

Inuit place-based knowledge, cocreation, and decolonizing processes in the climate research of Lene Kielsen Holm

- A conversation with Suzy Basile and Mark Nuttall

Björn Hakon Lingner and Naja Dyrendom Graugaard

Introduction

This article is a conversation piece in memoriam of Kalaaleq researcher and scientist Lene Kielsen Holm. With Lene's untimely passing in January 2021, we lost one of the most remarkable and groundbreaking researchers in Kalaallit Nunaat, and the Arctic at large. In this article, we not only wish to honour the work of Lene and her imprint in the Arctic research field, but we also wish to acknowledge that we – as both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers – still have many lessons to learn from Lene's approach to Indigenous knowledge creation in climate research.

Lene Kielsen Holm's internationally acclaimed work was passionately dedicated to building knowledge about social and environmental change in Inuit homelands brought about by climate changes, resource extractivism, colonial legacies, and development projects. Lene insisted that such research should be done in collaboration with the people who live with and off the land, sea, and ice – and that the local communities should not only be active co-creators in, but also the primary beneficiaries of, the research that was conducted. Unlimited by universalist Western scientific paradigms, Lene's work by example demonstrates the necessity and richness of prioritizing Kalaallit knowledge systems, languages, and life worlds in order to gain deeper understanding of the changes and challenges that we currently face in the Arctic.

As for so many others, Lene Kielsen Holm has been an inspiration to the two authors of this piece, Naja Dyrendom Graugaard and Björn Hakon Lingner. In fact, the initial idea for our article to this thematic issue in KULT was an interview with Lene, herself, on her work and perspectives on Inuit knowledge creation, collaborative research methods, coloniality and decoloniality in the existing Arctic scientific field. After learning about her untimely death, we agreed that producing an article about her was even more important now, and we decided that the most appropriate format would be a conversation with some of Lene's friends and long-time collaborators. Two of them, Professor Suzy Basile and Professor Mark Nuttall – whom Lene held very dear – generously agreed to work with us. The four of us sat down for an online conversation on May 20th, 2021.

The ensuing text, we hope, provides some insights into the life of an extraordinary human being, who was highly respected for the high quality and innovativeness of her work, and who is remembered for being tirelessly and uncompromisingly committed. Lene was appreciated as friendly, open, generous, and a very good listener by everyone who knew her. As pointed out by Suzy and Mark in our conversation, Lene was a scholar in high demand, as she often was the first point of contact for international researchers who gained interest in her perspectives, and Lene was involved in a long list of different projects that led her to do many interesting things, some of which our text provides glimpses of. The conversation also conveyed a picture of a person whose passion in her professional life came out of love for the work she was doing, and a person who was deeply engaged with family, friends, colleagues, and collaborators on an

interpersonal, human level. Lene often had fun doing her work, and Suzy and Mark both repeatedly emphasized how her infectious humour and interest in other people made her fun to be around.

Importantly, our conversation with Mark and Suzy passes on the story of a courageous scholar who ‘walked the walk’ and paved new ways in a scientific territory where Indigenous and local knowledges are not necessarily welcomed, appreciated, and taken seriously. Paving new pathways for a science that insist on the Indigenous presence and relevance is Lene’s gift to the young generation of Kalaallit scholars, and it is one of the many reasons why Lene Kielsen Holm’s legacy is not to be understated.

Conversation participants

Suzy Basile (SB) is a Professor at the School of Indigenous Studies the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT). Basile comes from the Atikamekw community of Wemotaci and is member of the steering committee of DIALOG Aboriginal Peoples Research and Knowledge Network. She has developed the Guidelines for Research with Aboriginal Women for Quebec Native Women Inc., published in 2012. She has also co-led varied works on the subject of the ethics of research with Indigenous peoples.

Mark Nuttall (MN) is a Professor and Henry Marshall Tory Chair of Anthropology at the University of Alberta. He also holds a visiting position as Professor of Climate and Society at Ilisimatusarfik (University of Greenland) and the Greenland Climate Research Centre at Pinngortitaleriffik (Greenland Institute of Natural Resources). Mark has carried out extensive research in Greenland, Alaska, and Canada. He is editor of the landmark three-volume Encyclopedia of the Arctic (Routledge, 2005), and author and editor of many other books.

