

***Kalaalimernit*: the Greenlandic taste for local foods in a globalised world**

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ABSTRACT. In recent years, a decline in the consumption of local foods (*kalaalimernit*) can be observed in Greenland. However, its appreciation and symbolisation is increasing and *kalaalimernit* are a powerful contemporary symbol for being Greenlandic. The present article argues that *kalaalimernit*, as a specifically Greenlandic taste, are suited to marking and maintaining a cultural boundary in relation to the Danish people living in the country, a boundary constructed through identity politics. As the empirical findings from fieldwork conducted in the Greenlandic capital Nuuk and the small coastal settlement Oqaatsut demonstrate, this construction is subject to social change. Greenlanders advocate two different narrative patterns regarding how *kalaalimernit* are to be understood that stem from contemporary definitional struggles over what kind of cultural boundary is deemed important to demarcate. The struggle illustrates two different perceptions of Greenland as either an indigenous people and/or a small Nordic nation.

***Kalaalimernit*: local foods in Greenland**

Local foods of the Inuit have long been a topic of research in anthropology. Its study provides insights into relations within families and households (Hovelsrud-Broda 1999; Jolles 2002), the activities of sharing and gift giving (Jessen 2010; Sejersen 1998; Wenzel 1995; Wenzel and others 2000), the spirituality of Inuit groupings (Borré 1994), the health of Arctic hunters (Andersen and Poppel 2002; Mulvad and Pedersen 1992), how to eke out a living in a mixed subsistence-based economy (Caulfield 2002; Gombay 2010; Petersen 1989), the patterns of a specific culture (Stevenson and others 1997), the practice of hunting rules (Dahl 1989), the marking of an individual and collective identity (Freeman 1996; Kleivan 1996; Rasing 1999), the Inuit dietary patterns in terms of the quantities of local foods (Duhaime and others 2002; Pars and others 2001; Rasmussen 2002), and the vulnerability of Inuit food systems as a consequence of contamination and climate change (AMAP 2009; Ford and Goldhar 2012). The powerful self-articulation of Inuit identities through symbolic resources such as food has been pointed out in the past (Searles 2002). This quality of food is shown not least by the mistaken translation of ‘Eskimos’ as ‘eaters of raw meat’ (instead of ‘snowshoe-netter’) still used to this day (Damas 1984: 6).

The word for the food of the Greenlandic Inuit (*Ka-laallit*) in the Greenlandic language is *kalaalimeneq*, in the plural *kalaalimernit*. Literally translated this is a case of ‘linguistic cannibalism’ (Roepstorff 1997: 99) because *Kalaaleq* means ‘a Greenlandic’ and *-mineq* ‘a (small) piece of,’ thus, combined, a ‘piece of a Greenlandic’. Here we find a key difference from imported food, which is called *qallunaamineq*, in the plural *qallunaamernit*. This translates as ‘food of a non-Inuit/a white man’ because *qallunaaq* means ‘a non-Inuit/a white man’. *qallunaamernit* is often equated in Greenland with Danish food. This linguistic dichotomy reveals a profound

linguistic identification of the Greenlanders with their own food. What does *kalaalimernit* include? There is agreement on a kind of restricted core definition of Greenlandic food as Greenlandic food as ‘fish or meat of local origin, but that it is not fried and that spices are not used with the exception of pepper or mustard after the meat has been prepared’ (Petersen 1985: 296).

Generally speaking, it includes local game products that are served raw, dried, boiled, frozen, or smoked. Primarily used are marine species, including seals, whales, and fish, and land animals such as reindeer and polar bears and various species of birds. Raw seal liver and raw whale blubber, *mattak*, are regarded as particular specialties. Here Greenlandic foods are differentiated according to the raw material, emphasised origin, as well as the method of preparation, with particular emphasis on ‘non-preparation’ or ‘naturalness.’ Often, therefore, the literature speaks of ‘traditional food’ (Pars and others 2001).

In recent years, a decline in the consumption of local foods can be observed in Greenland. This is connected with contemporary processes of modernisation and urbanisation that have changed the traditional ways of life of the Greenlandic Inuit (Pars and others 2001). Fewer and fewer people are working as full-time hunters who have to earn their living from hunting alone (Greenland Home Rule Government and Statistics Greenland 2002: 62). In response to this, the Greenlandic self-rule government launched a ‘Buy Greenlandic meat’ campaign to promote hunting products available in the local open-air markets and supermarkets (Grønlands Hjemmestyre and others 1998). As studies have shown, however, the contamination of the meat of marine animals with heavy metals and chemicals has led to the west Greenlandic population having the highest concentration of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and heavy metals in the world (AMAP 2009; Mulvad and others 2007), a development that could continue to have restrictive effects on the

consumption of *kalaalimernit* in the future. In order to counteract this, the former president of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) stressed the food's positive nutritional health aspects that have shaped Inuit culture for thousands of years and outweigh the negative consequences of meat consumption (Lyng 1999). While the actual regular consumption of Greenlandic foods is sinking, however, its appreciation and symbolisation is increasing. *Kalaalimernit* are a powerful contemporary symbol for being Greenlandic.

