Acta Borealia
A Nordic Journal of Circumpolar Societies

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/sabo20

Stories of reconciliation enacted in the everyday lives of Sámi tourism entrepreneurs

Britt Kramvig & Anniken Førde

To cite this article: Britt Kramvig & Anniken Førde (2020) Stories of reconciliation enacted in the everyday lives of Sámi tourism entrepreneurs, Acta Borealia, 37:1-2, 27-42, DOI: 10.1080/08003831.2020.1752463

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/08003831.2020.1752463

© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

Published online: 23 Apr 2020.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 622

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Citing articles: 1 View citing articles

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=sabo20

ACTA BOREALIA
2020, VOL. 37, NOS. 1–2, 27–42
https://doi.org/10.1080/08003831.2020.1752463

Stories of reconciliation enacted in the everyday lives of Sámi tourism entrepreneurs

Britt Kramvig[a] and Anniken Førde[b]

[a]Department of Tourism and Northern Studies, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway;
[b]Department of Social Science, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway

ABSTRACT
Reconciliation has gained political interest in Norway, where a commission was established in 2018 to investigate the injustices committed in the past towards the Sámi and Kven. In this article, we argue that reconciliation can also be found in the small stories and events enacted in everyday life. Our analyses are based on a collaboration with a Sámi reindeer herding family who, through objects, food and tales, invite visitors to get "A taste of Sápmi". Through storytelling events, they bring the colonial past into the present. In communicating that "nature is our culture", these events have become a way to explore and express the interdependency between Sámi practices and landscape. We seek to explore how the act of telling locally embedded stories enables the Sámi entrepreneurs to reconcile with their colonial past. The storytelling events also offer a space for engagement in which visitors can reconcile with their own participation in these encounters.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 2 January 2019
Accepted 19 February 2020

KEYWORDS
Storytelling; reconciliation; decolonization; Sápmi; Sámi tourism

Introduction

In Norway, as in many other nations with indigenous populations, reconciliation has become a topic on the political agenda. Telling stories of past injustices in public hearings, writings or by contacting the commission secretariat, are offered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission established in June 2018. This follows the important role storytelling plays in Sámi and Kven traditions in regard to how knowledge is made available for the common good. On the Commission's webpage, the following invitation to tell stories is given: "The Commission shall ensure that personal experiences and stories are brought to light by enabling individuals who have experiences to share; the opportunity to tell their story, including any wrongdoing against them personally or other relatives, and about how the effects of the injustice have affected or affected their life situations" (Sannhets og forsoningskommisjon 2020). People have the opportunity to send in digital letters which answer this call.

Giving Sámi and Kven people the opportunity to tell their stories about the effect of coloniality necessitates translation. Translation risks forcing some people to fit into the

CONTACT Britt Kramvig britt.kramvig@uit.no Department of Tourism and Northern studies, Faculty of Humanities, Social Science and Education, UiT The Arctic University of Norway

© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

stories of others. The challenge connected to translation in indigenous-majority contexts is marked by asymmetries, as Blaser (2010) argued:

> If the rupturist story is to open up spaces for 'worlds and knowledges otherwise,' then one needs to render this story in a way that opens itself up to be contaminated by the full extent of existing worlds and knowledges otherwise. One cannot rely solely on the knowledge that those intellectual others recognized by academics offer; one must perform a gesture similar to theirs and engage with knowledges otherwise that stand further removed from the language of academics. Blaser (2010, 17)

Strathern (2004) offered the concept and practice of "partial connections" to create space for translation and coexistence between different knowledge practices.

In this article, we engage with these concerns by offering a story based on engagement with Davvi Siida and the Utsi family, Sámi reindeer herders and tourism entrepreneurs. They struggle, as we academics do, to find different ways of telling stories which create space for coexistence. Davvi Siida is a tourist company emphasizing storytelling in which the colonial past is brought into the present through stories of past ruptures and present reclaiming of Sámi knowledge traditions, nature-culture relations and contemporary challenges emphasizing how they engage with present concerns through Sámi knowledge traditions. Encounters with travellers have encouraged them to relearn and reclaim their heritage, and by telling their stories, they offer others the possibility to engage with their Sámi world.

In recent years, tourism to the Arctic has increased, with many travellers searching for knowledge about northern ways of living. The growing interest in indigenous practices has resulted in emerging Sámi tourism companies and products. Sámi tourism products have often fuelled public debates about appropriation of Sámi objects, stories and heritage (Kramvig and Flemmen 2016; Kramvig 2017). Such moments of friction still appear, but we see an increased engagement of different political, administrative and academic bodies in the making of more just and respectful Sámi tourist development. In 1989, Norway ratified the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, or ILO Convention 169, addressing the indigenous Sámi population's rights to self-determination and to decide upon the political, economic and cultural priorities affecting them. There is ongoing work to evaluate what this means politically as well as in regard to commodification and commercial tourist activity in Sápmi (Åhrén 2010; Kramvig 2017). Article 7 of ILO Convention 169 states that "the peoples concerned shall have the right to participate in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of plans and programmes for national and regional development which may affect them directly". This legal protection applies to all areas of society, including entrepreneurship programmes, tourism and the development of other cultural industries. Åhrén (2010) asserts that indigenous people have the right to be free from utilizations of their cultural elements which seriously harm their cultural identity. The challenge is to judge whether, and in what situations, use causes harm (Åhrén 2010, 277).

