
SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

Diversity Policies as Tools to Increase Participation and Encounters

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Informed by the concept of diversity, this article discusses the issue of municipalities' facilitation of ethnic diversity and integration in two cities in northern Norway. Municipalities are in a position to accommodate ethnic diversity in more pragmatic ways than the nation-state through local policies. We explore diversity policies in three different areas: democratic participation, urban planning, and cultural policies. The study finds ambivalences in the involvement of immigrants in urban planning processes and to some degree indifference in planning for diversity but also real attempts at recognition by giving immigrants a voice in local politics.

Keywords: Diversity policies; Integration; Urban planning; Encounter; Participation

Introduction

What are the consequences of demographic change when people from a wide range of countries and social backgrounds live together in small and large cities? How do city administrations adapt to this new normal and develop a "politics of diversity"? This article investigates policies aiming at facilitating immigrants' social and political participation and encounters at the local level. Immigrant integration is essentially a local process (Niessen & Engberink 2006) and includes the recognition and management of cultural diversity (Penninx & Martinello 2004; Fincher & Iveson 2008). However, cities do it differently. Local governments do not just implement national policies but increasingly formulate policies as well (Alexander 2003). Local solutions and management strategies are considered to be crucial in identifying, developing, and diffusing new integration models (Milan Declaration 2007). The local authorities are therefore in a position to accommodate ethnic diversity in more pragmatic ways than the national level (Castles & Miller 2003; de Graauw & Vermeulen 2016, Takle 2018). Local services towards refugees and asylum-seekers such as educational programs, social services, housing are designed by the state, but they are implemented and organised locally, partly through the municipal administration and partly through government agencies in the municipalities.

Even if there are reasons to be sceptical about the 'local turn' in integration policies as cities lack the power to govern immigration themselves (Bernt 2019), some soft policy areas such as in the cultural realm the discretion of municipal governments opens for more local initiatives. It is not only affordable housing, language courses, and finding a job that are important to migrant integration but also being included in civic society. City administrations

do administer more of the programmes and deliver more of the services that are crucial to immigrants' daily lives (de Graauw & Vermeulen 2016). Immigrants' social and political participation in the local community is complex and related to a varied set of activities that are partly facilitated by local governance structures. In Norway, municipalities have the autonomy necessary to organise their administrative and political systems according to local needs and ambitions. A political opportunity structure that is open to immigrant voices is closely linked to how the local political system is organised. Setting up immigrant councils could be one example. Municipalities are also largely responsible for managing the built environment to ensure social order and harmony among ethnically and racially diverse residents. Here the municipal levels are authorised through the Planning and Building Act (Ot.prop Nr. 32 (2007–2008)) to plan their territories in a way that are inclusive for all its citizens, today that means to plan for pluralism. As such, planning is a part of urban governance. Another policy area in which municipalities possess great autonomy is in the cultural policy sector, not because of delegated power as with the Planning and Building Act, but simply because of lack of state regulations. This is a sector that is vital in the recognition of minorities' cultural expressions and in facilitating some of the activities of importance for everyday encounters between newcomers and the host community such as libraries, sports clubs, and other civic society associations that to a high degree are funded and facilitated through the municipality's cultural programmes.

The practicing of activities aimed at increasing the social inclusion of immigrants and the governance of ethno-cultural diversity are negotiated at the local level but are of course highly influenced by national and also European and even global discourses. Despite this, we know comparatively little about the actual practices of governing diversity at the local level (Bernt 2019). Different practices between cities can be traced, which to a certain degree gives grounds for this article more closely examining two medium-sized Norwegian cities. Through a study of Bodø and Tromsø, we will trace the dominant discourses on integration and the ways in which these discourses translate – or not – into concrete practices of encounters and participation. The findings are ambiguous. Giving immigrants a voice in city governance through some sort of consultative bodies is one expression of recognition. The power of this voice, however, remains uncertain. The two cities are celebrating diversity in different forms. What is less developed is intercultural arenas enhancing dialogue between different ethnic groups. Planners seem to lack the tools needed to form an adequate response to the increasing diversity or to reach out effectively to immigrant groups. More sensitivity to ethnic differences in the planning tools when planning in a diverse city is called for. The outline of the article is as follows: We start with a review of literature that deals with the governance of diversity in politics, urban planning and cultural programs. We then present the two case studies, analysing how diversity has been addressed in these policy fields. In the last section, we reflect on our findings.

