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## **Title page**

Paper title: Body, nature, language: Artisans to artists in the commodification of authenticity

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## **Abstract**

This article examines processes of authenticating and selling handicrafts at the conjuncture of cultural pride and economic profit in two peripheral sites (Finnish Sámiland and rural Québec), under shared conditions of late capitalism and globalizing political economies. These conditions (re)structure traditionalist and modernist discourses about artisans' historical bodies, their connections to the local land (nature), and how they interactionally authenticate and sell their products through language. Under these conditions, the commodification of authenticity pushes artisans and handicrafts beyond being emblems of national belonging and collective tradition, and towards individualised, artistic commercial production, with greater or lesser ties to post-national cosmopolitanism.

## **Keywords**

political economy, commodification, authenticity, handicrafts, peripheries

## **Résumé**

Cet article examine les processus d'authentifier et de vendre l'artisanat à la conjonction de la fierté culturelle et du profit économique dans deux sites périphériques (en Laponie finlandaise et au Québec rural), dans des conditions communes du capitalisme tardif et des politiques économiques mondialisées. Ces conditions (re)structurent les discours traditionalistes et modernisants sur les corps historisés des artisans, leurs liens avec la terre locale (la nature), et comment ils authentifient et vendent leurs produits de façon interactionnelle à travers la langue. Dans ces conditions, la commodification de l'authenticité pousse des artisans et l'artisanat au-delà d'emblèmes d'appartenance nationale et de tradition collective, vers la production artistique individualisée et commerciale, avec des liens plus ou moins importants au cosmopolitisme post-national.

## **Mots-clés**

économie politique, commodification, authenticité, artisanat, périphéries

## **Body, nature, language: Artisans to artists in the commodification of authenticity**

### **1. Branding the nation: traditionalism and (post)modernity**

The anthropology of tourism and anthropological studies of geographical, economic and political peripheries have long noted how tourism has been used, at least since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to structure and legitimise local, regional, national and imperial identities in the making of boundaries and the distribution of political power and economic resources (compare, for example, Bruner 1989; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Urry 1990). This article is a contribution specifically to reflections on what it means to be both constructed as a political and economic periphery and as a rural heartland of the nation, both as a bastion of authenticity and as a commodity.

The Romantic nationalism of industrial capitalism roots the nation in areas created as sources of labour and of primary resources, at the same time as they are constructed as symbolic connections to the nature that allows identities to seem immutable and timeless (Williams 1973). While this process legitimises the economic availability of labour and materials, it creates a tension that needs to be neutralised. We argue here that this tension is becoming particularly acute in the contemporary period, as symbolic resources – in particular the linguistic and cultural resources associated with nationalism – are increasingly commodified. Further, increased possibilities for global circulation of goods and of consumers intensifies competition, and values cosmopolitanism in and of itself.

Monica Heller and Sari Pietikäinen have watched regions we have long been familiar with begin, in the last ten years or so, to work at resolving this tension in new ways. Rather than separate the tourism experience from the industrial production process in space and time, they

now move from a frame of artisanal production to one of artistic production. Both in Arctic Finland and in the Laurentians regions of Québec, the decline of primary and secondary sector economic activities led to increases in attention to tourism as economic development, which in turn has intensified the contradiction between periphery and heartland, and, we argue, heightened the need to find a stronger basis for the value of artisanal products. Crafts become art, although they still draw on the naturalizing tropes of Romantic nationalism: the body, nature, and language as emblems of the nation. They index cosmopolitan values of transnationalism and environmentalism, while drawing on the national semioses that give these universalizing tropes their meaning as transcendent of the national.

A great deal of recent anthropological and sociolinguistic research has focused on shifting ideologies of national, regional and local identities, focussing on how semiotic resources of authenticity are commodified in niche products and markets (Cohen 1988; Del Percio 2016; Duchêne and Heller 2012; Jamal and Hill 2004; Johnstone 2009; King and Wicks 2009; Koontz 2010; Lacoste et al. 2014; Littrell et al. 1993; Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2011; Tan and Rubdy 2008; Wherry 2006). These resources of authenticity draw on Romantic ideologies and discourses of the nation, linking moral and social order to an organic nation, which is biologically reproduced and draws legitimacy and authority from nature. This discourse was mobilised in the transition to what Heller and Labrie (2003) call “modernist” nationalism in industrial economies, which links the nation to political territorial boundaries, and anchors its legitimacy in political citizenship and rights (Bauman and Briggs 2003; Hobsbawm 1990). More recently, the neoliberal globalizing new economy moves the source of legitimacy and authority away from modernizing political rights and territorial boundaries, and towards the terrain of

“post-national” and cosmopolitan economic development (da Silva and Heller 2009; Duchêne and Heller 2012; Heller 2011; Pietikäinen 2014).

As many researchers have shown, the same semiotic resources once used to claim modernist political rights or to affirm nationalist pride are now processed (albeit not always successfully) into profitable and mobile commodities, providing added value of “authenticity” to distinguish commodities sold in new forms of heritage tourism or on the market for authentic, natural goods (Aronczyk 2013; Cavanaugh and Shankar 2014; Foster 2007; Graan 2013; Heller 2014; Heller and Duchêne 2012; Kaul 2007; Pennycook 2010; Pietikäinen 2010). This article focuses on discourses circulating in commodifying *handicrafts* as authentic. We draw on fieldwork conducted in 2015 in two peripheral areas (Finnish Sámiland and rural Québec), which, in the past 40 or 50 years have been loci of claims for minority political rights.<sup>1</sup> Today, these efforts take a back seat to emerging forms of economic development in which the very semiotic forms that once were guarantees of the legitimacy of nationalist claims are now turned into objects for sale. We ask here what kinds of authenticity are sold, how, where, and by whom. In other words, how does authentication happen? More broadly, we ask: what does this process tell us about how discourses that construct authenticity to legitimise nation, culture and identity might be shifting in late capitalism?