The present article argues that *kalaalimernit*, as a specifically Greenlandic taste, are suited to marking and maintaining a cultural boundary in relation to the Danish people living in the country, a boundary constructed through identity politics (Sowa 2012). Here a collective identity should not be sought in the characteristics of its members but instead serves as an offer of identification. The latter describes a representation of Greenlandic culture that remains legitimate to the present day, one that was first articulated by Greenlandic elites at a time when the main issue was to assert the right to an independent development *vis-à-vis* Denmark. This invention of a Greenlandic collective identity requires a cultural demarcation through individual, overt signs and symbols. The local foods of the Greenlanders served as a distinguishing feature that led to the formation of a legitimate, Greenlandic taste and provides a visible representation of the cultural boundary up to the present day. Finally, as the empirical findings from fieldwork conducted in the Greenlandic capital Nuuk and the small coastal settlement Oqaatsut demonstrate, this construction is subject to social change. Greenlanders advocate two different narrative patterns regarding *kalaalimernit* that stem from contemporary definitional struggles over what kind of cultural boundary is deemed important to demarcate.

Culture and cultural identity in a globalised world

Anthropological approaches to understand Arctic hunting societies focus on the complexity of human-environment relations and how hunter-gatherers perceive the environment (Ingold 2000). Through their close interaction with the environment rural populations live in a kind of harmony or balance with the environment and do not distinguish between nature and society as it is the case in western societies (Descola and Pálsson 1996; Nuttall 1998). This unique way of living which is characterised by hunting, fishing, herding and/or trapping as well as sharing activities was first interpreted as adaptation to and exploitation of an environmental niche, latter as a construction of cultural meaning or imagination (Nuttall 1998: 81–85). The impact of rapid social change and processes of transformation on indigenous peoples like the Inuit lead to the question, whether Arctic societies and cultures and their cultural practices are threatened by social disruption or can persist social and economic changes; whether there are cultural dis-

continuities or discontinuities of indigenous or aboriginal culture (Angell and Parkins 2011; Csonka and Schweitzer 2004). Not only did Inuit experience colonisation of indigenous land as well as political subordination and cultural and economic dependency. In recent times, processes of globalisation have influenced their world-views, lifestyles, values, beliefs, customs, and cultural practices.

Today, Inuit live in a mixed economy of informal (that is subsistence) and formal activities. In order to make a living in a mix of wage based economy and hunter-gatherer economy, many northern residents are engaged in subsistence activities, 'defined as harvesting natural, renewable resources to provide food for one's own household, for gifts for others or to exchange outside the market economy' (Poppel and Kruse 2009: 39). Subsistence activities are not only of economic and nutritional significance, but also still essential as a marker of identity (Poppel and Kruse 2009: 40). In other words: a marker for being Inuit. However, the expressions of Inuitness, for example through language, subsistence activities, food consumption, etc., are being confronted by young Inuit, 'who may have different notions of what makes a real Inuk' (Graburn 2006: 154). Also urban, well-educated Greenlanders living in Nuuk distance themselves from the unique, traditional Inuit way of living in a hunting society. Some of them also emphasise their Greenlandic-Danish lineage. This does not mean that subsistence and sharing activities are not of significance for them. Rather the Greenlandic society is characterized by social differentiations indicating that it is not unproblematic to define an Arctic culture or Inuit identity. That is to say good-bye to the scientific concept of a shared culture. Processes of modernisation, the homogenisation of forms of life, and the emergence of cross-cultures lead to hybrids, permeations, and the overlapping of cultural forms (Welsch 1999). The idea of cultures as self-enclosed islands whose constituents can be defined unambiguously, whether in ethnic, traditional, or indigenous terms, is an illusion (Hall 1992). Nevertheless, there is such a thing as the sense of belonging of the members of a society: 'National cultures construct identities by producing meanings about 'the nation' with which we can identify; these are contained in the stories which are told about it, memories which connect its present with its past, and images which are constructed of it' (Hall 1992: 293). Cultural or national collective identities are perceived as uniform and homogeneous only as long as they manage to represent themselves as such. Thus, I understand culture in a networked world as a (powerful) identification offer that is maintained through the representation of collective identities, often in relation to other collective identities.

The invention of a Greenlandic collective identity

How did the articulation of the collective identity of Greenlanders or of the Greenlandic Inuit come about?