Governing diversity

The capacity to live with difference is the coming question for the twenty-first century (Hall 1993). The quantitative increase in demographic diversity marked by a growing number of ethno-racial groups makes a qualitative difference in how diversity is experienced in urban settings (Foner, Duyvendak & Kasinitz 2017). The rapid change of the composition of the urban population, which in some cities has been characterised as 'super-diversity' or 'hyper-diversity', has led the way for diversity as the main concept for describing societies characterised by migration-led diversification. Diversity and even super-diversity are described as the new normal for Western societies and have become a successor to multiculturalism (Vertovic 2007; Meissner & Vertovic 2015). The concept is considered a more descriptive and

less normative concept than multiculturalism. (Schiller 2016). Diversity is used as a label for policies addressing the heterogeneity of local populations, as an analytical concept to capture the increasing social complexity in cities because of migration, while used as a policy concept, and extended to different forms of diversity. Although “super-diversity” perhaps should be reserved for global mega-cities or neighbourhoods where diversity is extreme, where no group holds the majority status, ‘diversity’ could be used as a concept that catches less extreme but still complex social development driven by migration-driven diversification, characterising a number of Norwegian cities.

One way of responding to increased ethnic diversity could be to improve the city’s democratic system, for instance expanding the spaces of democracy by increasing the democratic participation of minority groups. Many local authorities across Europe have experimented with initiatives that offer opportunities for participation, giving new reality to the idea that urban citizenship may be based on residency rather than nationality. These avenues can be described as opportunity structures; a set of formal and informal signals that encourage or discourage political activity (Morales & Giugni 2011). In Norway, Finland and in some other European countries, the political opportunity structure is more inclusive at the local than the national level: Immigrants with a residency of 3 years or more have the right to vote in local elections. This suggests that territory trumps national citizenship, which is necessary to vote in national elections. The representation of immigrant interests in consultative bodies or committees has gained more importance in Europa partly initiated by the Integration Cities Charter (EUROCITIES 2010; Guentner & Stanton 2013; Kotic & Triandafyllidou 2005). Such bodies are often launched with the best of intentions to open a dialogue between municipal institutions and the new population. They might promote active citizenship and open new routes to political participation but bad design, for instance, a lack of decision-making powers and commitment from the municipal authorities, could lead to ‘institutional ghettoisation’ and reinforce social divisions (Guentner & Stanton 2013: 39). Consultation exercises may be just another tactic of elitist governance if not grounded in a regime of rights (Guentner & Stanton 2013: 50). Their design and the wider context of political institutional inclusion, therefore, define their performance (Takle 2015).

The governance and management of diversity is also about facilitating encounters between strangers, in ‘micro publics’ (Amin 2002); that is, encounters with a certain intent or purpose; sites of purposeful and organised group activities where people might interact in pursuit of common projects and goals that are not defined with reference to ethnic identities and differences (Amin 2002). Encounters have the ability to change and transform differences in unpredictable ways (Wilson & Darling 2016: 10). Such spaces, which offer opportunities for people to experiment with different ways of being and acting together, are fundamental dimensions of the political landscape.

Facilitating sites where encounters with strangers can intermingle is a central requisite in implementing a democratic urban policy (Wilson & Darling 2016). The city is a space in which to imagine, enact, and contest political imaginaries and processes (Wilson 2015). Encounters occur in a myriad of ways that are not only spontaneous and accidental, but also highly regulated, for instance through participation in planning processes. Urban planning is therefore another field of relevance for the governing of diversity. A growing body of literature addresses these issues, in particular immigrants participation in planning processes. (Fincher & Iveson 2008; Sandercock 1998, 2003; Fainstein 2014; Gressgård & Jensen 2016; Amin 2011, 1997; Burayidi 2015; Fincher et al. 2014) Urban planning practitioners are being called upon to find comprehensive solutions to questions of housing, work, education, and social and cultural life.

