were let loose to reunite with their mothers.

Most of the calves were slaughtered following the earmarking. The reason for this was that the reindeer count in the previous year had revealed a too large a population, according to the limit designated by the state. This was revealed to me by Ánde’s father in the car on our way back to Unjárga-Nesseby later that night. Should unmarked calves (*geažotbeallji*) be discovered during the gathering at the *girdnu* at the Seida Mountain later that year, they would be distributed among the different reindeer owners according to the proportion of calves marked earlier in the autumn (see also Ravna 2007).

Talking about reindeer herding in general and today’s activities in particular, I asked Ánde’s father how many reindeer he thought were still to be gathered and divided in the enclosure. “About 5000 animals” he told me. He thought close to 7000 animals had been sorted so far, and in response I reasoned out loud that then they were more than half way done. “Oh no, we are not”, he replied and when I turned to look at him I saw a smile on his face. Although I received my warning upon arrival in Unjárga-Nesseby, I was once again, this time indirectly, reminded that you do not ask a reindeer owner the exact number of his or her animals. Traditionally, a meticulous counting of the reindeer was thought to have a negative impact on the reindeer fortune, *boazolihku/reinlykke* (Oskal 1995). On behalf of the whole siida, Ánde’s father took my blunder with a smile and a vague reply.
**The hunting season**

The Finnmark Act states that residents of Finnmark have a legal right to hunt moose (Finnmarksloven 2005, § 23). From the 25th September and throughout October, the moose hunt constitutes an important activity among several Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants, in particular the men. At the municipality hall, the autumn is divided into a ‘before and after the moose hunt.’ “Rather than thinking in dates we think of what we are doing at different times of the year” one of the employees told me with a laugh, only half seriously. Still, a large proportion of the personnel save part of their vacation for these weeks of autumn, so as to be able to join the moose hunt.

According to my Unjárga-Nesseby informants, the moose population in the area has greatly increased since the first animals appeared in the 1960s. A similar situation is referred to by the Finnmark Estate agency (FeFo) for Finnmark in general, where both moose population and hunting yield has increased in size, from 15 animals killed in the municipality in 1961 to the record of 850 animals in 2012 (FeFo 2012). Unjárga-Nesseby numbers show that a quota of 37 moose was allowed in 1990, and during the hunting season 18 animals were shot. In 2010, 96 moose were allocated to hunters, and 70 had been shot by the end of the season (Slaastad 2012).

“Despite the hunting efforts, the population has increased,” one of the moose hunters, a man in his mid 40s, told me. “But ultimately it seems like the hunters have been helped out by the moth larvae, since it has killed such a large amount of trees.” Karen Anne, another moose hunter in her early 40s, had a different perspective when taking about the recent reduction in number of moose in the municipality:

Several hunters are concerned about the moose population and the moose hunt this year. The quota is radically reduced, from a total of nine animals to only two on the individual hunting terrains. In earlier years, the hunting season has been divided in two, where the team hunting during the first period would be allowed to hunt four animals on their terrain, while the team of the last period would have five. Now there is only one hunting period with a quota of two animals per terrain, so the quota reduction is certainly large.

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74 It is still possible for people outside the county to take part in the hunt if they participate in a local hunting team (FeFo 2012).

75 See also chapter 8.
The woman further told me that a variety of different theories circulated as to why the moose population had shown such a recent decline after all the years of expansion. While some thought it was due to the moth larva outbreaks, others believed it to be caused by the intensive moose hunt over previous years. Still others reasoned that the moose had begun migrating later in the autumn, causing a mismatch between the hunting season and the time the animals are to be found in the area. “I don’t know the reason for this reduction,” Karen Anne said, “but I find it likely that it is caused by a combination of all these explanations.”

In the kindergarten, hunting and gathering is the main theme in čakča. At this time of year, both children and staff take part in the autumnal reindeer slaughter, where they buy meat they freeze and then hang for drying in January. They also pick berries and join some of the local hunters to go moose hunting. When on the moose hunt, the kindergarten manager told me, unloaded rifles are used so that children get the experience of a real hunt. They do not partake in the actual killing of a moose, as the personnel consider that to be a too severe experience: “Det blir i voldsomste laget”. Instead they move around in the moose grazing areas and look at grazing marks, tracks and faeces. This, I was told, provides the basis for good discussions about moose, why people hunt, and population management.

The staff clearly see the advantage of excursions where they are all outdoors, in actual situations, and experience, instead of just talking about a theme in the gathering group (samlingsstund) inside the kindergarten. After such a trip they can discuss their experiences in the gathering group, with the opening line: “Do you remember when we went moose hunting?” In this way the children have a self-experienced event they can link the conversation to, I was told.

While the moose hunt is a social harvesting activity, strengthening the bonds of those participating in the same moose hunt team, as well as a socializing and educational setting utilized in the kindergarten, it is also an activity that leads to conflict. The moose hunters’ use of motorized vehicles in particular cause resentment amongst some co-villagers. The hunters are given dispensations for a certain number of trips with car or ATV (All Terrain Vehicle) to bring equipment to and from their hunting terrain. Some non-hunters suspect that certain hunting teams do not comply with these dispensations.

As the hunt takes place in the autumn, when it often rains and the ground is wet, the motorized vehicles may inflict particularly distinct marks in the terrain. “You should see what it looks like just behind my cabin after last year’s moose hunt,” a woman once said with frustration. “There were moose hunters driving back and forth during the hunting season, and as it rained a lot their tracks became more rutty and muddier every trip. It really doesn’t look
good, and it will take long until these traces have disappeared.” The dissatisfaction with the traces left behind by the moose hunters in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields is however rarely manifested in other ways than through comments like the one above.

Unlike the moose hunt, the autumn ptarmigan hunt is, to a rather high degree, regarded a ‘visitors hunt’ among Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants. It is the moose hunt that most residents have a relationship to, either as practitioners or as family members, or friends of moose hunters. Whether participating or knowing someone who does, most inhabitants are thus in position to receive some moose meat or share hunting stories, or both, by the end of the season.

Skábma – Autumn winter (~ November – December)

When the November darkness sets in, the amount of outdoor activities reduces and coffee visits and indoor activities increase. While some Unjárga-Nesseby residents told me how they tire easily and are in need of more sleep during this time of year, others experience no such difference. Some described ‘a break’ as pleasant, where everything settles down and a calm period can be enjoyed, before another round of energetic activity starts anew.

With the abundance of Christmas markets arranged in various villages in Unjárga-Nesseby and neighbouring municipalities approaching, several of my informants would use the evenings to produce works for sale given the abundant market opportunities. While many gifts are purchased from among the knitwear, skin products, wood craft and jewellery at the Christmas markets, this is also the time of year for trawling shops in order to fulfil Christmas wishes from relatives and friends. Like elsewhere in Norway in November and December, a certain degree of planning is required for gifts to reach their recipients in other parts of the country and abroad before the Christmas holiday begins. With only a few hours of daylight each day, Christmas lights are put up on houses and trees at the end of November or beginning of December, and are commonly allowed to stay on until the darkness lessens throughout the month of February.

The activities presented in this and the previous chapter, have, due to structural judgments pertaining to a seasonal division of a year, become separated from their prolongation, which in most cases involves food procurement (matauk). How food procurement forms an essential part of human-nature relations is often left out in more theoretical accounts on the interconnections of humans and the environment, and Ingold
(2000; 2011), for example, does not include food procurement in his descriptions and theorizations on human habitation in the world. In the next chapter this essential connection between nature-based activities and access to valued food resources will be elucidated. The chapter will further show how the preparation and distribution of food serve as important elements in Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants’ identity and feelings of belonging.
‘Have you experienced how difficult it is to make a distinction between economic activities (næringsaktivitet) and recreational practices (rekreasjon) in the outfields here in Nesseby?’ I was close to half way through my fieldwork when, as a follow up on her initial interest in how my project was proceeding, a local employee at the Sámi parliament asked me this question. This was neither the first nor the last time I was asked this very valid question. The two previous chapters have demonstrated how local identity and a common ‘we’ is tightly connected to, as well as enacted through, practical activities in the Unjárga-Nesseby landscape. It is of little wonder that people wanted to ensure that the visiting anthropologist did not miss out on essential aspects of Unjárga-Nesseby living.

After several years of study, both farther south in Norway and abroad, the woman at the Sámi parliament had returned to Unjárga-Nesseby. This was where she grew up. In her present employment she was often struck by the challenges of making real life fit within the less flexible frames of laws and regulations; “In cases where dispensations for motorized transportation may be given, for example for economic activities, where should the boundary be placed between work and leisure?” Complementing her initial question, she explained that there exists no clear split between work and leisure in Unjárga-Nesseby outfield practices. “A common way to define such a divide is by looking at the tax return, but that does not provide us with the whole picture,” she concluded.

76 Here dispensation refers to applications for an exception to a rule, for example when it comes to driving a snow scooter to a private cabin located outside a regulated cabin area, or going by ATV outside of the common dry land trail.
The woman’s questions and comments reveal the shortcomings of using taxable income as a measure of economically important activities. These reflections also highlight the relevance of so much more than economic gain in peoples’ nature-based activities, resource harvesting and way of living. A parallel to the Unjárga-Nesseby situation is referred to by Riseth et al. (2010) in their report on nature based-activities in Guovdageaidnu-Kautokeino municipality in inner Finnmark (Meahcásteapmi Guovdageainnus/Naturbruk i Kautokeino). The authors draw attention to the low socio-economic statistical score given to the local population (Riseth et al. 2010), whilst also finding that the people generally consider themselves to be economically well off, even if their income is limited. For Riseth and colleagues this is explained by an ability to cope, in Sámi birget. Referring to Helander (2004), the term birget (in Norwegian berges/klare seg) is described as relating to multiple economic initiatives, Sámi combination activities and self-sufficiency (Riseth et al. 2010: 50). In this part of their study, the authors conclude from their findings that “the large utilization of meahcci in terms of time commitment, versatility, participation level and motivation are clear signs of how the utilization of meahcci compensate economically for restricted monetary income” (Riseth et al. 2010: 66-67, my translation).

This conclusion is easy to accept, at least initially. However by paying closer attention to the wording, an underlying premise can be traced where the basis of comparison is drawn from national statistics. This tells us that limited monetary income must be compensated for. Similar to the Guovdageaidnu-Kautokeino situation referred to above, and as presented in chapter 2, the statistical reports of Unjárga-Nesseby municipality paint a picture of a population with a low level of education and a high unemployment rate, especially among the men (Statistics Norway 2008). In addition, mean annual income per inhabitant is far below the national level, with the male population again accounting for the highest deviation from the national average (ibid.). But, as stated by a local historian; “if you look at the actual economic conditions, we are well prepared with food in our freezers” (Nilsen 2003: 29). As in Guovdageaidnu-Kautokeino, harvesting activities in meahcci can thus be seen to compensate a low income also in Unjárga-Nesseby. But it may also be the other way around.

Even if Varanger is known for its long trading traditions, with the earliest traces of bartering dating back to the Mesolithic, approximately 4 500 B.C. (Krogh 2009, see also chapter 4, on meahcci.

77 See also chapter 4, on meahcci.
78 Leif Ole, a retired fisherman, once gave a similar comment: “There has always been a lot we could get from the mountains,” whereupon he mentioned berries, fish in rivers and lakes, and ptarmigans. Reindeer meat was made available for him through reindeer herding acquaintances.
chapter 2), the abundance of natural resources from the land and the fjord have been essential to human livelihoods in the area throughout history. As late as in the 1950s, most inhabitants were self-sufficient with fish, meat and milk products and “[g]roceries were hardly more than a supplement to the already existing nature based household subsistence (naturalhusholdet)” (Karlsen 2009: 45, my translation). The use of money was mainly restricted to buying items such as sugar, flour, coffee, tea, syrup, tobacco and paraffin (ibid.).

Currently, a much larger amount of money is circulatig in the Unjárga-Nesseby municipality than 60 – 70 years ago, but simultaneously the natural resources are still abundant and utilized. Also today, seasonal variations and a flexible local lifestyle facilitate several ways of birget, through various resource uses and different ways of earning money. This is given as a reason why so many people in Unjárga-Nesseby prefer extended holidays rather than higher wages: “It is not to be on vacation, but because there are other things to attend to.” From this point of departure, it seems legitimate to suggest that the harvesting activities in meachhi make a high monetary income superfluous, more than merely serving as a means for compensating low income.

While the previous chapters in this thesis have drawn attention to the multiplicity of seasonal nature practices and harvest activities performed in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields throughout the year, this chapter focuses on the bodily, culinary and social practices closely connected to this harvest. As the following ethnography illustrates, these multiple outfield activities cannot be separated from their prolongation, which in most cases involves matauk, that is, food procurement. Along with a presentation of seasonally influenced food preferences, and how preparation, consumption and sharing of food are activities through which individual and communal identities may be enacted, I describe and discuss various ‘ways of coping’ through circulation of food gifts, in reciprocal processes of providing and receiving a helping hand, and from different ways of gaining additional income. These findings lead to the chapter’s final discussion, questioning commonly taken for granted divides between ‘work and leisure’ and ‘the tame and the wild’.

Seasonal food preferences and ‘local’ meals

The seasonal variations in Unjárga-Nesseby are not only embodied in terms of how people locally experience fluctuating weather patterns, practice outfield activities and sustain a flexible way of living. The seasons also appear embodied in the way they play their part in
people’s food choices, influencing the way these preferences change throughout the year. My field notes include several statements regarding the taste of particular kinds of food at certain times of the year, such as “nothing is like freshly caught cod on a winters day” and “I always long for fresh salmon in the summer.” The freshness of the locally harvested ingredients is exactly what makes up an essential part of this seasonality of food preferences.

Certain kinds of food resources can only be harvested from the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields at specific times of the year. Even if the access to these resources may not be strictly limited to the time of the harvest, they stay fresh only for a short while. To last longer than for relatively immediate consumption, the resources have to be frozen or go through some kind of further refinement, such as salting, smoking, drying or jam making. Most established households in Unjárga-Nesseby have at least one freezer, many have two and some have even three, so as to prolong the timeframe in which the food could be consumed. Berries, and meat from reindeer, moose and sheep, can be kept frozen for up to a year or longer and still be regarded adequately tasty, but I was told that fish like salmon would definitely lose its quality after more than a couple of months in the freezer. While berries and meat can serve as food gifts also after they have been frozen, fish is only given away fresh or refined.

“Now you can tell your parents that you’ve tasted the freshest cod (sprellanes fersk torsk),” Leif Ole, a retired fisherman, told me after he and his wife Ellen had invited me for dinner and the meal was consumed. Earlier that day, in late February, the couple had received cod, liver and roe from their son Olav, one of Unjárga-Nesseby’s professional fishers (yrkesfiskere). Before delivering his catch, he had set aside enough fish for a decent meal for his parents and some additional guests. While we were seated around the kitchen table set for four persons, Ellen told me that she had prepared the cod in the same pot that she used for the roe. “The roe just needs a bit longer to get ready, so I wait a while before I add the fish,”

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79 As referred to in chapter 2, a 40 litre freezer was also among the first things I was offered to borrow after I arrived in Unjárga-Nesseby. This was to provide me with room for more food than the small freezer above the fridge could contain. In this way I got the possibility to thankfully receive the food gifts I was offered during my stay, in addition to freeze some of the fish and berries I harvested myself.

80 I often experienced that people would make more food than they and their pre-invited guests could eat. This was just in case someone would show up during the meal and feel like joining in. Anna illustrated this during a session of ptarmigan slaughtering, joined by pupils at the school. One of the pupils asked how much meat you actually get from a bird, whereupon Anna answered: “If you buy ptarmigan at a nice restaurant, you’ll only get one side of the breast and then a lot of garnish. But I calculate one ptarmigan, or both sides of the breast, to one grown up man. Or maybe a little extra. When I make a ptarmigan meal at home, for me and my husband, I use three ptarmigans. Then we have enough, and if a guest should show up, he or she could be invited for food as well.”
she said. The liver was prepared in a separate casserole, even if it was not absolutely necessary, Ellen explained. “This fish is so fresh that it almost wriggles on the plate,” Leif Ole said with a laugh, whereupon Ellen smilingly agreed. The fish was accompanied with boiled potatoes and Ellen told me that if I wanted to try, I could add liver and roe and pour some of the fish oil from the liver casserole onto the fish.

I found the food delicious, and even enjoyed the cod liver that I initially was afraid I would not like. Instead of the sharp taste I had expected, the liver had a rounded, mild flavour. Just after we had started the meal, the back door into the kitchen was opened and a man entered the room. Leif Ole introduced him as his brother and we greeted before he sat down by the fourth plate at the end of the table. “Few things are better than really fresh cod,” he said as he helped himself to the fish and potatoes, “and if you can’t have it all during dinner, it is really good to fry fish and roe together in a pan in the night. But not liver,” he added. “I have never learned to like liver.”

For dessert, Ellen served us homemade milk soup made of milk, round rice and raisins, sweetened with sugar. As with cod liver, Leif Ole’s brother was not particularly fond of milk soup either, and so he went for the second alternative; store brought raspberry jelly with vanilla sauce. While pouring me a portion of the lukewarm milk soup, Ellen confided in me that her son and daughter in law, living in another part of the country, called her from time to time to get her milk soup recipe. But even with Ellen’s instructions, her daughter in law told her that she never managed to get the soup just as tasty as when Ellen made it herself.

