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THE DOMESTIC TURN IN POSTPANDEMIC INDIGENOUS ARCTIC TOURISM: EMERGING STORIES OF SELF AND OTHER

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In this article, we explore how the lockdowns followed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent rise in domestic tourism impacted the ways in which Arctic tourism businesses sold and shared their experiences and stories to the domestic tourist—for many, a new and unusual guest. In exploring cases from Greenland and Northern Norway, we are interested in describing tourism marketing and product innovation in times of crisis, using this disruption into the usual market dynamics of Arctic tourism to reflect on postpandemic tourism opportunities. As we argue, tourism marketing and development may serve as a lens to shed new light on the often turbulent relationships between tourism actors in Arctic communities. As we show, this was the case in the summer of 2020, where increasing concerns, as well as new insights and experiences, surfaced in the emerging domestic tourism encounters. We argued that these exemplify potential new ways for more reciprocal encounters in Indigenous and Arctic tourism.

Key words: Domestic tourism; Arctic tourism; Indigenous tourism; Encounters; Identity

Introduction

For decades, peoples of the Arctic have been portrayed in tourism using stereotypical markers, such as the representation of Sámi and Greenlanders as nature people in colorful clothing. In the case of Sámi, this has led to a continuous reproduction of an essentialist, stale, and reductionist image of Sámi culture (Olsen, 2010) focusing on reindeer and the midnight sun, while not taking into account the diversity of Sámi cultures and practices. In Greenland, up until the most recent branding campaign "Pioneering people" launched in 2005, Greenlandic culture was also largely marketed as close to nature, traditional, and rooted in Indigenous hunting and gathering practices (Thisted, 2015).

In Arctic destinations, many cases exist to this day of so-called "Indigenous" tourism experiences offered to tourists by businesses without any real affiliation to Indigenous, or even local, culture. The relations between hosts and guests performed

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in this mode of tourism can broadly be characterized as a relationship between Western guests and Arctic "Others." Recently, however, attempts have been made from tourism businesses as well as from various development projects to explore new and more culturally sensitive ways in which to tell and sell local and Indigenous culture in Nordic Arctic (including Greenlandic) tourism (Ren et al., 2021). Rethinking the encounters between hosts and guests is a central component in this development towards a more sensitive form of Arctic tourism.

The COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic profoundly impacted international arrivals to the Arctic and has forced local tourism entrepreneurs to rethink their business models. New branding and product development endeavors were quickly set in place to attract and cater to various types of local and domestic tourism. We use this unique situation as an opportunity to explore a "domestic turn" in Arctic tourism and its consequences for the tourism encounter, now increasingly taking place between nationals. In particular, we are interested in the experiences that Sámi and Greenlandic tourism providers drew from these emerging encounters in terms of making sense of and telling the Self and the Other through the identification of new affinities as well as differences.

In this article, we focus on and contrast Greenland and Norway, showing how despite similarities—both destinations are predominantly marketed and perceived as destinations for adventure tourism—the current tourism situations in both nations are also divergent. We look at small tourism businesses and their work to attract and cater to domestic tourists, replacing the usual international visitors during the peak summer and winter seasons of 2020. We investigate how businesses adapted their marketing and experiences from a global to a domestic market. How, we ask, did these changes in marketing and selling Arctic places and cultures impact the host–guest encounter? Which new cultural discourses and practices emerge and what does this mean for relations between Self and Other in Arctic tourism? We deploy the concept of *cultural sensitivity* to analyze and discuss the changes and issues emerging in Arctic tourism encounters during the pandemic. Developing Bennett's (1986) original model of intercultural sensitivity, Viken et al. (2021) introduced a framework specifically aiming at reinforcing cultural sensitivity in Arctic tourism. In this model, the authors suggest a need to transition from ethnocentric towards ethnorelative experiences of difference between hosts from a cultural minority and guests from a cultural majority. This framework offers, they argue, a pathway for tourism encounters to enhance recognition, respect, and reciprocity towards otherness in the context of climate change and lockdowns due to COVID-19 (Viken et al., 2021). In our analysis, we deploy, discuss, and tinker with this model by also encompassing domestic encounters that are, as we argue, overlooked in the current framework.

In the following, we first sketch out the prepandemic tourism situation and related guest–host relations in Greenland and Northern Norway. We introduce our methodology and research into pandemic tourism. In our analysis, we explore the changes to the tourism offers caused by the pandemic with local tourism actors from Sisimiut and Nuuk in Greenland and Finnmark in Northern Norway, looking at the *whats* and *hows* of wowing a new guest. We then identify what kind of encounters emerge in these new offers, before discussing some implications that can be observed from this first attempt at analyzing postpandemic Indigenous tourism in the Arctic. By exploring the experiences of small tourism businesses with new local guests, we lastly discuss the ways in which host–guest relations and with this, representations of Self and Other in tourism, are dynamic entities subject to change.

