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Emotions, finances and independence. Uranium as a "happy object" in the Greenlandic debate on secession from Denmark

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Research Article

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Abstract

Analysing the Danish-Greenlandic debate on Greenland's plans to extract and export uranium, the article advocates bringing the fields of extraction studies and cultural studies into dialogue. Drawing on discourse analysis, critical theory and the "emotional turn" in social sciences, the article demonstrates how the current discussion about secession is linked to a Danish-Greenlandic affective economy instituted during the colonial era. Conceived as the antithesis to the unhappy condition of present postcoloniality, independence has become the ultimate political goal for the Greenlandic nation. The reasoning is that history has made the Greenlanders citizens in a foreign nation, which has left them in a state of alienation. In order to lock colonialism away firmly in the past and attain future happiness, the Greenlanders must attain statehood. Uranium is supposed to promote this goal and is thus circulated as a "happy object", positioning opponents of uranium mining as "affect aliens" or "killjoys" in the independence discourse. In Denmark, the Greenlandic detachment has led to "postcolonial melancholia" – and to a greater receptiveness to the Greenland desire for equality. In Greenland, disappointed expectations of rapid economic progress and growing distrust of large-scale projects have sparked a discussion about the significations of the concept of "independence".

Introduction

Mineral extraction has been the prerequisite for modernity and life as we know it in industrialised societies (Szeman & Boyer, 2017). We are well aware that this development has come at a cost, both for the environment and for the people who have not profited, but lost, on such projects – people whose home has been destroyed or violently altered in the process. Since one person's happiness is often another's misfortune, mining evokes strong emotions. However, emotions are preferably avoided in discussions about mining, dismissed on the grounds that they are, after all, "merely" emotions. The general consensus seems to be that where economics is involved, emotions should yield to rational arguments. Yet, this is a false dichotomy. Whether to mine or not depends on different visions of the future, different hopes, different ideas of what might be "the good life" – all of which is deeply embedded in emotion. A more analytical approach to the role of emotions in debates and decision-making processes related to mineral extraction is thus sorely needed.

The study of affect and emotion has in recent years spread far beyond its origins in psychology and evolution theory. Not least in social sciences, this "emotional turn" has been fruitful because it bridges the social and the biological, which have conventionally been treated as separate analytical objects. With its biological focus, affect theory has brought the body back into the political arena, also in its own right and not just as a background for studies of (mis)representation (Thrift, 2007; Wetherell, 2012). New scientific disciplines have emerged, such as the history of emotions, the sociology of emotions, the anthropology of emotions or emotional geography, the latter focusing on the emotional intersections of people and places (Davidson & Smith, 2005; Smith, Davidson, Cameron, & Bondi, 2009). It is difficult to establish fixed boundaries between these disciplines, since much of the research is conducted in interdisciplinary fields. These fields all share the assumption that the body contains embedded affects (anger, fear, disgust, etc.) that precede social organisation, but which become fundamental factors in socialisation, as it is through socialisation we learn what should trigger these affects and how we are supposed to deal with them. Most studies agree that it is difficult to distinguish sharply between affects and emotions, but affects are commonly defined as being biological in nature and origin, while emotions spring from the cultural context and hence vary depending on time and place (Griffiths, 1997). Thus, rather than regarding emotions as individual psychological states, social sciences view emotion as cultural practices: something that is located in the interaction *between* people rather than *within* an individual itself, underscoring the sociality of emotion. While some scholars, including the geographer Nigel Thrift, use the emotional turn to break with the tradition of discursive studies in social sciences, other researchers, including the

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social psychologist Margaret Wetherell, see discourses and affect as inextricably linked. The following study is inspired by the latter approach. Borrowing Barbara Rosenwein's concept of *emotional communities* (Rosenwein, 2006) Wetherell argues that communities are held together by shared repertoires of emotion, intertwined with shared repertoires of interpretation. Thus, the sense of community comes from the recognisability and cohesion produced by the shared affective practices, which through routines and repetition become internalised in the individual and work as a sort of "affective habitus" (c.f. Bourdieu's habitus concept, see Wetherell, 2012, 106f., p. 139). Where many researchers see discourse as having a taming effect on affect, Wetherell sees it the other way round, so that it is the discourse that makes affect powerful and provides the means for affect to travel and spread from one person to another (Wetherell, 2012, p. 19).

Similarly, Sara Ahmed, who has gained a great deal of influence in critical cultural studies, sees a close correlation between discourse and emotions; however, instead of emotional communities, Ahmed introduces the concept of *affective economies*: a circulation and accumulation of emotions, not unlike the way money circulates and accumulates. From Ahmed's point of view, it is the objects of emotion that circulate, rather than emotion as such. Emotions stick to objects, and human bodies too are transformed into objects of emotion, which then circulate, like any other object. Through processes of discourse and stereotyping, some emotions "stick" to particular bodies. Thus, "sticking" is dependent on "past histories of association" that often "work through concealment" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 13). Power then, as both Wetherell and Ahmed demonstrate, is crucial to the agenda of affect studies.

Combining the concept of *affective economies* with Hagen Schulz-Forberg's concept of *uchronotopia* (described in the introduction to this themed issue and later in the article), the article aims to demonstrate the crucial role played by emotions in the Greenlandic-Danish debate on mining, in particular uranium mining. The literature on mining in Greenland is extensive, including studies on environmental and social impacts, as well as broader introductions to the political debate (see e.g. Bjørst, 2016, 2017; Nutall, 2017; Sejersen, 2015). My intention is to contribute to this research by drawing attention to how a particular relationship between economy and emotions founded in colonial times lives on in the present and shapes ideas of the future. The article conducts an in-depth analysis of two significant communicative events in the Greenlandic-Danish debate on uranium mining, which took place at the time when it still seemed that mining would be able to secure Greenland's economy and fulfil the dreams of full autonomy. Later, however, expectations for large-scale projects have had to be downgraded, and in addition to the environmental movements' protests, counter-discourses for the autonomy discourse are emerging. The final section of the article discusses two documentaries in which the hegemonic discourse of the independent nation is downscaled to a vision of self-reliance for the individual and the immediate community.

New act – new conflicts

Greenland Self-Government was introduced in the most peaceful way, following a long run-up of commission work based on cooperation between Greenlandic and Danish politicians and experts. The Act on Greenland Self-Government (Statsministeriet, 2009) is an extension of the Greenland Home Rule Act, which was implemented in 1979. As early as the 1970s, left-wing Greenlandic politicians wanted self-government and recognition of the Greenlandic people as an independent people in accordance with international law. At the time, however, it was not possible to negotiate such a solution with the Danish state, and the Home Rule Act became a temporary compromise. The Act on Greenland Self-Government can be regarded as a fulfilment of most of what the Greenlanders asked for in the negotiations during the 1970s. However, in the 2000s, the bar had been set higher, so that the Greenlanders now want the full power to represent themselves, also in foreign policy and security policy matters – which under the Act on Greenland Self-Government falls under the state. Since the formulation of the Act on Greenland Self-Government, the phrase "the Danish Kingdom", consisting of the three – in principle – equal entities of Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, has been used synonymously with the state. However, the act also makes it clear that in issues of foreign policy and security, the Danish government has supreme power over Naalakkersuisut (the government of Greenland) – as long as Greenland stays in the Kingdom. Greenland may decide to leave at any time, as stated in Chapter 8: "Decision regarding Greenland's independence shall be taken by the people of Greenland".

