Dealing with difference

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Dealing with difference

Contested place identities in two northern Scandinavian cities

Christine Hudson ⬤, Torill Nyseth and Paul Pedersen

In an era of culturally driven growth, urban identities are of central importance for the branding of cities. However, urban identities are under constant re-negotiation as cities' populations become more diverse. In northern Scandinavia, some cities have developed on what were traditionally Indigenous lands but have failed to acknowledge the role these roots and histories have played in shaping the city's identity. As the numbers of Indigenous people living in cities grow and they begin to assert their right to the city, the relationship between a city's 'majority population' identity and its 'Indigenous' identity may become contested. Looking at the northern Scandinavian cities of Tromsø (Norway) and Umeå (Sweden), we study the conflicts that have arisen around the cities' place identity. In Tromsø, the conflicts concerned joining the Sámi Administration Area. Whereas, in Umeå, the Sámi identity of the city was contested in relation to the inauguration of Umeå as European Capital of Culture 2014. Drawing on theories of place identity, social justice and the right to the city and analysing representations of place identity in the local media and public fora, we discuss the importance of change and reproduction of urban identities and power relations in the two cities. We conclude that contestation can open up space for change and challenge the city's dominant power relations, encouraging a resurgent politics of recognition of Indigenous identities rather than a conciliatory form of settler-state recognition that (re)produces and maintains colonial relations.

Introduction

Cities have historically been critical to the establishment of the colonial state and continue to be the key sites for the reproduction of colonial relations. (Walker and Belanger 2013, 195)

In an era of culturally driven growth, urban identities are of central importance for the branding of cities (Kearns and Philo 1993; Mommaas 2002; Evans 2003). Cities' identities are, however, under constant re-negotiation as their populations become more diverse and place identity is often a contested issue. Although the details of colonial policy towards Indigenous people vary

from country to country (Sandercock 2004), Indigenous people have been dispossessed, marginalized and regulated in cities (Tomiak 2017). They tend to be seen as 'out of place' (Peters and Andersen 2013) not just in settler states such as Canada and Australia, but also in the Scandinavian countries as 'cities are not generally seen as places "with" or "for" Indigenous peoples' (Porter and Barry 2015, 22). Their identities and traditional cultures tend to be linked to remote, rural places (Tomiak 2011; Tedesco and Bagelman 2017). However, greater mobility from rural to urban areas means that Indigenous people are increasingly living their lives in urban centres (Peters and Andersen 2013; Gyepi-Garbrah, Walker, and Garcea 2014). This is leading to the (re)claiming of Indigenous identity in an urban context (see for example Desbiens, Lévesque, and Comat 2016; Tedesco and Bagelman 2017; Warren 2017), which may lead to a contested relationship between a city's majority population Identity and its Indigenous identity (Nyseth and Pedersen 2014).

In Scandinavia, the Sámi, the only Indigenous people in Northern Europe recognized and protected under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, have never been absent from the cities. Unlike many settler states, they have not been dispossessed or located outside the cities in reserves and are today a non-visible minority highly integrated into Norwegian/Swedish society (Zhang and Müller 2018). The urbanization of the Sámi population with an increasing number of Sámi living in cities, combined with the revitalization of Sámi identities, has produced a much more visible Sámi presence in the cities, changing the discourse about Sámi rights (Nyseth and Pedersen 2014). Cities have become a part of the Sámi political movement which, until recently, has been rooted in rural areas and related to rights claims to land and water.

In this article, we focus on two cities, Tromsø in the far north of Norway and Umeå in the far north of Sweden, meeting places for several different ethnic groups, including local Indigenous peoples and a diverse range of nationalities from all over the world (Nyseth 2016). Both cities are built on traditional Sámi reindeer herding areas, but in the past both have failed to acknowledge the 'Sámi' within their urban identity. Instead these cities have been constructed as predominantly 'Norwegian' in the case of Tromsø and 'Swedish' in the case of Umeå. Their Sámi identity has been constituted as 'out-of-place' or as having 'no place' other than as an exotic element that can be marketed to attract tourists in neoliberal processes of city branding (Kearns and Lewis 2019). Decolonization is, however, an on-going process, creating a complex ethnic fabric and in both cities events have occurred that have increased the salience of their Sámi identity and brought it into conflict with the majority Norwegian/Swedish identity. Through a study of conflicts related to place identity being questioned and confronted in Tromsø and Umeå, we explore how these debates became an issue of indigeneity and belonging. We ask: what happens when Indigenous identity collides with the majority population's place identity and challenges the dominant images of place? Do such confrontations offer potential for new understandings and for redefining politics?