The Changing "Other" and Prepandemic Host–Guest Relations in Arctic Tourism

The questions that we address in this article are what kind of (new) *differences and affinities* are produced in the encounter between domestic tourists and Indigenous entrepreneurs in two different Arctic contexts and what the role the pandemic plays in shaping these roles? In an Arctic context, much of the research has addressed problematic issues in representing local and Indigenous cultures for the purpose of marketing and selling tourism (Brattland et al., 2020; Olsen et al., 2019). Indeed, the very notion of traveling rests on a quest for otherness or the encounter with "the Other" (Cohen, 1972). Reflecting on the anthropological

understanding of the Other, tourism research has had a long tradition of conceptualizing tourism as an encounter between differences (Wang, 1999). This understanding of culture is ingrained, reproduced, and reinforced in tourism marketing on social media and in other destination promotion material. Here, the destination culture is often thematized as exotic and like nowhere else. If tourism is an encounter between differences, tourism thus depends upon the degree of difference produced through the encounters.

Before the COVID-19 lockdown, the Nordic Arctic witnessed a tremendous growth in tourism numbers attracted by the marketing of Northern destinations such as Tromsø, Rovaniemi, and other, smaller destinations as "off the beaten track" and exotic (Hall & Saarinen, 2010). The Sámi are one such attraction for encountering difference, for those organizing, as well as undertaking, tourism in the Nordic Arctic (Müller & Viken, 2017). According to Ren et al. (2021), "travel writing, tourism marketing, media and partly even tourism research, have contributed to reproducing an exotic, primitive and objectifying image of the Sámi as the Arctic 'Other' " (p. 113; see also Viken & Müller, 2017).

In his analysis of local and regional tourist brochures and site visits to Northern Norway and Sámi tourist sites, Olsen (2010) illustrated how an image of the Sámi as a traditional people was consistently reproduced around the turn of the century through tourism encounters. In brochures, the Sámi were fitted into the image of the Indigenous or native peoples as either "noble savages" or "barbarians." What was produced as typically Sámi in tourism was reindeer herding, nomadism, traditional dress, and the image of Sámi people being in nature (Olsen, 2010; Viken, 2000). These images are not only powerful but may also be harmful or damaging in reproducing stereotypes and reductions, as they deny a context and complexity to Indigenous cultures and identities. Despite this, such imagery often lives on in the tourism product itself. To add to the complexity of these issues and as argued by Keskitalo and Schilar (2017), tourism entrepreneurs themselves also at times partake in generating or reproducing reductionist or exotifying representations of destinations.

From 2008 to 2018, Northern Norway experienced a boom in winter tourism following the already well-developed winter tourism market in Arctic Finland. In 2018 the Finnmark region even constituted the second largest destination market for Sámi tourism actors after the Arctic town of Tromsø, welcoming 100,000 foreign visitors (Nord-Norsk Reiseliv AS, 2020). The main Sámi tourism product in Northern Norway is primarily based on reindeer experiences, hence to some extent reproducing Western self–Indigenous Other relations. Reindeer experiences are predominantly advertised by Sámi-owned tourism companies, both independently and in collaboration with hotel chains in larger towns such as Karasjok, Kautokeino, Alta, and Tromsø. The reindeer culture products are mainly developed by reindeer herding families themselves, such as visits to reindeer herds gathered in corrals from November to April. The meet and greets often include a feeding opportunity for tourists completed with a steaming cup of coffee and dried meat. Other winter activities, such as snowmobiling and dogsledding, are also part of the tourism experiences in the region. During the summer season, a variety of activities includes Sámi cultural experiences such as visiting Sámi campsites, museums, restaurants, and hotels, offering souvenirs, dining, and learning about Sámi culture through storytelling over dinner or during art exhibitions.

In Greenland, tourism development is still in its early stages with the number of yearly visitors below 100,000. Up until recently, tourists traveling to Greenland were primarily Danish. However, the Arctic island nation is receiving increasing interest from a global audience (Bjørst & Ren, 2015). The market is slowly changing as tourists from Asia, North America, France, Germany, and the Nordic countries increasingly take up flight seats on the current international routes from Denmark and Iceland. As a result of the planned opening of two international airports in the capital Nuuk and the "tourism capital" of Ilulissat in 2023 and 2024 and positive growth in primarily expedition and cruise tourism, tourism numbers were—until the lockdown—projected to rise.