Björn Hakon Lingner (BL) holds an M.A. in Kulturmødestudier/Cultural Encounters from Roskilde University, where he works as an external lecturer. He has co-edited and written for KULT on various occasions and works with Cultural Studies, Postcolonial Theory, and Whiteness Studies.

Naja Dyrendom Graugaard (NDG) is a Danish-Kalaaleq postdoctoral researcher at the Danish Centre for Environmental Assessment, Aalborg University. A prime focus in her research and publications is coloniality, decolonization, and Inuit knowledge in Arctic research. Her doctoral thesis specifically investigated the role of seal hunting in these processes, as they historically and presently unfold in Kalaallit Nunaat.



Lene Kielsen Holm. © Marco Holm

First Encounters

BL: Shall we start with a brief account of how and where and when you met Lene?

SB: I met Lene back in 93 or 94, she came to Quebec City with her family, at the time her kids were very small. She came for one year to Université Laval in Quebec City to study Anthropology, so that's where we met. So, we became friends nearly automatically. We were quite busy both of us, but we met a couple of times during her year in Quebec City and, also, she came to my home community. I'm from the Atikamekw first Nation and the name of my community is Wemotaci, which was at the time 4 or 5 hours driving from Quebec City. So, she came with her husband and two kids to visit me and my community, and we had a great time.

She learned French quite well, she was managing the language pretty well in less than a year. The kids were going to school and learned French as well, so she really wanted her family to

have a good daily life - and one of the ways was probably to learn French because Quebec City is very French, n'est-ce pas?

So that's how I met her. And we met again two years later. I went up to Nuuk for five months, January to May 1996. One session of my BA-degree at the time. She was a lecturer at Ilisimatusarfik (University of Greenland) at the time and I followed one of her classes, even if she was giving the class in Danish and Greenlandic, most of the readings were in English, so I found my way to manage it. I visited her at her place many times during these months. And then we keep meeting each other a few times in Canada, in Denmark, in Iceland ... and Greenland of course, because I went back there many times.

MN: It was 1998 in Nuuk. I had gone there for a meeting, and I was introduced to Lene because she was part of that project team. Later on, I met her in various fora and meetings, particularly Arctic Council working group meetings. She was working for the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), and she was a member of ICC-delegations to various meetings of the Arctic Council Sustainable Development Working Group. I was involved for about 10 years with the International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA). Their secretariat is in Copenhagen, and with all the Arctic work that IWGIA does, our paths would cross. And I was doing work in Greenland anyway, so we would meet – and at various international conferences as well.

I think it is very important to acknowledge the international reach of her work, particularly through ICC. Suzy talks about Lene's time in Quebec, at Université Laval, and Lene always talked about that experience. She was very international in her outlook, and in relation to Indigenous affairs, and she never lost that context, which I think is very important. She was always able to connect and bridge those different scales, between Greenland and wider Indigenous political movements.

In 2012, I took up a Professorship at the Greenland Climate Research Centre. The Climate Centre's work was predominantly natural science-focused, but there was a social science-component to the work that the Climate Centre does. I developed what was called the Climate and Society research Program. I needed to build a team, and Lene was the obvious person to work with me to do that. So, she joined the team as research scientist, and we worked together for 8 years, before she fell ill, developing and working on this Climate and Society program, and building capacity in Greenland for social science research focused on climate change within a broader context, of course, of other changes. Very central to that work was PhD education. We had PhD students based at Ilisimatusarfik, and Lene was a very, very important mentor to students.

NDG: When did I meet Lene the first time? It's funny, I think my parents met Lene first, in Kangerlussuaq airport, where they struck up a conversation with Lene. They were so excited afterwards and were like: "We've met Lene, and she is incredible, and you should really talk to her". At that time, I was about to start my first fieldwork project in Greenland. I studied in Canada, so I did it during the summer. So Lene and I connected and over the years, we've had conversations, here and there - specifically talking sustainability and what does sustainability mean in a Greenlandic context and from an Inuit perspective?



Lene Kielsen Holm (middle) with Suzy Basile (right) and Toku Oshima, one of the co-editors of *The Meaning of Ice* (left), at Ilisimatusarfik 2019. © Suzy Basile

Breaking disciplinary boundaries and privileging Indigenous epistemologies

BL: Mark, could you talk a little bit more about Lene's work as a PhD supervisor?