Theoretical approach

The use of culture in city branding has become increasingly common (Evans 2003). It serves not only as a way of differentiating places from each other, but also as a way of creating identification with, and recognition of, a place (Mommaas 2002). Culture is important in creating a collective identity—a sense of common belonging and the empowerment that accompanies it

(Bjørklund 2000). However, if aspects of the local culture are 'commodified' and used in 'selling' the city to tourists, the city branding message focused on attracting tourists may compromise the 'authenticity' of the place image and fail to resonate with locals (Ooi 2011). As Kearns and Lewis argue, city branding 'is invariably political and a means by which citizens can gain or lose influence on their collective future' (2019, 882). Identity and place are intertwined so that stories about place become stories about identity (Lichrou et al. 2017) and place stories become moral geographies that work to establish what activities are possible and desirable in a given place, who can belong and what rights they have (Lee and Smith 2004). This invokes 'the idea that certain people, things, practices belong in certain spaces, places and landscapes and not in others' (Cresswell 2005, 128). Place stories are a means by which some actors are recognized as legitimate participants in place politics and others are excluded or made invisible. They can discursively produce both subjects of belonging and objects of strangeness (Kielland 2017). Thus place stories are also sites of strange encounters (Ahmed 2000) between possible versions of 'us' and 'them' (Kielland 2017). Certain groups are empowered and others are disempowered or marginalized, certain bodies and communities are produced as politically present and others as missing (Tedesco and Bagelman 2017; Warren 2017) and their right to the city is constrained.

Social justice in the city requires the realization of a 'politics of difference' (Young 1990) one that provides voice for the different groups living together in the city (Sandercock 2016). However, as Massey points out, 'the challenge of the negotiation of place is shockingly unequal' (2005, 169). The ability of groups classified as 'out of place' to engage in the processes of identity creation and place making is often restricted. Lefebvre's (1996) notion of the right to the city is important as an expression of urban citizenship understood not only as a right to access to physical space, but also the right to access

and participate in urban life, to use and shape the city as an equal. However, as Jacobs (1996) points out racialized constructions are often made through place and Lefebvre's right to the city has been criticized for failing to pay sufficient attention to the gendered and racialized power relations that weaken the right to the city for women and people of diversity (Fenster 2005). Indeed Njoh (2017) argues that Indigenous urban populations are missing from the list of rights bearers in the right to the city discourse and they are 'conditionally produced as strangers through place stories in which the "we" of the nation state either excludes them or renders their distinctive history and culture invisible' (Kielland 2017, 79). Thus Indigenous identity is persistently rendered as 'out of place' in the city (Porter and Barry 2015) and 'the right to fully participate in the life of the city and to shape its future continues to be constructed as an inherently non-Indigenous prerogative' (Tomiak 2011, 212).

If this situation is to be rectified and the promise of equal right to the city realized (James 2013), there must be room for continual problematisation through dialogue and critique so that ideas and decisions can be reframed and reconsidered and space created for coming to terms with difference (Amin and Thrift 2002). Identity work in contested spaces is political (Mouffe 2005) and can be described in terms of the unstable negotiation of identity and power which occurs in, through and about the space of the contemporary city (Jacobs 1996; Massey 2005). The political in identification processes includes questions of how and on what basis identities are positioned in relation to each other, and what meaning such positionings imply. Mouffe (2013) advocates a process of 'agonism' whereby conflicting parties recognize the legitimacy of their opponents. When diversity becomes a dialogue, a space is opened up (Ahmed 2012)—a rupture—that allows for the possibility of change and new forms of action; for new groups to gain the right to the city and to

participate in decisions affecting places (Stae-heli 2010). When the majority population's place stories are challenged this may open up 'cracks' in which alternative ideas may gain support, disrupting colonialized power relations, encouraging a 'resurgent politics of recognition' that pays attention to cultural practices reinforcing/maintaining colonial power relations (Coulthard 2014). These ideas are explored in relation to the application for membership of the Sámi language administration in Tromsø and Umeå respectively and Tromsø's bid for the Olympic Winter Games and Umeå's bid for European Capital of Culture.

Methodology

This article draws on two research projects, one on Sami urban identities in Tromsø, Umeå and Rovaniemi (2011–2013), and the other on Umeå as 2014 European Capital of Culture (2015–2018). In studying the conflicts concerning Sámi identity in Tromsø and Umeå, we have followed events during the 'heat' of the controversies. In Tromsø this was mainly 2011/2012, and in Umeå largely 2014. The analysis is based primarily on documents, debate in local newspapers and the social media, and observations of important public events related to the conflicts. Representations of place identity have been analysed through public documents, home pages, branding material and reports from the two municipalities. These documents are understood as constructing a social reality (Mik-Meyer and Järvinen 2005). Supplementary qualitative in-depth interviews were carried out in both cities with Sámi citizens and public representatives to provide insight into the social processes from which public articulations spring (Mik-Meyer and Järvinen 2005).

In the case of Tromsø, the two local newspapers 'Nordlys' and 'ITromsø' were analysed from autumn 2010 until the end of 2012, focusing on public debate about Tromsø Municipalitỳs application for membership of the Sámi Language Administration Area and how this became a contested issue in the 2011 municipal elections. We searched for 'Sámi language administration' and 'Tromsø and Sámi'. This resulted in 120 articles in 2011 and 30 in 2012. The articles were categorized according to source: (1) editor's comments, (2) political statements, and (3) letters to the editor. The public documents preparing the application were also scrutinized. In the case of Umeå, articles were identified and collected from the Media Archive database. Two local newspapers, Västerbottenskurrien and Västerbottens Folkblad, were followed between 2008 and 2015. Searches concerning Umeå's membership of the Sámi Language Administration Area used the words 'Umeå' and 'Sámi Language Administration Area' and resulted in 18 articles directly concerning Umeå and its membership of the Sámi Language Administration Area. With regard to Umeå's hosting of the capital of culture year 2014 the words 'Sámi' and 'Capital of Culture year' were used and resulted in 101 articles that were analyzed using thematic analysis to reflect recurring ideas and topics in the data (Ryan and Bernard 2003) and a thematic framework constructed and refined. Use was also made of in-depth interviews, social media and radio discussions with representatives for Sámi organizations. We acknowledge our majority position and try, from a critical deconstructive perspective, to analyse the cities as contested post-colonial sites, hardly settled, and deeply implicated in ongoing colonial and post-colonial processes.