In Greenland, marketed solely as an adventure destination (Ren & Cooper, 2021), guests can enjoy experiences such as hikes to the Icecap, trout fishing, whale watching, and various other nature and culture experiences in the summer. In

winter, tourists can go dog sledging on the frozen sea or watch the Northern lights. The price of travel within Greenland is high due to the costly methods of transport as the lack of roads between towns and settlements means that travel can only take place by plane, helicopter, or boat. As a result, domestic tourism was, until the lockdown, quite modest. Mostly, people would travel for work or to visit friends and relatives for important social occasions such as weddings, confirmations, or funerals.

Within the tourism landscape, in which the national DMO Visit Greenland plays an important role, continuous efforts are made to expand the tourism offer to attract a broader range of tourists and to invite more locals to join the tourism industry. Activities are organized on a municipal level by business associations such as the Sermersooq Business Council of the capital region, working specifically on the commercialization of culture and food innovation, both in close connection to tourism. Business councils such as Innovation South Greenland and Arctic Circle Business continuously offer courses in service and product development, digital marketing, or similar activities that strive to build skills and capacity within the tourism sector while the Arctic food cluster NERISA and the Food Lab Greenland encourage and offer support in the development of Greenlandic food products and experiences.

In Greenland, Thisted (2015) noted a recent movement where descriptions and representation by people living in the South are increasingly challenged by the peoples of the Arctic, who "are now to a much larger degree representing themselves, both on the political stage and in the media, art, literature and film. This creates completely different images from the ones we have grown accustomed to over so many years" (Thisted, 2015, p. 23). In her work, Thisted described this transition from passive representation to active creation of new Greenlandic identities through branding campaigns, pop culture, art, and recently, together with Ren, through the European Song Contest (Ren & Thisted, 2021). In a Sámi context, a similar movement has also been observed in the critical arts coming out of Sámi's resistance to colonialism in reindeer husbandry management, to green colonialism and extractive industries. The amount of knowledge about Sámi culture communicated to Norwegians also changes the former images through school curriculums, academic knowledge production, and media communication. As the new art and knowledge produced by Greenlanders and Sámi become known to domestic and international audiences, outdated images of the exotic Indigenous are increasingly challenged and replaced.

In the context of tourism, and as argued by Ren et al. (2021), many activities are currently developing within Arctic tourism and Arctic tourism research in recent years to enable more just and diverse representations of local and Indigenous Arctic cultures. Drawing on the ideas of ethnorelative relations, characterized by recognition, respect, and reciprocity, Viken et al. (2021) proposed to enhance recognition of cultural traditions, customs, and practices in Arctic tourism. This can take place by supporting culturally sensitive product development among tourism entrepreneurs or collaborative efforts in developing guidelines for culturally sensitive tourism (Viken et al., 2021). The traditional Sámi *verdde* institution is also an example of a reciprocal relationship between nomadic Sámi guests and settled Sámi hosts that continues to shape and inform hospitality thinking in Sámi communities (Svensson & Viken, 2017).

Postpandemic Tourism: An Opportunity to Build Back Better?

The COVID-19 pandemic has been damaging for the tourism industry on an unprecedented scale, reducing the level of travel in 2020 to that of thirty years ago (UNTWO, 2020a). The pandemic led to massive disruption, forced businesses to close, and saw entire tourism-dependent nations drastically reduce their GDP for 2020. Despite this, the pandemic and the consequent lockdown across the globe have also been addressed by tourism industry organizations and academic researchers as an occasion to build back better. As an example of this view and using the pandemic as an analogy to the climate crisis, Gössling et al. (2021) see the pandemic as an opportunity to question growth tourism models. Within a policy context, Ioannides and Gyimóthy (2020) discussed how the pandemic has offered "the perfect opportunity to select a new direction and move forward by adopting a more sustainable path" (p. 624), while Higgins-Desbiolles (2020) sees

COVID-19 as "a transformational moment opening up possibilities for resetting tourism" (p. 612).

Tourism organizations have also heralded a new future for more sustainable tourism development in the wake of the pandemic. An example is the UN World Tourism Organization, arguing that the crisis offers a unique opportunity to not only grow the sector but also to grow better (UNTWO, 2020b). While global tourism has showcased impressive (or horrifying, depending on the viewpoint) growth rates since the end of World War II, the above indicates how hope for a better and more sustainable future is invested into the break created by the lockdown. As we see, many perceive the pandemic crisis as a lever to turn tourism into something better, through more socially just and fair tourism development (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020), stronger policies for more sustainable development paths (Ioannides & Gyimothy, 2020), and for environmental and mobility-related green transitions (Gössling et al., 2021).

