

Co-Creating Pluriversal Worlds: Reflections on the Virtual Exhibition *Decolonial Movements in Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland)*

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Abstract

In this article, we offer an examination of the online exhibition *Decolonial Movements in Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland)* and its potential for visualizing coloniality, through the practice of collaboration, design-thinking and pluriversality as part of the curatorial process. The exhibition is centred around the observed shift in historical, social, and political narratives surrounding the “Hans Egede Debate” of 2020 in Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland), and was developed by the authors, Laura Lennert Jensen, Anne Chahine, and Vivi Vold, as part of the virtual reality collaboration, *Pluriversal Design*, investigating how to bring decolonial discourses into the virtual sphere. The exhibition brings together diverging perspectives in one coherent online space, touching upon a variety of, at times underlying, aspects. These include (mis-)representation of Kalaallit (Greenlandic) people in popular media, Nordic exceptionalism in contemporary history writing, and the role of young people in challenging previous consensus and narratives surrounding the colonial past and its repercussions in contemporary Kalaallit Nunaat. What becomes most apparent is the complexity of the topic itself and the occurrence of many different, often opposing, narratives and opinions within Kalaallit society.

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Figure 1 - Entrance of the exhibition and close-up of revised apology letter by Hans Peder Kirkegaard

Introduction

In this article, we explore the online exhibition *Decolonial Movements in Greenland (Kalaallit Nunaat)* (Figure 1) and its potential for visualizing coloniality, through collaboration, design-thinking and pluriversality as part of the curatorial process. The exhibition is centred around the observed shift in historical, social, and political narratives surrounding the “Hans Egede Debate” of 2020 in Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland)¹, and was developed by the authors, Laura Lennert Jensen, Anne Chahine and Vivi Vold, as part of the virtual reality collaboration *Pluriversal Design* (Pluriversal Design 2021)². The collaboration brought together projects based in Namibia, Mexico, Australia, Kalaallit Nunaat, Ecuador, Borneo, and Ghana, to investigate how to bring decolonial discourses into the virtual sphere, resulting in the co-curation of the *Pluriversal Design Exhibition* where all project partners occupy individual but interconnected exhibition rooms³. The respective curators propose to create “alternative spaces from where meaningful dialogues on pluriversal views and worlds in the making can emerge” (Kambunga et al. 2021), contributing to decolonizing design practices and shared knowledge

¹ Throughout the article, we use the local-specific terminology for Greenland (Kalaallit Nunaat), Greenlandic Inuit (Kalaallit) and Greenlandic Inuk (Kalaaleq) in Kalaallisut, the West-Greenlandic Inuit language.

² The authors would like to thank Asnath Paula Kambunga and Rachel Charlotte Smith for inviting us to become part of the *Pluriversal Design* collaborative.

³ The exhibition will be online until the end of 2021 and can be accessed here: <https://pluriversaldesign.com/PUYFaoZ/decolonial-movements-in-greenland>

production, building on notions of “re-designing design from within and from without” (Escobar 2018, 205) and “delinking” from hegemonic knowledge structures by bringing forward alternative epistemologies, and ways of knowing and understanding the world (Mignolo 2007).

Underlying the effort to decolonize is the need to acknowledge the modern/colonial world order we live in (Mignolo and Walsh 2018). A world, where “colonialism is not over; it's all over” (Theory from the Margins 2020, 17:50) as Samantha Pong, former student of Walter Mignolo, once phrased it, and where coloniality is the prevalent reality of many “formerly” colonized communities and marginalised groups and peoples. Coloniality conceptualizes the continuing and changing form of colonization in the contemporary, such as prevailing systemic structures and dependencies, one group maintaining to exert domination over the other (Quijano 2000; Grosfoguel 2011). Coloniality is also what marks Kalaallit-Danish relations, as Kristine Køhler Mortensen and Marie Maegaard (2019) argue in their analysis of media representations of Kalaallit people on Danish national TV, which perpetuate the “colonial bind between the colonizer and the colonized as two different parts set in a clear hierarchal order” (Mortensen and Maegaard 2019, 2). Kalaaleq scholar Aviaja Egede Lynge describes the effects of this colonial bind as a form of mental colonization, where Kalaallit “became even more dependent with a colossal adoption of Danish cultural items and institutions – in the name of equality” (Lynge 2011: 274), and what in consequence can lead to “a mentality that indicates a self-consciousness as inferior to others ethnic groups” (Lynge 2011: 275), apprehending one’s own Inuit culture and identity as less aspirational.

In recent years, calls have been growing louder for moving away from solely critiquing colonialism/coloniality and dominant Western thought, towards engaging with pluriversality as a solution-oriented way of thinking (Mignolo 2013; Blaser and de La Cadena 2018; Reiter 2018a). Pluriversality hereby promises a way to work across different cosmologies, recognizing their entanglements, and inhabiting (not studying) these border regions of knowledge production (Mignolo 2013). It also points towards recognizing that knowledge production is always embodied and situated, and therefore partial and limited, and can never be thought outside its historical, cultural, and environmental context (Haraway 1988; Mignolo 2013; Reiter 2018b). Decolonizing epistemologies, thinking the world as a pluriverse instead of a universe, is closely followed by questions around developing research design, methodologies, and methods that can put this call into action. And this is where the exhibition

Decolonial Movements in Greenland (Kalaallit Nunaat), as part of the larger *Pluriversal Design Exhibition*, enters the frame. Not only is the exhibition one world among other worlds, positioned and connected in the digital realm with its project partners, it also offers multiple “worlds” in itself, and instead of one holistic narrative, situates decolonial movements in Kalaallit Nunaat within a spectrum of perspectives. As Nigerian writer, Adichie Chimamanda Ngozi, suggests, there is nothing more dangerous than a single story (Adichie 2009), and by displaying varying narratives and viewpoints that connect, reckon with, deepen, and think further from the events unfolding in 2020 around the “Hans Egede Debate”, the authors offer a fragmented, situated, embodied, and partial body of knowledge, grounded in their own life experiences. Mignolo speaks of “thinking pluritopically”, engaging with the entanglements of multiple worlds, dwelling in their border regions (Mignolo 2013). And Mario Blaser and Marisol de La Cadena coin the term “pluriversal fieldwork”, describing a “practice of crossroads” that does not just collect data but spans the practice between researcher and the people s/he works with (Blaser and de La Cadena 2018: 5). We understand pluriversality as part of our curatorial practice, both as thinking with the entanglements of worlds and bringing together possibly different ontological and epistemological perspectives.

