Paradigm shift in the view of duodji in the 21st century: Higher education in *duodji¹ Gunvor Guttorm*

Introduction

In this article, I intend to elaborate on one cultural expression and the position it has taken as a university discipline. That cultural expression is *duodji*, which can be roughly translated asSámi arts and crafts. The case that I use as an example in the presentation is based on my work at *Sámi allaskuvla*, the Sámi University College in Guovdageaidnu (Kautokeino) in the Sámi area of Norway, where we have designed new bachelor and master programmes in duodji. In the first part of the article I discuss indigenous knowledge and the content of duodjias a paradigm shift within the art education discourse. In the second part I present some examples of how we have developed an indigenous art programme at the bachelor level that has a Sámi point of view.

The Sámi University College was established at Guovdageaidnu, Norway, in 1989 as a result of Sámi political mobilisation in 1970s and 80s. The Norwegian government gave the Sámi University College a special responsibility for providing higher education in Sámi art. Duodji was one of the first courses at the Sámi University College. The Sámi University College is not the only indigenous college in Norway; there is one in Sápmi also. The Sámi language is the main language in both teaching and administration in the university college. Most of the practical instructions and the written teaching instructions are also in the Sámi language. Those who choose to work at an institution like this aspire to develop certain areas in their professions that will benefit Sámi education. We all have different ways of doing this.

My own experience of being part of the Sámi society and the duodji society may make me somewhat "blind" as researcher, but on the other hand, very observant. I started to work with duodji when I finished highschool. But it was while I was studying for my master's degree induodji that I realised that there was a need to emphasise Sámi knowledge in higher education. I did my PhD at the University of Tromsø art faculty. At that time, in the beginning of 2000s, there was little study being done on indigenous theoretical frameworks in art studies at the university, so the journey through my PhD thesis was quite so literary (Guttorm, 2001).

My experience of being marginalised as a student/researcher has forced me, and given me the courage, to take duodji seriously and give it a chance to be a field on its own in an academic context. My approach to this is to first of all try to understand the kind of frames

¹ Duodji refers to Sami cultural expressions.

in which duodji has existed and exists today, and second, how it can become an independent discipline within higher education.

Indigenous knowledge frameworks

When discussing a starting point for developing an indigenous art programme the methodologies of indigenous peoples and knowledge production are crucial aspects. How indigenous methodology is understood is connected to what group of indigenous people is being discussed and what that indigenous group has experienced.

The Cree scientist Margaret Kovach considers that a researcher's self-location is important information for the indigenous peoples who are involved in the research. In self-location, researchers share their belonging to a group (identity), the kind of cultural experience they have, or how they have based their understanding on knowledge established by indigenous peoples (Kovach, 2009, p. 110). Kovach emphasises that in indigenous peoples research, self-location is important because the researcher has made a decision to view elements from an indigenous people's point of view. As I understand this, Kovach means that this way, the researcher recognises his/her own starting point and experiences, and that these are a part of the indigenous people's knowledge production and research. She is saying that indigenous methodologies are not about organising knowledge, but rather about the position from which the researcher understands knowledge (Kovach, 2009, p. 55). Many of the approaches in indigenous methodologies are similar to Western approaches, but it is the relationship between the researcher and the researched that make the indigenous visible (Kovach, 2009, p. 55).

Maori scientist Linda Tuhiwai Smith has outlined a model for indigenous research methodology that can also be adapted to indigenous education (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). For her, self-determination in the research agenda becomes something more than a political goal (TuhiwaiSmith,1999, p. 116). Also, she can see similarities between common and indigenous research, although there are elements that she sees as different and which involve the process of transformation, of decolonisation, of healing and of mobilisation as peoples (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 116).