In an Indigenous context, Carr (2020) explored the immediate impacts of the pandemic lockdown on Māori tourism businesses and discussed how such insights could inform the future development of tourism. Besides the harmful effects on Indigenous communities that the pandemic brought forth globally, the author emphasized numerous cases, where Indigenous tour operators managed to turn the pandemic into an opportunity for community well-being and business innovation. For instance, some tourism companies started to serve food to the more vulnerable members of the community or learned to strengthen their digital presence. Carr (2020), therefore, argued that such Indigenous businesses constitute "the future of cultural sustainability" (p. 499). As also argued by Hutchison et al. (2021), Indigenous values can, and should, inform national and local governments in rebuilding tourism responsibly and grounded in local needs.

Methodology

Our research followed a qualitative methodology to capture the pandemic experiences of local tourism entrepreneurs. We take a comparative approach between Sisimiut and Nuuk in Greenland and Finnmark in Northern Norway, to highlight and reflect upon the similarities and differences addressed by respondents from these two destinations. In Autumn 2020 we approached 27 tourism actors through snowball sampling. We started with the established network of the Culturally Sensitive Tourism in the Arctic (ARCTISEN) project, which supports local and Indigenous tourism actors in the Arctic areas of Canada, Greenland, Norway, Sweden, and Finland in developing culturally sensitive tourism (Olsen et al., 2019). Through this network, we conducted 10 semistructured interviews lasting between 30 and 60 min. Among the three Greenlandic interview respondents were two tourism destination managers, and one working as an entrepreneur and manager. The seven Norwegian interviewees, based in Northern Norway, consisted of small-scale Sámi and Norwegian tourism entrepreneurs and three tourism destination managers, two Sámi and one Norwegian. The two interviewers, Randy and Elsbeth, were based in Tromsø and Copenhagen, respectively, and deliberated with Camilla and Carina on research design, selection of informants, and interview guides to ensure a common red thread throughout the interviews (Kajornboon, 2005).

In the interviews, the discussed topics revolved around, among others, the social and financial consequences of the COVID-19 crisis. Due to the complex and at times delicate nature of the topics, the interviewers, who are both Dutch and do not speak the local languages, had a certain responsibility to build rapport and sense if the dynamics were appropriate before asking more sensitive or personal questions. Apart from issues concerning their financial situation, sensitive matters such as cultural identity and discrimination were also addressed. In conducting this research, we followed the work of Brattland et al. (2018) where we as "careful partial participants" aimed to account for the interviewees' complex stories and experiences instead of reducing its diversity into fixed categories.

Besides interviews, we distributed an online survey in Norwegian and English among tourism entrepreneurs associated with ARCTISEN and beyond through snowball sampling. We received a low response to the surveys, most probably due to the large number of surveys circulating at the time on the impact of COVID-19, and due to the difficult time that many entrepreneurs experienced during the pandemic. The survey respondents were mostly from Greenland, which provided deeper

insights into the experiences of Greenlandic entrepreneurs. There were around the same number of respondents (less than 10) for the international and Norwegian survey, which offered some clues into the differences and similarities between the two contexts. Due to a low response, the survey data merely served to complement the interview data.

In Spring 2021, the authors were part of planning and participating in a range of ARCTISEN online workshops, which featured discussions about stereotypes in tourism, cultural representations, local knowledge, and the various impacts of the pandemic. Local tourism actors, including tourism entrepreneurs from Sápmi, Greenland, and Canada, engaged in the discussions and shared interesting insights. Many reflected on Arctic tourism before and during the pandemic from the point of view of local tourism businesses. The discussions brought a diversity of perspectives on the encounters between guests and hosts during the pandemic, which confirmed, supplemented, and challenged the results we had already gathered from our own interviews. This helped to broaden our analysis of domestic host–guest relationships in the Arctic in general.

The Arctic Pandemic Tourism Situation and the Need for a "New Wow"

The pandemic lockdown in Greenland and Northern Norway saw Arctic tourism businesses' bookings from the usual international tourist customers rapidly disappear. For some companies, the gap was replaced—at least to some degree—by a new domestic market. Besides domestic tourism, local and regional tourism grew, as people headed out to explore their own region. For Northern Norway, this entailed welcoming visitors from Norway and when border openings allowed it, visitors from Finland. In Greenland, the country remained under strict lockdown allowing only very few flights from Denmark and Iceland and requiring all visitors to undertake strict quarantine regulations. With few exceptions, this left the Greenlandic tourism industry with only one market, a market that grew, however, as Greenlanders wishing to travel were restricted to visiting Greenlandic destinations.