In the following, we first reflect on the overall concept of the exhibition and our collaborative, design-oriented and pluriversal curatorial practices in the virtual realm. We then consider our individual positionalities as co-curators of the exhibition and co-authors of this article, before progressing through each of the five sections of the exhibition space, concluding with a reflection on how these different examples have the potential to make coloniality in Kalaallit Nunaat more tangible.

Concept and Practice

The “Hans Egede Debate” emerged from an activist action closely connected to the global reckoning with racism and systemic injustice following the police murder of George Floyd in the U.S., led by the social justice movement Black Lives Matter. The night before the National Day of Kalaallit Nunaat (21 June 2020), unknown people covered the statue of Hans Egede, situated in the old colonial harbour in Kalaallit Nunaat's capital Nuuk, with *kakiornerit* (traditional Inuit tattoos) and the word “Decolonize”. Hans Egede is a Danish-Norwegian missionary that came to Kalaallit Nunaat in the early eighteenth century, and whose arrival marks the beginning of colonization and Christianisation of Kalaallit society. As the majority of Kalaallit today are Lutheran Christians, stemming from the conversion Egede initiated, he

is also perceived positively as a prime reference in the present-day belief system, and not necessarily only a symbol of colonization. The Hans Egede statue incident on the National Day led to heated debates concerning official remembrance and ongoing repercussions of Denmark's colonization within Kalaallit society. The exhibition attends to these developments and brings together diverging perspectives within a coherent online space, touching upon a variety of, at times underlying, aspects such as misrepresentation of Kalaallit people in popular media, Nordic Exceptionalism in contemporary history writing, and the role of young people in challenging previous consensuses and narratives surrounding the colonial past and its repercussions in contemporary Kalaallit Nunaat.

The process of co-curating the exhibition in the virtual realm enabled a discussion about coloniality in Kalaallit Nunaat free from monetary, time-sensitive and location-based strains. This does not make the virtual a neutral space, or decolonial by default, but rather a part of technoscience's propensity for constant new technologies that can bring a whole new set of ethical problems to the fore, such as limitation of access in relation to locality and background, thereby reinscribing the creation of race and capitalism (Takaragawa et al. 2019), or digitization processes adding new racialized layers to archival material (Odumosu 2020), leading to further oppression. In our specific setup and purpose, the virtual has proven to be advantageous, as it allowed us to move an ongoing discussion into a digital arena, circumventing persisting travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The intended audience for this exhibition is hereby not only other partners of the larger project, or conference attendees where this exhibition was shown, or you, the reader of this article, but we also had us, its creators in mind. Our knowledge-making practice is grounded in design-thinking, as in making ideas palpable through things and through creation (Otto and Smith 2013; R. C. Smith et al. 2016; Otto 2016; Chin 2017), enabling us to weave together material, textual and visual markers, that embody that "thing", so often felt but not clearly visible, called coloniality. It allowed us to communicate to each other across our different positionalities, making the intangible tangible, finding answers to questions, and questions to answers, telling by showing, and making explicit what exactly we mean by "this or that". Our collaborative practice, from curating the exhibition to writing this article, is based on ideas of shared knowledge production as an alternative to conventional ethnography, engaging in an epistemic partnership where the exhibition space functions as our infrastructure of inquiry (Lassiter 2005; Rappaport 2008; Criado and Estalella 2018). The idea was to document a moment in time, the summer of 2020, make its description as thick as possible (Geertz 1973; Cottom 2019), and create an exhibition that incorporates

various perspectives into one space, in contrast to favouring one over the other, serving as a basis for further discussing ways to go forward. An understanding that is common value in Indigenous knowledge systems, providing time and space for different kinds of stories to evolve, not labelling them paradoxical, but enabling them to coexist alongside each other (Xiiem et al. 2019). What becomes most apparent is the complexity of the topic itself and the occurrence of many different, often opposing, narratives and opinions within Kalaallit society. The pluriversal fabric of this exhibition, and its overlaps, the border regions, is where we intend to dwell (Mignolo 2013).

In relation to putting pluriversal thinking into practice, Mario Blaser and Marisol de la Cadena (2018), building on Isabelle Stengers (2005; 2011), propose the “uncommons as the heterogeneous grounds where negotiations take place toward a commons that would be a continuous achievement” (Blaser and de La Cadena 2018: 19). The uncommons, as in matters that seem to be in opposition, but also constitute the larger whole, is what characterizes the exhibition. Building on Tina Campt (2019), who engages with the video work of Arthur Jafa (2017), the co-creation of this exhibition can be understood as archival work that produces something new instead of looking away. Arthur Jafa predominantly works with juxtaposing suffering and joy of Black life in America, and it is the near proximity of these two lived realities that break with binary structures (Campt 2019). The strength lies in the combination of both, one propels the other, and for our own archive, we draw from the contemporary world around us, documenting what is. We document what we consider relevant for making coloniality more tangible, bringing to the fore what is in plain sight but often stays hidden, paying tribute to its complexity, spurred by Jafa, leaving room for both beauty and pain, ubiquitous in everyday life, and the frictions that accrue. The exhibition is a push and pull in various directions, taking the “Hans Egede Debate” as a starting point but not making it its sole focus. Some of the exhibition pieces engage in dialogue, some remain in silence to one another. We perceive silence as another form of communication, embracing Indigenous ways of knowing where silence *is* knowing, and, according to Sto:lo scholar Jo-Ann Archibald (Q'um Q'um Xiiem), a “respectful space for reverence” (Archibald 2008: 126). Silence is the deferential way to connect to the world around you, the earth, the sky, and everything in-between - tangible and intangible (Xiiem et al. 2019).