The Act on Greenland Self-Government was negotiated and passed with very little debate in Denmark. There are at least two main reasons for this. First, the notion of Denmark as a small, democratic and peace-loving country is a central part of the Danish national narrative (Jensen, 2012; Olwig, 2003; Thisted, 2009). The peaceful and democratic way in which Denmark and Germany have resolved the conflicts in the border area of Schleswig is internationally recognised as a shining example of how to put an end to war and conflict through negotiations and acknowledgement of minority rights (Kühl, 2004; Østergaard, 1996). Likewise, Denmark considers itself and is generally regarded by others as a pioneer with regard to the rights of indigenous peoples (e.g. Danida, 2011, p. 8; Gunter, 2015, p. 444f.). Second, at the time when the act was formulated, most Danes – including most Danish politicians – thought it completely unrealistic that Greenland would ever want full independence. The power relationship between Denmark and Greenland has been so unequal, and from a Danish point of view, Greenland has been so underdeveloped and completely dependent on Danish assistance, that such a solution has seemed barely conceivable.

Thus, from a Danish point of view, the time after the introduction of self-government has been unexpectedly turbulent, with several conflicts between Denmark and Greenland, including debates on large-scale projects and the use of foreign labour, extraction of rare elements and, most recently, Danish co-financing of Greenlandic airports. On this latter issue, it was a surprise to most Danes that some Greenlanders do not want the Danes' money but prefer to rely on other financing options, which from a Danish perspective is problematic in terms of security. Because the Act on Greenland Self-Government gives the Danish state full authority in security matters, Denmark has the option of playing the "security card" and thus block Greenlandic projects. Issues of this nature are being used as a way to mark and test boundaries between Greenlandic and Danish rule (Rasmussen & Merkelsen, 2017). Uranium has become a potent symbol in this ongoing test and negotiation of power relations.

During the first years after the implementation of self-government, everything boded well for the renewed relations between Denmark and Greenland. While the Social Democratic Party Siumut had been in power throughout Home Rule, the first government after the new act was led by the leftist party Inuit Ataqatigiit (IA), headed by Kuupik Kleist. During this period, the idea of a

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Greenlandic nation seemed to move in a less ethnic, more demos-based direction (Thisted, 2013, p. 250). The key words were inclusion, globalisation and room for everyone who wanted to contribute to the continued development of modern Greenland. Unlike the rhetoric at the beginning of the Home Rule period during the early 1980s, mobility, modernisation and urbanisation were cast in a positive light, and from being considered an alien, "Danified" city, the Greenlandic capital Nuuk was now embraced as the symbol of the modern, hybridised, multilingual Greenlandic identity (Thisted, 2014). However, this development was viewed with scepticism, especially in monolingual Greenlandic-speaking environments, where people feared that development would once again leave them in an inferior position – as it happened after the opening of the hitherto closed colony in 1953, when Danes swarmed the country and took all the good jobs. With an ethnically based, nationalist rhetoric targeting Greenlandic-speaking Greenlanders, Siumut's leader, Aleqa Hammond, won a convincing victory in the election on 12 March 2013, and Siumut was back in power in Greenland.

Hammond soon lost power due to irregularities regarding the use of public funds for private purposes. However, her mission of giving hegemonic status to the discourse about full independence for Greenland has been successful. Likewise, her decision to allow uranium mining still stands. The article therefore focuses on the turbulent months when Hammond was in power. It was during this period that the miscommunication between Denmark and Greenland became clearly visible, as did the role of affective economies in the discussions about mining in Greenland.

Within my lifetime

The international interest in the Arctic fuelled the Greenlandic dream of full independence. The Arctic had played a lesser role in international politics, and certainly in Danish politics. With the impact of climate change, this suddenly changed – so suddenly, in fact, that it went unnoticed by the Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs, who in 2010 prioritised a Mediterranean holiday with her family over attending an Arctic summit in Canada, where even the American secretary of state Hillary Clinton took part. This caused a scandal in Denmark and was widely seen as a mistake that was not to be repeated. Denmark had now fully realised the changed status of the Arctic in international politics (Petersen, 2011, p. 156). The Arctic momentum, combined with an increased awareness that the peoples of the Arctic can no longer be represented from the south but insist on representing themselves, gave Greenlandic politicians a high-profile platform in international politics. It was hardly a coincidence that Greenland's premier was invited to be the opening speaker at the inaugural session of the 2013 Arctic Circle Assembly during 12–14 October in Reykjavik – an initiative that, along with similar initiatives, such as the Arctic Frontiers conferences in Tromsø, Norway, can be seen as contributing to locating decision-making processes *on* the Arctic *in* the Arctic. In previous years, Icelandic national leaders had shown a significantly increased interest in Greenland, which, due to the future ice-free seas and Greenland's new, far freer position in relation to Denmark, constitutes an interesting partner for Iceland (Thisted & Gremaud, 2014, forthcoming). According to journalist Martin Breum (2015, 13f.), it was with Aleqa Hammond's speech in Reykjavik that it really dawned on the general public in Denmark that something important was happening in Greenland.

Hammond opened her speech with an expected theme: the climate crisis and its global consequences. Here she spoke on behalf of a "global we": "In order to solve a global problem, we need renewed global efforts fast" (Hammond, 2013, p. 1). Assigning the Arctic a privileged position in the climate debate, she also constituted an "Arctic we":

> All countries have a responsibility, but I believe that we – the Arctic communities – have a special stake in achieving a new global agreement. We must carry our eyewitness accounts to the global community and call for action. A united voice from the Arctic is an important contribution to the global negotiations. (Ibid., p. 2)

Next, Hammond went on to constituting yet another we: "We the Kingdom of Denmark". By means of this "we", Hammond made it possible for herself to speak as the representative of one of the five Arctic coastal states, which constitute the core of the Arctic Council, where Denmark currently has a seat by virtue of Greenland being part of the Kingdom of Denmark. By describing Greenland's importance, as concerns strategic location, extent (Greenland making up around 20% of the Arctic land mass) and the significant unexplored mineral, oil and gas resources, Hammond elegantly made it clear that Greenland is the important future international partner, not Denmark.

Having thus set the record straight, Hammond continued to her last and decisive "we": "the Greenlandic people". Here, Hammond positioned herself as head of state – or at least the head of a future state – and outlined the initiatives that Greenland will be taking "at the national level" and "independently" (ibid., p. 4).