What we know about this process is limited. We have seen that it produces tensions around the subjectivity of the citizen as rights-bearing versus profit-making, and around the use of cultural and linguistic resources as sources of pride and profit (Duchêne and Heller 2012; Heller 2011; Kelly-Holmes and Pietikäinen 2014). We have seen that it produces tensions around the emergent nature of authenticity (Bruner 2004; Cohen 1988), its value in discourses of the nation, and its legitimacy when involved in a value system of symbolic and economic capital

(Bourdieu 1996). We also have seen that these tensions can be neutralised through humour and irony (Heller 2011; McLaughlin 2010; Pietikäinen 2014), and through identity constructions that put nation-type identities into play with each other, producing what can be considered cosmopolitan, diasporic, mobile or post-nationalist stances (Beck 2006; Habib 2004; Heller 2011; Urry 2002). But we have yet to fully explore ethnographically how these processes unfold, and what their consequences may be. What happens to the value of authenticity when it is monetised as an exchangeable resource? What implications does this have for who gets to define and produce authenticity?

There is some variation according to the extent to which market conditions are controlled by traditional understandings of authenticity as tied to the nation as a biologically reproducible organism and to producers' ability to mobilise the genealogical ties that are its hallmark. When those are absent, producers depend more heavily on other modes of legitimization, mobilising the physical imprint of the nature to which the idea of the nation is tied, or the interactional performance that mobilises linguistic features understood as local vernacular. At the same time, contemporary conditions loosen the ties among semiotic elements for the construction of national authenticity, allowing new kinds of producers and products in, and allowing producers to shift what counts as handicraft into the world of art and commerce. It allows them to experiment with narratives, materials and aesthetic forms in ways that individualise production, rather than reproduce the anonymously collective traditional forms of handicraft, and that universalise authenticity as environmental rather than national.

Peripheral spaces are particularly illuminating for their mobilization of niche markets and niche products in their navigation of contemporary political economic shifts (Pietikäinen et al. 2016). These regions have served, in the nation-state's logic of industrial capitalism, as well as in

the cultural and historical imaginations of these regions (for example, in poems and national epics) as the rural heartlands which guarantee the authenticity of the nation, and as the nation's hinterlands, exploitable for natural resources and human capital (Hechter 1975; Wallerstein 1983; Williams 1973). As primary and secondary sector economies decline, many of the people from these peripheries become entrepreneurs, tying the commodification of their minority and indigenous cultures to global flows of tourism and the consumption of added value of exoticism (Amit-Talai 1997; Cave, Jolliffe, and Baum 2013; Duchêne and Heller 2012; Graburn and Glass 2004; Heller and Pujolar 2009; Kopytoff 1986; for handicrafts in particular, see Oberholtzer 1995; Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2011; Salazar and Graburn 2016; Szala-Meneok and McIntosh 1996). The fact that we see these processes unfolding in similar ways in hitherto relatively unconnected peripheral spaces like Finnish Sámiland and in rural Québec, and that the two become more and more connected through networks valuing northernness and indigeneity, underscores how solidly these processes are intertwined in global political economies (see also Kirtsoglou and Theodossopoulos 2004; Notzke 1999; Pietikäinen et al. 2016).

This paper analyzes multi-modal and multi-sited data, collected by the three authors, including interviews, media texts, websites, photographs, and ethnographic observations and experiences as customers during two short visits to each site in 2015, although Heller (who speaks French) and Pietikäinen (who speaks Finnish, with some familiarity with Northern Sámi) are each deeply familiar, as tourists and researchers, with the regions discussed (da Silva visited both sites, and speaks French; his interviews in the Finnish village were conducted in English). The second section of this paper describes the political economic shifts these regions have experienced, the investment of two particular villages in selling local authenticity through tourism, and four artists/artisans who exemplify the processes we discuss. The third section



examines how these artisans mobilise three strategies of authentication: authenticating their bodies, their products, and their sales performances. The final section argues that the commodification of authenticity under contemporary conditions pushes handicrafts further and further away from acting as emblems of national belonging, and more towards the branding of markets and the universalization and individualization of artistic production.

## **2. Local political economy of authenticity in two peripheral sites**

In this section, we present each village in order to highlight how their position as peripheral to nation-states (or in the case of Québec, quasi-nation-states) provides them with similar semiotic resources. They are both spaces that authenticate nation-states as rural hinterlands, and whose minoritised populations have mobilised their authenticating resources to claim political rights in the context of resistance against histories of economic neglect and exploitation. These processes now constitute them as exotic items of consumption.

### **2.1 The Sámi village**

The village has under 1000 inhabitants; it is located north of the Arctic Circle, in Finnish Lapland/Sámiland. The region is known for its seemingly unspoiled nature and indigenous Sámi culture. Historically, its economy was based on timber, small-scale farming, and traditional livelihoods (reindeer herding, hunting, and fishing), providing subsistence and employment for both Finns and Sámi (Dana and Remes 2005). The Sámi are a recognised indigenous people (about 60,000–80,000 in number) living in the Nordic countries and Northwest Russia. Each state accords them a different degree of autonomy. There are political and legal debates around the category of indigenous Sámi, especially in Finland (see V. Lehtola 2015; Pietikäinen et al.

2010; Valkonen 2009). Local resources and practices are organised around a politics of distinction between who and what are perceived as indigenously Sámi, as opposed to Finnish (V. Lehtola 2012; Pietikäinen 2010).

The village is a symbolic and institutional focal point for Sámi culture, politics, and economic development. Several Sámi institutions, manifestations of the fight for indigenous Sámi politics and rights (V. Lehtola 2012, 2015), are located there, constituting an employment market on their own. In the region, tourism now accounts for a significant part of the regional economy. As an emergent field in changing economic conditions, it is rife with negotiation and contestation of access, ownership and attribution of value to indigenous linguistic and cultural resources. Recent disputes have concerned legitimate use of Sámi symbols in tourist services and souvenirs like handicrafts (Länsman 2004; Magga 2012), and what criteria should be used to decide if products are authentic (V. Lehtola 2015; Magga 2012; Sarivaara 2012). “Authentic Sámi culture” has now become a source of capital for both political mobilization and economic development (see Kelly-Holmes and Pietikäinen 2014; Pietikäinen 2013).