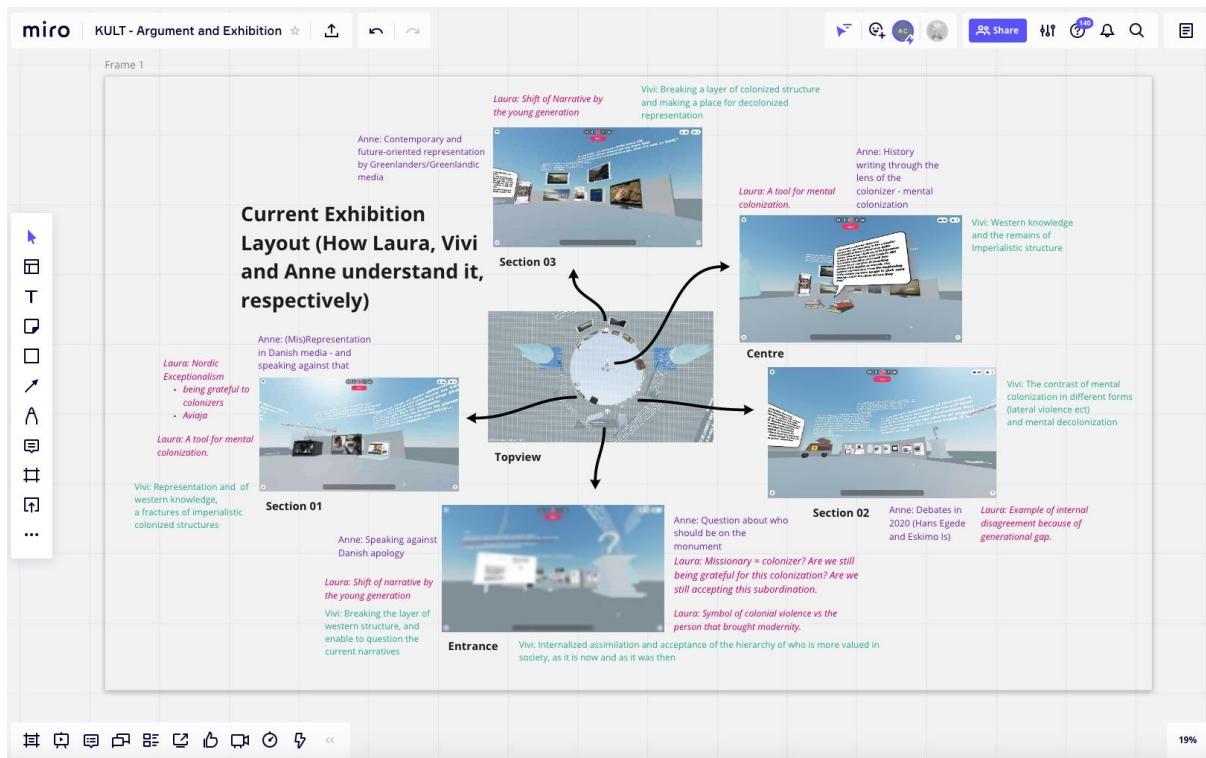


Figure 2 - Shared digital working space on Miro displaying our individual notes on the separate sections

Positionality of the Authors

When drafting the first outline of this article, we scheduled a meeting to discuss the overall exhibition and how the walls and individual pieces complement and contradict each other. We used an online co-working space for visualizing the different sections in one place, discussing their meaning and adding our respective interpretations (Figure 2). When comparing our notes, our varying positionalities - the relations and interests we have with the societies in question, Kalaallit Nunaat and Denmark - quickly became apparent. Jensen is a Kalaaleq (Greenlandic Inuk) from Sisimiut, studying Cultural and Social History at Ilisimatusarfik, University of Greenland, and bore witness from within, in 2020, by being physically present in Kalaallit Nunaat as a young member of society. Vold recently finished her master's degree in Cultural and Social History at Ilisimatusarfik, is also a Kalaaleq, and, in her work, focuses on decolonizing research in the Arctic. Chahine is a German PhD candidate, born south of Berlin in former East Germany, based at Aarhus University in Denmark who has worked in a Kalaallit-Danish context since 2018, following the developments in 2020 from abroad.

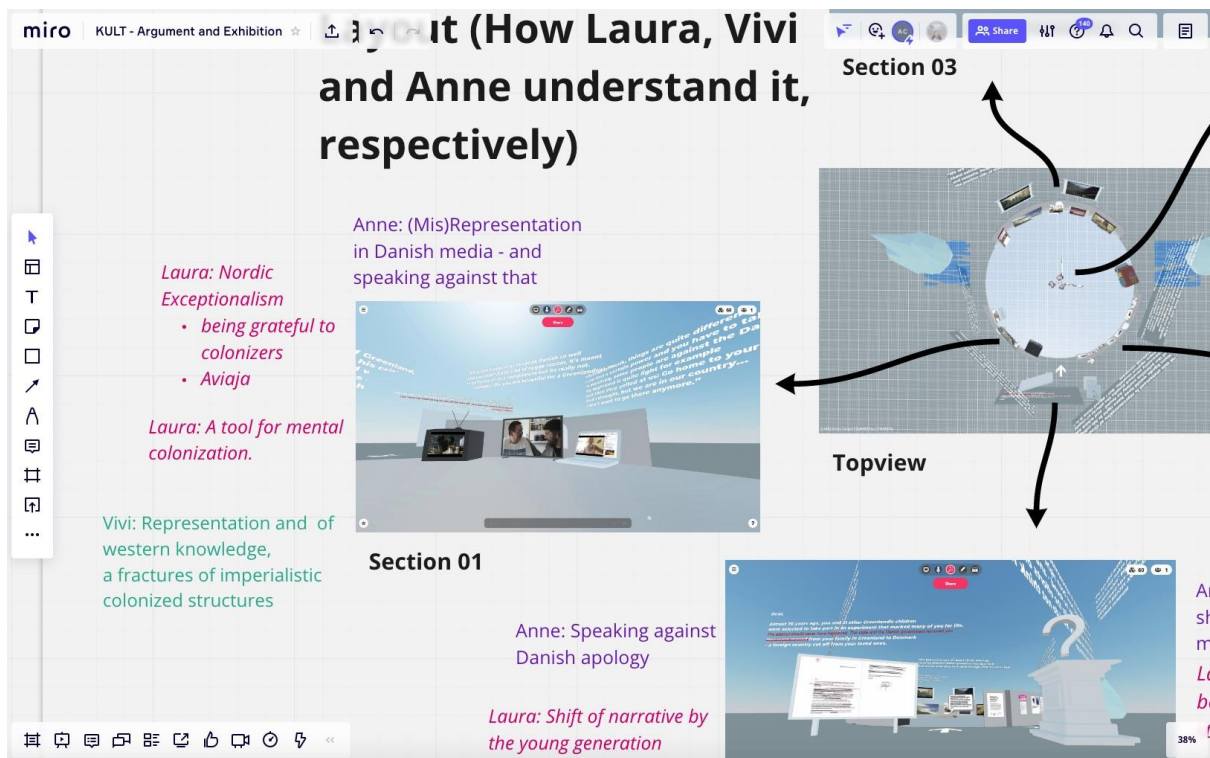


Figure 3 - Shared digital working space on Miro displaying our individual notes on Section 02

