Propelled by the acute ecological crisis this dissertation moves between artistic affinities and academic disciplines to craft an intervention into imaginaries of Svalbard as an Arctic place. Designed as an iterative set of artistic practice experiments with live editing, it seeks to demonstrate a Geo-Aesthetical Discontent – a dissatisfying lack in the representational discourse – upon terrains with colonial history for visual production. By subverting the historically monolithic and singular narrative of the Arctic, the artistic research unsettles the traditional exemplars of the artist and the scientist. Rather it mobilizes The Guide as an analytical figure and tool with which to propose a Post-Future Essayism: a precarious filmic methodology and epistemological strategy of the moving image; a fragmentary and momentary compositional effect that seeks to navigate and negotiate the role of film in relation to a historio-graphic concept of futurity.

The dissertation, then, is a response to a discontentment with current portrayals of the Arctic that produce the region as an outside to the global west. At stake is to connect the production of an artistic practice – significantly described in relation to historical image-makers such as Jette Bang, Emilie Demant Hatt and Johan Turi, Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson – and the production of the Arctic.

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Eva la Cour Geo-Aesthetical Discontent

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SVALBARD THE GUIDE AND POST-FUTURE ESSAYISM

UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

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Abstract

Propelled by the acute ecological crisis, *Geo-Aesthetical Discontent: Svalbard, the Guide and Post-Future Essayism* moves between artistic affinities and academic disciplines to craft an intervention into imaginaries of an Arctic place. Designed as an iterative set of artistic practice experiments with live editing, the aim is to demonstrate a *geo-aesthetical discontent* upon terrains with colonial history for visual production.

By subverting the historically monolithic and singular narrative of the Arctic, the artistic research explicitly attends to the Arctic Archipelago of *Svalbard* as a site of- and for image-making that has historical effects on cultural imaginations of the future of the planet and its political and ecological systems. However, as evidenced by the current attention to the term "mediation", image-making cannot be fully grasped through representational discourses and the traditional exemplars of the artist and the scientist. Rather, this dissertation mobilizes *the guide* as a figure that embodies how skilled practicing – and hence affect, sensibility and care – are intrinsic to questions of mediation, when understood as a process or milieu that is never foreclosed. Representations (in all their varied forms) are part of the relational configurations that emerge from considering mediation as a geographical event. This is the geo-aesthetical condition.

Meanwhile, the research is practice-based in exploring all this through a meta-reflexive (and political) experimentation that addresses questions of technology in relation to affective and historical knowledges. Situated between traditions of experimental ethnography and essayistic approaches to film as practice I propose what I term *post-future essayism*: a precarious filmic methodology and epistemological strategy of the moving image;

a fragmentary and momentary compositional effect that seeks to navigate and negotiate the role of film in relation to a historiographic concept of futurity.

The dissertation, then, is a response to a discontentment with current portrayals of the Arctic that produce the region as an outside to the global west. At stake is to connect the production of an artistic practice – significantly described in relation to historical image-makers such as Jette Bang, Emilie Demant Hatt and Johan Turi, Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson – and the production of the Arctic.

Keywords: geo-aesthetics, image politics, Svalbard, Arctic imaginaries, philosophy of ecology, the guide, live editing, essay film, experimental ethnography.

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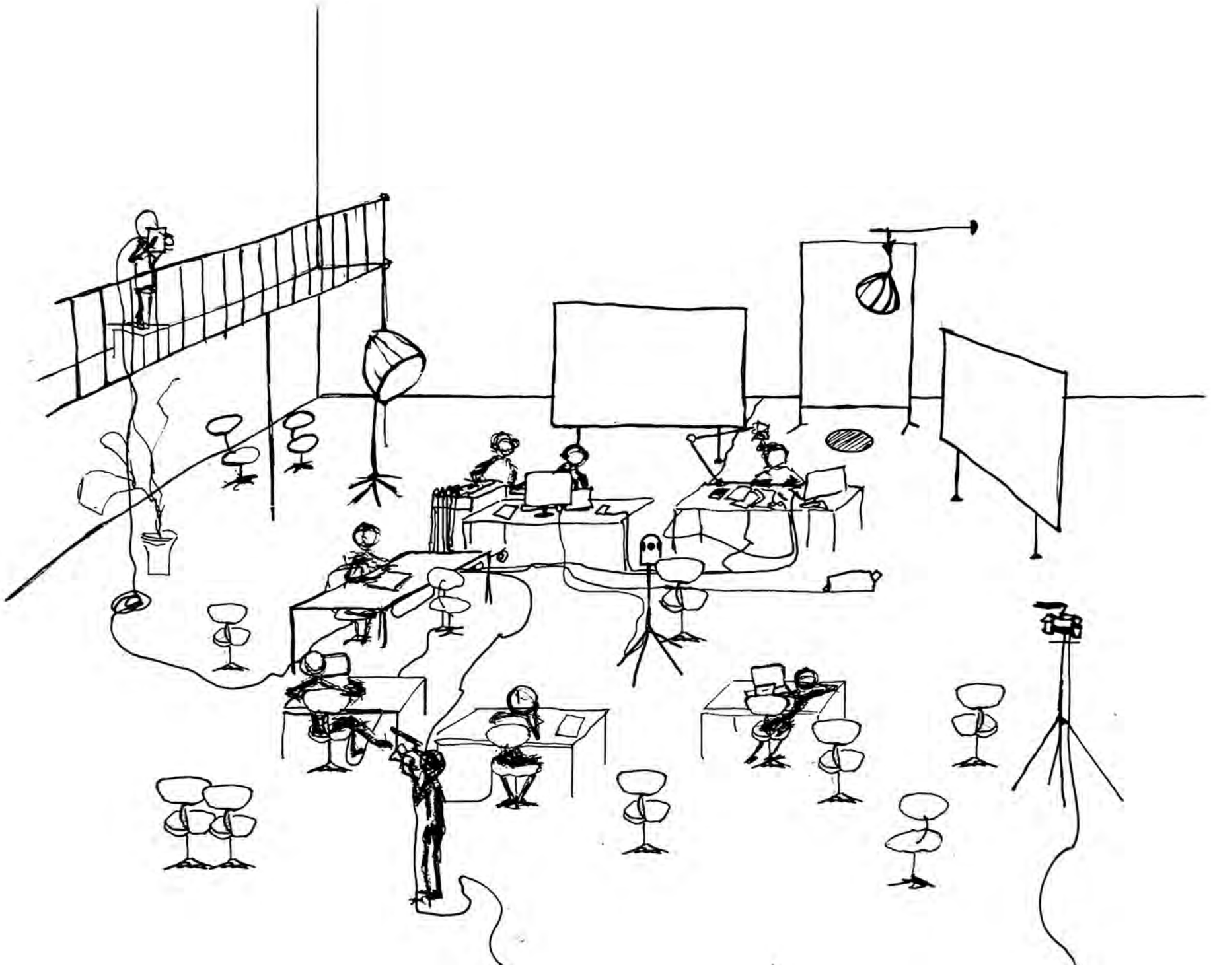

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Fade in

A parallel session at the Mediating Climate Change Conference in Leeds has just begun. The session's title is *Ice*. I get up, dim the regular lights, place a wireless microphone around my head and press play on my laptop. At the same moment, a projector hanging from the ceiling illuminates the screen behind me.

This is a cinema screen, I claim. And in front of the screen stands a man, who welcomes the audience to the Arctic Dwelling Project – a fictitious framework for a self-institutionalized network of researchers that imagines Svalbard. My voice, amplified by the wireless microphone, merges with an increasingly loud soundtrack of improvised guitar while beautiful sunny Arctic scenery shot from a boat in open water is projected. A man with crossed legs is sitting on a chair looking at an unfolded map indicating the different geological layers forming the substrate of the surrounding terrain.

A former no-man's land situated halfway between the northern coast of Norway and the North Pole, where no indigenous population ever lived, but where a long trajectory of human activity and exploitation continues to mark the land, I explain.

The man with the map moves his finger across the map and when he eventually looks up, I continue: The man emphasizes that the Arctic Dwelling Project is developed in close connection to Svalbard particularities – but also, the view that the global climate crisis is a political crisis.

And from this perspective, Svalbard is regarded as particularly ideal for the creation of a post-national zone and future testing ground for local, self-sufficient, experimental communities consistent with eco-cosmopolitan notions of planetary sustainable citizenship.

Blackout

At the conference in Leeds, the screen has turned black. Leaving the audience uncertain whether this black-out is intentional or not, I suggest starting anew. Now the soundtrack has changed, giving the scenery a different character.

Far above the Arctic Circle and surrounded by the open sea, Svalbard is characterized by multiple Arctic features: permafrost, polar bears, glaciers and even its own ice cap. But on the west coast, the Gulf Stream warms its waters and fjords, which creates a relatively mild climate and makes Svalbard particularly accessible for temporary visitors. Combined with a well-developed infrastructure and nature reserves with designated areas for research, the archipelago is an attractive and important site for Arctic fieldwork.

Whiteout

Picture a group of fieldworkers stepping down into a zodiac with all their gear. Dressed in identical orange jumpsuits, the fieldworkers steer the boat onto a barren island where they go ashore

and soon demonstrate an effort to register, collect from and (particularly) observe their surroundings. Imagine the fieldworkers walking towards the horizon and into the film image, their colourful jumpsuits ensuring that they remain alien figures.

For a while I let the projection run without commentary. Various shots of the different fieldworkers follow.

Marked by whaling, scientific discoveries and territorial claims, I continue, Svalbard's futures are deeply entangled with modes of making resources. As a century of coalmining on Svalbard leaves behind post-industrial sites for new narrative framings, a new flow of temporary locals continues a history and economy of extraction and infrastructure: researchers, entrepreneurs, political representatives and tourists. And artists, I add.

The camera then pans to a former mining town bathed in sunshine. It is a Russian settlement – in the 1980s the biggest settlement on Svalbard but today, after a few years of complete abandonment, primarily a tourist destination staging a spectacular High Arctic presence of a Soviet past. A guide dressed in a Soviet uniform speaks to a group of people and points toward something behind the recording camera. His voice is barely heard as I simultaneously ask you to imagine the need to remember through the constant repetition of images fixed, condensed, studied and made visceral, the need to watch, to chronicle.[1]

1 Kathleen C. Stewart, "An Occupied Place," in Senses of Place, ed. Keith H. Basso and Feld, (Santa Fe, N.M. : [Seattle]: School of American Research Press, 1996), 148.

The Stage

My story, like all the stories I heard on Svalbard, begins and ends in a process of remembering, re-telling and re-situating.[2] It began with an artistic residency aboard a vessel for three weeks in 2010 and continued through several visits between 2011 and 2018. Through continuous twists and turns of fieldnotes, audio recordings, video recordings, memories, photographs, phone-, skype- and zoom-calls, postcards and professional presentations, papers, art work and artist talks, it has become a process of *"long dwelling* on things remembered and retold, forgotten and imagined."[3] The outcome of my image-production is a film only in so far as it sets a mode of thinking in motion.

At a fundamental level and in subtle and unspectacular ways, my "long dwelling" is an epistemological consideration of the capitalistic assumption that the planet's materials are primarily for human consumption; it more explicitly considers how Svalbard is constituted through narratives and images – projected fictions – as much as by geological layers, permafrost and polar bears. In this sense, my contribution to the Mediating Climate Change Conference in 2017, a paper in the form of the voiceover for a film, plays with the particular context of the conference as a moment of mediation in itself. The authority of both expert communities and the political-aesthetic implications of any professional vision emerge as a mediating factor.

Scenography

"Imaginaries are all there is on Svalbard, really," a friend recently said. The comment was tied to the mode in which even seemingly marginal things in relation to Svalbard have international

2 I am borrowing this phrasing and processual understanding from Stewart's essay.

3 Stewart, "An Occupied Place," 140.

and global implications and requires constant negotiation and re-negotiation.

This is what makes Svalbard an extraordinarily interesting focal point. It occurs to me that my friend's use of the term "imaginaries" comes close to my use of the term "geo-aesthetics." Effectively, how do specific processes of mediation connect with particular imaginaries, when "imaginaries are perhaps not as ephemeral and fleeting as we imagine"?[4] How are these processes ontologically conditioned (connected with both material and discursive conditions for situated practices)?

In many ways, Svalbard stands in for a generic Arctic imaginary. The absence of an indigenous population makes the world's northernmost settlement easily accessible for travellers who want to see polar bears and glaciers. Tales of early expeditions and the foundations they laid for the later heroic defeat of the extreme conditions by coal miners have gradually been exploited in innumerable ways, packaged and sold as tourist products and activities. One can follow in the footsteps of trappers and escape traces of human presence and comfort, experience Arctic wildlife and the remains of abandoned mining sites or simply be engulfed by the silence and the sound of unusual surroundings. One does not need to travel to Svalbard to participate in the commercialization of its imaginaries. We can consume it from home via wildlife documentaries, reality TV-shows or YouTube vloggers capitalising on its extreme appeal.[5]

Amidst all this, residents and external planners are increasingly called upon to engage with Svalbard's imaginaries and to

4 Professor of Environmental Policy and Planning, Simin Davoudi in a session on Imagined, Imaginative, and Imaginary Geographies, at the Royal Geographical Society's annual conference 2021.

5 This summative descriptive paragraph of Svalbard as a tourist destination and site of consumption greatly draws from the joint paper 'Constructions and consequences of power-full Svalbard imaginaries' presented by Samantha Saville at the Royal Geographical Society (with Samantha Saville, Mathias Albert, Lisbeth Iversen and Dina Brode-Rogers, 2021).

direct Longyearbyen's trajectory in the post-coal era. Hence, current processes of rewilding post-industrial sites, re-structuring old infrastructures or re-circulating archival imagery of working miners raise a fundamental and pressing question about image-making and history writing.

Image-production in the Arctic, then, has an urgent impact on the world, both because the Arctic plays a key role in the cultural imagination of the future of the planet and its political and ecological systems,[6] and because of the ways in which images are used to prompt future actions. Or as the cultural geographer Ben Anderson has formulated it: "The experience of the future relates to the materiality of the medium through which it is made present,"[7] capturing my urge for an understanding of aesthetics that cannot but be understood through its situated global infrastructure – a geo-aesthetics raising essential questions about the definition of the event, and the role of the event in constituting time and space. Here I focus, however, on the relational configurations of which representation is but a part.

Plot

Geo-Aesthetical Discontent: Svalbard, the Guide and Post-Future Essayism is an artistic practice-based research project that both reflects and is informed by a renewed concern with representation in anthropology and cultural geography. This concern is manifested as the effort to engage with the force of representations as they make, remake, and unmake worlds.[8]

6 Lill-Ann Körber, Scott MacKenzie, and Anna Westerståhl Stenport, eds., *Arctic Environmental Modernities: From the Age of Polar Exploration to the Era of the Anthropocene* (Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 11.

7 Ben Anderson, "Preemption, Precaution, Preparedness: Anticipatory Action and Future Geographies," *Progress in Human Geography* 34, no. 6 (2010): 793.

8 Ben Anderson, "Cultural Geography II: The Force of Representations," *Progress in Human Geography* 43, no. 6 (2019): 1120.

This project is informed by the crisis of representation that marked anthropology in the 1980s. Sparked by feminist, postcolonial and anti-racist movements in general,[9] critical examinations demonstrated how particular representations (re)produce unequal power relations of class, gender and race. These relations continue to be inseparable from ethical and political imperatives of understanding the operation of power through representation.[10] Representational analysis served as an analytical tool to effectively rupture the historical, and continuously too-often assumed, equation between ethnography and descriptions and interpretations of cultural otherness – that is, ideas of ethnography "grasping" distinct and incongruent lifeworlds and perceptions. Hence, a proliferation of meta-textual strategies and self-reflexive practices with "a high sensitivity to the ethical and epistemological implications of ethnographic authority" emerged.[11]

Over the last decades, however, scholars have increasingly strived to disclose an over-extended emphasis on "signifying systems," dissatisfied with a "discursive idealism" argued to rest on a Euro-modern version of culture.[12] Similarly, while debates in the field of anthropology since the 1990s have acknowledged the illusionary aspect of "a fair" relationship (of course there will always be power implied; of course, there will also always be perspective, status, and position implied), a so-called ontological turn has more fundamentally challenged any ideally non-colonial ethnography. Indeed, feminist analysis of the last century had already identified the operations of an ontological register

9 Obviously, a crisis of representation exceeds any one disciplinary field as political/intellectual project.

10 At least in its Anglo-American variants (See, e.g., Marilyn Strathern, *Relations: An Anthropological Account* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020); Anderson, "Cultural Geography II.")

11 Karen Lisa Salamon, "Mind the Gap," in *Transcultural Montage*, ed. Christian Suhr and Rane Willerslev (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 146.

12 In *The Force of Representation*, Anderson more precisely traces the impact of non-representational theory as formulated since the beginning of the millennium and in response, precisely, to a "discursive idealism"; this is currently reflected in a renewed concern with representation in cultural geography. (See Anderson, "Cultural Geography II.")

that drives representation by introducing, for example, the idea of the "vulnerable observer'[13] affected by what she gets to know, or the idea of "apparatuses of visual production, including the prosthetic technologies interfaced with our biological eyes and brain."[14] This, then, connects with scholarly study more genuinely striving to emphasize how material aspects of culture[15] are active constituents in shaping effects of the discursive and symbolic. Fields such as Media and Communication Studies and Science and Technology Studies, in particular, gave rise to new materialism and feminist post-humanism. At stake is thus an opposition to technological determinism and an advocacy for more relational forms of emergence. Scholarships in these fields, meanwhile, have been significantly contested by (amongst others) feminist Marxists, for whom current trends in the application of actor-network theory or "new materialist" agentialism risk both the assumption of a flat ontology that does not account for the role of human and social-economic powers, and, while stating it does the opposite, the reproduction of modernist ideas of the binary (as far as they rely on there being a clear set of modernist binaries in the first place).[16]

Explicitly arguing against Latourian hybridism, the claim is, rather, that an analytical distinction between subject/object,

13 See the feminist scholar and anthropologist Ruth Behar (Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012).

14 See the feminist biologist-turned-anthropologist Donna Haraway (Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 589.

15 My use of the term "culture" here draws from the cultural geographer Ben Anderson's examination of the concept to coexist in different modalities: as "assembled effect," "mediated experience," and as "forms-of-life." These concepts are connected in their expression of a reworking of culture understood as the "description of a particular whole way of life," in and posing questions regarding that which is understood as "life."

16 In *The Progress of This Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World* the historian and human geographer Andreas Malm writes, more precisely, about the ecological crisis rendering "the distinction between the social and the material … more essential than ever" (New York: Verso, 2018), 61.

society/nature and human/non-human is needed in order for the "social" and the "material" to interact via emergent relations, and as a requisite for a sort of realist ontology to expose exploitative and unsustainable global power relations.[17]

In the midst of this, my inquiry is practical. Rather than attempting to solve a theoretical problem, it addresses the question of how to navigate the proliferation of effects and relations (and their mediating power effects) both embedded within and circulated by media, and constructed by and through the same media. That is, how might we navigate image-production as a spatiotemporal situation of negotiated co-production, positioned within a wider set of relations?

Principal Character

In this navigation, through research designed as a consecutive set of experiments, the figure of the guide has emerged both as principal character and useful analytical tool. Accordingly, the guide is neither instrumental nor founded on a harmonic model of mediation but a figure that discloses skill – and hence, affect; sensibility and care; humility and passion. We can understand what is disclosed in this way to be intrinsic to questions of mediation, when understood as a process or milieu that is never foreclosed. In fact, the figure of the guide allows me to consider the work of mediation to be driven by what I will discuss as a mediation passion, making mediation comprehensible as something which is, in a sense, always politically contested and uncertain.[18]

17 See, for example, Alf Hornborg, "Artifacts Have Consequences, Not Agency: Toward a Critical Theory of Global Environmental History," *European Journal of Social Theory* 20, no. 1 (2017): 95–110.

18 Mediation, that is, is not a settled concept, but, rather, full of political contradictions and antagonisms; of alienations and over-identifications. This understanding in part draws from Deleuze's discussion on mediators: Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972–1990*, European Perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

The guide embodies the attempt to show something to someone in a way that preserves the potentiality of something to show itself; to hold agency and to do something in the world. If the particular "something" were, say, a former mining site on Svalbard, this site would be the prism through which to consider "the showing". In the course of this process, the guide is a storyteller who has to answer to several stakeholders while investing her passion, experience and knowledge in the effort.

In this sense, this research project is an attempt to claim my own expertise as much as it is an attempt to show what it means to guide, constantly shifting between the process of making a film and of writing its script, reflecting both the process and the outcome of the PhD research. What is demonstrated is an experimental practice that manifests both as writing and as a set of iterative experiments.

Performative strategies

At the Mediating Climate Change Conference in Leeds this is what happened: I made a mistake by pausing the video sequence playing behind me and proposed to start anew. The "mistake" however, had already been integrated in what I was trying to convey in the presentation. The pause became part of the performance – a meta-reflexive moment – allowing the "agency" of the paleo-geologist in the image to be juxtaposed against my agency as the expert and the voiceover of the image sequence. Effectively, the experience caused me to speculate upon performative strategies that would be less pre-arranged or choreographed, and better allow for a temporality and for the provisional qualities of the assemblage to unfold; for the image to potentially start and stop, and start again. My response to this at this point is *live editing*,

which I consider both a precarious artistic film practice and an aesthetics of potentiality that embraces errors and social impulse in its mode of challenging contemporary image production.

So; what is live editing?

The European football championship of 2021 provides an easy-to-understand example of what live editing can be. When a Danish player suddenly collapsed from a heart attack during the championship, live-broadcast editors professionally handled the situation by cutting away from cameras on the ground to drone cameras hanging in the air. Doing so, they performed seamless media coverage of live sport and mainstream television production.

Nevertheless, live editing, and collaborative live editing in particular, offers an epistemological strategy of non-linearity or recursivity, that I propose holds the potential to explore more marginal spaces of standardized viewing. Live editing, I propose, also holds a rather radical potential in being always politically charged in the sense of being open to uncertainty. Think of TV stations being stormed by revolutionaries, and the concomitant state of emergency, making visible through a kind of Verfremdungseffekt the TV station's image-political role, as we see in Harun Farocki's *Videogram for a Revolution*. We see another significant exemplar in those protesters or dedicated fans showing up behind the live studio of *Go' aften Live* (TV2) or live cuts to news reporters in the field capturing accidental passers-by. In fact, there is always the possibility of being "cut and spliced" when TV2's live news helicopter is hanging in the air, and the use of live editing is, in this explicit sense, attuned to an aesthetics of the potentiality of the "now-live," also characterizing the more avant-garde tradition of performative live editing. Today, then,

an often-emphasized potential of web-based editing software is effectively sold to us as the possibility of pluralistic, process-driven and truly instantaneous interaction.[19]

Precisely for this reason, live editing plays a significant role in mainstream TV studio productions. Live-on-tape covers a way to generate material that captures a given staged event, then serving as the basis for post-editing processes. A kind of authenticity or "live ontology as ideology" is inscribed.[20] And this makes it interesting to observe how radio and TV hosts increasingly seem to articulate some form of media self-reflexivity on air – whether in the form of webcams live-streaming video from the radio studio on Facebook (Den Uafhængige Radio), or in the form of the hosts commenting that it's hot in the studio, or what kind of clothes they are wearing, and so on. It is almost as if on the one hand we are becoming increasingly habituated to glitches or "mistakes," as it were, but, on the other, these glitches and mistakes, becoming the standard, serve to enskill a particular viewing.

