

Border-region multilingualism - encounters between Sami, Kven and Norwegian in North Norway

Hilde Sollid, Universitetet i Tromsø

KURS, EUF, 29.11., 17 Uhr s.t., OSL 243

The northernmost part of Norway can be described as a meeting place where people with different linguistic backgrounds have related to each other within and across national borders. In this lecture, I will depart from a description of Northern Norway as a multilingual borderland, and I will emphasize the encounter between historical minority languages Sámi and Kven and Norwegian. Multilingualism in Northern Norway is a good starting point for studying multilingualism as a social and political phenomenon. The relations between Sámi, Kven and Norwegian and the language users of these languages have long been characterized by colonization and the authorities' Norwegianisation policy, which is also the subject of the report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission from June 2023. In short, the Norwegianisation policy aimed to promote the Norwegian language and identity at the expense of Sámi and Kven, and this policy subsequently contributed to language changes in many local communities, and to this day this is described by many as a loss of language. Today, there is ongoing processes of language reclamation work of the Sámi and Kven languages and cultures, and thus we see new dimensions of multilingualism in the north. To say something about the changing relationships between the Sami languages, Kven and Norwegian, and thus the conditions for multilingualism where these languages are included, in the lecture I will use Tromsø, the largest city in northern Norway, as a starting point.