MN: PhD-students were so central to the Climate and Society group. We had a number of students work with us. And it was very important to bridge Ilisimatusarfik and the Greenland Climate Research Centre. These are two very separate bodies, even though they kind of share a campus space. There also is quite a divide between different ways of doing research. So, Lene and I were walking across the car park quite a bit, between the university and the centre, and tried to organise meetings about methodology, about how to do research, and the students were very key to this.

Lene played a very important role as a mentor. She included the students in discussions, making sure they were known about, that they had a presence in the centre. And it was never an easy thing, given that everybody was working within their own particular disciplinary boundaries. But it was always an interesting topic of discussion between Lene and myself: That here we have this incredible opportunity to bridge, not only the natural sciences and the social sciences and the humanities in Nuuk, at this campus, with people proximate to one another, but also to talk about different ways of knowing, Indigenous ways of knowing, thinking about Indigenous epistemologies and Anthropologies and how we can kind of build this ... or turn this into a hub, I suppose, for knowledge exchange. And that is a long, difficult process to do, and we were engaged in a lot of discussion over the years about how to do this. Trying to break down

disciplinary boundaries, trying to break down these different silos within which people work. And, you know, there is still quite a lot of work to do in that area, but that was something that Lene was always committed to doing. And you know, there were not many people like her, so it's a very, very hard thing to do, particularly when people are so entrenched into their own particular disciplinary methodologies. When a fisheries biologist is tasked with assessing the stock of cod in the Nuuk Fjord, for example, that's all they do, that's their job. And when you start introducing, for some people, very complicated questions about including local people into this kind of research, it always presents challenges. Much of our work was about trying to break down barriers as well, and to have conversations with the natural and the physical scientists who were our colleagues at the institute.

BL: It was exactly this aspect of Lene's work that fascinated me, when Naja introduced me to her books and articles initially. But Mark mentioned challenges with respect to including local communities into research, so as a question to both of you: What necessitated developing this kind of approach, and how has it changed knowledge production in/on the Arctic as far as it has changed anything?

SB: I can maybe just share some thoughts; I hope you will be able to deal with my Quebec accent. I was not in the university for a good 12 years, after my MA degree which I did in Ilulissat in Greenland in 1997 - 1998. I was working for various Indigenous organisations, but I kept in touch with Lene during these years. When I went back to work in my university, and became a professor, we of course kept talking about all of these issues through the years and we had in common the goal and wish to decolonise the ways that research is done. Specifically in the Humanities, because we both felt that we were stuck in ways of doing research that didn't belong to us, or in which we didn't recognize ourselves. We had many discussions about that, and we were sharing experiences, myself in Quebec, and her experiences with Danish or other European researchers. And we both agreed that we had to put our foot down, in our ways, and speak out about all the negative experiences that we both faced.

Now, we have an ethics code in Canada, but we didn't have that 20 years ago, and we faced researchers that were doing what they wanted without asking anybody. So Lene and I had discussions about those issues, and the world brought us together at the opening of the Greenland Science Week in 2019. That year, we did the conference keynote together, and it was really great! We had that same perspective, saying that Inuit, and Indigenous people in general, have these principles and we propose to the research community to take into account our words. And these words were coming from Lene's experience and my own experiences with Indigenous nations here in Canada. So, we didn't make up these principles ourselves, we gathered all these ideas, principles, from our respective work, and we brought that together at that conference. And this was the last time we met. I was staying at her place too, so we had this wonderful time, one full week together.

MN: Suzy has spoken about decolonising the research process. That has been something for the last twenty years that has been so important to changing the ways in which research is done, why it's done, and for whom. And that's a question that I pose to my students when I'm teaching anthropological research methods: When you do your field work – it doesn't really matter whether you're doing it within an Indigenous community in Canada, or somewhere else around the world, or in non-Indigenous communities somewhere else - and somebody asks you the question, why are you doing this research? For whom are you doing this research? And how can I and my community benefit from that research? And that is something that many students

in Anthropology still, and probably in many other disciplines, do not really get an opportunity to debate when they are being trained in research methods. These are uncomfortable questions, but they are questions that should be asked, and they need to be addressed. So, the decolonising research process is about putting Indigenous voices and Indigenous epistemologies and matters right at the centre, at the heart, of any kind of research.

