

## Introduction

Paninnguaq Boassen, Èva Cossette-Laneville, Naja Dyrendom Graugaard, Lars Jensen, Björn Lingner and Regine-Ellen Dora Møller

This Kult issue has several points of origins. The most obvious one is the conversation surrounding the tricentennial of Hans Egede's arrival in Kalaallit Nunaat. The term "arrival" is a neutral word for what in effect became Denmark(-Norway)'s colonisation of Kalaallit Nunaat, but we do not make a distinction between Egede's arrival as innocent, in contrast to what followed - colonial subjugation. Egede's arrival was premeditated, regardless of the often-cited argument that he was looking for descendants of the Norse settlers who had in effect died out several hundred years before his arrival. Premeditated here means that Egede was part of a plan for colonial expansion in the North Atlantic in the wake of the colonialism instigated by Christian IV, a century before when he sent a fleet to the Bay of Bengal.

Yet this Kult issue is less about Denmark and colonial history and more about the contemporary and about Kalaallit Nunaat. We use the name Kalaallit Nunaat not only because it is the proper name for Greenland, but also to signal that what Egede began colonising in 1721 was not a space awaiting the European imperial expansion as much as it was a place, an island, a country where Inuit peoples were living – a place they had already made theirs. Colonialism is about taking land away from its proper stakeholders. This basic fact undermines the sustained Danish narrative about the Danish presence in Kalaallit Nunaat as an at times sad story of misunderstanding, misguided Danish policies, but always well-intended story of benevolence, civilising mission and exceptionalism. The tenacity of this narrative owes much to the fact that it remains in Denmark's interest to defend the presence in Kalaallit Nunaat. Even if the interest changes over the years, from monopolising whale trade, seal hunting, fishing interests, geopolitical interests (securing NATO membership, shoring up American recognition of Denmark as a military partner, securing a seat at the Arctic table) – and a range of less easily defined interests – profiteering from the monopoly trade in goods to and from Kalaallit Nunaat, research in the icecap and climate change being channelled through Denmark, job opportunities for Danes in Kalaallit Nunaat, where Danish remains the master language in the higher echelons of society: Danishness accompanied by language privilege, culture privilege, economic privilege and whiteness privilege. Privilege here is understood primarily as something which gives you an automatic entitlement, for example that everyone switches to Danish when this is required by a Danish presence. Not the Dane(s) being encouraged/forced to learn Kalaallisut. How different this is

from what migrants coming to Denmark are being required to do. Privilege makes you blind – you don't see that the elephant in the room is you.

When we began discussing doing a Kult issue, at the time loosely entitled – 300 years after Hans Egede – we were interested in the events leading up to the tricentennial. Then covid-19 came and what was already a divisive event - marked by the conflictual aspects of what followed Hans Egede's arrival - was cancelled. Covid was thus a blessing in disguise though it also ruled out the possibility of making new connections, for example between the new pandemic and earlier European introduced epidemics, such as smallpox, that had created havoc in colonial Kalaallit Nunaat society.

One of the topics we discussed while planning this issue was how to find ways of including the general society in Kalaallit Nunaat in the dialogues about the history of colonisation, contemporary issues related to colonisation, and decolonisation. Young Indigenous peoples around the world are using social media platforms to inform and discuss indigeneity, ongoing colonial oppressions, and the different ways of decolonising the minds, bodies, institutions, lands, and ways of knowing and living. In Kalaallit Nunaat, the students at the national university, Ilisimatusarfik, have taken interest in their country's colonial history as well as Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies. Outside the university, the younger generation of Kalaallit have become part of the Indigenising and decolonising movement through social media. The discussions about colonisation and decolonisation in Kalaallit Nunaat among the younger generation, however, occur primarily in Danish and English which leaves out the population who may not understand these Western languages that well. We therefore include a conversation piece in Kalaallisut written by Regine-Ellen Møller that introduces concepts from the English language commonly used in the topics of colonialism and decolonisation. The conversation piece explains the concepts in Kalaallisut and gives examples of situations in Kalaallit Nunaat and Denmark. By doing so, Regine-Ellen attempts to adapt the concepts to a Greenlandic context to further the understanding of the colonial history and the related concepts of colonialism.