Even though domestic tourism is not new to Arctic destinations and many companies usually welcome them during the summer season, many local tourism entrepreneurs received more domestic tourists than ever before after the borders closed. Most of the survey and interview respondents identified tourism as one of several occupations often combined with a job in the fisheries or the food and crafts sectors. In adapting to the different demands, and above all, surviving financially, many tourism entrepreneurs turned to other jobs, either looking for something new, starting education, or concentrating more effort on already existing working activities (Greenlandic tour operator, 2020; Business consultant and project manager of a business garden Norway, 2020). Companies responded in different ways and were forced to meet different demands within one season, resulting in a new market for tourism businesses to work with and adapt to.

As we learned from the interviews, domestic tourists came with other demands, wishes, and needs for their holiday than international tourists. As argued by a tourism actor in Arctic Norway about the preferences of the new Norwegian clientele: "The cruises were not used that much, but the kitchen was used a lot. And so, [the entrepreneurs] realize that Norwegians have to be treated in a different way" (Norwegian tourism manager, 2020). The diversity of the domestic market was emphasized, as it included families, couples, groups of friends, ex-pats, business travelers, and first-time travelers to the North. What domestic tourists from Greenland and Norway had in common was their lack of interest in guided tours, such as boat tours, husky safaris, reindeer experiences, snowmobile tours, and Sámi experiences, because of their (perceived) familiarity with the area and the high prices, tailored for international tourists.

This lack of interest in packaged travel and tours was explained as a result of domestic tourists having different expectations than international tourists. As one respondent described:

> The funny thing is that what [international] tourists are interested in, is our everyday life. It is what we do every day is like going snowmobiling, hiking, dog sledging, skiing, all of these things that we do when I'm off work. . . . Basically, what the staycation market is interesting in, is all of those things that is not that [associated with everyday life] (Hotel owner and tour operator in Greenland, 2020).

A trip to Northern Norway or Greenland by international tourists is often a "once in a lifetime" experience, according to the Head of Competence and Development at an Arctic DMO. Domestic tourists, however, perceived this differently: "it is easier to create this wow factor with foreign tourists than with Norwegians, because they have kind of seen it all in a way" (Tourism manager in Norway, 2020). For instance, as exemplified by a Greenlandic DMO, "it is difficult to convince somebody to go hiking for several days when everybody has been hiking for several days since they were children" (Destination manager in Greenland, 2020).

Besides the outdoor products, there was also a need to tell new stories. For instance, the Greenlandic Destination Manager argued how difficult it was to sell cultural tourism products among domestic tourists:

> I cannot tell people about the national dress. They know all about it. . . . The national dress, for example, or the northern lights, myths: people know that. Selling northern lights tours hasn't really been a thing, because that is something we are used to up here.

As a result, domestic tourists in Greenland and Norway needed to be wowed in new ways.

How to Wow

As a result of a new set of demands, many tourism entrepreneurs and DMOs in both Greenland and Norway saw a need to adapt their stories, products, and experiences to attract domestic tourists. In the case of Greenland, this turn resulted in a shift from the nature-based and local everyday life tours made for international tourists, such as husky safaris and snowmobiling, towards rediscovering new ways of experiencing familiar places. For instance, tour operators in Greenland emphasized how they used nature in their products differently during the pandemic to attract domestic guests, as some businesses were able to make the outdoor experience more challenging, as in the case of this Greenlandic entrepreneur: "It is more a matter of the experience as well and doing it more physically. Because when [the guest] comes from Greenland, it is possible to make the tours more physically demanding for example."

Moreover, to offer a new experience of Greenland, respondents noticed that, for instance, saunas, outdoor spas, e-bikes, paddle boarding, and roasting marshmallows by the campfire attracted domestic tourists, as opposed to guided tours and luxurious accommodations that were a traditional demand in prepandemic tourism. So, the most popular products, services, and experiences during the pandemic summer of 2020 turned out to be those that were different from everyday life in Greenland. According to the Head of a Greenlandic business council, this was one of the reasons why South Greenland became one of the most popular destinations, because "it is warmer and greener [in South Greenland] compared to the rest of Greenland." In other words, merely by offering different products, like the ones above, tourism businesses facilitated domestic guests to enjoy their homeland while experiencing something new.

In Norway, tourism entrepreneurs experimented with finding new ways to engage with local regions, but here, a movement towards the more mundane and slow activities was observed with a focus on quality and the connection with local products, traditions, and everyday life. Nature remained among the main attractions in Norway, but in contrast to foreign guests, most domestic tourists engaged in outdoor activities independently instead of in guided tours. This was often supported by premium and small-scale accommodations, which expanded their gastronomical offers at high-quality restaurants to cater to Norwegian guests coming with high expectations. As a tourism manager in Norway argued: "I think that the companies realize that Norwegians are, well they are demanding, . . . they have money and they like to spend money when they are on vacation, because vacation equals having a good time."

