

Project Rationale

**Tourism Enterprise
Nutti Sámi Siida**



in Sweden

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on behalf of

Institute for Tourism and Development (Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung e.V.)

January 2023

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Maps



Map 1: Location of Nutti Sámi Siida



Map 2: Sapmi, the settlement area of the Sámi, spans parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia.
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1 INTRODUCTION

The application for the TO DO Award 2023 was submitted by the tourism enterprise Nutti Sámi Siida AB from Jukkasjärvi in Sweden and was nominated by the TO DO Award jury. From 19th to 23rd January 2023, expert Laura Jäger travelled in Sweden on behalf of the Institute for Tourism and Development (Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung e.V.) in order to check on location the information given in the documents submitted by Nutti Sámi Siida.

Based on her insights and findings, the author recommends awarding NUTTI SÁMI SIIDA with the TO DO Award 2023.

2 BACKGROUND AND SETTING

For more than thousands of years, the indigenous Sámi people have lived with their reindeer in harmony with nature in a geographical area which they call Sápmi. Sápmi extends across northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia (see Map 1). The Sámi originally inhabited even larger areas. But over time they lost more and more of their land – first to agriculture, later to extractive industries such as forestry and mining (e.g. iron ore, silver, and graphite). Recently, wind farms and graphite mines for modern battery technologies have also been posing a threat to the Sámi's settlement areas and grazing grounds of their reindeer. According to current estimates, there are 80-100,000 Sámi today, with around 20,000 of them living in Sweden.

Reindeer play a central role in Sámi culture and for their identity. The Sámi used to be a nomadic people of hunters and gatherers. In groups of families (siida), they followed the wild reindeer herds on their long migration between the grazing grounds in the mountains in summer and the tundra in winter. It was not until the 17th century that some of the Sámi started to live on reindeer herding.

Today, only 800 Sámi are registered as reindeer herders in Sweden. Climate change and the fragmentation of migration corridors make traditional livelihoods not only unprofitable, but also less romantic. Instead of skis and reindeer sleds, modern transport technologies such as motorbikes, snowmobiles, and sometimes even helicopters are being used. Instead of using the traditional lavvus (Sámi tents), they sleep in small solid wooden cabins. One out of three young Sámi reindeer herders seriously considers or has already attempted suicide. This means that the Sámi run a risk of suicide twice as high as among their Swedish peers.

Today, the Sámi lead many different kinds of lives. There is no such thing as a uniform Sámi lifestyle anymore. Since the 1970s, most of the Sámi have been living in solid houses. Many left their ancestral land and moved further south in search of better educational and income opportunities. Some of the Sámi live a modern urban life. Others continue to live in Sápmi, side by side with the Swedish majority population. Some continue their traditional livelihood activities there, such as fishing, hunting or reindeer herding, but generate most of their income by working in the mines or in the tourism sector.

Like many other indigenous peoples around the world, the Sámi, too, were oppressed and discriminated against, and their rights were violated. Until the middle of the 19th century, the Swedish government made various efforts to assimilate the Sámi. For example, they were forced to convert to Christianity and at times they were not allowed to speak Sámi. The Sámi are still suffering the consequences. Less than half of the Swedish Sámi still speak one of the nine Sámi dialects.

It was not until 1977 that Sweden recognised the Sámi as an indigenous people. But various UN organisations criticise that the Swedish state does not sufficiently protect the Sámi from racism and discrimination. Among other things, they demand that Sweden finally ratify ILO Convention 169 on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and thus strengthen the Sámi's rights to self-determination, land, and resources. The Swedish state would have to renounce its claims to ancestral Sámi land. It would also have to compensate the Sámi for dams, wind farms and mines established without their consent. With regard to any political decisions affecting the Sámi in the future, the principle of "free, prior and informed

consent" – i.e. their comprehensive participation – would apply. In short, ratifying the ILO Convention would transform Sweden's current resource policy, which is why it does not get much political approval at the moment.

But there is also reason for hope. The Swedish parliament has set up a so-called Truth Committee which is investigating the effects of Sweden's policy related to the Sámi. In doing so, it is taking an important first step towards coming to terms with past and continuing injustices and violations of the Sámi's human rights and their rights as indigenous people. The results will hopefully pave the way for them to get a proper political voice.