This little story about Ellen’s daughter in law and how she enjoys Ellen’s milk soup may seem trivial but opens up for interesting reflections. First, it was probably not by accident that Ellen told me this story given that her brother in law refused a portion of her homemade soup. By referring to how others greatly valued her milk soup, their approval could compensate for the rejection she experienced by her brother in law. Further, this approval would serve as recognition of Ellen’s role as a good cook, a worthy housewife and, consequently, a respectable woman. From her work in Båtsfjord, on the north coast of the Varanger peninsula, Lien (2001: 99) finds that being “one that provides” is highly important to female dignity and identification among Båtsfjord women. Similar findings are described in Kramvig’s (2005) work from Western Finnmark. Without excluding the importance of food gifts for female identity also in other parts of the world, the giving and receiving of gifts of food seem to be a trait of general regional importance, as well as in the Arctic at large (see e.g. Nuttall 1992, Wenzel 1995, Caulfield 1997, Hovelsrud-Broda 2000, Kalland and Sejersen 2005).
During my master’s fieldwork in Qeqertarsuaq in Greenland, a woman once asked; “you write about our food, don’t you?” before she added: “You know, it means so much to us.” Both women and men in Qeqertarsuaq would commonly use the term ‘Greenlandic food’ to refer to meals based on locally harvested resources, and ‘Greenlandic food’ gifts circulating between relatives and friends were highly valued (Rybråten 2006). This was only partially due to increased food scarcity, caused in part by the shifting migration routes of some sea mammals, new quota restrictions and the steadily declining number of full-time hunters. The highly prized natural resources also represented an important link to the landscape and the history, and hence served to strengthen people’s feeling of belonging (ibid.).

Just before I left Qeqertarsuaq in the summer of 2005, I joined my host family and some of their relatives on an alianaarsaariartut, a ‘pleasant excursion’, which are commonly carried out by Qeqertarsuaq inhabitants throughout the summer months. After a short ride in open skiffs with outboard motors, we reached the island where we would spend the rest of the day. Immediately upon arrival, Gerda, my host mother, and her sister Hansine each started arranging a fireplace. Two almost closed circles of stones were built, just wide enough to support a kettle or a frying pan. The women filled the hollow space inside the circles with pre-picked crowberry heath, brought along in large plastic bags, and once the heath had been ignited their food preparations could start.

Gerda and Hansine provided the rest of us with one meal after the other throughout the day, including halibut, mattrakk (whale skin), meat from seal and musk oxen, and dried narwhale meat. Thanks to the fishing and hunting by their men, these two women could prepare and serve us a variety of their most valued ‘Greenlandic food’. Furthermore, the two fireplaces not only ensured that enough food could be cooked for everyone; it also gave both women the opportunity to reveal their knowledge on ‘Greenlandic food’ preparation in the open. The presence of a variety of resources in the meals strengthened the men’s position as skilled hunters, just as much as the women’s position as family caretakers and providers was highlighted. During this summer’s day, on a small island just outside Qeqertaarsuaq, historical continuity, ethnic identity, gender relations, and the sense of belonging were all present and in different ways sustained, through the meals shared around the fires (Rybråten 2006).

To return to Unjárga-Nesseby, the connection between food provision and female identity appears to be stronger among the older Unjárga-Nesseby women than the younger, and Ellen – being in her 70’s – belongs to the first category. Among people of her age, the process of transforming ingredients into meals is, with few exceptions, a female duty. Through this task, the women express their knowledge and experience connected to food
preparation. The provision of meals for others becomes a personal matter. “Giving food connects women to close relatives through an extremely intense emotional channel; women become identified with the food they offer,” Counihan (1999: 49) writes, referring to her informants in Florence, in the early 1980s’ Italy. 30 years later, parallel conditions can still be recognized both in Qeqertarsuaq and Unjárga-Nesseby. When Ellen’s brother in law rejected the soup that was offered him, even adding that he did not like it, his refusal could be interpreted as a refusal of the knowledge, experience and subjective preferences included in Ellen’s soup making, and thus in the end, as a personal rejection. By noting that only Ellen could make the milk soup adequately, her daughter in law, on the other hand, indirectly stated that Ellen’s family is still in need of her food, and consequently of Ellen herself.

The compliments from her son’s wife may, in addition to highlighting Ellen’s cooking skills and acknowledging her role in providing meals for her family, serve as a reminder of how a meal consists of so much more than the ‘right’ combinations of ingredients from a recipe. When being served Ellen’s milk soup during visits to Unjárga-Nesseby, her daughter in law may not only appreciate the combination of milk, rice, raisins and sugar. The meal might also induce the feeling of being on vacation and recall memories from earlier visits and shared meals. “Taste and smell,” Ben-Ze’ev (2004: 156) reminds us, “are vehicles of remembrance both in practice (…) and in the creation of discourse and image.” Among my informants, particular flavours and smells, especially when experienced in combination with an outfield activity, would commonly evoke recollections about previous experiences or past activities in the landscape. This served to strengthen a sense of Unjárga-Nesseby belonging, as well as individual and shared identity.

As stated by Counihan (1999:7), food studies enable insights into “how human beings mediate their relationship with nature and each other.” By inviting me to share a meal of sprellanes fersk torsk, Ellen and Leif Ole opened their home for me and offered me a dinner based on the best local resource available for them at this time of the year. Serving me the tastiest February meal they could think of was undoubtedly a gesture of great generosity, even if it is not an uncommon way of inclusion. As the cod was caught in the fjord just outside their house, the meal made from the fish can also be seen to strengthen the connection between Leif Ole, Ellen and their surrounding landscape. Furthermore; “eating with others can be interpreted as a way of participating in their place-making practices, since the preparation and consumption of food might, like walking, be constitutive of place” (Pink 2008: 181).
It was not only Ellen that gave of herself through her preparations of the cod meal. To Leif Ole, this meal was much more personal than it would have been if the fish was bought sliced, packed and frozen from the grocery store. Having been freshly caught from the same fjord that had served as Leif Ole’s work place for several decades, the cod can be seen as a symbol of Leif Ole’s personal values and way of life. This may further be supported by the fact that his youngest son chose to become a fisherman, taking over Leif Ole’s vessel when he retired. In addition to being a gift from their son, the cod may serve to strengthen this couple’s values connected to local harvesting activities and the ability to cope (birget). Through the cod meal, a certain relationship to the fjord, and what it means for Ellen and Leif Ole to live their everyday life in this coastal society and its particular landscape, was implicitly expressed.

Ellen and Leif Ole’s continued access to fresh fish, ensured by their son Olav, ensures that only occasionally have they had to pay for fish products at the grocery store. When I was invited for dinner during my stay in Unjárga-Nesseby, I could be served ‘international food’ such as pizza, taco and spaghetti Bolognese, but more commonly people wanted me to taste ‘something from here’. During such meals it was not unusual that my praise of the delicious food I was served was answered by something like “yes, we are really lucky to have so many good natural resources just outside the door”. While this, at least in some occasions, seemed to be a way to move the attention away from the cook, it was also an acknowledgement of what is seen as one of the really important benefits of living in Unjárga-Nesseby; the presence of appreciated food resources. The access to these resources is nevertheless not equally shared among the different inhabitants.

**Distribution of food**

In addition to the seasonal variation in the availability of living resources, there are other aspects influencing peoples’ access to locally harvested food. As already mentioned, not all Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants take part in every nature-based activity in the municipality, and not all harvest the resources available in the outfields and the fjord. Some people may therefore end up with a surplus of a particular resource, while others are in deficit. The following will show how formal distribution, informal distribution and an extensive gift exchange make up an important component in the food circulation system among Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants.
Before I return to food from outfield-harvested resources, I want to make clear that store bought goods currently make up the main food intake among most Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants throughout the year. During weekdays, semi-finished meals may be chosen to reduce the time spent on food preparation, and food products like chicken, pork, sausages, rice, pasta, potatoes and other vegetables will find their way into the shopping cart, just as they do elsewhere in the country. These store bought food products are not the ones people talk about however, and they are not the ones included in enactments of Unjárga-Nesseby as a place where an abundance of natural resources are to be found. Rather they are the ‘non-localized’, general food products against which outfield resources are contrasted.

Store bought goods make up an essential part of the Unjárga-Nesseby formal distribution. Prices are fixed and no personal contacts are needed in order to access the food (see also Lien 1987). In addition to purchases in the Vuonnabahta-Varangerbotn store, or shops in neighbouring municipalities, this formal distribution also applies to meat, lactose reduced products and other foodstuff, as well as wine, beer and spirits, which can be bought for a lower price in Nuorgam, just across the border in Finland.

When it comes to locally harvested or produced food products, a formal distribution may take place during announced sales markets, like the yearly Vuonnamárkanat (see chapter 6). At such markets, products like dried meat, smoked fish, bread, pastries, juice, jam and berries are sold for a set price. Occasionally discounts may be given, but by and large these markets are not locations for bargaining. Except for the advantage of knowing which products are the most popular, in order to get hold of them before they are sold out, no personal contacts are required to get access to the food at these markets.

Within the informal distribution of food products, on the other hand, personal contacts and knowledge regarding the distribution system are crucial for gaining access to the product, whether it is bought with money, given away as a gift or gained through exchange. This kind of distribution covers transactions and exchanges between individuals or through unofficial and less known outlets. Similar to what Lien (1987: 52-53) found in Båtsfjord more than 20

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81 Several Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants have lactose intolerance, as the Sámi population has a higher degree of this intolerance than the Norwegian population in general. Some of my informants told me that due to a high percentage of lactose intolerance in the Finnish population, more lactose reduced products are to be found in Finnish grocery stores than Norwegian ones.

82 This form of distribution does not include locally harvested products, but I nevertheless include it in this chapter as it is undoubtedly a highly important way of getting access to food, also among Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants. Theoretically, this could also be the only form of food access for a few people, even though I never experienced or heard of anyone in such a position.
years ago, the general tendency in Unjárga-Nesseby is for locally harvested or produced food products to be distributed informally.

One example is Berit’s cloudberry sale. During the past years, while still keeping several kilos for her own consumption and for gifts, Berit, the younger sister of Anna, has sold a fair quantity of the cloudberrries she picks to people in the city of Tromsø. News of her berry picking activity have spread to friends of family members living in the town, “and so one person orders 10 kilos, another 20 kilos. People further south find the Finnmark berries particularly good,” Berit explained. “But the berries don’t hold the same quality every year, of course. If it’s been raining a lot, for example… This year the berries were very small”.

Most of Berit’s berry buyers appreciate the opportunity to get hold of this ‘gold of the mountain plains’. It occasionally happens, though, that some do not fully acknowledge the hard work that lies behind the filled berry boxes, and directly or indirectly they tell Berit that her cloudberrries are too expensive. “But first you have to locate the berries, and sometimes you really have to search, when they are not where they are normally found. Then you have to pick them, bring them home, pick them over, and then pack them. Consequently they inevitably have to cost a bit… It’s something else with the strawberries you have in the field just outside your house”. By adding this last sentence, Berit emphasizes the difference between easily accessed garden strawberries and the not so straightforward process of cloudberry picking. Through this comparison, the price of Berit’s cloudberrries becomes legitimised.

Other examples of informal distribution can be found alongside formal distribution in the fisheries and in the reindeer herding industries. As we have already seen, the fishermen occasionally set aside some fish for family and friends before delivering their catch at the fish landing. While it is possible for people to just show up in the harbour when the fishing vessels return with the daily catch, personal fish deliveries are mainly agreed upon in advance. This was exemplified on a cold day in late February, when I decided to go to the harbour to take some pictures in the frosty mist from the fjord. Down at the harbour, I met an elderly man who told me he was waiting for a fisherman to enter the harbour, as this fisherman would bring him some cod. It turned out that the man he waited for was Olav; the son of the elderly man’s nephew, Leif Ole. “I am actually not that fond of fish, I’ve never been,” the man admitted. “And this thing of having fish once a week, or even several times a week; I never do
that.” This day, he would nevertheless make himself some fresh cod, he explained, adding that it was kind of the season for it right now.83

When it comes to reindeer meat, the majority of the meat from the slaughtered animals is sold for further processing and distribution through formal industrial channels. Some carcasses are still kept by the reindeer owner, and from these some meat is given as gifts or as payment to people who have helped the reindeer owner during the gathering and slaughtering process. However without any connections to the reindeer herding industry, the access to reindeer meat is more restricted. “It can be hard to get reindeer meat here if you don’t know anyone with reindeers really well,” Anna said during a reindeer dinner I was invited for in the autumn. She had told me in advance that she would serve something made from reindeer meat, adding that she really likes such meat at this time of the year. She continued to explain that she thought this urge for reindeer meat in the autumn was connected to her childhood, when her parents used to get meat from some reindeer herding friends.

Currently, Anna normally buys reindeer meat in Nuorgam, in an outlet just across the border. Here she finds the assortment and quality of meats to be quite good and she can pick whatever kind of meat she likes from the freezer. When having filet, for example, she always buys it there, she said. While the assortment of reindeer products is smaller in the grocery store in Vuonnabahta-Varangerbotn, they do sell frozen bullion and marrow bones (addamat/margebein), which Anna buys. During the dinner I was invited for, Anna served her husband Iver, her sister Berit and me store brought bullion and reindeer meat together with home grown potatoes from her’s and Iver’s garden.

The Unjárga-Nesseby informal distribution mainly includes resources that are accessed either through a common, shared availability, or through more restricted access, limited by juridical privileges. The first form resembles Lien’s category of ‘distribution of common own production’ (Lien 1987: 52). All Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants who have their own house, which most have, may create a small kitchen garden nearby the house if they want to. In theory, the whole population thus shares the access to homegrown potatoes and carrots. Distribution of cloudberris (as well as other berries from the outfields) would also fit into this form of shared availability. Similarly to fishing in rivers and lakes, all inhabitants in the county of Finnmark are allowed to pick berries on equal terms on common ground (Finnmarksloven 2005). The examples of food distribution related to the primary industries,

83 Again we see this focus on ‘the right timing of the year’. Even if this man told me he did not really like fish, he seemed to feel obliged to have it at least once during the cod season when it is possible to get it freshly caught from the fjord.
on the other hand, represent ‘exclusive own production’, as activities within these industries are related to certain juridical rights (Lien 1987: 52). Whether or not the informal distribution includes resources characterized by shared availability or restricted access, gift exchange plays an important role in in Unjárga-Nesseby.

**Gift exchange**

Gifts, Kramvig (2005:51) writes, referring to her Western Finnmark ethnography, can be seen “as a means of making community become apparent, at the same time as the gift exchanges are parts of complex processes that provide a source of identity for those involved.” Similar to Lien’s (2001) Båtsfjord experiences, a gift exchange in Unjárga-Nesseby does not necessarily presume a favour in return, but requires “an acknowledgement of the other part’s dignity as a provider or as a receiver” (Lien 2001: 97, my translation). During the cod meal described above, through which Ellen and Leif Ole expressed a willingness to include me in an Unjárga-Nesseby commonality, I was relieved to experience I could fully enjoy all parts of the meal. In this way I did not only accept the food I was given, I could also show that I really appreciated taking part in the reciprocal relationship connected to serving and receiving value-laden food.

As with elsewhere in Finnmark (Lien 2001, Kramvig 2005), the gift exchange in Unjárga-Nesseby both provides a sense of community and serves to strengthen individual identity and autonomy. Most Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants are integrated into a gift exchange network, primarily restricted to family members, relatives and friends. As exemplified above, other people may be included as well. A majority of the food gifts circulating in this form of exchange come from harvesting activities in the outfields. This does not exclude homemade bread, cakes or meals made entirely from store bought ingredients, though, and favours and services are included as well. Thus those without the possibility, or interest, in harvesting activities that result from the allocation of local resources have other opportunities for inclusion in these relations of exchange. This corresponds to what Mauss (1954) finds to be an important quality of the gift exchange: Rather than predominantly representing a replacement of objects, the exchange serves to initiate and reinforce social relations.

Through his position as a fisherman, Olav has the possibility to set aside some fish for himself and help family and friends birget by sharing his harvest, just as his father did before retirement (and sometimes still does when joining Olav on board the vessel).
occasionally receiving dinners, other food gifts or, when needed, some kind of help in return for his fish, Olav further gain a confirmed, or even strengthened, position as a fisherman and a provider for his family and friends through the meals they are able to prepare as a result of his generosity.

Mauss (1954: 37) emphasizes how “the obligation to give, to receive and to repay” is included in any gift exchange practice. Such a commitment can be recognized in the Unjárga-Nesseby gift exchange as well. An obligation to give seems to be particularly strong among inhabitants with an abundant access to certain resources, such as Olav’s access to fish. If Olav failed to offer fresh fish to his family and friends, his co-villagers would most likely consider this seriously inadequate.

In the case of cloudberries it is common practice that those able to walk the marshes and pick the berries ensure a part of their harvest is shared with elders who have lost the ability to pick berries on their own. Ingvald, employed at the Municipality Hall but just about to retire, told me that he use to bring cloudberries to one of his elder relatives, now living in the retirement home. “He really brightens up when he receives cloudberries,” Ingvald said and continued: “Now that we all have freezers, it is so easy. You can just freeze the berries in small packages and give away your surplus.”

Mauss’ (1954) ‘obligation to receive’ is also clearly present within Unjárga-Nesseby gift exchange, as food gifts are given to those regarded as in need of the gift or to people considered able to fully appreciate the food they have been offered. To reject a gift would indirectly imply a rejection of the friendship and community involved in the act. Furthermore, such a refusal could be seen as a lack of acknowledgment of the giver as a provider with a particular social identity, as illustrated in the example of Ellen and her milk soup.