Now, Hammond's speech took an even more unexpected turn. Combining the opening statement about the privileged position of the Arctic communities in matters of environmental protection with the Greenlandic will to exploit its natural resources Hammond revived the arguments about nuclear power as an environmentally friendly form of energy:

> Nuclear power continues in many parts of the world to have an important place, as part of the necessary non-fossil fuel energy mix, in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. (Ibid., p. 5)

In a Danish-Greenlandic context, this discourse had been completely dead since Denmark gave up its plans about investing in nuclear power back in the late 1970s and early 1980s, due to the strong resistance from the general public (Knudsen & Nielsen, 2016). Without devoting any further attention to this discussion, Hammond went straight to drawing up a scenario of Greenland as a major future uranium exporter:

> On 24 October, the Greenlandic Parliament will take a very important decision on abolishing the "Zero-Tolerance policy towards uranium", which has been in place for the past 25 years in Greenland. This decision will pave the way for Greenland to exploit its rare earth elements, the deposits of which are often linked with uranium and other radioactive minerals – and it will also pave the way for Greenland in a not-so-distant future to become a significant uranium exporter, among the world's Top-10 or possibly Top-5. (Ibid., p. 5)

Even in Greenland, this view had never been expressed so openly in a public context. Uranium had usually been framed as an unfortunate but inevitable by-product of the extraction of rare elements – not as an export object in its own right. In Hammond's speech, uranium is given priority as the necessary means of achieving both a sustainable future source of energy on a global scale and an economically sustainable Greenlandic state on a national scale. Describing Greenland's "unique position of being the only indigenous people in the Arctic, which has its own government that has a recognized and agreed right to independence", Hammond positioned Greenland as a pioneering nation within the category of indigenous peoples (ibid., p. 6). Envisioning independence as

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the natural goal of an indigenous people could be seen as controversial. On the other hand, according to the national discourse, independence is the natural goal of any people. Thus, Hammond's speech positioned Greenland in a kind of David-versus-Goliath position – and here, the sympathy belongs automatically with the underdog. On this basis, Hammond reached her conclusion:

> My personal objective is that the present government will take the necessary steps, which will enable Greenland to achieve independence one day within my lifetime. Close cooperation with Greenland's international partners in this process is of vital importance. (Ibid., p. 6)

Here, "the necessary steps" must be understood as referring first and foremost to the decision of abolishing the zero-tolerance policy on uranium, while the final sentence contains an obvious invitation to other countries than Denmark to take part in the making of a state and its prosperous future. Thus, by means of a speech act, Hammond bluntly (although somewhat prematurely) terminated Denmark's supremacy over Greenland and Denmark's privileged partner status.

Emotional economies in the Kingdom of Denmark

The decision to abolish the ban on uranium mining was in fact pushed through the Greenlandic Parliament on 24 October 2013 – albeit with the narrowest possible margin. Later it was discovered that in fact no such formal ban had ever existed (Kristensen, 2013). However, that did not change anything. Everybody thought that it existed, and there was, and is, certainly a morally motivated distaste for nuclear energy in Denmark and among many Greenlanders. Likewise, there is an expectation that indigenous peoples should be opposed to such projects, which are considered to pose a great risk to the natural environment and to world peace. Hammond thus challenged both Danish supremacy and outside expectations to how she would reason and act as an indigenous person.

In terms of what was at stake in the speech with regard to Danish-Greenlandic relations, it is worth noting the Danish reactions to the speech. The Danish journalist Martin Breum, who specialises in Greenlandic issues, uses the speech as the prologue to his influential book *The Greenland Dilemma* (Breum, 2015). It is the self-confidence with which Hammond appeared on the international scene that attracts Breum's attention:

> The camera caught Aleqa Hammond from the front and a little to the right. If she was nervous, it didn't show. She smiled self-confidently as she sat bolt upright, dressed in a black angular jacket, next to Iceland's president, the experienced statesman, Ólafur Grímsson. There she sat, in the front row, with 1,000 people in the audience behind her. She had been in office as Greenland's premier for exactly 200 days, and in seconds she would address the largest group of decision makers ever gathered in the Arctic. (Prologue, unpaged)

If Hammond was not nervous, why does Breum focus on her non-nervousness, as if she ought to have been nervous? There is probably both a gender dimension and an ethnic dimension to Breum's obvious astonishment over Hammond's assertive behaviour. Breum does not expect this behaviour from a Greenlander – not to mention a Greenlandic *woman* – or perhaps he does not expect his readers to expect this self-confidence from a Greenlandic woman. Breum points out the connection between this perception and the Danish perception of Greenlanders as inferior and out of place in the international top league where they now suddenly appear:

> She was tearing away the historic narrative that Denmark had had about itself for so long: a story of polar explorers, of Knud Rasmussen and of Denmark's meeting with an ancient Greenlandic culture so outlandish that it was hard to imagine that their descendants now used iPads and talked about oil, uranium and independence "in their lifetime". (Prologue: unpaged)

While the Faroese – and the Icelanders, who gained independence from Denmark in 1918 – have been regarded as part of the Nordic/Scandinavian family, the Greenlanders have been represented as racial "others": "the primitives". Later, the term "primitives" was replaced first with "naturvolk" (people of nature) and then by "indigenous". However, the old connotations of inadequacy and untranslatability in relation to modernity still cling to the modern term. If the Scandinavian countries are thus perceived as a family (of closely related languages and cultures with roughly the same social structure, cf. the term "the Scandinavian model"), Greenland is perceived as belonging to the family only by virtue of adoption (Thisted & Gremaud, forthcoming). Back in the 18th century, Greenland was "adopted" into the Kingdom of Denmark by being colonised by the then Danish/Norwegian Kingdom. Thus, Greenland is admittedly embedded in the emotional community of the Kingdom, but due to its partly different origin and kinship (with the other Inuit in Canada, Alaska and Siberia) and the related narratives of "their nature" versus "our culture", the emotional attachment is divided and conditional.

In the family discourse, words such as subjugation, oppression and exploitation, which are usually associated with the domain of colonialism, are replaced by words such as love, care and protection, which are associated with the family domain. On the collective level, the words signal community and communality. At the same time, this emotional community was closely associated with an *affective economy* where emotions and money/goods circulated in a self-optimising circuit. Although the Greenlanders paid for the goods they received, the Danes established themselves as the "giving" party, while the Greenlanders were assigned the role as the "receiving" party. Through myriad affective practices, the Greenlanders were expected to show their gratitude and thus demonstrate acceptance of their subordinate position.

The Danish colonial narrative was built on the idea of Danish benevolence and charity towards the Greenlanders. Borrowing Ahmed's terminology, this narrative empowered emotions of pride in the Danish efforts in Greenland that made pride *stick* to the Danish body – as formulated here by Prime Minister Thorvald Stauning:

> We [the Danish people] have taken on the duty to manage those parts of the country [Greenland and the Faroes] and further guide their development. And we owe our descendants to leave this historic inheritance in a shape that *is testimony to the good, Danish Culture*. (Stauning, 1930, p. 8., author's translation, italics in the original)

However, duty was not the only reason for the Danish helpfulness. In songs, speeches, novels, plays and others, the Danes expressed their deep-felt love for the Greenlandic people, and this love was perceived as the basis of the actions and practices that the Danes performed in Greenland. For instance, in the past, the king's love for his Greenlandic subjects was demonstrated by an annual "royal gift", which was distributed to all Greenlanders on the king's birthday – with the exception of anyone who had transgressed against the will of the administration. Those individuals could be punished by being denied the gift – in some cases their entire family or settlement might even be denied the king's gift (Gundel, 2004 [1926], pp. 146–147). Thus, obligation and gratitude – and shame – came

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Fig. 1. Sapinngilagut (Yes we can) Collection, Nuuk Couture, Nuuk. Photo: Kirsten Thisted, 22 August 2017.

to stick to the Greenlandic body. Giving places the giver in a superior position and the receiver in an inferior position (cf. Mauss, 2016 [1925]). Pride and abundance stick to the giver's body, while shame sticks to the constant debtor.