Our interpretations of Section 01: *Media (Mis-)Representation* offer a fruitful illustration of how our respective readings of the exhibition space differ (Figure 3). Chahine understands this section to cover “(Mis)Representation in Danish media - and speaking against that”, focusing on the content of the displayed film excerpts and the messages they convey. Jensen, on the other hand, conceptualizes this scene as an example of Nordic Exceptionalism and describes Danish media as “A tool for mental colonization”, drawing attention to the harmful effects of misrepresentation and derogatory narratives in Danish media on a Kalaallit audience. Vold, bringing a third perspective to the table, points out the inherent Western knowledge system embedded in Kalaallit society that forms the basis for the persistent (re-)creation of these kinds of media representations, which she interprets as “fractures of [an] imperialistic, colonized structure”. While Chahine, an external researcher from Germany, engages in a more distanced stance through descriptive interpretations of the section’s content, Kalaallit scholars Jensen and Vold point out its significance for contemporary Kalaallit society, as well as connections to a dominant Western knowledge system. By reflecting and bringing together our different perspectives, we engage in what Dwayne Donald (2009) coins an “ethical relationality”, creating a common understanding where each person comes from and “how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other” (Donald 2009, 6). These three readings, combined, guide our reflections on the exhibition within this article, and lead the

reader through the distinctive narratives brought together in the digital realm.

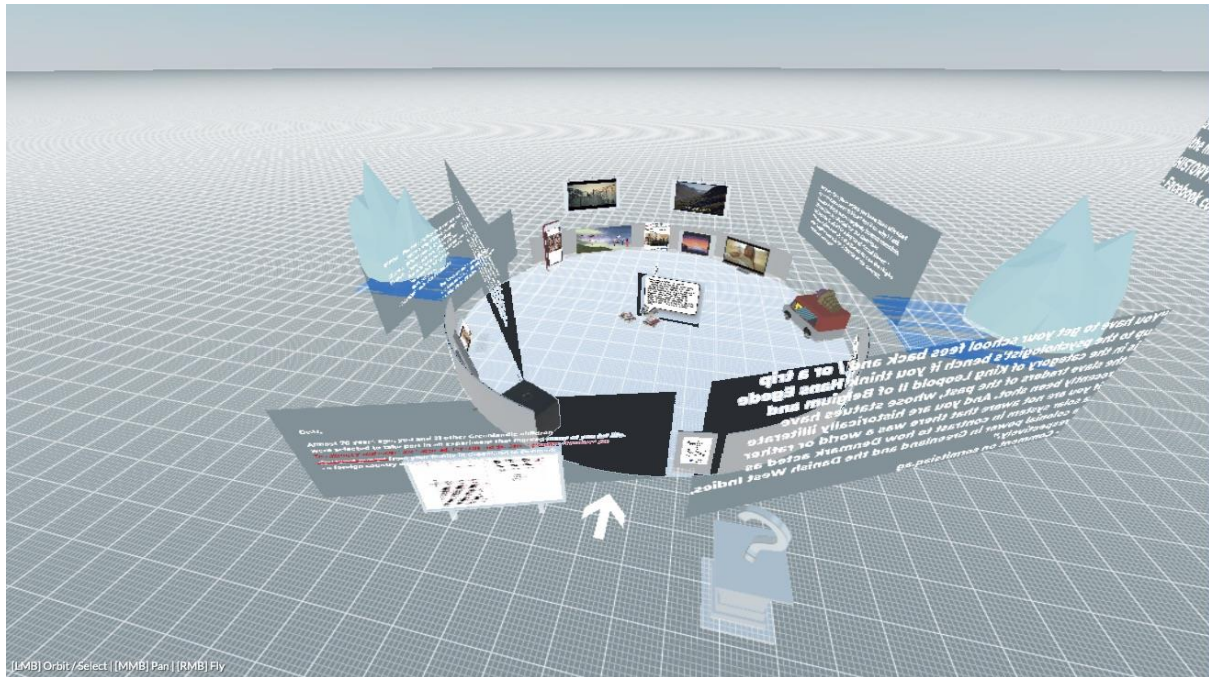


Figure 4 - Overview of the exhibition in the virtual 3D collaboration space Mozilla Hubs

Overall Layout

The exhibition pieces are arranged inside a rotunda, consisting of three curved walls placed on a grey-coloured open plane with a blue sky above, flanked on each side by an iceberg rising from a patch of blue water (Figure 4). The circular layout and open-air setting were a premise the global project partners of the *Pluriversal Design Exhibition* all agreed upon, born from the wish to highlight the situatedness of knowledge in each respective (virtual) place. Its iterative and open character symbolized through a circular arrangement, never wholly closed but punctuated with openings throughout. Our exhibition space, *Decolonial Movements in Greenland (Kalaallit Nunaat)*, consists of five areas that each highlight one aspect that either touches directly on the events surrounding the “Hans Egede Debate” or stands in relation to it: Entrance: *Apology from Mette Frederiksen*; Centre: *History Writing*; Section 01: *Media (Mis)Representation*; Section 02: *Internal Differences*; Section 03: *Shifting Narratives*. The exhibition pieces come in a variety of formats, such as newspaper clippings pinned to the walls, film excerpts shown on TV screens, laptops and iPads, textual references floating above the rim of the walls, and other physical materials such as an ice-cream truck parked between two adjoining walls. Even though we divided the space into separate sections for the visitors to engage with, the open design emphasizes that each particular narrative stands in connection with other areas: individual exhibition pieces form part of a greater whole.