In practice, some businesses changed from offering a relatively simple and affordable dinner for foreign visitors to a five-course gourmet meal including a well-suiting wine list and local products (Norwegian tourism entrepreneur, 2020). Such innovations also emerged among Sámi tourism entrepreneurs, who upgraded their lavvus from "camping" to "glamping" by improving the interior with their own handicrafts, such as homemade blankets and wooden hand-carved utensils. In addition, stays could be combined with an intimate

dinner where the hosts' own reindeer meat and locally sourced foods were enjoyed (Sámi tourism entrepreneur in Norway, 2020; Sámi tourism entrepreneur in Norway, 2020).

Besides providing local and high-quality products and services, the ways of offering cultural tourism experiences changed as well. Many companies downscaled usual excursions or visits, hence making cultural experiences more accessible, less time consuming, or more affordable. An example was to downgrade a full-fledged Sámi reindeer experience into a less demanding meet and greet. Tourism businesses were supported in making such changes by tourism clusters such as the Norwegian Arctic 365, which assisted members to target domestic customers. This was done by marketing *hidden treasures* such as local food, handicraft, and other businesses connected to tourism. This way, the companies, usually located outside of the municipality centers, could more easily be found by tourists from further away in Norway (CEO of business garden, 2020; Business consultant and project manager of business garden, 2020). Similarly, in Greenland, the domestic marketing campaign of "Nunarput Nuan—our wonderful Greenland" was launched by Visit Greenland in Danish and Greenlandic to encourage and facilitate local travelers in planning their staycation and to support local tourism businesses.

Encountering New Affinities in Tourism Relations

As experienced by many entrepreneurs, not only did the discourses and practices around marketing and product development change as a result of new visitors to Northern Norway and Greenland. So did the service encounter and the resulting conversations and exchanges. In the interviews and during the online workshops, entrepreneurs, as well as DMO representatives, reflected on the need to respond to domestic guests in new and different ways. In our material, we see a concern about identifying or developing new affinities, in the sense of communalities to ground an encounter and potential exchange.

In their research on the quest of Scandinavian tourism developers to identify commonalities with Chinese tourists, Jørgensen and Ren (2015) suggested an affinity-based approach to tourism product development as a contrast to a difference-based approach. This, they argued, "enables us to see beyond perceived differences and to focus on meeting grounds where local qualities and characteristics are developed to suit a [new] market" (p. 19). The focus on affinities, rather than differences, is retrieved in the work of destination managers and businesses, who grappled with identifying new ways of framing local qualities and characteristics to a domestic market and are discussed in further detail below.

Nature and Spirituality

An example of a new "frictious" affinity is nature. While nature remained the unique selling point in both Greenland and Northern Norway in the shift to more domestic tourism, a Sámi tourism entrepreneur pointed to how new, domestic audiences challenged their usual accounts told to international tourists about Sámi relations to nature: "Norwegian people do not like me saying that we [Sámi] have another way to relate to nature. Because . . . they have an identity that they are the outdoor [enthusiasts]." In the encounter with Sámi ways of narrating nature relations, Norwegian guests—often carrying with them their own stories and experiences of being in nature—contested the idea of a strong connection to nature as an exclusive Sámi privilege. This forced host–guest conversations about how to be in and with nature and new productive frictions—not only about national and cultural identities but also of how hosts and guests talk about and negotiate relations to nature.

As something new, Sámi entrepreneurs also received tourists who were Sámi themselves:

> This summer we had a Sami family from the south coming, and I was a little bit afraid, because I am balancing the world that you do not see or the spiritual world in Sami and this world. But it went really well! (Sámi tourism entrepreneur in Norway, 2020)

In the online webinars hosted by the ARCTISEN project in Spring 2020, experiences such as this led to reflections on how to represent and share sensitive issues such as Sámi spirituality to a local clientele or from the same culture, including both Sámi and non-Sámi people. The balance of "how much

to share" with tourists about sensitive issues like spirituality depends on the connection or trust felt within the host–guest encounter. Both with Norwegian and Sámi guests, Sámi tourism entrepreneurs expressed concern and increased awareness when disseminating Sámi stories related to their relationship with nature and spirituality, as these can be personal and sensitive topics. Therefore, some entrepreneurs chose to wait with or abstain from sharing these stories depending on the level of connection, trust, and intimacy with the guests, allowing time to assess whether they are open to different attitudes and worldviews regarding spirituality.