Today, the annual block grant may in the eyes of many Greenlanders play a similar role (Dahl, 2005, p. 152). As long as Greenland receives the block grant from Denmark, Greenland can maintain a welfare society, with or without mining. However, because Greenland was never integrated as a full and equal part of the Danish Kingdom, the block grant to Greenland has a completely different character than the same subsidy does in other, integrated parts of Denmark. The Danish block grant to Greenland, also in the eyes of the Danes, still has the character of a gift that may be withheld if the Greenlanders make decisions that are deemed to run counter to the Danish Constitution (in which case the membership of the Kingdom will be terminated). Thus, in the Kingdom of Denmark, the entanglement of affective economy and pecuniary economy legitimised Denmark's dominance over Greenland, even after the end of colonial times. Through the endless repetitions of the narrative about Denmark who as a loving parent wished to protect and care for Greenland, helping the Greenlanders to develop into "maturity", the Greenlanders were constantly reminded of the infinite love the Danes felt for the Greenlanders. With every telling of the story about the Danes' selfless behaviour in Greenland and all the Danish taxpayers' money that is spent in Greenland, the notion about the supposed Danish affection for the Greenlanders also grew – as did Danish expectations of the gratitude the Greenlanders were supposed to feel towards the Danes. Likewise, with every telling of the story, the subordinate position of the Greenlanders grew.

By moving the discussion about Denmark's and Greenland's relationship from the family, parent and child discourse to the coloniser/colonised discourse, Greenlanders have for at least the past 100 years sought to terminate this affective economy (Thisted, 2017). In the Greenlandic discourse about Danish colonialism, Greenland does not owe Denmark anything. Here, it is rather the reverse – or, at least, the story can be told as a narrative of reciprocity. The Greenlanders have indeed received Christianity, book-learning and an elevated living status, but in return, Denmark has received raw materials and access to the Arctic, which has provided Denmark a prominent position within a wide range of sciences and a geopolitical position as an Arctic nation.

It was from such a Greenlandic framework of understanding that Hammond spoke at the Arctic Circle Assembly, playing the indigeneity card without embracing the victim's role. As Martin Breum points out, she had carefully chosen her appearance: no ethnic jewellery, which she otherwise often wore in a domestic political context during those years, but a modern, elegant dark suit – worthy of a head of state. With her very appearance, Hammond opposed any notion of Greenland inferiority. By tearing away the negative emotions sticking to Greenlandic bodies, Aleqa Hammond was a producer of Greenland pride, which for once was not associated with the pre-colonial past but with faith in the future.

When Hammond took over the presidency of the Siumut party in 2009, the party slogan became *Sapinngilagut!* the Greenlandic version of Barack Obama's *Yes we can!* Soon this slogan was everywhere and even found its way into Greenlandic fashion, where it adorned a collection of very popular T-shirts from the fashion company Nuuk Couture. With the *Sapinngilagut* slogan written across their bodies, fashion-conscious young Greenlanders demonstrated the same assertiveness that Hammond exhibited at the podium in Reykjavik. No more shame, no more inferiority. A feeling of liberation and hope spread in Greenland and in the Greenlandic Diaspora in Denmark during that time (Fig. 1).

Independence and the promise of happiness

On Danish television Hammond elaborated on independence as the naturalised goal within the de-colonisation discourse. As Hammond put it, "Who would not want an independent country – When we have over 300 years of history with a country that has been a colonial power over our country – For a people who have this desire – it's a natural process" (Deadline DR 2, 27 October 2013, 22:46–22:57, author's translation). Thus, independence has

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become the *uchronotopia* in Greenlandic politics. The uchronotopia concept was coined by historian Hagen Schulz-Forberg (2013). The concept combines the semiotician Mikhael Bakhtin's concept *chronotopoi*: narratives that follow their own historical logic in representing time and space, framed by the genre the narrative is part of, and *utopia*: the ideal society – earlier imagined as a different place or space but since modernity located in a different time: the future (Koselleck, 2002, p. 87; Schulz-Forberg, 2013, p. 20). Thus, the uchronotopia signifies a vision of the perfect future for this particular place. Inspired by the philosopher Martin Heidegger, Schulz-Forberg further investigates how the idea of the perfect future inspires the notion of the past. The future, or rather, our envisioning of it, sets the framework for reinterpretations and redefinitions of the past, which are needed in order to legitimise and give meaning to the vision. Schulz-Forberg developed the term uchronotopia in connection with his analysis of major turning points in world history, the so-called *zero hours*, when a crisis necessitates a completely new perspective. A zero hour, such as World War II, calls for certain things to be locked away in the past and not to be allowed to have any influence on the future.

In Greenlandic politics, there is a yearning for such a zero hour, when colonialism and its emotional economies will be locked away in the past. Certain landmark years in Greenlandic history have temporarily resembled such a zero hour: 1953, when Greenland's colonial status ended, and Greenland was included as an "equal part" of the Danish kingdom; 1979, when Home Rule was implemented; and 2009, when Self-Government was implemented (Andersen & Thisted, forthcoming). Each time, however, expectations have been disappointed, because there was no decisive change. First of all, there was no real change in the described affective economy, and thus, the immediate euphoria over having won an important victory was quickly replaced by a new yearning for a more decisive, ultimate zero hour.

Thus, independence is associated with happiness, or a promise of happiness. Borrowing the anthropologist Sarah Franklin's description of happiness as a "hope technology", Sara Ahmed describes happiness as future-oriented, in the sense that it directs our thoughts about the future in a certain way. "If happiness is what we hope for, when we hope for this or that thing, it does not mean we think we *will* be happy but that we imagine we *could* be happy if things go the right way" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 182; italics mine). With Aristotle, Ahmed describes happiness as an *end-oriented* feeling. Happiness is the "what" we aim for, a sort of "perfect end" (ibid., p. 26). Still according to Aristotle, this also means that we make choices in life based on a notion of what will be the best instrument for achieving happiness. "Things become good, or acquire their value as goods, insofar as they point toward happiness" (ibid.). Ahmed describes such "happiness pointers" as *happy objects* (ibid.). Some objects are staged as providing a means of happiness (in Ahmed's analysis, examples include the heterosexual family or the colour white), and we direct ourselves towards those objects. Happiness thus becomes a very powerful tool of world making. By setting up a specific end, we actively shape what coheres as a world, including life choices, moral values, what is considered right or wrong (ibid., p. 2). As a certain image of the world achieves hegemony, it blocks other notions of happiness, other visions of the future. This is fully consistent with Schulz-Forberg's description of the uchronotopia as "ideologically charged and unfold into ideal type normative visions" (Schulz-Forberg, 2013, p. 16).