In Canada, in the Canadian Arctic, the land claims process that has been going on since the 1980s has made that a requirement. For example: the co-management of resources, means that there is a need to co-produce research, whether that's for narwhal management or the management of polar bears. So, whether scientists like or not, they have to work with communities and there are still many, many important steps that need to be taken for it to be completely effective. Just because it is written down in the land claims process doesn't necessarily mean it's going to be an easy process. Of course, there was no land claim process in Greenland, so there was no similar process of working out and defining Indigenous, Inuit lands and territories. In Greenland there is a public government, but there is no Indigenous land claim, like in Nunavut where the land claims agreement has certain articles about Inuit rights at the very heart of it. Self-government doesn't necessarily mean self-determination and Greenland may have Self-government, but that doesn't necessarily mean that there's been a self-determination process. Some may, arguably, critique the self-government process as merely a process of devolution, which probably includes the way in which research is still carried out. In Nunavut there is a concerted effort and a process to place Indigenous, Inuit ways of knowing and being at the very heart of government, anything from education to the design of housing. This involves the implementation of the principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit - which is Inuit ways of being and doing – that does not exist in Greenland.

In Greenland, the discussion of Indigenous knowledge is not something that has necessarily been engaged with at many levels, including resource management. Even to talk about local knowledge is not the same thing. This is something that was of great concern to Lene, the need to privilege Indigenous voices, to bring those voices front and centre in any kind of research centre. Working, as she did, in an institute where most of her colleagues were biologists and fisheries biologists and marine biologists studying whales – who would always say things like, well, of course we include local people. But here, the inclusion of local people essentially is often just seen as to hiring a boat to take the biologist out to catch a fish. And that is very, very different from the process concerned with the co-production of knowledge, to engage and work collaboratively with hunters and fishers who depend on natural resources in a process of stock assessment, for example, of gathering the data that is necessary for informing those decisions. When we look at any kind of research in Greenland today, there is often still a real lack of involvement of communities and of recognition of the value of Indigenous and local knowledge. And yes, scientists and others will say of course, well, we consult with the Hunter's and Fisher's Association over this research, but that is not the same as co-producing the research. This is likely to change, though, as a result of current discussions about research ethics, knowledge co-production, and community-based research.



Lene Kielsen Holm on fieldwork. © Marco Holm

On the importance of Kalaallisut, language and place

SB: Lene emphasized the importance of language and doing research in Greenlandic. She was a very strong speaker, very quiet sometimes, but her voice would resonate very strongly. And I think for her to bring the voices in Kalaallisut [Greenlandic] was so important. Even in her daily life, in discussions with her, she would always introduce Greenlandic words, and if you didn't catch them, she would repeat them. I don't know if she noticed that herself, but even to me, and other foreigners, she would always use Greenlandic words here and there. And I think this a very good way to decolonise as well. Languages and the use of the knowledge, she was so proud to bring these into science. I think the book, *The Meaning of Ice*, which she was very proud of, speaks a lot about that. I remember she once said: 'You know that book?' She had a copy and held it in front of me. She had insisted for it to be made in a very good quality of paper and colour, the layout, the physical book was very high quality. She had insisted to get this the same as all the other books in our library here, it doesn't have to be devalued just because it's Greenlandic knowledge in these pages. So that was part of her work.

MN: I would sit in Lene's office, and she would be talking about that translation of *The Meaning of Ice* from the English into Greenlandic that she was working on. To say that this was a work of passion, and the heart is probably an understatement, because having it written in English of course was the convention, but she really wanted to have it written and published in Greenlandic, and for the communities. You're right, Suzy, Lene was incredibly proud of that book as a collaborative venture, I think, of different ways of knowing, all the co-editors, communities, partners, as well as academics.

That point you made about the language, Suzy, is so crucial! When we started the Climate and Society programme back in 2012, there was the likely prospect of the large iron ore mine that was being developed by London Mining at Isua, in the Nuuk Fjord area, being given an operation and exploitation license for developing. It was a huge issue for the local community. We would hear people speak about their frustrations of not being included in any of the social and environmental impact assessments and the work that was being done. We were hearing from people in Nuuk, and also the community of Kapisillit, about how consultants and the mining company would talk about the place, where the mine would be built, as empty, as a wilderness, as low in biodiversity, and yet this was a place where people from Nuuk and from the old communities around Nuuk that had been closed down in the 1960s and 70s had this long history of using that place. This is far from an empty landscape. In collaboration with local research partners, Lene and I started one of the main Climate and Society activities, to look at how people engaged with and related to the area. It was a counterpart to the scientific research in the Nuuk Fjord, and it was to look at the human history and human use of the fjord. And to contribute knowledge to that social and environmental impact assessment process when it comes to extractive industries, that many people felt was lacking. Lene and I sat down, and we talked about this with our community partners and others. We started to think about a collaborative research process, and we decided that we would start this project: Inuit Pinngortitarlut, which can literally be translated as “people and the world of becoming”.