‘The obligation to repay’ a received gift (Mauss 1954) can be recognized in the gift exchange of Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants primarily as a delayed, partial commitment, and as shown in chapter 2, baking cakes became a way for me to give something in return from all that was given me during the first part of my stay. As fieldwork proceeded, my reciprocal gift repertoire was extended with dinner invitations and by providing different kinds of help, such as taking part in fixing a fence or by volunteering at various events. While being small contributions, compared to what I was offered, it was nevertheless a way for me to show my thankfulness and gain “a place in the gift exchange system” (Kramvig 2005: 58).

The gift exchange logic recognized by Mauss is however not the only logic behind the giving and receiving of gifts in Unjárga-Nesseby. As stated by Kramvig (2005: 54), gifts are “symbolic expressions of dependence on and recognition of others, even as they provide
opportunities to communicate one’s own independence.” In this way, the gifts become means of communication through which both individual identity and shared community is emphasized. Another way of strengthening the feeling of Unjárga-Nesseby belonging can be found in the Old Norwegian Sheep farmers communication and distribution of their ‘short travelled’ meat.

Enacting local food

In Unjárga-Nesseby conventionally farmed meat is almost exclusively distributed through formal channels. This process is nevertheless accompanied by a less formal distribution of meat from Old Norwegian Sheep (in Sámi dološ sávza, in Norwegian villsau). As referred to in chapter 6, this particular sheep breed was introduced in Unjárga-Nesseby in 2002 (see also Rybråten and Hovelsrud 2010). The Old Norwegian Sheep are smaller, the number of offspring is lower and their slaughter weight less than modern breeds bred for high meat yield. As this makes the Old Norwegian Sheep farms in Unjárga-Nesseby less immediately profitable than conventional sheep farms, the farmers have found alternative means to increase the value of their production.

In 2006, through formal cooperation with the local reindeer slaughter facility, Old Norwegian Sheep lambs were, for the first time, slaughtered within the border of the municipality and informally sold locally, and to a certain extent regionally. “We slaughtered close to hundred animals that year, and all the carcasses we had for sale were sold out. Actually we did not have enough meat to cover the demand, and we had barely even advertised our product,” Jorunn said after the sheep gathering in September 2008 (see chapter 6).

Since the first year of informal sale, the amount of meat, and associated products, has increased. On the web page “Villsau fra Varanger” (Old Norwegian Sheep from Varanger), it is now possible to read the history behind the local Old Norwegian Sheep association (Unjárgga dolos sávza searvi/Nesseby villsaulag) and their increased production. It is most likely a combination of several factors that has contributed to the success of these sheep farmers and their products. Jorunn told me that the Old Norwegian Sheep breed has a versatile grazing pattern, utilizing ‘everything’, including grass, heath, herbs, shrubs, tree bark, leaves

84 In the following, I choose to use the term villsau, as it was the term most commonly used in the distribution context described.
and twigs. From the web page we can read that this grazing pattern gives the meat a mild but rich taste, reminiscent of game, and enables the sheep to utilize other pastures than the ones preferred by other kinds of sheep and livestock (Villsau fra Varanger 2008).

Furthermore, “slaughtering takes place locally and the animals are therefore not exposed to long and stressful transportation. Old Norwegian sheep meat from Unjárga-Nesseby is ‘short-travelled food’. From most farms it is less than 20 km to the slaughter” (ibid., my translation). Short travel distance between farm and slaughter is utilised as an argument for enhanced sheep welfare, the ‘short-travelled’ meat branding becomes an example on “how local foods and their producers are identified as rooted in ideals of social and environmental virtue” (DeSoucey and Téchoueyres 2009: 82). Lesser fuel emissions, due to reduced travel distance, can further be seen as an active stance in the climate change debate by taking action to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases emitted to the atmosphere.

During my stay in Unjárga-Nesseby in 2008, the advertising of villsau meat was still limited, but in contrast to the informal distribution of cloudberries and reindeer meat, it was nevertheless advertised. In other words, there was a clear interest among the villsau farmers that their transactions should reach beyond personal contact. The farmers advertised by means of flyers at the Old Norwegian sheep stand at Vuonnamárkanat in August, as well as a notice on the web page and a few notices in the regional newspapers as the slaughter date approached. No such information was produced prior to the reindeer slaughter.

In the autumn of 2008, as with the two previous years, the demand exceeded the amount of villsau meat the farmers could supply, Jorunn told me. I had been lucky though, and in late September I arrived to pick up and pay for my pre-ordered box with a roughly cut carcass of a lamb from one of the sheep farmers who was parked in the car park outside the grocery store in Vuonnabahta-Varangerbotn. Among the other people that came and went while I received my meat, there were only familiar faces, and I knew most of them to be friends or relatives of one farmer or the other. Informal distribution of the meat through personal contacts thus seemed to be essential to the sales success.

It happened that I was invited for villsau meat also by others than the sheep owners themselves, and then it was always by people who either had a sheep farmer relative or one or several Old Norwegian sheep farming friends. Among relatives there was a higher degree of meat distribution in terms of gifts, but friends could also return from a visit to a sheep farmer with a piece of meat for the freezer. During dinners prepared from villsau meat, the taste of the meat was often compared with meat from ‘ordinary sheep’ and determined to be better. “The taste of sheep is not so strong, it is closer to game” some could say, while others would
comment on the feeling of eating more healthily as they found the *villsau* meat to possess less fat than other sheep breeds. Furthermore, the ethical advantages derived from the local slaughter process would also be highlighted as an argument of the food choice.

While the Old Norwegian sheep farmers emphasize that the local slaughter and sale network will not make them rich, due to the extensive work effort required, they nevertheless see it as an alternative way of adding slightly to their income. Even more importantly, though, this production adds another layer of meaning to the farming activity, Jorunn told me. By involvement in the whole process from when the lambs are born in or close to the barn, through feeding and ultimately to slaughter, and in ensuring that every stage in the process has been done properly, Jorunn experiences a strengthening of the attachment to her home-place, she said. Having cared for her lambs since they were born, checking their wellbeing during the months they spend in the outfields during summer, she is pleased that the sheep do not have to spend their last moments in life on a long and stressful journey to the slaughterhouse.

In addition to the personal feelings Jorunn attaches to her farming activities and the local slaughter process, the close collaboration between the *villsau* farmers produces a common ‘we’ that is further enacted and strengthened through their shared production of ‘clean food from the local outfields’. Production of refined and differentiated products was under development by the Old Norwegian sheep farmers when I left Unjárga-Nesseby at the end of my fieldwork. In 2011, the following products were for sale (Villsau fra Varanger 2011, my translation):

**Whole carcass:** 99 NOK/kg

**Roughly cut carcass**, divided into

- two legs, two shoulders, neck, back,
- saddle and two sides/flanks
- – packed in plastic and delivered in a box: 130 NOK/kg

**Leg of lamb:** 190 NOK/kg

**Pieces of meat/fårikålkjøtt:** 150 NOK/kg

**Salted and dried ribs/pinnekjøtt,**

- cut in serving pieces: 285 NOK/kg

**Salted and dried leg of lamb/fenalår:** 285 NOK/kg

**Flanks (for lamb rolls):** 50 NOK/kg
Below the price list on the web pages is stated: “Our products are for you who value quality, animal welfare, short-travelled food and sustainable food production!” This statement, and the above mentioned processes it refers to, can be linked to the alternative production methods that have emerged as a response to the “scope and speed of industrial agriculture’s globalization and consolidation” (DeSoucey and Téchoueyres 2009: 81). As resources harvested from the Unjárga-Nesseby landscape have always been short-travelled, labelling them ‘short-travelled’ or ‘local’ in a distribution context has previously been regarded a superfluous act. With the production of ‘short-travelled villsau meat’ on the other hand, this has changed, at least within this specific form of food distribution.

In addition to the territorial qualification included in the concept of ‘local food’, DeSoucey and Téchoueyres (2009) find the term to comprise “a polemical and political tool that legitimizes new markets as dynamic social spaces connecting the production and consumption of culture in addition to food” (ibid.:83). In Unjárga-Nesseby, the distribution of Old Norwegian sheep meat is so far limited to a local and, to some extent, regional setting. Still, it serves as a way of strengthening people’s close connection to the outfields. As a new way of birget, the production and sale of ‘local food’ resonates with coping value through the combination of activities and multiple economic initiatives. Furthermore, it becomes a way of enacting Unjárga-Nesseby outwards as a place where people and landscape are closely connected, a place where people manage to create new activities through cooperation, and a place where the local inhabitants, living in the modern world, play their part in providing an alternative to the globalized, industrial mass production of agricultural products.

So far, the ‘local food’ terminology has not spread to the reindeer herders and private berry sellers. While the informal distribution and sale of Old Norwegian sheep meat is also open to people from outside the local network, the informal distribution of reindeer meat is still, like private cloudberry sales, an ‘internal’ process without any form of advertising.

“Actors tend to purify distinct aspects of food (as signifier), claiming a specific trait to be its essence, and hence ignoring other aspects or taking them for granted,” Jacobsen (2004: 63) writes. While the locality of the food is emphasized in the sale of villsau meat, this is regarded a settled fact and thus not highlighted in the distribution of reindeer meat. The new food category established by the “short-travelled local sheep meat” represents a transition that may, or may not, spread to the distribution of both reindeer meat and berries. Another local initiative, and example of a similar but more externally oriented form of transition, can be found in the setting up of a combined café and restaurant in the municipality centre of Vuonnabatta-Varangerbotn.
Boaššu – Highlighting local specificities

“Isn’t it typical that all of us taking part in this trip are from outside the community?” The woman in the front seat turned around to look at us, before partly answering the question herself: “But perhaps people that are not born and raised here better see the local opportunities? When you are from the outside you are not as stuck in thinking that new initiatives will probably not work,” she added. “Or maybe we are just less realistic,” the woman next to me in the back seat added and laughed. A few weeks earlier I had been introduced to the Unjárga-Nesseby cooperation initiative planning a local café and restaurant. Seasonal food and short-travelled food were to be the guiding principles behind the menu, and the main attraction for guests. In being eager to help wherever I could (in order not to default my part in the gift-giving system), and showing an interest in the restaurant initiative, I suddenly found myself on a study trip to a guest house close to Berlevåg, North West on the Varanger Peninsula.

During this trip I was introduced to a very different ‘we’ than the ones I most often met during my fieldwork in Unjárga-Nesseby, where local forms of belonging were highlighted. Here, the focus was on the non-local denominator of the ‘we’. Simultaneously, this ‘outsideness’ was what connected us to Unjárga-Nesseby, as it became a prerequisite to ‘see the possibilities’ and do something good for the community. This motivated Aina, the woman in charge of the Boaššu initiative; “I want to do something for Nesseby. I want to give people a place to meet. As it is now, we don’t have a place to meet in the evening”. Aina had lived in the municipality for more than 20 years and was married to a man from Unjárga-Nesseby. Now her children had grown up she had the possibility to spend time on her own interests, and was actively engaged in communal activities. I first met Aina at a women’s gathering at the local library, and during my fieldwork year we continued to meet in several different settings. In winter, we often stopped for a chat when we met on the ski trail, and whenever a cultural happening took place throughout the year I could be sure Aina would be there.

“I think of Boaššu more as a community development project than a commercial way of gaining big money,” Aina told me when presenting the Boaššu idea to me. With her background in economics, she knew there would be small profit from a restaurant business in a small community, especially in its initial phase. However with 40 local shareholders,
comprising the Boaššu Corporation, Aina hoped that most of these would have a sense of ownership to the place and thus feel a certain degree of responsibility for it. “Our idea is that we will draw on the local resources we have here in Nesseby. Among the shareholders are reindeer owners, fishermen and farmers, and our concept emphasises local food on the menu. Short-travelled food is trendy, and that is spot on for our wish of a local focus.”

While the Boaššu project-working group agreed the location of the restaurant was good, just by the roundabout connecting all the main roads in eastern Finnmark, they saw a challenge in persuading people to stop. In addition to good signage, a clear profile was seen as a necessity to gain a decent customer base. “We want a yearly calendar that follows the seasons, both when it comes to the food that is served and accessories like napkins. In February we’ll serve fresh cod with liver and roe, in September we’ll have fár i kål, and so on. And we want to include the coastal Sámi and let the room reflect that this is a coastal Sámi municipality,” Aina told me. The working group had agreed to keep the room bright, with big windows in the corner facing the museum and the Varanger fjord. There would also be a wood-burning stove to add to the feel of the place. They planned to announce the different kinds of activities they would be arranging or housing, such as a literary evening, a Russian evening or a Philippine evening, in the regional newspapers. Again, local resources would be utilized, Aina said, adding that such events would further demonstrate the diversity (mangfoldet) represented within the borders of the municipality.

Although opened just opposite the roadside restaurant Varangerkroa, Boaššu was not perceived to be in direct competition with this well-established tavern. “While they serve food typical for roadside taverns, we’ll have our local food profile. And while they close in the afternoon we’ll provide a meeting place in the evening as well.” Aina thus thought the clientele of the two restaurants would overlap only to a limited degree.

Whilst in Berlevåg, the ideas presented by the Boaššu team were commented upon by the owner of the guesthouse we were visiting. During our tour of the guest rooms, conference venue and dining room she forewarned us that starting something new is hard work for small money. She recommended sticking to the ‘less is more’ rule and to provide the guests with only a small – but good – menu. “And then you’ll need a general manager (daglig leder) who is willing to work around the clock,” she said.

The opening of Boaššu was postponed till after I left Unjárga-Nesseby, but by summer 2010 the restaurant was up and running. On the tourism portal for the Varanger area, Boaššu

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85 A kind of stew with sheep meat and cabbage.
was described the following way: “Boaššu is a restaurant situated in Varangerbotn. The meals are based on local resources like Varanger lamb, reindeer and seafood. Boaššu changes the menu according to the seasons to provide a wide range of products harvested from the areas natural resources” (Varanger.com 2012b, my translation).

The Boaššu initiative can be seen to represent what Lien terms “the transformative potential of globalising processes” (Lien 2003: 101). Based on her Båtsfjord ethnography, the author analyses three different cases that all concern “the investment of physical spaces with certain meanings and functions, and their social implications” (ibid.: 108). By paying attention to the shifting boundaries that emerge during firstly; the establishment of a new airport, secondly; the adaptation to national and international trade regulations in the local ‘fiskebruk’,86 and thirdly; a meeting on future utilization of the Båtsfjord physical environment, Lien shows how global connections can serve to constitute different localities.

In the Boaššu case, like with the Old Norwegian sheep meat distribution referred to above, certain local specificities are highlighted in order to accentuate a unique sense of locality. The enactment of such a ‘clear local profile’ is nevertheless not a local phenomenon detached from transnational processes. Rather, short-travelled food is trendy, as Aina said. The choice of the Boaššu profile thus fits within a larger picture of present day food preferences spanning, if not the whole world, at least the western part of it. Referring to the emergence of ‘local food’ in the United States and France, DeSoucey and Téchoueyres (2009) finds that even if there are variations in how certain foods gain definitional and categorical properties, there is an expanding social desire to provide purer, safer and healthier food, through “production methods […] that serve to contrast with the work of global food conglomerates (ibid.: 81).” The meanings and functions invested in Boaššu can be seen as a way of enacting a certain Unjárga-Nesseby locality through transnational standards for what is regarded healthy food, enlightened consumer demand in a modern, appealing restaurant locale.

Boaššu operated for roughly nine months. I was told that local as well as passing visitors praised both the interior and the food. Unfortunately however, the expenses exceeded the income, and eventually the business was forced to close down. Once again the only

86 “Fiskebruk” is the name of the premises where fish is brought ashore and processed into frozen products for domestic sale and export” (Lien 2003:109).

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alternative to having dinner in peoples’ homes would be to share a meal at the roadside restaurant Varangerkroa.  

**Changing food habits**

Food preferences are fluid and changeable, and even if food may play an important role in the identity formation of both persons and groups, “diets, recipes, and cuisines are in a constant state of flux” (Wilk 1999: 244). Food habits may change due to several factors such as exposure to new influences or experimentation. In addition, a shift in access to different resources may lead to changing food habits, as shown in the section on Old Norwegian sheep meat. Another example of a shift in resource access, and one that people in Unjárga-Nesseby often referred to, was when the red king crab (*Paralithodes camtschaticus*) entered the Varanger fjord in the early 1990s. The history of the introduction (or invasion, some would rather say) of this species to the Unjárga-Nesseby fisheries is an example of how a species can be perceived initially as a problem and later as a resource, from being non-food to a valued food source.

The first time I visited Ellen and Leif Ole we had coffee and Ellen’s homemade *lefse*. Leif Ole suddenly left the living room to reappear with a pile of pictures. “This is from the first years of the crab invasion,” Leif Ole said, handing me some pictures from the harbour showing fish nets full of red king crabs. “The crabs were so entangled in the nets that we had no chance of removing them and saving the nets. The only parts we could keep were the upper and lower lines. We were really in great despair,” Leif Ole explained, before he continued: “Now, on the other hand, we know which locations the crabs prefer and so we can avoid them. Furthermore we can earn money from them now. Once I earned 17 000 [NOK] in three weeks of crab fisheries. Then it is easy to forget how angry we were at it [the crab] in the beginning.”