In what ways urban planning recognises the needs and values of immigrant groups is therefore an important question. Planning and governance mechanisms are also playing a key role

in shaping the terms on which inter-ethnic relations are organised and conducted. The normative ideals of planning, in this respect, are to contribute to the creation of inclusive urban spaces that sustain diverse populations and just cities. Nevertheless, there exists a cultural bias built into every aspect of planning (Sandercock 2000). 'In Western countries, the planner's epistemology rests on rationality, comprehensiveness, scientific methods, faith in state directed futures, and faith in planners' ability to know what is good for people' (Sandercock 1998: 62). Translating these ideals into practice is not straightforward. Planning is a rather technocratic exercise treating citizens as equal, and where the right to difference is not being recognised. Planning for pluralism is therefore not necessarily desirable or even possible (Gressgård & Jensen 2016: 3). Planners themselves are not neutral actors but active participants in the politics of difference (Fincher & Iveson 2008). Although there is an extensive literature on how urban planning should respond to ethno-cultural diversity, far less has been conducted explaining how these insights should be put into practices: 'surprisingly little attention has been paid to the implications of immigration and ethno-cultural diversity for local planning' (Pestieau & Wallace 2003: 255). Increased migration has not yet become the central focus of planning strategies (Bernt 2019, Heino & Jauhiainen 2020). The increasing number of immigrants in municipalities and the mandatory requirements for participatory planning necessitates consideration and encouragement from municipalities for immigrant participation in their strategic planning (Maunaunaho 2016).

Practicing diversity policies: The case of Tromsø and Bodø

The analyses of the two cases are based on extensive fieldwork conducted in these locations over a 3-year period spanning from September 2017 to May 2020. The study is part of the research project entitled 'Sustainable Diverse Cities – Innovation in integration, funded by the Norwegian Research Council 2017–2021'. The two cities were chosen as promising laboratories for creative innovation initiatives in integration. Small- and medium-sized cities are also understudied in research on integration despite the fact that immigrants are present in all types of municipalities in Norway (Aure, Førde & Magnussen 2018). Larger cities dominate most of the research in this field. This study therefore fills a gap on integration at the local level. The location in a cold climate with extreme light conditions explores a situation that is new to most refugees and asylum seekers; it highlights questions of distance and transportation, housing and well-being, and it brings out spatial aspects of meeting places and encounters between people. Tromsø and Bodø are also similar enough to make useful comparisons. They are both regional capitals that have received an increasing number of both refugees and asylum seekers, as well as labour migrants in a short period of time. They are also different enough to trace interesting varieties on the studied dimensions such as the design of the immigration bodies and how policies towards immigrants are organised. The data collected on the three policy areas do differ, however. The fieldwork started with content analyses of key documents; firstly, we examined strategic municipal plans laying out the cities' development plans for the next 12 years, and how diversity was addressed and interpreted. The planning field was also analysed through individual and focus group interviews with municipal planners in both cities. These interviews were later transcribed. In Bodø moments of engagement between planners and immigrant groups are described, based around a particular planning issue. Here immigrant groups were invited to discuss and give their input on the plan. The main data used to analyse the political dimensions were interviews with three diversity officers, and 10 members of the integration councils in the two cities, representing both politicians and representatives of immigrant associations. In addition, minutes from some of the meetings in both councils have been analysed in order to understand what types of issues these councils have been dealing with. The fieldwork also included observations of

these meetings. In addition, we conducted participatory observation at several arenas related to new forms of involving citizens in planning processes. The cultural policy fields were analysed through the interviews with the diversity coordinators and some key policy documents addressing cultural policies.

Throughout the project, aspects of action research have been conducted at particular events such as language cafés, workshops, and inclusive theatre events. The research group has given its input to the municipalities on a number of issues, such as on the design of the consultative bodies and on how immigrants can be included in urban planning processes. Public debates on urban planning and integration have also been organised on one occasion by the research group. A thematic analysis of the data was conducted based on the theoretical concepts (Guest MacQueen & Namey 2012). This mixed-methods approach contributes to a rich and in-depth understanding of the diversity policies in the two cities. The participants were informed of their rights to withdraw from the interviews at any time. Approval from those participants that can be identified has been collected and in addition the project has been approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD).