Conceived as the antithesis to the unhappy condition of present postcoloniality, independence is staged as the perfect end in Aleqa Hammond's vision. The argument is that history has made the Greenlanders citizens in a foreign state, and this is perceived as something bad, something one would want to move away from. In order to attain happiness, the Greenlanders must have their own state – uranium promotes this goal and thus becomes a "happy object" in Hammond's discourse on independence.

As demonstrated by the historian Gabrielle Hecht, who specialises in nuclear policy, uranium is considered an *exceptional* mineral, and as such it is heavily politicised, surrounded by myths and embedded in divergent narratives of utopia and dystopia (Hecht, 2012). Uranium is inherently associated with its *nuclearity* (ibid., p. 3). However, before uranium becomes nuclear, it has to undergo a highly complicated technological process. Whether uranium is radioactive is not up for discussion. This can be measured. Whether it is nuclear is less easily decided, since that depends on what is done to it, and how the term is interpreted. It is these latter aspects Hecht points to with her use of the concept of nuclearity (ibid., p. 15). Hammond could have chosen to downplay nuclearity, insisting that Greenland is exporting the mineral, not its nuclear potentials. However, as quoted earlier, in the Reykjavik speech she opted for a much less defensive position. Embracing nuclearity, Hammond inscribed Greenland in what Hecht calls "the nuclear renaissance" of the first decade of the 21st century (before the Fukushima reactor disasters in 2011): the re-emergence of nuclear power as a desperately needed carbon-free energy source (ibid., p. 10). So, even though Hammond had no intention of making Greenland a nuclear power as such, her equation of nuclearity, nationhood and geopolitical power echoes post–World War II political rhetoric, in which nuclearity signified power, its absence colonial subjugation (Hecht, 2012, 23ff.).

Thus, in Hammond's speech Greenlandic uranium was turned into a "double" happy object, combining the discourse of Greenlandic decolonisation and independence with the anti-dystopian vision of a green, unpolluted world. However, the strategy backfired, at least to some extent. The equation of uranium, nuclearity, imperialism and dystopia is well established in Greenland, not least as a result of the so-called Thule case, where the crash of an American B-52 military aircraft in 1968 led to the disclosure that the Danish government had lied to both the Danish and the Greenlandic population when it claimed that there were no nuclear weapons on Danish territory, including in Danish airspace (Brink, 1997). Thus, although the decision to lift the ban on uranium mining was pushed through in the Greenlandic Parliament, the link between uranium and independence intensified the question, "independence at what cost?"

Confronting Danish postcolonial melancholia

Contrary to the widespread assumption that Danes are completely indifferent to Greenland, 57% of Danes responded that they wanted Greenland to remain part of the Kingdom of Denmark in an opinion poll carried out by the research institute Epinion for DR (Danish Broadcasting Corporation) in 2018. Only 7% replied that Greenland should secede (Nielsen & Petersen, 2018). Thus, there seems to be broad public support for the Danish policy, which seeks to preserve the realm of the Kingdom – even though studies have shown that general knowledge of Greenland is minimal in Denmark (Visit Greenland, 2012). Since the Danish-Greenlandic affective economy has, as

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Fig. 2. Presenter Martin Krasnik and then Greenlandic Premier Aleqa Hammond in the Danish TV news programme *Deadline*, 27 October 2013.

described, played a central role in building the Danish self-image, it is not surprising that the Danes react with strong emotions when the Greenlanders, as part of their own nation-building efforts, denounce the Danish-Greenlandic love contract and thus a key premise of this self-image. A confrontation between the TV presenter Martin Krasnik and then Greenlandic premier Aleqa Hammond on Danish television is an illustrative example of how the Greenlandic rejection of the emotional economy causes hurt feelings among the Danish people.

Following the Greenlandic Parliament's decision to allow uranium mining in Greenland, on 27 October 2013 Aleqa Hammond was invited to explain her policy on Danish television in the daily news programme *Deadline*. This programme is broadcast on DR 2, a commercial-free public-service TV channel dedicated to "education" and "information" rather than "entertainment". The programme is based on in-depth discussion of current topics with invited guests. Journalist Martin Krasnik is known as a talented reporter but also, at times, as a tough interviewer. The presenter and his guest sat facing each other across a table. As a backdrop, there was a huge photo of a snow-white glacier front, reflecting in a dark-blue sea dotted with pieces of fallen ice. Such a photo always inspires awe of the sublime Arctic nature. These days, the image of the pristine ice also signals Arctic vulnerability and thus triggers emotions of anxiety and fear. Thus, the staging signalled a high degree of emotionality and framed Hammond's optimistic message in a far more gloomy perspective (Fig. 2).

This was supported by the presentation, where Krasnik set the scene by describing the concern and resentment the decision to lift the ban on uranium mining had raised, both in Greenland, as evidenced by protests from Greenlandic nongovernmental organisations, and in the Danish government. His introduction was accompanied by video clips from demonstrations in Nuuk, where protesters displayed yellow banners with the nuclear radiation hazard symbol and texts saying "no" to uranium and from the annual "National Meeting" (a meeting between the three premiers from Denmark, Greenland and the Faroes). The pictures from the latter demonstrated an obvious lack of communication between the Danish prime minister Helle Thorning Schmidt and Aleqa Hammond. Schmidt did not say a word but stared stiffly into the table while Hammond explained that they would simply have to agree to disagree. Thus, the initial presentation created a tense atmosphere, which Hammond tried to soften with an open and welcoming body language and by smiling frequently.

After the strong reactions to her Arctic Circle speech, Hammond had realised that the picture she painted of Greenland as a future uranium exporter did not enjoy much support in Greenland, not even among her own party members. Hammond thus began to backtrack, returning to the argument that in Greenland, uranium will only be extracted as a by-product to rare elements, which is the intended export article. While Krasnik talked about the risks associated with uranium, Hammond pointed out that Greenland has taken over the mineral resource area, and that the law does not specify uranium as exceptional in any way: "There is nothing in that agreement that makes uranium something special" (21:20–21:35, author's translation).