Over the past few years, Sámi culture has become increasingly appreciated. It is gaining visibility in pop culture and is enjoyed by young Sámi and other Swedes alike. Sámi songs make it into the Swedish charts, films by and about Sámi are screened on Netflix, and Sámi athletes win medals at the Olympic Games, etc. Finally, tourism also plays a role by motivating an increasing number of Swedes and Sámi to develop an interest in Sámi culture and to wish to preserve it.

3 NUTTI SÁMI SIIDA AND ITS RELEVANCE

3.1 History and Objectives

In the late 1990s, the Sámi experienced several harsh winters in a row that were difficult for reindeer husbandry. The animals could not find enough food in nature and needed additional feeding at high cost. Nils and Carina tried to find ways to keep up reindeer husbandry in spite of climate change. Together with the operator of the local Icehotel (the attractions here are sculptures, a bar and rooms made of ice blocks from the adjacent Torne River), they came up with the idea of taking guests staying at the hotel to see their reindeer and of telling them about Sámi culture. As tourist interest grew, Nils started working full-time for the tourism business and left his reindeer to be cared for by his nephews. After three years, the couple shifted the tours from Nils' native village of Soppero to Carina's native village, Jukkasjärvi. Since then, Jukkasjärvi has been the centre of the tourism business.

From its third year of operation, Nutti Sámi Siida was able to create more jobs and give employment to Nils' nephews and other young people. Young Sámi from the locality were hired, as well as young people with Sámi roots from the bigger cities, and young people from the region itself. Many of them started as interns, but then decided to stay, as with Nutti Sámi Siida they not only found their roots, but also a home.

Today, Nutti Sámi Siida is understood as a place of learning and experimentation for young Sámi. Through an exchange with tourists the young Sámi get to reflect on themselves, on their culture and their traditional ways of living, thus keeping their traditional lifestyles alive. At the same time, they acquire new skills – from handicrafts to traditional cuisine. Some of the former staff of Nutti Sámi Siida have started their own businesses. For example, two of them offer tourist activities in their villages. Others are now able to earn a living by selling handicrafts. In this way, Nutti Sámi Siida helps young Sámi to find new ways of sustaining their traditional livelihoods in harmony with the modern world.

Nutti Sámi Siida has established itself as a platform for culture and exchange within the Swedish Sámi scene, with cultural events, such as readings of Sámi literature, taking place once in a while.

3.2 Concept and Programme

Nutti Sámi Siida's tourism services started with day trips for guests staying at the Icehotel. These guests mainly visit in order to spend a night in a room made of ice and/or to admire the northern lights. Today, Nutti Sámi Siida still get about 40 percent of their guests from the Icehotel. The remaining 60 percent are individual travellers or visit with tour operators.

Most of the guests are not cultural tourists as such. Nevertheless, it has been a key concern of Nutti

Sámi Siida to provide authentic insights into the Sámi's culture, their living situation and the challenges they face in the balancing act between culture and modernity. Nutti Sámi Siida is based on three pillars to acquaint tourists with Sámi culture, at varying degrees.

The **open-air museum Márkanbáiki** with its attached café and shop for Sámi handicrafts and local products. It is located in the village of Jukkasjärvi within walking distance of the Icehotel. Many of the Icehotel's guests go for leisurely walks to the museum, café, and shop and easily get into contact with Sámi culture. They can explore the open-air museum on their own or take a guided tour and feed the reindeer. Afterwards, they may enjoy refreshments at the café and purchase authentic Sámi handicrafts as souvenirs.

Some tourists particularly want to pet the reindeer. But Nutti Sámi Siida has clarified that the museum is not a petting zoo. If you want to see the reindeer up close, you need to pay an entrance fee to the museum and may then reach the reindeer by walking through the open-air museum. In my observation, guiding the visitors in this manner had the desired effect. Even visitors who initially had no interest in Sámi culture took a closer look at the exhibits and displays and gained new insights.