The Scandinavian post-colonial context

Sápmi (the land of the Sámi) stretches across northern Scandinavia to the Kola Peninsula (Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia). Prior to the establishment of the nation states, the Sámi moved freely along the river systems and valleys, hunting, fishing, and following the reindeer migration since time

immemorial. However, from about the middle of seventeenth century, the expanding states of Sweden, Norway-Denmark and later Finland each sought to colonize and integrate Sápmi territory as 'ownerless lands' into their respective national boundaries (Sillanpää 2002). Nevertheless, in contrast to many of the settler states, Sámi people in both Norway and Sweden enjoyed fairly strong protection of their lands against non-Sámi society up until the mid-nineteenth century. At this point, however, colonization grew rapidly and the increasing number of settlers led to greater conflicts. This was accompanied by a changing view of Sámi land rights and, increasingly, the Sámi lost in court cases over land disputes with settlers.

In both Norway and Sweden, the state has, in the past, implemented strict linguistic and cultural assimilation policies vis-á-vis the Sámi people which were partly racially oriented (Jernsletten 2002; Zachariassen 2012). Following World War I, when nation building was at its strongest, 'a purification' policy was implemented. There were powerful negative stereotypes of the Sámi as primitive and Sámi culture as 'backward'; reindeer herding, for example, was considered incompatible with civilization. The Sámi language was banned in schools, and children from the Sámi communities were sent to boarding schools from a very young age and many lost their native tongue. After World War II, this policy lost its legitimacy, and race as a statistical category in the censuses became illegal. In both Sweden and Norway, Sámi policy was integrated into regional policy, highly supported by Sámi organizations. Sámi language and culture became a private issue. The Sámi were increasingly assimilated making them less visible to the majority cultures (Mulk 2009; Zhang and Müller 2018) as they became 'Norwegianized' or 'Swedified' and more urbanized with only a minority continuing the reindeer-herding way of life.

In the middle of the 1960s, inspired by the international discourse on Indigenous rights, the Sámi community in both countries claimed the Sámi as an Indigenous people with particular rights. It was, however, not until the 1980s that rights and protection for the Sámi were implemented through the establishment of Sámi Parliaments in Norway (1987) and Sweden (1993). In Norway, this changed the relationship between the Sámi and the state. A number of laws were introduced giving the Sámi rights related to language and culture; to land and water resources in rural areas, as well as the right to consultation with state authorities on matters affecting them directly. Sweden has lagged behind Norway and, for example, not yet ratified ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. Prior to 1992, Swedish law defined only those who owned reindeer and pursued reindeer herding as 'genuine' Sámi (Mörkenstam 2002). However, as the Sami are a heterogeneous group and many lived by hunting and fishing, this meant that large groups were 'invisibilized', not defined as Sámi by the State and subjected to a consistent assimilation policy (Jernsletten 2002; Mörkenstam 2002; Beach 2007). The 1992 Sámi Parliament Act changed the definition of Sámi to include all who regard themselves as Sámi and use or used the Sámi language in the home, or in the parents'/grandparents' home. In both countries voting eligibility to the Sámi Parliament is based on identity, language and ancestry. In the 1990s, both countries introduced policy areas where the Sámi language is recognized either as equal with the majority language (Norway) or as a minority language (Sweden). Here the Sámi have the right to use their language in communications with administrative authorities and the courts; in connection with pre-school education and elderly care and to mother-tongue teaching in compulsory education.

The discourse about Indigenous rights has, in both countries, mainly emphasized land rights claims and natural resource management in rural areas. An exception has been membership of the Sámi Language Administration Areas which generated heated public debate in some cities, particularly in

Norway. In contrast to many settler countries, land claims to urban areas have not been advanced by the Sámi organizations. Sámi who in-migrated to urban areas were often marginalized and hid their Sámi roots for fear of discrimination (Gaski 2000; Paine 2003). Today, parts of Sámi culture fit well into the neo-liberal idea about branding the city. Some cities have therefore 'rediscovered' their Sámi heritage and used it as an exotic element in place branding to 'sell' the city and attract tourists (Wåhlin et al. 2016). Another recent development involving both rural and areas in close proximity to cities is a form of neo-colonialisation related to resources such as wind power parks and other infrastructure projects that impact reindeer grazing areas. These have mobilized both Sámi and environmental interests in the areas where the impacts are most visible (Søpstad 2015; Normann 2019). Neoliberal politics have entered the scene leading to new forms of contractual agreements between state and wind power developers, which seek to exclude Sámi interests. This form of internal colonization, referring to 'the unresolved processes through which Western society and Indigenous peoples have come to inhabit the same territories, and the continuing Indigenous resistance to colonial occupation of those Indigenous territories' (Lawrence 2014, 1039), remains a continuing contradiction.