The termination of the colonial period that lasted from 1721 and the incorporation of Greenland into the Danish kingdom in June 1953 should be seen as a concession to Greenland and to the worldwide decolonisation process, and also in a sense as the fulfilment of a commitment by Denmark to the United Nations (concerning Greenlandic history see Gad 1984; Nuttall 1994; Petersen 1995). This incorporation went hand-in-hand with modernisation initiatives intended to erect a Greenlandic welfare state, which, however, entailed far-reaching changes for the Greenlandic population. The so-called G-50 and G-60 plans envisaged the complete integration of Greenland into the Danish kingdom. The reform plans mainly affected the education system, economic development, and the administrative system. The idea of the welfare state was transferred to Greenland. Because it was too expensive to supply the small settlements with running water and electricity, many of them were closed down. The quality of life of Greenlanders improved. However, traditional bonds were severed, and the once small communities had to adjust to living in newly created 'cities' (Nuttall 1992). Greenlanders did not possess well-trained craftsmen and workers at this time, so they had to be 'imported' from Denmark. Lured by good pay and good housing and services, more and more Danish workers entered the country. The workers were paid according to the *birthplace principle*, which eventually led to large disparities in income between Danes and Greenlanders. Although Danes represented just 15% of the entire Greenlandic population in 1967, they earned 50% of the total private income (Kleivan 1984). The people of Greenland passively accepted the changes in their country. The political decisions were made in Copenhagen by Danes, who were also responsible for the structural transformation of Greenland. The overwhelming acceptance and adoption of Danish cultural elements and institutions by Greenlanders (Kleivan 1969–1970a) led to an escalating 'Danification' of the country (Kleivan 1984: 706). Danish food was served in Greenlandic families increasingly often and growing numbers of parents taught their children the Danish language so that they would be more successful in the Danish education system (Kleivan 1969–1970b). The rapid changes turned many Greenlanders into spectators of an immense foreign-driven development.

Because of the alienating developments in their country, reflection on their status was initially undertaken by Greenlandic elites who had studied abroad. With a new constitution passed in 1953 the colonial status of Greenland formally ended and Greenland was made a county within Denmark. However, 'no real change occurred, as Denmark for a long time administered the common human rights or civil rights in Greenland and continued to govern Greenland with the same civil servants and the same administrative body as before' (Petersen 1995: 120). People in Greenland had, formally speaking, become 'Northern Danes' (Caulfield 1997: 36; Dorais 1996: 29) overnight, hence equal citizens with

equal rights and duties but without possibilities of self-determination.

If people wanted to change their situation, they first had to actively define and position themselves, which ultimately occurred through the articulation of a Greenlandic identity *Kalaallit*. Triggered by the accession to the European Community, which was decided in Denmark but was rejected by Greenlanders, political parties were formed in the early 1970s in Greenland. Increasing numbers of young, educated Greenlanders began to resist Danish supremacy and challenged the uncritical adoption of the Danish system by Greenland. Thus, it was chiefly the Greenlandic elite at Danish universities that wanted a 'Greenlandic Greenland' and (for the first time) itself defined its own Greenlandic identity. A process of *Greenlandisation* began (Nuttall 1992), the effort to achieve political and economic independence from the 'parent country' Denmark. Greenlandisation was also an ideological and cultural process because diversity now had to be represented and articulated. Demarcation took the form of a pronounced exaggeration of certain elements identifiable as proper to the Greenlanders' culture. The difference between Greenlanders and Danes, as it was put at the time, was unbridgeable. In the 1978 report of the Commission on Home Rule in Greenland, in which the reasons underlying the introduction of a Greenlandic national self-rule government were explained, one can read, among other things:

Greenland and its indigenous Eskimo population differ from metropolitan Denmark in so many ways that the relationship between Danes and Greenlanders can never be such as that existing between Zealanders and Jutlanders (quoted in Cobo 1982: 16).

The political claim to and the establishment of the regional self-rule government (*Hjemmestyre*) on 1 May 1979 strengthened the formation of a Greenlandic nation (Dahl 1993). With the passage of time, national affinity found expression in national symbols such as the national anthem (since 1979), the national flag (since 1985), the National Day (since 1985), and the bear as the national emblem (since 1987) (Kleivan 1991). In addition, there was a revival of the national language and an accentuation of local foods, *kalaalimernit*. The introduction of Greenlandic self-rule (*Selvstyre*) on 21 June 2009 through the ratification of the Self Rule Act represents a further step in founding a nation-state.

Cultural demarcations

It is noteworthy that the process of decolonisation and the definition of *Kalaallit* identity were accomplished by the Greenlandic elites at a time when modernisation efforts had led to an enormous alignment of lifestyles between Greenlanders and Danes. Thus, it was a Greenlandic elite that had studied in Denmark and spoke Danish fluently, in short, that most closely resembled the Danes, that began to steer the identity process. This process of cultural rapprochement is still continuing in Greenland. For many

researchers, life in Greenland is in no way different from life in other places in the 'modern world' (Caulfield 1997: 17; Thomsen 1996: 265). Conversely, the lifestyle of some of the Danes living in the country has also approached that of the Greenlanders. For example, they go hunting as recreational hunters, shooting reindeer or seals and sharing them with friends. Although their lifestyle is similar to that of many Greenlanders in the capital city, they are not accepted as 'Greenlanders.' The activities surrounding Greenlandic foods are invested with nostalgia and appreciation, so that the same activities are evaluated differently. Through identification with the ideal image of the 'proper Greenlander,' a cultural boundary is established between 'Greenlanders' and 'Danes' living in their country, in spite of the enormous processes of alignment. How can it be that the cultural boundaries endure under conditions of alignment, exchange, and change in lifestyles? Some reflections of the ethnologist Barth prove helpful in approaching these questions. Barth called for the *a priori* notion of the existence of ethnic or cultural groups to be challenged. For him, 'culture' is not decisive but the question of cultural boundaries that endure even when there is active exchange and contact between different groups:

[B]oundaries persist despite a flow of personnel across them. In other words, categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories (Barth 1998 [1969]: 9–10).