Main characteristics of the two cities' discourses about integration

Bodø and Tromsø are both arctic cities with long winters and lack of daylight several months of the year. The fact that migrants from all over the world used to a much warmer climate decide to settle here might therefore seem like a paradox. Both cities are characterised by high ambitions in policies towards newcomers. Some of these ambitions are expressed as visions in political talks and in strategic master plans but some are also implemented in a number of policy areas. The two cities have been rewarded nationally for these ambitions. Both municipalities were nominated for the title: Best Municipality on Integration in 2018 a competition organised by ImDI: The Directorate for Integration and Diversity. In its visionary statement, the municipality of Bodø states that: 'Bodø is increasingly a multicultural and international city and we must make sure that we are an inclusive community for all' (Bodø Municipality 2017). The official policy in Tromsø has been to brand itself as a multicultural and diverse city for quite some time, both with reference to its Saami and its International profile. As a university city, the academic influence infuses local politics with a rhetoric of an open, welcoming city towards ethnic minorities. The celebration of its international profile may have peaked in 2005 when Nelson Mandela visited the Mandela Concert and appointed Tromsø as the first ambassador city for the 46664 Arctic Concert. The local discourse about ethnic diversity has, however, focused mostly on the indigenous population in the city, the Saami, related particularly to racism and to branding the city as a Saami city (Hudson, Nyseth & Pedersen 2019). This politicisation of ethnicity has not been part of the political landscape involving the immigrant population. Another characteristic is the power of civil society in supporting refugees and asylum seekers that have had their applications for settlement rejected by the central government, giving them asylum in churches or through demonstrations and protests against decisions made at the central level. This is particularly the case for Tromsø, although in Bodø the engagement has focused on supporting irregular migrants. A third characteristic is the volume and broadness of immigration in the two cities. With a population of approx. 80,000 and an immigrant population of 15.2 %, and more than 140 different nationalities residing in the city, Tromsø qualifies as a multicultural city. Bodø, with a population of approx. 50,000 and an immigrant population of 9.4% in 2020, Bodø is below the national average in terms of demographic expressions of diversity. A fourth characteristic is the local context, which is less marked by spatial segregation than larger metropolitan cities as the immigrant population does not occupy particular areas of the city or its suburbs. Nonetheless, immigrants are more present in some districts than in others.

Giving immigrants a political voice

Both municipalities have for some years experimented and developed some form of political board or council dealing with diversity issues and integration policies. In 2006 Bodo established a 'Dialogue Forum', consisting of 14 members, 10 representing immigrant organisations and 4 political parties. After the local election in September 2019, this forum was reorganised and renamed 'The Multicultural Council' (with members appointed by the Municipal Council), consisting of two politicians and five representatives from immigrant organisations. Their mandate is 'to contribute to an inclusive Bodo-community through advancing interests and views on behalf of the international citizens in Bodo and into the political and administrative level' (Bodo Municipality 2019). In particular, they focus on giving advice on the development of actions that contribute to (a) integration, inclusion, pluralism, and participation from the international community in Bodo and (b) ensuring children and youths who represent the international population of Bodo have the necessary conditions for good childhoods (Bodo Municipality 2019). The reason for the reorganisation was to give integration issues more political authority; a council is considered to have more power than a 'Forum'. The council meets regularly, following the proceedings of the meetings in the Municipal Council in order to respond to cases of relevance.

Much later, in 2018, an advisory council on integration was established in Tromsø named the Integration Council, comprising nine members, with three political representatives, selected from the Municipal Council (representing political parties both from the position and opposition), and six representing immigrant associations. By this composition, they aim to secure legitimacy both from the established Municipal Council and from a number of ethnic groups. The objective is 'to work toward making Tromsø an open, tolerant, and inclusive community where the inhabitants from all countries participate. It is an advisory, information-giving and activity-oriented council that collaborates with the Municipal Council, the municipal administration and the city on issues of importance regarding participation and integration' (Tromsø Municipality 2017). They also have a mandate to hold ad hoc meetings on urgent issues. The Council is seen as a useful arena to collaborate between ethnic organisations and City Hall. Some of the members representing ethnic organisations see themselves as representatives of several networks, not just a single organisation. Until 2019, the Vice-Chairman, Abdallah Mohammed Ali, who is also a politician representing the Socialist Party, as well as a civic association saw himself as representing a much broader network of associations: 'I am not elected from the party, but from the organisations. I do not want to work for single interests. I see myself as independent, that's why I was elected Vice-Chairman, and because I have a huge network with different associations (Interview with Abdallah Mohammed Ali). A service officer with integration as his main responsibility in the Department for Culture provides support for this council.