Another topic is the future of Greenland, which is very uncertain, but with recent incidents, and the inactivity of being isolated in your own home, it has benefitted the causes fighting for equal rights. It is a battle that has been going on for as long as humankind can remember, and there are always people that believe they have reached a time in history where genuine strides are being made towards an equality based global society. At least in Greenland this development has only been going on for 300+ years, so it might be true that Greenlandic people are heading towards a situation in which the gap between the cosmopolitan and average Greenlander are closing at a rapid pace.

As Kalaaleq writer and politician, Augo Lynge, wrote in the beginning of the twentieth century, the Greenlandic people today can be seen as resulting from a mix between Inuit and Danish culture. Not only is it visible in people identifying themselves as Greenlandic today, there is a great variety, but also in values and celebrated occasions. Industrialisation has been a great influence in at least the past 5 generations for the western population, but Greenland was only just introduced to the rest of the world 3-4 generations ago. There are still communities who have lived in “relative isolation” from the “modern world”, but there are examples of countries that have gone through fast-paced modernisation into a capitalistic society e.g. South Korea. There are several problems in such an instantaneous industrialisation of a country, especially for the mental health of the population. It is because of examples from other countries that all propositions of the future of Greenland are so heavily scrutinized. It is not easy to make a clear path through all the possible disasters when it has not even been announced from the Greenlandic population which future they want for their country.

Focusing on contemporary Kalaallit Nunaat and its possible futures entails the question of alternatives, of how to do things differently. For two of the editors and authors of this issue, Björn Lingner and Naja Dyrendom Graugaard, the Kalaaleq researcher and scientist, Lene Kielsen Holm, had for a long time set an example with respect to knowledge production in and by Kalaallit Nunaat. Her internationally recognised research was ground breaking in its insistence on decolonising research methods by working not only with, but also for affected, local communities. Sadly, Lene Kielsen Holm passed away in January 2021, so the planned interview with her could not go ahead. Instead, Björn and Naja conducted an interview with two of her colleagues and friends, a conversation focused around Lene Kielsen Holm’s work, and thus also a conversation about co-creating knowledge, decolonising and Indigenising research methods, the importance of language and other related topics as they manifest in, and thus provide an insight into, the contemporary, postcolonial Kalaallit Nunaat. Even if Lene Kielsen Holm will not continue her many projects, her legacy also points to a contemporary Kalaallit Nunaat (and probably also a wider, postcolonial Arctic) that is not only defined by its problematic (post-)colonial legacies, but also by the active, creative, and passionate (re-)negotiation and (re-)construction of it by its inhabitants. Lene Kielsen Holm leaves multiple legacies, only some of which the article in this issue touches upon. But one of the ways of understanding her work and legacy is to see them as part of the emergence of an increasingly “sovereign” Kalaallit Nunaat, working on self-defined ways of creating knowledge about itself and its entanglements with the current global conjuncture. “Sovereignty” is a central topic in both Èva Cossette-Laneville and Lars Jensen’s articles on Nunavut and Kalaallit Nunaat-Indigenous Australia.

The articles illustrate how sovereignty cannot be understood beyond the histories of dominant nation narratives. But they also demonstrate the possibility of questioning the underpinnings of such narratives and through this the importance of imagining alternative ways of defining sovereignty that in themselves represent a first step towards the unfolding of such a sovereignty.