For Barth, ethnic groups are not natural formations that arose through isolation and adaptation to external environmental factors. They are instead categories of ascription and identification that originate in the groups and organise and are articulated in everyday interaction. He is critical of the assertion that there is such a thing as an empirically verifiable, universally existing phenomenon of the ethnic group. On the contrary, Barth claims, this reflects a preconceived view of the factors typically involved in the genesis, structure, and function of such groups.

The danger for Barth is to assume that distinct cultural or ethnic groups exist everywhere which can be subsumed in an ideal-typical manner under the formula *one race = one culture = one language*. A society on this assumption would be a unit that rejects or discriminates against others. The interesting point is how this unity is justified. In accordance with Barth, it is assumed, on the one hand, that there is a continuity between these units over time and, on the other, that the place determines the form assumed by the units. Applied to Greenland, this would mean that there have always been clearly distinguishable 'Greenlanders' who have adapted to their arctic environment. As the inclusion of the historical context already made clear, the postulation of a Greenlandic identity is a recent phenomenon. Thus attempts are

made to proclaim the 'traditional,' seemingly precolonial lifestyle, which, as informants repeatedly told me, can only be found in the smaller settlements today, as an ideal image of Greenlandic life. However, the precolonial lifestyle, which is no longer to be found today, but is nevertheless deemed to be worth striving for, differs much more from the lifestyle actually lived today, which is regarded as Danish. The Greenlandic culture that is assumed to be a unity from a diachronic perspective must reclaim past cultures for itself in order to count as the 'timeless' or 'stable' Greenlandic culture. However, these past cultures would clearly be excluded in the present, hence from a synchronic perspective, because of their differences in form. Barth describes this paradox as follows: 'Paradoxically, it must include cultures in the past which would clearly be excluded in the present because of differences in form – differences of precisely the kind that are diagnostic in synchronic differentiation of ethnic units' (Barth 1998 [1969]: 12). Therefore, Barth concludes that ethnic groups are defined, though not in accordance with 'objective' differences, but with differences that are significant for the actors. These could be overt signals or signs, or basic value orientations: '(i) overt signals or signs – the diacritical features that people look for and exhibit to show identity, often such features as dress, language, house-form, or general style of life, and (ii) basic value orientations: the standards of morality and excellence by which performance is judged' (Barth 1998 [1969]: 14).

This perspective makes it clear that cultural or ethnic groups do not owe their stability to characteristic properties but to maintaining cultural boundaries to other groups. The constraint to make distinctions is always relational. The cultural attributes that mark the boundaries may change over time, but the binary dichotomy remains intact. According to Barth, loyalty to the "collectively shared" culture is thus decisive for his analysis, not common cultural activity. For the latter varies considerably among the members of the groups, even though the cultural boundary is rarely challenged.

Cultural boundaries are especially important in the field of politics. The articulation of cultural difference procures for Greenland as a political actor opportunities to participate in world polity (Meyer 1987). In the *world polity*, universally accepted categories, standards, and concepts are propagated to which every actor must appeal in order to gain recognition. Differences are only formulated within this system, hence in increasingly similar ways. Thus it is assumed, for example, that the global model of 'culture' exists everywhere in the world. Something similar can probably be reported on the status of 'indigenous peoples.' Greenlanders obtain rights and participation opportunities through recognition as an 'indigenous people.' However, this requires that they present and demarcate themselves as an 'indigenous people.' Just a few features are sufficient to mark and maintain the boundary. Barth speaks in this context of idioms: '[M]uch of the activity of political innovators is

concerned with the codification of idioms: the selection of signals for identity and the assertion of value for these cultural diacritica, and the suppression or denial of relevance for other differentiae' (Barth 1998 [1969]: 35).

The local foods of the Greenlanders as Greenlandic taste

In Greenland, a hallmark was invoked that played a major role at the time of the first contact with Europeans, namely, the Greenlanders' foods. This way of marking the boundary through a changed positive connotation shows that the articulation is extremely restricted. But, to avoid misunderstandings, *kalaalimernit* are simultaneously an unreflected element of everyday life (personal dimension) in Greenland and symbolically charged and codified (political dimension). Perhaps this dual character is what makes them into a particularly powerful *idiom* for being Greenlandic. In this respect, the connection to Greenlandic identity is shown by the consumption of Greenlandic foods, as Petersen emphasises:

[I]t is the common understanding that in order to have a Greenlandic identity the person must eat dried meat, dried fish, raw mattak, etc. Not only should the person be able to eat it, he or she should also like it (which is not so difficult). In a lot of places it has become difficult to get these kinds of food for everyday consumption. Often they are served at festive occasions, giving them cultural and social significance and making them a symbol of a Greenlandic celebration (Petersen 1985: 299).