The council meets every other month; they have concentrated their activities on (a) raising issues related to immigration to the political arena, (b) increasing the visibility of these issues and (c) working on increasing contact with agencies and organisations of importance to integration. They have arranged meetings with a number of agencies dealing with issues relevant for the immigrant population, with different ethnic religious groups and the municipality. One of the meetings was held in the mosque.

Until the local election in 2019, the council in Tromsø had an ethnic Norwegian chair. After the election, the leadership was transferred to Abdallah Mohammed Ali, the former vice-chair. He and his party campaigned for his candidacy in the local election. The result of the election gave him a seat in the Municipal Council as he gained many personal votes in the election climbing from sixth place on the party list to second place. This was a huge personal victory. At local elections in Norway, the ranking of the candidates on the list can be changed,

but very seldom does a change of ranking this big take place. He is, however, the only representative with a non-European immigrant background in the Municipal Council.¹

In Bodø, the new Multicultural Council operates with a similar mandate and composition as in Tromsø. The representatives of the Council believe the new mandate gives them more power than the former (as they have the same status as the other advisory councils in the municipality). They also have the opportunity to speak in the Municipal Council and can give their views on the decision-making process on a number of issues. They also can formulate their own policy and raise issues of importance to the immigrant population.

Organising diversity at the administrative level

In both municipalities, we found positions in the administration with integration as a designated responsibility. Bodø has a Diversity Coordinator, whose responsibilities are reflected in the professional title of this position. The Diversity Coordinator, who has an ethnic Norwegian background, is placed in the Department of Strategic Planning and Development. In Tromsø, the cultural department is the hub of integration policies. Here we find several positions working with integration. One of them holds the position of 'Integration Officer', with particular responsibility for the Integration Council as a secretariat. This person has a minority background. Two other officials, also with a minority background, work more directly with the cultural industry. These are all positions that could be understood as examples of what Schiller defines as a 'diversity officer' (Schiller 2016: 8).

The mandates of these positions are somewhat different in the two cities. Placed at the strategic level in the organisation seems to be crucial to the way the Diversity Coordinator operates in Bodø. She acts as a flexible generalist characterising the post-bureaucratic organisation which is characterised by less hierarchy, more networks, and links with private actors or individuals (Bogason 2003). Participation and inclusion of immigrants is a major part of her work:

As a diversity coordinator the main responsibility is to be a link towards immigrant organisations, related to participation and communication... pushing this issue in a number of projects and planning processes (Interview with Merethe Wie Sandbakk).

Linked to the Department for Culture & Sport, the mandate in Tromsø is more limited, but these positions also operate as a link between the municipality and the immigrant organisations, and to funds provided towards integration by the IMDi – the state authority for integration.

The diversity officers act as brokers between the municipality and civil society and also within the municipal organisation and between the Multicultural/Integration Council and the municipal administration. Their interpretation of diversity and their practice is significant in determining the scope of diversity policies. As agents implementing immigrant policies in practice, they make a case for diversifying the municipal organisation. This is a way to make the organisation more reflective of the city's diverse population but also a symbol of the city's acceptance of diversity.

Urban planning for diversity; recognition, neutrality, or ignorance?

Analysing municipal plans as such, immigrants are nearly invisible. Diversity is rarely reflected in, for instance, master plans. Only at a somewhat visionary level do we find statements like 'vision as an international city'– 'Tromsø as an international meeting place' (Tromsø

¹ An exception was one of the smaller parties that had nominated a candidate with a minority background at the top of the list. However, this party has very few supporters; he did not receive sufficient votes to get into the Council.

Municipality, 2020). And in Bodo: 'Bodo is marked and increasingly developing into a multicultural community'. In this section, we are, however, more interested in the involvement of immigrants in urban planning processes.

In spatial urban planning, diversity is less specified but perhaps even more important. In a liberal market economy, it is the housing market that defines what is being built and indirectly for whom; 'We plan for everybody – not a particular group', a planner in Bodo said, and continued: 'We know that certain immigrant groups need apartments with many bedrooms. It is, however, the market that decides what's going to be built... We have no influence on that... except for the options of a certain number of social housing' (Focus group interview with planning administration in Bodo). Diversity is rarely addressed by planners or planning institutions. One could say that diversity is a nonissue in the sense that no target groups are identified except for social housing, which is publicly generated housing, and is not left to the market. There seems to exist a form of silencing of the ethnic diversity perhaps because migrant groups do not occupy specific different areas of the urban environment.