Alongside questions regarding methods in studio production, then, live editing opens manifold possibilities of politics and ideologies of the "live" and of "livelieness." In the context of what follows, however, live editing comes closer to the potential of ethnographic analysis, when considered a fundamental concern in knowledge production. That is, live editing is my attempt to craft a spatiotemporal location for the execution of analysis, which at its best "enlivens thought and concepts through a type of singularity that cannot be reduced to an example or an instantiation of a predetermined category,"[21] as the anthropologists

19 I am thinking, for example, of how database documentaries, covering a mode of storytelling where a kind repository of audiovisual materials is tagged and combined as the viewer of the film interacts with the interface of a software system, not only promise interaction and democratic participation, but are often considered to embrace cultural change and negotiation.

20 Jane Feuer, "The Concept of Live Television: Ontology As Ideology," in *Regarding Television: Critical Approaches*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (University Publications of America, 1983).

21 Andrea Ballestero and Brit Ross Winthereik, eds., *Experimenting with Ethnography: A Companion to Analysis*, Experimental Futures (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 4.

Andrea Ballestero and Brit Ross Winthereik write in *Experimenting with Ethnography* (2021). More precisely, Ballestero and Winthereik stress that the spatiotemporal location of analysis must be suspended for both the systematized and messy bodily labour of organizing material (composing index cards, crafting vignettes, and so on): "the power of singularity lies in how ethnography enlivens a concept itself, becoming its flesh and thus bringing it into existence in a different manner than how it previously was."[22]

In this sense, my practice with live editing as a research vehicle comes, perhaps, closer to a science experiment (requiring a shared situated engagement) than to any traditional understanding of the exhibition, challenging perhaps the very notion of the exhibition in so far as it hardly can be done "in front" of people. Live editing is the tool with which I try to immerse myself in a kind of analytical singularity; it is perhaps best described as a performative artistic experimentality, with which I try to craft analytical time-space suspense precisely by performing it.

The Script

The writing that follows is inspired by the long tradition and descriptive crafts of anthropology – the production of evidence through thick descriptions, based on fieldnotes, field experience and observations and by feminist critiques of neutral observation. My female body, wrapped in Gore-Tex and with "the prosthetic devices, visualization techniques, and other devices … configure

22 Ballestero and Winthereik reference Veena Das, who writes that "what counts as empirical [in ethnographic knowledge production] already bears the imprint of the conceptual," and, at the same time, as Ballestero and Winthereik write, "what is conceptual is given life and existence through the empirical charge of ethnographic relations" (Veena Das, "Analysis: Between the Empirical And the Conceptual," *Social Analysis* 1, no. 62 (2018): 11; Ballestero and Winthereik, *Experimenting with Ethnography*, 4.)

a distinct infrastructure for seeing, thinking and knowing," as the visual anthropologist Waltorp has pointed out.[23] In other words, I understand myself to be working adjacent to ethnographic practices turning towards poetics, while sustaining the chance to offer something else. And this "something" is not delimited by the disciplinary obligations of anthropology as a field of science.

Unfolding in the intersection between anthropology, film and contemporary art, the research and writing also draws inspiration from artistic strategies of juxtaposition, performativity and the essayistic, which I understand to hold (a field of) aesthetic sensitivity, critical capacity and an analytical agility which allows, or enables, unforeseen parallels and juxtapositions of seemingly incompatible contexts and phenomena. The essayistic holds the possibility of guiding in a guided fashion, open to whatever happens along the way and in the process of trying something out.[24]

More significantly, the points of intersection between anthropology, film and art in my work are informed by a critical stance regarding the role of the arts in society and on an implicit concern with art's production of social relations. Importantly, this is a stance that denies the author-subject as originator, and assumes, rather, the author to be a shifting and complex function of discourse, drawing on Foucault's notion of authorship as a function of writing itself, not a role belonging to the writer.[25] This is an important basis for the reading of what follows; the guide

23 Karen Waltorp, "Multimodal Sorting: The Flow of Images across Social Media and Anthropological Analysis," in *Experimenting with Ethnography: A Companion to Analysis*, ed. Andrea Ballestero and Brit Ross Winthereik, Experimental Futures (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 140.

24 The example that comes to mind, is Georg Kuchar's *Weather Diaries* (1986) – a kind of essay-film-making seduced by approaching tornados – and their varied forms of representations – recorded and edited in camera, from the inside of a motel room in Oklahoma in the United States.

25 In "What is an Author?" Foucault writes, in relation to the author of a textbook, that "it would be just as wrong to equate the author with the real writer as to equate him with the fictitious speaker; the author function is carried out and operates in the scission itself, in this division and this distance" (*The Foucault Reader*, 1991, 112).

emerges as an interesting figure in relation to the notion of the essayistic when the author is considered an agential function in a collaborative operation rather than a textual source. The figure of the guide is interesting to explore as an image-maker through the notion of the essayistic. Moreover, this potentially re-invents the essayistic itself – the concerns of the guide are different to those of the traditional essayist, if we think of the essay-maker as primarily concerned with how to construct an altered sense of historical or contemporary narrative. The guide, rather, offers resistance to the idea that any single reconstruction can escape the "progressive" (neo-colonial) futures of linear thinking. A chance and control nexus, characterizes guiding – a politics of temporality in relation to representation as technology.

This manifests in the research as an urge to fundamentally shift our thinking about the artist: a way of thinking away from the authorial act towards a recognition of different functions of authorship, according to which the creative act becomes a question of setting the conditions for things to happen. I propose post-future essayism to be both a methodological term and an artistic project derived from a discontentment with certain problems of epistemology that ethnographic writing renders legible and with the political implications these problems present to the artist's practice.

It may be useful to clarify that I understand discontentment as being "against" something in the dual sense of being both directly adjacent to it and as marking out a distinct position in relation to it.[26] Further I use the term as a linguistic gesture, sig-

26 I am borrowing this phrasing from the media philosopher Bernhard Stiegler, who speaks about how he adopts key concepts, methods, and insights from Derrida and Heidegger, while "correcting" these for their shortcomings in the maintenance of technicity at the centre of their considerations. Hence, Stiegler characterizes his relation to his major influences as being "against" them in the dual sense of being both right up close to them and marking out a distinct position in relation to theirs (Patrick Crogan, "Bernard Stiegler: Philosophy, Technics, and Activism," *Cultural Politics: An International Journal* 6, no. 2 (July 1, 2010): 133–56).

nalling both an irritation and a kind of critical sympathy with the potentiality of a label – be it the Arctic, the Anthropocene or the artist. Rather than being devoted to any idealized image-making, I am thus engaged with the processes and environments in which a label is written and read. In fact, this is how live editing as post-future essayism covers the research's attempt to navigate geo-aesthetical relations, the concept of history and coloniality in knowledge production. A poetic reading of live editing, then, stresses provisionality as the central premise with which the method implies a risk, or indeed the possibility, that blurs questions of form, formlessness and theoretical abstraction. As a mode of setting the conditions for something to happen, often together with other people, live editing as post-future essayism produces a continuity of discontinuities. And while it does this, the situation of editing is inscribed in the material record, permitting an immediacy in the performative situation that serves as a constructive differentiation, even an estrangement, from directed and framed viewing.

The Visual Record

Provisionality implies movement; shifts, turns and jumps. Shifts in writing style, turns to different literatures and jumps in historical time. I am aware that the theories I am dealing with are diverse and disparate, ranging from anthropology and tourist studies to film studies and art history, media philosophy, eco-Marxism and new materialism. But in seeking to develop a transdisciplinary perspective, the intention is not to exercise disciplinary ingenuity, but, rather, to draw inspiration from my live editing practice, in thinking-writing-making the text.

Perhaps, then, the six chapters and its attendant vignettes and the After Word that follow serve to form a literary equivalent of an essay film, as far as it is neither academic, personal nor

poetic unless it is all of these things at once.[27] I am not only informed by scholarly literature but by a proliferation of anecdotes, stories, impressions, things I still grapple to understand – myself as hard drive!

This engenders imagery. Meanwhile, neither illustrating the writing, nor separating themselves entirely from it, actual visual interstices invite the chance encounters and sudden discoveries between textual and visual material – the hallmark of so many essay films. Moreover, in this terrain the guide is a tool to know differently, precisely because she does not have to present her own conclusion but is, rather, someone who submits to something and accepts letting things flow through. She can't control what her co-producers (the audience) take and use. This is, then, a different relationship to knowledge, much more like being a channel – albeit a channel that consists of something; the guide has her reason and passions and these become the medium through which the guided is channelled. Her passion cuts and organizes.

In thinking about Svalbard, then, as a context where the function and editing of images are closely connected to questions of territory, sovereignty and ownership, the figure of the guide does not offer a model that inspires any solution, but perhaps a kind of temporary presence, differentiating my own knowing and, thereby, my understanding of that figure's politics.

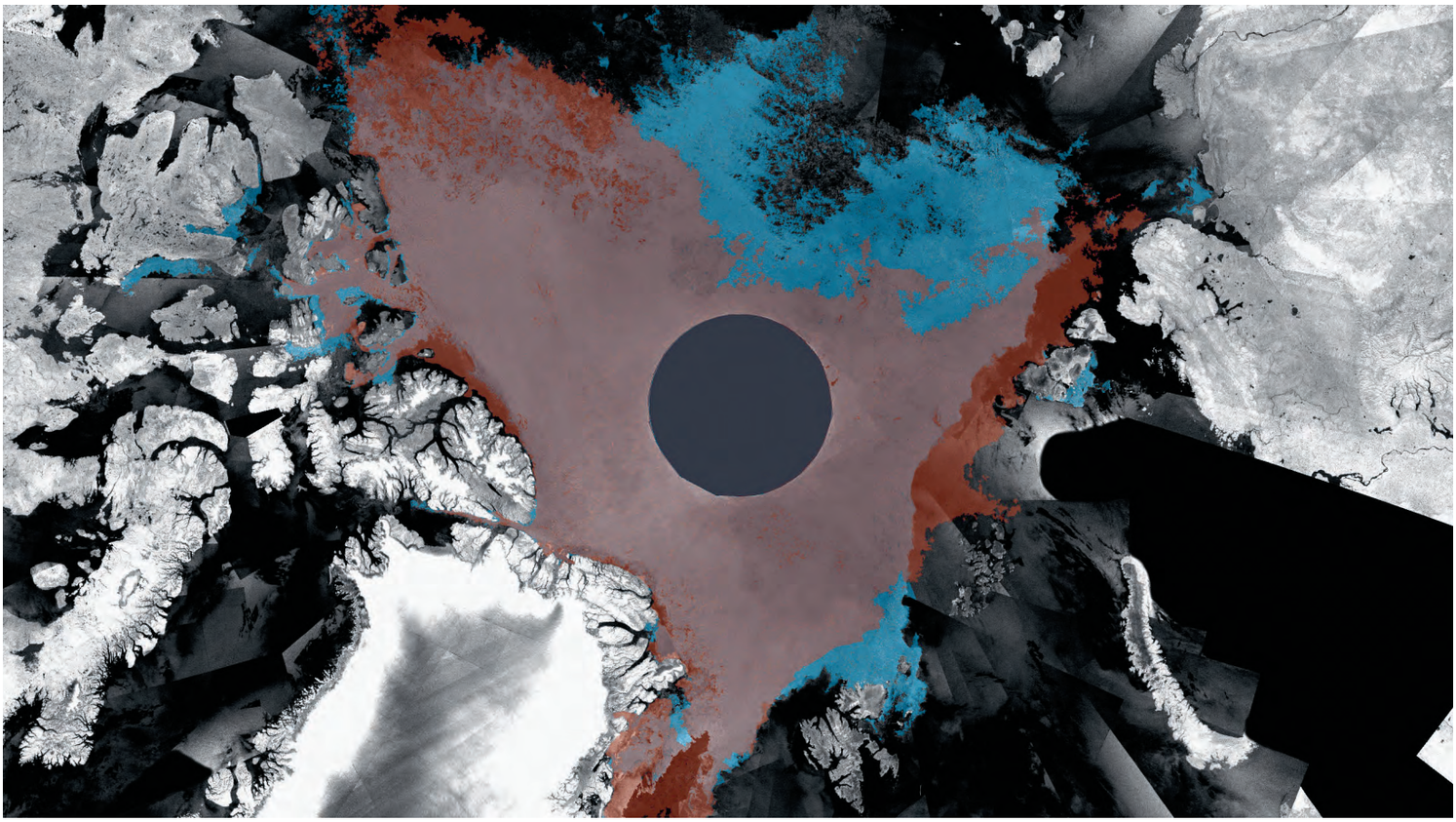
I will offer, then, an After Word in the form of a teaser for an indeterminate possibility, not a conclusion – and it is for this reason that there is no "resolved" artwork to be exhibited beyond this PhD research.

27 I borrow this inversion of the usual genealogies that start with the literary essay, and then derive from it the cinematic essay – in the words of the film scholar Thomas Elsaesser "a pedigree that may not be as historically accurate or analytically helpful, even if names like Montaigne and Lukacs, Benjamin and Adorno do help to ennoble and legitimate a bastard cinematic practice." ("The Essay Film: From Film Festival Favorite to Flexible Commodity Form?," in *Essays on the Essay Film,* ed. Nora M. Alter and Timothy Corrigan (Columbia University Press, 2017), 248).

In fact, intending to enact my practice with live editing as I have developed it in the research in the context of the public defence, what follows is a highly-edited script of an event that I can prepare but not fully control. The outcome of the research, then, is the demonstration of an attempt to move beyond the reduction of writing and artwork to a dialectics of explanation and experience; it is an integrated take on artistic work and text, mediated from within an intermediary position. This is the role of the editor – from within the middle of things, of anything, the place where the guide-editor, the one who edits the live editing, who writes, who edits the text, likes to be.

The aim is a geo-aesthetically discontented position, or the possibility of a practice, tackling the force of much image-production related to the Arctic, indicative of wider basic conditions for visual production (among other forms of production) in the contemporary context of late capitalism.

Video still. October 2021



European Space Agency. September 2007

Video still. September 2017

Video still. May 2018

Thesis Movement in Three Parts

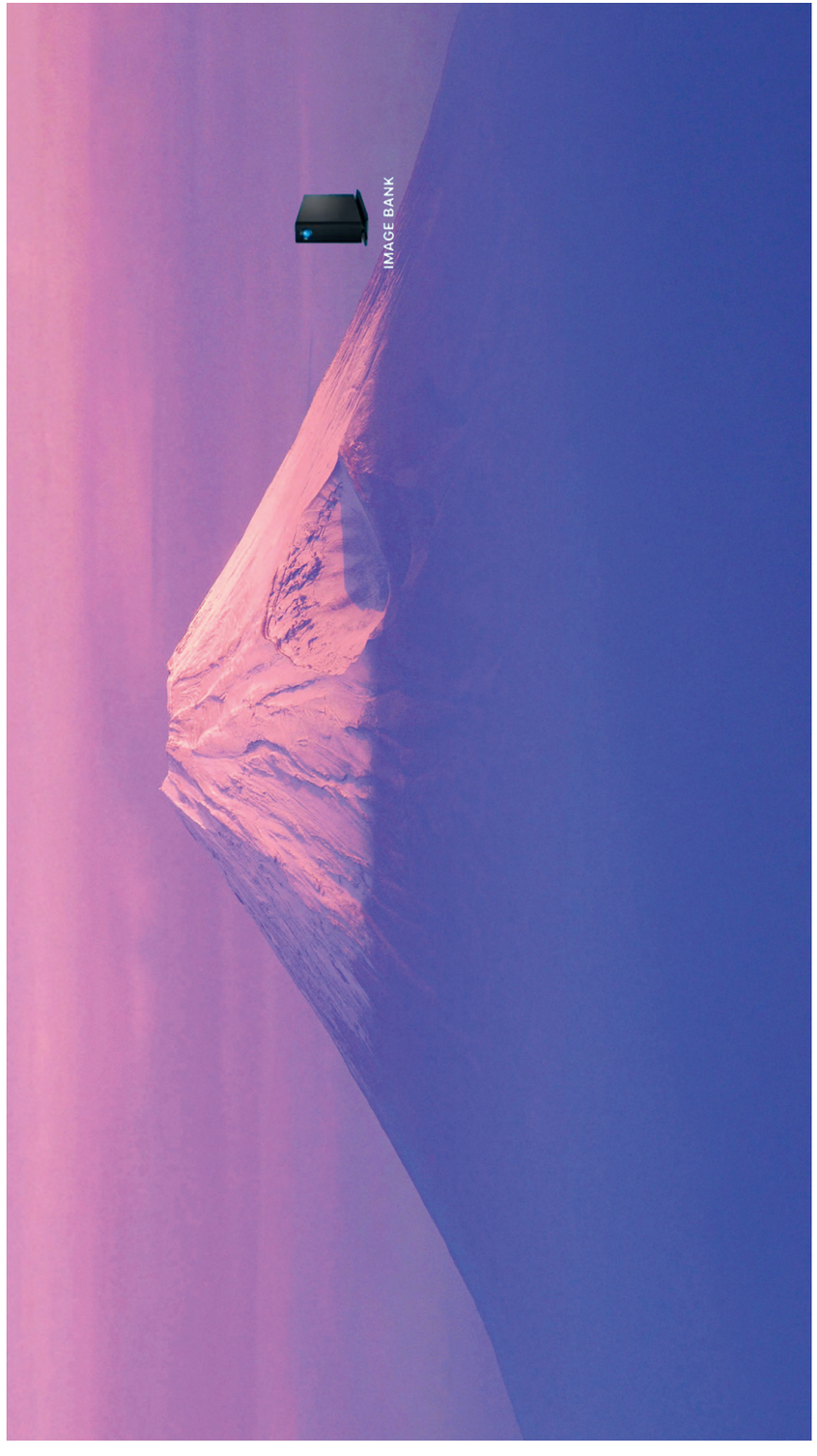
The thesis is divided into three parts reflecting the research's movements and driven by different forms of writing. I use crafted arguments, fieldnotes, thick descriptions, letter writing and journal entries with visual annottions. Video stills, mobile images, screen captures and downloaded online images are inserted throughout the text. They offer the reader a moment of reflection and propose to negotiate the "landscape" of the dissertation.

Part 1 introduces a set of historical characters that point to the colonial Arctic as we know it, while disclosing how colonial relations can also be affective relations and vice versa. This is important because the geo-aesthetical terrain the guide navigates in the present is predicated on historical relations and imaginaries. Reflecting upon my own image-making in introducing Svalbard through fieldnotes and thick descriptions, Part 1 is about the Arctic as it is constantly produced; as an indeterminate image. The main characters are the Danish female painter Emilie Demant Hatt (1873–1958) and the Sámi wolf hunter and author Johan Turi (1854–1936), and a group of Arctic Nature Guides.

Part 2 introduces new characters: Swedish researchers on fieldwork anno 2016 set the stage for battling narratives about Svalbard as a historical site of coal extraction. Thereupon the creation of Arctic/environmental imaginaries on Svalbard is shown to have material effects. The scenography then shifts for the sake of a discussion of the research's central pillar: the colonial legacy of Euro-American naturalism, and the importance of doing away with the traditional roles of both the artist and the researcher as knowledge-producing figures in a (neo-colonial) production of the past. Accounting for a set of different encounters with image-makers working in Greenland, partly through letter-writing

in which I offer private journal entries, I reflect that, in order to understand climate change as a human-caused threat of "loss," it is useful to understand that the Arctic has never been authentic; the "loss," I claim, consists in the increasingly impossible conditions for the processes of historical becoming.

Part 3 delineates my performative strategies in order to cut to the relationship between post-future essayism and the figure of the guide. Again, I turn to a pair of of historical characters: the anthropologists Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson who discuss their differing positions on the correct or the most interesting use of a camera. This allows me to further discuss the guide's capacity to trouble illusions and ideas of authenticity, pure authorship and undisturbed knowledge production. Drawing upon specific scenarios of my live editing experimentation, and acknowledging how I am affected by temporary fragments, such as a Facebook post by a friend, by including them alongside my own notes, I ask: can there be no authorship, only guidance? A guidance thought of as a behaviour through which temporality is equally presented, produced and lived?



Screen capture. April 2020

Video still. October 2021

PART I

Notes on Muitalus Sámiid Birra / Or, on the Production of a Practice

Copenhagen, August 17, 2020. Outside Astrid Noack's Atelier, before the construction of a seven storey building.

From my window I see a group of tourists on a city walk. They are standing in a semicircle around a guide in the square below my apartment. The guide is wearing a backpack and is gesturing with her hands. I imagine that she is telling the group of tourists about the riots in Nørrebro on 18 May, 1993, when Denmark voted "Yes" to the EU after having voted "No" a year earlier. Police fired on protesters for the first time in peacetime. At least 113 gunshots were fired; 11 were subsequently treated for gunshot wounds.

The street fight is a distinctive event in portrayals of the area where I live – a former working-class neighbourhood which, 25 years ago, went by the name *Den sorte firkant*, "Black Square." Today, it is a mundane middle-class area of town. It is a story of real estate speculation and gentrification. The displacement of former inhabitants whose lives remain part of the stories told of the place.

How do I foster situated transmissions of a sense of place in the context of a community defined by continuing change? How to avoid reducing either place or this process of change to encapsulating explanations or deadening repetitions of a fixed storyline? What kinds of poetic effort allow for an attunement to forms and alterations of cultural production in an iterative fashion? How to enable the "hard-to-grasp sense of something"?[28]

From my apartment window, I turn to the effect of the power of an image and to the written word as a medium for summoning authority: *Muitalus sámiid birra*, a book written in 1910 about the life of the Sámi people, and the first book written in Sámi by a Sámi person– Johan Turi, the wolf hunter who became a writer.

Situating Myself

Muitalus sámiid birra may be considered documentation or testimony. It appears as an organized collection of moments in a non-linear narrative. It appears to begin repeatedly – as if the book suggests a story that is like the process of investigation. An

28 Stewart, "An Occupied Place," 139.

iterative practice. My interest in the book is further sharpened upon reading that telling stories is an essential part of everyday life in Sápmi – the northernmost part of Fennoscandinavia, what once was known as Lapland.[29]

I became acquainted with *Muitalus sámiid birra* while reading about the painter Emilie Demant Hatt (1873–1958). More precisely, I was working on a video commission in 2017 for a village in Northern Jutland called Selde, which is where Demant Hatt was born in 1873. She left village life and settled in Copenhagen to study at a drawing school before she was admitted to the Danish Royal Academy of Fine Arts School of Art for Women in 1898, the year after its establishment. She initially painted in a naturalistic style, like many other contemporary female painters, adopting modernist and expressionist ideas in the 1920s. After Demant Hatt's last exhibition at Charlottenborg in 1949, a reviewer warned against ignoring her. "En vildfugl flakker over Dansk kunst," he wrote – a wild bird wanders over Danish art. Dorte Smedegaard and Helle Askgaard's *Vildfuglene* is a captivating account of her story.

In short, while *Muitalus sámiid birra* has figured as a remarkable book since it was published in 1910, albeit without a continual place in the spotlight, Demant Hatt is a relatively unknown historical figure. For a long time she was almost forgotten. But in 1981, Sundsøre Lokalhistoriske Arkiv arranged an exhibition of her paintings, prompting renewed interest in her work; among instances of the cultural recognition that followed, the Sámi theatre Beaivváš Sámi Našunálateáhter staged a play about her life in 1993. Skive Museum's archive contains part of her sketching work, largely sketches from the Sundsøre area but also from her travels in Sápmi.