Guests who want to learn more about the Sámi's culture and contemporary ways of life may join the various **guided tours**. In winter, there are two half-day tours during which participants learn more about the importance of reindeer and may drive a reindeer sled. During a meal prepared in a traditional manner and served in a lavvu (Sámi tent) or outside by an open fire, the guests may enjoy an intensive exchange with their guides. There is also a culinary tour during which a Sámi guide talks about Sámi culture over a six course meal in a lavvu. In addition, this winter, a home stay programme with a Sámi family will be offered for the first time. Guests may join the family for two days and learn about their family life. There are also tours in the summer. They include fishing, cooking classes, or hikes over several days. The range of tours offered is subject to continuous development. Special emphasis is placed on an intensive exchange between the guests and the Sámi.

The third pillar are the accommodation facilities at the **Reindeer Lodge** where five cabins, two traditional lavvus and three goathis (a modern, more luxurious interpretation of a lavvu) are available to the guests. The Reindeer Lodge can accommodate around 30 people at a time. In addition to a rich breakfast buffet with local dishes, dinner is also available.

4 EVALUATION AGAINST THE TO DO AWARD CRITERIA

Assessing the activities of Nutti Sámi Siida against the contest criteria for the TO DO Award leads to the following evaluation:

4.1. Participation

How were/are the interests and needs of the local population taken into account in the planning phase and throughout the project?

The idea of launching Nutti Sámi Siida was originally born out of the financial need experienced by Nils and his wife. The tourists' visits were primarily meant to ensure the survival of their reindeer. However, they soon realised that with the reindeer under threat, it was not only their personal livelihood and that of many other Sámi that was at stake, but much more: the culture and identity of the indigenous Sámi people.

Nils and Carina were convinced that their cultural heritage can only be preserved if young Sámi can be enthusiastic about it again and are able to identify with it. Nutti Sámi Siida has created a platform where the knowledge of Sámi traditions, customs and crafts comes together and is passed on to the younger generation. The focus is not primarily on the interests of the local majority population, but on a broad participation of Sámi – and particularly young Sámi – from different parts of Sweden.

At Nutti Sámi Siida, the Sámi can discover their roots. In this process, it does not matter how close their

ties with their own culture have been or whether their families still engage in reindeer husbandry. Whoever is curious and open-minded is welcome. By word of mouth, via social media or through advertisements at job fairs and in the Sámi newspaper, Nutti Sámi Siida invites young people's active participation.

Some people may come for just one season, others find a home here, or even their vocation. Like Klara, for example, who came from Stockholm as an 18-year-old intern to learn about the lives of her ancestors. Today, ten years later, she is in charge of communications and holds shares in the company. For Thea, her job as a guide is a way of earning an extra income, so that she is able to keep up reindeer husbandry which nowadays no longer covers costs. However, she considers it an important part of her identity which she wants to preserve and pass on to her children.

Others, for example, are from Jukkasjärvi. It was only thanks to Nutti Sámi Siida's presence in their village that they looked into their own family history and realised that two generations back their ancestors were Sámi. Some of them returned to their grandparents' place because at Nutti Sámi Siida they can now earn an income there that provides for their livelihood.

The importance of passing on knowledge and power is also reflected within the company. Founder Nils Torbjörn has already handed over parts of his shares to his two nephews, his reindeer herders and to Klara and Ida who are not relatives of his. Within the next seven years, he will hand over his shares and responsibilities entirely to them. Important strategic business decisions are already being made by this group at board meetings that take place three to four times a year.

4.2. Cultural Identity

Strengthening local culture and the cultural identity of local people, avoiding/minimising any social and cultural damage caused by tourism, supporting intercultural encounters and exchange between hosts and guests

As a semi-nomadic people living close to nature, the Sámi left hardly any physical or material evidence of their culture. When they shifted from a nomadic to a settled lifestyle, many Sámi completely renounced their roots and hardly passed on their culture and language to their children. As a result, their culture is in danger of increasingly falling into oblivion.

To this day, prejudices prevail that the Sámi are primitive and dirty. At school, many Swedes learn much more about the indigenous peoples of America, but hardly anything about the Sámi in their own country. The Sámi rarely make media headlines. If anything at all, it is mainly their protests against mines, dams, or wind farms that get reported. It frequently happens that a wrong impression is given, suggesting that they want to prevent job creation or progress in the field of sustainability and green energy.