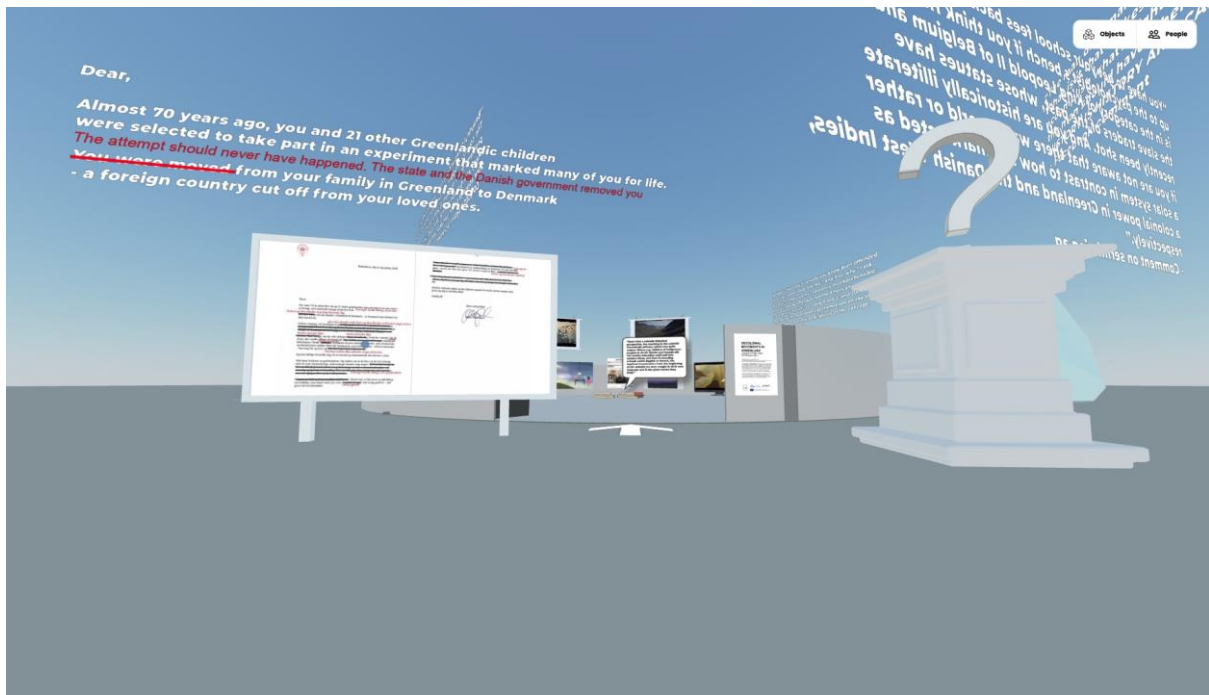


Figure 5 - Entrance: Apology from Mette Frederiksen

Entrance: Apology from Mette Frederiksen

When logging into the online exhibition space, visitor avatars are placed in front of the entrance, facing a billboard on the left and a pedestal on the right, positioned adjacent to the path that leads to the rotunda of the exhibition (Figure 5). The pedestal features a large question mark, touching upon the “Hans Egede Debate” in Kalaallit society that is featured in more detail in Section 02: *Internal Differences*, raising questions about historical narratives connected to the monument, specifically, and colonial history in general: Is the monument a symbol of modernisation arriving at Kalaallit Nunaat’s doorstep 300 years ago, or should it be a reminder of the colonial violence that followed? The billboard on the left prominently displays the edited version of an official letter from the Danish Prime Minister, Mette Frederiksen (Statsministeriet 2020), apologising for a Danish social experiment in the 1950s where Kalaallit children were removed from their homes. The children were brought to Denmark for re-education purposes and expected to foster cultural links on their return home. As a direct consequence, most of these children had to deal with long-term effects of the experiment, such as a sense of loss of belonging and mental illness (Bryld 2010; Thiesen 2011). Even though the apology has been lauded in the news as a step towards Denmark acknowledging its misdeeds of the past (BBC News 2020b; Naalakkersuisut 2020; TV2 2020b), it has also attracted criticism for its linguistic passivity throughout, circumventing the active role of the Danish state in the experiment. The alternative version of Frederiksen’s

letter—featured on the billboard—was created by Hans Peder Kirkegaard, co-founder of *Aqago*, a non-profit NGO that promotes further democratic development in Kalaallit Nunaat. An example of the suggestions, with the help of red annotations and strikethroughs, is translated into English and prominently displayed hovering above the billboard:

Dear,

Almost 70 years ago, you and 21 other Greenlandic children were selected to take part in an experiment that marked many of you for life. **The attempt should never have happened. The state and the Danish government removed you** ~~You were moved~~ from your family in Greenland to Denmark - a foreign country cut off from your loved ones.² (Private FB post by Hans Peder Kirkegaard on 8 December 2020³)

Kirkegaard proposes to remove the passive voice entirely and instead inserts the Danish state as an active force, responsible for the actions taken during this experiment in the 1950s. He hereby shifts the narrative from Kalaallit as grateful recipients of a passive apology from Denmark towards a critical debate about accountability, clarifying the explicit role of the Danish state “back then” whilst also finding appropriate ways of coming to terms with the colonial past in the present. The billboard is an example of bringing pluriversality into the exhibition space by combining and highlighting two different ontological departures. What the passivity of Frederiksen's letter reveals is the Danish state's hesitancy of fully acknowledging that, yes, Denmark was a colonial power in Kalaallit Nunaat, and is responsible for the forceful removal of small children. Danish colonialism's implied civilizing mission, as in believing to bring good to the “Native people” through educational means, remains tangible, watering down the concept of what colonialism is. Kirkegaard's corrections offer an alternative perspective on the matter, calling attention to its individual significance, but also the broader power relation it is intrinsic to, making clear these actions need to be more than addressed by the Danish state. They must be fully embraced through naming the perpetrator as part of a reconciliation process.

² Own translation.

³ We would like to thank Hans Peder Kirkegaard for granting us permission to use and reproduce his work in the exhibition and as part of this article.