In Greenlandic, it is very hard to find a word that simply translates to ‘nature’ in English or in Danish. The word pinngortitaaq, a place of becoming, a process of becoming, creation ... a world that is constantly in motion.

And there are few people who could really take a scientific document and translate it into Greenlandic in the way Lene did. Just to give one example, we were both part of a large-scale, interdisciplinary project, funded by the EU called ICE-ARC. That was the acronym for Ice, Climate and Economics - Arctic Research on Change and it ran from 2014 to 2017. Part of that project-our work package - focused on changes to sea-ice in Northwest Greenland. The wider project involved a number of European institutions that were working on sea-ice changes in the Arctic Ocean, north of Siberia and in Canada as well. One of the things that we felt was very important was to produce a highlights brochure, a document of that research, but we felt it had to be translated into Greenlandic so it could reach the communities we were working with and beyond, to policymakers. The text was sent to a Greenlandic translator in Nuuk, who translated it, but Lene wasn't happy with the result. Christmas was approaching and we were under pressure to get it to the EU as a deliverable by a strict deadline, by the end of December, I recall. Lene worked on it over her Christmas break to get the translation right. It mattered to her, quite rightly, that the science, and the highlights of the research, should be communicated in her language in the right way – she was concerned that some translation into Greenlandic could result in miscommunication.

Coloniality, Decoloniality & Indigenization in research

NDG: I think it's so interesting what you just described. It brings together the discussion that we currently have on science, on decolonising knowledge, on co-producing work, and the challenge it poses to current scientific projects and their reproductions of colonial traditions of “researching on” Greenland. It seemed central to Lene's approach to insist on anchoring it in the local knowledge and in the people of the place. This process seems to me as a decolonized

research process, in itself - but how was it for Lene to speak about decolonization – did it play an articulated role in your collaborations with Lene?

SB: Yeah, we had discussions about that a couple of times, of course, and I was sharing my own experience with her. I spent many months, nearly two years, in Greenland if I put them all together. And once I was in Denmark and I was speaking with Danish people, and I was using the names of the towns in Greenland in Greenlandic. One of the ladies there stopped me and said: “Why are you using these words, we don’t understand what you mean, why don’t you use the Danish names of these towns?” And I said I’m sorry, but I didn’t learn them. I spent years in Greenland and well, I learned the Greenlandic names of these towns, I didn’t know the Danish names... Well, I know Nuuk is Godthåb and Ilulissat is Jakobshavn. But why should I use Jakobshavn? I never heard it, I just read it on a map somewhere. I discussed it with Lene, bringing her back this experience that I had, and she smiled.

And, once I was in Nuuk there was a discussion about the statue of Hans Egede, if it should be removed or not. Lene and I agreed that yes, it should be changed, and it should be a Greenlandic woman. As a joke I said to her: “You would be the perfect model for the next”.

It was very important to her to put the Greenlandic language, culture, and food – I don’t know if you have ever eaten with her, but she was cooking and preparing tea, and salt from the resources from Greenland. And she was a good cook. She always had fresh, traditional meat in her freezer or in the fridge. It was very important to her to also show to her two granddaughters. The last few times I was there, they were there, of course, and she was making a lot of things for them. So, I think she was herself in her own way doing decolonizations through her work and discussions with me and other friends as well.

MN: It was very important to Lene to ensure that any project was anchored in the community, that community members felt ownership of that project, and that the project was conducted and carried out in Greenlandic, working in communities, but with them. These things also take time to develop, often years, and our project in the Nuuk fjord that I mentioned earlier was one of the most exciting projects, I think; That we worked on with an expanding group of people in Nuuk who felt that it was their project.