Claims of recognition are addressed in Sámi tourism and entrepreneurial programmes. Multiple Sámi products have emerged in which herders from *siidat* also engage in tourism performances. Davvi Siida is one of those enterprises. The Norwegian Reindeer Husbandry Act definition of a siida is a group of reindeer owners who practise reindeer husbandry jointly in certain areas. Sara (2009, 2011) argues that the siida is a Sámi local community which has formed as an adaptation of ancient siida principles to large-scale nomadic

reindeer herding. Still, until recently, the siida have not been legally acknowledged by the Norwegian national authorities. Instead, the authorities maintained their own construction of reindeer herding districts and an outsider's representation of Sámi reindeer herding. The siida, with its use of traditional herding knowledge, has, on the other hand, been living its own life alongside, and often in conflict with, official accounts and decisions (Sara 2009). The Utsi family is part of a siida whose summer pastures are located on the Nordkyn Peninsula near Kjøllefjord or Gilivuotna in Sámi. Together with the local tourism company, Arctic Coast, they have established a tourist business, inviting visitors to learn about Sámi culture. In partnership with Hurtigruten, they offer excursions labelled "A Taste of Sápmi" and "Sámi Autumn". We consider these excursions storytelling events, in which the Utsi family share stories of Sámi traditions and their lives as a contemporary nomadic family. We are concerned with how storytelling creates opportunities for articulating differences, thus openings for something unknown, and how this may enhance more responsible travelling practices. Working with the Utsi family, we created a flexible research design, sensitive to questions and concerns which came up during the process, in what can be described as experimental ethnography (Blaser 2010).

Our partner Ellinor Utsi runs the company Davvi Siida together with her husband, Ailu. Ellinor plays an active role in the entrepreneurial programme Johtit, which was initiated by the Sámi Parliament. Johtit is a Sámi concept which can be translated as movement, travel or migration. Through engaging with travellers, Davvi Siida works out how Sámi knowledge can be performed and how stories need to be told in order to connect to and address the prejudices which their visitors often come with. How do they remake these stories so they can be lived, not as repetitions of previous colonial pasts, but as relation-weaving and world-making which have the capacity to make partial connections between the storytellers and the travellers?

Reconciliation as a transformative process

Tourism changes societies and can either foster or thwart respectful relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. We argue that Sámi tourism holds the possibility of offering what Verran (2002) calls post-colonial moments, which allow for differences to be enacted and thus disturb the ethnic stereotypes often performed in tourism. We suggest the theory of storytelling as a useful approach to engaging with the locally embedded enactment of reconciliation. Jackson (2002) argues that storytelling serves as a strategy for transforming the private into public and, thus, for sustaining human agency in the face of disempowering circumstances. Like Jackson, we are concerned with how reality can be reworked through creating and telling stories to make circumstances bearable. Storytelling may be a coping mechanism which involves using words both to represent and make the world. In telling stories, we reclaim a say in the way in which our lives unfold (Corntassel, Chaw-win-is and T'lakwadzi 2009).

Scholars such as Alfred (2009), Coulthard (2014) and Short (2016) are concerned with how the concept of recognition has become the dominant mode of negotiation and decolonization between the nation-state and indigenous nations in North America and Australia as well as in other parts of the world. The term "recognition" relates to indigenous land claims, cultural distinctiveness and self-government. Coulthard (2014) challenges recognition as a method of organizing differences and identity in liberal politics, questioning

the assumption that contemporary differences and past histories of destructive colonialism between the state and indigenous peoples can be reconciled through a process of acknowledgment. Alfred (2009) has referred to reconciliation as a concept leading to the co-opting, appeasement and assimilation of indigenous peoples as government-defined "Aboriginal" people. In short, he argues that indigenous governance structures are fundamentally incompatible with the colonial liberal-democratic order.

Similarly, Corntassel et al. (2009) have argued that Australia's federal governments have used the language of reconciliation in negotiations as a screen to promote assimilation and ensure the extinguishment of Aboriginal claims. Short (2016) suggests that reconciliation in Australia could be better understood as the latest stage in colonization. He argues that reconciliation cannot be achieved without attending to historical and continuing injustice enacted towards indigenous people. Freeman (2014) argues, in defence of reconciliation, that decolonization and reconciliation may be understood as complementary and concurrent processes. Reconciliation can be a transformative process of building the relationships, alliances and social understanding necessary to support the systemic changes which true decolonization entails. Freeman argues that ongoing events at multiple levels as well as locations are not necessarily under governmental control.

Storytelling as an analytical lens

Research on indigenous tourism has examined whether tourism represents an opportunity for economic independence and the cultural revitalization of traditional knowledge or, rather, a threat to indigenous communities through hegemonic expropriation of cultural expressions (Viken and Müller 2017). Studies of tourism in Aboriginal Australia emphazise that cultural tourism can be an important catalyst to dissolve barriers between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians and to achieve reconciliation (Galliford 2010). Whitford and Ruhanen (2016) further argue that indigenous tourism could expand the concept of sustainable tourism away from its Western epistemology to embrace different scenarios. Seeking to avoid essentializing different epistemologies, we argue instead to address different ontological practices which are currently performed. Furthermore, indigenous tourism needs alternative approaches to practice, aims and issues, such as business ownership, governance and capacity building (Butler and Menzier 2007).

We argue for storytelling as an analytic lens, addressing how Sámi tourism practices can be enacted as stories of reconciliation. Studying tourism as storytelling allows us to address the agency of tourist performances. As Jackson (2002) argues, storytelling serves as a strategy for transforming private into public and thus for sustaining human agency in the face of disempowering circumstances. Storytelling is crucial to the processes of re-empowerment. In the context of indigenous tourism, we are concerned with how storytelling becomes a tool for reworking a colonial past, thus changing the way indigenous people experience it. Like Jackson, we are not merely concerned with stories as products but rather with storytelling as a relational process. We are concerned with how Sámi storytelling in the tourism industry attempts to adjust and reconcile differences rather than impose strict unitary identification. Our concern is not so much the substance of the stories but the very act of participating in a shared event and how it calls attention to our sense of coexisting with others, which allows for building relationships as well as creating a world in which the past and the future are recalled and remade. In addition,

these shared events require both audience and storyteller to participate in an interactive relationship of call and response; thus, the storytelling event itself both socially and dialogically realizes an ideal of tolerant solidarity despite differences (Jackson 2002, 141).