Ellen asked me if I had ever tasted the red king crab, which at that time I had not. “You have to know how to eat them,” she told me, and explained how she initially did not have a clue how to prepare them. However, once she had seen and heard what others did when preparing for a crab meal, she told herself that she would probably be able to make a

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87 An Italian restaurant later opened in Boaššu’s old premises (as mentioned in chapter 2). It is still operating.

88 A thin kind of pancake served folded with butter, sugar and cinnamon.
king crab dinner herself, if she only gave it a try. Acquiring the taste for king crab was a bigger challenge: “In the beginning I could not eat them. I had problems swallowing the crabmeat. The taste and the consistency were so different.” Once, though, she decided to make a crab meal for her mother, and when they sat down to eat her mother found the crabs really tasty. This made Ellen try the king crab one more time, and at that point she actually liked it. But she needs the crabmeat to be cold when she eats it. “Some probably like it warm, but we prefer it cold. With salad. And white bread.”

During another visit, Ellen told me that Leif Ole used to bring home some reindeer blood earlier on, when they gathered the animals on the Seida Mountain, but that he seldom does so anymore. Now, when Ellen feels like making the traditional gumppus (similar to meat balls but made from reindeer blood and rye flour), or other blood products like sausages or pancakes, she makes it from cow blood. She nevertheless finds the taste from reindeer blood to be the best, she told me.

“The symbolic association of foods with other attributes is integral to the definition of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ food” (Lupton 1996: 27), writes. Local reindeer meat, as well as food made from reindeer blood, is seen to be closely connected to the clean, free and healthy landscape in which the reindeer, their owners and other local consumers live, while harvested seagull eggs may be about to lose their traditional symbolic value. “I don’t eat seagull eggs now that I know all things seagulls like to consume. I used to eat them earlier on, but nowadays there is so much pollution,” Iver, Anna’s husband, told me during the egg harvest season in spring. “Eggs from the common eider (ea),” on the other hand, taste really good. But it is also a much more selective feeder and only eats shells and things like that. But now it’s protected, so you can’t eat eggs from it anymore,” Iver concluded.

The different examples above represent changes in food habits that can be divided into three main categories of change: 1) access to new resources, 2) reduced access to resources, and 3) continued resource access, but a change in attitude regarding the resource in question.

The king crab is an example of the first category. Following changes in the fisheries regulations, in response to the spread of king crab into the Varanger fjord, the species has gone from being nothing but a pest to (also) becoming a delicacy. The second case is

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89 Somateria mollissima. In Sámi hâvda and Norwegian ærfugl. Along the coast of northern Norway, however, the bird is mainly called ea.

90 These categories are not totally exclusive, though. As shown in chapter 5, the king crab it still highly distained when it enters the fishing nets during the season of cod fisheries, for example.
The third category encompasses the example of Iver’s changed attitude towards eggs from seagulls. While his access to seagull eggs remains unchanged, he does not regard a continued consumption to be healthy, as he once thought it to be. The eggs, that once had their place as an important seasonal resource, are no longer seen as representational of the healthy local landscape they once symbolized. Rather, they can be seen to imbue negative influences from outside the local community, here exemplified by transported contaminants. The still valued common eider eggs, on the other hand, are no longer accessible due to national natural management regimes. Iver agreed that in this case the protection of the common eider was a necessary act in order to maintain a viable population. As we shall see, there are other cases where Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants find bureaucratic regulations to be incompatible with the local reality.

**Combination activities, matauk and the question of domestication**

In the previous sections of this chapter we have seen how the preparation and circulation of local resource based foods have important identity aspects, and how such circulation processes facilitate a flexible way of living and reduce the necessity of high economic revenues. In most Unjárga-Nesseby households that are connected to the primary industries more than one income is however needed. Not only is this to ensure that all expenses are met, there is also, as we have already seen, a value (as well as a kind of resilience) incorporated in self-sufficiency and combination of activities. For fishermen, sheep farmers and reindeer herders a wage earning spouse, and/or additional income from alternative activities, such as carpentry, teaching or fishing (for those in the animal husbandries) enables a certain degree of livelihood flexibility.

To maintain several jobs can be challenging, but this might have less to do with time or logistical constraints and more to do with policy restrictions (Rybråten and Hovelsrud 2010). One sheep farmer put it this way:

> I used to go fishing on the fjord in the wintertime, together with another sheep farmer. We only had a small boat, but still caught decent amounts of cod. Now I’m left out of the fishermen census because, according to the new rules, I earn too much from non-fishing...
work. I still work some other places than on the farm, but less now than earlier on, since the farm has grown and most of the investments are done. It is an articulated goal in the Norwegian agricultural policy that a farm should be self-supported. But I don’t mind working outside the farm as well. We’ve been used to that here, over the years.

The way it is experienced in this example, political regulations emphasizing industry efficiency and productivity diminish an important source of flexibility valued by the farmer. During periods when there is less to do on the farm, fishing can constitute a possible additional income, or at least so it did when the farmer could still sell the bulk part of his catch. Furthermore, the example illustrates what is locally felt as an artificial categorization of activities and irrelevant divide between work and leisure.

Similar experiences can be recognized in the importance of the cloudberry harvest for both personal use and for sale. “The cloudberry is so important to us,” Juhan, a retired carpenter in his early 80’s, told me during a conversation about his earlier and present use of the outfields. He continued:

They don’t understand this in the south [of Norway], but it is the best berry we’ve got. And you don’t have a lot of time from when it ripens to when it freezes, so when it is ripe all is just about getting up in the mountain to pick before the frost takes it!91

This statement shows how the seasonality of the berries provides the berry pickers with a limited time frame in which the berries can be harvested. Together with Berit’s description of a cloudberry harvest where she, after hours in the marsh, wished for someone to show up and help her with the workload (see chapter 6), these examples indicates an urge for harvesting the rich but perishable resources of the outfields. A third example is from a reindeer herder, one of Ánde’s uncles, who described a related experience the following way:

I find it impossible to walk in the mountains just to walk, like my friend [a doctor from further south in Norway] enjoys so much. Last year he managed to convince me to join him on a mountain tour, but it wasn’t only that his aim was to reach every peak, he even almost ran as he climbed them. After the first day of the trip I had learned, and the next day I picked cloudberraries instead. And he ran up the selected summit of the day. I have to pick berries or fish or do something when I am in the mountains like that. This year my friend contacted me

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91 In original: “Man har ikke lang tid på sæ fra den blir moden til den fryser, så når den e moden e det bare om å komme sæ på fjellet og få plukka før frosten tar den”.

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again, but this time I told him that I don’t have time to join his mountain running. But I said that he is always welcome to come here and help.

The reindeer herder’s final comment, that his friend would always be welcome to come visiting and give a helping hand, is yet another illustration of the pressing need to harvest the seasonally available resources that could, or would, otherwise go to waste.

The examples above show how a bureaucratic divide between work and leisure fits poorly with the outfield experiences of these Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants. While the harvesting activities constitute matauk (food procurement) or ‘work to be done’, they are simultaneously conducted in the holidays, in certain periods of the year or at times in the day when ‘ordinary work’ is completed or put on hold. “It is hard to describe,” a young politician said when she wanted to tell me about peoples’ need to use the local outfields. “It is not an economic necessity anymore, but still it is more than recreation. It is something else and something more than going out to get peace of mind, even if that is also a part of it…” And so birget can perhaps best be described as something in-between work and leisure; sometimes more or less the one or the other, but never totally either or. Such a split is nevertheless the basis for evaluating whether or not motorized vehicles can be used in outfield areas by inhabitants of the Unjárga-Nesseby municipality.

According to the Law on motorized transport in outfield and waterways (Lov om motorferdsel i utmark og vassdrag) from 1977, no motorized activities are allowed in the outfields, except from a few tasks related particularly to police-, ambulance- and rescue services and natural management inspections. Further exception is given to “necessary transportation of persons and goods to and from permanent settlements and in agriculture-, forestry- and reindeer herding industries. Hunting, trapping, fishing and berry harvesting are not considered industries in this context” (Lov om motorferdsel i utmark og vassdrag92 1977: § 4 c, my translation). Through the law’s sixth paragraph, municipalities are nevertheless given the authority to allow exceptions to the rule for certain activities in cases where “exceptional reasons exist” (ibid.). Consequently, there is a link at the home page of Unjárga-Nesseby municipality leading directly to an application form for ‘dispensation from the law on motorized transport in outfields’.93 Here, you can apply for dispensation for ‘driving in connection with outfield industries for local residents’ (kjøring i utmarksnæring for

92 In English: Law on motorized transportation in outfields and watercourses.

93 In Norwegian: Søknadskjema om dispensasjon fra lov om motorferdsel i utmark.
fastboende), as long as you are able to argue that your outfield harvest is a form of industrial activity.⁹⁴

For most inhabitants, achieving dispensation for motorized transport in the outfields is not an important cause of concern. To some, though, it has become a matter of principle. As written by a local historian in the report ‘The Varanger peninsula national park and local Sámi interests’, many people in Unjárga-Nesseby from the 1970s and onwards, saw an acquisition of some kind of vehicle for transportation to the outfields as a “logical, fair and necessary development, seen in relation to the hard work they had been through regarding outfield harvesting and to social development in general, where technical innovations allowed for physical relief” (Nilsen 2003: 27, my translation). Among my informants were those that found the national outfield regulations to be an example of the demonstration of unreasonable power and also those that called for even more rigorous vehicle restriction. Nevertheless, common to both sides was a wish to sustain harvesting activities in the outfields.

In her book about tradition and modernity in the Aleut fishing village of King Cove, Alaska, Reedy-Maschner (2010: 241-242) finds fishing to represent “a franchise that allows the Aleut to maintain individual identity, social relationships, and collective identity.” A similar parallel can be drawn when it comes to harvesting activities or practical use of the outfields in Unjárga-Nesseby. In addition, another factor contributes to this picture; food made from locally harvested resources. Consumption of such food can be used to enact Unjárga-Nesseby as a place where good resources are to be found (as long as you have the knowledge of how to access them and are able to make the harvesting effort). Through interaction with these resources, in the harvesting activity as well as the preparation, consumption and exchange of goods, individual and collective identities, and social relationships, can be reinforced.

From her study in Normandy, Okely (2001: 109) writes: “The taste and the consumption of home-grown produce carries with it symbolic associations of person and place.” While not ‘home-grown’, the same is the case with self-harvested products in Unjárga-Nesseby. In addition, as with the distinction between work and leisure, the difference between tame and wild is also not afforded a definite divide. Fluid degrees of domestication in Unjárga-Nesseby are, amongst others, exemplified through the cloudberry harvest, the reindeer herding industry and the Old Norwegian sheep farming.

⁹⁴There are also a few other categories for applying for such a dispensation, including transportation for people with disabilities, transportation of equipment to or from a cabin, transportation of wood or transportation related to other special needs to be described (www.nesseby.kommune.no).
Cassidy (2007: 11) finds domestication to be best viewed as “an ongoing relationship between people, animals, plants, and the environment.” She continues:

This relationship may be exploitative or mutual, intentional, or serendipitous, it does not preclude reversals, and although it may appear to go through distinct phases, (…) one tendency does not replace another but merely comes to the fore under particular sets of circumstances that emerge from a combination of social and environmental factors (ibid.: 11-12).

By following Cassidy, domestication is not a straightforward one-way process through which humans exercise control over other species. Instead, the concept comprises complex processes of mutual influence between humans, animals, plants and the landscape. In order to better understand the concept of domestication, Russell (2007: 40) suggests examinations of “the specific practices used to create domestication or wildness.”

While people in Unjárga-Nesseby consider cloudberries to be wild in the sense that humans do not plant them, it is possible to trace a certain degree of domestication in peoples’ experience of having their ‘own’ cloudberry marshes. When full of berries, the ‘owner’ of the marsh feels obliged to harvest the produce, just like farmers do when their yield has ripened. In the example of Berit in chapter 6, she preferred someone else to help her harvest ‘her own’ marsh, rather than risking valuable food to go to waste.

In the reindeer herding industry, as shown in chapter 6, the animals are considered tame, in the sense that humans own them, even if only limited control is exercised when it comes to the animals feeding, movement and reproduction. An unmarked calf is in principle only a certain person’s property so long as its mother is recognized as belonging to that person’s herd. Unmarked calves that do not follow their mothers, or are not respected as some other herder’s property, may be caught and earmarked by other herd owners. By first ‘wildening’ the calf, it is thus possible to ‘re-domesticate’ it through a new ownership relation.

When it comes to the Old Norwegian sheep farming in Unjárga-Nesseby, neither sheep nor outfields can be categorized as being either totally tame or totally wild. Instead they are somewhere in-between. The Old Norwegian sheep remain beyond fenced land for the whole summer season. This means that for close to half the year, the sheep live their lives away from the farms and thus are less subject to daily human contact. At the same time, the sheep are still, to a greater or lesser degree, looked after while on pasture. Even when they are not attended to, the sheep are present in the farmers’ minds, as the summer months are used to
secure the animals’ winter fodder. As we have seen, cloudberries are also a source of concern and thought of outside the period of harvesting activity itself, as precipitation, drought, wind direction and temperature, are evaluated for their effect upon the ripening of the berries. Reading the weather and evaluating specific situations with the animals’ wellbeing in mind, is of course also a part of what occupies the mind of a reindeer herder, even when away from his or her flock.

Similar to the situation of sheep farmers in the Scottish Border (Gray 2003), both outfields and the Old Norwegian sheep living in them, can be seen as less domesticated by human intervention and control, than cultivated land and sheep bred for high meat yield. In this way, “their significance to sheep farming people is not confined to meanings derived from rational use and efficiency in terms of producing commodities for the capitalist market. Hill lambs are less commodities than they are symbols of hill sheep people and their way of life” (ibid.: 230). This is also true for the Old Norwegian sheep farmers in Unjárga-Nesseby. Economic gain is not the main reason for keeping this sheep breed. For several farmers the income does not even exceed the expense of keeping the sheep. Instead, the sheep represent a meaningful way of utilizing local resources in the outfields. Furthermore, they strengthen the farmers feeling of belonging, as both the areas they utilize and their active engagement in the outfields increase as a result of their outfield oriented farming activities.

The three local domestication processes referred to above not only serve as examples of “the multiplicity of relations included under the rubric of domestication” (Russell 2007: 27), or using the words of Lien and Law (2011:81): “Enacting the distinction between the realm of domestication and the realm of non-domesticates is always uncertain. It is always practical. And, (...) it comes in many forms: it is multiple.” These processes also link the floating division between wild and tame to the just as fluid split of work and leisure. When the berry pickers postpone their summer vacation until the point when berries ripen, is the following harvesting activity recreation or work? When the farming of sheep brings further meaning to their Unjárga-Nesseby way of living, despite achieving hardly any money from their activity, is it a job or a hobby? When a reindeer herder is in the mountains, is she at work when she attends the herd, but not when she goes fishing in a nearby lake? What difference does it make? In the processes of carrying out practical activities in the outfields among my Unjárga-Nesseby informants, these divides appear irrelevant.

As shown in chapter 4, the Unjárga-Nesseby meahcci is where resources are found, and where harvesting take place. What is important locally, is the ability to maintain varied (and from time to time changing) harvesting activities in the outfields, because it enables a
flexible way of life, through matauk and the ability to birget, and because it contributes to social interaction through food gifts and the sharing of meals, based on locally harvested resources. Both the harvesting activities and their following social significance, made possible through mutually constitutive relations between animals, plants, humans and landscape, appear highly important to peoples’ local identity management and sense of belonging. How changes in the outfields, and natural resources, are experienced and acted upon, is the theme of the next chapter.
When it comes to climate change… I don’t really know what to believe.” Hans, a reindeer herder in his early fifties, had just told me that the migration of the reindeer herd from winter to summer pastures occurred late that year, when he introduced the topic of climate change to our conversation. He continued: “I think a lot is created by the media. There are variations from year to year anyhow. I don’t think I’ve noticed any changes here that can be ascribed to climate change. But there’s a lot of talk about lauvmakken (the moth larva)$^{95}$ in that regard, and there is no doubt the winters have become warmer. There were moth larvae outbreaks earlier on as well, I remember that, but I can’t recall them having been as bad as these recent ones.”

From 2002 through to the summer of 2007, enormous amounts of larvae from autumnal moth (Epirrita autumnata) and winter moth (Operophtera brumata) fed on and eventually killed vast areas of birch forest in Finnmark County. These moth larvae outbreaks were frequently described to me during my fieldwork in Unjárga-Nesseby in 2008. The outbreaks were discussed locally, and in the regional newspapers, and causes and effects were investigated by natural and social scientists. The moth larvae outbreaks accompanied a period of nationwide concern about anthropogenic climate change, and seemed the most obvious natural phenomena in Unjárga-Nesseby that could possibly be linked to global warming. Residents as well as scientists, politicians and the media made the assertion of a correlation,
but to different degrees. In the following, I want to demonstrate how such a tiny insect like the moth larva can play a role in the generation of different realities.

The opening quote from the reindeer herder above illustrates the types of linkages commonly communicated by Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants following the end of the moth larvae outbreaks. As we shall see, in communications such as these, the focus of discussion moved back and forth between specific linkages and causal relations in the outfields, and more general connections with reference to a global scale. In addition, the quote from the reindeer herder captures the essence of this chapter, where the moth larvae serve as a point of departure in order to investigate the fluidity of knowledge and the linkages between the particular and the abstract, the way they unfold in a context of climate change related debates.