29 Britt Kramvig and Helen Verran, "Stories, Stones, and Memories in the Land of Dormant Reciprocity. Opening up Possibilities for Reconciliation with a Politics That Works Tensions of Dissensus and Consensus with Care," in *Recognition, Reconciliation and Restoration: Applying a Decolonized Understanding in Social Work and Healing Processes*, ed. Jan Erik Henriksen, Ida Hydle, and Britt Kramvig (Orkana Forlag, 2019), 165–82.

*
For a long time, the idealized artist figure has been a man.
It takes an effort to preserve the legacy of early female artists.
*

I did not study at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, like Demant Hatt, but at the Jutland Academy of Arts in Aarhus. I was longing for somewhere else and Aarhus, in Jutland, seemed exotic. I later did an internship in New York and an exchange in Tromsø. In 2008, I encountered Sámi culture and the struggle for rights at first hand in northern Norway; this was where I first heard about the Alta conflict, which, in the 1970s, secured the status of the Sámi as an indigenous people with rights to northern Norwegian territories. The violent conflict united the Sámi struggle for recognition with a struggle for the environment – a struggle against neocolonialism.

In 1904, the year after Demant Hatt's debut at the spring exhibition at Charlottenborg, and while studying at the Danish Royal Academy of Fine Arts School of Art for Women, she and her sister travelled on an iron ore train to northern Sweden. There they met Johan Turi. The encounter with Turi and his family, who lived a nomadic life in the border area between Norway and Sweden, motivated Demant Hatt to study the Sámi language and to return shortly after she finished her art studies in 1907. Her goal, with Johan Turi's help, was to live and travel with the Sámi for at least a year. Turi acted as a kind of *cultural broker* or intermediary: a cultural insider and a kind of (political) authority in the tense relationship between metropole and colonial periphery, the traditional sphere of old-school anthropology. It is perhaps worthwhile expanding on why brokers were used and the roles they were called on to play – a method of investment in understanding different to that used by contemporary anthropologists.

Copenhagen, August 17, 2020. Outside Astrid Noack's Atelier, before the construction of a seven storey building.

The Cultural Broker

I am drawn to the idea of Turi as a cultural broker through a general interest in the guide as an actor in anthropology – not in the sense of a privileged position, but in what arises when attention is anchored in a specific location towards the meaning and effect of narratives. It strikes me that the encounter between Demant Hatt and Turi complicates the idea of brokering and brokerage.

Briefly, in anthropology, the cultural broker has historically been understood as a representative of a particular culture; *brokerage* is the representation of a cultural form of a particular identity. But during the 1960s, the idea of the broker as a social agent increasingly began to allow more formal considerations of

the role as a kind of entrepreneur for opinions and ideas, and with both economic and political interests.[30]

Basically, a more sophisticated understanding of power made it necessary to focus on the mediation of the very framework of meaning. I am thinking here of the postcolonial state during the '70s and '80s as the primary field for studies of power and dominance, which made political analyses at the level of the broker less important.[31] The focus shifted to a more general inquiry into the production of power and the subsequent disciplining and shaping of individual subjectivities; I myself am trained with such a focus.[32]

30 Johan Lindquist, "Brokers and Brokerage, Anthropology Of," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (Elsevier, 2015), 870–74.

31 Lindquist.

32 I am trained with Michel Foucault's understanding of the expansion of productive forces in capitalism (discussed as unique political-economic transformations) and his diagnosis in this of an emergence of forms of power that are "bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them" (*The History of Sexuality. Volume 1*, 2020). This connects to his critical engagement with representational knowledge – representations as social facts (Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971) making power a question of the relations and effects of a wide range of social and political practices making up the Western world—a world in which order, truth and the subject are paramount. What I owe to Foucault, then, is a way of thinking about the relationship between power and life, when life is that which is made productive through techniques of intervention (Foucault talks about techniques that govern and administer), but also that which constantly escapes these techniques. Furthermore, what emerges from this training is, arguably, a politics of experience revolving around how "power relations and effects work through but are mediated by the diversity of elements and forces that compose experience," as Anderson writes in "Cultural Geography 1: Intensities and Forms of Power," *Progress in Human Geography* 41, no. 4 (August 2017): 501–11. See also: Ben Anderson, "Affect and Biopower: Towards a Politics of Life," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 37, no. 1 (2012): 28–43).

I believe that my generation's way of thinking is founded on a crisis of representation.[33] I have experienced nothing but neoliberal reforms and increasingly pervasive global capitalism. Therefore, I do not have the same notions of state-centred power and sovereignty as previous generations. I have grown up in a transnational landscape where technological innovations in transport, communication and social media make it seem pointless to talk about delimited or fixed identities and how separate entities enter into dialogue with each other.[34] It is the other way around: identity is produced through interaction, in impermanent, transient constellations and moments. While I question whether the broker has basically been replaced by the producer, what is at stake is not the production of cultural forms and meanings but the very conditions for meaning-making, which ironically returns the broker to the centre.

What is interesting, in other words, is the relationship between brokerage and mediation.

Artistic Inspiration

During the year Demant Hatt lived and travelled with the Sámi, she developed her Sámi language skills, took notes and made sketches that later served as templates for paintings. Her notes reveal that the desire to travel north and live with the Sámi was motivated by a desire for a different emotional register and

33 In being trained with Foucault's assertion of representations as social facts, the generation of scholars and cultural producers, of which I am part, routinely employ formal techniques of representation in their discourses. Effectively, I am thinking here of social scientists' concerns in general, with social order, domination and resistance, marginalisation, and inequality, and of anthropologist's concern with ethnographic writing in particular. I demonstrate this concern throughout this thesis.

34 In the "Special Issue: The Interface of Culture and Communication" (*Tourism Culture & Communication*, 2021) Jundan Jasmine Zhang and Adam Doering stress the idea of communication as *interface*.

Copenhagen, August 17, 2020. Outside Astrid Noack's Atelier, before the construction of a seven storey building.

unique visual experiences,[35] a desire and attraction coinciding with a more general idea of the adventure artist, inspired by the ethnographer's "studies" of "the exotic other." According to Demant Hatt, Turi hoped from the beginning that Demant Hatt, in return, could help him write a book about Sámi life and culture.

35 As I am re-reading my account of Demant Hatt's desire to travel and live with the Sámi, I reflect upon my own desire to travel north and realize a connection between Demant Hatt's desire for travelling in space in order to encounter a different emotional register and a contemporary consideration of 'the ethnographic moment' as "an exercise of being open to whatever is to come later" (Marilyn Strathern, *Property, Substance, and Effect: Anthropological Essays on Persons and Things* (London: Athlone Press, 1999), 9. That is, as Strathern writes, "time, rather than space, has become the crucial axis for isolation or separation (Strathern, 1). Subsequently, Demant Hatt also helps me realize that the kind of Arctic image-making that I am working up against are ones that work to totalize the Arctic.

After she returned to Copenhagen for the second time, she and Turi thus kept in touch, and together they continued to develop the idea of a book about life and culture in Sápmi.

Three years later, in 1909, Demant Hatt and Johan Turi spent the summer in a cottage by Torneträsk in Norrbotten. Here Turi wrote the texts and drew the pictures that later became *Muitalus sámiid birra*. Demant Hatt then returned to Copenhagen and spent another two years translating Turi's texts and reproducing his drawings. She succeeded in financing publication thanks to her association with the Swedish state geographer Hjalmar Lundbohm (1855–1926), then managing director of the mining company Luossovaara-Kiirunavaara in Kiruna.

I flick through one article after another assuming that Turi and Demant Hatt had a romantic relationship – clearly an alluring idea. A gendered reading offers a significant perspective to the dynamics of power defining their relation.

If one understands brokerage as a kind of engaged attitude, is not the broker's position (in the traditional understanding of the cultural broker) less encapsulated than itself active in a process of encapsulation? I am looking for a figure who can lead me away from the idea of the financial broker, the middleman, and instead seek to approach a position – or perhaps, rather, the possibility of a practice – where passion, humility and discontentment may meet. Can the broker be understood as a discontented sympathiser?

Demant Hatt is a completely different kind of middleman to Turi. If she is mentor and financial intermediary, he is the pathfinder. It strikes me that while the idea of retrospective renderings and explanations of old sketches can certainly be an interesting method of recalling lived experiences, I'm not particularly interested in Demant Hatt's paintings; most of her travelogue paintings are from many years later. What does interest me is that

Demant Hatt gave a lecture to the Royal Danish Geographical Society on 13 December 1911, in which she spoke about her time among the Sámi and about her work as a "birth helper" for Johan Turi's book. It was the first lecture given by a woman in the history of this Danish scientific society established in 1876. Turi himself sat in the second row in the large hall in the Prince's Palace, where the lecture was held. Demant Hatt's use of the term "birth helper" in describing her own role seems at once gendered and colonial, infantilizing and subjectivising.[36] The birthing of Turi's *Muitalus sámiid birra* is being helped, so to speak – a striking idea, given the repeated readings of their relationship as romantic, but also given a basic understanding of the collaborations that inform the production of an author's work.

While Demant Hatt's lecture at the Geographical Society was criticized by the Norwegian ambassador in Copenhagen as too political, in 1940 she received the Hazelius Medal from the Crown Prince of Sweden. Could it be that Demant Hatt's position as a female artist, active in the periphery of the traditionally male-coded artist role, enables a more open (self-) understanding of an artist's work. Is it easier to navigate freely between the roles of ethnographer, painter, translator and editor, amongst others? The ethnographer when understood as someone making analysis based on fieldnotes, who looks back at the field; the painter when assumed as someone who expresses or creates

36 It is worth pointing out that my reading of the term "birth helper"' is influenced by the language that historically has permeated the colonial relationship between Denmark and Greenland. Thus, it for example reads in the Greenlandic Society's Yearbook (1938): "Loyal to Colony as to Motherland, Danish Influence in Greenland has only sought one big and beautiful goal: to help a small, isolated and primitive population to a place in the sun equally besides other Nations'." (Det Grønlandskse Selskabs Aarsskrift, 1938 (my translation)

presence through art making.[37] The editor and translator when presumed to organize material to make it available for someone in the future.[38] I myself navigate a series of these roles in my practice – as a financial intermediary in relation to collaborators, as ethnographer in the field, as videographer, editor and director (coordinator) of iterative experiments with video live editing.

And then there are Turi's drawings, or "plates," as they are termed in *Muitalus sámiid birra*. Lithographic reproductions. Depictions of situations. Landscapes in motion, and disappearing physical circumstances. The drawings are flat, incomplete, vacant white paper serving as background. They lack scenography. Turi's landscapes seems to be depictions of sequences of time, in which reindeer may cross a river somewhere in northern Sweden at the beginning of the last century – a collection of optical experiences serving to instil a certain distrust of the pure and measurable.

In Christopher P. Heuer's fascinating book *Into the White: The Renaissance Arctic and the End of the Image*, he identifies a "desperation to scale New World phenomena within a European epistemological syntax."[39]

37 Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

38 Many of Demant Hatt's paintings from "Lapland" were painted decades after she returned from her travels, and when she had adopted a different, more expressionistic, painting style. In this sense the ethnographer looking back at notes from the field and the artist creating presence somewhat merge with the editor.

39 Christopher P. Heuer, *Into the White: The Renaissance Arctic and the End of the Image* (New York: Zone Books, 2019), 60.

Copenhagen, August 17, 2020. Outside Astrid Noack's Atelier, before the construction of a seven storey building.

The Book's Afterlife

Muitalus sámiid birra was published in 1910. Demant Hatt translated it into Danish the following year. It was later translated into German, Swedish, English (as *An Account of the Sámi*), Finnish, Hungarian and Japanese. Interestingly, the Norwegian rendering is the most recent. I would have imagined a Norwegian translation to have come earlier; the translation from 2011 indicates the late political recognition of Sámi culture in Norway.

In later editions of *Muitalus sámiid birra*, Demant Hatt's introduction has been removed. This might be understood as an editorial attempt to free Turi's text from colonial mediation – but it can also be read as an editorial adaptation of the image of the male author, concealing a collaboration fundamental to the work's creation.

Muitalus sámiid birra was financed by the mine director Hjalmar Lundbohm during the early phase of the industrialization of northern Sweden.[40] This phase in the colonization of land cannot be separated from Swedish art history; the contemporary artist Hanni Kamaly has written both about Lundbohm's extensive financing of Swedish art around the turn of the last century and his advocation of the doctrine "Lapp ska vara lapp" – Lapps should be Lapps. Lundbohm was not alone in this attitude, considered to be progressive. This doctrine was shared, with amongst others, Selma Lagerlöf, Ellen Key, Verner von Heidenstam and Sven Hedin, all of whom contributed financially to the infamous Folktypsutställningen of 1919, a photographic exhibition of "folk types."

I have been told that remaindered copies of *Muitalus sámiid birra* were sent to Turi after Hjalmar Lundbohm's death, and that he resold them to tourists, making the book significant in the creation of the tourist's desire to travel. The development of tourism as an industry in the context of imperialist globalization is dictated from the metropolitan centres – an ultimate by-product of which is the acceleration of climate change.

A true anthropology of tourism arrived, in part, with the landmark book *Host and Guest: The Anthropology of Tourism* from 1977, showing the close links between the colonial heritage of mass tourism and the role of the cultural broker, including the tourist guide, through the symbolic and material values of imagined geographies. The north, I might add, is rich in both. My insight into tourism as an anthropological field focuses on a more contemporary idealized guide figure: the arctic nature guide.

40 The company is still mining ore in Kiruna today.

Copenhagen, August 17, 2020. Outside Astrid Noack's Atelier, before the construction of a seven storey building.

The Construction of the Arctic

The landscape of the Arctic was romanticized during the nineteenth century. In the age of polar expeditions and photography, the well-known visual culture of the sublime Arctic was organized for the privileged human being as the centres of the narrative of no man's land. Not least by artists.

*

"Sail, sail, adventurous Barks! go fearless forth
Storm on his glacie seat the misty North"[41]

*

Arctic history, from a Western perspective, begins as a non-history of non-events – the silence before action preceding the well-known, eventful tale of commercially enterprising rival masculine hero characters setting forth in epic and untouched polar landscapes. I have seen countless versions of the latter image – the diaries, texts and photographs that have served as sources for similarly minded adventurers in search of new experiences. The role of expedition pioneers in the invention of the Arctic is thus closely linked to the production of the territory and sovereignty of the modern state, through the idea of civilization and non-civilization and perceptions of no man's land. The historical relationship between the Romantic preoccupation with the sublime and global capitalism laid a solid foundation for the author-figure of Western cultures.

During the twentieth century, heroic Arctic expeditions were replaced by more long-term projects, both state-funded and commercial: measuring stations, raw material extraction, mass tourism and Cold War propaganda. It remained a remote natural area defined mainly in scientific terms. During the Cold War, however, the Arctic became strategically important, which can be regarded as a significant shift towards its becoming "more than a periphery for and defined by explorers and polar scientists."[42] In these years, the Arctic slowly gained the definition of a circumpolar region with the North Pole at its centre. As a natural environment it was still represented, in the main, as an untouched wilderness free from human impact; indigenous inhabitants were still largely regarded as naturally linked to this hostile and desolate wilderness, enjoying an exceptional status that rendered them fundamentally "other" to ordinary Europeans.

But it has become warmer since then. The temperature is rising. In the past thirty years the minimum coverage of summer ice has fallen by half and its volume by three-quarters; global heating is changing the Arctic more rapidly than anywhere else. Given current trends, by 2040 the Arctic Ocean will be largely

41 Eleanor Anne Porden, 1818 (in Christopher P. Heuer, *Into the White: The Renaissance Arctic and the End of the Image* (New York: Zone Books, 2019), 60.

42 Carina Keskitalo, "International Region-Building: Development of the Arctic as an International Region," *Cooperation and Conflict* 42, no. 2 (2007): 193.

ice-free in summer.[43] But the Arctic is also heating in terms of its arrival as an integrated region, a global arena for cultural, political and economic frictions and interests around future natural resources and infrastructures across an open polar ocean. Most importantly, the status of the indigenous peoples of the far North has changed. While for generations the Arctic has been described and represented by people living in the South, the peoples of the Arctic are now representing themselves, both on the political stage and in art, literature and film and the media.[44] With the region increasingly valued as a multifaceted, historicized and cultivated area, *Muitalus sámiid birra* is becoming a crucial source for histories of the populated Arctic – a *histoire croisée*[45] challenging the nation state as the starting point for historical presentation and analysis. In effect, such a historio-theoretical concept affords a consideration of *Muitalus sámiid birra* as the antithesis of research stations, oil platforms and cruise ships.

While these spatial inscriptions of colonial heritage are based on biophysical and cartographic definitions of the Arctic, *Muitalus sámiid birra* draws from indigenous experiences of landscapes and lives. The outsider's gaze has dominated research throughout the twentieth century, and "the Arctic" is an outsider's term – a loan word in Sámi, rarely used to describe Sápmi itself.

Yet the question of an inside and an outside is in itself, a discursive construction that produces competing and contradictory imaginaries of the Arctic. It is a geo-aesthetic paradox. While the

43 The newest SWIPA report on snow, water, ice and permafrost in the Arctic (http://www.amap.no/swipa2017)

44 Kirsten Thisted, "De-Framing the Indigenous Body. Ethnography, Landscape and Cultural Belonging in the Art of Pia Arke," *Nordlit* 16, no. 1 (2012): 283.

45 Körber, MacKenzie, and Stenport, *Arctic Environmental Modernities*, 10. See also: Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity," *History and Theory* 45, no. 1 (2006): 30–50.

region has never been deserted or unpolluted, it is precisely the idea of the pure Arctic that stirs emotions and leads to action. The commercialization of the Arctic in the twentieth century sold us an image we still believe in – a vanishing, desolate landscape, threatened by climate change, that makes us aware of the impact of our own actions.

Collaborative Ethnography

It is possible to highlight the collaborative aspects and to consider *Muitalus sámiid birra* a publication project with a focus on the importance of the terrain; the presence of other people, the agency of technology and the biophysical environment become

Copenhagen, August 17, 2020. Outside Astrid Noack's Atelier, before the construction of a seven storey building.

material parameters necessary for the book's production.[46] Along these lines, the cultural studies scholar Kristin Kuutma regards Turi and Demant Hatt's collaboration "a collaborative ethnography before its time," and *Muitalus sámiid birra* a synergistic effort in the work towards a mutual goal.[47]

46 A basic idea in collaborative ethnography is that the anthropologist's perspective is considered alongside, rather than above, their interlocutors. Hence, cultural critique in anthropology – "the use of cultural richness for self-reflection and self-growth" (George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 9.) – has partly been concerned with the ways in which collaborative research projects may reconcile multiple knowledge systems through acknowledgement of the subjective experiences informing knowledge (Marietta L. Baba, "Theories of Practice in Anthropology: A Critical Appraisal," *NAPA Bulletin* 18, no. 1 (2008): 17–44). I will later return to discuss ethnographic filmmaking, and how theory in the field of visual anthropology has focused upon the objective versus the subjective perspective of the anthropologist-filmmaker as sole creator. However, thinking about *Muitalus sámiid birra* as a collaborative effort arguably expands discussions concerning the subjective reality of filmmaking and editing. The effort perhaps comes closer to that which Luke Lattiser has called *reciprocal ethnography*, being an approach where the anthropologist continually adjusts their perspectives and interpretations through dialogue with cultural constituents during the research phase (Luke E. Lassiter, *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 8–9.). Hence, the anthropologist-interlocuters relationship is repositioned into one of clear mutual understanding, as opposed to a hierarchical relation. In *More Than Meets the Eye*, Demant Hatt is thus aptly called Turi's "friend and interlocutor." Demant Hatt helps Turi become an autonomous author (she helps him write in his own language), while Turi helps Demant Hatt gain ethnographic authority (Harald Gaski, "More than Meets the Eye: The Indigeneity of Johan Turi's Writing and Artwork," *Scandinavian Studies* 83, no. 4 (2011): 591–608.

47 *Muitalus sámiid birra* "was not a single effort, but the result of a collaborative undertaking by a Sámi insider and a Danish outsider," writes Kuutma, eschewing essentialist studies of the book as a transparent text or singular effort. Rather, she approaches the book as a "collaborative ethnography before its time" by inquiring into aspects of cultural poetics and cultural politics and by examining the historical context of the books "contested codes and representations, the negotiated subjectivities, and the politics of constituting textual representations and creating interpretive authorities"(Luke E. Lassiter, *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 8–9). Hence, "before its time" refers to the later post-structuralist questionings of the Western privileged position to represent "others," and particularly to how a crisis of representation in anthropology in the 1980s mobilized strategies for explicit cultural critiques in any written representation (Marcus and Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*.) Debates on collaborative ethnography are often regarded as effects thereof.

Can Turi and Demant Hatt be seen as both guides and friends? Living and physical experiences, different historical knowledge and rhetorical habits undoubtedly play an important role in the formation of power structures. But perhaps through an acknowledgment of affective relationships, one can develop the categories "colonized/ colonizing." Perhaps Turi and Demant Hatt can be regarded as pragmatic and committed subjectivities, whose collaboration simultaneously shapes and opposes these structures.

A wise friend from Tromsø writes to me that it is important to give one's time in the dialogue with Sámi philosophy and its sources – to be able to listen carefully, and, perhaps even more importantly, to be able to ask yourself why you really want to be in dialogue with these sources. Why is *Muitalus sámiid birra* important, and how does the book inspire my work? My friend asks me: "What do you want to take with you into the future of art?"

Production of Practice

My thesis is that the guide complicates the idea of the landscape as a background; if its emergence may be inevitable, it is nonetheless mediated. The naturalist's eye is challenged as the landscape is read through its social stories and surroundings are read as interwoven layers of social and biophysical sediments. The guide causes the temporality of authenticity to collapse – and with it the idea of undisturbed authorship and the pure production of knowledge. Authenticity is something produced. In fact, rather than collapsing, the temporality of authenticity is contrary to a configuration of the past: authenticity is not a matter of origin but a matter of becoming. According to *Muitalus*, all

Copenhagen, August 17, 2020. Outside Astrid Noack's Atelier, before the construction of a seven storey building.

life revolves and recurs in circles of death and regrowth, parallel to the cyclical nature of seasons and heavenly bodies. As Turi writes: "Man har ikke hørt, at lapperne skulde være kommen noget steds fra" ("no one has ever said that the Lapps must have come from somewhere else").[48]

This does not mean, however, that different types of historical baggage are irrelevant. On the contrary, their importance becomes explicit when one considers historical constructions of understandings of the Arctic as an exceptional no man's land and the conquest of these lands in the context of European colonialism. In other words, given the kinds of affect that can arise in specific encounters and environments, the many different social,

48 A recent Master's thesis on the Sámi conception of history brought my attention to this quote (Mads Sørensen, "'Man har ikke hørt, at Lapperne skulde være kommen noget steds fra' – Et indblik i en samisk historieopfattelse" (Roskilde Universitet, 2016).

tactile and implicit qualities and sensibilities that emerge, there is an important distinction to be drawn between authenticity and having a story.

Thus, I am myself driven by the desire to complicate my own label as an artist. Or out of a desire to escape my own self-delineation through the development of a practice (by which I mean the work of generating, rather than simply rendering, explaining, or deconstructing) that can contribute to a fundamental shift in our cultural configuration of the artist; a way of thinking beyond questions of (pure) origin and towards a recognition of the changing functions of the cultural producer.

In this way, the creative act becomes a matter of setting the parameters for something to take place, or to change, and the artist a more widely distributed and connected cultural practitioner. The artist is no longer imagined as "special" or possessed of genius.