The common issues that become present are experiences, decolonising and healing. The experiences are based upon personal commitment. But what experiences are we discussing? As I understand Linda Tuhiwai Smith, she is referring to a certain nation's experience of colonisation and how this has affected the people (1999, pp. 1-3). Her opinion is that since the knowledge of indigenous people has not been visible in the building of knowledge, the consequence is that the indigenous people have rejected their own system of using knowledge. Once a system of knowledge has been rejected, in order to restore it, it is necessary to raise awareness, make changes and improve it (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 3). Asta Baltoand Vuokko Hirvonen see the same tendency in the Sámi context (Balto &

Hirvonen, 2008, pp. 104-126). Kovach also observes the experience of the entire nation and agrees with Smith in this. But she adds that individuals also have their own experiences, and these influence the opinions of each and every scientist. When she discusses experience, Kovach states that everything that affects people is worth taking into account, for example issues that come up during knowledge collection.(Kovach, 2009, p. 113).Shawn Wilson has used storytelling, alternating between his own personal stories of life and how these have affected his choices in the process of collecting knowledge (Wilson, 2008). His conclusion is that story is not a matter of unique ways of functioning, but rather a matter of behaviour and traditions (Wilson, 2008, pp. 80-125).

Duodji versus dáidda, craft versus art

In the course of time, the concept of *duodji* in the Sámi language has assumed several meanings. We can say that duodji refers to all forms of creative expression that require human thought and production, but it cannot automatically be translated as *art*.

However, the term is mostly used to describe a specific work that is created by hand and anchored in a Sámi activity and reality. Duodji, then, has its origin in "everyday life" in Sápmi, the activities, the conventions; the aesthetic understanding has been formed within this "everyday life". When the needs of everyday life were fulfilled through duodji, it was important to be able to obtain materials, and to design and use the needed items, and repair them as necessary.

Both the Greek term techné and the Latin term ars consisted initially of aesthetics and technique. Thus, craftspeople and artists were equally important. At present, we can also say that techné is, in terms of its content, much closer to duodji than art. In the Western classical period, techné meant all work that could be finished. In that time, ordinary craft and art were not yet seen as different things. Thus, techné is a general term, but there are also technés, the levels and value of which can vary (Shiner, 2001, pp. 19-24). As concerns the difference between art and craft, Shiner argues that, initially, there was no difference between the Latin word ars and the Greek word techné; the same applied to artist and artisan (craftsperson). However, by the late 1700s, art had become the opposite of craft and artist the opposite of artisan (Shiner, 2001, p. 5). Shiner also sees the rise of aesthetics as a separation, as special and ordinary enjoyment became different things. Contemplative enjoyment was called aesthetics and could be found in "fine arts", where as ordinary enjoyment was connected to everyday life (Shiner, 2001, p. 6). According to Shiner, this division means much more than just giving new content to a term; it means a change in a system, and, as it affects both practices and institutions, its influence goes far beyond adding a meaning to a term.

Indigenous art and craft education

Higher art education based on indigenous peoples' ways of expression, thinking and everyday life is a real challenge for indigenous studies in academia. In a Sámi context it is necessary to take duodji as the starting point when it comes to higher art education with an indigenous perspective. For years, indigenous peoples around the world have argued that self-determination indicates education on all levels and subjects of the educational systems (May, 1999, pp. 42-63). Academic art education has a strong position in Euro-American history (see e.g. Hansen, 2007; McEvilley, 1992; Vassnes 2007, pp.6-15; Vassnes, 2009, pp.19-23). In fact, art history, with its European or Euro-American approach, is Eurocentric, and art education is often based on this perspective.

In 1988 Alfred Young Man wrote that the history of art in America has many steps to take before it can also acknowledge the basis of indigenous peoples, even though museums of art have started to embrace indigenous expressions of art into their collections (Young Man, 1988, p. 5). In universities and higher education, indigenous knowledge has seldom been visible, and artistic expressions of indigenous peoples have very rarely been part of art studies. Even when they have been included, it has been the result of the Euro-American view of art and Euro-American art programmes. When it is included at all, indigenous art is generally only a minor subject within a "real" art programme. In the past thirty years, indigenous peoples have demanded that their cultural expressions (and knowledge) be included in higher education. To achieve this, they have applied diverse strategies. This integration is, however, a complex process, as universities and other institutions of higher education often have to follow national programmes and regulations. This applies to comprehensive schooling as well (see Balto & Hirvonen, 2008; Hirvonen, 2004, pp. 110-137; Keskitalo, 2009, pp. 62-75). For the Sámi, the Sámi artists association pointed out in the 1970s the need for higher education in art with a Sámi perspective. On the other hand, in the early 1980s, when the engagement to include more subjects in school arose, a demand for teacher education in duodji was raised. This has led, over time, to the planning and establishment of two different "schools" of art, one based upon duodji, and the other based upon art.