Inspired by recent anthropological studies on climate change and perspectives from material semiotics, as well as Helmreich’s (2009) ‘athwart theory’, Hastrup’s (2011) ‘lateral approach to knowledge-making’ and Boholm and Corvellec’s (2011) ‘relational theory of risk’, I show how the different moth larvae theorizations included in this chapter represent an ontological multiplicity that intersects and forms parts of a shared world that is always in the making.

The empirical data and theoretical discussions presented in the preceding parts of the thesis have primarily been related to the near and practical interactions of Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants and their home-place outfields. For the first part of this chapter this focus is continued, through an introduction to the experience-near aspects of moth larvae outbreaks, where the larvae form multispecies relationships with other animals as well as plants and humans in the Unjárga-Nesseby landscape. The moth larvae are not only articulated as particularities on the ground, though, and in the second half of the chapter we follow the moth larva as it is simultaneously involved in more general and abstract connections through practices linking moth larvae outbreaks and global warming.

Weather and climate, particularities and abstractions

Among meteorological scientists, short-term weather events are distinguished from long-term climate patterns, a distinction that involves a clear temporal dimension (Strauss and Orlove 2003, see also Hastrup 2008). This is exemplified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change96, which defines climate change as “any change in climate over time, whether due to

96 “The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established by the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme in 1988 with the mandate to provide the world
natural variability or as a result of human activity” (IPCC 2007a: 6, emphasis added). As defined by the World Meteorological Organization, the classical period for averaging meteorological measurements of climate ‘over time’ is 30 years (WMO 2012, see also Hulme et al. 2008). IPCC further notes that their characterization of climate change differs from the one established in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, “where climate change refers to a change of climate that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and that is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods” (IPCC 2007a: 6, original emphasis). Brace and Geoghegan (2011: 285) argue that these differing definitions lie at the heart of the ambiguities surrounding climate change, as they recognize the term to correspond to “simultaneously a reality, an agenda, a problem and a context.”

As stated by Heymann (2010: 581), the understanding of the term climate has changed considerably in recent history. From a meteorological interest in standardized, long-term weather recording in the 19th century, where climate was considered a local characteristic, climatological investigations evolved to incorporate all atmospheric phenomena. This classical climatology still represented a rather geographical science, Heymann writes, as it emphasized “the stability of climate over time and its variability with respect to geographical location” (ibid.: 588). From the second half to the end of the twentieth century, modern climate research, employing computer-based General Circulation Models (GCMs), understood climate in a fundamentally different way:

First, climate was not any more conceived as stable, but as changing in time. Interest consequently shifted from the geographical distribution of climates to changes in climate in time. Second, the term climate lost its immediate conjunction to a certain location. Climate became global, a kind of a world climate. (…) Third, temperature, particularly global average temperature, became the key parameter in climate research” (Heymann 2010: 591).

The entanglement of weather, including temperature, and climate, as currently recognized by IPCC, is presented in the fourth assessment report (AR4) on The Physical Science Basis in the following way: “Climate is generally defined as average weather, and as such, climate change and weather are intertwined. Observations can show that there have been changes in weather, and it is the statistics of changes in weather over time that identify climate change” (IPCC 2007c: 96). Still, it is not a statistical average that people relate to in community with the most up-to-date and comprehensive scientific, technical and socio-economic information about climate change” (IPCC 2007b: vii).
everyday activities, and to most people weather is what you personally experience, live in and relate to in practice, while climate change represent a rather abstract idea (see also Nuttall 2009, Hulme et al. 2009, Boholm 2003, Ingold and Kurttila 2000). In the words of Hastrup, “the concepts of climate and climate change designate an averaged record over time of variation and seasonality and are thus by necessity somehow abstracted from immediate experience of natural conditions in any given location” (2008: 139, original emphasis).

In addition to the abstractions and generalizations included in the notion of climate change, the temporality incorporated in the concept is one of linearity. In referring to the length of meteorological phenomena as linear temporality, as opposed to a cyclic one, this more directly supports the determination of unprecedented, irreversible change. Previous chapters have shown how climate to a large extent is conjoined with weather events when it comes to peoples’ practical activities in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields. The temporality of these seasonal activities in the weather-world (Ingold 2011) is, as opposed to climate change temporality, one of a cyclic kind. Here, similar activities take place at approximately the same time from year to year, albeit with a high degree of flexibility and variation to account for weather variability and seasonal changes. Climate as average weather, on the other hand, is “difficult to grasp because it is not the weather and not the seasons, but an accumulation of data over a timeframe” (Brace and Geoghegan 2011: 291). Still, the concept of climate change can be seen to represent “an element in our collective thinking about the future” (Hastrup and Olwig 2012: 2), of varied relevance to different people. As we shall see, the Unjárga-Nesseby moth larvae outbreaks are alternately connected to climate change, weather variability and other changes or fluctuations, moving back and forth between the particular and the abstract, depending on the context in which the moth larva is made relevant.

While a link between the moth larvae outbreaks and climate change is not always established in the narratives presented below, the various causal relationships emphasized can still serve as examples of how local events may be framed or reframed within the climate change discourse. By making some relationships present, others are made absent (see also Hinchliffe 2008). In her introduction ‘anthropological perspectives on climate change’, Kay Milton (2008: 57) writes the following:

If scientific predictions are to be believed, environmental changes are going to be more extreme, more frequent and more widespread than previously experienced in human history. But there have always been floods, fires, famines, conflicts, and there is already a wealth of anthropological knowledge on how people deal with these disruptions to their lives. While
these problems may not be new, the discourse of climate change, with its scientific, economic, political and moral dimensions, is a relatively recent arrival in the global arena, and it is changing the way local events are framed and understood. For anthropologists to neglect it would be unthinkable.

Since the beginning of this millennium, anthropological studies of climate change have gradually increased in number and thematic approach. In addition to investigating the local implications of climate change for various populations (e.g. Krupnik and Jolly 2002, Crate 2008, Hastrup 2008, Hastrup 2009, Bjørst 2011, Sejersen 2012, Rudiak-Gould 2012), anthropologists have looked into the merging and partitioning of weather variability and climate change (e.g. Strauss and Orlove 2003, Crate and Nuttall 2009), as well as explored global negotiation processes and climate change discourses (e.g. Tsing 2005, Wilk 2009, Bjørst 2011). Anthropologists have also initiated multidisciplinary social science research projects, in response to a recognition of “the necessity of establishing a closer relation between diverse disciplines if we are to establish a common ground upon which we can re-imagine a shared world and rethink received notions of nature and culture” (Hastrup and Skrydstrup 2012: 4).

Within the multidisciplinary research consortium Community Adaptation and Vulnerability in Arctic Regions (CAVIAR),97 anthropologists, geographers, political scientists and sociologists collaborated to “enhance the theory, empirical understanding, and practical application of processes that shape adaptation and vulnerability in communities across the polar region” (Smit et al. 2010:1). From my position as a participant in the Norwegian part of the CAVIAR project, I established an early ‘most likely’-link between the moth larvae outbreak events and climate change. This relation of causality was also the point of departure for a chapter written to the volume Community Adaptation and Vulnerability in Arctic Regions (Hovelsrud and Smit 2010), presenting a broad spectrum of case studies and results from the CAVIAR project.

In the CAVIAR book chapter, my co-author, and one of my supervisors, and I focused on “the interlinkages between maintaining and developing the important nature based industries of sheep farming and reindeer herding in UnjárGa-Nesseby, and the locally experienced outcomes of global climate change (...) where special attention is given to the recent years’ extensive moth larvae outbreaks in the municipality” (Rybråten and Hovelsrud 2010: 313-314). The chapter further analysed “the adaptive capacity of the reindeer herding

97 See also chapter 1.
and sheep farming livelihoods, before finally discussing the challenges and opportunities farmers and herders in Unjárga-Nesseby may face with regard to future climate change” (ibid.).

In this chapter of my thesis my intentions are of another kind. Here, I want to investigate the ‘becomings’ of moth larvae phenomena, that is; how they “come into being in specific situations” (Hastrup 2011: 432). In order to do this, I juxtapose narratives from my Unjárga-Nesseby informants with narratives from the regional administration, natural sciences and the CAVIAR book chapter. In other words I approach the various moth larvae narratives (this text included) as lateral theorizations of multiple phenomena. Inspired by Frida Hastrup (2011: 435), I see the moth larvae outbreaks as “continuously generated in collective life as a very real object, and that this generation is accomplished in the combination of and encounter between different world-making practices and theories.” Acknowledging, like Hastrup, that an external overview position simply does not exist, I want to show how the various moth larvae narratives make up equally legitimate enactments of diverse realities and parallel natures.

**Enacting nature through talk**

In Unjárga-Nesseby, I was told, the birch leaves normally burst during the first half of June. Here, *normally* does not refer to a 30 years’ average but to what people have experienced through their own years of living, extended by experiences communicated by older family members, friends or co-residents. However in the summer of my fieldwork, vast areas of the birch forest were still leafless in early July. The explanation I was given was straight forward: The birch trees were dead. They had not survived the consecutive years of moth larvae outbreaks. Now, a year after the last outbreak had come to an end, I witnessed the result; extensive areas of black birch forests occasionally scattered with a few surviving leaf bearing trees.

During my first months of fieldwork, most people I met told me about the local *lauvmakkangrep* (moth larvae attacks) on trees, bushes and berry heath at some point during our conversations. Vivid stories were shared of how paths in the forest could be covered by a thick, slippery, winding layer of green larvae. Nevertheless, through the months of winter and

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98 See also chapter 6 where the normality referred to relates to first- and second-hand ‘living memory’. 
spring it was not possible to see the effect of these preceding summer outbreaks, at least not with an untrained eye.

My own first experience of the dead trees in Unjárga-Nesseby was during a ski trip in February. I was skiing through the forest, outside the trail, when I had to bend a birch branch to pass it. Despite the moth larvae stories I had heard, it surprised me that the light push from my hand made the branch brake right off, instead of bending slightly before bouncing back into position. Naturally, all the trees around me were leafless in the snow, and while I had presumed they were in their winter mode, I began to wonder how many of them were actually not alive anymore. The change in my emotions during this ski trip, once I realized that most of the trees around me were probably dead, gave me an idea of how directly the inhabitants in Unjárga-Nesseby experienced the forest death of their outfields.

“First there was this one kind of larva, the bjørkemåler, bright green in colour. And it was here, all over the place, all summer for three years. But the fourth summer we got this other larva as well, liten frostmåler, a bit smaller and with a dark line along the body. I inspected them closely, you see,” Anna told me, as she introduced me to the local situation of the moth larvae outbreaks during one of our early conversations. “Both larvae were just as aggressive, and when there were no more leaves to eat from the trees, they started to attack the plants on the ground. Over the last couple of years the tyttebær (lingonberries) and blåbær (blueberries) have disappeared from the areas they used to grow in due to lauvmakken.” Anna continued to explain that the multebær (cloudberries) were affected as well, but only in the areas close to the birch forest: “Up in the mountain plains, away from the forest, the cloudberries grow on the same locations as always, but close to the village there have been a lot of changes due to the moth larvae devastation.”

As already explained in the introduction of this chapter, the big outbreaks of the moth larvae were over by the time I moved to Unjárga-Nesseby. Still, the many stories shared with me in retrospect, helped me to understand how it must be to live summer after summer with the peculiar situation of the ever-present larvae. During my first visit to Ellen and Leif Ole, a married couple in their 70s, we were talking about life in Unjárga-Nesseby in general, when Leif Ole relayed one of his worse experiences with the abundant insect:

We were at our cabin and I was on my way to the outdoor toilet when I discovered a pit in the ground, filled with moth larvae. The pit had a diameter of at least 1, 5 meters and the amount of larvae was enormous! I called Ellen, for her to see it as well, and then I found some paraffin
and ignited it all. By using insecticides we managed to save some of the birch trees around the cabin, but huge areas are totally dead.

On another occasion Einar, a fisherman, went from talking about the red king crab invasion of the Varanger fjord to recalling his experience with the moth larvae outbreaks on land:

When I was out walking in the forest, the threads from the larvae stuck to my face and my clothes. I felt I could hear the larvae eating leaves because there were so many of them. It was like the ground was alive from larvae.

On a cold, clear day in the middle of November I shared a cup of coffee with Juhan, a retired carpenter, in his and his wife’s warm kitchen, while he told me about his previous and present outfield activities. We were about to round up our conversation when Juhan thought of the moth larvae outbreaks, not yet mentioned:

Never in my life have I seen such an amount of moth larvae, as during these last years with the major attacks. When the leaves started to fall, we could see that the ground was all green from larvae. Sometimes, at its worst, there was a 2 cm thick layer of larvae covering the road in the autumn when we wanted to go for a walk. Never have I seen that many larvae! They even started crawling on the wall at the back of our house. We sprayed them there, and then they fell down. But it was not nice. It has destroyed a lot, that moth larva.

From the stories above it is evident that people in Unjárga-Nesseby found that the years with moth larvae outbreaks posed a great challenge to their nature-based activities and outdoor movement. Through the presence of enormous amounts of larvae in trees and bushes as well as on the ground, the landscape was dramatically altered. The narratives above illustrate the high degree of sensuousness incorporated in peoples’ moth larvae experiences. The direct encounters with the abundant larvae, whether a slippery feeling of larvae under foot, or the continuous sensation of larvae threads sticking to one’s face, would occasionally lead to the cancelling of planned activities, like going for a walk or checking the ripening of berries.

In addition to sense of touch, the moth larvae were also sensory experienced both visually, as reported in all narratives above, and auditory, as referred to by Einar. Indirectly, the moth larvae could also be olfactory sensed, through peoples’ use of insecticides (Leif Ole and Juhan) or paraffin (Leif Ole). These small but numerous insects did not only create a sensory change in the landscape, though. The moth larvae entered the multispecies
relationship (e.g. Haraway 2008, Kirksey and Helmreich 2010) of humans, animals and plants in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields, and played a major part in ‘the becomings’ of new multispecies relations both during and after the outbreak years. In what follows I make use of ‘multispecies ethnography’ in studying “the host of organisms whose lives and deaths are linked to human social worlds” (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010: 545).

During my first visit to Ellen and Leif Ole, after Leif Ole had told me about the enormous moth larvae pit by their cabin, Ellen moved on to express her loss of rich berry harvesting locations in the nearby outfields due to the moth larvae outbreaks:

The last five to six years, the moth larvae have even affected the berries. There were few lingonberries around here this year. I only managed to pick 7 litres. And then I got one litre from my daughter. I think it is the moth larvae that have caused this berry scarcity. The blueberries disappeared completely after the first years of the moth larvae attack. Two years ago, my daughters and I picked blueberries close to Krampenes [60 km away], but this year I haven’t picked any. Earlier on, I went straight up in the forest, right here, and picked both blueberries and lingonberries.

From Ellen’s story it is possibly to recognize how the ‘becoming with’ (Haraway 2008) of berries and humans have been altered by another species entering their interspecies relationship; the moth larvae. With the expansion of moth larvae in the outfields, previously important berry locations were destroyed, making it necessary for Ellen and other berry pickers to either reduce their consumption, rely on generous family members or friends with berries to spare, or drive long distances in order to find sites where the sought after berries had not been damaged.

Another example of a change in the relationship between animals, plants and humans, in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields, was presented to me by Signe, a local government employee and ptarmigan hunter:

My 80 years old neighbour is a ptarmigan snarer. He told me that fluctuations in the ptarmigan population is common, that’s how it’s always been, but he has never seen as few ptarmigans as this year [2008]. The reason for this, he thinks, is the recent huge increase in number of ptarmigan hunters in the area. And in addition he is convinced that the moth larvae have influenced the population, as it has altered the vegetation. It has killed the crowberries that the

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99 See section on berries in chapter 6.
ptarmigans feed upon, and in addition the dead forest gives the birds reduced access to fresh buds in the spring.

In this narrative, moth larvae, crowberries, trees, ptarmigans and humans make up the multispecies relationships involved. The humans, though, are represented in two different ways; there are those that shoot too many ptarmigans and, like the moth larvae, have a negative impact on the ptarmigan population (i.e. ‘they’), and there are those that witness the effect of the game reduction and experience its effect (i.e. ‘we’). While Signe’s neighbour has experienced fluctuations in the amount of ptarmigans present in the Unjàrga-Nesseby outfields throughout his life, the concurrence of two different events is recognized to have caused the severe reduction in question. Not only have more ptarmigan hunters led to a reduced number of birds in the area, the already pressed population is further pressured by lack of feed due to the destruction of trees and berries by moth larvae. In turn, this affects the ptarmigan snarers who are unable to practice their subsistence activity adequately until the population has recovered.

Similar to the multispecies narratives of Ellen and Signe, are stories of the effects of moth larvae, in combination with other organisms, upon the moose population. During one of my conversations with Karl, a tourist operator and moose hunter, our talk moved from the topic of opportunities and challenges faced by the Unjàrga-Nesseby tourist industry, to moth larvae outbreaks and moose hunting. “The moth larvae are a huge minus to the area,” Karl said, and continued:

It is here just because we never have proper cold periods (skikkelige kuldeperioder) anymore. I remember how we always had long periods with really cold weather in the past, but we haven’t had that for several years. And I’ve noticed how the moth larvae have had an impact on the moose. The moose is not to be found on the same locations as earlier on, and there are only few of them where they used to be plentiful. Like in one of the hunting terrains that used to be just great. Both last year and the year before there were only few animals in the area. And I am sure it’s because the forest is gone.