In practical terms, I suggest an experimental approach and aesthetics of potentiality, connecting historical and affective knowledges in both discursively and materially situated environments. Video live editing is a multi-perspectival, fragmented, situated and cooperative film practice, concerned with imagining different models of image formation. Drawing on a tradition of improvisation, being performative and repetitive, live editing is founded on poetics manifesting in momentary constellations of thinking, imaging, archiving and social processing. It is a form of documentation through remediation in which sites of production merge with sites of observation and presentation. In this sense, live editing seeks to disclose that to present something to other people is also, simultaneously, to produce it and to live it. Authenticity! Live-editing effectively collapses the tensions between production and presentation by emphasising the process of living.

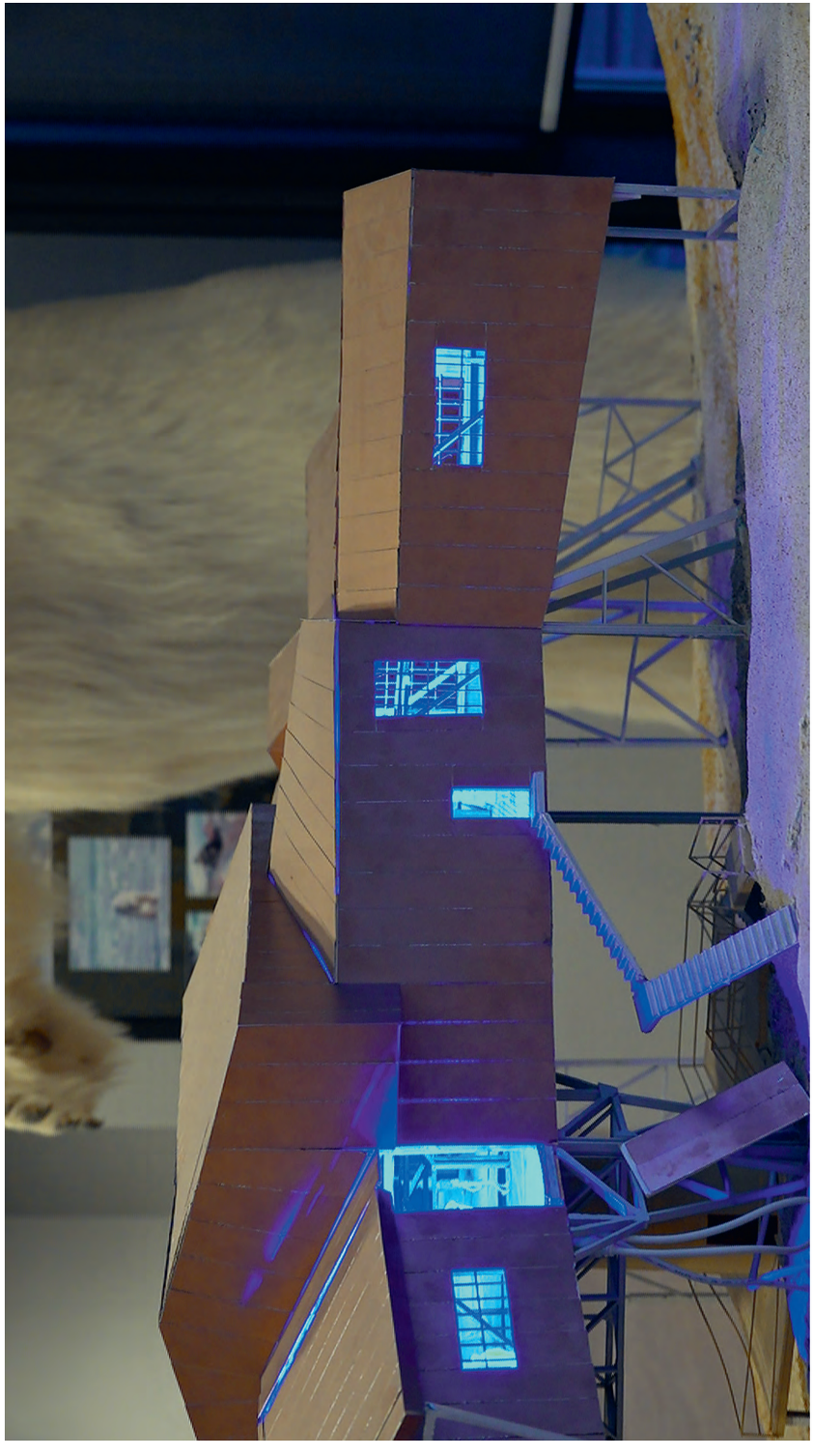
This is not unlike the manner in which contemporary guides enable material-discursive narratives across pasts and futures, as site-constructive and value-productive material. In other words, in seeking an aesthetics of potentiality, the cultural producer becomes a guide in an open terrain of material circumstances and optical experiences. A palimpsest landscape where both the subject and her struggle to survive are produced across different layers, obliging the collapse of the notion of culturally delimited identity.

A poetics of live editing then, connects with the guide figure in a historical space, by creating and re-creating original starting points. The guide is part of constellations with others, and with other, than herself. The guide has a special responsibility; the guide has to answer to several stakeholders. The guide must be trustworthy; the guide must possess both power and humbleness. The guide, if she is good, is both knowledgeable and passionate. Perhaps, also, discontented. The guide is, then, as authentic as non-authentic; perhaps above all a storyteller capable of shifting focus as required from the prescribed to the performative – not in the sense of performing but of living.

The crucial thing is the production of an (implicit) change and difference. The crucial thing is not to be the author but to make a contribution to collective knowledge. The guide figure I am looking for does not aim to change or transform people – by making them activists for a specific cause, for example – but to create opportunities for thinking.[49]

49 This is not unlike experimental strategies in the ethnographic writings where narrative is used as a means to deal with what *is* rather than with that which ought to be. Through an expanded understanding of what *is* – "by seeing without tearing apart or running away," as the Danish anthropologist Line Dalsgård writes – the narrative can still afford change, in so far as it can change the relationship to that which we think we recognize and understand (Anne Line Dalsgaard, "Sandalfødder og mulighedenfor forandring," *Tidsskrift for Antropologi* 45 (2003): 73–80). See also Anne Line Dalsgaard and Martin Demant Frederiksen, "Out of Conclusion: On Recurrence and Open-Endedness in Life and Analysis," *Social Analysis* 57, no. 1 (2013); Stewart, "An Occupied Place"; Michael Taussig, *My Cocaine Museum*, 2009.

Investing her own passion, experience and knowledge in the effort to show something to someone else, the figure of the guide embodies an attempt which is not in opposition to something showing itself. The guide does not dismiss the potentiality of something to hold agency and do something in the world but is, rather, part of and dependent on the variety of elements and forces that composes experience as a momentary constellation. The refusal in this then, is to subscribe to the idea that any prescribed (homogeneous technological) future is the only option. The situation is open.



Video still. Store Norske's office in Longyearbyen (model of former aerial coal tramway central), 2021

I take a sip of water and look out into the space where some 20 people are sitting in a semicircle. Then I place the glass on the table and look down at the screen in front of me. Mia asks out loud if there are any questions. She is sitting next to me behind another screen. On the table between us is a television studio HD mixer, an audio mixer and a video recorder. Apart from being connected to our computers the studio mixer device is connected to cameras and a microphone in the space. Wires stream down the edge of the table.

"We haven't started yet, have we?"

I look up again and make eye contact with Kirsten. Unlike everyone else in the space, Mia and I have specifically invited Kirsten to be the voice of this live editing experiment. Kirsten's story is a central part of what we have invited the rest of the audience to come and listen to. The Facebook event is titled: "Collaborative Ethnography as Artistic Method #2." Like everyone else, however, Kirsten is sitting on a chair in the semicircle occupying the entire space of Astrid Noack's Atelier.

"We have begun," Mia answers.

I turn my head 180° to see the large screen installed behind our table, but which everyone else in the space has a clear view of. I see a hand-held digital recorder in the semicircle. Then I look down at the multi-viewer screen that Mia is operating. In the programme window I see the handheld camera slowly shift into focus from the recorder to a pair of hands resting on a notepad, fumbling with a pen.

These are Kirsten's hands. She has started talking and says something about the fact that she is a visual artist and therefore not a great speaker, but that Mia and I have asked her to talk about the process and fight for the preservation of Astrid Noack's Atelier. She sounds a bit nervous and that makes me a bit nervous too. I adjust my headphones and look into the screen in front of me, select and activate a slightly random video clip. Mia, operating at the editing computer, then has the opportunity to use it. She decides whether the video clips that I select will be visible on the big screen behind us.

The headphones only cover my right ear. I want to be able to listen to both the space and to the video material I intend to select. I flip through a folder of footage showing the construction process that has been going on around the

Atelier for the last few months, attempting to sink into to the rhythm of the material, trusting my instincts. I have filmed the material myself. I have come to the construction site outside the Atelier more or less every day for some time now, after taking my son to day care. I have intuitively filmed endless video sequences during the process.

The video archive that Mia and I have pre-selected and collected for tonight also consists of material shot by other people. Several of those sitting here in the semicircle right now have contributed to the archive. Local residents, artists and musicians who in the past have filmed and documented activities in the backyard of Astrid Noack's Atelier.

"The first thing we did was a **dérive.** That is, we walked around the area to understand what is really going on here, right? And then we made some small booklets. That's how we have distributed our work, right?"

I have a hard time concentrating on what Kirsten is actually saying, which makes me feel divided. Wasn't my intention to create a space of attention and care for what was told as much as for what was jointly remembered? Am I automatically opting out of this community by taking the position of the live editor? I feel busy. But affected. Kirsten's voice clearly directs what I intuitively choose to pull out of the archive. Small cues sieve themselves into my nervous system, and with a kind of rhythmic sensation I establish visual connections across the archival material.

Mia approaches. I wonder if she already wishes to swap places and for me to take over the editing computer. But she points to the multi-viewer. **Battery level low.** Change battery. This is the signal from the handheld camcorder. I look up from the screen and into the space and see someone sitting and fumbling with the camera. How is it? Do I have a charged camera battery somewhere? I don't remember; instead I find a power cable. Carefully I creep across cables and behind bodies to connect the camera.

The cables are covered in brown dust from the event a few weeks ago, when all my live editing equipment was set up outside, in the middle of the construction site. It was an extremely hot August summer day. The audience was also seated outside. Benches were placed under the arm of a huge excavator. In

that setting, the big screen, now standing behind Mia at the editing table, looked significantly smaller. It almost disappeared in the visual "noise" of the surroundings outdoors.

Mia cuts from a pair of muddy working shoes standing next to a gigantic drill in front of Astrid Noack's Atelier, to the feet of people in the indoor space. The handheld camera streams again.

I get the impulse to seat myself in the semicircle and join the conversation. Mia nods. I turn my back to the screen and the equipment and tune into to what has become more of an open conversation than a story told only by Kirsten.

After a little while Mia and I swap roles.

I sink into the chair behind the editing table, more comfortable. I cut to a recording of a violin concerto, very clearly taking place inside Astrid Noack's Atelier. People are very lightly dressed, so it must have been summer. It is years ago. But the clip establishes a very easy-to-understand link to the space, here, in which we find ourselves, now.

Download image. Alexander Romanovskiy's Facebook update, August 2020

The Arctic Nature Guide in Geo-Aesthetical Terrains

Most tourists travel to the High Arctic to experience the scenery. To achieve this, the guide is an invaluable asset. Indeed, many guides strive to ensure that, through their experiences, tourists also adopt a knowledge-based approach to the increasing awareness of global climate and environmental crisis.[50] In relation to this, the archipelago of Svalbard offers an interesting prism through which to further consider the figure of the guide. While Svalbard's transient cosmopolitan population, enjoying a well-developed infrastructure and relatively mild climate, plays a crucial role in altering imaginaries of the Arctic by developing a greater appreciation of the region as multifaceted, historicized, cultured, and peopled,[51] the archipelago nevertheless often functions as visually representative of prevailing portrayals of the circumpolar region as an empty wilderness.

This is the complexity that Svalbard embodies: Svalbard's cosmopolitan population challenges conceptions of "the Arctic" as a fixed, homogenous region bound by insider/outsider relations, or coloniser/colonized relations as embodied by indigenous communities elsewhere in the circumpolar North. In this sense, the place does not match the colonial Arctic as we know it. Rather, in extraordinary ways, it discloses the Arctic as a geopolitical space which, I suggest, is worth considering geo-aesthetically.

50 Britt Kramvig, Roger Norum, and Berit Kristoffersen, "Arctic Whale Watching and Anthropocene Ethics," in *Tourism and the Anthropocene.*, ed. Martin Gren, Routledge Studies in Contemporary Geographies of Leisure, Tourism and Mobility (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 94–110.

51 Thisted, "De-Framing the Indigenous Body. Ethnography, Landscape and Cultural Belonging in the Art of Pia Arke."

The concept of geo-aesthetics is key to my mode of figuring the guide in relation to place and in the context of a process. It adds to my understanding of the guide as a complex mediating figure and trained position when understood as an aesthetics which cannot but be understood through its situated global infrastructures. Drawing from fieldwork experiences among designated Arctic Nature Guides in 2018 and from earlier fieldwork on the archipelago, the concept of geo-aesthetics thus particularly affords perspectives on the ways in which different situated practices – scientific, artistic and touristic alike – are equally involved in shaping the mediated version of Svalbard.

The Arctic Nature Guide Ski Excursion

On 24 May, 2018, following earlier fieldwork and research on Svalbard, I arrived in Longyearbyen, the archipelago's main settlement, in order to join a six-day ski trip (an annual ski trip and exam excursion to which I had been invited by the head of the Arctic Nature Guide (ANG), a one-year practice-based program at The Arctic University of Norway (UiT), focused on "value-based guiding and teaching in Arctic Nature."[52]

After two long days of introduction, packing, planning and logistics I found myself –one of seven other participants – eating dinner with six guide students in a party composed of many different nationalities. Having travelled by boat across the Ice Fjord from Longyearbyen to Trygghamna, we skied for a couple of hours before setting up camp for the night. Once our tents were pitched and our equipment organized, we ate our first joint dinner, sheltered by a circular wall of snow carved out by hand by the guides. Afterwards, warm and less hungry, we were encouraged to share our expectations of the days to come. It turned out that we would create such a shelter each night, eat dinner and, one by one, talk about our impressions and experiences of

52 https://en.uit.no/education/program/345066/arctic_nature_guide_-_one_year_programme

the day. By encouraging us, the participants, to contribute with observations, to share perspectives and to tell stories, the guides prompted us to actively engage in moments of narrative framing instead of otherwise remaining passive listeners to their explanations or arguments.

Having been to Svalbard several times before, I could personally share anecdotes from earlier encounters. In terms of mountaineering, however, I had nothing to offer in comparison to the two trained mountaineers from Spain. Similarly, the kind of perspectives that an elderly Norwegian couple contributed, in terms of how the Svalbard-Norway relation had been subject to changing narrative framings throughout their lives, re-embodied a particular kind of historical knowledge. As our conversations deepened throughout the tour, our guides also communicated the various individual ambitions and life stories that had led them to begin their training as guides on Svalbard. One came from a research background but wanted official recognition of her leadership competencies; another was driven by his personal desire to cross Svalbard from south to north. A third was trained as an artist like me and involved in socially engaged outdoor projects. But in all cases, the guides expressed an appetite for being *in* nature rather than for looking at nature, as scenery from a distance. Statements like "When I am in Longyearbyen, I am just waiting to get out in nature again" were followed by statements like "To be in nature is really to be present with whatever happens around you," evincing that the guides were talking about something more and other than a contemplative experience.[53]

I have myself embodied the role of guide on Svalbard, which has helped to shape my understanding of what I describe here. To be more specific, as is the case for many travelling there for the first time, after my first encounter with Longyearbyen in 2010, which I had then experienced only as a kind of temporary base camp for

53 Fieldnotes, May 2018.

a boat journey of three weeks as part of an interdisciplinary artist residency, I was left with a puzzling impression of the archipelago. I decided to return in the winter of 2011 to conduct two months of fieldwork for my Master's thesis in Visual and Media Anthropology, with a focus on site-constructing narratives; I had met a fellow Dane, a taxi driver, during my first visit, and took up the possibility of staying with him. During the summer of 2012, I came back to work as a taxi driver myself as part of my fieldwork and was thus employed as a taxi driver, the sightseeing guide par excellence, in one of Longyearbyen's two taxi companies while working on my film *The Tour* (2012). Since then, I have returned several times, increasingly interested with the guide in the context of a rapidly changing Svalbard. What struck me from very early on was how the guide on Svalbard seemed at once stuck both with Svalbard as a "sticky materiality"[54] and the affective affordances of material encounters, in terms of bodily experience, while living off a speculative economy of its experiential value, narrativization and strategic envisioning.

The Arctic as Geopolitical Space

In what follows, I will elaborate this conception with an approach to tourism as an assemblage of actors and materials, informed by the idea that the embodied participation of the "tourist" in this assemblage is largely constituted of affects, attitudes, and memories.[55] As recognized guides, the ANG students offer the possibility of comprehending Svalbard as made up of assemblages of many different kinds, and thus, in turn, a mode of embracing the potential of affects, attitudes and memories to shape future geopolitical actions. The ANG guides come from very different social backgrounds, evincing further material dimensions to my

54 Thisted, "De-Framing the Indigenous Body. Ethnography, Landscape and Cultural Belonging in the Art of Pia Arke."

55 Dittmer in Mary Mostafanezhad and Roger Norum, "Towards a Geopolitics of Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 61 (November 2016): 226–28.

understanding of the different assemblages and geo-aesthetics that interact to reproduce the archipelago. If I discover complications in the politics of image production in this place, then, it is not so much a matter of my coming from "the outside" as it is of comprehending how Svalbard is produced through the images I create of, from, or in relation to, embodied and situated encounters.

In other words, my aim is not to analyze the role of the Arctic Nature Guide in relation to the future of tourism on Svalbard or to analyze the effect of the guide's entertaining or educational function in relation to a prior given "purpose." Instead I seek an understanding of the guide as an assembler and differentiator – both as fundamentally a politics of the guide and a model of practice that enables a shift in focus from representation to mediation.[56]

The Guide Role

"But what, really, does it mean to guide with care and respect?" I asked, implicitly acknowledging the ANG program to be part of a trend in sustainable tourism focused on active bodily participation and experience-based knowledge in nature. More precisely, I asked one of the ANG guides, after a period of silence when I had tried to synchronise with the steady, slow rhythm of his skiing next to me. Asked about the specific notion of value-based guiding, he and the other ANG guides had already emphasized

56 In approaching mediation as something significantly different from representation, I understand mediation as something that establishes dynamic relations and processes of feedback, different from a traditional understanding of representation as a signifier locked to a signified. While representation, in this sense, functions as a stand-in for a virtual "someone/something," mediation arguably has a transformative function of this "someone/something." But mediation is a slippery term, hard to define and delimit. I will later return to the ways in which speculations on the political and aesthetical implications of my concern with the guide on Svalbard requires me to consider representation as kind of force of mediation, as it were. This, in turn, has led me to consider the idea of a mediation passion.

the importance of interpretation, hostmanship and transparency, and the matter of guiding with care and respect for nature. But now that we were in the terrain, he emphasized it in a different way: "In the program we have talked a lot about the importance of finding out what kind of guide one is, about finding one's inner motivation to be a guide, and what it means to be a host in nature. But also about safety, and how this connects."

"Do you mean that to care for safety is to care for nature?" I asked.

"Yes, because in understanding the need of safety, guests automatically gain respect for nature. Now you have just seen yourself, how much time it has taken to get off the boat and everything. I also think of this patience as kind of care, because it makes one feel a kind of humbleness and respect for nature."[57]

In a practical manner, this care might be enacted through a sudden emphasis on the tying of a knot. We spent most of the morning of the second day of the ANG excursion preparing to traverse a glacier; to this end, learning to tie safe and delicate knots so that we could ski in procession, one by one, tied together by a rope, was an essential preparation. "Surrendering to the feeling of being one big organism," as one of the guides articulated, afforded us means of acting as a collective safety net should one of us fall into a glacier crevasse. But the careful preparation exposed, also, another aspect of the safety measure: the so-called "soft skill" of patient teaching. In this terrain both "soft skills" and "hard skills" are necessary. At best, they are deeply intertwined.

In his seminal text *The Tourist Guide: The Origins, Structure and Dynamics of a Role* (1985), the sociologist Eric Cohen defines two main roles: the pathfinder and the mentor. Seeking to provide a general theory aimed towards structural approaches to analysis in the field of tourist studies, Cohen explores the guide's historical roots. For him, the function of the modern tourist guide is

57 Fieldnotes, May 2018.

determined by these roles (and other different sub-roles), characterized by that which Cohen calls the leadership sphere and the mediatory sphere of the modern guide role.[58] Here mediation, particularly, is classified by Cohen as "culture broking" – a form of "communicative mediatory" work in a "sphere" including "selection" (the indication of that worthy of touristic attention), providing "information" and, sometimes, "fabrication" (the invention of accounts or the deceiving of tourists). Communicative mediation is then distinguished from "interactional" mediation, which consists of "representation" (the guide negotiating between tourists and hosts) and "organization" (the guide dealing with practical arrangements).

Despite the scope of activity covered by "mediation" and the large number of subcategories identified, Cohen's complex attempt to set out the roles and activities involved in tour guiding posits "mediation" as just one of two main types of tour guide activity, and indeed as characteristic of the type of guide that he refers to as the "mentor." "Pathfinders," by contrast, engage in "leadership" rather than "mediation" (which like "mediation" is broken down into a range of "components" and subcomponents). It is important to stress, meanwhile, that the professional guide draws on the spheres of both leadership and mediation.[59]

Cohen's schematic treatment permits an understanding of the guide as a highly composite role. My conversations with the ANG students, and a look through the ANG course literature, confirms this.[60] Drawing from this, it is worth further situating the role of the nature guides in the context of a certain

58 Erik Cohen, "The Tourist Guide: The Origins, Structure and Dynamics of a Role," *Annals of Tourism Research* 12, no. 1 (1985): 5–29.

59 Cohen, "The Tourist Guide: The Origins, Structure and Dynamics of a Role," 5–29.

60 The course literature reveals an approach to the guide role which, apart from safety and local policies, is concerned with questions of value creation, experience and learning, hospitality, hostmanship and cross-cultural communication, Arctic nature and ecology (Bibliography Arctic Nature Guides, 2017/2018)

development in sustainable tourism emphasizing the role that tourism may play in educating so-called Arctic ambassadors: ordinary people tasked with representing the region in the context of global climate change; "nature-based tourism" is one of the fastest growing sub-sectors of tourism, and now becoming a mature area of academic research.[61] More locally on Svalbard, it is a trend reflecting an equally economic and political investment in the development of forms of tourism responding to debates on future presence on the archipelago. Effectively, all the ANG students distanced themselves from what they considered to be the conventional role of the guide in mass tourism.

The Guided Tour

For the cultural geographer Tim Edensor, guides executing their roles as "actors who re-enact the same script at each performance" are often on an over-determined stage where "there is little room for reflectivity or improvisation given the narrow repertoire and the rigid script around which performance is organised"; here, the guides perform what Edensor terms "disciplined rituals."[62] In contrast, ANG guides considered their "guests" active and equal co-producers – something attested in their insistence on the use of the term "guests," itself connotative of a performance turn in tourism studies formed in opposition to the idea of the tourist gaze, "dislocating attentions from symbolic meaning and discourses to embodied, collaborative and technologized doings and enactments."[63] Consequently, the guided tour is regarded as a space of dialectical relations between structure and agency; the experience of a sight is constructed in the performance

61 Margaryan, 2017

62 T. Edensor, "Performing Tourism, Staging Tourism: (Re)Producing Tourist Space and Practice," *Tourist Studies* 1, no. 1 (2001): 334.