Through storytelling events, traditional knowledge is translated to tourists. These stories can serve as tools to encourage tourists to develop a sense of responsibility for the conservation of that destination, what Walker and Moscardo (2016) call "care of place". Walker and Moscardo (2016) examined how the Traditional Indigenous Owners expedition cruises on Stanley Island, Australia, changed tourists' perceptions of the island. They argue that those journeys, during which guides conveyed their own sense of care and concern, affected the tourists' sense of place and helped them partly share in a care of place. Caring – as Mol, Moser, and Pols (2010) observe, involves embodied practices. Care in practice is not restricted to a certain domain or site; it should be understood as an action, a mode or a style. Good care is always a collective achievement and involves "persistent tinkering in a world full of complex ambivalence and shifting tensions" (Mol, Moser, and Pols 2010, 14). Crucially in care practices, being human has more to do with being fragile than with mastering the world. This does not imply a docile acceptance of fate: "care is active, it seeks to improve life" (Mol, Moser, and Pols 2010, 15). Care as attuned attentiveness and adaptive tinkering asks for an embodied engagement with the human, the nonhuman and the regulation of traditions as well as technological tools, landscapes and authorities.

Care is also enacted in the stories we tell. We are not only concerned with what stories are told, by and to whom, when, where and how, but even more so, we want to engage with what these stories do. Following Law and Joks (2019), we argue for the need to emphazise not only what or who to care for but also how to care. Different caring practices and stories of care articulate differences in modes of knowing. Blaser (2010) argues that experimental ethnographies offer possibilities for addressing different modes of knowing. Blaser calls on researchers to engage in dialogical knowledge practices built on an epistemological principle which might allow the articulation of different worlds under the assumption that the totality is pluriversal rather than universal and move the engagement beyond "we are all equals" and respect the right to be different (Blaser 2010, 22).

Engaging with the pluriversal, addresses the need for new methods of decolonization (Tuhiwai Smith 1999). Kuokkanen (2010) argues that researchers should do homework, involving a radical shift from "knowing the other" to learning and, more specifically, learning to receive. Learning to receive calls for an academic change towards collaborative engagement (see also Jensen 2019).

Experimental ethnographies

There is increased interest in research designs which address new ways of working both in tourism and in indigenous studies. There are a range of concepts which address the need for collaboration between researchers and communities. Christensen et al. (2016) argue for what they call accompanying research, in which practitioners and researchers both participate in their projects and in their investigation. We share their urge for cultivating a new methodological sensitivity, and we have aimed to do so by exploring ways of co-designing the research process.

This specific research project has been designed in collaboration with the cruise-ship company Hurtigruten, which sails along the Norwegian coast, as well as with their contractors in one of the many harbours they visit, Arctic Coast and Davvi Siida. Hurtigruten wanted us to engage with their sub-contractors in order to support innovation as well as the quality of the products they offer at different destinations. The Sámi tourist company Davvi Siida and their local partner Arctic Coast from Kjøllefjord/Gilivuotna wanted to know what visitors learned from participating in their tours and asked us to reformulate our research design to answer this question in relation to their products.

We worked together with these partners on different occasions during 2015 and 2016, visiting the site, corresponding by email, writing texts, participating together at tourism conferences and bringing Ellinor into research and teaching programmes in our department. During the first visits, we spent time with the Sámi entrepreneurs, participated in their storytelling events and discussed the possible impacts of these performances before and after the excursions. We discussed how the stereotypes which tourists often came with could be altered and how stories from the colonial past could be told in a way which was relevant for the common future of all, indigenous or not. We also travelled with other tourists onboard a Hurtigruten cruise ship to the visit in Kjøllefjord/Gilivuotna. On these trips, we invited approximately 120 passengers into "reflection forums", often set up with two researchers and 3–6 tourists from different countries. In addition, we invited other actors such as political and administrative leaders in the different municipalities into a dialogue on tourism development and policies.

When the first draft of this paper was ready, we made another journey to Kjøllefjord/Gilivuotna to discuss our analyses with our main partners in Davvi Siida. Together we spent a day reading, translating, complementing, correcting, augmenting and developing the text. We aimed to recognize the authority of our indigenous partners and the practices by which wisdom is enacted in their communities while not abandoning our own epistemic authority as authors. Rather than "collecting data", we aimed to create and develop long-term research relationships. Following De la Cadena (2015), we envision our work as co-labour: working together across differences to bring forth ethnographic material which is respectful in relation to the differences it enhances. Stories in Sápmi are properties – and the properties of both storytellers and those within the stories. This needs to be considered when conducting Sámi research; conventional researchers have often collected stories, transforming them and bringing them into academic contexts. When stories bring both people and land into the academic space, how do we need to rethink the ethics of what we are doing? As a start, we need to recognize that such an endeavour has a frictional quality. We need to sit with the trouble and puzzle over the particularities of epistemic practices which might reveal historical, cultural, political and social meanings, from where Kuokkanen (2010) argue we might imagine possibilities for epistemic decolonizing.

Sailing into Kjøllefjord/Gilivuotna: an entrance to the Sámi landscape

In the following section we will share our experiences of arriving Kjøllefjord/Gilivuotna for the first time, on our way to visit Davvi Siida.