Sámi handicrafts (jewelry, tools, clothing and accessories) have a long tradition both in Sámi culture and in Lapland tourism. Sigga-Marja Magga (2012) and Jorma Lehtola (2006) describe how homemade handicrafts, used in the local exchange economy, were transformed into tourist souvenirs, beginning in the 1960s. They were first sold in small huts by the regional roads; in the mid-1970s they were turned into a luxury brand, regulated by a guild of Sámi handicraft makers established in 1975, and sold in special handicraft, museum and souvenir shops. The guild and its trademark were founded to promote the production, sale, and consumption of crafts that are made by people recognised as Sámi, that serve the practical needs of traditional everyday life, and that use historically-attested Sámi materials and patterns that

traditionally indicate the wearer's family, village, or area (J. Lehtola 2006; Magga 2010). Magga suggests that this shift was the result of emerging competition from cheap, mass-produced souvenirs made in China, as a result of the spread of mass tourism after the Second World War.

By 1980, the guild started branding “genuine” Sámi handiwork with the *Sámi Duodji* trademark (*duodji* in northern Sámi means “handicraft”). This trademark was introduced to distinguish their products from crafts made by artisans who were not recognised members of the Sámi community (J. Lehtola 2006; Magga 2012), or that, in their view, used semiotic resources which indexed broader identities associated with Lapland, the Arctic, the North or Finland, not Sáminess specifically (Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2011). In 1989, at the guild's initiative, the vocational training centre added a business course to its offerings aimed at prospective or current artisans (J. Lehtola 2006, 16). In the early 1990s, Finland experienced economic recession, followed by increased taxation and decreased state support for artisans. In response, in 1996 the guild opened its own business, the *Duodji* shop, in order to sell handicrafts, music, and literature directly to the public (J. Lehtola 2006, 17). Today, the *Duodji* shop is located in a centre that includes Sámi cultural, administrative, political, and civic spaces.

There are several relatively permanent shops that sell handicrafts in the village, but we focus here on two artisans, Marja and Vesa, both members of the younger generation most entwined in contemporary social change. Their handicrafts count easily as *Duodji*, but they also include modern elements, whether in materials or marketing. Marja studied handicrafts in the village at the vocational centre and the handicraft guild; she has been running her own jewelry business for at least 10 years. She makes earrings, pendants, and brooches, weaving birch roots into silver jewelry designs (see Figure 1). Her work has attracted public attention in Finland and across the Nordic countries for its craftsmanship and for her modern interpretations of traditional

elements. However, she herself does not publicly promote her work. Her website displays only her email address and a photo of some jewelry pieces; her workshop is not publicly accessible or advertised. We were only able to reach her through a trusted mediator, another local Sámi artisan, Vesa, who also agreed to be interviewed for our study.

**[Insert Figure 1 here]**

**Figure 1: Brooch by Marja (Photo source: Pietikäinen).**

Vesa is a multi-talented Sámi artisan: he is a silversmith, a jeweler, a wood-worker, and a knife-maker (see Figure 2 for an example of his work). He comes from a family with a history of Sámi craft production, and of participation in the Sámi handicraft guild activities. A few years ago, Vesa took over the family's workshop; visitors and tourists can usually find him working there five days a week. His products are sold in several places, including the workshop, the *Duodji* shop, and the Sámi museum shop. In both cases, we see the increasing professionalization and commodification of handicrafts with the growth of the tourist industry, connected to increasingly select niches for producers and products, and a movement from use-value to value of distinction.

**[Insert Figure 2 here]**

**Figure 2: Silver pendant of reindeer ear by Vesa (Photo source: da Silva).**

## **2.2 The rural Québec village**

The rural Québec village we discuss has a population of less than 5000 inhabitants. Numbers swell at holiday times, through tourism based in and around the nearby city of Montréal. The region first served indigenous peoples as seasonal hunting and fishing grounds, until the arrival

of French and then British colonisers. A wave of francophones came into the region in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, mobilised by an élite which convinced the British to use francophones to settle rural areas which might otherwise be (re)claimed by indigenous peoples, thereby preserving their own power base and allowing the development of a francophone ethno-class available as surplus labour (Heller et al. 2015). However, large-scale settlement in this area proved difficult due to the soil's poor quality for farming, and short growing seasons. The region was drawn into a chain of supply of raw materials (especially lumber) and labour for the development of Montréal (Morissonneau 1978). The railway that opened up the region's forestry industry also opened it up to tourism.

By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the area attracted not only people in search of outdoor recreation, but also artists. These artists documented the rustic quality of Québec's rural heartland, established it as unoccupied (Whitelaw, Foss, and Paikowsky 2010), and laid the foundations for regional art communities. The village played an important role in the post-WWII period of Québécois political-economic mobilization and the transition from a traditionalist French-Canadian nation to a modernizing Québécois nation-state. It became a hub for developing the semiotic resources of Québécois nationalism through folk music, painting, and a renaissance of traditionally local handicraft practices, like weaving and wood carving, as examples of an idealised national heritage (Handler 1988). By 1975, approximately 50 artists were based in and around the village. Organised as a group called "*les Créateurs associés*" (the associated creators), they held a public market in the village to sell and promote their work, and they opened their workshops to the general public (Laurin 1989). This artistic community was helpful in drawing tourists to the village as resource extraction and light industry activities dwindled.

A more recent example of invented tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) in the area is an annual summer exposition of ceramics. The exposition was initiated in 1989 by a ceramic artist of Japanese origin who established a workshop in the village (see also Kokker 2002, 146 for a description in *The Lonely Planet* guidebook). Initially a two-week event, it now goes on for the key holiday period from mid-July to mid-August, drawing about 20,000 visitors annually (estimates vary widely).