In my view, this symbolic emphasis on Greenlandic foods leads to the formation of a specifically Greenlandic taste. In the words of Bourdieu: 'Tastes (i.e., manifested preferences) are the practical affirmation of an inevitable difference' (Bourdieu 1984: 56). Based on the finding of the continuation of class society by other means, Bourdieu concludes that a social struggle is being conducted for the reproduction or dissolution of existing class structures. Here Bourdieu follows Marx's thesis of incessant class struggle, but without reducing it to economic criteria. The social struggle is concentrated on imposing a legitimate taste. As 'legitimate' Bourdieu describes those institutions, actions, or usages that are 'dominant,' where this dominance is not recognised but is tacitly reproduced (Bourdieu 1984: 26). The conflict over definitional power, hence over the imposition of a specific view of the social world, is always at the same time a conflict over the transition from difference to differentiation, over the recognition and misrecognition of 'legitimate domination.'

Does a kind of 'cultural taste' exist in Greenland that stipulates differences as differentiations? Here I am concerned with a few mechanisms that I would like to make fruitful for the cultural domain. Thus I am also aware that the Greenlandic society has a completely distinct structure, with a specific historical and spatial context of its own. In my opinion, Greenlandic foods have

special qualities attributed to them by the Greenlanders that make them into a specific distinguishing feature of (traditional) Greenlandic society. '*Greenlandic taste*' has a unifying effect toward the inside and a demarcating effect toward the outside. A symbolic approach to the subject makes clear that *kalaalimernit* not only represent a natural local resource, but many Greenlanders identify with the local foods. According to Petersen, a Greenlandic is also expected to eat Greenlandic foods:

Somehow it seems to have mattered [...] if a person 'ate Greenlandic'. It is not quite clear how and why, and the indication was mostly heard in connection like: 'Why can't you, a Greenlandic, eat this food?' which seems to indicate that being a Greenlandic one was expected to like certain foods. The notion was especially raised in connection with dishes prepared on traditional foodstuffs by way of boiling, drying or smoking, or simply with raw foods. Such foods are often eaten in the company of many people and often on festive occasions. Maybe it was these social aspects of the eating traditions that invoke the sense of identity – more than the food itself (Petersen 1991: 18).

Many people in Greenland identify with this alimentary sign, so that it functions, on the one hand, to found community and, on the other, to demarcate. The taste for Greenlandic foods, alongside the rediscovery of the common Greenlandic language probably the most important community-founding element, leads to the formation of a cultural group that in this way distinguishes itself from others. *Kalaalimernit* are a very strong mean of distinction because of the special name ('piece of a Greenlandic'), the place *kalaalimineerniarfik* ('place where Greenlandic food is sold') where it is sold, the considered high quality and value of local foods, the sign and symbol character transforming events to national celebrations, and the distinctive hunting and sharing practices (Sowa 2004). Taste preferences, such as the consumption of seal or whale meat, give rise to a '*marking of difference*' that leads to a distinction from foreigners, predominantly from Danes. Thus, Greenlandic foods, and especially raw meat and offal, are in fact described by many Danes living in Greenland as unusual and unappetizing. Lifestyle and taste can mark boundaries within a society. In Nuuk, this demarcation is especially apparent because most of the Danish residents live and work there and as a result the encounters between Greenlanders and Danes assume very concrete everyday forms. The city of Nuuk is also often described by many Greenlanders as 'not Greenlandic' on account of its size and the buildings. However, local foods, on my interpretation, are regarded by people in Greenland as symbolic of being Greenlandic. *Greenlandic taste* unites people and sets them apart as a group from others; in Bourdieu's formulation: 'Taste is what brings together things and people that go together' (Bourdieu 1984: 241).

With the help of Greenlandic dishes and foods, a cultural boundary is erected that is apt to serve the

purposes of showing Greenlandicness and plays an important role in the contemporary identity politics of the Greenlandic elites. Greenlandic foods are served on all official national and international occasions, for example on the Greenlandic national holiday or on visits by the Danish Queen. Greenlanders are proud of their foods and show them off to the world. Major events, such as the 2002 Arctic Winter Games in Nuuk, also provide occasions for sending political signals. On each day of the weeklong event, visitors could savour Greenlandic specialties in an oversized igloo appropriately called the 'Arctic Kitchen'. Furthermore, no official banquet can take place without *kalaalimernit*. The Greenlandic Inuit give the world an indigenous feedback in order to position themselves confidently in the world. Sejersen draws the conclusion: 'Thus, consumption of certain products at certain occasions can be a way to place oneself within a global (or national) political frame and relate to global (or national) issues' (Sejersen 1998: 59). 'Innocuous' events are used for the purposes of political representation of Greenlandic identity. The cultural demarcation is necessary because the articulation of a uniform 'culture' is required within a global system of reference. Only through the articulation of a distinctive culture can Greenlanders become players in the global power game and fight for opportunities to participate and for more rights. On the other hand, this approach offers a meaningful possibility of identification for Greenlanders underscoring a 'community spirit among Greenlanders' (Kleivan 1996: 155).

Greenlandic foods become a medium for being Greenlandic. Thus it becomes an alimentary sign that is increasingly intelligible not only for Greenlanders but also for 'foreigners.' It has the effect of demarcating and simultaneously of founding community and identity, and it leads to a cultural boundary.