Through Karl’s story, we are given a clear picture of the close connection between the moth larvae, the forest feed available to the moose, the moose population and the moose hunters. Due to the moth larvae outbreaks, large amounts of the forest have died, reducing the available feed for the moose population. This in turn has caused the moose to more or less abandon the area and led to a reduction in the number of moose observed by Karl in his
hunting terrain. Analogous to the other narratives above, this story shows how new multispecies relationships have evolved from previous ones.

Furthermore, Karl links the moth larvae outbreaks to increased winter temperatures. Our continued conversation made clear that Karl thought the milder winters were a result of climate change. In contrast to the quote from Hans, opening this chapter, where he questions the linkage of climate change and variations in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields, Karl’s statement was clear: Through increased winter temperatures, caused by climate change, moth larvae outbreaks could multiply and alter the multispecies relationship of the forest, the moose and the hunter.

The large moth larvae outbreaks in Unjárga-Nesseby and surrounding municipalities coincided with a strong focus on climate change in the Norwegian media, in official debates, within political initiatives like research funding and among a variety of research fields. Thus the years between 2002 and 2008 corresponded to a period where climate change formed a salient topic in public discourse throughout the country, peaking in 2007 (see also Bjermeland and Aasen 2012, Norgaard 2011). The establishment of Unjárga-Nesseby as one of the case studies in the CAVIAR project further contributed to situating climate change on the agenda among the municipality’s inhabitants. To Karl, and several with him, the moth larvae outbreaks were seen as a clear example of “local effects of global climate change” (Rybråten and Hovelsrud 2010: 313). Hans, and some others of my Unjárga-Nesseby informants, did not establish this link to the same degree, while simultaneously not abandoning it all together.

It is, of course, possible to argue that Karl and Hans expressed a clear link and a slightly possible link, respectively, between climate change and outfield events, because it seemed an appropriate connection to make in the context of talking to a researcher, especially one participating in a climate change research project. Conversely, their statements may just as well be examples of the framing and reframing of local events in the light of the climate change discourse, regardless of my presence. In any case, they both had different cores in their stories they wanted to communicate. To Hans, it seemed significant to articulate the high degree of variability present in Unjárga-Nesseby outfield events. To Karl, the connection between climate change and the moth larvae outbreaks was important to make, but what mattered even more was to pass on the experience of not being able to carry out a fundamental subsistence activity in familiar, appreciated ways.

From what previous chapters have shown about the significance of outfield utilization and subsistence activities among Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants, peoples’ concerns regarding moth larvae induced changes to their outfield activities are closely related to their ideas of
what a meaningful life comprises. Within the multispecies relations presented in the narratives above, humans are either seen to be directly influenced by the moth larvae, like in Ellen’s story of the diminishing amount of berries, or to be indirectly influenced, like in Karl and Signe’s stories. In the two last narratives, the moth larvae outbreaks are found to severely destroy the feed of the animals in question, resulting in a population decline that further leads to reduced quotas or lack of success for the hunters.

In addition to the various ways the moth larvae joined and altered multispecies relationships in the outfields, the Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants experienced these alterations and traces in and to the landscape in a variety of different ways. During winter I had seen Anna demonstrate how the lack of flexibility in the dead birch branches challenged her ptarmigan snaring, as even a light touch of her hands could make a branch break rather than bend. Jon, a carpenter in his 30’s, brought my attention to another visual aspect of the dead birch trees than just their leaflessness. “Have you noticed how differently the dead trees move, compared to living trees?” he asked me, and explained: “The dead trees don’t bend in the wind. They shake in a kind of disconnected way.” Observing the trees closely with their movements in mind, I immediately understood what he meant, although I would never have discovered this difference between dead and living trees on my own. “I find that it does something to me (et synes det gjør noe med mej),” Signe said during our conversation referred
to above. She continued: “I don’t get the same feeling of joy when I am outside and everything is black around me. And I see less birds and animals.”

The sensory experiences of the moth larvae outbreaks, the changes they have led to in the Unjárga-Nesseby outfields and the negative effect they have had on Signe and others sense of being at home in the affected areas, have made people consider the possible effects of the moth larvae outbreaks, in both immediate and more long-term perspectives. Gunnar, a sheep farmer, presented the following line of reasoning during a conversation about sheep farming livelihoods:

After the first year with the autumnal moths (*bjørkemålere*), the summer pastures for the sheep were fantastic. Dead larvae provided the ground with good manure and the lack of leaves on the trees ensured access of light to the forest floor. But the following years, the effect of the moth larvae was negative. Dominating grass species resulted in a near single species pasture where wavy hairgrass (*smyle*)° dominated, while herbs and leaves disappeared. Additionally, the grass grew too quickly to result in good pastures, even if it seemed to be good with all the grass. But then, subsequently, this grass fertilizes new growth. And now there are more species reappearing. In the long run I think the moth larvae have a positive effect and result in increased diversity.

In the narrative above, the moth larvae outbreaks serve as a point of departure for thinking of multispecies relationships in both short-term and long-term perspectives. Through his main focus on the relation between sheep and pasture, Gunnar presents us with a whole range of multispecies connections. Demonstrating how one species depend upon the other, as well as introducing other factors influencing this dependency, Gunnar shares his speculation as to what might happen when one ‘actor in the network’ is changed.

In the narratives presented so far, the moth larvae outbreaks are seen to result in various changes in the Unjárga-Nesseby landscape. People are nevertheless not certain of the outcome of these changes, and different connections are emphasized. In the following analysis I draw on Boholm and Corvellec’s (2011) ‘relational theory of risk’ to further illuminate the various connections established in the stories above and the processes through which ‘risks’ come into being.

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° *Avenella flexuosa*, in the Unjárga-Nesseby Sámi dialect *Meachesinno*. 
Risk, variation and flexibility

Boholm and Corvellec (2011) outline a ‘relational theory of risk’, presented as a theory that seeks to answer the theoretical as well as practical questions of why and how something is considered to be a risk (ibid.: 176). Schematically, the authors define risk the following way:

\[
\text{[Risk object]} \leftarrow (\text{Relationship of risk}) \rightarrow \text{[Object at risk]}
\]

‘Object’ is here understood in a broad sense, spanning from a physical artefact to a natural phenomenon or a social behaviour. For one object to pose a risk to another object, a relationship has to be established between the two, where the former is seen to threaten or harm the latter. Such a relationship is not predefined and does not simply occur. It has to be established. Simultaneously, Boholm and Corvellec emphasize that even if a relationship of risk is socially constructed (where I would say that it is brought into being through socio-material and discursive processes), this does not mean that it is arbitrary or “lack correspondence with the external world” (Boholm and Corvellec 2011: 181). What is important is that “there are never risk objects, objects at risk, or relationships of risk per se. Instead, the identities of risk objects, objects at risk, and relationships of risk are continually reframed and redefined” (ibid.: 182). The same counts for the continuous production of both nature and climate change.

With the schema of ‘the relational theory of risk’ as a point of departure, a synthesis of the moth larvae narratives presented above could be collated like this:

\[
\text{[Moth larvae outbreak]} \leftarrow (\text{Relationship of risk}) \rightarrow \text{[Unjárga-Nesseby outfields]}
\]

However, as stated by Boholm and Corvellec (2011: 178), “situated risk is embedded in specific practice-based social contexts in which various actors’ perspectives on and interpretations of risk can vary considerably, even if it is the same external phenomena that are being described.” If we look closer at the different stories, they consist of a variety of relationships, where some constitute relationships of risk while others do not.

In most of the narratives the moth larvae outbreak is established as a risk object, either as a principal risk object or a secondary one (ibid.: 182). On the other hand, when it comes to the object at risk, and the relationship between the risk object and the object at risk, there is less congruence among the narratives. In Ellen’s story, the moth larvae outbreaks comprise the risk object causing harm to the berries, the object at risk. There is a direct relationship between the two. The moth larvae feed on the berry heath during summer to such a degree
that is does not survive the foraging. This in turn leads to a lack of berries in the autumn. The berry harvesting subsistence activity can thus be regarded a secondary object at risk, as it cannot take place without berries to be picked. “Risk entails a state of uncertainty, something of value is at stake and uncertainty can relate to both the chances of a negative outcome and the nature of the outcome itself,” Boholm (2003: 166, original emphasis) writes. From Ellen’s narrative it is clear that highly valued berries are harmed by the moth larvae outbreaks (‘the nature of the outcome’), undermining the equally valued activity of berry harvesting.

In Signe’s story, the moth larvae outbreaks are found to harm the ptarmigan by destroying the food available to them. Here a relationship of risk is established where moth larvae outbreaks constitute the risk object, and ptarmigans represent the valued object at risk. Still, the moth larvae do not constitute the only harm to the ptarmigan population, as a recently high amount of ptarmigan hunters are seen to pose a threat to the population as well. This leaves us with two risk objects and two relationships of risk, food scarcity and hunting, causing a double threat to the Unjárga-Nesseby ptarmigan population. As a secondary object at risk, the subsistence activity of ptarmigan snaring is harmed as well.

In Karl’s narrative, the moth larvae outbreaks are explicitly established as a secondary risk object, as climate change makes up the principal risk object in his evaluation. In this case the perceived threat is to the moose population, thus forming the object at risk. Again it is food scarcity that forms the relationship of risk, here caused by moth larvae outbreaks enabled by increased temperatures, due to climate change. Outmigration or other forms of reduction in the moose population have further consequences for the subsistence activity of moose hunting, establishing this activity as the secondary object at risk.

Through the exercise of looking closer at the Unjárga-Nesseby moth larvae narratives through the lens of a relational theory of risk, it becomes clear how “[a]n object becomes a risk object only in relation to an object at risk; reciprocally, an object at risk emerges only in conjunction with a risk object, through a causal-contingent relationship of risk that brings the two together” (Boholm and Corvellec 2011: 181). This further illuminates why not all narratives above fit within the relational theory of risk frame. The story of Gunnar serves as a good example.

Gunnar’s story is clearly one about values. Still, there are no ‘objects’ threatening the values present in the narrative. While the moth larvae outbreak leads to a series of changes, they do not turn out to be harmful. Rather, the outbreaks represent one of several fluctuations that are part of a landscape that is always in the making through its network of connections. Gunnar’s narrative is not about risk; it is an illustration of the fine-tuned, but still flexible
connectedness of all the elements that constitute a landscape. Gunnar’s more optimistic attitude towards on the possible results of the moth larvae outbreaks can also be recognized in the following quotation from Per, another sheep farmer: “I am not sure the moth larvae only have negative effects. Personally, I think it is okay that the forest gets thinned out (tynnet ut) a little. But our sheep will also take part in slowing down the regrowth. We simply have to admit that…”

The narratives and statements above give some examples of the variability in experiences and considerations among Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants when it comes to the extensive moth larvae outbreaks in the region. While the majority of the stories focus on the negative experiences with, and effects of, the moth larvae outbreaks, and some of these present relationships of risk, I still find the flexibility and fluidity I learned to connect to the Unjárga-Nesseby way of living to be present in these stories. While most people avoided the forest as much as possible during the summers of the worst outbreaks, and then felt sorry about the huge areas of dead forest that the outbreaks left behind, they nevertheless seem to accept the outbreak occurrences as yet another example of the continuous transitions of landscapes. Anna, for example, recalls a moth larvae outbreak back in the early 1960s:

We had a moth larvae attack in the beginning of the ‘60s as well, but in no way as extensive and long as this one. At that time, the larvae harmed a part of the forest in the hillside above the village. The affected area stretched westwards from Vadsø. You can still see traces from it. But what really caused damage was the spraying of this area with insecticides, from planes, just like it was done in the south [of Norway]. And the composition of the pesticides was just as strong as the one utilized down south. It took 50 years before anything started to grow in this area again. Had it not been for the insect repellent, I am sure the re-growth would have started much earlier. I have noticed that the trees affected by the recent attacks have already started to recover where the root is still alive. The blueberry heath in the hill behind our house is also reappearing, little by little.

In Anna’s comparison of the recent moth larvae outbreaks with the one in the 1960s, a cyclic temporality can be recognized. While she has experienced that outbreaks have caused damage to both trees and plants, she has also experienced subsequent recovery. With the one following the other, the dynamic aspects of a landscape always in the making become apparent. Another example of similar dynamics was presented by those who wondered if the last decades’ reduction in human forest utilization, and the decreased number of grazing
animals in the outfields, had resulted in a dense, old forest, more susceptible to moth larvae attacks.

Narration and theorization that evoke a cyclic temporality allow for the possibility of more dynamic and flexible ways of relating to moth larvae outbreaks in the landscape. Here, the ‘horizon of expectations’ (Sejersen 2012), that is, the constantly changing ways in which people understand and judge future possibilities based on a variety of criteria, experiences and assumptions (ibid.), still includes diverse opportunities. In theorizations produced within a linear temporality “that extends into infinity, with temporal fragments that appear, pass and then disappear” (Natcher et al. 2007: 121), the outbreaks may turn out to be much more severe. From the linearity incorporated in the climate change debate, where climate change is expressed to have potentially devastating impacts on communities throughout the world (e.g. ACIA 2005, IPCC 2007a), the moth larvae outbreaks make up a serious transformation of the landscape as a result of irreversible climate change. These two forms of temporality exemplify how various theorizations are done, or made to happen by “[a]n endless list of heterogeneous elements that can either be highlighted or left in the background, depending on the character and purpose of the description” (Mol 2002: 26).

So far, we have dealt only with Unjárga-Nesseby narratives regarding the moth larvae outbreaks. While the narratives present a variety of connections and degrees of risk evaluation, common to them all are the multispecies relationships involved and the sensory experience-near way the moth larvae have influenced peoples’ lives and outfield activities. It is, however, not only locally that these outbreaks have attracted attention and evoked thoughts regarding the possible effects of the outbreaks (whether positive, negative or ‘neutral’ ones). In the next sections, I show how these moth larvae outbreaks are dealt with and presented by representatives of three different ‘institutions’: the county governor of Finnmark, the natural sciences and the community-based research project CAVIAR, focussing on adaptation and vulnerability to environmental and social change.

Enacting nature through texts

From the Unjárga-Nesseby moth larvae narratives above, we have seen how the moth larvae in the trees and on the ground are highly sensory insects, interfering in multispecies relationships and impacting peoples’ everyday life both under and after their recent outbreak period. This is however not the only way moth larvae are enacted. In the next sections we are
introduced to textual presentations where the moth larvae are made relevant in broader spatial and temporal connections. Following Helmreich’s (2009: 23) athwart theory, my point of departure is to “not take for granted the difference between things and forms of explanation or abstraction, tracing instead how these items exist in alignment and tension.”

As with nature (and as nature), the moth larvae outbreaks cannot be separated from the relationship in which they take part and are performed. Anna Tsing’s (2010) term ‘worlding’ captures the ways in which inclusions and exclusions are actively carried out in order to produce a relevant context for the story being told. While Tsing investigates ‘worlding’ as an orienting process in scientific work, “to mediate the uncertain zones between the analyst and her unfamiliar material” (ibid.: 58), emphasizing at the same time how the process is just as much a disorienting one, I find the term to be relevant outside the scientific community as well. The previous examples have shown how various contexts are evoked in order for different moth larvae stories to be told. In what follows, the various moth larvae realities enacted among the Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants are supplemented by the inclusion of the moth larvae in other theorizations, evoking different spatial and temporal scales. Together, these ‘becomings’ of moth larvae phenomena form associated and related realities.

**Moth larvae outbreaks in a regional context**

On a regional level, one of the responsibilities of the County Governor of Finnmark (Fylkesmannen i Finnmark/Finnmárkku Fylkkamánni) is to advise and assist the municipalities in issues regarding forest management. From the Authority’s web page, a link gives the following presentation of the Finnmark forest (Fylkesmannen i Finnmark 2012, my translation):

10% of the Norwegian woodland is located in Finnmark. The county holds in total 1 million hectares of wood (1 hectare/ha = 10 000 m²). This means that just over 20% of the total area of Finnmark is forested. The majority of the forestland consists of birch forest, approximately 90%, while 10% is pine.

Another link explains that after the moth larvae outbreaks, “almost 25 % of the deciduous forest has been damaged by the moth larvae” (ibid.).

In order to reduce the damage of productive forest as much as possible, the county governor of Finnmark produced the pamphlet “Birch moth in Finnmark – Information about
moth larvae and forest damage” in 2006. In approaching people throughout the county, in
order to inform them about the extensive, and at that time on-going, moth larvae situation, the
larvae are theorized as a source of regional damage, spanning several municipalities.

The information brochure opens with a description of the two moth species and their
lifecycles, and then describes the recent Finnmark outbreak situation as particularly vast.
“Some scientists theorize that the moth attacks are more frequent and extensive now than
earlier on. A warmer and more humid climate might be a reason [for this change]”
(Fylkesmannen i Finnmark 2006: 2, my translation). The text then introduces the reader to the
interaction between moth larvae and birch tree (ibid.: 3):

Birch trees have developed a chemical defence against leaf-eating insects. After foraging,
defence substances develop in the leaves, especially the year following strong foraging.
Larvae feeding on this kind of leaves become weak, and the butterflies lay fewer eggs and
produce less viable offspring. This is an important reason for why mass attacks decline. The
fight between the tree and the larvae represents a delicate balance and it may happen that the
tree dies first. (…) If the birch is defoliated (snauspist) three successive years, it is in danger
of dying. Old forest and forest on barren and dry ground are the most at risk.