To the Danish journalist, however, the real issue was not uranium but the question of Greenland's independence. A few minutes into the interview, Krasnik interrupted the discussion as to whether it is reasonable for Denmark to regard uranium as a security issue or not. "In this sense, it's about something much bigger than uranium," he said (22.07–22:12, author's translation). Krasnik now showed a video clip of Hammond from the Greenlandic election campaign in March 2013, where she says that she dreams about an independent Greenland, and then quoted another previous statement by Hammond on independence:

> In my lifetime I will experience the day when Greenland is declared independent in the UN, when we sing the national anthem and when the Greenlandic flag is hoisted all over the world. (22:32–22:40, author's translation)

During the remainder of the interview, Krasnik tried, on behalf of the (Danish) viewers, to understand what made the Greenlanders want to leave the Kingdom. Hammond's answer, quoted earlier in this article, that independence is a "natural process", was far from satisfactory to Krasnik. Krasnik simply demanded a personal answer from Hammond:

> But please tell me – yourself personally. You are Greenlander, but you are also . . . um . . . you know a lot about Denmark. You speak Danish, but you are educated in Canada, right – why do *you* want an independent Greenland? (23:10–23:26, author's translation)

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In this sequence, Krasnik expresses astonishment. He seems to assume that since Hammond knows so much about Denmark and speaks Danish – and, moreover, has a university degree – she should feel comfortable in the realm of the Kingdom. Hammond admits that Denmark is part of her because she has Danish citizenship, a Danish passport and so forth, but she chooses to emphasise differences rather than similarities:

> I don't look like a Dane. I don't think like a Dane, and Danish is not my mother tongue. Greenland is far away from Europe, so I already have many reasons for thinking differently than from a Danish perspective. And I also have to say that we also recognize the fact that the history we have in common with Denmark is a history where we have previously been a colony – now we want something else! (23:30–23:56, author's translation)

Krasnik, however, holds on to the question of whether she does not *feel* Danish:

> Krasnik: You don't feel Danish at all?
>
> Hammond: I never have.
>
> Krasnik: And when you are here in Denmark and land in Kastrup Airport and drive through the city to the Danish Broadcasting Corporation – you are in a *foreign* country.
>
> Hammond: Yes, I feel like I'm a *visitor* in another country.
>
> Krasnik: I think there are many who will be surprised by this – the way you speak about the realm of the Kingdom (Rigsfællesskabet) as such a historical thing. It is something you are aware of – but it [at this point, Krasnik puts his hand over his heart] it does not *matter* to you. (23:57–24:22, author's translation)

Obviously, the emotional economy described earlier is an issue here. On behalf of his fellow Danes, Krasnik insinuates that Hammond is being ungrateful when she refuses to perform an affective relationship with Denmark. As in the Reykjavik speech, Hammond rejects this demand for gratitude and emotional reciprocity by reminding her interlocutor that the Danish-Greenlandic relationship was based on colonialism.

Krasnik then changes the subject from Hammond's feelings to Greenland's economy. He reminds her that the Greenlandic state budget only balances because of the large block grant from Denmark, and he is clearly annoyed when Hammond downplays the significance of this amount by comparing it to the enormous wealth that is expected to be recovered by exploiting Greenland's mineral reserves. In a series of very sharp exchanges Krasnik accuses Hammond of deceiving her voters when she promises them independence in her own lifetime – which, after some discussion about age (Hammond says she is 48), is estimated to be about 30 years into the future. Hammond replies by listing all the things Greenland has achieved over the past 30 years: home rule, self-government, a better level of education, a reduction of the annual block grant and, not least, tremendous development in the Greenlandic people's view of the Realm, so that future independence is now something that is taken for granted. This led to the following interchange:

> Krasnik: It sounds . . . You're simply saying that divorce has *already* started. So, you are already done with this relationship. Are you so confident that the other part of the relationship – even if it's not the happiest marriage in the world – that the other party is equally prepared to let go?
>
> Hammond: This is what the Self-Government Act says . ..
>
> Krasnik: That *we* in Denmark . ..
>
> Hammond: It is stated in the Self-Government Act that the Danish State declares that Greenland can decide to become independent *any time* they want.
>
> MK: Yes, yes – well, I'm not talking about the logistics or the formalistic or the legal issues, certainly – but are you sure that the *rest* of the Realm agrees that it's all right if you leave the relationship? (29:20–29:57 author's translation)

Krasnik owes us an explanation of what he thinks this is about, if it is not logistics, formalities or law. Since Hammond assumes that the Greenlanders will sign out only if they can manage without the block grant, emotions are all that remains. This topic, however, is not unfolded but remains implicit and insinuated. My point here is that the conversation only makes sense because the parties involved, Danes and Greenlanders, are fluent in this language of (unrequited) love. Hammond replies that she believes that many Danes understand the Greenlandic wish for independence – but that this is really not about the Danes but about what the Greenlandic people themselves think, still according to the Self-Government Act.

This interview is just one of many examples that the Danish public, including journalists and politicians, does not seem to have fully realised that the Act on Greenland Self-Government has definitively put an end to Danish participation in the discussion on Greenland's continued inclusion in the Kingdom of Denmark (see Gad, 2017: 36 ff. for further examples). It is Hammond who introduces the divorce metaphor in the conversation by talking about the relationship as a "mixed marriage" (24:40–24:42). The Greenlanders have introduced the marriage or partner metaphor to replace the colonial parent–child metaphor (Gad, 2017, p. 116). When divorce is mentioned, Krasnik picks up the metaphor. However, he also reactivates the parent–child metaphor when he leans over the table and, with a slow and clear voice, explains Hammond that her big dreams are completely unrealistic. Greenland will not be able to finance its own state budget within the foreseeable future – regardless of whether the planned mining operations are going to happen or not, Krasnik claims. There is a sense of "adult speaking to teenager" during this part of the interview, which Hammond chooses to ignore. By not being provoked she manages to maintain her own position as an equal partner in the dialogue. Although Hammond is the one who is, in language terms, playing an away game, Krasnik ends up being the one who has to search for words, with many self-interruptions and fillers (um etc.). Thus, Krasnik is clearly affected by Hammond's game-changing attitude where the established subject positions in the Danish-Greenlandic relation are suspended.

Krasnik's hurt feelings on behalf of the fatherland when confronted with the Greenlandic subject's lack of humility and gratitude, mixed with a somewhat-paternalistic discourse, echo the British reactions to the loss of the empire – a condition the cultural scientist Paul Gilroy has called *postcolonial melancholia* (2005). Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, was the first to describe extended sorrow after a loss as "melancholia". It is perfectly normal to mourn a loss, but in most cases, the grieving person will gradually let go of the lost object and thereby become free to attach to new objects. If, on the other hand, the grieving person for some reason refuses to let go, grief may inhabit the person and turn into a state of melancholia, with the person caught up in nostalgia, unable to move on. Transferring Freud's theory from person to nation, Gilroy argues that England has neglected to mourn the loss of the colonies and clings to

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the fantasies of ancient grandeur. Likewise, it will be tough for Denmark to lose its status as an Arctic nation – which would be the result if Denmark lost its sovereignty over Greenland.

Thus, the discussion on Greenlandic uranium became a focal point for emotions linked to discourses and hierarchies echoing a colonial era, which at least the Danes generally claim ended long ago. "The absent presence of history", Sara Ahmed calls this phenomenon, which is what empowers affective economies, first and foremost by the obscurity with which they remain part of discourses and emotional repertoires (Ahmed, 2004, p. 13 and p. 45). From a Danish vantage point, the Greenlandic uranium risked becoming a highly toxic object. Not so much due to its nuclearity, but because it threatened to destroy the narrative of unity in the Realm. In order to avoid this, Denmark compromised and in 2016 entered into an agreement with Greenland to set up procedures to allow Greenland to proceed with the plans to mine uranium, while giving the Danish authorities control over the export (Den danske Regering/Naalakkersuisut, 2016). In this way, Greenland demonstrated its right to manage its own minerals, while Denmark demonstrated its sovereignty – upholding the distribution of power agreed upon in the Act on Greenland Self-Government. Thus, neither party lost face. One might even see it as uranium being turned into a happy object, also in a Danish discourse: as an example of the will to secure cooperation and overcome difficulties within the Realm.