Methodology

To what extent is Greenlandic taste a stable cultural boundary? This question can be answered with data collected in 2000 and 2002 (Sowa 2014). During these two periods of fieldwork in the capital Nuuk and in the small village of Oqaatsut close to Ilulissat, six Greenlandic women and 14 Greenlandic men were interviewed in 18 interviews, including two married couples who were interviewed together. The 15 interviewees from the capital were active in politics, public administration, associations, or research or were students at the time of the conversation. The five interviewees in Oqaatsut, by contrast, included four male villagers and one female villager who performed a variety of different jobs depending on the time of the year and who went hunting in their spare time. The duration of the interviews varied from half an hour to three hours. Seven of the 18 interviews were translated by simultaneous interpreters, with the result that five interviews were conducted in Greenlandic and two in Danish. In addition, interesting excerpts from the

Greenlandic interviews were transcribed and translated by a student.

After completion of the empirical portion of the study, the analysis of the findings revealed that the interviewees in the qualitative interviews consistently talking about Greenlandic foods, though without going into detail about it. As a result, written qualitative interviews were conducted by e-mail in October 2002 with nine informants from Nuuk in order to acquire a definition of *kalaalimernit* from the interviewees and to ascertain the practices associated with the local foods (preparation methods) and patterns of interpretation (preferences, aversions). The interviewees were predominantly young and very well-educated Greenlanders and two of them were middle-aged. A total of nine Greenlanders, three women and six men, provided written answers to the following questions:

1) How would you define *kalaalimernit*? 2) Do you consider *kalaalimernit* prepared in a modern way (for example fried cutlet, grilled steak, spiced meat, smoked fish) still as *kalaalimernit*? 3) What kind of preparation of *kalaalimernit* do you like? 4) What kind of preparation of *kalaalimernit* do you dislike?

The content-analytic interpretation developed below is based on the transcriptions of the answers. The statements from the interviews and the e-mail poll are thematically coded, analysed and interpreted (Przyborski and Wohlrab-Sahr 2009; Rosenthal 2011). In a first step all answers to each question are analysed and coded with the codes 'definition of *kalaalimernit*', 'method of preparation of *kalaalimernit*', 'origin of *kalaalimernit*', 'preferences of *kalaalimernit*' and 'dislike of *kalaalimernit*'. In a second step by continuously comparing and contrasting of individual statements, two typical patterns are revealed in the narratives of all questions. The results will be presented in the following section.

Empirical results: inclusion and exclusion by local foods

The analysis of the qualitative interviews reflects the findings in the scientific literature on the local foods of the Inuit. Greenlandic foods are not only appreciated on a personal level as tasty and nourishing, but is also associated with a way of being Inuit. Thus, there are sequences in the interviews conducted during the visits to Greenland in which local foods are associated with the identity of the *Kalaallit*. These are instances of some of the interviewees adopting the discourse on *Greenlandic taste*. In the opinion of these interviewees, being Greenlandic involves 'being in nature' as well as the consumption of Greenlandic foods *kalaalimernit*. Nature is a source of strength for one of those interviewed:

We need to travel and try always to travel as we cannot be without travelling; I think that this is a part of being a Greenlandic [...]. Nature is very important for Greenlanders as nature also gives us strength.

Greenlandic foods, one of the hunters interviewed continued, are predestined for arctic conditions because one eats and hunts the animals that happen to be available depending on the season:

I think every Greenlander cannot live without *kalaalimernit*, also because we live in the Arctic where we eat and hunt according to the seasons.

To the question of what a whale means for him, a Greenlander from the capital replied that, for him, consuming whale meat contributes to his sense of identity:

If you ask me very simply, what does it mean to be a Greenlander? then I would say, that's eating whale meat both the skin *mattaq* and the meat, frozen, raw, fried, cooked.

Local foods chosen as an idiom for otherness, which serves purposes of distinction in the political competition over interests and resources, is diffused as *Greenlandic taste* in the daily lives of native Greenlanders. *Kalaalimernit* are no longer exclusively a matter, for example, of a reindeer that one has shot oneself (personal dimension); rather, consuming *kalaalimernit* symbolises the connection to a higher, collective dimension of *Kalaallit* identity (political dimension). However, this definition of Greenlandic identity based on *Greenlandic taste* is highly contested, as the analysis of the written e-mail survey revealed. While the cultural boundaries drawn in political debates appear to be extremely stable, they are simultaneously subverted and subjected to change. Cultural boundaries have fragile and problematic effects, as the struggles over definitional power and the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion show.

The core definition of *kalaalimernit* presented in the introduction is becoming fluid in contemporary Greenland. According to the three answers formulated by those surveyed, several definitions of *kalaalimernit* exist in Greenland that express how the people surveyed see and position themselves. As a result, the narrow core definition, according to which it is a matter of fish or meat from Greenland that is not fried and is barely seasoned, competes with other definitions and is increasingly a source of divisions among Greenlanders. In spite of the small size of the sample, two different, dominant narrative patterns emerged from the qualitative analysis of the extremely detailed e-mail answers. These patterns reveal that there are permanent social struggles in Greenland over definitional power, hence, in this case, over the 'correct' definition of legitimate, dominant *Greenlandic taste*. The two predominant definitions differ according to the origin of the meat and its method of preparation.