In 1996, the old railway's 200km route was remodelled as a "linear park" for recreational sport year-round. This created a market for entrepreneurs, who opened shops to rent and repair equipment, and places to accommodate and feed visitors. In 1999, the village joined a growing network of weekend markets, selling local crafts and farmers' regional produce as *produits du terroir* (unique locally made food products) (Turgeon 2010). Today, tourists can visit print-makers, sculptors, woodworkers, potters, pewtersmiths, glass workers, a taxidermist, fine food stores, clothing stores, cafés, restaurants, art exhibition centres, an antique shop and gift shops, all featuring the work of local producers. The village has thus been able to establish itself as a hub for post-industrial tourism, turning the semiotic resources of rurality to its advantage in attracting visitors looking to consume nature and locally-made products.

Here we focus two artisans, François and Daniel, who produce locally, who feature in regional tourism material, and whose work circulates beyond the region. François continues the pewterware business started in 1960 by his father, an historical leader of the craft industry in the village, and in Québec more generally. His products (vases, lamps, candlestick holders, tableware, like the coaster in Figure 3, and custom decorative pieces) are sold locally at his boutique, at craft shows and stores in Québec and Ontario, and online through the company website.

**[Insert Figure 3 here]**

**Figure 3: Pewter coaster with imprint of maple leaf by François (Photo source: Pietikäinen).**

Originally from Montréal, Daniel is the owner and sole producer of a glass-blowing business that has been located in the village since 2006. He chose the village because of its cheaper rent rates and its history of artistic production. He makes jewelry, like the earrings in Figure 4, fashion accessories, vases, cups, and decorative pieces out of borosilicate glass, and sells them locally in his studio, at craft shows and in stores across Québec, Ontario, and the United States, as well as on his company website.

**[Insert Figure 4 here]**

**Figure 4: Glass earrings by Daniel (Photo source: Pietikäinen).**

### **3. Commodifying authenticity in craft markets**

The strategies available to these artisans can be categorised into three inter-related processes of material and discursive authentication which earn them and their products capital of distinction. We examine each of these strategies in turn. First, in section 3.1, we focus on the authentication of the artisans' body, or their embodied authenticity – how their very selves, their histories, and their trajectories are positioned, by others and themselves, within the political economy of local markets. How artisans position themselves has consequences for the second process we explore – namely, the authentication of the products through the discursive framing of their material production. Finally, we look at the material and discursive (performative) strategies used to authenticate the sales transaction. Each strategy is differentially salient depending on how easily the producer can claim to embody authenticity, although together they open up possibilities for

shifting artisanal authentication away from traditional notions of handicraft into individualised, artistic commercial production, with greater or lesser ties to universalizing ecological values (compare Chibnik 2003; Lee 1996, 2004).

### **3.1. Authenticating bodies: roots and routes**

To conceptualise the ways in which the artisans mobilise their personal histories and trajectories as semiotic resources of local authenticity, we will examine the discursive and material constructions of their “roots” and “routes” (Clifford 1997, 2013). How these intersect with the local market plays an important role in legitimating them as Sámi or Québécois. Each of the four artisans in this study has personal and/or professional ties to the villages where they live and work. Where they differ is in the degree to which they can or are willing to invest in authenticating embodiment.

In our joint interview with Marja and Vesa, both identified as Sámi and described themselves as rooted in the village, where they were born and raised in Northern Sámi families. Like many youth living in northern peripheries, they were “uprooted” as teenagers and routed to Southern Finland to pursue mainstream, post-secondary studies. However, after a few years, they both returned to the village, which they call home, to study and work with Sámi handicrafts.

#### **Excerpt 1:**

Marja: I really just wanted to come home. When I’m here in the North it’s a strong feeling that this is where I belong and this is what I’m supposed to do be doing.

And when I’m someplace else I feel a little bit lost.

Vesa: We’re rooted here.



Marja: Yes.

Vesa: Deep.

Marja: Yeah [...] I think both of us have really strong fathers who have --

Vesa: -- given a lot to  
this culture

Marja: And to us as well. So it's kind of a path that we're following.

The route back to their roots places Marja and Vesa in a small, but substantial, group of other Sámi youth who move south to study and work, but then return and try to find ways of making their living. Marja describes the professional path that she and Vesa are on as one that follows an earlier path forged by their fathers, who were active in developing Sámi handicrafts. Tracing her family's history, at another point in our interview, Marja described how her father's work instilled in her a strong sense of cultural pride and purpose. Similarly, Vesa believes he has naturalised a commitment to Sámi handicrafts by growing up making handicrafts with his father in his workshop: "You can't escape it [Sámi culture and handicrafts] if it's in your blood". Indeed, Vesa has capitalised on this link by adding a new slogan to his materials: while keeping his father's two slogans in English ("Original Lapland Handicrafts" and "Original Art of Samiland"), Vesa has introduced a new element, still in English only: "Generations of Sámi Art".

Being recognised as Sámi grants artisans like Marja and Vesa access to the specialised *Duodji* market, to the *Duodji* shop, and to the Sámi cultural centre. It also sets them apart from producers and products that are identified as more generally Lappish (from Finnish Lapland), Arctic, or Finnish (Magga 2012; Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2011). Marja's indigenous and

local authenticity is also inscribed on her by the regional public honours she has won. Within Sámi spaces, she has been invited to display her work in cultural exhibits both locally, in the Sámi museum, and internationally, in an exhibit that went to the European Union headquarters in Brussels. Vesa circulates primarily in the village, where, in addition to his workshop and the sites mentioned earlier, he sells his products in the Sámi museum gift shop.

The branding of Québécois artisanal production does not focus on producers, although there remains some tension around who can count as an authentic Québécois artisan, which is tied to broader debates about ethnic and civic nationalism. These juxtapose the kinds of territorial rootedness that figures in Sámi discourse with two countervailing orientations. The first is the recognition that French Canadians, as settler colonials, cannot mobilise rootedness over and against First Nations claims to land. The second is the remaining colonial orientation to the “old country” as the true source of authenticity, and the “new world” as a site of innovation.