Lene was very effective. We decided that we would have these regular meetings, either at the Institute or downtown in Nuuk in Katuaq, the culture house. And Lene would put the word out, she’d go on the radio and say we’re going to have a meeting next week on Friday, we want everybody to come along. This is what we’re doing, this is what we’re talking about, and that kind of project generated an incredible amount of interest. Lene was an effective communicator, also somebody who was so well-respected, not just as a researcher, but just as a human being. People had a tremendous amount of respect for Lene. I think that kind of dedication to her work - also to sit quietly and to listen, allowing people to express their own ideas and views - was very important to us as we developed that project and others. The research questions were worked out in this way, and that was exciting, it was challenging. It took on a life of its own that was an ongoing process. The understanding of that place of becoming - this place that is not static, but the world is always coming into being - that principle was very much evident in the way we were doing the research because we were not hemmed in by any kind of methodological or theoretical perspective that we had to shoe-horn our research into. It was a kind of process of being more organic which was very important for us. And people really enjoyed working on that project, we had a lot of fun doing it. Critically, it was also project that everybody felt had some significance. People would tell us that industry would

turn up, and the social impact assessment and environmental impact assessment consultants would come in, the reaction was: “Hang on a minute, you know, you have got to talk to us about this”. There is an eliding of Indigenous presence from the map, and to make industry aware of the significance of place, you have to talk to the people who live in this environment and use it. It’s fundamental.

The Co-creation of Knowledge

NDG: How would you say your friendship and your relation has contributed to each of your work?

SB: We both agreed that we have to work in collaboration with our respective colonial states, but we also have the responsibility to Indigenize as much as we could in our ways, and the work that we do. This is one of the last messages that we made at the end of our conference keynote speak at Greenland Science Week in Nuuk: that if we can contribute to the advancement of science with the Indigenous knowledge that belongs to us, or everybody, at a certain point, it should be pushed forward. And our respective work hopefully helped to go further with that process.

I was about to propose a research project related to climate change and the impact on women, specifically. I wanted to know what was her ‘women eyes’ on it. We were both women and these subjects were important to us because we were women ... The last time I was in Nuuk I was sharing with her a research project I am currently finishing about pregnancy and birth, pregnancies, and childbirth on the land - and Lene showed me where her mum was born, not too far away from Nuuk, in the now closed settlement of Qoornoq.

And so, she agreed on the fact that it could be important to map out, or to document, the experience of Greenlandic women that were born or give birth in these small settlements way before the hospital in Nuuk was the place that everybody would be send right away. But we didn’t go further, because time ... we didn’t have a chance to go further with that discussion, unfortunately.

MN: Important to mention is the EU-funded project I was talking about earlier; we were the only part of that larger project that was concerned with human-environment relationships and the importance of working with Indigenous communities. And Lene and I thought, well, it was very apparent, as is the case with so many of these kinds of large, scientific projects, that we were an add-on. You have to satisfy a requirement, have a social scientist involved, have some token-nod in the direction of Indigenous people, and we knew that it was going to be a big challenge of really being integrated into that wider project, because a lot of science-driven projects are motivated by purely scientific driven questions. Lene and I thought about this and said OK, we’re going to do it, but we can’t just be an add-on. So, we were part of a work package that was focusing on the North-West of Greenland, and we worked with colleagues from DMI, the Danish Meteorological Institute, and also from GEUS, the Geological Survey of Greenland and Denmark. They had purely science-driven questions and we had to really think about different kinds of research methodologies and grounding and anchoring that project in the community. But we all agreed that this had to be a collaborative process and it resulted in a project, where we as anthropologists, with our community research partners, anchored that project in the communities, working with the schools as well, but also with scientists. It was an exercise in the co-production of knowledge.

What is essential to the co-production of knowledge is that you have to begin with an understanding of it being context-based. For example, by asking how has this issue or this challenge emerged? How is it affected by a range of different contexts, not just environmental or ecological processes, but social and cultural and economic ones too. We have to understand the legacies of colonisation and social and economic change, and climate change is perhaps just one more link in a long chain of impacts that people in North-West Greenland have had to deal with over the last couple of hundred years or so. And for people, climate change might not be the most immediate or pressing problem, it may just be magnifying problems that are already experienced. The trauma, the legacy of change, relocation – the history and continued presence of Thule Airbase and son on. What are the experiences, concerns, anxieties, perspectives of those who are affected by all of these changes in this context, all of these different forms of socio-economic and political change?