63 Michael Haldrup and Jonas Larsen, *Tourism, Performance and the Everyday: Consuming the Orient*, (Routledge, 2009), 3.

of the sight.[64] The result is "a very open format, more like a discussion than a lecture," as the anthropologist Edward Bruner has written.[65]

A fundamental observation made during my own fieldwork among taxi drivers on Svalbard in 2011 was that a Maxi Taxi guide tour often began with people joining the tour giving a little information about themselves (where they come from, their occupation, and so on) which then may serve as a basis for the taxi driver to apply their dramaturgical skills, partly as a mode of involving the tourist, and partly as a means of de-routinizing the performance.[66] With the performative turn in mind, the idea is that in engaging with different kinds of social prerequisites (including the various previous experiences and perceptions of guided tours), a crack is left open for improvisation, interpretation and negotiation – maybe even investigation. Or simply, as I read repeatedly in writing on the subject of guiding, "passion and genuine interest in people as well as the subject matter is at the heart of guiding."[67]

Ironically then, in distancing themselves from the conventional role of the guide, many of the ANG guides expressed a rather stereotypical perception of guided tours in general. A performative turn in tourist studies offers a theoretical challenge to "value-based guiding" as something "different" from the received idea of what usually happens. In emphasizing interpretation, hostmanship and transparency as integral parts of value-based guiding, the question of the degree to which the ANG program also reflects current economical imperatives to embrace "the value-based" as a (demanded) add-on within Arctic Studies arises – and, I would add, the field of artistic practices.

64 Haldrup and Larsen, *Tourism, Performance and the Everyday*.

65 Edward M. Bruner, "Abraham Lincoln as Authentic Reproduction: A Critique of Postmodernism," *American Anthropologist* 96, no. 2 (1994): 410.

66 For a theoretical discussion on guide's Edward M. Bruner, *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

67 Widtfeldt Meged, 27. Widtfeldt has also importantly emphasised how previous experiences and perceptions of guided tours impact the guiding experience.

Audiovisual Mediation

Considering this, it is interesting to observe that the type of tourism developed on Svalbard over the last decades finds a parallel in the fact that "technologies – particularly those that have enhanced mobility – have produced a shift away from more contemplative and detached understandings of the landscape towards a more active participation in the landscape."[68] This covers digital recording devices and online technologies of all kinds, from networked satellites to individual pocket devices, as much as the kind of GoPro camera that I ended up using during the ANG ski excursion. I had brought an expensive SLR camera, which turned out to be complicated to handle while simultaneously skiing, traversing glaciers, winter camping and acquiring various other hard skills and zooming in on the specifics of local place names, attuning to cultural histories and noting facts about the changing climate. In this sense, the audiovisual material (and indeed the lack of audiovisual material) generated during the ANG excursion effectively reflects the excursion's focus on active participation rather than contemplative observation. But it also reflects the extent to which the skills of film and sound recording in such conditions must rely on essential supplemental practices and routines. Obviously, some of the guides were more trained in these than I was.

Trained both as a visual artist and in the field of visual and media anthropology, my interest in audiovisual material from Svalbard is tied to the ways in which the medium of film has functioned, since its invention, to make distant histories and geographies visible. Often made for educational and entertainment purposes, films about and from the Arctic have thus historically attracted large audiences, while framing the region as an image

68 Justin Spinney, "A Place of Sense: A Kinaesthetic Ethnography of Cyclists on Mont Ventoux," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24, no. 5 (2006): 712.

of "unspoiled wilderness."[69] In addition, films, numerous images (on the internet, in travel magazines, postcards) contribute to these influential projected perceptions of the Arctic scenery, in the context of the increased attention paid in the media to threatening global climate disasters and debates on future access to natural resources and new sea routes. Notwithstanding that the Arctic has become a focus of international policy and academic research, with a strong correspondence in the increasing visibility of tourism in the region,[70] the region is still approached as an image of the "authentic" to be captured for reflection or for posterity, before the ice melts, rather than as an image, or several images, of our globalized, image-driven, technified present.[71] Meanwhile, image-recording devices of all kinds are today present in Longyearbyen in high numbers, including both stationary and mobile smart cameras and GPS devices registering data from multiple viewpoints simultaneously.

Svalbard as a Tourist Destination

Current developments towards interaction, corporeality and mobility in sustainable guiding do not exist in isolation from the development of those new technologies documenting and permitting them. I seek to recognise a material approach to media technologies, not deterministically, but as a framing and

69 The framing of the Arctic as an "unspoiled wilderness" obviously expands the role of films, interacting and connecting with other narrative articulations. Films play a role in fostering Arctic imaginaries and hence, it has been argued, a role in the reinforcements of competing ideologies (Scott MacKenzie and Anna Westerståhl Stenport, eds., *Films on Ice: Cinemas of the Arctic* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015); Athinodoros Chronis, "Between Place and Story: Gettysburg as Tourism Imaginary," *Annals of Tourism Research* 39, no. 4 (2012): 1797–1816).

70 Patrick T. Maher, "Arctic Tourism: A Complex System of Visitors, Communities, and Environments," *Polar Geography* 30, no. 1–2 (2007): 1–5.

71 An authenticity relying on hegemonic images of the Arctic, which are, typically, also representative of what the tourist Arctic is all about.

disciplining of the senses.[72] The extent to which experience of place is mediated through subjective stances and situations does not thus oblige the rejection of symbols selected as Arctic ideals, and experiences only rarely possible in person – such as acquiring close-up images of polar bears and glaciers – continue to be meaningful for many visitors of Longyearbyen. In this sense, while tourist destinations are of course more than constructed symbols, techniques and images, more than just "gazing" and "sights," cameras and films continue to constitute travel.[73] While individual and personal images and memories are tied to immediate bodily experiences, often "sites turn into sights, that have constructed what is worth going to "sightsee" and what images and memories should be brought back."[74]

In other words, as much as the ANG guides emphasized the importance of the experience-based and embodied during our excursion, any guiding on Svalbard is arguably choreographed by dominant discourses and mythologies, advanced by media technologies and effectively circulating in the "imagescapes" of reportages, film and magazines, as well as through personal photographs posted on online.[75] All of this often affirms a romantic

72 Here I am drawing on a material approach to media in the sense of Walter Benjamin and Michel Foucault, and their different engagements with the question of how particular forms of media not only shape communication but also transform our experience, shape our perceptual capacities and faculties, and thus reconfigure embodied experience in relation to both private and public spaces. This, however, equally allows for considerations of how media technologies advance complicated and entangled visions not only of the human eyes and ears (of those filming as well as those being filmed), but also of the mechanical eyes and ears of cameras, as the visual anthropologist Christian Suhr points out in relation to ethnographic filmmaking (Ton Otto et al., "Camera, Intervention and Cultural Critique: An Introduction," *Visual Anthropology* 31, no. 4–5 (2018): 314.

73 Urry in Jonas Larsen, "(Dis)Connecting Tourism and Photography: Corporeal Travel and Imaginative Travel," *Journeys* 5, no. 2 (January 1, 2004): 37.

74 Larsen, 36.

75 Larsen, "(Dis)Connecting Tourism and Photography."

desire for, and imaginaries of, the untouched[76] – or that touched only by experts and scientists. The ANG guides are not simply middlemen in the sense of assembling the interests of the tourist industry according to their own values and expectations; demands from guests, both scientific (epistemic regimes) and politically driven discourses and imaginaries are assembled in the mix. As the head of the ANG program explained to me about the ANG program:

> It was a very clear intention that the guides should build the competence to respond to questions about the Arctic environment, the ecosystem and other important questions that guests asks. … In that aspect the guide should be able to interpret scientific articles and new research so they can be communicators or middlemen between what is going on in nature science and guests coming up here.[77]

Hence, if the guide situation is regarded as a space between the planned and the unplanned – or, as I will discuss later, somewhere between the choreographed and the improvised – discursive strategies, institutional collaborations and economic rationalities are shaping the situation as much as it is ontologically conditioned by the physical proximity and the participation of those being guided.

76 As I have already pointed to, Arctic imaginaries are largely conveyed by popular narratives, the media, films and myths, which furthermore often are created and steered from outside the region, by outsiders, for outsiders, and often function as representations "the Arctic" synonymous with a fixed region in the singular (Jason Dittmer et al., "Have You Heard the One about the Disappearing Ice? Recasting Arctic Geopolitics," *Political Geography* 30, no. 4 (2011): 202–14).

77 Then the self-reflexive comment followed: "I think we are quite good in the other areas – getting the guides to find their inner motivation to be a guide and to be a host in nature, with safety and everything – but in getting the latest research and being attractive for nature scientific researchers… nah, we're far away, I am sorry to say" (video interview with head of the ANG program, June, 2018).

Authority in No Man's Land

After a long day of roped walking, the third day of the ANG ski excursion offered us a chance to move at our own pace. We crossed a large open plateau, which meant that the polar bear guards (the guides carrying the rifles that day) had a good view and that we could therefore ski a little more spread out from one another. For a while, then, I skied next to another participant, someone I had already chatted to about the sometimes tiring need to be patient when operating as a group. He said that if ever he became a millionaire, he would prefer to buy a personal tour guide – it was a "mindfuck" to be serviced by our guides, on one hand, and to have to show patience for their "exam training" on the other. While he was of course referring to the specific form of exam excursion we were participating in, his comment also expressed a desire for some kind of "unspoiled" experience, without the weight of so many different registers of companionship.

Such variegated companionship is interesting in relation to the idea of the guide as a performer and improviser in processes of co-production and the negotiation of authority and authorship in temporary constellations of guidance and guardianship.[78] In fact, the idea of the guide playing a role in negotiating this variegated companionship is crucial to the artistic practice deriving from my research. But before discussing this further, I want to draw attention to the way that the idea of variegated companionship seemingly conflicts with the desire of an unspoiled experience, and with Cohen's historical tracing of the role of the modern guide in the pathfinder of Greco-Roman antiquity, where guidance was in demand from the army, the traveller and the explorer. Moreover, Cohen's idea of the pathfinder offers an

78 Jonas Larsen and Jane Widtfeldt Meged, "Tourists Co-Producing Guided Tours," *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism* 13, no. 2 (2013): 88–102.

interesting context for a further consideration of the relationship between the role of the guide on Svalbard and the archipelago's status until 1920 as a no man's land.

Historically, the guide has variously been considered a local with the authority of a cultural broker as an authentic representative of a locale. For a long time, however, the idea of a host was, precisely for this reason, considered contradictory to Svalbard's apparent lack of people and infrastructure, making the archipelago a seemingly irrelevant site for the social sciences. Arguably, and roughly speaking, the guide's authority on Svalbard has been the kind that comes from the possession of a rifle or from the specific, hard-earned skills one must possess if one is to survive outside settlements. From a contemporary perspective, however, there is a contradiction between the ways in which imaginaries of Svalbard as an empty wilderness, based on the historical observation that the archipelago never had indigenous inhabitants, played a role in the authorization of extractive activities which continued for decades. While there is a somewhat long history of human activity on the archipelago, what is contradictory is the fact that human presence and extraction have been *permanent*, and year-round, since the turn of the last century. Coal, scientific data and images have all been extracted. There is, in other words, an interesting relationship between the historical lack of interest in Svalbard on the part of the field of social sciences and the kind of authority that the pathfinder, as a heroic male guide, holds in anthropogenic imaginaries of the "empty" High Arctic.

The literary critic Anka Ryall's study of Sir Martin Conway's famous *No Man's Land* (1896) has an interesting historical echo here:

> As a gentleman tourist – upper-class, detached, well-bred and well-informed without being pedantic … he makes light of obstacles and avoids casting himself in a conventional heroic role. However, as a mountaineer, skier and sledge-hauler with an objective of charting the Svalbard topography, he displays a toughness and tenacity … fundamental for his later reputation as an authority on Svalbard.[79]

Knowledge of Svalbard, I suggest, is inextricably linked to degrees (and gendered kinds) of experiences – something reflected by the kind of social status that continues to be attained by those who have lived on the archipelago for a long time. Thus, with it being widely recognized that the colonial legacy of tourism is caught up in the enduring (albeit historically shifting) symbolic politics of imaginary geographies, and how the field of the social sciences – and the field of anthropology in particular – has played an equivocal role in producing these imaginaries, a crack is disclosed here when considering shifting anthropological inquiries. That is: do contemporary and more self-questioning approaches imply the anthropologist must encounter "himself" historically as a male explorer and guide as much as researche?

In the following I will briefly anchor this speculation within the emergence of tourism as a subfield in anthropology. From the outset, however, it is important to acknowledge that Svalbard is an ever-more interesting place for ethnographic fieldwork and an extraordinary site for anthropological inquiries into the rapidly accelerating and deeply entangled processes of change – geopolitical, climatic, economic, social. Thus, it is crucial to know that while coal extraction was the primary activity and Svalbard's primary economic pillar until the 1990s, it is today being phased out and replaced by the more economically differentiated industries

79 Anka Ryall, "The Arctic Playground of Europe: Sir Martin Conway's Svalbard," *Nordlit*, no. 35 (2015): 31

of tourism, science and education.[80] The intention is to guarantee and stabilise the community and infrastructural significance of the town of Longyearbyen. While this change from company town to local democracy, as it were, reflects changes in geopolitics and the global economy,[81] serving to further accentuate how Longyearbyen hardly qualifies as a "local community" in the anthropological sense of the term, perceptions of Svalbard change in step with changing theoretical frameworks for anthropological inquiries: an emergence of Arctic Humanities developing alongside a broader concern with ethics in integrated humanities.[82]

Anthropology of Tourism

In 1977, the United Nations World Tourism Organization was created to replace the International Union of Official Travel Organizations, which had functioned since 1925 for the purpose of promoting and developing tourism in the interest of economic, social and political progress of all nations. This was the context of the publication of the first edition of the anthology *Host and Guest: The Anthropology of Tourism* (1977), a text both evidencing the florescence of this strand of research in the field of anthropology and an important acknowledgment of tourism's position at the interface between industry and academia.[83] More specif-

80 Interestingly this has shifted only in the last couple of years. Until recently, Svalbard's three economical pillars were recognized as coal, tourism and research.

81 Thor B. Arlov, *Svalbards historie* (Trondheim: Tapir, 2003).

82 The emergence of Arctic Humanities has been advocated by Sverker Sörlin (e.g. in his talk "Why we should develop Arctic Humanities" at the Arctic Environmental Humanities Workshop on September 2020 (https://www.bu.edu/pardee/research/the-arctic-environmental-humanities-workshop-series/)), and also accentuates a broader scope of increasing concerns with political ecologies of value, more-than-human agencies, situated knowledges and decoloniality across a variety of disciplinary fields in the social sciences and the humanities. I will later discuss how this manifest explicitly on Svalbard.

83 Valene L. Smith, ed., *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, 2nd ed (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

ically, the anthology encouraged a theoretical analysis of tourism as a form of imperialism: the tourist's needs are generated in metropolitan centres which come to hold power over touristic and related developments elsewhere.[84] Focusing explicitly on the Arctic, the editor of the anthology, Valene Smith, herself contributed the article *Eskimo Tourism: Micro-Models and Marginal Men*. Based on fieldwork among indigenous Alaskans, Smith discusses the asymmetrical host and guest relationship with an emphasis on the importance of marginal men as cultural intermediaries: the form of local guides who emerged to present "Eskimo culture" to tourists.[85] In this sense, Smith exposes how the theoretical understanding of tourism in the field of anthropology has traditionally focused on the relations, again, between hosts and guests, not unlike the model of analysis proposed by the founding father of anthropological fieldwork, Malinowski.[86] Smith, however, observes that the increasing attention paid to the role of the culture broker as "mediator between hosts and guests, situated between the demand and the supply sides of tourism,"[87] served to generate the analytical figures of tourist and host. In the introduction to the anthology, it is thus concluded that "any analysis of the tourist-host relationships … probably will require a consideration of the agents and organizations that mediate their relationships with the host."[88]

I find this interesting in relation to Svalbard, a place of mediating agents and organizations largely founded on economically supported initiatives that, historically speaking, were established as political vehicles intended to establish a year-round

84 Nash in Smith, 39.

85 Smith, *Hosts and Guests*.

86 Nash points to how Malinowski precisely saw the world of contact and change in the colonial situation as "consisting of three orders of sociocultural reality: the native or traditional, the modern or industrial, and the transitional."

87 Smith, *Hosts and Guests*, 276.

88 Smith, 45.

community in the first place. Considering that there was virtually no tourism whatsoever in the 1970s and 1980s but that today it is crucial to the sustenance of the local economy and society, the question of mediating agency in the context of tourism on Svalbard underlines the status of the guide as image-builder in a place that became a tourist destination only this century.

Nature Guiding

The practice of nature guiding is regarded as client value when defined as "the sum of the guide contributions in relation to how clients perceive the utility, the gain, cost reduction, or emotional contribution."[89] While a performative turn in tourist studies enables a focus on embodiment and participation, ontology and practice as valuable assets, it recalls, also, theories of the experience economy from the early 2000s.[90] In their paper "The Art of Guiding in Nature-Based Adventure Tourism" (2015), Arild Rokenes, Scott Schumann and Jeff Rose, for example, come to the conclusion that contemporary guiding could develop in its choreographical dimension, writing that guides "have the potential to use basic film theory to create value to what may be an otherwise routine experience."[91] They continue:

> We are talking about live production where the value creation is made in interaction with the clients. … An experience should have a great start, something exciting that gets the clients' full attention, a slower part to provide necessary

89 Arild Rokenes, Scott Schumann, and Jeff Rose, "The Art of Guiding in Nature-Based Adventure Tourism – How Guides Can Create Client Value and Positive Experiences on Mountain Bike and Backcountry Ski Tours," *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism* 15, no. sup1 (2015): 63.

90 Think for example of Pine and Gilmore's economic theories of value creation in capitalist experience economy (B. Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy* (Harvard Business Press, 2011).

91 Rokenes, Schumann, and Rose, "The Art of Guiding in Nature-Based Adventure Tourism – How Guides Can Create Client Value and Positive Experiences on Mountain Bike and Backcountry Ski Tours," 67.

> information and build up to a new experience peak that is even better than the first one and is often the main goal of the tour. Finally conclude with a slower part where the clients get the time to absorb, reflect, and share the experiences with others.[92]

Any professionally guided tour is inscribed in larger institutional set-ups and within value-frameworks.[93] In the political aspect, tourism ushers in the "new imperialism"[94] associated with late capitalist globalization. In the 1970s, the *Host and Guest* anthology had already recognized, if only in a rather structuralist mode, the significance of the role of the guide as image-builder for a destination. A significant body of research drawing on a range of disciplinary perspectives has since recognized the role of the guide in terms both of the tourist experience and the ways in which "guides always work with reference to a global framework which influences the tour and the relations between tourists and guides."[95] But many of these approaches to the study of tour guiding share "a strong emphasis on the mediation activities of guides," portraying the guide as "someone who builds bridges among different groups of people"[96] and in relation to an industry. For the tourist scholar Heidi Dahles, this is problematic; while it is a practice operating "according to a harmony model of "mediation" of keeping all parties involved satisfied," it "fails to capture the political component of guiding."[97] In a sense, then, the anthropology of tourism that situates the political dimension

92 Rokenes, Schumann, and Rose, 63.

93 For a discussion on framework of value circulations and constructions in relation to Svalbard, see: Samantha Saville and Gareth Hoskins, eds., *Locating Value: Theory, Application and Critique* (Routledge, 2019), 173–85.

94 David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (OUP Oxford, 2003).

95 Widtfeldt Meged, "The Guided Tour – A Co-Produced Tourism Performance," 26; Heidi Dahles, "The Politics of Tour Guiding," *Annals of Tourism Research* 29, no. 3 (2002): 783–800.

96 Dahles, "The Politics of Tour Guiding," 784.

97 Dahles, 2002, p. 785; see also Macdonald, 2006

of the experience-economical aspect through a prism of imperialism helps us to acknowledge the ways in which the guide on Svalbard embodies a geo-aesthetical paradox: as an emblematic representative of the High Arctic, and thus a symbol of climate change, guides must navigate an increasing confrontation with modern discourses of nature/culture divide. The discourses available for critical thinking in the field of tourist studies are precisely those that authorized the industry in the first place.

I must confess that I am coming to embrace the idea of contemporary nature guiding as film – but this is more out of an interest in the figure of the guide as an analytical tool in understanding how the production of the Arctic (in a place like Svalbard) connects with a model of practice than out of any preoccupation with client value for the tourist. In this sense, a film with actual surroundings comes to life; its animation is dependent on the guide and as their affinity with dominant public discourses.[98] The idea of a relationship between film and guiding practices not only offers ways of thinking about the role tourist industries play in setting the stage; it permits an inquiry into the manner in which the scenery and other non-human features are often important components of films about the Arctic as narrative elements imbued with high degrees of agency. McKenzie and Stenport, the authors of several books on Arctic Cinema, write (on the basis of their research) that such non-human agencies are often imagined from a position remaining unchallenged as both objective and rational, male and Western.[99] This insight is interesting to consider because the application of film theory thereby affords me the opportunity of asking questions such as "What are the

98 In relation to this, it is interesting to consider the last decades' strategic investments in tourism in Longyearbyen as an industry dependent on its ability to attract and service guests. Such strategic investments are often valued in relation to business.

99 MacKenzie and Stenport, *Films on Ice*.

environmental implications of the presence of the guide (that is, a human presence) on Svalbard in the first place?"; "Which extra-human constellations are affected by the guide?" and "How does the guide's presence affect the very thing they are trying to make available?"

To return to the ANG excursion when approached as a range of situated interplays between non-human formations, human practices and knowledges, what is the political dimension of the guide's role in the evocation of perceptive sensibilities, and how does this relate to the ANG ski excursion being value-based?

A concrete example: during the ski excursion, we experienced a white-out. As a result, plans were changed; we stayed in our tents for the entire day, only striking camp at 3AM the following day, when the blizzard began to abate (one can easily swap day and night on Svalbard in summer on account of the constant light). This was principally a matter of safety: it is crucial to be able to see. Nevertheless, the situation created a moment of reflection on the difference between considering the white-out to be a phenomenon making it impossible to see nature, in opposition to a phenomenon considered to be nature itself. In a rather simple manner, the white-out was an outside manifestation of my personal interest in Svalbard as a situated set of material conditions rather than as scenery. This includes the agency of weather and image-making devices such as cameras, and, thinking particularly of the ANG guide, of ideas of so-called value-based guiding as educative and transformative ends of an experience economy.

Pyramiden as Scenography

This brings to mind another guide figure on Svalbard: the guide employed to accommodate tourists from Longyearbyen in the abandoned Russian mining town Pyramiden, run by the Russian

state-owned Trust Arktikugol (literally, "Arctic coal" in Russian). A popular destination for tourists on Svalbard, promoted as an "Arctic Soviet-era ghost town frozen in time" (as a quick search on the internet should confirm).