The former Dialogue Forum in Bodo was however invited to a workshop concerning the New City-New Airport project, a huge ongoing urban transformation process in the city, not by the planning department but by the Diversity Coordinator. The Forum was invited to participate and express their desires for this new area of the city that was to be developed because the Air Force base was closing down as well as the relocation of the current runway of Bodo Airport. The Forum raised concerns about the idea of displaying a fighter plane at the previous Air Force base, as this could trigger anxiety for immigrants who had experienced war. They were also heard regarding a plan for social housing, expressing their views particularly on an apartment building intended for lower-income families. Their response was that this building would cause more segregation, not less. The Dialogue Forum had also been invited to a discussion about a new plan for parks and public spaces in Bodo and had relevant input on the design of the park. In Tromsø, the Council was involved in the hearing process for the new masterplan and proposed building of a new mosque, arguing that what the locales currently used as a mosque was too small and not suitable for the purpose. The construction of a new Mosque had been suggested by the Muslim community some years before but had been contested (foremost because Saudi Arabian money was involved in the funding). Consequently, the Council explicitly expressed in their proposal that no foreign money should be involved.

One of the planners in Bodo reflected on the lack of tools to address immigrants in the planning regulations: 'The planning system does not have the tools to differentiate between citizens and does not allow us to address certain groups more than others – except children and youth' (Focus group interview with planners in Bodo). In most participatory processes related to detailed city plans, it is mandatory to invite people in the neighbourhood who will be most affected by the proposal. However, most often only landowners are invited. As the planning administration in Bodo explained: 'In detailed spatial plans, we invite landowners only. Very few immigrants own their apartment or house – they rent, for that reason they would not get an invitation to a neighbourhood meeting' (Focus group interview with planners in Bodo). This is one of the structural dimensions reflecting the unequal power relations between immigrant groups and permanent citizens. Public spaces are often understood as being 'for all' and not prioritising groups. There are, however, signs of a recognition of the need for new practices to be developed to ensure outreach to these groups. Indeed, as expressed by a planner in Bodo: 'We are beginning to think that we have to go out and meet people where they are – we have begun for instance with the youth council – in a planning process about the design of a city park – we invited the youth council to the park and discussed the plan there...I think we have to do more of that, we need to be more out there – where people are...' (Focus group interview with planners in Bodo).

Similar discussions are also underway in Tromsø. Planners here aim to draw people together in encounters in public urban spaces and to promote intercultural awareness and understanding. The Seafront area in Tromsø is the site of a large ongoing urban transformation process. It also serves as a testbed for democratic urban space experiments where immigrants are meant to play a role. However, in workshops organised for this purpose, where relevant stakeholders were invited to participate in a discussion of two specific public spaces, no immigrants participated. In fact, they had not even been invited – even though two immigrant shop-owners were located near one of the sites being considered. The Integration Council had not been invited either.

So, what seems to be the challenge? Some of the planners expressed that they find immigrant groups difficult to reach. This relates partly to difficulties in identifying them, for instance, related to categories of national or ethnic origin. Some of these barriers, however, are possible to cross through greater collaboration between the Diversity Coordinator (who has a broad network with all the immigrant associations) and the Planning Department. In Tromsø, this means overcoming sectorial barriers between the Department of Culture and the City Planning Office. The planners did not seem to make use of the information about immigrant associations available in their own administration. The 'silo' structure in the municipal organisation, making communication and sharing of knowledge and information between different sectors and levels of the organisation difficult, in these cases – particularly between the diversity officers and the planners – is therefore also a challenge. More important, however, seems to be a sort of collective disengagement with the diverse socio-political urban contexts within the planning professions. Planning administrations barely reflect diversity, treating it as a 'fringe issue'.

