Tourism work among Sámi indigenous people
Exploring its prevalence and role in sparsely populated areas of Sweden

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Little is known about the role of tourism development among Sámi indigenous people living in the sparsely populated areas of Sweden. Previous research shows tourism to be a potentially suitable option for development in such regions, yet the exact implications for the indigenous population remains largely unexplored. The aim of this thesis therefore is to investigate the prevalence and role of tourism involvement among Sámi indigenous people in sparsely populated areas of northern Sweden. Three different objectives underlie the aim of this work. First, to see if involvement in tourism among Sámi is common enough to have meaningful impacts on changes that bestow rural livelihoods in northern Sweden. Second, to investigate whether instead of replacing a struggling traditional occupation, tourism is part of a diversification strategy that allows for the continuation of reindeer herding. The final objective is to investigate to what extent tourism benefits go beyond just economic ones and incorporate a variety of social and cultural meanings as well. This thesis uses a livelihood approach as a theoretical lens to guide the investigative work and interpret the results. Multiple methods are used to investigate the topic, which include quantitative register data and interviews.

The results are presented in three articles. The first study shows that reindeer herding is an occupation with a strong inheritance factor. Results also indicate that individuals involved in reindeer herding are more likely to get involved in tourism than geographically matched farmers are. The second study in this thesis shows that there are many motivations behind working in tourism among Sámi entrepreneurs. Links to indigenous culture and knowledge of nature are, alongside job versatility and the joy of working with people, some of the motivations uncovered. The results also show that involvement in tourism is part of a livelihood diversification strategy, where income from tourism is used to support reindeer herding. The final study uncovers a variety of meanings given to tourism work by Sámi entrepreneurs. This includes tourism work as an opportunity to educate tourists about Sámi people and culture, as well as tourism work allowing individuals to express themselves and to keep certain traditions alive. Overall, this thesis shows that tourism involvement is prevalent among Sámi living in sparsely populated areas of Sweden, it often occurs jointly with reindeer herding, and encompasses numerous non-economic benefits. A better understanding of indigenous tourism in northern Sweden opens the door for better policies. The findings presented here need to be taken into consideration in any future analysis of tourism development in northern Sweden.

Keywords
Indigenous tourism, Sámi, reindeer herders, sustainable livelihoods, diversification, rural development, sparsely populated areas, Sweden