Nevertheless, many indigenous peoples have attempted, in their regions, to create art programmes for higher education, often as part of existing art programmes or as independent programmes. When the Maori of Aotearoa, New Zealand, began to build their own educational system in the 1980s, they did it through art. This indigenous art concept has a holistic approach, which integrates both the process of defining and exercising indigenous self- determination and the discourse about art in general (Jackson & Phillips, 1999, pp. 38- 40). The same applies to the aboriginal peoples of Canada, Central and South America, the USA and Australia (see e.g. McCulloch, 1999, pp. 45- 47). There is a clear effort to make cultural expressions visible and, through them, to have a discussion with the global

art community. When Pueblo scholar and artist Gregory Cajete elaborates on indigenous education, he simply points to the "eye of the beholder", which for him "reflects the perspective and worldview that I believe have to begin to teach in environmental education, which also includes to be critical to the colonial past, and the healing process through education" (Cajete, 2000, pp. 181-191).

Here we can find a parallel to Sami conditions. By using the Sámi word *duodji* instead of *handicraft* or *art*, we have already assumed a Sámi approach – which involves a broad perspective – to art education. By using the term *duodji* we also launch a discussion on how the term itself was used in the past and the links it has to the contemporary world. My main argument and claim is that as we want to have duodji as a discipline in higher education, we need to use the content of duodji itself and the way it works in society as a basis. The building of indigenous knowledge in general deals with such questions as who "owns" knowledge, who uses it and what kind of knowledge is valid. This is a common indigenous challenge that has been elaborated by many indigenous scholars working within the indigenous paradigm (see Balto, 2008; Kuokkanen, 2009; Wilson, 2008; Young Man, 1988;). In that sense, duodji is one of the narratives in many parallel art stories. This is part of the integration of higher indigenous education.

Relationships

Shawn Wilson states that the methods of investigation do not necessarily determine how to reach new starting points. When he describes the paradigms of indigenous peoples, he says that it is the relations that are the core issues. He divides relations into several aspects, including human relations (relatives, family, clans and so forth), created relations, relations between nature and the surroundings, and connection to the universe and to certain ideas (Wilson, 2008, pp. 80-97).

Cajete writes that education is a process, learning is a struggle and a process in life and that life and nature are always about making things connect (Cajete, 2000, p. 23). This connection leads to the fact that the scientist or the teacher is never left alone. In Sámi life it is evident that connections are spoken about, especially when dealing with traditional knowledge. For example, mention is made of connections to certain areas, specific places, and how people have used the area and made their life there possible (Guttorm, 2011. pp. 59-61). Solveig Jokshas written about the upbringing of children and described how teaching is carried out, and has also written about the connection between what one learns, who is teaching, and where the learning takes place, and how all of these affect the learning (Joks, 2007).

Rauna Kuokkanen has suggesteed the Sami term *láhi* (gift) as an entry point for understanding the relationship between humans and nature. Kuokkanen suggests that the system of sharing the richness of nature (láhi) and what has been gathered or caught can be

transformed into a model of how to share knowledge (Kuokkanen, 2006, p. 24). Asta Balto has studied how schools can adapt their work so they take into account human relationships and connections to nature. She stresses that this learning must be seen as benefiting parents, children, teachers and the surrounding environment (Balto, 2008, p. 53). Her research is taken from primary school, but it can also be comparative with contemporary higher education.

The strategies for achieving higher education in Sámi craft

What, then, are the strategies that we have chosen when creating a higher education programme – especially a three-year programme – in Sámi craft? Most important has been to strengthen different relationships in the establishing process. I will now elaborate on some of these strategies. As mentioned earlier, the Sámi University College had long wanted to start a three-year study programme in Sámi craft and art, but under Norwegian state regulations, it was not possible for the university college to get financing for such a programme. However, when all the specialised university institutions and universities of Norway were granted the right to formulate their flexible bachelor's degree programmes, we got the chance to create a bachelor's programme in duodji. The university college was able to begin its higher education programme in art in the autumn of 2008.