Figure 6 - Centre: History Writing

Centre: History Writing

When the visitors enter the exhibition rotunda, they are met with video, media, and object installations on all three sides and a central exhibition piece of loosely arranged book stacks on the floor, accompanied by two speech bubbles overhead. The books on display are copies of *Grønland: den arktiske koloni* (Greenland: the Arctic colony) (Gulløv 2017), one of the books currently used for teaching history at Ilisimatusarfik, University of Greenland. An excerpt from the book is cited in the bubble above:

Seen from a colonial perspective, the teaching in the colonial Greenlandic primary school was quite unique. Where e.g., children of Indigenous peoples in Arctic Alaska and Canada did not receive education until well into the modern times, and then in boarding schools in English or French, the baptised Greenlanders, from the beginning of the colonial era, were taught in their own language and in the places they lived.⁴ (Gulløv 2017, 175)

In the Nordic countries, including Denmark, there has been a tendency to understand and produce oneself exceptionally gentle and humane colonial power compared to other nations, termed “Nordic Exceptionalism” (Lynge 2006; Jensen 2016; Jensen and Loftsdóttir 2016).

⁴ Own translation.

Knowledge about (colonial) history in Kalaallit Nunaat has, for the most part, been communicated through the colonizer's eyes (Thisted 2002; McLisky and Møller 2021) and leads to silencing in historical knowledge production⁵. The rhetoric in Kalaallit history books, written primarily by Danes, is inevitably influenced by authors' socialization within this background of exceptionality regarding the colonial past (Kleivan 1991). As becomes apparent in the excerpt, the handling of Indigenous people in Kalaallit Nunaat, in contrast to societies in other parts of the Arctic, is portrayed as benevolent, unique in an international context and supportive of the community in question. Postcolonial theorist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1998) and Kalaaleq scholar Aviâja Egede Lynge (2006; 2011) have argued that this "white-washing" of historical narratives can, in turn, result in mental colonization wherein the population, through constant exposure of one-sided historical narratives, ends up being grateful for the colonizer's conduct and actions, internalizing the discourse of the colonizer. Copies of *Grønland: den arktiske koloni* are stacked on top of each other in the centre of the exhibition's rotunda, touching upon their prevalence in historical educational practices in Kalaallit Nunaat. These contemporary history books are waiting to be read by many more Kalaallit students, and make tangible the persistence of a Western knowledge system that takes precedence over local, Indigenous narratives and perspectives (Smith 1999; Vold 2020).



⁵ See for example Nonbo Andersen (2017) for forms of historical silencing in the Danish-US Virgin Islands relation.

Figure 7 - Section 01: Media (Mis-)Representation

Section 01: Media (Mis-)Representation

Section 01: *Media (Mis-)Representation*, the wall on the left-hand side of the entrance, features a video installation consisting of three playback devices positioned alongside each other - a television set, a flat-screen, and a laptop - and three citations above the wall, referencing scenes from the media below. The television set shows a one-minute excerpt from the opening scenes of *Flugten fra Grønland (Escape from Greenland)* (Heilbuth 2007), a Danish documentary that aims to counterbalance the “postcard-idyllic picture of the beauty of Greenland” by claiming that social problems destroy Kalaallit society and force the young generation to leave the country (DR Presse 2007). The film was openly criticized by one of the Kalaaleq facilitators, Sørine Gejl - who had established contacts for the film production on-site - for its misleading quality and for not living up to the initial promise of presenting a balanced perspective (KNR 2008). Even though DR, the official Danish Broadcasting Company denied them as altogether untrue (DR Presse 2008), the film can be seen as one of the first instances where misrepresentation of Kalaallit was openly debated in Danish society (Thisted 2015). The flat-screen in the middle features an excerpt from the documentary series *Anders Lund Madsen i Den Yderste By* (Anders Lund Madsen in the farthest city) (Danish Radio 2015), in which the host - Anders Lund Madsen, a Danish journalist, author and comedian - sets out to “get to know” the people of Ittoqqortoormiit, a town in the east of Kalaallit Nunaat. The one-minute-long clip shows a discussion about reproduction matters between Anders and a community member, Josef, where Madsen deems having many children as undesirable. This interaction has been criticised for its inherent paternalistic premise and problematization of family life - a frame that opposes, and wholly ignores, the local perceptions of those living in Ittoqqortoormiit (Mortensen and Maegaard 2019). It devalues the perception of a people, living in a country the geographical size of Kalaallit Nunaat where depopulation is a long-standing concern. In contrast to the first example, the asymmetrical power relations are here voiced differently, arriving in the guise of a charming TV anchor interviewing the people from the community, bringing with him his own set of biases that lead to reprimanding the people that welcome him (and his camera crew) into their homes. The clip on the laptop to the right shows a public Facebook video, posted in June 2020, by Kalaaleq actress Karina Møller who uses satire to comment on the events in 2020 (Moeller 2020). She introduces herself as a prime example of how Kalaallit can indeed become civilized people by marrying a good (Danish) man and receiving a proper education. Throughout the clip, Møller reverts to an overly friendly grimace and a high-pitched voice whilst praising missionary Hans Egede as the saviour of Kalaallit

society, as the first of many Danes to bring love and charity to the Kalaallit people. She also addresses the renaming controversy of *Kæmpe Eskimo*, the Danish ice-cream bar, and claims that having a delicacy branded with that name can only translate to Kalaallit being as special as confectionery.

Consolidating the points raised in the centre installation of the exhibition, the video excerpts point towards one-sided narratives about Kalaallit society as seen through the eyes of the former colonizer, primarily in the form of Danish media productions and their harmful implications for the people being portrayed. Here, again, the dominant Western mode of representation, and its structural (media) embedding, becomes apparent, devaluing, by leaving out or ignoring, Indigenous understandings of these matters (Berthelsen 2020). Even though *Kalaallisut* (West-Greenlandic) became the official language of Kalaallit Nunaat in 2009, Danish is still embedded in everyday, official, and media communications, and Danish TV is one of the primary sources of entertainment and news consumed in Kalaallit households. The satirical commentary by Møller not only manifests Kalaallit's awareness of the ways they are perceived and portrayed in the media, but establishes a direct dialogue with the derogatory messages the two documentaries convey.