In this context, François and Daniel draw variably on the complex authenticating discourses proper to francophone North America. François was born, raised, and still lives in the village. His mother is from Québec, his father from France. It was his father who settled in the village, undergoing an apprenticeship as a pewtersmith with two brothers of Bulgarian origin who had begun the business at the time the village was a hub of artistic activity. He eventually became a leader of the village’s local arts community, as well as on a provincial regulatory body, earning a medal of honour from the Québec government in recognition of his work. François earned a form of embodied authenticity by growing up working alongside his father as the master craftsman’s son, like Vesa and his father in Finland. These roots/routes are referenced in the bilingual booklet (see Excerpt 2) that accompanies every piece they produce.

## **Excerpt 2: Booklet for François' pewter ware [English version]**

It is because of a unique father-son companionship [mentoring] that [François] has acquired from his father all the know-how and taken over the family business. It is with the same love for this art that François continues to create, innovate and to make [the family's] creations evolve.

At the same time, his father's European origins, and those of the brothers with whom his father himself apprenticed, serve equally to authenticate the product as traditional. This history strengthens François' authenticity as a local representative and entrepreneur, which helps him gain access to spaces like the local municipal government, and as an artisan, where he is as celebrated as his father in local and regional craft shows.

Among the four artisans in this paper, Daniel has the shallowest "local" roots, but a very elaborate route system. Although he is a celebrated, young Québécois artisan, he is not easily pinned down to one particular place in Québec. When we asked him about his sense of belonging, he explained that he considers himself "a citizen of the world, a lot more than of a specific place". In the village, where he has worked since 2006, he cannot easily claim that he embodies much local authenticity: he has no family history there, nor does he work with materials from there. Daniel was born in Montréal, he grew up speaking French and English, his family's "roots/routes" extend across North America, Europe and Africa, and he spent his summers in the United States where his grandparents owned a stained-glass studio. It was there that his passion for creating glass art began. Back in Québec, in a town not far from the village, Daniel apprenticed himself to a Swiss glassblower (who has since returned to Switzerland). As we see in the excerpt below, the village appealed to Daniel for mostly pragmatic reasons: where

economic profit (cheap rent) met cultural/artistic pride (the village's artistic history - see Section 2.2).

**Excerpt 3:**

Daniel: I couldn't see myself being in another place because there's a monetary aspect to it. I couldn't afford \$3000 [monthly] rent in Montréal, \$5000 in Toronto, or \$10000 in New York. But it's funny when I hear people say that [the village] is an artistic village. [shakes his head] It has that history. Back in the day it was much more organised, nowadays it's more like "to each his own." There's less support [...] But there still is a bit of that [artistic/creative] energy. I think I help to contribute to it by being open and welcoming the public.

As he articulates his place within the village and its artistic market, Daniel refers to the political-economic shift we discussed earlier in section 3. The current economic conditions trending towards neoliberal, capitalist individualism in the village ("to each his own") stand in sharp contrast to the nation-building collectivism of the 1960s and 70s when the village was a hub of Québécois artistic and nationalist imagination. In other words, Daniel thinks that the village is now more market-driven than community-driven. He sees himself as contributing to both trends, trying to earn a maximum profit while also authenticating himself as local by keeping his studio door, well-located on the village main street, open to the public, and as traditional by recalling his ties to his Swiss master glassblower.

Daniel can also mobilise professional resources that place him as local, notably regional and provincial councils and their logo-brands. But whereas the other artisans in this study

emphasise their pride in belonging to cultural craft associations, even though they also profit economically from them, Daniel emphasises the professionalisation profit (symbolic and material) that comes with such membership, not the pride he has in the institutions: “I don’t really believe in those organizations anymore. I’m in it because it’s nice to say: ‘I’m a professional member of the Québec Craft Council.’”

What we see here, then, is that access to the position of legitimate producer is much more restricted in Finland than in Québec, although the same semiotic resources of genealogy and rootedness to place apply. Nonetheless, as the assemblage loosens, actors like François’ family (or even the Bulgarian brothers who taught his father) and the bilingual Daniel (and his Swiss master glassblower) begin to enter the market, deploying in their own way the authenticating resources available.

### **3.2 Authenticating the materiality and the discourses of craft products**

The authentication of the craft products produced by these artisans relies on a conjuncture of materiality and discourse. To unpack this conjuncture, we need to examine *where* the products are made, from *what*, and *how*, as well as how these dimensions are discursively framed (through language choice, narratives, and visual images).

Sámi artisans in the village rely heavily on the materiality of their products and their persons to authenticate them as local and indigenous, or their products as *Duodji*. For the latter, not only must the artisan be recognised as Sámi, the products must also be made of what are considered traditional Sámi materials (reindeer bone, leather, wood, metal), using traditional Sámi methods (produced by hand and with hand-made tools), reproducing traditional patterns and designs, made for traditional purposes or ceremonial use (e.g., for family/regional

identification, for practical everyday use, for herding and hunting) (see J. Lehtola 2006; Magga 2010). The only material used that is not local, but is still *Duodji*, is silver, though the artisans claim that it comes from Swedish Sámiland, discursively authenticating it as Sámi.

Still, both artisans add discursive authentication through public use of Northern Sámi, even though they, like many other multilingual Sámi, report having limited skills in it (Pietikäinen 2010). Northern Sámi figures as one of the languages in a multilingual promotional booklet, including Finnish and English, that Marja includes with every item she sells. As she explained to us, these three languages serve different roles: Finnish is the language in which she says she best expresses herself, Northern Sámi is the “language of [her] heart” and of her Sámi identity, and English is an international language that allows others to understand her and her products.

The booklet’s text highlights the double meaning of roots in her work: her ethno-cultural, Sámi roots, as well as the birch roots she weaves in her jewelry. The photos in the booklet highlight the material authenticity of Marja’s products: the roots in their natural environment, her hands at work harvesting the roots, her fingers carefully crafting the silver piece, and the final product ready for delivery. Marja’s face does not appear in these photos, focusing the visual authentication on the product and on its production. The artisan’s textual discourse authenticates not only her Sámi roots (“In my jewellery, my objective is to cherish the traditional Sámi craftsmanship and idiom [...]”), but it also inserts Marja in a history of rootwork dating back 5000 years (“various utility articles have been crafted out of root as long [ago] as 3000 B.C.E.” - all quotes are from the booklet’s English text). In this discursive positioning of Marja’s jewellery, we see key tropes of the marketed authenticity of experiential cultural tourism that were also adopted, as we shall see, by François, namely ‘the promotion of naturalness’ (Prentice 2001, 17)

in the case of birch trees and unspoilt nature, and ‘the offer of origins’ in the ancient history of rootwork and indigenous Sámi culture (Prentice 2001, 9).