Arriving by boat, one is immediately confronted with the decayed remains of industrial structures at a harbour clearly built for shipping coal and not tourists. Further into the settlement are towering brick buildings – a peculiar sight because of the permafrost,[100] and because of their distinct Soviet architectural style and planned grid structure. At the heart of the settlement the most central buildings face a large open field – a swimming pool, residential buildings four stories high, administrative offices and a cultural house. Though abandoned, they carry clear signs of their past functions. I learn that this is the only place on Svalbard where there is grass growing, imported from Ukraine. All grass on the open field is glossed as cultural heritage, equal to the two monuments on site, a bust of Lenin and a shield of the Trust Arktikugol, placed in an axis so as to figure with the impressive Nordenskjold glacier in the far distance. This image promotes the regular day trips by boat and guided tours of the settlement (with a Russian guide) that can be purchased from any hotel and guesthouse in Longyearbyen during the summer season.

From facilitating the material extraction of coal, Pyramiden today facilitates immaterial experiences of past Soviet life in the Arctic, where, as with any cultural heritage, the politics of maintenance and exhibition go hand in hand. Since 2007, Trust Arktikugol has employed maintenance crews on a seasonal basis, protecting the settlement against meltwater from the nearby glacier and restoring buildings and façades. In addition, English-speaking Russian men (so far, all guides have been men) have been employed every summer since 2008 to guide visiting tourists through the remnants of a lively past, protecting the settlement from theft and destruction while confirming a Russian

100 Most buildings on Svalbard are made of wood, and built on wooden pillars, due to the permafrost and to prevent frost erosions.

presence in a contested Arctic future. In 2013, Trust Arktikugol even rehabilitated one of Pyramiden's largest buildings to open a hotel and a souvenir shop. Those staying in Pyramiden overnight have been artists, researchers or journalists, commercial photographers and filmmakers shooting commercials for outdoor products and, residents of Longyearbyen and Barentsburg arrive for private adventures.[101] While being one of Svalbard's most visited tourist attractions, the regular boat tourists from Longyearbyen usually only visit Pyramiden for an hour and a half, as if they were visiting a museum.

If Pyramiden can be regarded as a museum, the Russian Pyramiden guide can be regarded as the museum's mediator, both pathfinder and mentor.[102] Ready at the harbour to receive any anchoring boat, he demands authority by providing access (the guide literally has the keys to any of the accessible buildings) and directing the visitors through the settlement, while carrying a loaded rifle to protect visitors from polar bears. Dressed in an old Soviet-style uniform and speaking with a heavy Russian accent, he performs the role of a descendant, or even a lingering resident, of the Soviet era. A figure within the narrative and scenography of the place, the guide becomes the bearer of whatever visitors might project on to him from their various imaginaries – as do the location's architectural structures, buildings and objects. While Pyramiden is smartened up every year, attention is paid to the potential of the remnant objects, as decisions are made about what to remove and what to leave as cultural heritage.[103] Everyday objects such as small children's shoes, an old piano, books and film reels make it possible for visitors to project their own lives onto the old objects. In this sense, as visitors respond

101 This was the case until 2018 when I last chatted to the guide Alexander Romanovkskiy (Sasha). The Russian historian Adrian Vlakhov also confirmed this.

102 Cohen, "The Tourist Guide."

103 Dag Avango and Peder Roberts, eds., "Heritage, Conservation, and the Geopolitics of Svalbard: Writing the History of Arctic Environments," in *Arctic Environmental Modernities* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017).

to what they are told and what they see on the basis of individual life stories, narratives and imaginaries are constantly negotiated and actively composed in the terrain by guides, visitors and their mediating objects (the video camera, for example) alike.

Geo-aesthetics

Over the past ten years I have had the chance to meet different Russian men who have acted as tour guides in Pyramiden since 2008.[104] All of them have told me how they barely knew of Svalbard's existence prior to their employment and how they picked up stories about the settlement from former Norwegian and Ukrainian miners and other residents visiting the settlement as tourists. While having an organizational subject position in the framing of context and the provision of perspective, the guides thus also function as collectors of narratives in which they, themselves, perform as characters; as Julia Gerlach and Nadir Kinossian have pointed out, the guides play a significant role in recycling Soviet imagery as a process of creating a new Russian identity in the High Arctic referencing the past.[105]

In many ways, Pyramiden exemplifies my understanding of how the Arctic has been significant historically, as a critical and exceptional space of modernity, used and imagined by "outsiders" as "a location where the past, present, and future of the planet's environmental and geopolitical systems are played out."[106] More precisely, the understanding of the guide as simultaneously collector and recycler, or transmitter, accentuates what I like to think of as a geo-aesthetics of the Arctic. This is a neologism combining the terms "geography" and "aesthetics." The Oxford

104 2008-2018

105 Julia Gerlach and Nadir Kinossian, "Cultural Landscape of the Arctic: 'Recycling' of Soviet Imagery in the Russian Settlement of Barentsburg, Svalbard (Norway)," *Polar Geography* 39, no. 1 (2016): 1–19.

106 Körber, MacKenzie, and Stenport, *Arctic Environmental Modernities*, 2017, 1.

English Dictionary defines "geography" as the study of the earth's physical features and the interactions of human activity with those features; etymologically, the Greek origin of the word "aesthetics" designates perception and perceptible objects. Thus, the term *geo-aesthetics* covers my understanding of geopolitics in relation to problems of representation. Or, as I have formulated earlier, the term geo-aesthetics designates an aesthetics that can only be understood through its situated global infrastructures.

I borrow the term from the postcolonial scholar Lars Jensen, who names it in the abstract for the article "Postcolonial Approaches to the Arctic" (2016), in which he addresses a postcolonial "bias towards conventional forms of representation in art."[107] The article subsequently points to "the need to develop a more integrated critique of colonial and neo-colonial presences in the Arctic before moving on to consider artworks about the Arctic that arguably through their transgressive forms push at the boundaries of geopolitical, geohistorical and geoaesthetic approaches."[108] Jensen's attempt to challenge conventional forms of representation in art by means of paying attention to transgressive forms resonates with the scope of my practice-based research, despite his listing of "geoaesthetic"[109] next to the terms "geopolitical" and "geohistorical," which perhaps reflects a less integrated understanding of the three terms. Since I first encountered the term in Jensen's article, I have seen it used elsewhere – primarily in geography, by geographers attending to the visual arts, as a mode of bringing together considerations of environment, place and geology,[110] in media art histories, as a

107 Lars Jensen, "Approaching a Postcolonial Arctic," *KULT – Postkolonial Temaserie* 14 (2016): 49–65.

108 As an example, Jensen mentions art works by the Greenlandic visual artist Pia Arke.

109 Jensen uses the term geoaesthetic, without a hyphenation.

110 Harriet Hawkins, "Geography and Art. An Expanding Field: Site, the Body and Practice," *Progress in Human Geography* 37, no. 1 (2013): 52–71; Harriet Hawkins and Elizabeth Straughan, eds., *Geographical Aesthetics: Imagining Space, Staging Encounters* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2015).

mode of disclosing a geology of media,[111] but also as topic for artists and theorists coupled with so-called geophilosophy.[112] In the context of my research, however, geo-aesthetics is principally a term allowing me to connect tensions, contradictions and shifts emerging as material contingencies in encounters with a place (the archipelago of Svalbard) in the context of a process (living Svalbard).

Geo-aesthetics, then, is not simply a term I use but a term that I (re)define by inserting a hyphenation between "geo" and "aesthetics," connecting the two terms whilst indicating that a gap remains between them.

An Ontological Register Drives Representation

To anchor my use of the concept: geo-aesthetically, Pyramiden's emergence as scenography reveals how aesthetic qualities are a large part of the geopolitics played out in relation to the Arctic. These epistemologies are indebted to narratives, images and representations, owed to ontological configurations. By this I mean that, while the "real" remains "larger than and beyond the knowing subject,"[113] exploring the relationship between the guide, visiting tourists and other situated figures in Pyramiden allow different kinds of knowledge and relations to the real to exist and to play out. Pyramiden is considered and promoted as an abandoned settlement "frozen in time." But the potential of various unfoldings is brought forth exactly by time – time as duration,

111 Jussi Parikka, *A Geology of Media*, Electronic Mediations, volume 46 (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

112 Gary Shapiro, "Territory, Landscape, Garden: Toward Geoaesthetics," *Angelaki* 9, no. 2 (2004): 103–15. Other kind of example include organizations such as The study for Land Use Interpretation in Los Angeles and educational programs on, for example, Land Art, Art&Ecology, and Landscape Architecture.

113 E. A. Grosz, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 5.

time as memory, time as consciousness.[114] Explicitly: photogenically situated in front of the pristine Nordenskjold glacier (and optically planned so that the glacier functions as a kind of backdrop), both Pyramiden and the melting glacier offer a critical perspective on the "frozen" moment of the photographic image itself.

Dwelling on this, can Pyramiden be thought of as a site at once composed and uncomposed? Emerging from bio-physical processes, manufactured objects, mediating devices and the subjective life stories of guides and tourists, can Pyramiden be regarded as a tourist assemblage for which the figure of the guide, topographically speaking, sets the stage?

These questions are further applicable to Longyearbyen, where the mountains that characterize and enclose the Longyear valley are formed of the hollow shells of depleted coal deposits. Arguably, both Pyramiden and Longyearbyen manifest a collapsing image – or the shifting historical and biophysical conditions of geopolitical set designs; Pyramiden, in its status of abandonment, evokes fundamental questions of human presence on Svalbard in this manifestation more effectively. At Pyramiden, the exploitation of natural resources connect the settler colonialism known from other northern regions with the persistent colonization of the natural, as an image of the authentic, more immediate than in Longyearbyen.

In drawing attention to Pyramiden I do not mean to conflate the Arctic Nature Guide and the Russian guide in Pyramiden. Through the differences in the situatedness that defines each of them, however, they broaden the perspective of how the guide-figure may serve as a tool to explore and enable a shift in focus from representation to mediation; they expose, in different

114 What I am referring to here is a sort of Bergsonian notion of time as fundament in scholarship on temporality and the image, such as it is used in Elizabeth Grosz'sGrosz, *Time Travels*. See also Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska, *Life After New Media: Mediation as a Vital Process* (MIT Press, 2012).

ways, how geopolitical means of ordering the world are implicit, not simply in the tourist gaze but in tourism as a practice. That is – not only in the sense of a top-down/distanced geopolitical analysis of tourism, but the analysis of transient constellations of both affective relations and temporarily available historical knowledges. The performativity of imaginative geographies reflects the co-constitutive relationship between tourism practice and geopolitical imaginaries[115] that are crucial for comprehending place – as prototypical of Soviet-era Arctic mining (in the case of Pyramiden) or, simply, as exceptional. More fundamentally, the guides' situatedness certifies that geopolitical spaces are reconfigured through images, places and experiences in their co-constitutive aspect, insofar as we can understand the guide to display agency in meaning-making. The guide does not simply put their agency to the service of mere representation, but to what can perhaps be thought of as a kind of ontologically conditioned politics of experience – or what the cultural geographer Ben Anderson calls "representations-in-relations,"[116] relational configurations of which representation is but a part.

I will address this in more detail in the following chapters. Meanwhile, it is worth noting that in attending to the importance of relational configurations – of power effects and relations of mediation – the human geographers Mary Mostafanezhad and Roger Norum point out how the dialectical co-production of both tourist and geopolitical imaginaries intensifies "as new media technologies proliferate and contribute to ongoing processes of time–space compression."[117]

115 Mostafanezhad and Norum, "Towards a Geopolitics of Tourism."

116 Anderson, "Cultural Geography II."

117 Mary Mostafanezhad and Roger Norum, "The Anthropocenic Imaginary: Political Ecologies of Tourism in a Geological Epoch," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 27, no. 4 (2019): 2.

The Figure of the Guide (as an Analytical Tool)

It is assumed here that a geo-aesthetical approach to Svalbard discloses how a grid of representational discourses interact to produce the terrain as we know it. This implies, however, that a geo-aesthetical approach also discloses a situated and constantly particular space for negotiation. The question is whether and how the figure of the guide may enact such a spatial practice for negotiation.

Western imaginaries of the Arctic are founded in no small measure on heroic figures announcing the names of "strange things" and, by naming them, bring them into being. A focus on the figure of the guide here is useful precisely because it requires a consideration of the multiplicity of agencies at play. Importantly, it requires an ontological register to drive representation. By this I mean that the figure of the guide embodies the realization that there is no place outside the imaginaries carried by our relations to our surroundings; the guide reveals how both social and natural stories emerge from being *in* – or *part of* – nature: an increasing lack of sea ice not only complicates safe crossings of fjords (requiring nature guides to seek new paths in the terrain), but reveals also how human behaviour and communities are constituted as an improvised negotiation of environmental and social stories;[118] the remains of blubber ovens, oil boilers and now ruined huts, left behind by whalers of the eighteenth century, allows the nature guide to track human presences and histories in a landscape often narrated as barren and empty; meanwhile, perceptions of nature are mobilized in effort to frame strategic re-structurations of post-industrial mining sites.[119]

Of course, the title "guide" may cover a wide range of job functions; "the guide in the global perspective may be anything from someone who is self-taught to someone holding a university

118 Tsing, *Friction*.

119 I will explicitly turn to the clean-up of a former mine on Svalbard in the next chapter.

degree," as the tourism scholar Jane W. Meged writes.[120] Meanwhile the people smuggler, the religious guru and the team-builder each embody radically different kinds of guiding.

In the context of my research, however, what is important is the guide as analytical tool for interrogating illusions and ideas of authenticity, pure authorship and undisturbed knowledge production. In light of this, I consider the guide to be an assembler or differentiator of an experience, that can be thought of cinematically – more than a choreographer using basic film theory, as it were.

A Gendered Reading of Productive Agency

In a casual conversation, a friend realized that she could only think of the guide as a male figure. In accordance with Cohen's influential definition of the guide as pathfinder and mentor, the idea of a male guide resonates further across a spectrum encompassing safety officers to spiritual mentors. While exposing the idea of the guide as a hopelessly broad term, the two ends of the spectrum connect in an interesting fashion in the context of the Arctic – a place which has "continuously been an arena for the performance of conflicted narratives about masculine heroism, supposedly anchored through recourse to normative male rationality and beliefs in technological progress"[121] – through a long trajectory of heroic male explorers. The influential authors of the Arctic, from the Dutch navigator Barentsz, recognized as the discoverer of Spitsbergen, to the Norwegian polar hero Fridtjof Nansen, are precisely those conquerors of the inhuman, empty, Arctic wilderness. They become mentors for other like-minded adventurers embarking on new expeditions. These are authors often thought to have accumulated particular

120 Widtfeldt Meged, "The Guided Tour – A Co-Produced Tourism Performance."

121 Körber, MacKenzie, and Stenport, *Arctic Environmental Modernities*, 2017, 4.

almost superhuman insights and authorial knowledge: hard and soft skills, the acquisition of which speaks to highly productive behaviour and supreme mental strength.

I have in mind Martin Conway and countless diaries, texts and photographs, functioning as sources for like-minded adventurers in search of new experiences. These are "narrated as exploration accounts and following many of the demands of that genre – such as an emphasis on natural science and collecting, on being the first and on mapping previously unmapped terrain"; they may also be read as guidebooks, "in which Conway and his travel companions laid out a path that other undaunted tourists might follow," as Ryall writes.[122] In this instance, not only do authorization and authorship connect; the role of the polar explorer in the construction of the Arctic is deeply entangled with the production of the modern state's territory and sovereignty through notions of civilization and non-civilization, and the imaginaries of no man's land noted above.

Michel Foucault's description of a regime of representation is fundamental here. He proposes that modernist conceptions of nature as a realm outside society have evolved through the coalescing of a network of discursive strategies since the Renaissance.[123] In these strategies in which an agent is basically a productive subject, a (hu)man who produces representations produces knowledge. But with Foucault, we are increasingly trained to conceive of such knowers – from Conway to contemporary Arctic experts – as situated in particular relations, both to what is known and to other knowers. What is known, and how it is known, reflects the situation and perspective of the knower.

Importantly, from a feminist perspective, the world is experienced according to the different constitutions and different locations in space and time those bodies enjoy. Briefly, feminist

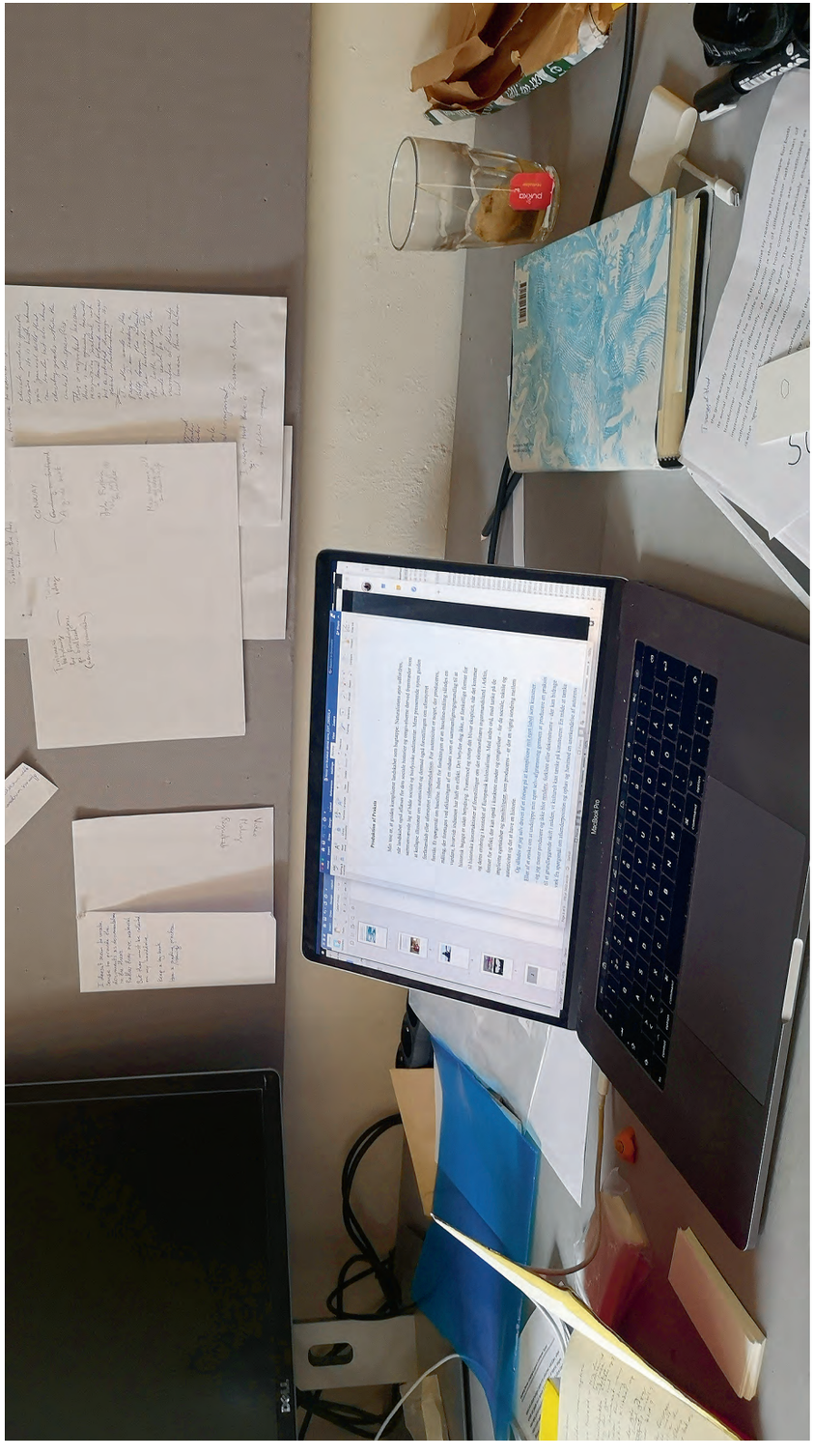
122 Anka Ryall, "The Arctic Playground of Europe," 29.

123 Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought* (London: Penguin Books, 1991).

epistemologies function as a sort of commentary on the (Foucauldian) idea of authorial constraint, disclosing that what is at stake is not only epistemological transformation (what is known) but a politics of ontological pluralism (how it is known).

To make a gendered reading of the modern Arctic, then, is to critique the modernist conception of nature and to politicise certain ecological discourses. That is, in revealing privileged and otherwise obscured positions of secular ideologies, a gendered reading offers the possibility of a historical re-reading of modernist intellectual discourse in the Anthropocene (a term I will return to later).

Drawing from this, my concern with the guide is not so much about transformation – even if "transformation" was a term used by many of the ANG's students when expressing their aim in guiding – as it is a negotiation and investigation of what we know. The aim is not only to challenge anthropogenic nature-culture relations, but to describe this colonial relation with the awareness that it is impossible to do so without entrenching it, acknowledging that it is impossible to challenge Svalbard's representational function as image without, as it were, producing the Arctic.



Mobile image. September 2020

The weather is strangely mild. Almost zero degrees. It isn't necessary to wear gloves, which makes it comfortable to sit on my pulk while looking, listening and filming. Floe, a guide, sits on her knees in the snow in front of me, with a green and yellow rope in each her hands. She is instructing me how to tie a double fisherman knot. Beside me, two other participants are sitting on their own pulks.

"I had to do it over and over again and again before I got the feeling of it." Floe looks down at her hands while she speaks, her fingers connecting the green and yellow rope in a step-by-step demonstration, before she loosens her hold and allows her hands to slide down the ropes. "And you just pull it and it will tighten," she says.

"And where do you need it? I have forgotten where we used it yesterday," asks one of the participants.

"Yes, you don't have to…" Floe looks up. "We can of course always show it again."

A third participant, a trained mountaineer, has approached behind me and interrupts: "We will need it at the end of the pulk."

Floe looks up at him and then down at her hands again. "And you will then learn it… but, yes, we will need it for the pulk, because we will have this loop at the end" (she makes a looping gesture with her hands) "to which we will have to fix the rope, and then you fix it to the… the…"

"To the next person?" I ask.

"The main glacier rope, yes," says Floe.

"And why a double and not a single?" asks the third participant.

"Because then…" Floe's hands quickly untie half of the knot. She pulls the yellow rope, which then slides out through the green knot.

"Ah no, no," the participant says. "Why a double fisherman – a normal fisherman is just knotted twice…"

"That is safety," says another guide now also standing next to our small teaching session. "It is less safe."

Floe looks up at him.

"This is among the strongest knots you can have," the standing guide adds.

Then the participant looks up at him, while Floe looks down at the knot in her hands again, nodding her head. She unties the yellow and green ropes, and now hands them to me. "So, you can try now."

I have to connect my pulk to the main glacier rope, but I have forgotten the principles. A guide stands right in front of me and he hands me two red ropes. I hear myself saying: "So I have to tie it to this one… eh, so it is." I am focused on the ropes – but somehow also on his red-shining mirroring sunglasses. I can't see his eyes, but I sense he sees my admiration for his practical skills. How to tie a proper knot. How different knots fit different purposes.

"Maybe I will just give it to you, then you can make it." I move my hands for the guide to organize the rope material.

"Ah yes," I say, and grab the ropes again. "So, it is twice… round… like this… and then in here, maybe?"

"Yeah… maybe." The guide looks closer, his hands aproaching. "No. Almost."

"Oh," I say, and pull off my hands. I can barely see the rope for all our fingers fiddling around.

"You missed one loop," the guide concludes, and begins re-looping one rope round the other. "One, two, and you have to go into here."

"Ah!" I say, remembering Floe's observation that one needs to do it over and over again before getting the feel of it. The effect of being taught to tie a knot in this situation – on my skis in the snow with a group of other people waiting for me – seems equally ambiguous and ambitious.