This is where Nutti Sámi Siida comes in. Their idea is to find their own narrative and tell their own story - somewhere between textbooks and headlines, between a preservation of traditions and modern reinterpretations of their cultural heritage. Nutti Sámi Siida gives everybody involved an opportunity to keep Sámi culture alive. In the exchange with tourists from different parts of the world, ancient knowledge, traditions and customs are prevented from falling into oblivion. The knowledge is passed on to the staff of Nutti Sámi Siida who in turn share it with the tourists.

In addition to conveying important background information about Sámi culture, the guided tours are above all filled with content by the guides sharing their personal stories. Today, there is no such thing as a uniform Sámi lifestyle. Their lifestyles are as diverse as the guides themselves. Each of them individually shares what concerns them with regard to their identity as Sámi or which facets of their culture they find particularly fascinating. They talk to the guests about the challenges they personally face in balancing tradition and modernity. For example, how as teenagers in Stockholm they did not find many answers to their questions about their Sámi identity, or how they changed schools during the course of the year, depending on whether they were at the winter or summer pastures, and found teachers and classmates showing very little understanding.

The income generated by the tourism enterprise makes it possible to keep up the dwindling reindeer husbandry as the heart of Sámi culture and to pass on the knowledge associated with it. The young people at Nutti Sámi Siida acquire practical knowledge and skills that would otherwise fall into oblivion. Whether it is catching a reindeer with a lasso, taming and bringing in the reindeer, or reading tracks in the snow to make sure there are no predators close to the herds.

The fact that the shift from a nomadic to a mainly sedentary lifestyle took place within the last two generations is both a curse and a blessing. Time and again the work with tourists stimulates intergenerational exchange. In many cases, the employees of Nutti Sámi Siida can ask their grandparents for their old knowledge. Nils' father, for example, taught him how to tame reindeer for sled rides with the tourists. He had never needed this knowledge before, as snowmobiles already existed at the time he took care of the herd.

4.3. Economic Benefit

Ensuring the economic participation of broad local population strata in tourism

From the beginning, Nutti Sámi Siida sought to create new income opportunities and types of work for Sámi that are in harmony with their culture and traditional livelihoods. What once started as a cash injection to feed the reindeer now provides nine people with a steady income throughout the year. In addition, 15 people earn an income during the winter months. In addition, two or three interns from the local school are employed, as well as some temporary workers from the village who help out during the peak season around Christmas and in February.

The reindeer are not only at the heart of Sámi culture, they are also key to the touristic products. Nutti Sámi Siida has its own reindeer husbandry business in the background, which is currently still registered in Nils' name. The tourism company covers the costs of winter fodder for the animals. In turn, the reindeer company provides some of the reindeer for sled rides or hikes in the summer. It allows tourists to see the reindeer in their pastures from a distance during guided tours. The reindeer enterprise does not just create a full-time job. Around 20 other reindeer herders from the Sámi village benefit from investments in common infrastructure, such as fences for the corrals or more favourable conditions when ordering fodder. In addition, the employees of the tourism company lend a helping hand when particularly labour-intensive jobs need to be done, such as vaccinations, the sorting of calves, or the slaughtering in autumn.

Around 650 people live in the village of Jukkasjärvi. So during the winter season, about one fifth of the village population is directly employed by Nutti Sámi Siida. Reindeer meat, fish, berries, jams, bread and other foodstuffs are purchased in the village or in its close vicinity. Some of the suppliers are Swedish, others are Swedish Sámi.

The souvenir shop at the museum sells authentic Sámi handicraft from different parts of Sweden, Norway, and Finland. The products include traditionally made clothes, blankets, jewellery, and tableware, but also cosmetics and tea with Sámi herbs, as well as pieces of art, books, and music.

Its products are very popular with tourists. One of the artisans is Randi Marianen. She is a certified Sámi silversmith who only sells her jewellery directly – and at Nutti Sámi Siida's shop as an exception. According to her, this is the only place where Sámi culture and heritage are put in context in an adequate manner and are not sold out or folklorised.

In total, Nutti Sámi Siida helps around 40 Sámi to earn an additional income as the company purchases their locally produced food and handicrafts. In this way, the tourism enterprise not only helps to offer new economic perspectives to the local Sámi and to increase the reappraisal of traditional livelihoods, it can also to some extent reduce the tendencies of people to migrate to larger cities or to workplaces around the mines.