Vesa’s craft products, like those of his father before him, come with no textual information (no tag, label, or booklet), just the business name stamped on a wooden display box. The Sámi museum shop fills in the missing discursive authentication for visitors through a separate tag for Vesa’s products, which situates the product, the artisan, and the act of production as local (“Handmade in [the village]”), and as indigenous (it features Vesa’s name in Northern Sámi and in Finnish). In his workshop, Vesa uses a trilingual purchase invoice, making Northern Sámi a language of business alongside Finnish and English. His recently-created Facebook page visually authenticates his product as indigenous and local by featuring them in photos against a backdrop of snow and wood.

Unlike the Sámi handicrafts in Finland, the handicrafts produced by Daniel and François in Québec are not authenticated locally through their materiality (neither the glass nor the pewter are from Québec), and, as a result, their authentication requires significant discursive work. Since François’ father started his atelier in 1960, it has become famous for producing over 300 different handcrafted pewter pieces ranging from the functional to the decorative (e.g., tableware, lamps, vases, large roosters, and custom pieces), involving different hammering, engraving, embossing, casting and polishing techniques. The village is explicitly mentioned as the long-standing site of the business in its promotional texts (it opens the “About us” section of the website), and in media coverage. François’ pieces have been used by Québec institutions and leaders to bestow different forms of recognition, adding discursive credibility to claims of being culturally significant markers of authenticity and locality.

Without a traditionally local way of authenticating pewter and pewter work, François' company website authenticates its universal cultural importance.

**Excerpt 4: Company website, “About us” section:**

Pewter is probably the first metal used by man [...] Down through the centuries, pewter has held an important place, in the service of man, in the fabrication of ancient kitchen utensils, medical tools, religious objects and warriors' shields.

However, François has found a way to mark local authenticity on products that otherwise may not function as local signifiers: by physically imprinting them. François' father had already devised a means of doing this through a touchmark, which identifies the atelier by name and location. To this François has added a line of products with imprints of local flowers and leaves, in which maple leaves figure prominently (see Figure 3). François explained to us that the idea of imprinting real maple leaves started about ten years earlier through experimenting with new techniques. Now a section of the company website is dedicated specifically to “Items with maple leaves.” The maple leaf, in particular, imprints the items with local and regional Québécois-ness (where these particular leaves and products originate), and national “Canadian-ness” (see the national flag).

Lastly, the language choices publicly associated with François' business also serve to authenticate his products. Visitors to the website land on a homepage in French, the preferred language of business in Québec. However, the website is also available in English, to serve a larger clientele. The separation of the two languages, by clicking on the words “ENGLISH” or “FRANÇAIS” on the main menu, allows the visitor to navigate parallel versions of the website



while adhering to an ideology of strict monolingualism and purity (in line with traditional Québécois nationalism, but in contrast with Daniel’s linguistically “mixed” website, see below). The business’s Facebook account is almost exclusively in French, without any parallel English structure or translations. François uses Facebook as a space to promote his participation in craft shows, as well as the village and the region, by sharing photos and news stories of the local nature and activities, the municipal council, the Québec Craft Council, and other artisans in the area. In this way, François discursively authenticates his global-reaching business as local. And by not promoting local activities in English, he makes French a marker of distinction and authenticity.

Since neither the glass Daniel uses nor the designs he creates are identifiably local, his products do not rely on the village for material authentication. Although most of his products are made there, they could be from anywhere. In fact, Daniel has a portable flame-working station, which he uses in public performances in craft shows, that makes him and his products mobile. The village makes strategic use of Daniel, and the other artisans, as a resource to authenticate itself as a “cultural destination,” by including him in its tourism materials. Daniel, however, does not reciprocate the reference on his website, where the village is only mentioned in the “Contact” section, not in the “About us” section, which is where he discusses the merit of his technique, design, and products in a text entitled “Our story.”

#### **Excerpt 5:**

Emanuel: How do you see your work positioned by journalists and others? Do you see it as Québécois?

Daniel: To me this is beyond Québécois. I've never made Québécois symbols or Canadian symbols. I'm not like that. I'm not your typical Québécois. [...] I consider my product being international.

Since his products do not function as signifiers of local authenticity through their materiality, their authenticity is discursively framed by Daniel's direct interactions with customers, through his website which circulates his products, and through media reports on his products. In a market like Québec where the French language is central to local identity and authenticity, Daniel's language choice helps authenticate his craft as Québécois. He conducts his business and promotes his products *en français*.

However, French is not the only language he uses and Québec is not the only market he targets. He also uses English, he code-switches freely between English and French, and he is willing to use other (Romance) languages to discursively authenticate his products as mobile and global, without worrying about local or national pride – his goal is to maximise profit. As he commented: "I'll play with anything that serves me. I'm a very opportunist type of person, for the positive outcome". The way he works with language on his website and Facebook page can be seen as mobilising "authentic" bilingualism, because he mixes French and English together, as he did when speaking to us, without imposing parallel monolingual structures that require switching languages by clicking on a flag or heading.<sup>2</sup>

Although Daniel adopts local, regional, national, and cosmopolitan identities, considering himself many things including "a citizen of the world," and he considers his products "international," the Québécois media identify him and his products as local. For instance, in a 2015 issue of a Québec popular-culture magazine, one of Daniel's necklaces is featured in a

section promoting the work of Québécois artists, entitled “Creators from here” (where “here” = Québec). The heading of the story reads “Québécois jewels. Long live necklaces from here!” and the sub-heading reads: “Jewelry artisans from Québec know how to use creativity so that *fashionistas* can fill/decorate their jewelry box with Québécois products” (Roy 2015; our translation).