On a more traditional conception, *kalaalimernit* come from Greenlandic nature, but the animals in question must live in the wild, and how they taste is said to vary according to season and regional origin:

I would define *kalaalimernit* from its origin. Anything originating from Greenlandic nature is by definition *kalaalimernit*, I would argue. It is very funny that people can taste where a caribou originates from. For example, most Greenlanders argue that caribou from

the northern regions has more taste than those from the Nuuk area. Any Greenlander is, just by tasting the meat, also able to distinguish between foreign (e.g. New Zealand lamb) and Greenlandic lamb meat. Perhaps you could somehow put that to test? Another angle is that the taste of most Greenlandic animals changes with the season; [...]birds [are a case in point]. Any *kalaalimernit* has the characteristics mentioned above. I guess if you would start growing, for instance, industrialised caribou in a factory, it would cease to be *kalaalimernit*. By this the caribou would cease to have seasoning, freedom of diet etc. Some have tried to domesticate caribou; some have tried to develop a fish farm; they all went bankrupt.

The narrator demarcates *kalaalimernit* from animals kept in captivity. The latter would lose the status of Greenlandic foods because they would no longer be bound to seasonal cycles and would lose their freedom over what they eat. If this argument concerning hunting wild, local animals is valid, then sheep do not count either, because 'sheep are "kept" and do not live in the wild.' In spite of her misgivings, the woman surveyed added that southern Greenlanders would contradict her:

There is no doubt that people living in the southern parts of Greenland consider sheep as a 'true' Greenlandic specialty; they taste differently than the imported meat, eg. from New Zealand.

In addition to the question of origin, opinions also differ over the method of preparation. Influences deriving from European cuisine and from the import of foreign foodstuffs, such as potatoes and vegetables, are enjoying increasing popularity, so that fish and meat are prepared differently, innovative side dishes are created, and vegetables and salads are served. Many current cookbooks likewise promote creative ideas for Greenlandic households. These novel preparation methods, which include experiments with local resources, are leading to changes in perception and evaluation especially among the young Greenlanders surveyed. In the traditional narrative pattern, however, local foods must be prepared in the 'traditional' way in order to be described as Greenlandic. 'Traditional' in this context means that the meat is processed as little as possible and is generally consumed raw. This does not mean that the Greenlanders surveyed reject the new preparation methods; they would just designate these foods differently:

Not only young people prepare food in a modern way, elders as well. Some like to boil *mattak* and use it as component in salad. Whale meat, as well as reindeer, can be fried as steaks, seal meat can be minced, *but can hardly be categorised as kalaalimernit*.

Another narrator is of a similar opinion:

Kalaalimernit – without adding any extra information to the concept covers the old way (or maybe common way) to prepare Greenlandic food. If you prepare it in a 'modern' way, with non-traditional spices and vegetables, you could still to some extent call it *kalaalimernit*, but you would have to add that it is made

in a modern way, or just in an alternative way. If I'm just told that I, or we, *are going to have kalaalimernit for dinner, I expect old fashion cooking* – which of course can vary a bit in how it is prepared from family to family. *Kalaalimernit* are also characterised by being easy to make – it may take time, but it is uncomplicated. You can make it when you're sailing in the fjords – both in your boat and on land without needing a full-scale kitchen. *Kalaalimernit* prepared in a modern way are often more complicated to prepare, and you add more ingredients to it.

For this narrator, her first association when she thinks of *kalaalimernit* is the old way of cooking. This traditional narrative pattern according to which Greenlandic foods come exclusively from animals living in the wild in Greenland, where the characteristic feature of its preparation is that it is processed as little as possible, for instance, that it is not fried or excessively seasoned, is now coming into conflict with a more modern narrative pattern. For instance, the predominantly young Greenlanders disagree over whether all local resources of the country, thus, for example, the sheep from south Greenland already mentioned, belong to Greenlandic foods. If the argument from origin is applied strictly, then the definition includes domesticated sheep. This leads to a softening of the criterion of animals living in the wild. The modes of preparation are also viewed more openly in the modern narrative pattern:

My definition of *kalaalimeneq* would be any source of food that is comprised of mammals from the Greenlandic sea and land with no regards to what way it was prepared.

Another informant confirms this: 'I still consider *kalaalimernit* as *kalaalimernit*, even if I prepare it in the modern way.' Yet another informant describes all dishes as Greenlandic foods once reindeer or sheep, for example, are among the main ingredients:

Even if we prepare *kalaalimernit* in a modern way, it still is *kalaalimernit*, just using other ingredients like fried potatoes beans and vegetables, because we still have as the main ingredient, for example, fried Tuttu (reindeer, sheep, etc.). In the old days, people used to mix food with other ingredients like black- or blueberries [...]. People used to get tired of their food when it was too one-dimensional. So, for me and many other Greenlanders today accepted a meat with vegetables and even also fried. Fried meat is not new food for Greenlanders. In the old days [...] people used to fry, for example, seal meat, whale meat, etc. on a flat stone over the fireplace, to vary [dishes].

Fried whale escalope or grilled seal steaks are still considered to be Greenlandic foods by the interviewees who display the modern narrative pattern. Some characterise every conceivable way of preparing the local resources as *kalaalimernit*, whereas for others an Indian or Thai preparation method goes too far.