4.4. Decent Work

Creation of qualified jobs and/or improvement of the working conditions in tourism with regard to social security, working hours, education and training, and remuneration

The wages paid by Nutti Sámi Siida are comparable to other tourism enterprises of similar size. However, they cannot compete with the wages paid by the mines or other big companies. The employees are extremely proud to be part of the company. They identify with its mission and appreciate the flat hierarchies and the family-like working atmosphere.

Another important factor is working hours. They are organised in such a way that most of the staff (with the exception of the two operations managers) work for seven days and then get seven days off. This allows the employees to also pursue other activities. Some of them may continue to take care of their reindeer, others are artists, yet others work in the mines, go fishing or hunting. About 2/3 of the direct employees also have other sources of income.

At Nutti Sámi Siida, Sámi and non-Sámi, young people and experienced staff work hand in hand. The guided tours are led only by Sámi. International employees also contribute their expertise to the organisational tasks in the back office. Guillaume is French and helped set up the reindeer lodge with his experience as a bar manager. Tuula from Finland takes care of the bookings and brings in her wealth of experience gained at larger hotels.

All employees may contribute their ideas. They are organised in small autonomous teams (one team each for the lodge, the tours, and the café and museum) and jointly take decisions. At the beginning and at the end of a season, team events are held with the entire staff which last for several days. At the beginning of a season, the focus is on training, at the end of a season, on feedback, new ideas, and suggestions for improvement.

The declared goal is to expand offers during the summer season in order to be able to employ more people throughout the year. The ideas contributed by employees have been incorporated into the product design. Thanks to a new booking system for tour operators, a good demand can already be predicted, so that at least another three people can be employed for the entire year.

4.5. Gender Equality

Equal participation of women and men in planning and implementation processes within the frame of their cultural background and values

In order to reach Nutti Sámi Siida, many guests take a night train from Stockholm to Kiruna. It is there that they become aware of the gigantic size of the mines. The world's largest iron ore mine is located there. At the station, you see a big mountain, a by-product of the mine. It is so big that several ski lifts are there. The mine has been consuming more and more land. The historic village centre, including the church, simply got relocated by several kilometres. At the same time, you realise to what extent the financial interests of the Swedish state are intertwined with resources. The mine is operated by the company LKAB, which is fully owned by the Swedish state. Just in January 2023, LKAB announced that the largest deposit of rare earth minerals to date has been discovered near the iron mine – amounting to more than one million tonnes. The fact that these resources are located in the Sámi's traditional grazing territory was not mentioned at all.

Together with other tourism providers in the area and the local destination management organisation "Kiruna Lapland", Nutti Sámi Siida is working on positioning tourism as a counter-model to extractive industries, showing that there are economic perspectives which respect the culture and territory of the Sámi.

Especially since the Covid-19 pandemic, more and more Swedes have been visiting Nutti Sámi Siida. The tourist programme makes it possible for them to experience the close ties between the Sámi and their natural environment. In this way, understanding and support for the Sámi's criticism of mining

projects and their demand for participation in the matter has been growing.

There are currently no plans to expand the tourism infrastructure. During the peak season, Nutti Sámi Siida works close to capacity. Even though there would be sufficient demand, they do not want to expand the tourism business in order not to exceed social and ecological carrying capacities. Instead, they focus on creating year-round products and services and on optimising existing infrastructure.

The tourism company is located in Sweden where the basic needs of the population are generally well met. Therefore, the participation of the majority society and an orientation towards their needs was not a major focus when designing the tourism programme. Nevertheless, Nutti Sámi Siida is a recognised enterprise in Jukkasjärvi, a community of 700 members. The company is on good terms with the local administration and other tourism businesses. The tourism products in the area complement each other rather than being in direct competition. If there are problems, for example because the routes taken by the dog sled providers cross the reindeer sled tours offered by Nutti Sámi Siida, solutions are quickly found through personal communication.