On the whole, the craft products examined here are all materially authenticated insofar as they draw, in varying degrees, on natural resources from the land, or the nation: whether they involve mineral products (metals, gemstones, silica), plant products (wood, roots), or animal products (leather, bones, fur, wool). The products instrumentalise the ideals of romantic nationalism through the production, consumption, and possibly the preservation of things that are traditional, linked to specific places and local practices, or made from the physical labour and creative imagination of specific people.

In some cases, the link between the product, the land, and the artisan is direct. The craft items that we examine here all meet the *Duodji* criteria of Sámi authenticity. In other cases, the link between the product and the land is indirect. The craft items that we examine from Québec do not relate explicitly to Québécois identity and culture, to traditional Québécois practices, to specific Québécois places, or to specific Québécois people. These products, which are open to post-national readings, require more discursive authentication to make them local (as we argue in the following section). But in both sites, we see similar discursive strategies like stressing the importance of history, genealogy, and language.

### **3.3. Authenticating sales transactions through performance**

The third strategy of authenticating the commodification of local and indigenous cultural resources is through the performance associated with a sales transaction. Moments of sales transactions can reveal how artisans manage authentication, which involves both commodifying semiotic resources otherwise used in identity politics, and facilitating conditions of (potentially non-local) consumption for profit (Heller and Duchêne 2012). This section explores how the artisans use public performances and interactions to discursively authenticate their products and themselves. This contributes to what is often discussed as “experience tourism” – branding, marketing, and delivering a memorable experience for tourists (Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2011). Performance is least important for the two Sámi artisans, who can rely on their embodiment of identity. It is most important for our Québécois glass-blower, who uses it not simply to provide national identification, but in fact to push his product further away from modernist ideas of identity, and further towards post-national cosmopolitanism.

Our experience with the Sámi village silversmith was that his engagement with clients was not performance-oriented but rather his conversation was about mundane, everyday concerns shared by most people in the modern world. During one sales transaction for a pendant of a reindeer ear with traditional herder markings (see Figure 2), Vesa made no comment about their significance in Sámi culture, or even about the materiality of the product or its production. Instead he talked about problems he was having with his wireless printer. However, he has developed a limited but increasing presence in social media, where most exchanges take place in Finnish or English.

As we mentioned above, Marja does not publicly facilitate any interactions with potential customers. Customers must track her down through local village networks, or, if you are not from there or have no local contacts, you must try contacting her via email. When we asked the

staff at the *Duodji* shop and the museum shop about her jewelry, they encouraged us to visit her website. This website was minimalist, containing nothing more than her name, email address, and a photo of her jewelry atop a wooden table. There were no active links, no social media pages, no online store, no catalogue of her products, no descriptive “About me” section, and no physical contact information. Over the course of writing this article her website was deactivated and is no longer publicly available. Before it shut down, there was no mention on it about taking orders by email, but, in our interview, she explained that this is how she sells her products:

**Excerpt 6:**

Marja: I mostly make orders. Have people order directly from me.

Emanuel: Do you seek out the orders? Or do you wait for people to contact you? Or?

Marja: I wait people to contact me. Then we talk and we see their needs. We plan a little bit together.

This private and individualised ordering system means that she can connect to clients anywhere, near or far, and can control her clientele and her communications with them. It adds a layer of exclusivity to the product, moving it as far as possible from the “made-in-China” souvenirs readily available at every tour bus stop. This is certainly how she is represented by mainstream Finnish media. One journalist remarked how the selectiveness and the small-scale nature of Marja’s business reflected a discourse of “Sámi professional ethics”, where one draws from nature what one needs without straining its resources (Vakkuri 2009).

François is usually behind the scenes in interactions in the village shop, which are managed by sales staff often drawn from the local artists’ community. Indeed, while the shop is

open year-round, François himself is often on the road, or in the back office. Nonetheless, the shop is covered with images and text linking the items for sale to the family history, and these are also prominent in the materials tourists can find almost everywhere in the village. Sales staff point to the link between father and son, and the decades the workshop has been in the village. While the internet is a valuable source of business, François does not use it to interact publicly with customers. His performances are mainly available at arts and crafts shows.

Daniel's products index his general creativity and can act as souvenirs of the customer-artisan interaction in the village or at a craft show. In the village, many visitors may be drawn to the studio by the performativity of glass flame-working, which is visible from the village's main street through the studio's front window. As Heller did, it is possible to walk into the shop while Daniel is in the midst of teaching a student how to blow glass; such workshops tie consumer to producer directly, and demonstrate physically how the body is tied to the product. In French, English, or a mixture of both, Daniel draws visitors into interaction, inviting them to watch him up close and sharing facts about the material, thereby authenticating his expertise. He also elicits and exchanges personal information (performing himself as friendly and trust-worthy). He invited us to browse his products and his promotional material, and shared stories about his sales and show tours around Canada and the United States. He casts his products, and the material they are made from, as technologically avant-garde, framing them as universal, and himself as both intimately personal and as a citizen of the world.

Daniel uses this same discursive performance on the internet, especially on Facebook, to interact with the public and to sell himself and his craft. During our interview (see Excerpt 7), he openly shared how "understanding the game" of social interaction online has improved his internet sales. The material aspects require a professional-looking product, but more importantly

he focuses on interaction, just as he does in his workshop: he creates contests that reward people for inviting their friends to “like” or “follow” his page, he responds to every comment that visitors leave on his page, and he draws people into his life and his brand by occasionally sharing intimate scenes that make him more relatable to others and that humanise the act of consumption (e.g., photos of him on vacation with his family, insight into his creative process, or comments that mark recent accomplishments or challenges).

**Excerpt 7:**

Daniel: For me social media is about a game. You have to play the star, being able to let people into your world [...] so that people keep interest because the 15 minutes of fame can go very fast [...] and then they feel that they’re part of your process and your story. And that will factor in into sales, because what happens is that those people that feel that they’re part of your life have an investment in you and kind of an obligation to share who you are. ‘Cuz they’re so proud of knowing you [...]

In these ways, the glassblower profits not only from a customer’s sense of ethnocultural or cosmopolitan pride, but also from her personal pride in earning a role in part of his personal and professional story.