There are many, many elements of that project to consider, but with the scientists from DMI and GEUS this ended up being a collaborative process, co-developing and implementing a participatory ocean and ice climate-monitoring program with local people. The incorporation of scientific knowledge, technology, and so on, was also designed using local knowledge and support from hunters and fishers. They were also trained to set up the equipment, to monitor it, to gather the material, to work in collaboration with the scientists in Copenhagen at DMI, and with us when we were down in Nuuk. I think it was a real success in establishing local partnerships and local networks that allowed an effective communication of the research results to the community, such as information about sea-ice conditions. And part of that wider project was also recognition of the generational aspects of knowledge.

Lene worked with a group of women in Qaanaaq and Savissivik and other communities. They sat down and Lene sometimes wasn't with them either. They felt that they were the team, and they would have their own meetings. Lene would be down in Nuuk, and they would have a meeting and come up with research questions And it would be that kind of collaborative process that is allowing people the opportunity and the scope to say: This is what is interesting to us and this is why we are interested in this data.

Another part of that wider project in Northern Greenland was the development of a halibut fishery. There is a great need to understand those shifting conditions and also understand the ocean floor, so one of the things that we started to do was to talk about Indigenous knowledge of, the seabed. This was a rather neglected, or rather ignored part of local knowledge. This gets back to the importance of working through local languages, giving people the opportunity to range freely along a range of questions. One of the products of that project was a map of the – bathymetry of the Inglefield Fjord, Kangerlussuaq, as it is also known as, that draws upon scientific knowledge as well as local knowledge. It involved the school as well. And very important to that was the way in which Lene would work with scientists and the community and nurture a collaborative research process.

SB: To Lene, it was very, very important to bring back, or to share the findings of the research with the local community, with her family, with friends, her colleagues, and with the Greenlandic population in general. We had discussions about that, too, and I remember that we both agreed that if we do not share these findings with everybody, or with the people involved, then there is no reason to do research. The final goal should be that the findings serve everyone, not only the scientific community, or the CV of the future researchers.

BL: In what ways would you like and hope to see Lene's work continued or picked up, commemorated in the future?

MN: I think that she inspired a generation of emerging Greenlandic scholars and scientists. We're now seeing more Greenlandic students go on to doing PhDs, engaged in the work at the university and also the Greenland Climate Research Centre, so I think Lene has been very inspirational in that way. She laid some very, very strong foundations for future research methodologies and collaborative, community-based processes. for research.

SB: I will just add to what Mark said, because I totally agree to what he just mentioned ... I know that Ilisimatusarfik works on a toolkit for community-based, participatory research in Greenland. I don't know if this will become a formal protocol at the university, but I'm pretty sure that it will probably be involved in the establishment of such rules at the university, but also at the other research centres that are set up in Greenland.

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“For me, the sea ice actually brings thoughts of warmth and light. Not the frozen nothingness as it is often portrayed. There is one tool especially, that helped Inuit survive, the qulleq, the oil lamp, which the women tended. Ikummataa is what feeds the light in the qulleq – fuel from the fat of seals, walrus, whales, and other animals; those animals that come from the sea ice. And in traditional times that light meant warmth and it provided a light

by which families shared their stories, their knowledge, and much laughter. Imagine the warmth and comfort that a hunter would feel inside himself when returning from a long winter hunt, in the dark, and seeing in the distance the glow of the qulleq through the walls of his family’s illu. The sea ice, then, directly provided what is needed for light, for warmth, and for wisdom, through the qulleq, one of the most important tools for all Inuit and for life on the sea ice.”

Lene Kielsen Holm (2013: 202)

Post-scriptum

The conversation represented in this text was a rich one, covering an incredible amount of ground. This also means that this article could not fit in the entire conversation, but was co-edited for reasons of readability and length.

This also expresses that there are still so many important stories to be told about Lene, her work, and her legacy, beyond this conversation piece. One central one – which reoccurred many times over the span of our conversation – was how proud Lene was of her family, her children, and grandchildren, and how much Lene's family meant to her life and being in the world.

Lene was loved and admired not only as a spearheading Kalaaleq researcher, but first and foremost as an incredible human being with a very warm heart and an infectious laugh. In her way and being, she supported and inspired a new generation of Greenlandic researchers, across disciplines and fields – and that is one of Lene's long-lasting legacies and speaks to the need for keeping Lene's work accessible for coming generations.

We want to thank Suzy and Mark for generously sharing their memories and time with us, as well as Lene's son Marco for – together with Suzy - contributing the great pictures for this article.

References:

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