We approach Kjøllefjord/Gilivuotna from the sea, standing on the deck of the coastal steamer MS Trollfjord with the other travellers. We had left Tromsø's harbour the night

before. We had an appointment with the Sámi tour operator Davvi Siida. As we approach land, the guide draws our attention towards some distinctive rock formations rising from the sea, Finnkirka. We are told this was an ancient sacrificial site for fishermen, seafarers and the Sámi. Finnkirka marks the entrance to the Sámi landscape and is heritage for those travelling with Hurtigruten.

When we dock in the harbour, a bus and a guide are waiting to take visitors to the camp at Davvi Siida. Along with the 26 other travellers, we are taken on a guided drive through the fishing village and into the tundra where Davvi Siida have their summer pasture. Often, reindeer on the move can be seen from the bus. We are told that we will encounter the Utsi family, a nomadic family who hold on to the traditional way of life. At the camp, Ellinor and Ailu Utsi are waiting for us in front of a lávvu dressed in gákti—the traditional Sámi costume. The visitors begin walking slowly and with some hesitation into the camp. We are welcomed into the lávvu, where benches covered with reindeer skins are placed in a circle. We sit down around the fireplace. They serve warm reindeer soup, and various traditional objects are presented for the visitors to touch. They share stories of their contemporary challenges of everyday life, offering insights into the storied painful memories of boarding school experience and the traditional knowledge which was taken from them. They also give personal accounts of the struggles to preserve the Sámi language and cultural heritage and how land, migration and herding need to be cared for. Through these stories they argue that indigenous traditional knowledge could be considered as important to address the global challenges of climate change.

On their classic voyage along the Norwegian coast, Hurtigruten sails from Bergen to Kirkenes with daily departures, visiting 34 ports on the route. One of these is Kjøllefjord, a municipal centre with approximately 1,000 inhabitants. Fisheries are the main employers, but in recent years a growing tourism industry has emerged. For the ten reindeer herding families and their animals, this land is Čorgaš, district number 9 and summer pasture for the siida. Ellinor and Ailu insist that, for them, tourism is supplemental to their principal occupation, which is reindeer herding. Their tourism business contributes to mediating knowledge about their co-existence with land and animals in a landscape they consider home. Their involvement in tourism also supports the economy as well as the possibility of a generational shift. The Sámi artist Nils-Aslak Valkeapää (1979, 87, our translation) writes about his homeland as “lines in the landscape and those clefts that exist between different ways of living and practices of livelihood. Mechanically drawn borders drawn on maps are not natural lines for me”. Not all Sámi are or have a history as nomadic herders. Some have been settlers and lived as fishermen, hunters and farmers along the coast – many assembled these economies dependent on localized resources. The seasonal nomadic practice of people and animals was to follow trails from the winter season on the tundra to the summer season at the coast and often also included living within settler households along the route. The land on which these *siidas* of people and animals lived was marked by *sieidis*, or sacred stones, lakes or mountains which are part of the Sámi ontologies and ways of living with and on the land. *Sieidis* are particular places in the landscape which ask for the attention of the *siida* and need to be respected. Offerings could be part of fulfilling that respect, but in addition, people should dress up and act respectfully, and dogs should not bark nor children cry when they pass by these sacred places. Oskal (1995, 139) describes this as “*Lobiid jearrat*”, or asking for permission, often by approaching or being approached by helpers of the land. He claims that you do not ask for blessing from these figures, the *sieidi*, or the

land – you simply ask to get along, not only with humans but also with all the other species which inhabit the same trails which you are following.

Finnkirka, which marks the sea-route entrance to Kjøllefjord, is one of those *sieidis*. This *sieidi*'s Sámi name is neither known nor used in the stories told by guides on Hurtigruten. Finnkirka is an expression of the colonial appropriation of this land and people, exemplified here by the concept of Finn-kirka, an anomaly in the Norwegian language. "Finn" is a Norwegian name for the Sámi people. In contemporary times, "finn" is considered outdated due to its associations with colonialism and racism. "Kirka" means church. Naming a *sieidi* "kirka" transforms a sacred place important in the Sámi ontology into an utterance of Protestant worship. Many elements of Sámi culture and tradition have been neglected in this region. In Kjøllefjord/Gilivuotna, as in many communities along the northern coast of Norway, acknowledgement of their Sámi heritage has increased since the establishment of Sámi institutions in the 1990s. The mayor says they have seen a new generation in their community who are more concerned with the assimilation forced upon the local settlers and who have started reclaiming the Sámi heritage and knowledge as well as participating in programmes to learn the Sámi language.

The municipality did not, however, identify itself as a Sámi community. When Hurtigruten chose Kjøllefjord as their Sámi destination, the decision was met with some resistance. As the mayor explained, "The Sámi, in a way it was something Hurtigruten decided. It was not something we promoted". She argues that Sámi tourism activity has contributed to the "new presence" of the Sámi in Kjøllefjord/ Gilivuotna. Davvi Siida have initiated different social events offered to the settlers to enable them to learn about the nomadic life as well as about the reindeer.

When Davvi Siida started their tourism business, there were critical local voices who questioned it: "Don't we have anything else to offer – do we have to recall the Sámi?" This view is gradually changing. Davvi Siida's local partner at Arctic Coast claims that tourism itself has participated in this process: "This project has increased the knowledge about the Sámi in Kjøllefjord". He argues that, with these tourism activities, Ellinor and Ailu have contributed to making their common heritage more accessible. He describes a community in which many have been ashamed of their Sámi settler origins but also how this attitude has changed in recent years:

> You never saw a *gákti* [Sámi national costume] on the national day in Kjøllefjord/Gilivuotna, never a Sámi flag. Now we have many *gáktis*. And the Sámi flag is hoisted every February 6th [the Sámi national day]. Many families that have lived here for generations are starting to wear *gáktis* again.