Finally, Daniel mixes both French and English freely no matter to whom he speaks. He draws on vernacular French to authenticate himself as Québécois, and uses a mixed French-English performance to situate himself both as a new post-national kind of Québécois (Heller 2011) and as a citizen of the world. Examples of his use of vernacular French include his pronunciation of the vowel “a” in a stressed syllable as [ɔ] rather than the standard [a] or [ɑ]

(e.g., *pas* [pə] vs. [pa] or [pa]), his elision of the unstressed vowel “e” (schwa) and consonant cluster (e.g., *peut-êt’* instead of the standard *peut-être*), his omission of the standard negative particle *ne*, and his reduction of the pronoun *il* from the standard [il] to [i] before a consonant. His use and pronunciation of English words (e.g., show, business, and marketing) when speaking French mark his bilingualism as cosmopolitan since he pronounces them in English rather than French. On Facebook, Daniel often posts messages in both French and English. For instance, he shared a photo displaying a new glassblowing technique with the caption “New trick 😊 *voilà le résultat*” [here’s the result]. He also occasionally switches languages for humour: he replied in English (“Smart cookie [wink emoticon]”) to someone writing messages in French praising his products.

The Sámi artisans, anchored in body and place, need little packaging, even when their products stray a little far from the handicrafts produced by their ancestors, entering a contemporary world where nature meets culture as commodity. The Québécois artisans need to do a little more discursive work, mobilizing the internet and the visual and linguistic presentation of their sites of production to do so.

### **3.4 Body, nature, language**

This examination of the authenticating strategies used by the four artisans allows us to see the continued importance of body, nature and language in the authentication of artisanal products. In that sense, there is continuity with earlier discursive regimes. Differences lie in the fact that contemporary conditions allow for new kinds of actors to enter the space of production, either from among those who left and now have returned, or from relative newcomers. Trajectories and



genealogies matter, but they can also be leveraged in new ways, not only to authenticate, but also to universalise and cosmopolitanise.

What we see is a difference between those who are more able to mobilise semiotic resources of tradition and authenticity (connections to the land, local knowledge, family ties, language) and those who are less able (either because of a lack of family ties or a lack of a long temporal connection to the land). Those who can, like Marja, Vesa, and François, do not need to vigorously perform their commercialization since they operate well enough within with the local political economy of their markets that authenticate them, their families, and their products as local, authentic, and valuable. Marja and Vesa benefit particularly from the specialised *Sámi Duodji* brand which guarantees them some capital of distinction and access to a niche ethno-cultural market that is naturalised as part of the Sámi's state-like modernizing project, without excluding them from mainstream Lappish, Finnish, or Northern handicraft marketing.

Those who cannot so easily mobilise semiotic resources of tradition and authenticity adopt more reflexive performances and a more cosmopolitan discourse of place, of themselves, and of their product. They are more explicit about seeking profit on their own individual terms. This is notably the case for Daniel, who, not “from” the village and not making products that have a “tradition” in Québec, discursively frames himself and his products as authentically creative and accessible to anyone from anywhere. But even in this post-modern or post-national case, Daniel can be occasionally framed within the traditionalist discourse of the community or the nation as local (from “here” and one of “us”), and as drawing on old-world techniques, in order to profit from their success.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In the interview excerpt below, our Québécois pewtersmith explains how nationalism works as commodity.

**Excerpt 8:**

François: Customers have to understand that there's a reason for the cost that they're paying. Because of a brand, because of whatever, people are made to believe that a product is worth a particular price. We, as artisans, don't live outside of the general economic context. I compete against any product in any store. And so, my products are made here, by hand, and they contribute to Québec's economy.

Our glassblower has his own way of expressing the link: "I understand the economic and social importance of tourists who come searching for creativity and for souvenirs".

Indeed, the possibility of earning a living from selling local authenticity through crafts presents specific opportunities and challenges for the four artisans we observed and interviewed. This article has shown how processes of commodifying authenticity, by producing cultural goods (like Marja and Vesa) or goods with cultural added value (like Daniel and François), are unfolding under similar conditions of late capitalism and globalizing political economies, even in two hitherto relatively unconnected peripheral sites. These processes shed light on ongoing social and economic change, allowing us to link an individual's historical body or subjectivity, social interactions, and the conditions of symbolic and material markets. Examining the processes of commodifying authenticity therefore allows us to see how traditionalist and modernist debates about pride and profit unfold to (de)stabilise certain positions of power and (re)structure the shape and functioning of markets.

While things play out slightly differently for each artisan, nonetheless, together they point to some important shifts in the idea of what handicrafts may be, in particular as emblems of an organic nation. All four tie bodily production to natural materials, but, increasingly (and despite *Duodji* constraints), they tie individualised products to individualised producers in a process that shifts the object more and more onto the ground of art. Further, the value of the product is understood not as use-value (although both in Finland and in Québec regulatory councils insist that the object should have some relation to use), but as symbolic added value in a competitive market, and as monetised value in economic development.

Artist, entrepreneur, economic developer, citizen of the world: all these subjectivities slowly infiltrate the world of the defender of minority language and culture, or the militant claimant of collective political rights. At the same time, the first would not be possible without the institutions, networks and markets produced by the second. The question remains how they will be transformed, or whether the strategies adopted by people like the artisans examined here sufficiently neutralise tensions to allow the contradiction to be socially, politically and economically productive.

**Graphics [included here for clarity but uploaded individually as supplementary files]**

Figure 1: Brooch by Marja (Photo source: Pietikäinen).



Figure 2: Silver pendant of reindeer ear by Vesa (Photo source: da Silva).



Figure 3: Pewter coaster with imprint of maple leaf by François (Photo source: Pietikäinen).



Figure 4: Glass earrings by Daniel (Photo source: Pietikäinen).



## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> On Daniel's website, words that exist in both languages appear only once: "blog," and "collections." Other words appear alongside their translations: "Shop / *Magasiner*," "*verre soufflé*–glassblowing," "ring–*bague*," "belt buckle–*boucle de ceinture*."

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