The main reason, however, relates to how invitations to participate in planning processes are practiced. The standard form of invitation is either open – addressing the public as a whole (e.g., through a public hearing) or through a compiled list of stakeholders (e.g., civic organisations, neighbourhood associations, developers, environment organisations, business organisations) for a given planned project. So why are immigrant organisations and/or stakeholders not on these lists? One example of how this might play out in practice can be illustrated by the neighbourhood plan in Mørkved, a suburb on the outskirts of Bodø, a mixed residential area with a diverse population. In the district adjacent to the university campus, a new plan to revitalise this neighbourhood that had long since been left to casual planning and development was forming. In the planning process, involving the immigrant population became a deliberate intention. Several workshops were organised where different groups were invited, including a workshop inviting migrants. However, at this event, not a single person showed up. It is not unusual that few people attend such events. If citizens do not feel the plan affects them, they will not spend time attending such meetings. There might be a need for special arrangements that encourage minority populations to participate in planning processes (Maunaunaho 2016). Open invitations do not appeal to all. In this case, the planners had used an immigrant with a huge network to suggest a number of immigrants to invite, and these people received a personal invitation to participate in developing this part of the neighbourhood. The planners had also prepared a presentation of the plan and its ideas in a form that was easy to understand. The planners were quite reflective on how they were going to present it in order to reach out to this audience: 'It is important that the language is not too complicated as many do not understand the expert language of planning – but at the same time it's important not to underestimate them. It is also important to present ideas and plans at a level people feel comfortable with and that they feel they can contribute' (Interview with the planners organising the event). In a conversation with the planners organising the event, we discussed possible causes that might explain why no one came. Alienation from not

having knowledge about planning or the planning system and therefore a lack of confidence in being able to contribute, lack of trust in public authorities, and also the fact that some of the immigrants are temporary residents and therefore are unlikely to engage in the neighbourhood and its facilities were some of the explanations. One of the planners explained: 'Many immigrant groups do not know their democratic rights, have less experience with democracy, or do not trust authorities'. (Interview with the planners organising the event)

Cultural policies and everyday diversity

Encounters with differences at the everyday level, take first of all place in civic community, organised by groups other than public authorities. However, a number of institutions are there to support such encounters; within the policy field of culture, some of these institutions and meeting places are being supported. Policies supporting immigrant organisations are channelled through the cultural sector and diversity officers. There are, for instance, financial support of ethnic associations and their activities, particularly programmes to mobilise children of ethnic minorities to be active in sports and so forth. Some of these programmes support arenas that could be defined as 'micro-publics' of everyday encounters (Amin 2012). Much effort has been expended in both municipalities to help establish immigrant associations as one way of reaching out to immigrant groups. Most cultural groups now have their own associations, but they work very differently, and the most recent ones need more time to mature. What is also missing is a forum for intercultural dialogue among the different ethnic groups. Most of these associations operate on separate forums with issues related to their specific group. Their effect on intercultural dialogue is therefore weak. The integration councils are nearly the only formal arenas where several of them meet regularly.

The public library is probably the best example of a public cultural institution that also works as an informal intercultural meeting place. In Bodø, the most important change in the cultural profile of the city was after the construction of the new library, named *The Storm*, finished in 2014 and located at the heart of the city. The library is a site for organising intercultural dialogues such as 'Borrowing a Bodø Budy' (Forde 2019) – a form of language training based on voluntary participants from the Red Cross and immigrants. Similar events also commonly take place at the library in Tromsø. The library in Tromsø is also a critical informal meeting place for immigrants, which is why one of the diversity officers has made it his 'second office'. He visits the library almost every day to talk to the immigrants – most of whom are unemployed – and keep them posted on what is going on, and by practicing direct interaction with groups that are less integrated in the economic sector, and for whom the library represents an important arena in which to meet.

It is perhaps in facilitating such everyday encounters, at the library, in the football club, and in the youth club, that these policies have the most impact. Economic decline in the municipal economy and cuts in the cultural budget do, however, threaten these activities. In May 2020, the Municipal Council in Tromsø proposed huge cuts to their budget, also within the cultural sector. One of the diversity officers in Tromsø was rather critical of the Integration Council for not raising issues about the consequences: 'I wish that they had a more powerful voice, not only [to] comment on public plans. For instance, now when they are cutting the cultural budget, why are they not addressing this? What will be the consequences for the policies related to integration? For diversity?' (Interview with a service officer in the Department of Culture). This officer expressed some doubts about the Integration Council having the power to make a difference on issues of high relevance to the immigrant population.