Figure 8 - Section 02: Internal Differences

Section 02: Internal Differences

Section 02 *Internal Differences* consists of a collage of newspaper articles and social media

content, bordered by an ice-cream truck on the left-hand side and citations hanging in mid-air above, relating to elements of the collage below. Here, the exhibition picks up two controversies that unfolded in 2020: the call to remove the Hans Egede statue in the old colonial harbour in Nuuk and the appeal for renaming the Danish ice-cream bar *Kæmpe Eskimo*. Both debates unfolded in close proximity to the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement that catalyzed a global reckoning with institutionalized discrimination and racism, enduring consequences of colonialism and resulting inequalities in society. The activist action in connection to the Hans Egede statue - painting the word Decolonize and *kakiornert* (traditional Inuit tattoos) on its pedestal overnight - sparked an intense debate in Kalaallit society, visualized in the exhibition through various newspaper clippings⁶ and the drawing *Angerlarli* (Let it return to its home) by Kalaaleq artist Lili Frederiksen Chemnitz (Chemnitz 2020b). Rapper Josef Tarrak-Petrussen, for example, told *Reuters* that the statue should be removed because “it’s a part of the oppression and the systemic racism here in Greenland”⁷, and politician Aki-Mathilda Høegh Dam advocated for the relocation of the statue, considering it a symbol of colonial violence (Gronholt-Pedersen and Skydsgaard 2020). Many discussions on social media and the commentary sections of online news outlets, however - examples of which are featured above the wall - take an opposing view:

The man died many years ago and you cannot delete history ...What is it that makes you want to delete your own story? What do you want to accomplish? Right now, it's just vandalism and the man should have a hefty fine [...]HISTORY IS HISTORY AND CANNOT BE CHANGED! - comment on private Facebook thread, June 2020⁸

Similar to the billboard installation in the entrance, pluriversal ways of understanding the world are here combined. What becomes apparent are discrepancies in how the statue and Hans Egede’s arrival, as a symbol and externalization of cultural memory (Assman 2010), is remembered in Kalaallit society. Some equate the memorial’s connotation with a benevolent form of occupation that brought Christianity to Kalaallit Nunaat, the primary religion practiced today, and consider colonization a necessity for Kalaallit Nunaat’s modernization, paving the way for becoming part of a global world. Others believe it to be a constant reminder of the loss of pre-colonial culture, the infliction of colonial violence, and ongoing systemic racism affecting Kalaallit society today. Young Kalaallit, in particular, such as Chemnitz, Tarrak-

⁶ (BBC News 2020a; KNR 2020; Petersen 2020; Brøns 2020)

⁷ Own translation.

⁸ Own translation.

Petrusen and Høegh-Dam, are disputing the previous consensus and narratives surrounding the colonial past (Marcussen-Mølgaard 2020; Volquardsen 2020). In doing so, they question the older generation's positive perception of the (former) colonizer and challenge the dominant Western (Danish) knowledge system that makes little or no space for Indigenous epistemologies and worldviews (Vold 2020).

The protests of 2020, centred around the Black Lives Matter movement, also heightened awareness of misrepresentations of BIPOC⁹ in popular culture and, in some instances, led to re-branding initiatives. For example, the football team *Washington Redskins* retired its name, recognising the ethnic slur it stands for (Homero and Sterling 2020), and food producer *Uncle Ben's* re-branded to *Ben's Original*, acknowledging the “inequities associated with the name and brand” (Ben's Original 2021). To colonize is to name. To decolonize is the right to identify oneself. In the Kalaallit-Danish context, criticism arose concerning the use of the term “Eskimo” for the branding of the chocolate-covered vanilla ice-cream bar *Kæmpe Eskimo* (Big Eskimo) produced by Danish manufacturers such as *Hansen Is*, *Naturli'*, and *Premier Is*. As Danish-Kalaaleq scholar Naja Dyrendom Graugaard (2020) notes, “Eskimo” is a testament to an unequal power relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, clearly demarcating who is able to name who, and was replaced with “Inuit” as a common term for Indigenous people of the Arctic by the ICC¹⁰ as early as the 1980s. Graugaard further contends that the name *Kæmpe Eskimo* can be considered a form of “Eskimo Orientalism” (Fienup-Riordan 1995), pointing towards Danish stereotypes and racialization of Inuit people (Graugaard 2020). In the exhibition, the original advertisement of *Kæmpe Eskimo* by *Hansen Is* is shown on the side of the ice-cream truck parked to the left, with examples of the debate's news coverage and discussions on social media pinned to the wall¹¹. Opinions in Denmark and Kalaallit Nunaat over the 2020 summer ranged from complete incomprehension of the need to rename a “Danish classic”¹² to calls for respecting the wishes of the Indigenous people, such as Kalaallit, offended by the term (Agger and Reinwald 2020; Scheel 2020). Manufacturers *Hansen Is* and *Naturli'* changed the name of their products in the summer of 2020. *Premier Is*, on the other hand, the largest Danish ice-cream manufacturer, initially refused any re-branding measures, referring to nostalgia and the will of the consumer (Floris 2020; TV2 2020a); only

⁹ Black, Indigenous and people of colour.

¹⁰ Inuit Circumpolar Council.

¹¹ (Floris 2020; Luyken 2020; Chemnitz 2020a; Meyer 2021)

¹² See, for example, the social media discussion unfolding in response to Lili Frederiksen Chemnitz's drawing *Hyggeracisme* (Chemnitz 2020a).

in March 2021 did they agree to drop the name after gaining a “much greater understanding of the topic”¹³ (Best 2021; Limfjord Update 2021). The playful ice-cream truck installation with the oversized ice-cream cone on its roof and the old *Kæmpe Eskimo* advertisement in place, offers a reading beyond childhood memorabilia. It can also be understood as a reification of the prominent bewilderment within Danish society towards the much-needed name change, equating the term *Kæmpe Eskimo*, and therefore ridiculing the essence of the debate, with no more than virtuous nostalgia. Graugaard (2020), referencing Gloria Wekker (2016), speaks of “white innocence” among the Danish population, forcefully forgetting or denying one's own complicity in reinforcing stereotypes, signalling a position of white privilege and advantageous power position.