Broken hopes and possible reorientations

As the decision to speed up Greenland's move towards independence won hegemony, and since mining and industrialisation seem the only viable path towards economic and thus political independence, anti-nuclear opponents in Greenland were cast as "affect aliens" or "killjoys": Ahmed's terms for people who do not buy into the common promise of happiness and thus end up spoiling the mood. In the public debate, not least on social media, opposition to large-scale projects and industrialisation was quickly characterised as resistance to independence. Where the issue of secession had previously been the subject of discussion, it was now treated as an established – and indisputable – fact. As stated in the opening words of the Greenlandic government coalition agreement 2016–2018: "Greenland is irreversibly on its way to independence, and this process requires not only political stability, but also national unity" (Naalakkersuisut/Government of Greenland, 2016). A Ministry for Independence was created in 2016, adding substance to the statement.

However, despite the great expectations, the large-scale Greenlandic projects have not fared well. Decreasing oil prices and the fear of natural disasters in Arctic waters have largely put Greenland's oil exploration on hold. The construction of an aluminium smelter at Maniitsoq has similarly come to nothing. The same applies to an iron mine at the bottom of the Nuuk fjord. In January 2014 the report *To the Benefit of Greenland* (The committee for Greenlandic mineral resources to the benefit of society, 2014) was published. The report punctured the idea of replacing the block grant from Denmark with income from mining. The report pointed out that the resource area is characterised by profound uncertainty: prices on natural resources fluctuate, and extraction requires major investments from external partners. Minerals are non-renewable, and the bulk of the revenue from mining should therefore not be spent here and now but set aside for future generations, similar, for instance, to the Norwegian wealth fund. This cast serious doubt about the reality of Greenlandic independence. Kim Kielsen, who took over the position as chair of the Siumut party and head of the Greenlandic government, immediately changed Aleqa Hammond's "In my lifetime" to "In our children's or grandchildren's time". The strong slogan of *sapinngilagut* disappeared both from the discussions and from Nuuk Couture's collection – perhaps because it was too closely associated with Aleqa Hammond, who had fallen into disrepute. Likewise, the words about Greenland being "irrevocably on its way to independence" were not included in the two succeeding coalition agreements (Naalakkersuisut/Government of Greenland, May 2018, October 2018), where the focus is on Greenland's internal affairs – although both agreements maintain a sentence stating that the parties agree to continue the drafting of a constitution for the purpose of state formation.

The fact that so many big plans seem to have disappeared into thin air has left an atmosphere of frustration and disappointment, even though opponents of intensive mining and industrialisation are relieved that these major changes in society – the disruption of landscapes, mass immigration and so forth – have failed to materialise. However, some of the mining projects are still on the drawing board, including Kuannersuit at Narsaq in South Greenland, which is claimed to be the world's second-largest deposit of rare-earth oxides and the sixth-largest deposit of uranium. Anthropologists are reporting great uncertainty among the population of Narsaq about the consequences of an open-pit uranium mine located just above the town (Bjørst, 2016).

The documentary *Kuannersuit/Kvanefjeld* (Autogena & Portway, 2017) focuses on these strong emotions dividing the community, as one group of citizens believe that the mine will create wealth and development for the city, while others are equally convinced that the city will have to close, and all residents will be condemned to exile, if the mine is opened. In the documentary, the latter point of view is supported by the former Minister for Industry and Mineral Resources (2009–2013) Ove Karl Berthelsen, Inuit Ataqatigiit (IA), who says that it seems hard to imagine that people can live so close to an open mine where uranium is being extracted. Due to the fear that Greenland would "lose its soul" and Greenlanders would become a minority in their own country, the former minister no longer advocates a large number of mining projects in Greenland but only a smaller number, including Kuannersuit. "It's a price I'd be willing to pay," he says (14:17–14:18, translation in the subtitles). Thus, Narsaq seems to have been appointed a "sacrifice zone" (Kuletz, 1998; Nutall, 2017) with the view of attaining the goal of a better Greenlandic economy and hence a step towards independence.

However, for those who are against the mine, that is a very high price to pay – not least because Narsaq is situated in the heart of the sheep farming district. If being independent also implies being self-sufficient, the pollution of the area that supplies Greenland with mutton and, in the summer, potatoes and vegetables, seems like a bad idea, as one of the interviewees, helipad controller (and member of the Greenlandic protest movement Urani Naamik/No to uranium) Mariane Paviasen, puts it. Likewise, she questions whether letting big parts of the country be occupied by foreign companies can actually count as "independence". Thus, in the terminology of Lauren Berlant, another cultural theorist who works with emotions, for some Greenlanders the independence project assumes the character of "cruel optimism", a concept signifying a situation when "something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (Berlant, 2011, p. 1).

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A similar discussion about the meaning of the word "independence" is raised by the documentary *Winter's Yearning* (Larsen & Pilskog, 2019) about the capsized Alcoa aluminium-smelting project at Maniitsoq. The film demonstrates the impact on the population of the endless wait for a project that never materialises. In the film one of the interviewees draws the conclusion that relying on foreign companies and investors to come in and do something for Greenland is not going to lead to more independence. On the contrary, it confines people to passivity, a mentally degrading situation. Unhappiness is thus redirected from the waiting position associated with the postcolonial condition (cf. the historian Dipesh Chakrabarty's description of "the waiting room of history", 2000) to the waiting position associated with the large-scale projects that were supposed to bring an end to waiting. As pointed out by the people portrayed in the documentary, dependence can mean many different things, including being dependent on alcohol, an abusive husband, abusive parents – or an abusive company, in this case Alcoa, which makes elusive promises. Thus, independence can begin with the individual taking charge of his or her own life, according to the documentary.

The film thus portrays a number of powerful individuals who manage to take destiny into their own hands – both on an individual and on a community level. The documentary ends with the following words from the alcohol consultant Gideon Lyberth:

> My greatest dream for Greenland is. . . . You might expect me to say independence. But it's just to see my fellow citizens having self-confidence and a spirit of community. Seeing that they're happy and hopeful about their future. If we get there, we have nothing to fear in the future. (Translation in subtitles)

Here, the political hope for the imagined community of the nation (cf. B. Anderson, 1991 [1983]) is downscaled to a hope of self-reliance for the individual and the local community.