Different cities—similar stories?

Tromsø (74,000 inhabitants) in Northern Norway and Umeå (125,000 inhabitants) in the far north of Sweden are the major cities in their respective regions. Both cities have a Sámi heritage. Tromsø was established in 1794 and the Sámi presence on the outskirts of the urban area has been well documented, both through place names and traditional settlement structures. Umeå was granted its town charter in 1622 and the land on which it is built has a long history as winter grazing sites for reindeer. For centuries the

Sámi villages (*samebyar*) moved their reindeer herds through Umeå on their way from the coast to their summer grazing sites in the mountains. This continues even today, although the reindeer are now moved round rather than through the city.

Expressions of Sámi presence in the two cities differ. Tromsø stands out due to its larger Sámi population (1166 registered Sámi in 2013 compared with only 366 in Umeå), the density of Sámi institutions and the visualization of the Sámi language and culture which 'root' Sámi within everyday life. Both cities celebrate Sámi culture over a period of 7–10 days every year presenting Sámi research, theatre, music, exhibitions, food traditions and an international focus on Indigenous perspectives. Both have university programmes in the Sámi language, as well as separate research centres conducting Sámi research in a broad number of disciplines. Each has a regional or university museum with Sámi collections, district offices of Sámi radio and broadcasting and national and local government institutions providing bilingual services. The main differences between the cities are related to child and youth services. Tromsø has a much broader spectrum and scope of public services than Umeå. It has a well-performing Sámi kindergarten and Sámi is taught in 22 primary schools and one higher secondary school. In contrast Umeå municipality established a Sámi kindergarten first in 2017. Sami pupils are entitled to mother-tongue education, but it is only provided if a 'suitable' teacher is available. Tromsø has a well-established Sámi language centre to support the implementation of the Sámi language and culture in different municipal services. A similar centre was only established in Umeå in 2017.

Both cities have images as tolerant, inclusive and progressive cities and been forerunners in bringing Sámi issues into an urban context. Both have applied for major events where a Sámi profile has been important as well as for membership in the Sámi Language Administration Area in their respective

country. There have, however, been differences between the cities in how this has progressed. Umeå succeeded in becoming a member of the Swedish Sámi Language Administration Area in 2010, and then in hosting the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) in 2014, where the Sámi heritage was a dominant feature in the application. Tromsø, on the other hand, failed both to win its bid for hosting the 2018 Winter Olympic Games or to join the Norwegian Sámi Language Administration Area. In contrast to Umeå, the issue of joining the Sámi Language Administration Area became an antagonistic conflict in Tromsø that ended in a defeat in the 2011 local elections for the ruling Socialist coalition and a withdrawal of the membership application.

Tromsø: from inclusion and tolerance to antagonized conflicts

Tromsø's Winter Olympics bid launched in 2008 was backed both by a local Sámi organization and the Sámi Parliament (Kielland 2013), and the Sámi community was presented as co-host for the events. The promotion of Sámi culture in the bid was debated and questioned, above all by opponents from the majority population, not by the Sámi community. The bid was supported by all political parties, including the Socialist coalition (between the Labour and Socialist Parties) that came into power in 2007. However, it was abandoned in 2008 not because of local opposition, but because the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF) decided the costs would be excessive.

The end of the Olympic story was, however, the beginning of another when the Socialist coalition launched the idea of inscribing Tromsø into the Sámi Language Administration Area. The process started in 2010 with preparing an action plan covering all the issues related to being included in the administration area. It provided a detailed review of the various measures that would need to be implemented during the following 4-year period. The plan was adopted in December 2010, and in June the following year a majority in the Municipal Council passed a resolution to submit an application to the Sámi Parliament for inclusion in the Sámi Language Administration Area.

However, the matter rapidly became politicized and led to a conflict over whether Tromsø's identity was Norwegian or Sámi. 2011 was an election year for the Tromsø municipal council and the question of membership of the administrative area became a contested issue in the election campaign. The level of engagement can, for instance, be illustrated by the large number of newspaper articles concerning this question during the year as well as the heated discussions in the social media. Indeed the editor for the newspaper ITromsø wrote:

> 'the degree of engagement that this case has triggered is very rare.' (Daily Newspaper ITromsø, 2011-02-21)

There were two conflicting points of view: those arguing for and those against joining the Sámi Language Administration Area. One fairly typical argument put forward by the protesters was that:

> 'the Sámi and the politicians want to implement a Sámi identity in the Municipality of Tromsø, an identity that hasn't any relationship to our city's history. Tromsø Municipality has no obligations towards the Sámi language and culture.' (Ulf Johansen, Letter to the editor, The Daily Newspaper Nordlys, 2011-11-10)