I am looking through the viewfinder in order to frame the interview. Contrary to a lot of my footage from Svalbard, I want this video sequence to be framed as a proper interview. Not because I have any particular plan of how I will eventually use it. In this moment it is more a matter of behaving professionally and enacting some kind of authority in the situation. We are sitting in small room on Linden. A beautiful wooden boat operated by a Danish captain and a crew of youngsters, who for different personal reasons have been offered the opportunity

to volunteer on the boat for half a year. Mette Eliseussen, however is the local Svalbard guide on board. I mount a clip microphone onto Eliseussen's light woollen sweater.

"OK, the mic is running," I smile friendlily, and pull a chair to sit next to the camera tripod. Eliseussen begins to talk.

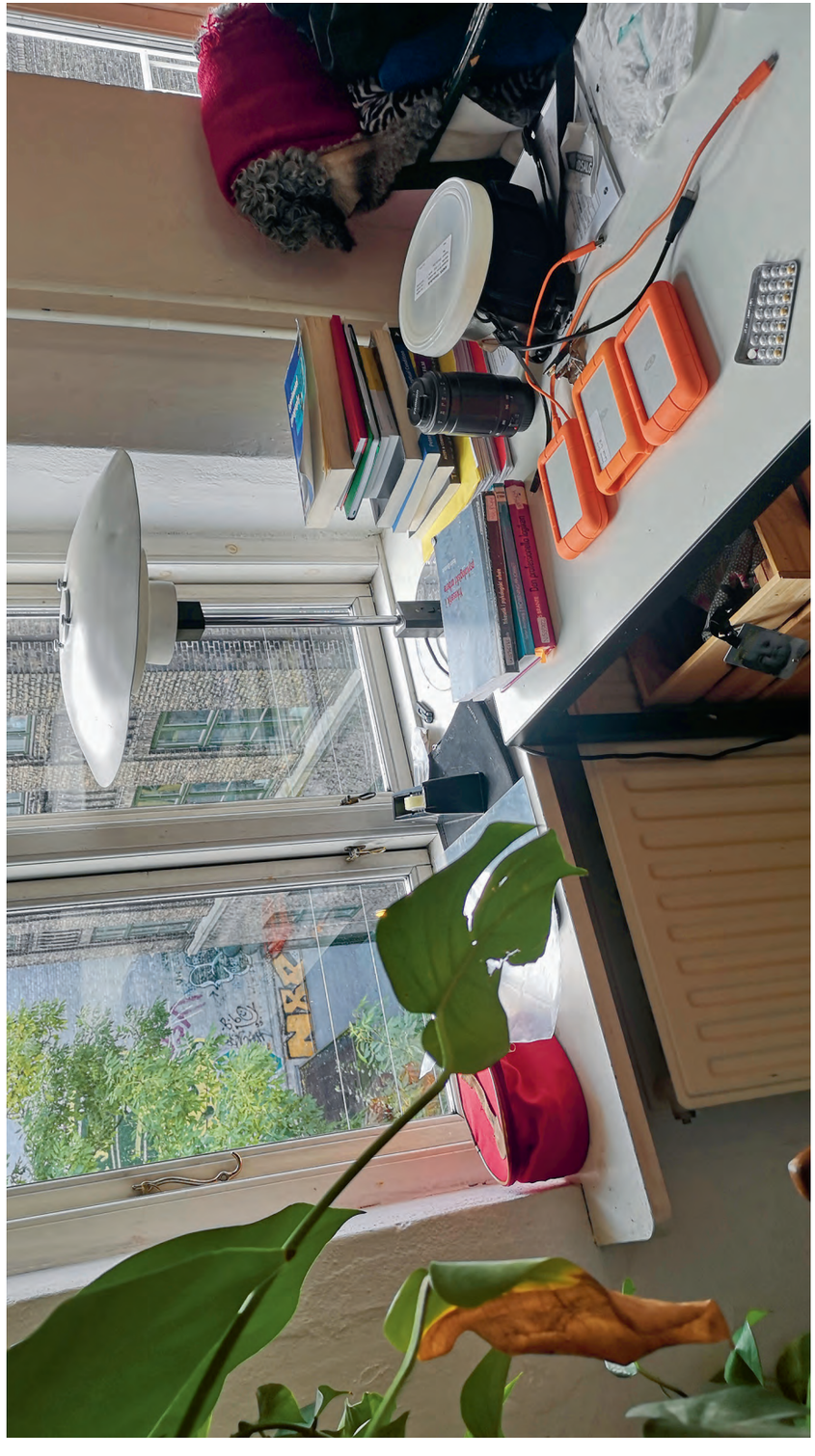
I think of Sascha. I picture him as he walks down the completely empty central square at Pyramiden with his rifle hanging from his shoulder, and away from the abandoned culture house. I am filming him from a small room on the first floor, historically an archive of 35mm films reels, screened in the culture house's cinema. I let the camera run until I can't see him anymore. Film cassettes are piled up in the room; long-damaged and curled reels cover much of the floor.

I remember the video recording of Sascha while having a lunch meeting with Dag Avango, a history of technology scholar and a professor specializing in industrial heritage. Avango has conducted extensive fieldwork in Pyramiden, and has also befriended Sascha. Now Avango and I are at Bagdad Café at Medelhavmuseet in Stockholm, Sweden. We talk about trends in museologizing post-industrial sites, and I tell him about my interest in the guide figure. I'm anxious that my research might come across as strange and frivolous to his ears, but he nods his head and smiles in a friendly manner, and I feel confirmed and awkwardly authorized to continue.

I think of my interview with Eliseussen:

> So here on Svalbard we are crucial because you need a gun.
> And most people can't do that. And that in itself adds one more factor to the whole thing. It gives you a lot of authority. As a guide you have so much authority. You are almost like a god to people, because you look after them. They listen to you in another way. If they were here by themselves, they would maybe not be able to tell their companions – other people – to be quiet and experience the silence. But as a guide you get so much authority

and people do listen, and they do, if you explain it well to them, they do stay silent and they do get to hear that part of the Arctic. Or, they believe you will come with information that is valuable to them, has a value. So they listen to your stories, and if you can tell them stories, they are really amazed by that too. If you didn't have a guide… you know you can come here and experience it on your own, but it would be… me, it took me many years to experience what I experience today, and it took me books and books and books to read. So, the books were my guides, and other guides were my guides. Now, people who come here they can hire me or someone else and then they get to that – hopefully – like those inputs from someone who can guide them and give them the best input. Or, it is not about the best, but about getting a different experience from nature to the one they see. And not only see, but the nature that they are in, and engulfed in, and staying in.



Mobile image. August 2020

Svalbard:
An Indeterminate Image

My own production of the Arctic is a pressing question.

Working with my audiovisual material from Svalbard and engaging with different audiences over the years, I have repeatedly had to (re)articulate Svalbard – as image, as site, as geopolitical infrastructure. Not unlike my application of film theory to the activity of guiding, or the idea of Pyramiden emerging as scenography, my continuous contextualization of Svalbard in my research, as the prism through which my inquiry is conducted, can be thought of as structured according to the language of cinema. I am not simply thinking of writing as dramaturgy but thinking of writing as an editing practice. I will come back to the question of editing and the importance of practice as fundamental contingency in guiding: the objective of the guide, like the objective of writing or filmmaking, is not a dead reference but all at once affective knowledge, lived experience, historical knowledge.

For example: having had to contextualize Svalbard during Covid-19 lockdown, I have found myself deeply concerned with regards to how the pandemic has come to impact the often precariously employed guides working on Svalbard. This sensitivity has also come to affect my mode of writing about Svalbard.
Being an ever-increasingly international and multicultural place (something which the ANG students reflected), Longyearbyen is comprised of people and companies from more than 50 different countries, living and operating not least from and in the field of tourism. This year's completely failed tourism season, and the financial difficulties the industry has consequently suffered, have made this evident. While no one has caught Covid-19

on Svalbard so far, travel to the archipelago has been restricted as a precaution. Not only did the Norwegian government close its borders in the spring of 2020 (tourist flights to Svalbard all pass through Norway), but anyone arriving in Svalbard must self-quarantine for two weeks. On an island where most tourists travel to stay between two and four days, a consequence of this has been that guides have lost their income and been forced to leave the islands (guides often plan to stay on Svalbard only for the winter season, from mid-February to early May, or the summer season from mid-June till mid-September – or the two seasons combined, which basically covers the months of the year when the sun is above the horizon). Another consequence has been the increasing visibility of the class divide existing between those employed privately/seasonally and those working full-time or in an official capacity, and of the contrasting conditions for workers from Norway and the Nordic countries and other countries. Only Norwegian companies are covered by the financial aid packages that have been granted by the Norwegian government, leading to social inequality – a challenge to the current, highly international, composition of the population in Longyearbyen. A further challenge comes from a government policy of Norwegianization, turning what once was a company town into a state town, arguably manifested in the Norwegian Ministry of Justice's proposal of 23 June, 2021 to take away voting rights from non-Norwegians in Longyearbyen who have not lived on mainland Norway for at least three years.[124]

124 A recent commentary article in the local newspaper, *Svalbardposten*, by a member of the local council was pointedly titled "From Company Town to State Town." (https://svalbardposten.no/nyheter/det-er-en-state-town-fordi-longyearbyen-styres-av-staten/19.14217.) It is not only the distribution of aid packages that challenge the demographics in Longyearbyen. Rather, several factors come into play, such as language and housing politics (more than 50% of the houses in Longyearbyen are owned by the government and thus only available for employees in the public sector). More concretely, the closure of the local branch of Spar Bank Nord Norge this spring was a major issue for many international people. While Norwegians usually have a bank account when they arrive in Svalbard, coming from Norway, international residents are left without – and thus with a problem. As the spokesperson for the Svalbard Guide Association has put it: "How are you supposed to work if you don't have a bank account to receive payment? Also, you need an identification number to work in Norway, but that's an obstacle too, because in order to get that number, you need a bank account. So, some people are forced to struggle even for the basics in order to live and work on Svalbard."

Without going into detail, this is related to the Svalbard Treaty of 1920. Norway has subsidized a settlement on Svalbard with the aim of maintaining sovereignty of the archipelago;[125] the largest company in Longyearbyen remains the Norwegian coal company, Store Norske Spitsbergen Kulkompani (or simply Store Norske).[126] Nevertheless, with its well-developed infrastructure, relatively mild climate and transient cosmopolitan population, Svalbard remains a very accessible place to conduct scientific research and develop tourism. Moreover, its practical accessibility has an additional dimension, again because of the Svalbard Treaty, which confers on anyone from any of the signing nations equal rights to be on Svalbard. By way of illustration, the largest

125 Important context for this, as I shall discuss later, is the Norwegian government's decision to cease all mining activity. Remove the primary reason to be on Svalbard, however, leaves the state with a big problem. Hence, in deciding to end coal mining, they need to replace it with something – and look to tourism, pushing hard to ensure that those services are provided by Norwegians. Again, this poses a challenge to companies that focus on international labour, even if they pay Norwegian tax, having being present on Svalbard for ten years. While attracting a lot of international tourists to Svalbard, they have been refused help from the Norwegian government during the pandemic, with the explanation that their owners are not Norwegian. This is tricky with regard to the Svalbard Treaty, but a rather clear signal of the geopolitics involved in local decision-making. The Svalbard Guide Association, for example, have recently taken notice of how there are now companies who only hire guides who speak Norwegian.

126 In official terms Store Norske Spitsbergen Kulkompani AS (SNSK) is a Norwegian state-owned mining group that operates the Norwegian coal production on Svalbard through the subsidiary Store Norske Spitsbergen Grubekompani – also known as Store Norske.

demographic group beyond Norwegians are Thailanders.[127] Any Thailander holds the right to be on Svalbard. Practically, however, this is only possible if one either has a job or is part of a strong social community, since there exists no social safety net. This is partly why those living in Longyearbyen must necessarily belong somewhere other than Svalbard. If, for some reason one is forced to leave the archipelago, there must be a place to "return" to.[128]

As already pointed out, then, it is hardly possible to talk about "community" in Longyearbyen in the anthropological sense of the term. The social anthropologist Zdenka Sokolíčková has suggested, rather, we "talk about various social actors, economic migrants, state employees, students, contract workers, tourist workers, etc.,"[129] manifesting how people settle on Svalbard with different social prerequisites and what I describe as the material dimension of who guides whom. While guiding on Svalbard

127 There are some 2400 people living in Longyearbyen, 64 % Norwegian, 36 % other countries (53 different countries whereof the 3 countries represented most are Thailand, Sweden and the Philippines. Interestingly enough, the first ethnographic fieldwork in Longyearbyen is presumed to be *Livet i Longyearbyen* (An-Magritt Jensen and Kari Moxnes, eds., *Livet i Longyearbyen: Åpne Landskap, Lukkede Rom* (Trondheim: Tapir, 2008) – which includes fieldwork conducted within the Thai community..

128 Over the last ten years, I have known several who have been sent away from Svalbard, either due to illness, drugs, or economic crisis (and hence social insecurity). Recently, a US citizen was deported after ten years, which received a lot of attention because he, as the sole publisher of Ice People – an English-language local newspaper – has been central to the international community's access to local information. Moreover, when you live on Svalbard, you are not considered a resident of Norway. You do not pay tax in Norway and the time you stay does not count towards the opportunity to stay on the Norwegian mainland. Over time, a handful of asylum seekers have had to experience this, and in practice they have become prisoners on Svalbard for years. This is because you have to travel via the Norwegian mainland to get both to and from Svalbard. Recently a research into the challenges this causes for children of non-Norwegian migrants working in Longyearbyen ('Teenagers without land: Offspring of non-Norwegian migrants to Longyearbyen, Svalbard') has been initiated by the anthropologist Zdenka Sokolíčková. (For another account of the issue, see also: Tobias Stål, "På Svalbard Behøves Intet Visum," *VisAvis*, no. 4 (2010)).

129 Vienna Anthropological Days, 2020

is recognized as a professional job-function, with some variety, within tourism, all kinds of other assemblages and compositions are also taking place.[130]

My Hard Drive

Svalbard is an archipelago with a history, a sequential order of events, conditioning how the archipelago is presented in this particular instant.

In a similar sense, I have a hard drive in Copenhagen with a history. It is conditioned by sequence, containing digital footage from Svalbard and material accumulated from every one of my visits made to the islands over the course of last ten years. This history is reflected in the kind of digital material it contains. The pocket camera I brought with me in 2010 on my first travel to Svalbard was different from the Canon camera I brought with me in 2015 and the GoPro camera I used in 2018 during the ANG excursion. And as the journey I planned to Svalbard in December 2020 was superseded by an invitation to join an online workshop, the kind of material this will generate will have a different character on account of the formats and the conditions of their production.

While the contents of my hard drive may be ordered, nothing is narratively structured. The drive is an algorithmic device; both an informational and physical object that operates as a prism through which my research happens. It is an conglomeration that operates to connect different moments in the research. My story, again, like all the stories I heard on Svalbard, begins and ends in a process of re-remembering, re-telling and re-situating, over time becoming a process of "long dwelling on things remembered and retold, forgotten and imagined."[131] The outcome of my

130 It is currently being debated how to develop a Svalbard Guide Certification.

131 Stewart, "An Occupied Place," 7.

image-production is, therefore, a dazzling series of linked memories rather than the great Svalbard film that I occasionally have been expected to envision and produce.

What I mean by this can be understood by thinking of Svalbard as a site that re-emerges every time I assemble my audiovisual material, not unlike the way it emerges when introduced through writing. The fieldwork material "comes alive" when the hard drive is operated, which is what my method of live editing explores. Speculatively, this is thus similar to the way Pyramiden emerges as scenography each time the Russian guide welcomes tourists by the harbour. Similar to the Russian guide in Pyramiden, the hard drive is both a metaphor, in the sense of an image bank for a collection of audiovisual material, and a tool with which I generate new material – and which of course always happens in situated conditions. In thinking of the figure of the guide, what is at stake is, as already hinted, the difference between animating a fixed scenery and assembling a set of relations, including the kind of social relations that contemporary Arctic imaginaries and conditioning politics produce; or, how presentations of the Arctic are entangled with temporalities of producing and living it.

Turning away from approaching Svalbard as scenery and approaching Svalbard as a web of material conditions is thus a turn to the climate, the environment, its infrastructures, resource-extractive activities and governance by international law – as well as how these connect geopolitically through contemporary ideas and imaginaries of an uninhabited no man's land that became populated in the context of European colonialization. But, in thinking particularly of the guide, the material conditions include ideas of so-called value-based guiding, as educative and transformative ends of a capitalist experience economy. To

approach Svalbard as a set of material conditions is thus to acknowledge nature as a proliferation of ontologies, without ignoring the risk of its hierarchization.

While I will unpack this later, I suggest that the notion of "host" in traditional anthropological terms has migrated to a language of management also used in guide studies, in a way which manifests this risk. Nevertheless, the guide is as authentic as it is inauthentic. As much as there exists a vocabulary of hostmanship, the ANG guide, precisely, makes comprehensible that there is no such thing as "authentic hostmanship." Rather, the guide on Svalbard emerges as a particular and complex mediating figure in a terrain that an early version of mass tourism sold to us as authentic scenery.

Contesting authenticity is thus by no means a relativization of the diverse backgrounds that characterize various kinds of guides guiding on Svalbard. On the contrary; Svalbard renders particularly explicit that, never having had any indigenous population, everyone there is in a sense, a visitor. In thinking more specifically about the modes in which nature guides on Svalbard gain their skills (at the ANG programme, for example), where they come from is relevant. Meanwhile, there are other relevant factors at work within the guide's "community of practice"[132] on Svalbard, which again engender a range of situated skills and sensibilities. In other words, given the kinds of affect that can arise in material encounters and environments, there is an important distinction between authenticity and having a story, which further opens the possibility of complex considerations of the ways in which the guide's knowledge – tacitly and socially – derives from lived experience, and relates to a desire to educate and entertain visitors. It offers considerations relevant to knowledge production, as far as there is no knowledge in the singular, only networks of knowing relations; no guide without variegated companionship.

132 Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

The guide, then, challenges the very idea of Svalbard as a place that has linearly moved from terra nullius to being populated.

The colonial legacy of tourism on Svalbard lies precisely in the assumption of the archipelago's "emptiness," no man's land possessed of great mineral wealth. Certainly, Svalbard's prototypical tourism industry declined after a few decades around the turn of the nineteenth century, and organized tourism only really developed in the 1990s. Yet, throughout the twentieth century, Svalbard remained an extraordinarily important site for the demonstration of national power and presence; for the extraction of resources and capitalization of mainstream imaginaries of the High Arctic.[133]

133 As political geographer, Philip E. Steinberg, has noted with regard to the European High North, the industries of tourism and resource extraction "serve both to reflect and to reproduce the postcolonial condition' (Philip E. Steinberg, "Afterword: Tourism, Extraction, and the Postcolonial Arctic," in *Postcolonial Perspectives on the European High North: Unscrambling the Arctic* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 144).

PART 2

Dear Friend

I am writing to you from Flixbus!

I managed to conquer a seat by the window, on the right side of the bus and until now I have just been looking outside, contemplating the transition from the built environment to the cultivated land. Now, a monocultural desert. I assume I am looking at corn, probably for animals.

I am on my way from Berlin to Copenhagen. I could then change and continue to Gothenburg. But I have a few errands to do in Copenhagen first.

I am working on a film. Or, thinking about how to organize a proliferation of film takes. Things constantly happen, wanting me to begin anew.

I guess a classical approach would be to begin by establishing a context. To introduce a theme or a site.

But I struggle with the narrator as anything but a clumsy substitute for a visual narration.

Any voiceover, really, seems to lend itself to the problematic history of so-called voice-of-god narration, and narrations rooted in socially driven goals and desires of an informed citizenry. The didactic possibilities of film too easily match a sense of the lecture as the most viable form of pedagogy.

Could a beginning simply be:

Sept 3rd 2016. Skansebukta, Svalbard.
The sun is shining and the scenographic bay area, with the remnants of an old plaster-mine, appears extraordinarily colourful.

I mic up the paleo-geologist, and follow him closely. I follow him climbing up a hillside, listening to him mumbling to himself. I eventually stop in order to get a steadier and smoother recording of his movements. He get into trouble going any higher, because of loose gravel, and he begin to discuss (with himself) an alternative route. I listen carefully and see him slide downwards and venture deeper into a gorge in the terrain. At this point he disappears from sight and I no longer receive any input from the mic, and suddenly I become aware of my own breath. So loud, it is. I look up, orient myself and realize how far I am from the rest of the group, which has continued along the shore. I decide to try to find an angle from which I can see the paleo-geologist from above. I leave the camera on, hanging from my neck, as I begin to walk across the soft soil, which isn't an easy manoeuvre carrying all of my equipment and I notice how my breath intensifies. But the scratching sound of my Gore-Tex pants is even louder. Suddenly, however, I clearly hear the voice of the paleo-geologist in my earphones again, discussing whether or not to bring back particular findings for the collection in the museum in Stockholm – what to collect, what not to collect? I still can't see him, but he ought to come into sight any moment, since the sound-receiver reconnected with his microphone.

As you know, I have been interested in the relationship between biophysical terrains and imaginary landscapes for quite some time. Or, in the mediation of this relationship as a historical effect.

For the time being, I am scrambling together a bunch of stimulating ideas with a proliferation of descriptive detours.

I want to de-dramatize theory. To loosen formal narrative binds.

Narrative – the travelogue – of course, was always intrinsic to the colonial traveller's toolkit. How to navigate the legacy of travelling as a search for knowledge?

We are passing a forest area now. Huge numbers of trees enclose the highway.

I look at a wall of green flicker. It has an almost hypnotic, trance-like, effect on my nervous system.

My common sense understanding tells me that I am located where my eyes are. But what if I give up this subject-centred view of vision? Is there a way to do that?

I am sceptical.

Yet isn't the act of looking in fact twofold, entailing not only seeing but also being seen? I am not simply suggesting that I am sometimes seen by others; I suggest that my vision is not only to be understood as a one-way directedness towards the world but as something which immediately is reflected back towards me.

I look at the trees, and the trees look back at me? Like a mirror, reversing the so-called "natural" directedness of my vision towards the ways in which I have been trained to see.

A conversation between two people in the back seat captures my attention. They don't seem to know each other. But one tells the other that meteorologists say that "this is our last chance."

"Stop going on holidays to faraway places, do some holidays in Germany."

They agree that the question is whether technology wins or whether we are all doomed.

I get that one of them is a veterinarian and that the other is working in the field of finance. He is writing green investments portfolios for a Danish bank.

It is a bit shocking, isn't it? The casualness with which they at once blame themselves and commit to a belief in the perfection of science and trust in the progress of technology. Not that I can claim to able to imagine anything different.

Now the conversation shifts towards wedding planning. They are apparently both engaged.

There is a scene in Chris Marker's canonical film **Letter From Siberia** in which three film takes are repeated over and over again, each time with a different voiceover and soundscape. I don't know if you remember it, but the scene kind of exposes how voiceovers may guide different receptions of the film scene.

I can't really let go of the idea of a voiceover.

...

I was just woken up by the sound of heavy raindrops hammering on the window of the bus. It is not as ideal to write on a bus as it is in a train. Not for the body at least. I took a break. I fell asleep.

I was probably only asleep for a couple of minutes. But the sky is different now, compared to earlier, and the asphalt has turned almost black. I realize that I have not seen rain like this for a long time. There has been a drought. Heat records, and endless hours of sun throughout the month of July. It is Earth Overshoot Day today. That is what I read on the news. The day when the planet's resources are used for the year.

Sure, I am enjoying the grey sky.

50 km from Rostock.

A kid is playing with a plastic lion and a tiger, and his mum's mobile phone has been turned into a platform, or island.