Ellinor and Ailu also describe changes in the way they are treated in the community, including an increase in acceptance, understanding and insight. Hurtigruten's profiling of Kjøllefjord as a Sámi destination engages with and supports the ongoing local revitalization of their Sámi heritage. As a result, former conflicts between the nomads and the settled community are rarer and new local stories of co-existence can be made.

Nature is our culture

"We used to tell the travellers why and how nature became our culture", Ellinor says, and explains how they "need to know everything in nature. We have learned that everything in

nature has spirit". In addition, she tells stories about how they operate according to the lunar cycle when they gather wood or other natural resources.

> "We have a very strong nature belief. We have learned that when we are going to build the lávvu in nature, we have to ask nature for permission. We have to ask permission because maybe someone has lived on this place before us, or maybe they are still living here". They tell the visitors how this belief in nature was threatened by colonial programmes of assimilation: "At the time when the King decided that the Sámi people had to become Christians, a lot of things in our nature belief were forbidden".

The claim that nature is their culture is the main narrative element of the stories told to the travellers. Various objects are brought into the stories in terms of how they relate to nature. While recalling the plants on the tundra and their importance as food, medicine and equipment, samples are passed around for the visitors to touch, smell or even taste. In the story "Sámi autumn", the guests are served pieces of dried reindeer meat, stockfish and various berries and herbal products. The Sámi storyteller also presents *duodji*, various handicraft objects. Demonstrating a traditional Sámi cradle, Ailu explains what it is made of and adds the family's personal attachment to it: he tells the visitors how he used to sleep in it, like his father, and that their grandson was the last one to use it. The tourists learn how the Sámi objects are connected to their relationship with nature as well as how nature is embedded in practices such as the ring on the cradle which would protect the baby against people from the underground.

The visitors are invited to touch the objects as they are brought forward, and they touch each object with interest and respect. They often look at the hand-crafted elements and ask questions about how they were made. Many lower their voices and talk among themselves about the different items which are circulated around the group. These objects are unlike any other objects. Because the Utsi family participate in a performance of the past, these objects have the capacity to bring tactile memories into the present, expressing pride but also mourning the memories and practices of these objects which were lost during the colonial period. The past can be touched, as Harries (2017) expresses, by engaging with objects from the past. This concern is what Harries calls "giving rise to the possibility of historical sensation and the feeling of pastness" (2017, 118). Through discoveries, handling and storytelling events, objects become artefacts which index the presence of an absent other. The clear distinction between the past and the present is dissolved by the tactile investigation of an object.

Through such events, visitors are introduced to Sámi knowledge practices which are fluid in regard to the past and the present. Engaging with travellers from different continents serves as a situation in which visitors can explore how knowledge traditions can be recognized as relevant; and the family also aims to learn how these can be translated as understandable and relevant for the visitor. Law and Joks (2019, 440) argue that for the nomadic Sámi,

> the world is fluid, a set of nonbinary pathways and encounters with powerful and lively actors worthy and demanding of respect. Movement precedes time and space, and action grows out of responsive and contingent preparedness. The world is somewhat patterned, but it is also more or less unpredictable and there are no underlying general causes.

Ellinor is continuing to work on ways of bringing knowledge into encounters with visitors. They are doing extensive research and reading of academic textbooks in order to recall

knowledge about the land, various plants, herbs, lakes and the non-humans they live with. They have learned to play the Sámi drum and what in the shamanistic traditions they felt confident performing. Through performances, knowledge which they felt their people had been deprived of during colonization comes into the present. Thus, storytelling has become a tool for repairing and reconnecting the partly broken connections between human and land and past and present. Blaser (2010, 31) argues that a key concept for telling the story of the present without reproducing modernist commitments is that of "imagination". Imaginations are the entities which emerge from the power-laden interconnections which exist within the ever-changing continuous network which weaves the pluriverse. All that exists is in a permanent process of co-emergence, and telling is both acknowledging and keeping alive that which is told. In stories, the past is not imposed on the present but instead offers a creative comprehension of the present and makes space for stories about how it can be addressed. When told, such stories can offer both retaliation and reconciliation, for although the past contains the seeds of antipathy, defensiveness and violence, it also contains the possibility of trust, openness and reconciliation (Jackson 2002, 357–358). Stories can transform the experience of colonial violence into openness and reconciliation. We argue that the encounters taking place provide a context for telling stories about Sámi people's past and present experiences which invite travellers to make a partial connection to the stories performed. It brings our attention back to our sense of engaging with others.

Disconcertment and the fear of patronizing the locals

When we first visited Davvi Siida with a group of tourists, we became aware of a kind of collective discomfort in approaching the Sámi family awaiting us. As we walked the short pathway from the bus to the lávvu, many walked slower and slower as we approached our waiting Sámi hosts dressed in their *gáktis*. Two women in front of us slowed down, and we recognized their physical discomfort. One said to the other, with unease, "I feel like a … " She searched for words. "A tourist?" one of us added, all laughing. We also felt this discomfort. All of a sudden, the feeling of being a tourist was overwhelming.

After the event, we returned to these women and discussed what this feeling of unease meant. They told us about their fear of meeting the stereotypical Sámi and of other "horrifying experiences" they had which they would have preferred to do without when they visited an "Indian reserve" and a "Pygmy village". Many of the tourists we met in our travels had similar stories of experiences with indigenous tourism, which they described as "shallow", "stereotyped", "artificial", "theatrical", and "patronizing to the locals". Some had encountered this in other Sámi tourism experiences which they described as "inappropriate", with Sámi plastic dolls labelled "Made in China". An American tourist we talked to onboard the ship explained one such encounter with the Sámi culture: "That cheapens the people, and I don't like that". An English tourist who did not join the excursion told us why they chose not to go: "To go to somewhere where you were this afternoon [Davvi Siida], I find that a bit patronizing to the locals, to the ethnic people. I don't want to see them as a peep show".