One of the most heated issues had to do with street signs and the city's name on signs. According to the Norwegian Sámi Language Administration regulations, the Sámi name of the municipality should be placed uppermost and the Norwegian name below, as follows: Romssa/Tromsø. In the application for membership, however, the municipality stipulated

that that the Norwegian name had to come first: Tromsø/Romssa. Nevertheless, this generated protest:

> 'To sign in a language that only 0.15% of the inhabitants of Tromsø can read, I would call pure stupidity.
> To claim that having signs in Sámi strengthens the Sámi language is nothing less than a delusion.' (Kristoffer Kanestrøm, the Progress Party, letter to the editor, Nordlys, 2011-07-07)

A petition against signs in Sámi was produced and endorsed by nearly 3000 people. Those who supported the application could not understand why the issue of signs became so contested. They referred to European experiences from a number of countries with minority languages that had an official status, for instance, Basque, in northern part of Spain and France, Erse in Ireland, and Catalan in Spain. They also pointed out the practice of using Sámi road signs along the roads in northern Finland and Sweden. They argued that signs in the Sámi language were important in making the Sámi language and culture visible and also as a way to recognize the Sámi culture's place in the city's public space. What happened in Tromsø can be understood in terms of what Kearns and Lewis have called the 'politics of naming' in relation to colonial practices of naming and claiming places. Such practices have led to 'the systematic erasure of many Indigenous meanings of place and all the socio-spatial processes of identity making and sovereignty associated with them' (2019, 875). Restitutive projects to restore Indigenous place names frequently become politically contentious processes involving the competing claims of Indigenous people and the majority/settler population. Another point of conflict was the costs involved in joining the Sámi Language Administration Area. Opponents to membership argued that these would be high, as is illustrated by the calculation made by a member of the populist Progress Party:

> 'Every year the Municipality will have to teach between 120–125 municipal employees the Sámi language. We will also have to hire stand-ins for those who are attending courses. The bill will soon become high. If 100 persons are attending courses at an annual cost of NOK 500.000, that would mean 50 million NOK a year.' (Jan Blomseth, the Progress Party, interview in the daily Newspaper ITromsø, 2011-02-22)

However, this way of calculating the likely expenses did not correspond with the figures presented in the action plan which stated that the extra costs involved in joining would be well compensated by the contribution from the Norwegian Sámi Parliament. The situation became even more infected when one of the members of the Progress Party suggested that the Sámi flag would not be welcome any more in the celebration of Norway's national day 17th May. The Progress Party also suggested closing down the Sámi language centre in Tromsø.
In the election campaign, the Conservative Party entered the scene by opposing the membership of the Sámi Language Administration Area. The candidate for the position as Mayor, Jens Johan Hjort, argued:

> 'To me it has not been proven that Tromsø does not comply with the international and national obligations set by the UN and ILO-conventions, the Norwegian Constitution, the Sámi Act, and the Education Act […]. And with regard to the economic consequences; it has become very clear in the discussions that no one actually knows what the final bill will be!.' (Jens Johan Hjort, 2011-02-24, The Daily Newspaper ITromsø)

The election in September 2011 gave the opponents to membership the majority, and the Conservative Party together with the Progress Party took over the municipal council, with Jens Johan Hjort as the Mayor. The first thing they did when entering office was to annul the application to join the Sámi Language Administration Area. The proposal to join the Sámi Language Administration Area appeared to challenge the majority population's place story and

the ensuing debate changed the 'climate' in Tromsø. From being promoted and presented as an inclusive, tolerant and ethnically diverse city, another side of the local culture was revealed—the conflict between Norwegian and Sámi. This had always been there, particularly further north along the coast. However, until this point, it had not been widely expressed in Tromsø—with its university and 'radical', progressive image. The conflict led to many Sámi residents becoming less active in public and more reluctant to wear their traditional Sámi dress. This change in the political climate was, for instance, expressed in the following way:

> 'Tromsø had always been the city that came closest to my heart. It has been the town where I would like to settle. Tromsø has been the city where I have felt good about being a Sámi. This is no longer the case. 2011 has been a very tough year to be a Sámi in Tromsø.' (Lill-Tove Veimæl, Dagbladet Nordlys, letter to the editor, 2011-11-05)

The story, however, does not end here. All the parties involved realized that this conflict had been hard on everyone, and that it was necessary to calm down, and bring the situation back to 'normal'. For the new political majority governing the municipality, it became necessary to reach out a hand towards the Sámi inhabitants, as Tromsø's reputation as an open and tolerant city faced a serious backlash. The same Mayor from the Conservative Party who, a few months earlier, had argued against the need for any new measures to support the Sámi population, now changed his mind. He became much more moderate in his statements and, more importantly, he initiated a dialogue with the Sámi community, acknowledging the necessity of bringing more informed knowledge into the discussion about how to deal with the Sámi issues in the city. A number of seminars were arranged, to which the research community with expertise on Sámi matters were invited, as well as dialogues between the political leadership and Sámi civic organizations. These continued over the next year, ending with the signing of a less binding agreement between Tromsø Municipality and the Sámi Parliament that pledged to protect Sami language and traditions (Kielland 2017). The actions taken to settle the conflict can perhaps be understood as a process of reconciliation in which the legitimacy of the Sámi right to the city was at least partially recognized. When the conflict risked endangering the city's positive image, it seemed to drive a move towards Coulthard's (2014) resurgent politics of recognition and draw attention to the cultural practices maintaining colonial power relations.