The last section of the pamphlet addresses possible measures to reduce the damage of
the moth larvae outbreaks:

New forests in growth are more resistant against attacks. Forest thinning and care is therefore
an important preventive measure. Consequently, those with their own forest should chop there,
rather than applying for a wood parcel (vedteig) on state owned land. (…) If the birch, after
repetitive years of attack, does not grow leaves, it is important to chop it down before the tree
as a whole dies. If you chop down the tree while the root is still alive, new sprouts will emerge
and ensure rapid re-growth. If the trees die at the root, they will stay for 40-50 years before
seeds from surrounding forest result in regeneration.

The forest authorities will, together with the Finnmark Estate (Finnmarkseiendommen)
encourage increased logging in areas affected by the moth larvae outbreaks: 101

In parts of the county, there are big areas with dead and dying forest exploitable for firewood.
People are encouraged to cut trees that are now leafless, and trees with too little green to be

101 Also within the Finnmark Estate agency (FeFo), the moth larvae outbreaks are themes of discussion, as the
Estate acknowledges the birch forest makes up important parts of the Finnmark landscape and comprise
significant resources such as firewood, berries and game (www.fefo.no).
able to survive. If the tree is cut before it is dead, there is a possibility for trunk sprouts to emerge, and in this way new forests can emerge in the areas that are currently attacked. Leave the trees with the most foliage, as they have the best chance to survive and will contribute to seed formation of new trees. The solicitation applies to those who have their own forest as well as those with a wood parcel at the Finnmark Estate (Fylkesmannen i Finnmark 2012, my translation).

The texts published by the county governor of Finnmark represent narratives whereby the effects of the moth larvae outbreaks upon valued resources on a county level, are central to the story. The connection enacted through these texts is based on a linear application of time, where humans across municipalities can reduce the negative effects of the outbreak if only they act the right way before it is too late. Through decisive and timely action, people can influence the outcome of the outbreaks and reduce their harm.

“The act of designating an object as at risk is an act of implicating value,” Bolholm and Corvellec (2011: 180) write, considering value to refer to the “notion of something that is held to be of worth, be it life, nature, principles, or a state of affairs” (ibid.). By applying a relational theory of risk to the stories from the county governor of Finnmark, the risk object would be the moth larvae outbreaks, while the principal object at risk would be the birch trees subjected to severe threat. Humans as an important secondary object at risk can also be recognized, as increased deforestation is seen to cause a decrease in harvestable trees for firewood.

The narratives above show how the resource aspect of the Finnmark birch trees is at the core of the theorization. Here, the moth larvae become a central element in the establishment of the Finnmark forest as a regional resource under threat. Precautions are called for to prevent resource depletion throughout the county, insofar as possible. While ‘a warmer and more humid climate’ is mentioned as a possible reason for the extensive regional moth larvae outbreaks, an explicit link to climate change is not established. Rather, the moth larvae are linked to a linear temporality of forest reduction and thus found to severely influence the inhabitants of the county. Through this theorization, the insects are enacted into being as regional forest destroyers. In the process, the moth larvae outbreaks experienced on the ground in Unjárga-Nesseby become part of a broader spatial context. In the next section, an even broader spatial connection is established within the natural sciences moth larvae narratives.
**Moth larvae outbreaks in the natural sciences**

Among natural scientists, large but short-lived outbreaks of the autumnal moth (*Epirrita autumnata*) and winter moth (*Operophtera brumata*) are regarded as common and found to occur in the circumpolar region at intervals of approximately 10 years (Hylen et al. 2007). These outbreaks are described to cause defoliation of an array of different host trees, but in northern Fennoscandia, where Unjárga-Nesseby is located, it is mainly the birch trees (*Betula spp.*) that are found to be affected (Tenow et al. 2007).

Hagen and colleagues (2008: 1513) show that the two species belong to the family Geometridae, and describe their biology as follows:

Both species have spring feeding larvae that need to appear synchronously with bud burst of their host plant. Moreover, the adults of both species emerge and breed in the autumn, and the eggs enter a winter diapause and hatch in spring. Still there are certain differences between the species in their response to seasonality and temperature that could account for the observed differences in their spatial population dynamics.

These spatial population dynamics, found to cause a distinct altitudinal differentiation in species-specific outbreak areas, have usually been attributed to a difference in cold tolerance. From the article we learn, amongst other things, that the eggs are extremely cold tolerant with lethal temperatures as low as approximately –35°C for the winter moth and –36°C for the autumnal moth (Hagen et al. 2008). In Jepsen et al. (2008: 258, 260), the moth larvae outbreak dynamics are described the following way:

*Epirrita autumnata* outbreak cycles are most prevalent in the northernmost and continental birch forests, whereas the outbreak range of the somewhat less cold-tolerant *O. brumata* has been climatically restricted to more southern and near-coastal locations. (…) *O. brumata* has experienced a strong northward and eastward expansion of the core outbreak area, while *E. autumnata* outbreaks appear to have expanded into colder, more continental regions. Most noticeably, this has happened during the past 15 years. A pronounced increase in both mean annual and minimum winter temperatures has occurred during the same period, in particular in the continental parts of Fennoscandia.

Their study also finds that “[t]he presence of *O. brumata* outbreaks in regions previously affected solely by *E. autumnata* is likely to increase the effective duration of local outbreaks and hence have profound implications for the moth–birch forest ecosystem” (Jepsen et al. 2008: 258).
While these quotations of the moth larvae and their effects on the birch forest can be seen as accurately describing nature, they can also be viewed as ways of performing nature through enacting moth larvae outbreaks in a particular way (see also Lien and Law 2011: 68, on salmon as scientific fact). By combining specific knowledge of temperature-related changes in the moths’ surroundings with investigations of the biological aspects of the two species’ life cycles, a relation is established where changes in temperature directly influence the distribution of moth larvae:

Our study demonstrates a likely major role of regional climatic trends in large-scale outbreak dynamics in the geometrid–mountain birch system. (…) we consider the pronounced increase in both mean annual and minimum winter temperatures the most parsimonious explanation for the observed change in outbreak distribution by *O. brumata* and *E. autumnata*” (Jepssen et al. 2008: 261).

Based on simultaneity, where increased temperatures and unusually numerous amounts of moths coincide in time and place, a connection between the two is enacted. Here, human agency and activities are left out of the narrative, as the outbreak represents a (complicated) moth response to temperature changes, or in other words, a temperature-dependent geometrid population dynamic. Human activity is however indirectly included in the narrative, as the increase in both mean annual and minimum winter temperatures is linked to climate change: “Global warming is predicted to have a dramatic impact on many species (…). For insects, in particular, evidence of a response to long-term environmental trends, directly or indirectly linked to recent climate warming, is accumulating quickly” (Jepsen et al. 2008: 257).

In a more recent article, the introduction presents the reader an even closer link between the geometrid moths, climate change and long-term consequences (Jepsen et al. 2011: 2071, brackets left out):

Forest insect pests are both important indicators of climate change and forceful inducers of climate-related ecosystem state shifts. Their geographical distribution is largely defined by temperature, and they are responsive to even small changes in their thermal environment. Over the next century, mean annual land temperatures are projected to rise by 3-5°C across the sub-Arctic and Arctic region and with a milder climate, insect pest outbreaks are expected to increase in both frequency and intensity.

From this introduction we can read that not only is the distribution range of the insects found to be temperature dependent and thus influenced by global warming, the insects themselves
serve as ‘indicators of climate change’ and ‘inducers of climate-related ecosystem state shifts’. Through the established connection between increased temperatures and insect pest distribution, the moth larvae become part of a theorization where a linear temporality is evoked. Here, long-term environmental trends are expected to increase in severity in the future.

By looking closer at the natural science moth larvae narratives, considering Boholm and Corvellec’s (2011) relational theory of risk, we can recognize the temperature increase as the principal risk object. The moth larvae, on the other hand, serve as the secondary risk object. The object at risk is the moth-birch forest ecosystem, as the moth larvae outbreaks (caused by the temperature changes) result in damage to the host trees upon which they feed (i.e. the relationship of risk). The present trend in outbreaks, covering a 15 years period, is expected to increase in both frequency and strength in the years to come, as a result of the estimated temperature increase caused by global climate change. Within this form of theorization, the Unjârga-Nesseby moth larvae outbreaks become an example of an early state of irreversible change expected to occur throughout the circumpolar region. A similar linear temporality is evoked in the following example of a social science theorization.

**Moth larvae outbreaks within climate change research**

Social scientists within the CAVIAR (Community Adaptation and Vulnerability in the Arctic Regions) consortium have focused on how social, cultural, economic and political processes operate at multiple scales and affect adaptive capacity to interlinked and interacting changing societal and climatic conditions in Arctic communities. Employing ‘vulnerability’ as its central concept, “CAVIAR is interested in the overall wellbeing or sustainability of communities and their susceptibility or vulnerability to changing conditions” (Hovelsrud and Smit 2010: 5):

> Vulnerability refers to the manner and degree to which a community is susceptible to conditions that directly or indirectly affect the well-being or sustainability of the community. This includes the sensitivity or resilience of the ecosystem of which the community is part or on which the community depends. Use of this term does not presume that communities are particularly vulnerable – some may have relatively few or no vulnerabilities. Vulnerability is a function of both exposure-sensitivity and adaptive capacity (ibid.).

Schematically, the core concepts of the CAVIAR project can be presented as follows:
[Vulnerability] = [Exposure-sensitivity] + [Adaptive capacity]

Here, ‘exposure-sensitivity’ refers to “the manner and degree to which a community is sensitive to and exposed to particular conditions, forces or stresses” (Hovelsrud and Smit 2010: 5). In the CAVIAR framework, it is further emphasized that “to be comparable in CAVIAR, exposure-sensitivities are identified empirically, from insights and evidence gathered in the community – they are not assumed a priori nor derived arbitrarily or exogenously from hypothesis or models” (Smit et al. 2008: 7).

‘Adaptive capacity’, the last of the CAVIAR core concepts, “is closely related to resilience, and reflects an individual’s or community’s ability to cope with, adjust to or recover from an exposure-sensitivity” (Hovelsrud and Smit 2010: 5). Finally, “[t]he functional relationship between exposure-sensitivity and adaptive capacity will vary by context and over time, but it is understood that vulnerability is positively related to exposure-sensitivity and negatively related to adaptive capacity” (ibid.: 6).

During my fieldwork, one of my supervisors, who was also one of the CAVIAR consortium leaders, and I started to write a book chapter to be included in a collection of case studies and results from the CAVIAR project. As the majority of my climate related data from Unjárga-Nesseby was related to the moth larvae outbreaks, we decided to build on this material and write a chapter on sheep farmers and reindeer herders’ experiences of, and responses to, the local moth larvae outbreak. The section ‘Local adaptation to current changes’ opens the following way:

Sheep farming and reindeer herding have century long traditions in Unjárga-Nesseby, and both livelihoods are well adapted to the sub-Arctic seasonal changes as well as to the fluctuations within particular seasons. Still, some of the recently experienced changes and their accumulative effects upon the husbandry industries are not to be found in the historical repertoire of the livelihoods. Moth larvae outbreaks in Unjárga-Nesseby have never reached such proportions as during the period between 2005 and 2009. These outbreaks will likely have future consequences for the sheep farmers and reindeer herders, in both positive and negative terms (Rybråten and Hovelsrud 2010: 325).

The chapter discusses the local farmers and herders experience of the changes in their animal’s pasture, due to the deforestation following the moth larvae outbreaks, as well as the locally voiced pros and cons regarding the possible outcomes of these changes. This information is further analysed in relation to possible future consequences for the animal
husbandry, as regards potential land use changes and reduction in grazing land combined with projected climate change (ibid.: 327):

In estimating the challenges and opportunities sheep farmers and reindeer herders in Unjárga-Nesseby may face in the future, climate change projections have been developed through close collaboration with local partners and the Norwegian Meteorological Institute (met.no). As a basis for these projections, locally observed weather variation and climate change, relevant to community livelihoods and activities, were discussed in Unjárga-Nesseby and presented to the climatologists. Next, the Norwegian Meteorological Institute developed downscaled projections of the locally identified climate elements.

After including a more technical description of the process behind the downscaled projections, some of the temperature estimates found relevant to the moth larvae outbreak situation are presented (Rybråten and Hovelsrud 2010: 327-328, brackets referring to figures left out):

For now, nothing certain can be said about future moth outbreak rates in Unjárga-Nesseby. However, as the temperature is expected to increase in the years to come, cold temperatures will no longer be a limiting factor in possible future moth outbreaks. The downscaled climate projections for Unjárga-Nesseby regarding future temperature development show a 2–2.5°C increase in winter temperature from the 1981–2010 projection, to the 2021–2050 projection. This means a change in mean annual winter temperature of -14 to -8°C, to a mean of -12 to -6°C. Additionally, Fig. 13.7 shows a decline in number of days with temperature below -10°C in autumn, winter and spring towards 2050, with the decrease in number of cold days during winter as the clearest trend.

With vulnerability as a paradigm for the CAVIAR project, the term also became essential to our analysis, even if we concluded, as we did, that the adaptive capacity of the sheep farmers and reindeer herders was sufficient to deal with the present exposure-sensitivities. From our analyses we found that both sheep and reindeer were able to make use of the altered composition of their summer pastures in and near the moth larvae affected birch forests. The adaptive potential of the animals was therefore seen to influence the adaptive capacity of the local farmers and herders positively. The chapter concludes the following way:

102 “A main scenario was based upon output from the regional climate model HIRHAM (Haugen and Haakenstad 2006), but adjusted to the local topography by a method developed by Engen-Skaugen et al. (2007). In order to get a measure for uncertainty of the main scenario, the projected local changes in temperature and precipitation, from the main scenario, were further compared with the results from empirical-statistical downscaling (Benestad et al. 2008) from a large multi-model ensemble” (Rybråten and Hovelsrud 2010: 327).
The possibility of combining different activities and to make practical use of the local landscape remain of great significance to both sheep farmers and reindeer herders, and constitutes an important part of what it means to live a good and meaningful life for them in Unjárga-Nesseby. Flexibility among both animals and owners, combined with the experiences and attitudes connected to people’s home place and way of living, as expressed by local farmers and herders, will likely have a positive effect on their ability to adapt to future climate change (Rybråten and Hovelsrud 2010: 331-332).

In the theorization presented above, the Unjárga-Nesseby moth larvae outbreaks become part of an argumentation on vulnerability, adaptation and climate change where a broad temporal and spatial scale is evoked. In other words, the moth larva becomes a central element in the establishment of Unjárga-Nesseby as a climate change case where a linear temporality and a global scale are essential terms of reference. In this project of scale-making a direct connection is established between the local moth larvae outbreaks and global climate change. Consequently, the possible effects of the outbreaks are linked to the question of vulnerability to multiple stressors including climate change.

By applying the perspectives of a relational theory of risk (Boholm and Corvellec 2011) to the narratives above, we can recognize global warming as the principal risk object, followed by the moth larvae as a secondary risk object. What is of value and at stake, and hence the object at risk, are local livelihoods. They are threatened by climate change induced resource changes, caused by the moth larvae outbreaks, the relationship of risk. Humans are essential to the story, both indirectly as ‘producers’ of climate change, and directly as ‘recipients’ of exposure-sensitivities as well as creators of adaptive strategies.

From the risk assessment conducted in the social science narrative, downscaled projected climate trends are expected to result in future changes that need to be dealt with by the Unjárga-Nesseby sheep farmers and reindeer herders. Here, the flexible multispecies relationships between farmer/herders, animals and plants are found to positively influence the adaptive capacity of the animal husbandries. Simultaneously, the temporal and spatial abstractions inherited through the climate change phenomenon, upon which the narrative is formed, transcend the particularities of time and space. In this field of abstractions the Unjárga-Nesseby moth larvae outbreaks serve as a way of making non-sensory, abstract changes on a global scale sensorial on the ground. Through this process the global warming reality is established as a local reality as well.
Lateral knowledge and parallel realities

The various narratives presented in this chapter represent different theorizations and world-making practices through which the Unjárga-Nesseby moth larvae outbreaks are “continuously generated in collective life as a very real object” (Hastrup 2011: 435). Depending upon the context in which the moth larva is made relevant, the long-lasting outbreaks are alternately connected to weather variability, multispecies dynamics and/or climate change. As we have seen, the causal relations established within the different narratives evoke various connections and move back and forth between the particular and the abstract.

In each story, the moth larvae play a significant part in the diverse connections enacted, producing a distinct moth larvae reality. Here, “[o]ne world is not a version of the other, but form part of a shared world continuously under construction, in which givens and entities have to be created as such” (Hastrup 2011: 438). While presented above in separate sections, the various narratives included in this chapter do not represent isolated processes of knowledge making. One way or another they relate to each other, and eventually they intersect, are supportive or collide. From the coexistence of these different theorizations, moth larvae outbreaks as a multiple phenomenon evolve. In other words; “[w]hat counts as ‘nature’ in any given circumstances is an outcome of multiple (and constructed) relations between humans and non-humans (…). Therefore, there are multiple ‘natures’ and a central question is who is given the power to speak on behalf of any specific nature” (Jónsdóttir 2012: 198).