Diversity policies also take place as forms of celebration. In Bodø, there is an International Week in October every year. One of the aims of this event is 'to increase international understanding through cultural diversity, and to show the great international and multicultural

engagement in Bodo' (Bodo Municipality 2020). In Tromsø, there has been a transformation of the international week into TromsøGlobal – a multicultural meeting taking place in August every year. Encounters with different cultures are an explicit goal. She therefore wanted to make this week into a meeting place for intercultural dialogue and a celebration of diversity. There are no stands, instead, there is music, food, and seminars (Lee, Arcodia & Lee 2012). Subsequently, TromsøGlobal is also an attempt to become an intercultural arena; to accomplish this, the immigrant associations need to be challenged according to the chair.

At the everyday level, other arenas are Café Globus, which is an intercultural meeting place that arranges minor events; the International seminar is a weekly seminar and political meeting place; and Tvitbit is a youth centre organising a number of activities for young people with different backgrounds.

Inspired by a project called the 'flying carpet', initiated by the Eritrean community to create a meeting space for people from different cultures but based on cultural practices from the Middle East, municipal planners supported the project, which became an inspiration for how to plan with the multicultural community. One project being developed in Tromsø in line with these ideas, within the frame of a new city centre plan, is to invite different groups of citizens, and migrants in particular, to participate in the redesign of some of the open public spaces with other programmes that fit the needs of different groups. If and when implemented, this could allow for low-cost, nonconfrontational and widely appreciated forms of multi-ethnic coexistence (Ambrosini & Boccagni 2015: 41).

Discussion and conclusion

Do the public diversity policies in the two cities of Tromsø and Bodo discussed in this article make a 'difference to difference'? Over time, Tromsø and Bodo has gradually recognised diversity at least as a demographic fact, and eventually also with implications for their policies, making an impact on the political system, including administrative positions with diversity as a responsibility, and on the city's cultural programs. Both cities have adopted an image presenting themselves as 'diversity-friendly', Tromsø over a longer period of time. On the other hand, Bodo is more oriented toward its international population. Giving immigrants representation in city governance through advisory councils is probably the most important formal expression of recognition. Opening up local institutions to immigrant communities in this way is a rather narrow oriented policy but their bare existence is at least a symbolic expression of being given a voice. The power of this voice, however, remains uncertain.

Celebration of cultural diversity through events is a prominent feature in both cities, as well as a number of policy measures aiming at increased collaboration with and support of immigrant associations and their activities. Some of these events and semi-public spaces, for instance in sport activities nurturing forms of multicultural conviviality, are promising in enhancing encounters across ethnic boundaries. The transformative potential of encounters might be found in such settings. In both cities, a number of ethnic networks and associations have been established, facilitating city officers' collaboration and contact with immigrant groups. The two cities have chosen both similar and somewhat different approaches in the coordination of their diversity policies. What seems to be less developed in both cities is intercultural arenas enhancing the dialogue between different ethnic groups; the advisory councils represent an important exception at the city institutional level.

Addressing the policy field of urban planning, the findings are also ambiguous. Planning documents were more or less 'colour-blind', as were the planning administrations themselves. This, of course, raises the question of representation: for whom are the plans produced? Looking at participation in planning processes from minority groups, the picture is also mixed. Urban planners in these two municipalities seem to lack the tools needed to form an

adequate response to the increasing diversity or to effectively reach out to immigrant groups. Planners – even those who proclaim an inclusive aim in their participatory practices – have been unable to include immigrant communities. Ethnic minority groups are often perceived as difficult communities with which to engage (Beebeejaun 2006). However, some planners have recently grown more sensitive to ethnic differences – at least with respect to how they organise planning processes in diverse neighbourhoods. Depending on which segment of the public one wants to reach, planners need to address these in a form that different groups are able to respond too. It is also important that the immigrant communities themselves decide on how to bring people together to transcend cultural differences (Nyseth, Ringholm & Agger 2019). The use of ethnographic methods could be one way forward, involving mediation, negotiation, and facilitation. As action-researchers, we have tried to push planners in this direction, resulting in new projects where immigrants are playing front roles. Working *with* immigrants – rather than *for* them – and enabling them to set the agenda need a new attitude for planners. Planners need a ‘feel for the game’: a repertoire of stories and experiences from which they have learned, and which enable them to become ‘virtuoso social actors’. So how can planning and difference come together? To overcome indifference to difference (cf. Mayblin, Valentine & Winiarska 2016), a bottom-up, community-based method of transformative planning is called for. The main challenge seems to be that institutions and planning processes have not been designed with difference in mind.

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