Heightened by the rush for the world's diminishing resources, the quest for or the desire to keep hold of the Arctic pushed forth a particular understanding of territoriality in the region. From this perspective nation-states are seen as holding exclusive sovereignty over a territory, situating Kalaallit Nunaat under the jurisdiction of Denmark. This issue includes a piece by Paninnguaq Boassen analysing Kalaallit author Auge Lyngé's *Ukiut 300-nngornerat* (300 years later) novel, published in 1931, that relates the story of a utopian dream for Kalaallit Nunaat. Boassen presents an interesting reflection on the varying meaning of territoriality. At the end of the novel, Lyngé narrates a speech given by the highest official in Kalaallit Nunaat where the spectators refer to the leader via the Danish term "amtmand" (leader of a county) which Lyngé translates in Kalaallisut as "leader of a country". Boassen emphasises how borders are not a part of Inuit cultures, reinforcing Lyngé's understanding of Kalaallit Nunaat as a sovereign, autonomous, state. Boassen's reflection stresses the tenacity of a Westphalian logic of sovereignty and territoriality that insists on dividing the Arctic and locating its different regions under the subjugating eyes of imperial states. While this "border thinking" directly impacts the configuration of places, it also influences ways of producing knowledge about and within a place. The circumpolar nature of the Arctic appears to be pushed aside for a rather fractured understanding of the different parts constituting its whole. The Arctic is a vast area, consisting of many places and peoples, yet they also share many commonalities. What could it mean for Kalaallit Nunaat and the Arctic as a whole to think in terms of similarities and not only differences? Among other things, this issue invites pondering the reality of the circumpolar nature of the Arctic and to pay attention to the many ways in which its different parts relate to one another historically as well as contemporarily.

Recognizing that knowledge and narratives on Kalaallit pasts, presents, and future aspirations in 2022 are conditioned by, sometimes heavily invested in, and increasingly opposing the continuity of colonial mechanisms, this Kult issue also challenges the idea of "neutral" and "objective" (and often-times Danish) expertise on 301 years of Danish colonial presence in Kalaallit Nunaat. The intimate relations between European colonial interests and Arctic research are well established by now, but their continuity in contemporary knowledge production on Kalaallit Nunaat seems less widely accepted, and even less frequently challenged. For this reason, we have urged ourselves and each

author to reflect on the role of positionality, location, background, and power relations as constitutive of the insights that the contributions bring to this Kult issue. Aware of the colonial dynamics by which predominantly white scholars continue to tell and narrate Kalaallit Nunaat and the Arctic, as “unmarked” and “neutral” observers, experts, and policy advisors, this Kult issue insists on the exercise of reflexivity as a way towards destabilising colonial knowledge relations and as a necessary step towards holding our work accountable to its particular perspectives and potential blindfolds. Sofie Malm Henriksen’s article is particularly preoccupied with how the benevolently intended Danish researcher unwittingly reproduces blind spots, but also an excellent case illustration of the steps that can be taken to avoid landing up in such a trap.

Meanwhile, being “less about Denmark and more about Kalaallit Nunaat” also entails to actively challenge academic practices that continue to centre certain kinds of perspectives and authorships, at the expense of others. As highlighted in Amalie Høgsbro’s article, practices of silencing Kalaallit experiences, views and visions are still disturbingly common in academia. Høgsbro instead proposes a critical feminist lens, as a pathway to undertake “killjoy research” that is consciously unwilling to participate in reproducing hegemonic structures in the study of the Danish-Greenland relationship. In this Kult issue, we also hold that prioritizing Kalaallit authorship is a central part of the decolonial movement towards breaking with colonial knowledge regimes and epistemic violence that also define “301 Years After”. Such movement calls for the conscious priority of Kalaallit authorship, expertise and editorial governance, as is reflected in the organisation, content, and editorial membership of this particular Kult issue. It also calls for considering other forms of knowledge as informative to the processes of colonisation and decolonisation in Kalaallit Nunaat. In Laura Lennert Jensen, Anne Chahine and Vivi Vold’s work, the debate about the Hans Egede statue in Nuuk and the exhibition *Decolonial Movements in Greenland (Kalaallit Nunaat)* becomes a space for pluriversal thinking and a way to invoke the complexity of the colonial pasts and its present legacies, by bringing together different and perceived realities and understandings. In a similar vein, we have also considered other-than-academic contributions, artistic pieces, social media posts, video-logs, personal testimonials as valuable and informative contributions to building of contemporary archives of knowledge. A new archive that we are just starting to build, and some of which is reflected in this issue.

Collectively, the contributions can thus be taken as a step in the decolonial journey but also as an acknowledgment of the different knowledge regimes each piece stems from. 300 years later, what we as editors can observe is continuity. Continuity in the necessary and ongoing questioning as to how

knowledge is produced, and continuity in the ways in which peoples of Kalaallit Nunaat show agency and resistance in the process of reclaiming what was always theirs.