For the Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants, the moth larvae are first and foremost experience-near insects that intervene in their everyday lives and necessitate adjustments in their outfield activities, whether or not the outbreaks are linked to climate change or global warming. Even in the aftermath of the outbreaks, the successive destructions in the landscape and changes in multi-species relationships form highly sensorial alterations that people have to deal with in various ways. And this is precisely what people do; they deal with it. The Unjárga-Nesseby narratives have shown what the moth larvae outbreaks feel like and how they are responded to on the ground, as well as how the larvae take part in forming outfield realities. Despite challenges and unwanted changes, the harm caused by the moth larvae to Unjárga-Nesseby livelihoods is mainly dealt with as the kind of change that may eventually occur in a landscape of multi-species engagement, always in the making. In order for people to be able to meet the unexpected with some kind of preparedness, flexibility becomes a key element in this form of theorization.
Among representatives of the county governor of Finnmark, the moth larvae are included in a broader spatial context, linked to a linear temporality of regional forest reduction. The linear temporality evoked underscores the severity of the damaged forest and peoples’ need to act in order to reduce the risk of resource depletion as much as possible. In this narrative, the development moves in one direction with a clear negative outcome. The governor of Finnmark County has an administrative obligation to represent ‘a nature of resources’ and encourages individuals across municipalities to reduce the harmful impacts of the outbreaks before it is too late.

In the natural science narrative, a correlation between increased temperatures and vast amounts of moth larvae is established. A linear temporality is evoked as long-term environmental trends, including more frequent and intense moth larvae outbreaks, are expected to increase in severity in times to come. Here the moth larvae are no longer found to represent the regional level of Finnmark County, but characterize a global climate change phenomenon with a circumpolar scope.

Within the social science narrative that I partook in producing, the focus is on the positive and negative effects of the moth larvae outbreaks on Unjárga-Nesseby livelihoods, and their potential consequences, given future climate change projections. With a linear temporality and a global scale as essential terms of reference, the Unjárga-Nesseby moth larvae outbreaks are enacted as one particular form of a local manifestation of climate change to materialize in a variety of forms across the globe.

From the different narratives presented in this chapter it seems clear that the moth larvae outbreaks in Unjárga-Nesseby do not constitute an unambiguous risk situation shared by all narrators. While concurrences in risk evaluation can be recognized among Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants, and between them and the regional administration, as well as the scientific communities, there are also examples of diverging notions of risk and examples where risk is found to be irrelevant. In other words, risk cannot be universally established, but is enacted and theorized through diverse practices where some connections are highlighted and others are kept in the background.

Within the discourse of climate change, risk is related to changes in the world climate in time. In his article “The evolution of climate ideas and knowledge”, Matthias Heymann (2010: 593) identifies how “[t]he rationalist ideal of modern science to gain ‘objective knowledge’ about nature provided an important intellectual background for the construction of predominance of single climate concepts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As there is only one nature, there could only be one scientific truth.” In this way, the concept of
climate change can be seen as an example of how “the specific social contexts of knowledge production become increasingly irrelevant as the knowledges themselves take on the generalisable forms that allow them to float free of the conditions of their making” (Harvey 2007:164).

The empirical investigations and theoretical discussions included in this chapter have shown how a tiny insect like the moth larva can take part in a variety of ‘becomings’ of related realities, through multiple world-making practices. In examining the processes behind the various realities referred to above, an understanding of the world as multiple rather than singular is evoked. Within this multiple world, all knowledge versions make up equally legitimate enactments of parallel realities. The one is not ‘more real’ than the other. Quite the contrary, they are all athwart theoretizations (Helmreich 2009), or enactments, of human-nature relationships, together forming a multiple reality performed through a variety of socio-material processes.

Throughout the chapter, the relationships established or dismissed within the different narratives presented have been investigated to discern the various realities, or natures, produced. In this multiple reality, we must, as stated by Mol (2002: 165), “come to terms with the fact that we live in an underdetermined world, where doubt can always be raised. Somehow we must learn to understand how it is that, given this possibility, we can still act.” This may be particularly important when it comes to our present challenge of how to deal with climate change. The global climate change thematics open for investigations on the local and the global, particularities and abstractions; topics that conclude the final chapter of this thesis.
Multiple natures

This thesis has addressed the ways in which various natures are continuously brought into being through practice. Among Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants, nature is not something ‘out there’. Instead we have seen how multiple nature realities are constantly created in multispecies and socio-material activities in the outfields, or in storytelling and conversations about different outfield localities and events. Forming an essential part of Unjárga-Nesseby living, diverse natures are enacted through practices involving humans, animals, plants, land and water, as well as seasonality and weather.

The multispecies relationships included in the outfield activities presented in the previous chapters, elucidate the lack of a straightforward divide between ‘nature’ and ‘society’ and ‘the wild’ and ‘the tame’ in Unjárga-Nesseby nature-based practices. As shown, a conventional model of domestication, founded on a clear dualism between nature and society, can be recognized in the national environmental management strategies, forming a premise for the regulation of Unjárga-Nesseby outdoor life. Among the municipality’s inhabitants, however, more interconnected understandings of biosocial relations are apparent in the practical outfield activities carried out, and in outfield-related statements and stories. Far from seeing the mountains and forests, the fjord and lakes as wilderness, these areas are found to constitute important aspects of the known locations people feel at home within.

The previous chapters have revealed how phenomenological and material semiotics inspired perspectives facilitates the inclusion of multiplicity and variability in my investigations of nature, thus demonstrating how dynamic and emergent nature realities are enacted into being through a multitude of complex practices. Furthermore, by focusing on the particularities included in specific individual as well as collective outfield activities, it becomes evident how even in a small community, multiple natures are encompassed. Instead of presenting to the reader ‘the Unjárga-Nesseby nature’, I have drawn attention to the diversity that such a depiction would inevitably conceal.
Among the majority of the Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants, the practical engagement with nature, or possessing the knowledge connected to such activities even when not carried out in practice, proves highly important in peoples’ sense of individual identity, as well as in the establishment and maintenance of social relations. While acknowledging the multitude of outfield activities practiced throughout the year, a shared frame of reference connected to Unjárga-Nesseby as a place gathers peoples’ individual experiences of these activities into a collective sense of belonging. Such production of locality is carried out through harvesting activities as well as in subsequent food production and gift exchange. Furthermore, particular ways of Unjárga-Nesseby living are highlighted among the inhabitants in order to tell specific stories and enact Unjárga-Nesseby as a place in a certain way. A similar process of inclusion and exclusion is conducted by me in the production of this thesis, in order for a particular story to be told.

Nature practices and STS-inspired anthropology

The story presented throughout the preceding chapters, is a result of the integration of Unjárga-Nesseby fieldwork data and theoretical investigations, inspired by classical anthropological approaches to the study of social interaction, phenomenological perspectives of peoples’ mutually constitutive engagement with their environments, and a material semiotics view of the world as continuously generated by socio-material relations.

As mentioned in the introduction, a range of anthropological studies inspired by scholars within Science and Technology Studies (STS) has recently evolved (e.g. Tsing 2010, Abram and Lien 2011, Harvey 2012). STS-inspired anthropology primarily exemplifies the possibilities such interdisciplinary engagement may cause, but also reveals how context, language and social communication and interaction are themes of disciplinary differentiation (Tsing 2010, Harvey 2012, Lien 2012). In my own research, I found the inclusion of a STS approach to strengthen my anthropological findings.

Rather than moving the focus away from people and social interaction, material semiotics provided room for the materiality that I came to recognize as highly essential to Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants in their outfield practices. In these activities, the interaction between people and the material became evident, and a material semiotics approach offered an opportunity for this to be reflected in my theoretical considerations as well. Furthermore, material semiotics helped me to pay attention to processes as well as the complexities
interaction between people and the material involve, and served as a reminder for not automatically taking ‘truths’ for granted.

At the same time, anthropological ethnographical perspectives and phenomenological orientations have proved essential to my research by keeping me attuned to context, human interaction, the spoken word and the importance of the sensory in peoples’ living in the world. As states Ingold (2011: 239): “anthropology’s solution, to ground knowing in being, (…) means that any study of human beings must also be a study with them.”

Throughout all phases of my PhD research, I found that my sources of inspiration have broadened my investigation, and helped me to be true to the complexity I learned to associate with Unjárga-Nesseby outfield practices. My combined perspective further inspired me to utilise the part of my research that focused on climate change as an opportunity for examining the division of ‘the local’ and ‘the global’, as well as taking a closer look at the flow of knowledge.

**Particularities and abstractions**

Similar to the notion of nature, neither the local nor the global exist prior to their constructions. Rather these are entities created through various processes. Correspondingly, the practices that bring such notions into being should also be investigated empirically. Throughout the thesis I have illustrated how the production of Unjárga-Nesseby as a ‘local’ place is enacted through, amongst others, historical narratives, outfield activities, shared meals and the establishment of particular products. In order to make Unjárga-Nesseby visible within a Norwegian national context or even an international climate change context, Unjárga-Nesseby must be made meaningful outside the community as well. To achieve this, bits and pieces of Unjárga-Nesseby would have to circulate.

Ingold’s (2011: 148) recognition of place as delineated by movement, “[w]here inhabitants meet and trails are entwined,” has served as inspiration to look more closely at how different participants, or actants, produce different places. We have seen how Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants, in being used to a weather-world where a certain degree of predictability is recognized within the seasonal variations, interact flexibly with both expected and unexpected shifts in their surroundings. With the emerging recognition of human activity as an essential driver of global environmental change, the climate change discourse has become an important context for present understandings and explanations of such shifts. This
influences the production of place, by providing a spectrum along which different degrees of ‘locality’ and ‘globality’ can be played out, and it serves as an interesting point of departure for investigating the circulation of knowledge.

Chapter 8 showed how risk cannot be universally established, but is enacted and theorized through diverse practices in which some connections are brought to the fore and others kept in the background. With the extensive, regional moth larvae outbreaks as points of departure, an investigation of the processes through which different climate related narratives were produced, led to an exploration of issues concerning knowledge production and scale making. Rather than treating the various ways of knowing presented in the chapter as being of particular fixed kinds, I have paid attention to the processes through which the different debates are produced, making interconnections and gradual transitions visible.

My ethnographic data has revealed the importance of highlighting the fluid boundaries between the different elements that various enactments of knowledge may include or exclude, depending upon the context in question. This thesis has shown how a detailed analysis of human-nature relations, in combination with a processual knowledge approach, makes it possible to move beyond the local-global dichotomy and instead investigate the processes that result in productions of place, as either locally specific or globally representative, and enactments of knowledge, as either particular or abstract. This approach further revealed the mutual influence between place-specific discourses in Unjárga-Nesseby, primarily focusing on weather, and scientific discourses centring on climate change. Rather than representing isolated processes of knowledge making, these different ways of knowing were found to relate to each other, and either intersected, were supportive or collided. Thus, in addition to engaging with anthropological debates regarding nature, this thesis has also provided insights relevant to the study of climate change.

**Anthropology and climate change research**

One of the challenges with the global climate change phenomenon is how it represents “formats that carry universalistic pretentions, but that in fact hide the locality to which they pertain” (Mol 2002: viii). However, as Mol continues, “the idea is not to celebrate localism instead of universalism. Instead it is to keep track as persistently as possible of what it is that alters when matters, terms, and aims travel from one place to another” (ibid.). From the ethnography presented in this thesis, the “we know where we live” statement, commonly
expressed by Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants, can be seen as recognition of “how one’s life and surroundings are not entirely in one’s control” (Faier 2009: 392). As we have seen, weather variability and seasonal changes form important parts of these surroundings, highly influencing peoples’ outfield activities. In order for people to be able to meet the unexpected with some measure of preparedness, flexibility becomes essential.

Through my investigation of how change is perceived and explained, primarily among Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants but also in scientific records, the discussions spanned from emphasising specific linkages and causal relations in the outfields, to accentuating more general connections with reference to a global scale. Despite challenges and unwanted changes brought about by the extensive moth larvae outbreaks, the inhabitants dealt with the harm caused to Unjárga-Nesseby livelihoods mainly as the kind of change that may occur in a landscape of multi-species engagement, always in the making. To them, the moth larvae were first and foremost experience-near insects intervening in their everyday lives, regardless of whether they linked these outbreaks to global climate change or not.

As stated by Barnes et al. (2013), anthropological insights can serve as important complements to climate change research by contributing to contextualize understandings of climate change impacts. The anthropological concern further “allows us to shed light on the complexities of real life situations,” Crate and Nuttall (2009: 395) comment, recognizing the challenge to be one of bridging scale and revealing their interconnections (ibid.). The Unjárga-Nesseby moth larvae outbreaks exemplify such a bridging of scale.

By linking climate change and the moth larvae outbreaks, the global phenomenon is connected to a particular event that is sensed and responded to by the Unjárga-Nesseby inhabitants. In relating to the climate of the world as a whole, climate change knowledge is by definition representing ‘the global’. An abstract climate is however more difficult to relate to than changes in the weather, or other events directly influencing peoples’ ways of living. In seeking verification of global abstractions, such as climate change, it thus seems necessary to establish connections to particular places and specific events. In this process, global climate change can be recognized as real also through experienced specificities.

Based on her work on bodies, Mol (2002) suggests that we need to learn ways of living with uncertainty and openness. As this thesis has shown, an inclusion of multiplicity in nature investigations may open up for new ways of accounting for particularities of nature. Moving away from the idea of a single nature, we can also acknowledge alternatives to ‘one scientific truth’ (c.f. Heymann 2010). The growing recognition of human activity as a ‘driver’ of global environmental change (Palsson et al. 2012) makes it increasingly clear how ‘the
natural’ cannot be separated from ‘the social’. A step towards a political solution to our present climate change challenges would be to acknowledge that no external overview position exists, and to recognize the various scale-making practices and socio-material processes involved in enacting ‘local particularities’, just as much as ‘global phenomena’.

Recognising the ontological multiplicity in the world, also within climate change research, would open for solutions based on the variability that characterizes life on earth, rather than generalizations that do not fit peoples’ various realities. What we as anthropologists can do then, Hastrup (2011: 438) suggests, “is to know and write about the world in ways that leave room for, and indeed make creative use of, other ways of knowing in a manner that recognizes the pivotal contribution of contingent social encounters to the creation of the world.” Consistent with Hastrup’s recommendation, my aim has been to show what nature can also be, by following various processes that bring different natures into being.
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### Appendix 1

**Table 1: List of names on animals and plants mentioned in the thesis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English name</th>
<th>Latin name</th>
<th>Sámi name</th>
<th>Norwegian name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arctic fox</td>
<td>Alopex lagopus</td>
<td>Njálla</td>
<td>Fjellrev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arctic herring</td>
<td>Clupea harengus</td>
<td>Sallit/silde*</td>
<td>Sild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic cod</td>
<td>Gadus morhua</td>
<td>Dorski</td>
<td>Torsk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic halibut</td>
<td>Hippoglossus hippoglossus</td>
<td>Bálddis</td>
<td>Kveite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic salmon</td>
<td>Salmo salar</td>
<td>Lúossa</td>
<td>Laks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic wolfish</td>
<td>Anarhichas lupus</td>
<td>Stáidnár</td>
<td>Steinbit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autumnal moth</td>
<td>Epirrita autumnata</td>
<td>Lastamáhtu</td>
<td>Fjellbjørkemåler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black crowberry</td>
<td>Emptetrum nigrum</td>
<td>Muorji/çahpesmuorji*</td>
<td>Krekling/krokebær</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blueberry</td>
<td>Vaccinium myrtillus</td>
<td>Sarrit</td>
<td>Blåber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue mussel</td>
<td>Mytilus edulis</td>
<td>Alitskálžu</td>
<td>Blåskjell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown bear</td>
<td>Ursus arctos</td>
<td>Guovža</td>
<td>Brunbjørn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capelin</td>
<td>Malloitus villosus</td>
<td>Sáka/sávša*</td>
<td>Lodde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloudberries</td>
<td>Rubus chamaemorus</td>
<td>Luomi</td>
<td>Multe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common eider</td>
<td>Somateria mollissima</td>
<td>Hávda</td>
<td>Ærfugl/ea</td>
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<td>Betula nana</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flounder</td>
<td>Paralichthyidae sp.</td>
<td>Find达尔</td>
<td>Flyindre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gyrfalcon</td>
<td>Falco rusticolus</td>
<td>Rievsatfälli</td>
<td>Jaktfalk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haddock</td>
<td>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</td>
<td>Diksudivso*</td>
<td>Hyse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hare</td>
<td>Lepus timidus</td>
<td>Njoammiil</td>
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<td>Lemming</td>
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<td>Lingonberries</td>
<td>Vaccinium vitis-idaea</td>
<td>Jokqajaanja*</td>
<td>Tytteber</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Lynx lynx</td>
<td>Albbas</td>
<td>Gaupe</td>
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<td>Makrella</td>
<td>Makrell</td>
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<td>Duorši</td>
<td>Breiflabb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moose</td>
<td>Alces alces</td>
<td>Sarvva/ealga*</td>
<td>Ei</td>
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<td>Mosquito</td>
<td>Culicidae sp.</td>
<td>Cuoka</td>
<td>Mygg</td>
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<td>Fjellbjørk</td>
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<td>Sáidi</td>
<td>Sei</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ptarmigan</td>
<td>Lagopus lagopus &amp;</td>
<td>Rievvsat &amp; giron</td>
<td>Lirype &amp; fjellrype</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Ruksesrieban</td>
<td>Rødrev</td>
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<td>Kongekrabbe</td>
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<td>Rein</td>
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<td>Reke</td>
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<td>Snospruv</td>
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<td>Meachesinno*</td>
<td>Smyle</td>
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<td>Lomvi</td>
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<td>Mearraoaaskin</td>
<td>Havørn</td>
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<td>Lastamáhtu</td>
<td>Liten høstmåler</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wolverine</td>
<td>Gulo gulo</td>
<td>Geatki</td>
<td>Jerv</td>
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* Unjárga-Nesseby dialect