Invite organisations to join in the planning process

We invited the duodji associations to join us in planning the education programme. This gave us the opportunity to understand what they regarded as important, and it helped to create goodwill and understanding in the surrounding society. This goodwill was especially crucial with respect to certain issues from an indigenous point of view. One part of this starting point involves changing the prevailing feeling that one's own experiences are not worth anything and to begin a process of healing.

We also wanted to engage trained artisans and artists in the planning. We appointed a reference group, which had two members, one from Swedish Sápmi and the other one from Finnish Sápmi. During the planning, we formulated the training guidelines.

Relationship between SUC and HonouredArtisan

In the Sámi language, *eallilanolmmoš* means a person who has lived for a certain time and has gathered wisdom of life. An eallilanolmmošis a person with unique knowledge and her /his authority is closely connected to her/his spirit of sharing knowledge.

Older artisans have knowledge and experience that need to be passed down to students and all of us. Instead of appointing an honorary doctor or artist, we wanted to use the word *duojár* (artisan) and give it a content of high value in the academic world, and we appointed an *ávvuduojár* (honorary artisan) for our university college. We appointed Jon Ole Andersen/Jovnna Ovllá as our honorary artisan, because he had already been a skilful member of the school staff; he had worked as an examiner both in undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Ever since the 1970s, he has worked enthusiastically on strengthening education about and the trade of Sámi craft at all levels. Jovnna Ovllá has also worked on bigger projects. He has, for example, built catering facilities that are in the shape of the Sámi tent, or *goahti*, reconstructed ancient sealskin boats, and decorated new public buildings. He has assumed a humble approach to Sámi duodji. He is a master of the discipline, and he has always been eager to pass down his knowledge to new generations.²

Relations between students and elders

As long as we have had education in duodji, we have recommended that our students look for information and knowledge in their own environments. For example, in 2001 we had a project in which students worked together with elder artisans in creating a large product. The project had two goals: the students would experience how traditional skills can be transferred from one generation to another, and they would learn a traditional way of making handicrafts that they could then pass on to other students. However, it is not always possible to send a whole group of students to study with artisans. Therefore, we chose another option; we invited elder artisans to come to the school.

In my opinion, it is important to make use of the wisdom of our honorary artisans and elder craftspeople in teaching. However, the students also need to acquire tools for assessing their handicrafts and different types of craft tasks. Therefore, we have attempted to combine the practice of creating with the building of theory on the basis of this practice, which again provides meaning for contemporary students. It is extremely important that we who are responsible for the craft studies in our school succeed in ensuring that these two aspects become interlinked.

Relations to other institutions

In Sápmi there are many institutions that promote the Sámi culture. The institutions that are situated locally have an advantage in cooperating and thus strengthening the local economies in areas outside more heavily populated centres. And when each institution has experience managing to be a small local institution in the "periphery", then this strengthens the efficiency of both the local community and all the small institutions to be visible. But building good relations is also important when preparing the students for the work ahead of them. And when students become aware of what each institution has to offer, then they come to value their education more highly.

² Jon Ole Andersen was also nominated and appointed to the WINHEC Order of the Circle of Scholars of Indigenous Knowledge in 2010 for his work as a traditional knowledge holder and as the *ávvuduojár*(honoraryartisan) of Sámi allaskuvla/Sámi University College.

We also contacted other indigenous educational institutions in order to find lecturers and to learn about the content of similar education programmes in other areas. This allowed us to create professional networks in the field of indigenous arts and crafts. For instance, the first course on indigenous handicraft and art was run as a separate project with external financing, which meant that we could travel more than usual and invite guest lecturers from other regions.

The curriculum

When we started working with the education programmes we had to take into account what parts of the duodji that function today in the Sámi society could be transferred into higher education, and how to make the situation adaptable for the students. Sámi duodji knowledge is a heritage that has been and still is important for the Sámi people; it changes over time in an ongoing dialogue about what really becomes a tradition. For instance, parts of the reindeer, such as skins and antlers, are used in all kinds of duodji and are common among different Sámi groups. How to prepare the materials is also common knowledge. When it comes to the creation or production of a certain kind of item, the understanding of collective traditional knowledge can differ from one family, group or region to another. In an institutional world it isn't possible to convey all possible views of Sámi knowledge, and it is perhaps not wanted or necessary in any case. However, the goal is to make the students aware of this. Actually, some of the traditional views of duodji cannot be applied in an institutional world. The challenge in the process of education is still to find avenues to convey essential parts of the traditional skills and knowledge in an institutional context and develop new platforms for knowledge and creativity. While designing a curriculum that is open-minded and that allows us to work together with other and different kinds of institutions, it is essential to respect indigenous points of view in education, and to include traditional experts' knowledge and skills that will be useful in the education and that can be applied in the modern world. While making the plan we also had to consider the regulations that must be observed by indigenous and higher education institutions in Norway and elsewhere in Europe.