However, those travellers who participated in the "taste of Sápmi" often described it in contrast to such "commercialized indigenous stuff". Many visitors entered the lávvu with fear but returned relieved. After one of these visits, a French woman came up to us. "I was

really scared", she said, relieved that there was no reason to be. Like many of the tourists we talked to, she described the event as "very real". The travellers emphazise that the Utsis were "not pretending" but "spoke very honestly, not just showing one side". They also emphazise that the handcrafts offered were in fact handmade, and the business was a "soft sell". The Utsi family was characterized as "more interested in the educational aspects, in sharing their experiences".

On one of the excursions with mostly French tourists, Sara Marja, the Utsis' daughter, performed the storytelling along with Ailu. When she presented the traditional *gákti* and skin shoes filled with dried grass which she was wearing, she also explained that she normally wears jeans, sneakers and socks. Along with stories of traditional nomadic practices, she talked about how they now live in ordinary houses and that she – like other youngsters – has an iPhone and checks her Facebook every hour. This makes the visitors laugh. In conversations after the visit, the tourists refer back to these stories, expressing the value of their nuances. These are travellers who like to have their stereotypes challenged. Many talk about being touched by the story. "She [the daughter] spoke very bluntly about the evidence of discrimination they get through". Many travellers were convinced of having participated in something they regarded as meaningful. They had become more interested in Sámi culture, and they had many questions about reindeer herding, indigenous rights in Norway, Norway's colonial history and their contemporary challenges. We became involved in long conversations with other travellers about these issues and how they relate to each tourist's understanding of their own context and circumstances in the world, especially in relation to nature. As one American man stated,

> I think we learned something important here, about how we can meet our future challenges that relate to how we are going to manage to live with each other and be more respectful in regard to nature and the planet that we live on.

The making of a confident storyteller

The visitors' discomfort recurred on our repeated journeys with tourists. In discussions with staff from Arctic Coast and Davvi Siida, it turned out that the tour guides were not aware of this. We agreed to explore this disconcertment further in our dialogues with travellers. Could this explain why their excursion was seldom fully booked even though it was one of the best scoring excursions in Hurtigruten's portfolio? As our investigation went on, this became a key issue. How could the Sámi tourism operators communicate their product to avoid this fear? What differentiates their tourism performance from the many stereotypical indigenous products?

In discussing the travellers' fears, we also uncovered stories about the Utsis' own fears and ways of dealing with them. Ellinor talked about the resistance they felt when they started their tourism business. "We felt like real prostitutes, it was unpleasant, like – what am I doing – selling myself … It was not a good feeling." Their negotiations reflect what Whitford and Ruhanen (2016) call the double-edged sword of indigenous tourism: it can be a vehicle for preserving and safeguarding cultures, but it can also lead to further commodification. In their tourism practices, Davvi Siida constantly have to balance these considerations. Promoting Sámi traditions such as *joik* and drumming, which were forbidden for a long time, has been difficult. Ailu tells us how nervous he was to *joik* in front of people in the beginning. When he decided to use the drum,

Ellinor was critical. “Are you really going to do that?” she asked him. “What if someone is filming you, publishes it and your whole family sees it?” Ailu says that the feeling of being debased is gone. Now he feels more “like an important intermediary. And that makes me [him] proud”.

In tourism studies, we could pay more attention to these moments of discomfort and investigate them, inspired by Verran’s concept of epistemic disconcertments (Verran 2013). “Epistemic”, Verran explains, refers to practice as knowledge and how we account for ways of knowing. “Disconcertment” conveys the sense of being inconvenienced in some way, and when qualified by the term “epistemic” it implies that our assumption of what knowledge is has somehow been upset or impinged upon, making us begin to doubt it and become less certain (Verran 2013, 144–145). Learning to recognize and value such differences is learning to refuse the steps which require a colonizing reduction to a shared category and acceptance that we may not be committed to one common worldview. This is what is involved in cultivating a postcolonial impulse, an inclination for storytellers, tourists and researchers to learn something new and expand their ontological enactment of their own world.

Ailu reclaims the shamanistic practices and objects which have been unacceptable even within Sámi communities for a long time. Currently, most Sámi practise Christianity. Through investigating Sámi traditions in their endeavour to become tourist storytellers, the Utsi family learned and regained a deeper insight into the complexity of their own past. Educational institutions did not offer a curriculum which gave them access to this past, such as the Sámi shamanistic tradition, how its practitioners were imprisoned and their drums confiscated, and how many drums were destroyed by official representatives in the region. For Ellinor and Ailu, it was a journey they needed to take to escape the fear and shame in presenting the drum and become confident storytellers of their shamanistic past and its objects. However, one can still argue that there is a fine line between cultivating a postcolonial impulse through tourism and the pitfall of what Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) call Ethnicity, Inc.

Ethno-commercialization opposes the mainstream economic rationality, as Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) argue. This is partly because “differentness” can apparently be reproduced and sold without losing value. The reason for this is that the value of this commodity, which is the culture, identity and differentness of a certain ethnic group, does not decrease in price due to mass production. On the contrary, Comaroff and Comaroff argue that mass circulation confirms ethnicity, both in general and in particular. This contributes to ethnic incorporation, and it makes the status of the ethnic body a source and a means of identity. These are examples of what Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) regard as “commercial ethnicity”, which they assert is rapidly growing in many parts of the world. This opens up new and (perhaps) more ecologically and socially responsible methods of production and products themselves, which become new arenas for claiming autonomy and the recognition of traditional knowledge which effectively articulate ownership and belonging, while often occurring in the absence of other options. Selling otherness “relies heavily on colonial imagery that is inherently (if implicitly) racist” (Mathers and Landau 2007, 253). The dilemmas which emerge, and the overall costs of strategies which commercialize traditional knowledge and ethnic identity, may turn out to be complex challenges (Kramvig 2017). The Utsi family are well aware that their tourism

business makes them a representation of the Sámi, and they continuously negotiate the responsibilities which that entails.