The perceived affinity of Greenlanders with nature seemed for many as potentially problematic since, as we previously noted, the domestic guests were at times seen as people who have "been hiking for several days since they were children." This also led to the introduction of more out-of-the-ordinary activities such as sea paddle boarding and a focus on the most "exotic" destinations, such as the warmer and "lush" South Greenland, described by many as a contrast to the rest of Greenland. However, stakeholders still insisted on nature as the centerpiece of the Greenland experience—also for domestic tourists, for instance by pointing to UNESCO heritage sites and musk ox safaris. This meant that operators constantly balanced newness and the mundane in their domestic offerings while seeking to meet the challenge of sameness and affinities to their local clientele, rather than the usual differences with nondomestic guests.

In these domestic tourism practices, the traditional and exotic are not the main attractors. Instead, nature seems to take on an even more prominent position than cultural difference as the main attraction for domestic tourists in both Greenland and Norway. With the emerging image of Indigenous peoples as holding the key to sustainability (Carr, 2020), we could also be witnessing a reshaping of relations between Indigenous hosts and domestic guests with nature and connected practices as a new affinity. In this process of cultivating nature as a new affinity, hosts as well as guests relearn and reflect upon different ways of being in and engaging with the environment. This proposes new avenues not only for tourism but also for alliances and hopeful new relations between tourists, locals, and Indigenous peoples in actions for nature and biodiversity preservation and the fight against climate change, which are common concerns in Northern Norway and Greenland.

Being Local

The domestic turn in tourism shows how tourism entrepreneurs in Northern Norway, and to some extent Greenland, highlight locality and everyday life experiences as attractive to tourists instead of highlighting the exotic as a cultural difference to be consumed by tourists. Tourists were invited into nature, served meals based on locally produced foods, and invited into conversations and discussions with tourism hosts around (at least potential) affinities such as experience with nature and spirituality. This move towards what we might term as proximity tourism (Rantala et al., 2020) contrasts the image of Sámi and Greenlandic cultures as the "the last nomads of Europe" projected in Arctic tourism, as suggested by Olsen (2010).

The local turn in tourism also saw a resurgence of a lingering debate about local guides:

> If I go to another region, I don't want to . . . have a guide that is from abroad, for example. And that's what we saw before, that there was a lot of imported guides, . . . And local inhabitants, we don't want to be guided by a foreigner that has been in our culture a few weeks. So that was also a big thing. That if you were not able to offer some authentic local, we would not accept it. They [domestic tourists] also forced the local operators very much in offering more according to our demands. (Destination manager in Greenland 2020)

Ever since the early beginnings of tourism, local guides have been a subject of concern and discussion in Greenland. As noted by Ren et al. (2020), discussions revolved "around young Danish guides coming to Greenland for the summer disabling locally trained Greenlandic guides to enter the industry" (p. 8). The discussion is at times framed around an ethnic discussion—about whether one is of Greenland, Danish, or foreign descent, but more commonly also about one's "belonging" in the sense of contributing to a local community (personal communication). In the context of domestic tourism, being local and able to demonstrate local knowledge received even more attention from the

tourism side and forced operators to continue or initiate the hiring of local guides.

As we see, more domestic tourists reinforced ongoing discussions of local guides, but also what it means to be "a local" and what a meaningful or legitimate relation to the destination might be. Similarly, the relationship to nature was also revisited in the encounter between Norwegian guests and Sámi hosts, where being—and being together—in nature became an occasion to learn about and from cultural differences and new affinities.

Towards More Reciprocal Encounters in Domestic Indigenous Tourism?

Returning to the pandemic, to what extent can we say that COVID-19 is "a transformational moment opening up possibilities for resetting tourism" (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020, p. 612). Even though the pandemic itself has not revolutionized tourism in the context we have looked into, it seems like it has sped up some of the already ongoing work towards more culturally sensitive practices in Arctic tourism. Both in Greenland and Northern Norway, close ties between tourism and communities were pointed out although the tourism contexts and starting point for Greenlandic and Sámi entrepreneurs were quite different prior to the pandemic.

Where Sámi entrepreneurs acted on a background of international mass tourism, Greenlandic tourism was only just beginning to increase. While wanting to grow the tourism economy as part of their livelihood adaptations after the pandemic, the Sámi entrepreneurs often emphasized the value in the small-scale, sustainable experiences and in contrast to the consequences of the winter mass tourism prior to the pandemic. The interviewees in Norway emphasize the sustainability of small-scale, value-based tourism as the new "wow" after the pandemic, providing domestic tourists with experiences that challenge capitalist modes of production.