The conditions to be accepted into the programme were a general or "real" competence. Another condition was that the students should have basic knowledge of duodji, or that they had a certificate showing they had learned duodji in another school or at home.

How to use the relations in an educational setting

In the following I present how different relations have been beneficial for the students' work and how the curriculum functions in "reality". In the example that I present here, we took part in the building of a goahti (traditional turf hut). One objective of the duodji education is for students to learn about both the history of Sámi architecture and how to use the materials that are to be found in the environment nearby.

Sámi allaskuvla ran a traditional knowledge project in partnership with people in the local districts.³ The partners, other Sámi institutes all over the Norwegian side of Sápmi, run different projects that collect, preserve and transfer traditional expertise. Riddo Duottar Musea (RDM) is one partner, and they ran a project where they worked with elders to put up a goahti (turf hut) in Gilišillju (a local museum) in Guovdageaidnu. The Sámi allaskuvla students were invited to join in and be a part of the project. There are many aspects to building a goahti and the knowledge connected to it, such as where to find the material, when to collect it, where to build knowledge and in what direction. Once the goahtiis finished and people move into it, there is knowledge to be built regarding how to behave inside a goahti and what rules apply there. The construction of a goahti requires knowledge of the area, the materials, the earth, the seasons, the rituals in staying in a goahti, etc. At the same time, a goahti, with its architecture, can also be regarded as an embodiment of traditional knowledge. For this project, the RDM could call upon three experienced and talented goahti builders (goahtečeahpit): Aslak Anders Gaino, Per Utsi and Jon Ole Andersen (who is also Sami University College's honorary artisan. Parts of the building process were filmed, such as the fetching of *bealjit* (curved poles), the construction process, choosing the birch bark, obtaining *lavdnji* (turf), demolishing an old goahti and constructing the new one. The bachelor course includes the learning of various traditional skills, and the Goahtehuksen Project offered the possibility of a large-scale learning activity such as building a goahti. Through the participation of the students, another factor in the Goahtehuksen Project was realised, namely the transmission aspect. The students were to work with the tradition bearers Aslak Anders, Per and Jon Ole. Jon Ole's role was to transmit the knowledge, and in this way he was also the authority on goahtehuksen. At the same time, Aslak Anders and Per were transmitters of knowledge of the work process. The first meeting between the RDM, árbečeahpit, the film-maker SolveigJoks and the college students took place on the land where the goahti would be built. Karen Elle Gaup, the director of RDM, presented the project, its objective and the roles of the people involved in it. This sequence was of great importance for the project, as everyone present came to realise what the project consisted of and all could feel involved in it. Jon Ole, Per and Aslak Anders had an overview of the elements of the work process and said that we would be able to build the goahti in a week since the students were taking part. They oversaw the process at all times, while we (the students and I) could only follow the instructions they gave us (see Joks, 2010).

³More about this project can be found at <u>http://www.arbediehtu.no/</u>



Figure 1: Students and Jon Ole Andersen working with the goahti (traditional turf hut).

The place where the goahti was going to be rebuilt was close to Sámi allaskuvla and could be seen from the windows of the duodji studios. The building of the goahti was a physical outcome of the week's activity, but a lot of other things happened and were tied together while learning. There were a lot of coffee breaks, and the fireplace was an important gathering place as well. By the fireplace stories were told from the time when people lived in lávvus. The question of how people originally invented the hut's design came up on occasion.