Articulating the colonial past

The Utsi family is one among many Sámi tourist operators who explore and expose the spiritual part of Sámi knowledge practices. For them, this is part of reconnecting with their own past and healing the separation caused by assimilation. Through personal accounts, they are both telling the truth of their experiences and being heard.

Ailu tells of his boarding school experience, when he was sent away as a child to a boarding school where he was not allowed to speak his own language in public. He explains how this has changed, how they are now proud to speak Sámi and how the language is being revitalized as many young people want to learn Sámi. Tourists are given the opportunity to listen to the language through short stories told in Sámi. They are also invited to learn some words in Sámi and to repeat certain sounds. Ailu demonstrates traditional *joiks*, and he explains to the tourists how uncomfortable it is to *joik* in front of people. Ellinor explains, "Back in time it was forbidden. But they never succeeded in taking it away. The sound survived in our minds". They explain how the shamanistic traditions are still practised, for "Even today we have people who have the knowledge, who can help us if we need it". Ailu provides an example with a story about when he cut his finger up in the mountains and his uncle stopped the bleeding by performing traditional healing practices.

The colonial past prohibited the Sámi's shamanistic traditions, healing practices, language and many other knowledge practices. Through this storytelling event, these are recalled in the present. Benjaminsen, Gaup Eira, and Sara (2016) argue that policy-makers are misreading the Arctic pastoral landscape, neglecting both scientific evidence and the indigenous knowledge of the reindeer herders. Conflicts between the national government and herding communities are manifold, and it could be argued that the destructive colonial politics of land and the management of land are still ongoing. Still, we have been involved with the locally embedded re-storying, which – as Corntassel et al. (2009) argue – can be seen as a first step towards remembering and revitalizing indigenous epistemic practices. These practices create "decolonizing spaces" in which indigenous resurgence movements can take shape, and they enable a space for mobilizing a community of alliances through visitors' growing awareness of what is at stake for the Sámi people.

In the storytelling events at Davvi Siida, stories of knowledge-traditions are combined with stories about the everyday lives of herders. The Utsis are concerned with presenting what they call "living traditions", demonstrating how Sámi traditions are highly flexible and adaptable to the present. This interlacing of the past and the present in their stories is appreciated by the visitors, and the nuances make the stories credible. Through these storytelling events the Utsi family bring the colonial past into the present at the same time as they enact reconciliation. In doing so, they open up dialogues and create a space for multiple engagements which are offered as possibilities of relation-weaving, both to locals (indigenous or not) and to other travellers.

This calls for a rethinking of the stories we tell about humans and nature and their interdependencies. Can different ontologies be bridged or translated, and how do we go about

doing this work? The mutual entanglements of indigenous and non-indigenous worlds, and the partial connections between them, are the concerns of De la Cadena (2015). She presents how the Turpos' indigenous ways of knowing and being included exceeds modern and non-modern practices. Her discussion of indigenous political strategies reconfigures politics. She follows Blaser (2010) and argues that we need to think beyond "hybridity" and towards translation, communication which accepts incommensurability and mutual difference as conditions for ethnography to work. How can we cultivate embodied and ethnographic sensitivities towards differences? Experimental ethnography could offer openings for the pluriversal.

Inspired by Blaser (2010), we have aimed to move beyond explaining or representing our Sámi partners' view of the world to enact moments which emerge from the relations with their embodied view of the world. We argue that the storytelling events offer moments of hope, hope for epistemic decolonization and reconciliation. We have addressed how this can be accomplished through locally embedded storytelling. There is a connection between the original events and the event of their telling in which storytelling is a distinction-making event. A Sámi *noaidi* [shaman] and friend said that healing depends upon learning to know the pain. In practice it means taking the pain carefully out of the body, holding it in the hand and looking at it from different angles. In other words, storytelling can bring entities out of indistinction – or throw them back into it. How this will be enacted in the ongoing political reconciliation process in Sápmi remains to be seen.

Acknowledgements

Our thanks to the members of the Utsi family for their hospitality and willingness to share their knowledge and to the anonymous reviewers for a careful reading of an earlier draft of this paper. We also want to express our gratitude to Solveig Joks and John Law for their academic support and inspiring conversations as well as academic texts.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This research was developed as part of the research project "Reason to return", led by Agderforskning, with the senior researcher Kirsti Mathiesen Hjemdahl as project leader. The project was funded by the regional research fund Agder (RFFAGDER) with additional support from our business partners among them, Hurtigruten. The grant number is 234971.

References

Åhrén, Mattias. 2010. "The Saami Traditional Dress & Beauty Pageants: Indigenous Peoples' Rights of Ownership and Self-Determination over Their Cultures." PhD Diss., Tromsø: University of Tromsø.

Alfred, Gerard Taiaiake. 2009. "Restitution Is the Real Pathway to Justice for Indigenous Peoples." In *Responsibility and Renewal: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Journey*, edited by Gregory Younging, Jonathan Dewar, and Mike DeGagné, 179–190. Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

Benjaminsen, Tor A., Inger Marie Gaup Eira, and Mikkel Nils Sara. 2016. *Samisk reindrift – Norske myter*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

Blaser, Mario. 2010. *Storytelling Globalization from the Chaco and Beyond*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Butler, Caroline F., and Charles R. Menzier. 2007. "Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Indigenous Tourism." In *Tourism and Indigenous Peoples' Issues and Implications*, edited by Richard Butler, and Tom Hinch, 15–28. Oxford: Elsevier.