In a world built upon statehood, it is not difficult to understand why the independent state has become the naturalised uchronotopia of former colonised peoples. However, as David Scott, an anthropologist of Jamaican origin and an expert in colonial history, has argued, it might be time to open new horizons of transformative possibility – especially since the social and political hopes that went into the anticolonial and postcolonial making of national sovereignties have too often been disappointed (Scott, 2004). The history of decolonising states is told in the genre of *romance*, Scott claims, and romance is, in the words of the literary theorist Northrop Frye, of all the literary forms the one which comes nearest to a "wish-fulfilment dream" (quoted in Scott, 2004, p. 70). Romance progresses in the direction of an ending that is already known in advance. The plot takes the form of a quest, "a search for the Holy Grail", which in an anticolonial narrative is the liberation of the people. The moment of epiphany in a revolutionary romance occurs with the revolution, as the oppressed shake off their yoke and establish their own state (ibid.). However, real life rarely evolves as a romance. The investment in the nation state as the "Holy Grail" restricts the perspective, both as concerns the future – where the vision stops at the declaration of the new state (cf. Aleqa Hammond's dream of the day when the Greenlandic flag is hoisted over the UN building) – and as concerns the past, where colonial history must take the form of an "unequivocally malignant, totalizing structure of brutality, violence, objectification, racism and exclusion" in order to serve as "the object of anticolonial discontent that stands in need of reformulation" (ibid., pp. 6–7). By letting go of the uchronotopia or "Holy Grail" of Greenlandic independence, Gideon Lyberth manages to formulate a new horizon, which is at once down to earth and truly open to new interpretations and possibilities.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this article has been to demonstrate how complex historical and emotional aspects, which usually belong to the domain of the humanities, must be included when analysing mining, especially with regard to decision-making processes. Without including such aspects, research might support dominant discourses and their power to identify which arguments count as rational, and which are "merely" emotional – besides often misunderstanding what is at stake in a given debate.

To give one example of such a misreading, let me quote from a very optimistic article, published by attorney Chelsea Gunter, advocating that Greenland should "cautiously" continue to permit mining of uranium at Kuannersuit/Narsaq – even though the "risks inherent in mining in Kvanfjeld are significant" (Gunter, 2015, p. 448). Gunter believes that "Greenland, with the assistance of Denmark, has the opportunity to serve as a paradigm for promoting the respect of indigenous rights by extractive industries" (ibid., p. 440). And what makes Denmark suitable for providing this assistance? Gunter constructs a long list of events in the history of Greenland where Denmark has acted with respect for indigenous peoples' rights, which makes Denmark "a world leader in the promotion of indigenous rights" (ibid., p. 444). In short:

> Though the Act on Greenland Self-Government intends to set the conditions for Greenland's independence, Denmark is arguably the ideal nation to shepherd Greenland into a self-government that is sensitive to indigenous rights. (Ibid., p. 445)

This description completely buys into the narrative that Denmark has constructed concerning its government in Greenland and places Denmark in the very pastoral position in relation to Greenland that Greenland is trying so hard to escape. The question here is not whether the assessment of Denmark's role in Greenland's history is true or false, but what discourses and emotions this positioning invites.

Similarly, it is far from enough to reject the dreams of a Greenlandic industrial boom as a greedy capitalism's hunger for new economic opportunities, aided by an insensitive Greenlandic elite (see, e.g. Nutall, 2017, pp. 38, 44, 57, 86). The dream of independence is nourished by heartfelt needs and extends far beyond a narrow elite, a group that is, by the way, itself sharply divided on these issues.

In Greenland there is increasing talk of some form of "free association" as an opportunity for an upcoming expansion of Greenland's powers in relation to acting as a state, albeit without completely severing the ties to Denmark. Such an arrangement was not considered to fall under the commission mandate of the Greenlandic-Danish Commission of Self-Government, since this presupposed the continuation of the Realm, while free association is an agreement concluded between states (Grønlandsk-dansk selvstyrekommission, 2008, p. 30). With such a solution, Greenlandic politicians would avoid losing face, as the promise of independence could thus be fulfilled without providing financial coverage for a wide range of areas that are the responsibility of an independent state (coastal monitoring, security and so forth). Presumably, the idea of the independent state would here be maintained – it would just, once again, have been pushed into the future (cf. Gad's description of Greenlandic identity as transitional: *becoming* independent, 2017, p. 51).

Meanwhile, the Danish wish to preserve the Realm has led to a far more receptive stance towards Greenland, both symbolically – as when Denmark in 2016 began to mark the Greenlandic and the Faroese National day by flying the Greenlandic/Faroese flags from

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all governmental buildings – and in more tangible terms, as in Denmark's offer to make major investments in two new airport projects in Greenland. This latter decision was made to prevent Chinese investments and the related possible Chinese political influence in Greenland – which would also be a possible concern for the United States, which has huge geopolitical interests in Greenland (Lucht, 2018). However, these Danish investments generated some resistance in Greenland – including from Partii Naleraq, which chose to leave the coalition government over the issue – as some saw the investments as a continuation of Denmark's colonial policy (Elkjær, 2018; Lihn, 2018).

Greenland has been represented by large delegations at raw material fairs around the world, but Denmark is eager to stay in the picture, so that Denmark and Greenland stand together, represented by Danish-Greenlandic delegations. In an attempt to further promote this unity, the Danish Crown Prince Frederik was part of the delegation and opened the Greenlandic stand at PDAC (Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada) in Toronto in March 2019. When asked about the expected outcome of the participation, Mads Quist Frederiksen, a consultant in the Confederation of Danish Industry and Head of Secretariat for the Arctic Cluster *of Raw* Materials (founded by the Danish Industry Foundation, Confederation of Danish Industry, Technical University of Denmark and the Employers' Association of Greenland), said the following to KNR (Greenland's Radio and TV):

> If a lot of investors come running for the mines in Greenland, then this will have been a huge success. But it's primarily about this: Have we strengthened the cooperation between Denmark and Greenland? We have. Have we discovered new markets and told new countries and people about Greenland as a mining country? We have done that, too. As it looks right now, it's been a success. (Frederiksen quoted in Lindstrøm, 2019, author's translation)

That the Danish partners see a major event such as this as being primarily about strengthening the cooperation between Denmark and Greenland is an important statement, testimony to the importance that powerful stakeholders in Denmark attach to Greenland's continued membership of the Realm. However, that does not solve the central question of the Realm: who has the authority? Who can act as host in Greenland? Who will have a seat at the table when representing the Greenlandic nation? In some cases, the problem can be solved by putting more chairs forward, so that both Greenland and Denmark can have a seat, but as several examples have shown, it is not always up to Denmark and Greenland to decide whether such a solution is possible. In 2013, Aleqa Hammond left the Arctic Council Meeting in Kiruna because Greenland was not given a seat. Thus, this issue remains a dilemma.

There is a strong need for new and truly equal relations between Denmark and Greenland. However, as long as the relationship is based upon an asymmetrical balance of power, not only with regard to formal power but also with regard to financial capacity, educational level and so forth, it will take an active and willing effort to dismantle the inherited discourses of colonialism and anti-colonialism and the emotions they empower. One first step will be to end their working "through concealment" (cf. Ahmed, as quoted earlier in this article) by bringing them into the open where we can study them, discuss them and understand the way in which they affect decision-making.

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