Nils and one of his nephews are part of the local association of reindeer owners in the region. However, it is not primarily a social association, but rather a business association in the sense of a legal entity for administrative, licensing and tax purposes. Nevertheless, they make use of the meetings that take place three to four times a year in order to talk not just about the reindeer, but also about the tourism business. On these occasions they can discuss not only problems, but also any need for mutual support.

4.6. Gender Equality

Equal participation of women and men in planning and implementation processes within the frame of their cultural background and values

In Sámi culture, gender roles play a rather subordinate role. Though there may be tasks that traditionally tend to be done primarily by either men or women, at Nutti Sámi Siida the tasks are distributed mainly according to the employees' motivation, interests, and expertise. Overall, the staff includes more women than men. All the guides are females. Two genderfluid persons also form part of the staff.

4.7. Environmental Sustainability

Taking into account criteria of low environmental and climate impact and sustainable use of natural resources

Nutti Sámi Siida offers a wide range of tourism products in a rather remote place under extreme climatic conditions (at least in winter). Living close to nature, the Sámi are well aware that this does have an impact on the environment. They seek to reduce the ecological footprint wherever possible. The flow of visitors is well managed. In the village, visitors stay within the area belonging to the museum. Most of the guided tours also take place there or at the reindeer lodge.

Whenever possible, local products are purchased. Waste is recycled. Unfortunately, there is no running water, neither at the café nor in the kitchen of the lodge, so it is not possible to wash dishes. Disposable cutlery and crockery made of wood and banana leaves are currently used. A kitchen building is planned to be set up where in the future reusable dishes can be washed.

4.8. Future Sustainability

Ensuring the economic and institutional sustainability of the project

Nutti Sámi Siida has already mastered several crises, from the financial crisis to Covid-19. Over the past few years, they have continuously adapted their products and services to the rapidly changing

circumstances - without compromising on their values. The employees are well equipped in terms of expertise and experience. They have a lot of ideas of how to modify their range of services to address new target groups and how to better distribute it over the course of the year, while keeping carrying capacities in mind.

Shares and responsibilities are slowly handed over from the founder to the next generation according to a well-conceived seven-year plan. Three of the five shareholders in the next generation are not from Nils' family. The family business is opening up and giving importance to a broad participation of Sámi from different backgrounds.

The biggest threat to the survival of Nutti Sámi Siida is probably the discovery of huge deposits of rare earth minerals around Kiruna. As a company, Nutti Sámi Siida has so far been reluctant to voice political demands and engage in activist action. However, this does not mean that the employees are not active as individuals. It is not yet clear how the granting of mining concessions will happen. What is certain, however, is that the people working with Nutti Sámi Siida will fight for the rights of the Sámi in the area and for the survival of their company.

5 CONCLUSION

Therefore, Nutti Sámi Siida deserves the TO DO Award 2023.

Originally, by organising guided tours the reindeer herders Nils and Carina had only wanted to earn some extra money in order to be able to feed their reindeer during a harsh winter. Today, Nutti Sámi Siida sees itself as much more than that: as a platform for their culture - for tourists as well as for the Sámi themselves. They find their own narrative, whether in the open-air museum they have set up themselves or on guided tours. They neither paint a romanticised picture of times gone by, nor do they exploit their historical oppression and continuing discrimination. They look to the future with self-confidence and pride and describe their very personal experiences and challenges. In the exchange with travellers, but also with other Sámi, young Sámi rethink their identity, culture and way of life. They also learn traditional skills in the process, which are thus prevented from falling into oblivion.

Sámi, no matter where they are from, sell authentic handicrafts at the gift shop. Local Sámi supply meat, fish, and other products. In this way, a total of 40 people and families benefit from an additional income. Nine persons have permanent contracts, 15 more are employed during the winter season. At and with Nutti Sámi Sida they explore new ways to preserve their traditional livelihoods in harmony with the modern world and in the face of advancing climate change.

6 SUMMARY

Nutti Sámi Siida tells the story of the Sámi, the indigenous people of northern Europe. It is set in the harsh climatic conditions of the Arctic Circle. As a semi-nomadic people, the Sámi's ancestors moved for centuries with the reindeer herds between the summer pastures in the mountains and the winter pastures in the tundra. But the Sámi are losing more and more land to mining, wind farms, and infrastructure. Climate change is making traditional reindeer husbandry even more difficult.

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