On the last day of building, the students had a moment to sit and reflect on what they had experienced over the past week. In the following week they moved that reflection to a new duodji, where they created pictures of what they experienced. Those who worked with wood carved a story into the wood, and those who worked with thread used that to show their story. One of the students, Katarina, embroidered a pillow. She had reflected on her own experiences living in goahti. On one side she embroidered a picture showing rats and dirt because that was what she remembered from her life in a hut. She remembered that always when they came up to the mountains in the summer and were going to stay in the hut, the rats had been in there making a mess and they had to clean it up. On the other side of the pillow she showed all of the good memories, such as when she met her relatives, fished and lived a "simple" life in the mountains. The pillow represented exactly how life was inside the hut, with everyone on the same level, on the floor sitting on their knees on birch branches and reindeer skins, and if they felt like lying down, then they just needed to find something to put under their heads.



Figure 2: Katarina's pillow.

Another student, Ann Majbrittes, reflected more about what happened during the work of building the goahti. She noted that she was working on top of the hut most of the time, and that she saw a lot from there. At the end of the building process she shaped the *reahpenráigi* (smokehole), where she had a new experience with the environment and the

landscape. Even though she had known of Gilišillju, she had never noticed it the way she now saw it. A new dimension of Guovdageaidnu had opened up for her; she had "placed the place", so to speak. She could also watch how the hut little by little got tighter and smaller towards the opening at the top and how she actually moved upwards with the construction. At the same time she heard and saw what was happening around her. She had an overview of the fireplace, and could see the guests coming, the other students, etc., and she could also see how the river runs downstream. She also reflected on the reahpenráigi.The reahpenráigi makes it possible to have a warm goahti, without too much smoke, and from inside the goahtiit is possible to look out. So this was what she wanted to express when she embroidered a reahpenráigi, to celebrate her own feeling of being on the top of the goahti, and the importance of the reahpenráigi she was shaping for those staying inside the goahti. She had placed herself on the top of the hut, and had the view from there; it was opposite to the view of Katarina, who expressed what happens inside the goahti.



Figure 3: Ann Majbrittes' piece.

In this project, where the Sámi allaskuvlla traditional knowledge project and Riddo Duottar Museums were involved, the aim was storing and documentation. The goal for Sámi allaskuvlla duodji education was to cooperate with skilled artisans, learn how to build a goahti and in that way get acquainted with Sámi construction traditions. In addition, students themselves were to come up with their own goals for new and personal work. Each of the participants therefore had their own intentions regarding what to achieve and how to achieve it, and had to establish good conditions for that. Here I can see that there are many levels in creating the necessary conditions. It's again like Shawn Wilson presents it, in that one makes connections and uses them in a positive way when setting out to do something (Wilson, 2008, pp. 80-91). Asta Balto has researched how Sámi teachers transfer traditional knowledge to the next generation, and notes that the basis for creating good conditions to achieve that is to strengthen the will to learn (Balto, 2008, p. 53).Long before we started to build the goahti, we had contact with Riddo Duottar Museat and also with the honoraryartisanJon Ole Andersen. This way of working, when we communicate with other institutions and skilled craftspeople, has proven to be very useful. I can see many advantages to working like this in the higher education in duodji; we maintain relations with elders and other institutions, and the students can work together on bigger projects, learning from elders and making their own reflections through new expressions.

Conclusions

In this paper I have presented how duodji education has been built up in Sámi Allaskuvla and considered what kind of paradigm shift in art education may come about. As mentioned previously, duodji has its basis in Sámi everyday life. When the activities of duodji, duddjon (crafting) and discourse move from everyday life and become an institutional practice, it is itself a paradigm shift too. In process and in a Sámi approach to art education, the choice of terminology (duodji) is a strategy. As an academic discipline duodji has elements of both production of traditional and contemporary arts and crafts and theoretical approaches to the task. The challenges are to take care of the heritage expressed through duodji and to develop students' artistic skills. Here we deal with a problem that is common in all kinds of training programmes in academic contexts, that of refining already existing skills and creating new experiences and expressions. We have to have an ongoing critical discourse, because the choices are not unproblematic.

When emphasizing duodji in art education and art research, we can talk about a paradigm shift in two ways: first, we produce new knowledge by using our own Sámi experiences, and second, we are subjects in the knowledge building and research. I have chosen a contextual approach to knowledge and epistemology. By taking a minority and indigenous approach, and by using cultural artistic expression within a specific culture, education itself creates the space for diversity of ideas and opinions. In order to be able to achieve the goals that have been set, it is also necessary to use certain approaches that open possibilities that do not make the gates of the institution close.

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