Umeå—joining the Sámi language administration area peacefully

In contrast to what happened in Tromsø, Umeå's inclusion in the Sámi Language Administration Area went largely unnoticed by the majority population in Umeå and was not a contested political issue. However, there is an important difference between the countries in that in Norway the Sámi language is on an equal footing with Norwegian whereas in Sweden it is classed as a minority language. This means that signs in Sámi are optional. Following Umeå's inclusion, the reports in the local newspapers were mainly fairly neutral, simply stating the fact that Umeå was now part of the Sámi administration area and there were even a few positive articles, for example, *Recognition and Restitution* (Västerbottens-Kuriren. 2009-01-31) or *The Sámi language given a strengthened position* (Västerbottens-Kuriren. 2009-11-09). Plans for a Sámi pre-school did not meet with opposition, and comments from Sámi organizations concerned the length of time taken to appoint a pre-school teacher. An application by Umeå municipality to have Umeå's south Sámi name Ubmeje on road signs might have aroused debate if it had been granted. However, the application was refused not because of local protest but because the Swedish Land Survey Authority

(*Lantmäteriet*)[1] argued that Umeå lay outside the boundary on the ordinance survey map for place names in Sámi. To sum up, joining the Sámi Administration Area did not become a political issue, Umeå retained its 'colonial' name (Kearns and Lewis 2019) and the lack of visibility meant that the majority population's understanding of Umeå's identity as an open, tolerant, *Swedish* city did not appear to be challenged.

Umeå and the European capital of culture 2014—contested place identity

The story was somewhat different when it came to the application for and the implementation of the European Capital of Culture Year (ECOC). Initially, protests about Umeå's bid, *Sámi invitation,* for ECOC 2014 came mainly from Sámi organizations. This was largely because, despite the name of the bid, the municipality had failed to talk to the Sámi organizations and no representatives for the Sámi had been included in the group working with the ECOC application:

> 'It was as if we were just an inventory to be brought in so they could win the competition.' (Interview with member of Umeå municipality's delegation for the Sámi Administration Area 2012-09-27)

The Sámi organizations argued that a patronizing, 'exotic' and outdated image of Sámi identity and culture was being presented and that a better, deeper understanding and more up-dated view of what it is to be Sámi and the Sámi way of life were missing. The revised, successful bid emphasized the importance of the legacy of the Sámi heritage. A representative for the Swedish Sámi Association (SSR) in Umeå was included in the group planning Umeå2014 and became coordinator for the Sámi part of the programme. This led to a closer dialogue and in May 2009, the Sámi parliament in Sweden expressed its support for Umeå's bid. A Sámi Artistic Advisory Committee was set up in 2011 with the ambition of 'encouraging, stimulating and securing the quality of the Sámi presence and participation in Umeå2014' (Sámiska konstnärliga rådet 2012). Led by the chair of the local Sámi association *Såhkie*, the aim was to ensure Sámi participation and influence in the leadership of the planning and programme for Umeå2014 so that the ECOC year would be *for* the Sámi rather than *about* them.

Criticism had, up to this point, mainly come from the Sámi community and focused largely on the shortcomings in the bid in terms of lack of Sámi participation and inadequate knowledge of Sámi culture, and there was limited public debate. The situation changed dramatically, however, with the inauguration of Umeå2014. It appeared that the very powerful Sámi presence in the opening ceremony challenged the majority population's conception of Umeå's identity and Umeå's *Sámi* heritage was made highly visible.

Contestation of Sámi and Sámi identity— Umeå as not Sámi

> 'Lund[2] has as much in common with the Rauks[3] on the island of Gotland[4] as Umeå has with the Sámi.' (http://www.sydsvenskan.se/ 2009-07-30/konkurrenten-redo-satsa-300-miljoner)

The above rather sarcastic comment was made by the project leader for Lund's unsuccessful bid when it became clear that Umeå had won the contest for ECOC 2014. It reflects a preconception common not just in southern Sweden but even in Umeå itself that the city does not have a Sámi identity. However, the inauguration of Umeå2014 seems to have acted as a catalyst by bringing Umeå's identity as *Sámi* to the fore and challenging its identity as *Swedish*. The breathtaking, highly impressive opening ceremony

Burning Snow held on the frozen Ume River was dominated by the Sámi presence. It featured Sámi culture, dress, yoik and even a herd of reindeer. According to the press release for the opening ceremony:

> '[…] for one evening the frozen river of Umeå turns into an enticing and vibrant stage of a poetic multimedia performance in a mystical Sámi Winter Wonderland.' (https://burningsnowbyphase7.wordpress.com/)

The important role Sámi culture played in the inauguration seemed to trigger an infected debate, and heated emotions were expressed in, for example, newspapers' letters to the editor columns, blogs and other social media about whether the Sámi were part of Umeå or not. As these comments on the local newspaper Västerbottens-Kuriren's blog after the opening ceremony illustrate, there was, at least amongst part of the majority population, a feeling that the Sámi were not part of Umeå's place identity or cultural history and that a 'false' image of Umeå was being presented in the inauguration:

> 'I'm having difficulty understanding why Umeå is putting such an enormous emphasis on the Sámi during the capital of culture year. Umeå isn't a Sámi city, is it?. (Västerbottens-Kuriren, 2014-02-04)
> False marketing of Umeå in my opinion […] I've lived in Umeå nearly 40 years and I've not seen much that's Sámi in all that time.' (Västerbottens-Kuriren, 2014-02-05.)