It remains that there is not just one possible definition of *kalaalimernit* but a plurality of definitions that com-

pete with each other and whose definition is open or is in flux. In Greenland, the core definition of *kalaalimernit* is being 'softened' and more and more dishes and their preparation are regarded as 'Greenlandic' by the young Greenlanders surveyed.

The two narrative patterns, traditional versus modern, lead to two different definitions of *kalaalimernit*, a core definition and an extended, more open definition. Were the core definition to prevail, a quite conceivable development should the nationalization trends continue to gain momentum, such a demarcation through *Greenlandic taste* would not be unproblematic. For then the issue would be who is a 'proper' Greenlandic. I met a few young Greenlanders who consumed hardly any *kalaalimernit* for reasons of health (allergy) or convenience (preference for fast food) and as a result were described as non-Greenlanders or, as the following quotation shows, describe themselves as not 'typically' Greenlandic:

So, I am not a typical Greenlandic person. Not at all. And you can see it from the food I eat. So, it's very European: pasta, rice, potatoes and a lot of, mostly it will be chicken or another kind of bird.

Moreover, many of the informants of the e-mail survey admitted that they did not like some of the typical 'traditional' dishes, such as boiled dog (traditionally served at Christmas), fermented fish, or rotted auk, a fowl specialty from Thule.

These Greenlanders feel that their situation is precarious because, from their perspective, they are temporarily accepted neither as Greenlanders nor as Danes. They are in an intermediate space, in that they do not belong completely either to the Greenlandic or to the Danish culture, and this is not their preferred position. 'Taste aberrations' are punished with negative sanctions of nonrecognition. Especially in Nuuk, some Greenlanders ascribe a Danish identity to these Greenlanders and as a result exclude them. The pressure of 'having to distinguish oneself' has effects in the everyday lives of the Greenlandic Inuit. However, the marking of difference, cultural demarcation, is made possible by just a few idioms. Local foods of the Greenlanders are undoubtedly one of them.

Conclusion

As became clear in this contribution, *Greenlandic taste* offers the Greenlandic collective identity, as the product of identity politics, an outstanding opportunity for distinction from the Danish residents in the country. Certain everyday eating practices have a supplementary symbolic meaning. They refer to the collective identity of the *Kalaallit* and set themselves apart from other eating practices. All of those interviewed also eat other foods. But from time to time the Greenlandic bond has to be renewed, also in ways visible for non-Greenlanders, and this is done by consuming corresponding food. *Kalaalimernit* are not only a nourishing source of food based on personal preference, but they are also necessary

for Greenlanders according to the interview partners. *Greenlandic taste* is becoming a national symbol. It is becoming an idiom for being Greenlandic, an identity-constituting element, in a society perceived as being increasingly Danishised. The rigid demarcation becomes flexible when, for example, young Greenlanders challenge the narrow core definition of *kalaalimernit*. In addition, however, intracultural exclusions occur when Greenlanders stop being accepted as Greenlanders because they do not 'eat Greenlandic' and thus no longer correspond to the ideal image of a Greenlandic.

But the conflicts over definitions of Greenlandic foods just invoked also reveal a further aspect that may be connected with *world polity* (Meyer 1987). I would like to formulate the thesis that the two narrative patterns stand for different global models of the *world polity* (see also Sowa 2013a; Sowa 2013b): the global model of indigeneity and the global model of (national) culture. The global model of indigeneity implies that the Greenlandic Inuit have been recognised as an indigenous people possessing traditional ecological knowledge, and thus they are given special rights, for instance, the right to whale. The global model of (national) culture means that the Greenlandic Inuit are recognised as small nordic nation with a specific national culture. Narratives about local foods are important at the level of self-representation of Greenlandic Inuit. The two definitions of *kalaalimernit* mirror the debate about the cultural self-images in Greenland. It illustrates the question whether Greenlanders want to represent themselves as an indigenous people and/or a small Nordic nation

When they want to be represented as an indigenous people, they often do it by underlining that they are a hunting people who for centuries have pursued a different, precapitalist way of life compared to the western industrialised countries. By doing so, they subscribe to a widespread perception that links indigeneity closely to the environment and modernity to a clear separation between nature and culture. Indigenous peoples are not (yet) developed, modernised, enlightened communities. As hunter-gatherer cultures, they have not (yet) founded a nation state of their own. Instead they possess a proximity to nature, a being-in-harmony-with-nature, a traditional environmental knowledge. According to the traditional narrative pattern, *kalaalimernit* come exclusively from animals living in the wild in Greenland, where the distinguishing feature of how they are prepared is that they are processed as little as possible, for instance, that they are not deep-fried or seasoned excessively.

If Greenland is to be represented as a modern national society that is nevertheless different from other societies, then the point is to show that Greenland has its own language, symbols, and customs. The collective identity built upon these features is so different from the Danish collective identity that the foundation of an independent nation is imperative. This nation would acquire its legitimacy through the articulation of diversity. According to the modern narrative pattern, *kalaalimernit* are prepared

in traditional *and* modern ways in a differentiated society, though they differ in particular through the selection of species (such as seals, whales, or reindeer) that are not available in Denmark.

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