What we also see is that the development of new experiences, where nature and culture intertwine and a new awareness to the cultural aspects of sustainable tourism development during the pandemic, has partaken in the emergence of new images of the "exotic Arctic Other." Similar to the Māori examples offered by Carr (2020), our analysis indicates that it is necessary to reconsider "culture" as a distinct entity separate from the realms of "nature." Instead, cultural and Indigenous practices are a part of sustainable development (Carr, 2020). The changing relationship between nature and culture in tourism in response to the pandemic has enabled a new awareness of the cultural practices related to—and necessary for—sustainable tourism development.

As a productive outcome of domestic tourism friction, the pandemic lockdown and its tourism actors necessitated the identification of new ways of thinking and talking about nature and the every day, and hence, new ways of encountering and thinking about the "Other," whether this being a guest or a host. Drawing on the framework offered by Viken et al. (2021) in their discussion on cultural sensitivity in tourism, postpandemic tourism could offer a possibility to move from ethnocentric to ethnorelative ways of living and engaging with difference. "While the ethnocentric realm involves essentializing difference, the ethnorelative realm is based on openness to diversity" (Viken et al., 2021, p. 4). But to what extent does this apply in contexts when both hosts and guests are Indigenous, such as in Sápmi and Greenland? As the pandemic fosters more domestic tourism, the question remains what kind of "Others" are the Sámi and Greenlanders, and what kind of tourists are "we"? Have "we" become closer to "the Other" in the postpandemic context?

Although the framework of Viken et al. (2021) emphasized the movement in which ethnic relations between majority and minority cultures should generally proceed, the framework fails to capture encounters between locals who might both be of the same ethnicity and both be minorities. In our case studies, we find examples of these relations between southern Sámi guests or local northerners and northern Sámi hosts, and in Greenland, where both guests and hosts are Greenlanders. Indeed, in Greenland, this is the norm and continues to be so also after the pandemic. The current framework mostly addresses concepts such as reciprocity and recognition of "the sins of the past" (Viken et al., 2021, p. 9) by non-Indigenous tourism developers. Recognition is described as a transformative process in relation with different others, such as "a continuously new possibility of questioning, reflecting and transforming our ways of being, knowing and

valuing in relation with others" (Viken et al., 2021, p. 7). This however only goes so far in supporting our analysis of the way *Indigenous* actors are transforming their relations with tourists and the experiences they offer. What does cultural sensitivity and recognition of difference mean to Greenlandic and Sámi tourism actors who are in the business of selling and telling their *own* culture?

What we propose is a focus on Indigenous tourism experiences where reciprocal relations and hospitality are the core basis for experiencing both difference and sameness. Taking the key concept of reciprocity as discussed in Viken et al. (2021) seriously also entails framing the concept of cultural sensitivity differently. If reciprocity as a continuation of Sámi *verdde* relations is the key to Sámi tourism experiences aimed at guests not coming from the majority of Western cultures, but from their own culture, an emphasis on affinities should be equally if not more relevant than the differences.

According to Carr (2020), Indigenous cultural landscapes "are the future of cultural sustainability and their wise management should be of equal importance to economic development" (p. 499). Carr argued how Indigenous values can, and should, inform national and local governments in rebuilding tourism responsibly and grounded in local needs through adaptive and resilient practices (Carr, 2020; Hutchison et al., 2021; Lapointe, 2020). This seems all well, but to what extent are these practices facilitated by the pandemic and in the case of the Arctic. Turning to the Sámi and Greenlandic tourism entrepreneurs, we might also ask whether what is happening in Indigenous settings might contribute to a larger tourism industry.

How cultures are framed and how they come to be represented and known determines our perception of whether and how they matter in the first place (Butler, 2009). Therefore, exploring and working towards ways of reframing "the Other" is vital. So how can otherness be framed differently in tourism through a focus on affinities? As we suggest, it can happen through the common experience with nature, which might also open up for an understanding of various ways of relating to, perceiving, and being in nature. It can happen through a sense of shared history, through humor, values of sustainability, and shared hopes for a better future between hosts and guests.

The similarities in how Greenlandic and Sámi entrepreneurs frame Indigeneity in tourism are striking. Moving away from images of "the Other" while at the same time building products based on cultural differences and affinities to provide interesting experiences for both domestic and foreign tourists are key. While perhaps only for a brief moment before international tourism kicks back in on the other side of the pandemic, the new domestic "wows" and encounters analyzed in this article suggested how people and places can become knowable in more accountable and arguably just ways through a reframing of unique and joint stories of Self and Other in Arctic tourism.

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