There were suggestions on the municipality's blog for citizen comments on ECOC 2014 that there was too much Sámi—that a much more limited Sámi presence would have been sufficient to recognize the extent of the Sámi role in and contribution to Umeå's cultural life. This contestation of Umeå as Sámi also took the form of direct comments made to the Sámi population, for example, the Sámi running an information point, *Sápmi Today*, in the city square during the opening ceremony, were told 'there are no Sámi in Umeå' and 'You're not authentic.' These

comments show that the Sámi were seen as 'out-of-place' (Peters and Andersen 2013; Tedesco and Bagelman 2017) by at least part of the majority population in Umeå. The very clear Sámi presence in the opening festival presented a challenge to the majority population as their 'view of the city and the stories which gave them authority over the city, were being destabilized' (Jacobs 1998, 274); and the authenticity of the branding story was questioned (Ooi 2011).

Negotiation of what Sámi means - Umeå as Sámi

Not surprisingly, there was a somewhat different response from Sámi inhabitants in Umeå who articulated an understanding of Umeå's cultural heritage where Sámi culture and identity play an important part:

> 'Umeå is part of Sapmi to a high degree. Umeå is talked about as an inclusive city, but we need to work together for an open and tolerant society.' (Interview with Anne Woulab responsible for the exhibition, Sápmi Today, Folkbladet, 2014-02-06)

This was echoed by the chair of the local Sámi association in Umeå, Michael Lindblad, who argued in a press release (2013-03-01) headed *Campaign for Sámi Culture in Ubmeje* (*Umeå*) that:

> 'Sámi culture is alive and well and ever-present in Ubmeje, we want all those living in Umeå to be aware of this.'

In a broadcast on the local radio, entitled 'Umeå reclaims its Sámi identity', Per Axelsson, a senior researcher at Umeå University's Centre for Sámi Research (*Vaartoe*), emphasized Umeå's long history as Sámi. He suggested the questioning of the connection between Sámi culture and Umeå was largely due to a lack of knowledge about the Sámi and Sweden's domestic colonial history:

> 'People expect the Sámi to look and behave in a particular way […] if you imagine that you will see a Sámi in a colourful, beautiful

Gáktis[5] then you need to know that this is worn on ceremonial occasions and not something you go around in every day.' (Per Axelsson, 2014-02-06)

Even though the Sámi way of life was to be a theme running through the Umeå capital of culture year with the traditional eight Sámi seasons used as a way of organizing the programme, many of the Sámi felt excluded. There was concern that it was others who were defining what it was to be Sámi and the Sámi identity—their culture and narratives were being 'colonized' once again (Kronmüllera et al. 2017), this time in the service of 'selling' the city. Questions were raised about whether there would be any lasting effects in terms of greater understanding of the Sámi culture and tolerance towards the Sámi people. In an interview, Sámi artist Sofia Jannok echoed concerns about the ambiguity of the Sámi presence in Umeå2014 and what might happen in the future.

'[..] Umeå as capital of culture will be a tremendous test of how it will be in the future. Will it be just a superficial 'show off' or will something more profound happen? It is a fantastic opportunity for all engaged in the Sámi culture to take the chance to tell what it's about.' (Västerbottens-Kuriren, 2013-02-16)

Despite the negative response to the opening ceremony and the risk that they were being exploited for marketing Umeå2014, some representatives from the Sámi organizations saw it as an opportunity to 'take place'.

'If we've been allowed in, we can't be forced out again [. . .]. We can accept exploitation as long as it isn't degrading and gives something back.' (Eva Conradzon, interview in Folkbladet, 2014-02-06)

As the ECOC year progressed, the visibility of the Sámi presence decreased and seemed to lead to petering out of the very strong protests that arose around the inauguration. This would suggest that Umeå's Sámi identity is acceptable as long as it remains an 'exotic' representation that does not question the majority population's conceptualization of Umeå as *Swedish*. Thus there is a risk that the Sámi place narrative is co-opted by the majority population's place story and instead serves to (re)produce and maintain rather than challenge the city's colonial power relations.

Conclusions

The article addresses a change in the discourse about urban Sámi identity and politics in cities profiling Sámi culture and presence—from an exotic attribute that could be used in city branding without threatening the respective city's status as Norwegian or Swedish, towards a discourse about the politics of place. Events took place in both cities that challenged the dominant narrative and underlying conflicts were brought to the surface—igniting a confrontation between different imaginings of the city (Massey 2005). The conflicts that emerged had to do with the identity of the city, its place story and to whom the city 'belongs'. Insisting on the cities as Swedish/Norwegian can be read as manifestations of nationalism. As Alan Pred argues, the construction of 'Swedishness,' for instance, builds on 'the fabrication of a collective narrative regarding the common, deeply rooted history of an "ethnically" common people sharing a naturally unified common territory, a common language and common "traditions"' (2000, 26). This creates the idea of Swedes or Norwegians as a homogenous 'people' in which positive images of national belonging are reinforced by negative images of inferior 'Others,' such as immigrants and Indigenous minorities who are seen as not cultured, civilized and orderly and therefore not worthy of inclusion.

