36. Co-Creation of Knowledges and Collaborative Research: Decolonial Methodologies in the Arctic and beyond (Workshop)

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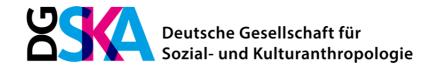
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Regional Group "Circumpolar Regions and Siberia" in collaboration with the CO-CREATE initiative

Research in the Arctic and sub-Arctic is called to change the attitude of scientists towards Indigenous knowledge holders and thus make the relationship with the Indigenous rightsholders equitable. From the beginning of the last century until today, Indigenous peoples of the North have faced growing interest from social/natural scientists conducting research in their homelands. Simultaneously, such interaction carries a bleak legacy of knowledge exploitation in a colonial manner. In the past, research has rarely been brought back to communities and Indigenous rightsholders in a form that could be meaningfully used for facilitating sustainable social change or endorsing local cultural heritage.

Indigenous rights holders expect current research to be about not only climate change, but ongoing contemporary colonialism, resource extraction, and more. Indigenous communities and organizations as well as international scientific organizations have published a number of policy declarations, codes of conduct, and protocols for ethical and collaborative research. Indigenous scholars and researchers applying decolonial methodologies are increasingly carrying these principles in academia to achieve equitable co-production of knowledge. These debates are linked to discussions that have taken place elsewhere, especially in the Pacific, Oceania, Australia, and the Americas.

The goal of this workshop is to enable an in-depth conversation about decolonial research methodologies, knowledge co-creation, ethics, and collaborative research practices as well as about the current state of decolonial debates in anthropology. We invite Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and rightsholders to share their experience and we explicitly invite papers from across the globe for mutual learning. The session is open to hands-on examples from research practice, epistemological reasoning and theory driven methodology discussions.

Keynote by Britt Kramvig, UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Facilitating for postcolonial moments in indigenous research

Decolonization has many pathways, still centers Indigenous methods, people, and lands in an ongoing negotiation of power, place, and sovereignty. Indigenous methodological focus on knowledge as a collective practice, an important framework for both gathering and disseminating knowledge. In the research project **OKTA Sámi art and communities of friction** we address research as collective through organizing public knowledge dialogues, at the three cultural festivals. In the project, we have sought to not only investigate the festivals as a meeting place for dialogue and discussion, but also facilitated forums for exchange and knowledge-sharing. The knowledge dialogues have put the project's issues, methods, and research results in continuous contact with different audiences and community of knowers. We are investigating art projects through the Sámi concept *searvedoaibma* that focus on the cultural festival in Sápmi as a place where art creates the framework for what Helen Verran calls "postcolonial moments" that can disturb established categories and normative values and thus contribute to expanding the worldviews of those involved.

Enlightening knowledge: towards a definition of "Inuit knowledge" in Nunavik-led research

Catherine Dussault, University of Laval

The use of Indigenous knowledge has now become a commonplace in collaborative and decolonial research. Even if practices of co-creating, braiding, and bridging knowledge assume that an epistemological distinction between "Indigenous" and "scientific" knowledge should be made, there is no evident consensus around what Indigenous knowledge effectively is. Building upon my fieldwork conducted in four communities across Nunavik (Canadian Arctic), this talk seeks to deepen the understanding of Inuit knowledge on two levels. First, with a sociohistorical and decolonial lens, I trace the genealogy of the discourses surrounding Inuit knowledge, which allows to comprehend when and how it has become an object of interest, and to identify the successive terms that have been employed to characterize it (traditional, ecological, local, Indigenous, etc.). Secondly, drawing from the analysis of interviews I have conducted with Elders and Inuit researchers, I present how Nunavimmiut define their knowledge. I conclude by explaining how the relations between knowledge that is transmitted [Qaumaniq] and knowledge that is acquired [Qaujimaniq] – and the relationships between people sharing or acquiring that knowledge – inform the development of original forms of Inuit-led research across Nunavik.

Ethnographic refusal as a decolonial research methodology

Lena Gross, Sámi dutkamiid guovddáš/Centre for Sámi Studies, UiT The Arctic University of Norway and NIKU Norgga kulturmuitodutkama instituhttas/The Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research
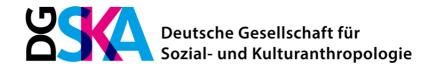
Following Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson's work and based on my research on conflicts surrounding resource extraction on Indigenous lands in both Turtle Island and Sápmi, I will discuss how ethnographic refusal can be used as a tool towards decolonizing research practices. Refusal to/in research attempts to make visible the colonial undertones of 'discovery' and place limits on conquest and colonization of knowledge (Tuck and Yang 2014). In short, refusal tells when to stop (Simpson 2007, 2014, 2017) and therefore unsettles the coloniality of academic knowledge production. However, refusal goes beyond stopping, it redirects research into areas that are often overseen, questions established knowledges and relationships, and through this opens social spaces and dialogues otherwise easily overlooked. This paper argues therefore for a kind of research that refuses.