Christensen, Dorthe Refslund, Louise Ejgod Hansen, Ida Krøgholt, and Carsten Stage. 2016. "The Participant Researcher; Developing the Concept 'Accompanying Research'." *Nordisk kulturpolitisk tidsskrift* 1 (19): 116–136.

Comaroff, John, and Jean Comaroff. 2009. *Ethnicity, Inc*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Corntassel, Jeff, Chaw-win-is and T'lakwadzi. 2009. "Indigenous Storytelling, Truth-Telling, and Community Approaches to Reconciliation." *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 35 (1): 137–159. doi:10.1353/esc.0.0163.

Coulthard, Glen S. 2014. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

De la Cadena, Marisol. 2015. *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice Across Andean Worlds*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Freeman, Victoria. 2014. "In Defence of Reconciliation." *Canadian Journal of Law & Jurisprudence* 27 (1): 213–223. doi:10.1177/1468797611407759.

Galliford, Mark. 2010. "Touring 'Country', Sharing 'Home': Aboriginal Tourism, Australian Tourists and the Possibilities for Cultural Transversality." *Tourist Studies* 10 (3): 227–244.

Harries, John. 2017. "A Stone That Feels Right in the Hand: Tactile Memory, the Abduction of Agency and the Present of the Past." *Journal of Material Culture* 22 (1): 110–130. doi:10.1177/1359835667987.

Jackson, Michael. 2002. *The Politics of Storytelling. Violence, Transgression and Intersubjectivity*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press.

Jensen, Ellen Marie. 2019. "Diasporic Indigeneity and Storytelling Across Media: A Case Study of Narratives of Early Twentieth Century Sámi Immigrant Women." PhD diss., UiT The Arctic University of Norway.

Kramvig, Britt. 2017. "Orientalism or Cultural Encounters? Tourism Assemblages in Cultures, Capital and Identities." In *Tourism and Indigeneity in the Arctic*, edited by Arvid Viken, and Dieter Müller, 50–71. Bristol Blue Ridge Summit: Channel View Publications.

Kramvig, Britt, and Anne Britt Flemmen. 2016. "What Alters when the Sámi Traditional Costume Travels? Affective Investments in the Sápmi." In *Sensitive Objects: Affects and Material Culture*, edited by Jonas Fryktman, and Maja Povrzanovic Fryktman, 179–199. Lund: Academic Press.

Kuokkanen, Rauna. 2010. "The Responsibility of the Academy: A Call for Doing Homework." *JCT Online* 26 (3): 61–74.

Law, John, and Solveig Joks. 2019. "Indigeneity, Science, and Difference: Notes on the Politics of How." *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 44 (3): 424–447. doi:10.1177/0162243918793942.

Mathers, Kathlyn, and Loren Landau. 2007. "Natives, Tourists, and Makwerekwere: Ethical Concerns with 'Proudly South African Tourism'." *Development Southern Africa* 24: 523–537.

Mol, Annemarie, Ingunn Moser, and Jeanette Pols. 2010. "Care: Putting Practice into Theory." In *Care in Practice: On Tinkering in Clinics, Homes and Farms*, edited by Annemarie Mol, Ingunn Moser, and Jeanette Pols, 7–27. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.

Oskal, Nils. 1995. *Det rette, det gode og reinlykke*. Tromsø: Universitetet i Tromsø: Institutt for samfunnsvitenskap.

Sannhets og forsoningskommisjonen. 2020. "Del din historie." https://www.uit.no/kommisjonen/deldinhistorie.

Sara, Mikkel Nils. 2009. "Siida and Traditional Sami Reindeer Herding Knowledge." *Northern Review*, March 22. https://web.archive.org/web/20110501035825/http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-202252650.html.

Sara, Mikkel Nils. 2011. "Land Usage and Siida Autonomy." *Arctic Review* 2 (2). https://arcticreview.no/index.php/arctic/article/view/25.

Short, Damien. 2016. *Handbook of Indigenous Peopleś Rights*. London: Routledge.

Smith Tuhiwai, Linda. 1999. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books.

Strathern, Marilyn. 2004. *Partial Connections. Walnut Creek*. Calif: AltaMira Press.

Valkeapää, Nils-Aslak. 1979. *Helsing frå sameland*. Translated by Liv Hatle. Oslo: Pax forlag.

Verran, Helen. 2002. "A Postcolonial Moment in Science Studies: Alternative Firing Regimes of Environmental Scientists and Aboriginal Landowners." *Social Studies of Science* 32 (5-6): 729–762.

Verran, Helen. 2013. "Engagements Between Disparate Knowledge Traditions: Toward Doing Difference Generatively and in Good Faith." In *Contested Ecologies: Dialogues Between the South on Nature and Knowledge*, edited by L. Green, 141–162. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Viken, Arvid, and Dieter Müller. 2017. *Tourism and Indigeneity in the Arctic*. Bristol Blue Ridge Summit: Channel View Publications.

Walker, Kyle, and Gianna Moscardo. 2016. "Moving Beyond Sense of Place to Care of Place: The Role of Indigenous Values and Interpretation in Promoting Transformative Change in Tourists' Place Images and Personal Values." *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 24 (8-9): 1243–1261.

Whitford, Michelle, and Lisa Ruhanen. 2016. "Indigenous Tourism Research, Past and Present: Where to from Here?" *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 24 (8-9): 1080–1099. doi:10.1080/09669582.2016.1189925.