Kronmüllera et al. suggest that the dominant cultural narratives often limit or even silence Indigenous groups' narratives so that '(i)n a way, it is not only Indigenous

peoples' lands that are conquered and occupied, but their narratives and truths as well' (2017, 241). This together with the construction of Sámi as reindeer herders (Mörkenstam 2002; Beach 2007) can lead to the urban Sámi being forgotten in or 'hidden' from the majority population's image of the city—being made 'strangers' in their own city (Ahmed 2000; Kielland 2017). The Sámi heritage could be tolerated by the majority population as long as it was subordinate to the majority place story. When the recognition of the respective city's colonial past became more explicit and the Sámi (re)claimed their narratives, it became a political issue questioning the position of the majority population as the sovereign people of the nation (Kielland 2017; Tomiak 2017)

One answer to why there was no conflict in Umeå about the Sámi Language Administration area has at least partly to do with the fact that the Language Act is different in the two countries and the different status given to Sámi. In Sweden, Sámi is a minority language, and therefore a secondary language, in Norway it is an Indigenous language and therefore a first language and equal to Norwegian i.e. there are differing political post-colonial restitutive projects of language and naming (Kearns and Lewis 2019). In Umeå signs in Sámi were optional and never an issue, whereas in Tromsø this was required and became one of the most contested issues as it appeared to pose a challenge to the city's identity as *Norwegian*. In Tromsø, the Sámi profile did not, however, become an open conflict in the bid for the Winter Olympics, possibly because predicted excessive costs led to the bid being abandoned before it became a potential challenge to the city's dominant place identity. In Umeå, conflict appeared in relation to hosting the European Capital of Culture—more specifically in relation to the inauguration of the ECOC year when the Sámi presence became highly visible and was experienced by at least some of the majority population as a challenge to Umeå's identity as a *Swedish* city.

In seeking recognition and restitution, Sámi organizations are contesting the normative spaces of the city and encouraging new ways of being in public that seem to challenge the majority population's place identity. Claims to rights that are rooted in identity and difference play an important role in contemporary political movements (Staeheli 2008). Place stories can be important in establishing the basis for political debate by providing ways of understanding both the past and the future. Through the articulation of diverse understandings of a city's Indigenous history, its possible future identity may be 'made available for encounter, contestations and negotiations' (Kielland 2017, 88). The spaces of politics are thus expanded and reconfigured, as are the kinds of claims that are brought into the public realm. Our study of the two cities shows that one outcome of these conflicts in both cities was partly recognition of difference. There was a recognition in the cities' place story of their Sámi heritage—even if this was contested. Expressions of identity and difference in the public realm have implications for the quality of democracy and citizenship. It is important to allow conflicting parties to recognize the legitimacy of their opponents (Mouffe 2005) and to respect difference (Young 1990). Thus rather than denying such conflicts it is important to acknowledge them and to develop and support institutions and practices that accommodate difference. In both cities, there are some moves (albeit nascent) towards widening the democratic processes towards greater inclusion of Sámi interests and respect for Sámi culture as a result of the conflicts.

Struggles for recognition are linked to broader political claims about redistribution, inclusion, and the reconstitution of the public realm (Staeheli 2010). However, the outcome of such struggles is not predetermined. Questions about who the city is for are always up for grabs (Mitchell, Attoh, and Staeheli 2015). According to Johnson (2008), it is through moments of struggle that traditions are constituted. Such disputes demand commitments

but also inspire learning and discussion and involve shared resources that are both contested and drawn upon. It is in these moments of contestation where 'cracks' appear that possibilities may open up for change and to challenge the dominant power relations in the city and move beyond conciliation to a resurgent politics of recognition that contests cultural practices reinforcing/maintaining colonial power relations (Coulthard 2014). Urban politics in western cities are embedded in colonial practices, not only in settler states, but also in Scandinavia, as this article has illustrated. Nevertheless, processes of post-colonialism may open up spaces of possibilities, interrupting the colonialised power relations and enabling the Sámi to take place and politics to be redefined, as the Tromsø case demonstrates perhaps most clearly. However, even in Umeå, the conflicts opened up a discussion of the city's place identity, leading to at least reflections about the Sámi history of the area and the Sámi presence and continuity in the city. As Jane Jacobs argues: 'The politics of identity is undeniably a politics of place' (1996, 36) and the politics of urban Sámi identity has become a discourse about the politics of place.

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Notes

1 The government authority responsible for road signs.
2 University city on the south-west tip of Sweden.
3 Ice age stone monoliths.
4 Off mainland Sweden's south eastern coast.
5 Traditional Sámi costume. Gáktis is an important unifying symbol of identity.

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