Ethnographic methods and research co-development in the Canadian Arctic

Elspeth Ready, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig

Peter Collings, University of Florida

Saanngasiniq is a collaborative research project focused on food security and stress management in Kangiqsujuaq, Nunavik, an Inuit community in the Canadian Arctic. The project has been developed through a multi-year process of pilot work and consultation with the partner community, aimed at eliciting community members' needs and priorities for social research. The name, Saanngasiniq, references bringing an issue in front of you and dealing with it together, capturing the applied and collaborative nature of the research. A core focus of the project will be the co-development, piloting and evaluation of community programs to enhance food-security and positive ways to manage stress. In this presentation, we detail the methodology of the pilot work and consultations that laid the foundations for the project, discuss the roles of the research team and community members in the project, and summarise both the challenges and opportunities encountered so far in the process.

Impacts of Mining in Swedish Sápmi: a Decolonial Feminist Perspective

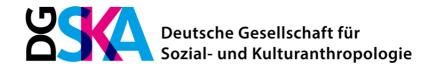*Laura Del Duca, Stockholm Environment Institute*

In a context of ongoing contemporary colonialism in Swedish Sápmi, the impacts of mining remain highly contested. Responding to the urgent need for a synthesis of diverging knowledges, we create a joint scientific and Indigenous and local knowledge map of the impacts of mining in Swedish Sápmi, synthesizing knowledge across three knowledge bases: a systematic map of the predicted and potential impacts of metal mining and its mitigation measures in Arctic and boreal regions using environmental and social impact assessments; a systematic map of the impacts of metal mining and the effectiveness of mining mitigation measures on social-ecological systems in Arctic and boreal regions; and documentation of Indigenous and local knowledge on the impacts of mining on Sámi lands. Following learning-focused individual actor engagement about emerging contradictions, and guided by expansive learning theory, we develop a synthesis method for diverging knowledge. Grounded in Western and Non-Western epistemologies, decolonial and feminist critiques of science, and Indigenous standpoint theory, we demonstrate the challenges of contested Indigenous rights for Swedish legislation; the need for an Intersectional lens in synthesizing knowledge sources; and the need for reflection on diverging understandings of the environment and embodiment of impacts for decolonizing knowledge and upholding human rights.

Co-creating knowledge: Relational accountability in Walking-with practices in Sámi (Indigenous) tourism research

Nina Smedseng, UiT The Arctic University of Norway

How can working on a Sea Sámi wooden boat, rowing on Porsáŋguvuotna, eating apple cake while sharing stories, walking the woods of Divtasvuotna, working with tourism texts at Čorgaš, or doing gáfestallan-talks (Keskitalo, Rasmussen, Rahko-Ravantti & Äärelä-Vihriälä, 2021) on zoom or by the campfire, be part of a research methodology? This kind of "walking-with" methodology, helps senter Indigenous knowledges within an Indigenous research framework that reflects Indigenous ways of knowing (epistemologies), being (ontologies), and doing (methodologies).

In this presentation I will share with you how a co-creational research design, aiming to decolonize Sámi tourism and research, has led me (as a non-Indigenous scholar) into the relational world and knowledge framework of Indigenous methodologies (Wilson, 2008). This has turned research, as I knew it, upside down. Replacing critical distance with critical proximity means to get involved - an involvement that also comes with a responsibility.

The road was never open: crafting decolonial research practices to envision alternative stories of self-drive and route tourism

Tarja Tuula Salmela, UiT The Arctic University of Norway

In this presentation, I talk about an ongoing collaborative experimentation of decolonial research practices when envisioning alternative stories of self-drive- and route tourism in the Northern Highlands of Scotland and the infamous tourist route NC500. I have become part of a complex assemblage of roads, bridges, lochs, sheep, motorized vehicles, human waste, litter, decommissioned nuclear power plant, local communities, and the growing vanlife community that entangle with land politics, definitions of "wilderness" and the promise of the "open road." I will elaborate on the potential and limitations of an ethnographic "ride-along method" (Vargas, 2021) to alternarrate the Scottish Highlands through a shared experience with a local tour guide. Indigenous as well as feminist posthumanist ontologies recognizing the inseparability of "land", "nature", and "human" (Blaser, 2012; Mattila, 2015) guide to ask critical questions related to the practices of colonization of landscape in tourism.

EU-PolarNet. Co-ordinating and Co-designing the European Polar Research Area

Gertrude Saxinger, University of Vienna

EU-PolarNet 2 is the world's largest consortium of polar research expertise and infrastructures, composed by 25 partners representing all European Member States and Associated Countries which have well-established Polar Programmes. The ambition of EU-PolarNet 2 is to establish a sustainable and inclusive platform to co-develop and advance European Polar research actions and to give evidence-based advice to policymaking processes. This project will allow to further develop the coordination of Polar research actions in Europe and with overseas partners. By involving all relevant stake- and Indigenous rightsholders it will support the development of transdisciplinary and transnational Polar research actions of high societal relevance. This presentation will highlight the importance of advancing co-creative and decolonial methodology in Arctic research practices and address how these principles play out in the work of EU-PolarNet.