Both discussions are examples of two cultural symbols - a memorial site and a consumer product - undergoing drastic changes in meaning due to increasing attention to social injustices and systemic racism as directly resulting from colonialism. The image of Danish-Norwegian Hans Egede, once praised for his missionary work and “human colonization” of the country, is being challenged by drawing parallels between contemporary social problems and a colonial period permeated with invisible, objective violence (Pettersen 2016). Debates emerging around the calls for re-branding of *Kæmpe Eskimo* are part of a global development that draws attention to the use of pejorative terminologies, previously rendered acceptable, but now contested by the people and communities addressed through these terms. Since the summer of 2020, the “Eskimo” debate has moved far beyond the world of ice-cream manufacturers, and, in the fall of 2020, the National Museum of Denmark announced the removal of “Eskimo” from its exhibits and public relations work, replacing it with “‘Inuit’ and ‘Inuk’ or more specific regional names” in the future (Kyle 2020).

¹³ Own translation.



Figure 9 – Section 03: Shifting Narratives

Section 03: *Shifting Narratives*

Section 03 *Shifting Narratives* showcases an arrangement of different media content and formats that have been created by Inuit for an Inuit audience. On the top left projection screen, visitors can view the trailer of *Akornatsinniittut – Tarratta Nunaanni* (Among us – In the land of our shadows), by Marc Fussing Rosbach (2017), the first fantasy feature film made in Kalaallit Nunaat, inspired by Kalaallit culture and mythology. Rosbach also directed the short fantasy animation film *Naja* (Rosbach 2020), a story about a young girl's death and her journey through shock and grief with the help of spirits - viewable on an oversized iPad on the bottom row. In the same year, director Inuk Jørgensen released the short film *In the Shadow of the Tugtupite* (Jørgensen 2020), shown on the top right projection screen, which unpacks the rationale behind past and future mining prospects in Kalaallit Nunaat and their links to the search for identity in a postcolonial world. The enlarged iPhone on the far left features the Instagram feed *Ullaakkut* (Good Morning) (Buscemi 2021), curated by Annie Buscemi, a young Inuk from Iqaluit in Nunavut, the largest and northernmost territory of Canada. Since October 2020, Buscemi has been posting one video per day addressing Inuit-specific reasons to stay alive, raising awareness about the high suicide rates in Nunavut and the lack of resources to support mental health. Shown to its right is an excerpt from *Aima Schhh!* (Silis-Høegh 2014), a Kalaallit children's picture book by visual artist Bolatta Sillis-Høegh that tells the adventures of a young girl, Aima, and her invisible friend Manna. On the far-right TV screen runs a

commercial from the Kalaallit mobile cell service provider Tusass, which advertises international flat rates by following Kalaaleq tattoo artist Paninnguaq Lind Jensen on her travels to various Northern countries (Tusass 2018). The newspaper clipping in the middle of the bottom row details a group of young Nuuk residents founding *NALIK Kalaallit Nunaat*, an association that advocates the need to establish discussion forums around decolonization in Kalaallit Nunaat to foster exchange between people with diverging opinions (Kristiansen 2020).

In contrast to other parts of the exhibition, these examples describe a shift in narrative, away from a Kalaallit-Danish relation at its centre, towards showing what life in contemporary Kalaallit Nunaat and the Arctic region is about. Even though the consequences of colonialism, such as mental illness, search for identity or resource extraction, become part of the stories, they are being addressed by Kalaallit/Inuit themselves, defining the overall narrative and format. It also calls attention to the initiators of this shift - like-minded people, often younger, who all have a common understanding of raising awareness for one-sided, derogatory narratives - and their push towards change by offering alternative ways of representation.

Conclusion

By default, the colonization of a people results in the forceful collapse of (minimum) two, often drastically different, versions of perceived reality and understandings of being in these respective worlds. Societies marked by coloniality bear the traces of this collapse. Pluriversal thinking and embracing Indigenous knowledge systems can in turn open ways to work across different ontologies, apprehending their entanglements, and possibly recognizing what was once a “border region” as a new world all together (Archibald 2006; Mignolo 2013; Xiiem et al. 2019). The exhibition brings together a variety of narratives that, in conjunction, manage to invoke the complexity of Kalaallit Nunaat’s colonial past, its legacies in the present, and the lived reality of its people. We intend to show more than one perspective, moving away from universality towards pluriversality, making different starting points and perceived realities visible, without conflating them. We are looking for the commons in the “uncommons”, what constitute each of them, in relation to one another (Blaser and de La Cadena 2018), or, seen from an Indigenous perspective: we are engaging layers of stories that are known by many, and other layers known by only a few (Xiiem et al. 2019). Co-curating the exhibition and reflecting on the meanings conveyed by each separate section, created an experimental space of knowledge creation based in design-thinking, as in conveying ideas through materiality and the

making of things (Otto and Smith 2013; Smith et al. 2016; Chin 2017), and a collaborative practice that perceives all three curators/authors as epistemic partners (Lassiter 2005; Rappaport 2008; Criado and Estalella 2018), requiring us to continuously clarify, but also challenge, our individual modes of perception. The “Hans-Egede-Debate”, and the decolonial movements in its wake, thus become entry points to a discussion about coloniality’s often invisible and subtle systemic nature, made tangible through concrete (virtual) material examples: the enduring reproduction of the benevolent Danish colonizer in contemporary history books; misrepresentation of Kalaallit in the media; an apology that neglects to give the perpetrator a name; or internal debates about who has the right to write (and right) the past. In their singularity, these examples often seem insignificant and negligible; as part of a larger whole, they unfold dialogical potential, laying open their interdependencies. These instances are not presented in isolation, but paired with narratives that run in parallel lines: Karina Møller’s satirical contribution that makes Kalaallit awareness of their ubiquitous misrepresentation abundantly clear, Kirkegaard’s pro-active changes to the Danish letter of apology, and the overall Section 03: *Shifting Narratives* that solely features contemporary reflections, depictions and interpretations of Inuit life created by Inuit for Inuit. The juxtaposition of these varying narratives in one coherent exhibition space enables them to coexist alongside each other whilst leaving room for varying interpretations: a prerequisite we, Jensen, Chahine and Vold, had discussed on several occasions, with all of us aware of the acute sensitivity the topic deserves to be treated with. What becomes apparent is the need to question the existing power and knowledge systems in place, structures that often favour a Western (Danish) worldview over Indigenous (Kalaallit) understandings of being in the world. The exhibition is a documentation of contemporary Kalaallit Nunaat in 2020, as experienced and discussed between the three authors in the beginning of 2021, offering a fragmented, situated, embodied, and partial body of knowledge - committed to pluriversal ways of knowing.

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