I am following it through the viewfinder of my camera.

Now I am looking out the window. Again.

The landscape is changing now. Heavy power cables hang across the fields, which are less flat and straight than earlier. Big factories rise on the horizon.

And now I am presented with Scandlines's new green vision from zero emission to hybrid: "Diesel-electrical ferry operation is the past, hybrid is the present, zero emission ferries are the future." Meanwhile I wonder what has happened to the three ferries of the past.

OK, so I have just googled it: M/S Dronning Ingrid is operating as a hospital ship in West Africa. M/S Prins Joakim in owned by a shipper in Athens but registered under the flag of Cyprus. M/S Kronprins Frederik remains a replacement ferry on the Germany-Denmark crossing.

Video still. In conversation with Florian Schneider, Lindholmen's Science Park, September 2018

Radicalized Landscape

In September 2016 a group of Swedish researchers from multiple disciplinary fields joined a two-week ship-borne expedition around Svalbard. Each member had a different agenda to pursue during the expedition. An evolutionary geneticist was seeking to collect old antlers from the Svalbard reindeer.[134] A photographer and a glaciologist had prepared for the chance to photograph shrinking glaciers. A theologian aimed at reflecting and writing upon human-nature relations. A museum director wanted to generate visual material for a permanent exhibition on the famous Swedish explorer August Solomon André.[135] A paleo-geologist was seeking to compare a number of rock samples from Rigsmuseet in Stockholm with the bedrock on a small island west of Spitsbergen,[136] while a retired astrophysicist was hoping

134 A small subspecies of reindeer found on nearly all non-glaciated areas of the islands of Svalbard, where it has become well adapted to the harsh climate. Being the only large grazing mammal in the European High Arctic, they are exceptional for studies concerning the introduction of pollutants to changing ecosystems.

135 Salomon August Andreé was a Swedish engineer, physicist, aeronaut and polar scientist who died while leading an attempt to reach the geographic North Pole with a hydrogen balloon. The balloon expedition departed from Danksøya on Svalbard, but ended in catastrophe with the death of all three participants. Andreé's expedition has been the source of both cinematic and artistic works exploring its mythological legacy; its remnants were found on the isolated island of Kvitøya, northeast of Svalbard, in 1930. At Grenna Museum and Polarcenter there is a permanent exhibition displaying what was recovered: equipment, members' diaries and, not least, photographic plates.

136 Forlandsøyane (a group of small islands), situated off the southwestern coast of Prins Karls Forland, west of Spitsbergen – the official name of the largest island within the archipelago of Svalbard. It is worth noting that the entire archipelago was called Spitsbergen up until Norwegian sovereignty was agreed in 1920. For a discussion on the renaming of the Spitsbergen islands as an act of political and linguistic Norwegianization of Norway's new polar province see: Roald Berg, "From 'Spitsbergen' to 'Svalbard'. Norwegianization in Norway and in the 'Norwegian Sea', 1820–1925," *Acta Borealia* 30, no. 2 (2013): 154–73.

that that same island might ideally serve for the installation of a projected satellite-connected field station. There were also two trained visual artists onboard: a skilful watercolour painter and myself. I had been invited to join the expedition shortly after having started my doctoral studies, and to follow all these different activities closely with my camera. I had agreed to document the expedition with video. But as for everyone, the expedition was also in and of itself an opportunity to return to Svalbard, something otherwise both expensive and logistically difficult.[137]

I list the participants because in this chapter I want to discuss how ideas of observational field practices have long been associated with neutral transmission, and how, on that account, according to the understanding derived from Euro-American natural history, an opposition between culture and nature (and of the former's mastery over the latter) have had a fundamental impact on how I am trained to think of "nature." Increasingly confronted with a current representational breakdown, accentuated by the ever-more serious global environmental crisis, I am precisely confronted with the essentially troublesome character of the concept of nature. This leads me to unpack what I understand as a radicalized notion of landscape.

While Svalbard's landscape is specific to this locus, it is temporal, living and never authentic; rather than engaging with 500 years of art history on the matter of landscape, I engage with critical debates on Svalbard imaginaries. The ongoing transformation of Svalbard imaginaries and their material, experiential

137 Informed by auto-ethnographical trends and debates around the self and subjectivity in documentary films, I tried to let myself be seduced by what I saw (in the viewfinder of my camera) and in this sense embody an investigative approach. Accordingly, my video recordings are handheld, site-responsive and conditioned by the weather, gear logistics, the shaking icebreaker and my relationships to the individual researchers on board. Similar to much of my audiovisual material from Svalbard in general, my video recordings from the expedition in 2016 are documentary in an intuitive sense, and not pre-scripted.

and conceptual consequences; how they are produced, by whom, how they circulate and change. This brings me back to the notion of nature and its emergence as a useful analytical category in relation to, for example, processes of "returning" an old coal mine to its natural state.

So, what does this entail for the guide? For the kind of guide figure that I am trying to develop, it requires a radicalization of the idea of "landscape". The radicalized landscape is the ever-shifting ground that allows the figure of the guide to contest human mastery of nature without assuming that representation can be escaped. The guide navigates the kind of contradicting situations, not least those that manifest on Svalbard, where technology, imaginaries and people – including myself – come and go at an extraordinarily high frequency.

At stake, then, is the kind of Svalbard-nature-making machine I myself am part of as cultural producer, trained artist and visual anthropologist. In fact, my urge in using Svalbard as a prism in this practice-based research draws inspiration from the disciplinary frameworks and contexts of anthropology, while seeking its expansion through artistic intervention and practice.

Anton Rolandson Martin

The paleo-geologist did not, of course, bring actual rock samples from Rigsmuseet to Svalbard, but a folder with images. The rock samples have remained in the museum since they were collected in the eighteenth century by the Swedish scientist Anton Rolandson Martin, a so-called apostle of the acclaimed Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778), the father of modern taxonomy, known as having formalized modern binomial nomenclature (the modern system of naming organisms). Impressed by his scientific skills, Linnaeus appointed Anton Rolandsson

Martin for an expedition to Svalbard and Greenland,[138] with the purpose of collecting specimen from the region, in accordance with Linnaeus's "manual for naturalists on voyages of exploration."[139] Linnaeus was at that time rector of Uppsala University in Sweden. While he continued to collect plants, animals and minerals, and to publish several volumes, he did not travel. Rolandsson Martin, among the best of his students, did, collecting and organizing new plants, animals and minerals according to Linnaeus's manual, thereby spreading his system of taxonomy through the world. It is relevant to emphasize that the manual Linneaus provided Rolandsson Martin with should be understood as one of the first examples of a *standardized* guideline for observations in the field.

Rolandsson Martin embarked from Gothenburg in April 1758 on a whaling ship belonging to the Swedish Greenland Company. Due to difficult weather conditions, however, the trip only lasted three months. He only made it ashore only once, on the first of July 1758 for a few hours on a small island west of Spitsbergen.[140] While one can only imagine the relief that it must have been to finally do so, one must also imagine the pressure on his shoulders to observe and collect the right elements.

Once brought to Stockholm and included in Rigsmuseet's collection, the collected specimens became scientific data; historical references for the paleo-geologist aboard the 2016 expedition; evidence for the story of the first Swede to set foot on Svalbard; a prompt for this piece of writing.

138 Interestingly (for readings of historical sources) everything north of Norway was popularly known as "Greenland" until the eighteenth century.

139 Jonas Hagström, "Where Swedish Polar Research Began: The Linnaean Apostle Anton Rolandson Martin's Voyage to Spitsbergen in 1758," *Polar Record* 54, no. 1 (2018): 36–42. See also: https://www.ikfoundation.org/fieldstation/thestory.php

140 Hagström, 2018

Pure Wilderness

To put it differently: the rock samples connect Rolandsson Martin's practical navigation in the field and Linnaeus's manual for naturalists on voyages of exploration (when thought of as a kind of guide for how to observe and what to bring home), with the desire of the 2016 expedition to establish a satellite-connected field station on the very same island 258 years later.

The Martin's Eye field station project involved the astrophysicist aboard, but was funded by the IK Foundation,[141] a British-Swedish foundation initiating and funding the entire expedition and its members – all those differently skilled practitioners listed above. More precisely, the 2016 expedition to Svalbard was one among a series of expeditions "grounded in the concepts of retracing and lifting both practical and theoretical knowledge from the Linnaeus Apostles' journeys," as it says on the foundation's website.[142] In this sense, the IK Foundation recognized the consequence of a historical expedition and fashioned theirs in its image: an eco-designed autonomous scientific satellite-connected, live-streaming video- and sound-recording field station – "Naturae Observatio," as it is called on their webpage – which, *"as the first station among other stations installed in selected – still wild and unspoiled – places ... shall record foremost pictures and sound from these environments below the mantra Pure Wilderness."*[143]

141 https://www.ikfoundation.org/fieldstation/thestory.php.

142 https://www.ikfoundation.org/ilinnaeus/iprojects/spitsbergen-p1.php

143 Eva la Cour, "A Montage of Notes from Svalbard: Mediating the Arctic through Artistic Research," in *Artistic Visions of the Anthropocene North: Climate Change and Nature in Art*. (S.l.: Routledge, 2021), 43.

Troublesome Nature

It is easy to question the IK Foundation's production of the Arctic, and to contest it as being predicated on colonial European modernist imaginaries of exploration and knowledge production.[144] I have already stated my fundamental discontentment with the ways in which Arctic terrains continues to be portrayed as wild, natural spaces outside society, and how this discontentment is crucial to my understanding of geo-aesthetics. In fact, I have made the rather self-reflexive observation of my own inevitable production of the Arctic in doing this research. Fundamental here is a recognition of how social imaginaries of nature connect with modes of producing the Arctic – in science as well as in art. Or, how the circulation of images and narratives about nature is "a constitutive activity of representations," as far as they foster imaginaries that produce and reproduce people and place.[145]

A cornerstone in the research and my practice, then, is a geo-aesthetically discontented striving towards accentuating this connection, when understanding the very notion of nature to be less bounded and more troublesome than many of us have been taught to think. While often described as something out there, or

144 On the IK Foundation's website, it further reads how the idea behind the autonomous cost-efficient field station, with a low ecological footprint, explicitly is motivated by and compared with the role of the field artist who accompanied expeditions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. That is, before photographical techniques were introduced within scientific fieldwork in an early phase and, effectively, the period when that which has come to be named as observations within science was developed.

145 Here I am citing Mike A. Crang, "Circulation and Emplacement: The Hollowed out Performance of Tourism," in *Travels in Paradox: Remapping Tourism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 48. This further connects to Noel Salazar's useful work on the power of imaginaries, when conceptualized "as socially transmitted representational assemblages that interact with people's personal imaginings and are used as meaning-making and world-shaping devices. The imaginary is both a function of producing meanings and the product of this function" (Noel B. Salazar, "Tourism Imaginaries: A Conceptual Approach," *Annals of Tourism Research* 39, no. 2 (2012): 864).

in the Arctic, worth travelling for, the problem is that such a description of "nature" fails to describe itself as a human construct. This makes it a troublesome concept when it comes to addressing the many natures imagined by human beings.

In other words, I am sceptical of those fully automated field observations carried out by stations in remote human protected areas, as much as I am questioning the effects of skilled field practices carried out by environmental photographers. But my aim is not to deconstruct any particular practice, or to question the good intentions driving projects like Martin's Eye.

One morning during the 2016 expedition, I had the opportunity to talk with the retired astrophysicist about his vision of the Martin's Eye field station. We were, aptly, walking around in Ny Ålesund, another kind of company town on Svalbard (owned and operated by the Kings Bay), a former coal mine today providing facilities for permanent research institutes from several countries. The astrophysicist envisioned the field station enabling observations of changes to the climate, serving to educate, bringing Arctic imagery to the world while simultaneously generating scientific data. He also talked about the potential of studying climate change through remote visualizations in areas protected from human beings, as a register of animal behaviour otherwise inaccessible. He explicitly talked about the walruses we had seen the day before, and about them seeing us – a crew of luminous orange jumpsuits.

So what am I contesting?

I am contesting the risk of reproducing particular (art historical) notions of landscape through ideas of documentation as neutral transmission from tripods with cameras and microphones, as it were. The risk of reproducing a desire for the untouched through ideas of visual documentation as objective or authentic

representation. In other words, my scepticism towards a field station like Martin's Eye as a piece of human infrastructure is largely a self-scepticism towards the risk of fetishizing generic Arctic imaginaries from a critical stance at a safe distance (outside the frame, so to speak).

A Radicalized Landscape

There is another way to approach the notion of the landscape.

From a critical anthro-geographical perspective, researchers have long questioned much observation in the field, precisely through critiques of the concept of landscape. Tim Ingold, for example, has suggested we talk about "the atmospheric" and "the weather-world" in attempts to move beyond a linear and visual understanding of a land's temporal character, so emphasizing the dynamic simultaneity of sensorial experiences.[146] Similarly critical, Emily Eliza Scott has advocated for perspectives that are "highly situated yet move across registers and scales – both spatial (e.g., the so-called local and global) and temporal (e.g., historical time, evolutionary time, and media time)."[147] Effectively, Eliza Scott, a trained landscape architect, is more precisely concerned with climate crisis as a representational breakdown, requiring a perspective that moves across scale, muddy and fractured, and thus radically different from what she terms a "seamless perspective."[148] This is not a perspective fostering illustration; it is not

146 Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (London: Routledge, 2011).

147 Emily Eliza Scott, "Archives of the Present-Future: Climate Change and Representational Breakdown (Avery Review, 2016)," *The Avery Review: Critical Essays on Architecture* (Vol. 16), 136.2016, https://www.academia.edu/25207403/Archives_of_the_Present-Future_Climate_Change_and_Representational_Breakdown_Avery_Review_2016_.","plainCitation":"Emily Eliza Scott, "Archives of the Present-Future: Climate Change and Representational Breakdown (Avery Review, 2016

148 Ibid.

the iconic, lone Arctic polar bear, representative of an endangered nature threatened by human technology. But, importantly, neither does it recall notions of the "techno-sublime";[149] subsuming particularities into totalities is also an illustrative mode, which all too easily naturalizes or depoliticizes the representational breakdown, she points out.[150] This, then, is how Ingold's notion of "the atmospheric" or "the weather world" is useful. An environment *becomes* through an interplay between biophysical processes, topographical sites, located practices and spaces of knowledges.[151]

This is interesting in relation to historical perceptions of the Arctic environment. In *Into the White: The Renaissance Arctic and the End of the Image*, the art historian Christopher P. Heuer explains how early explorers of the Arctic often found themselves confused by "the scalar disjunctive between what they saw and what the chart (say) told them to be true."[152] Heuer shows how the difficulty of describing the Arctic in this sense has a long history. In fact, exploration of a region neither continent, ocean nor meteorological circumstance affected contemporary debates of perception and matter, of representation, discovery, and the age of the earth, to the point that, for the Renaissance exotic, the far North acquired a status exceeding image itself.[153] This is the apt point that Heuer makes when he points to how a Danish sailor

149 Scott's pinpointing phrasing.

150 Scott, "Archives of the Present-Future," 134.climate change entails many (often correlated and at times seemingly contradictory

151 Ingold further writes: "To regain the currents of life, and of sensory awareness, we need to join in the movements that give rise to things rather than casting our attention back to their objective and objectified forms" (Ingold, *Being Alive*, 97).

152 Heuer, *Into the White*, 60.

153 I am here drawing from the précis of *Into the White*, where Heuer, more precisely, writes: "Icy, unpopulated, visually and temporally 'abstract,' the far North – a different kind of terra incognita for the Renaissance imagination [to that of the Atlantic New World] – offered more than new stuff to be mapped, plundered, or even seen."

simply said of Greenland in 1607: "'We could never see.' … Travellers' accounts almost uniformly thematized blindness, obstruction and disorientation: 'We could not scarcely see one another… nor open our eyes'," as, Heuer tells us, another Arctic sailor put it in 1578.[154]

The disruption of representation is arguably manifest in the timeless character of the North Pole. The North Pole continues to have no longitude allocated to define its time zone; spatially, when standing on the North Pole, every direction is south. Hence, in a similar vein, exploring the early modern Arctic as site, myth and ecology, the polar science scholar Michael Bravo has stated that cosmography is the true legacy of the Renaissance surviving into the present.[155]

This did not prevent, however, a romanticization of the polar landscape in the nineteenth century. The representational challenges that the climate crisis poses and which precisely manifest through the degree to which the Arctic has become emblematic of this crisis, actualizes how one cannot be *in* the landscape; one is *part of* the landscape, entangled with particles, species and weathers as much as personal and communal memories, experiences and anticipations. Rather than talk about landscapes, I seek attune to *becoming* landscapes or radicalized landscapes: the many different entanglements across scales, actors and practices that play out materially, politically, experientially and conceptually.

154 Heuer, *Into the White*, 12. What Heuer so usefully contributes in his recognition of the Arctic being "not so much an infinite 'place' as a condition" (p. 18) is the observation that "the Arctic experience subsisted not just in what is seen, but in a productive anxiety about how the act of seeing itself is transformed or even cancelled by a terrain that resisted – in a very real sense – some stable humanist contingency between subject, object, and image" (p. 19–20).

155 Michael Bravo, *North Pole Nature and Culture.* (United Kingdom: Reaktion Books, 2019).

Svalbard Temporality

When the young Austrian photographer Herta Grøndal came to Svalbard in the 1950s, visual records show that sea ice covered the entire Isfjorden throughout the winter.[156] In 2015 however, when I was back in Longyearbyen during winter, a lack of any sea ice, even in the inner fjords here, forced tourist operators in Longyearbyen to reinvent many of their winter activities. In 2018, a thick layer of ice formed early in the season, before temporary shifts in temperature, along with strong gales, threatened to crack it. While we understand ice as a living, changing matter rather than a fixed "landscape," we tend to be more surprised by land showing similar characteristics.[157] The Svalbard landscape has changed over the decades and is constantly changing hour-by-hour, day-by-day, year-by-year, as is reflected in the way we use and perceive it.[158] Glacial meltwater runs down the winter snowmobile paths in spring and summer, transforming them into rivers. The light, meanwhile, is a daily experience of constant alteration. The view from my studio apartment at Skjæringa in Longyearbyen when I arrived in February 2015 was limited to that from a construction site and a dark, foggy backcloth.

156 While her maiden name was Niedermayer, she changed her last name to Grøndal in the 1950s when she married in Svalbard in the 1950s. However, after her return to Vienna in the 1970s, when she married for a second time, she chose to take the last name Lampert. Nevertheless, on Svalbard she is primarily known as Grøndal. Or, as it says in an article in the local newspaper, Svalbardposten, from 1992: "This year marks the 40th anniversary of Herta Grøndal Lampert's first arrival in Svalbard. Or simply Herta Grøndal, as she is usually known on Svalbard. For the Grøndal name has been immortalized through myriad photographs from Svalbard" (Ellen Marie Hagevik, "Herta – Sommerfugl På Vinterbesøk [Herta – Butterfly on Winter Visit]," *Svalbardposten*, 1992, 10 edition.; translation mine).

157 Here I am deliberately using the term "landscape" to signal the term as it is commonly used.

158 While this is true for all land and geographical and geological terrain I am, again, using the term "landscape" in the common usage rather than the specific sense employed in art history of an arrested moment captured. See for example W. J. T. Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

When attempting to look out I primarily saw myself reflected in the window. I knew that Hjortfjellet was right in front of me behind the foggy backcloth on the opposite side of Adventdalen, but only because I recalled a virtual image. However, while sight is limited in the dark season, listening is not, and the terrain affords plenty of rich auditory experiences beyond the visible. These support a rhythm and feeling of place and time, not least in the absence of sight during the polar nights.

In other words: the changes of the seasons with which one is so sensorially confronted on Svalbard reflect temporality as a defining dimension of the situated experience.

Living Nature

Recalling my participation in the ANG exam ski tour in 2018, the six ANG guides that I eventually got to know in person opened the possibility of using the figure of the guide as a tool in all this from early on. Before departing on the ski excursion, I attended a full day introduction seminar at The University Centre in Svalbard (UNIS), during which the six guides (among others) held a presentation, and reflected upon the training they had received during the one year ANG program. For one, a student from Romania:

> I think we came closer to what some scholars in value-based guiding and tourism are talking about, this passage, where we slowly move from season to season. We live with the nature and all the time try to adapt ourselves to its cycles and… Here [gesturing towards a PowerPoint and photograph taking during polar night] it is a really interesting moment, at least for some of us, it is when the total darkness comes. And some of us have never experienced that, and it is something that is quite powerful and puts into perspective what it means to see light, to see sun when it returns in March and April. It is about valuing small things that you have every day, and maybe being more grateful for them. And about understanding contrasts. To understand more about yourself, answer some question with regard to why you are here, in order for you to better be able to go out and be with the nature, and with the guest and share the nature with them.[159]

The six students affectively conveyed the ANG program's emphasis on nature as something living; as something one must seek to be a part of rather than to master. Moreover, the ANG guides embody the refusal of "fantasies of human mastery"[160] and the fundamental modernist perception of the human species in Western history of ideas, in which humanity, despite its biological origin, is perceived to be above – or at least categorically different from – nature, as noted, among others, by the French philosopher Bruno Latour.[161] Discussing today's environmental crisis as expressions of greater and more-than-human forces, Latour effectively suggests that they respond back and threaten to make the earth uninhabitable for human as well as many other forms of life.[162]

Borrowing from this, my concern with field observational practices in the Arctic when enacted as photographic practices on Svalbard, is that they both frame a limited scenery (as "the landscape") in two-dimensional form and fix a relationship between object and subject. The viewer is located outside of the picture; outside of the relationship being depicted. A radicalized understanding of the landscape is, differently, relational and contingent.

159 Fieldnotes, Longyearbyen, May 26, 2018.

160 Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

161 Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

162 Ibid.

The Inscription Of Time

This resonates with Ingold's argument that wayfaring is our most fundamental mode of being in the world,[163] and how in this movement of creation – looking and listening, for example – time is inscribed. Or, to put it differently, Svalbard is produced through temporary organizations: being today a liberalized society with a local government and a growing experience and knowledge economy, the local cultural reality of Longyearbyen changes according to people both visiting and temporarily living in the settlement. It is a connective hub and facility base camp, characterized by social temporality and mobility reflected in an almost 23% yearly population turnover – 43% of all residents stay less than two years.[164] But with the mobility of people, there is also a mobility of contaminants, objects and concepts (think of coal and scientific data), ideas and anticipations (political ideologies, entrepreneurships and desires) experiences and remembrances (personal and collective), travelling between the Norwegian mainland, elsewhere, and Svalbard, eroding and sedimenting the place.[165] In this sense, the "place" is unstable with regard to non-human agential formations and human practices and representations alike, suggesting a symbiotic relationship between the often-assumed binary relationships between human/non-human, society/nature. There is rather a kind of co-production

163 Ingold, *Being Alive*, 152.

164 64% stay less than 5 years and only 6 % stay more than 20 years. Interestingly, more than 50% of the households in Longyearbyen consist of only one person (Norwegian Tax Office, 2020). While a further understanding of how and why Longyearbyen today is able to facilitate families, researchers, adventurers, visitors and tourists from all over the world all year round deserves a detailed account, it cannot be provided in the framework of this writing – but see, for example. Arlov, *Svalbards historie*.

165 Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt, ed., *Performing Tourist Places* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

going on, and a conjunction of the material-discursive; a radicalized approach to the landscape must take changing social imaginaries into consideration.[166]

Hence, I understand the ANG guide's care for nature (and the kind of care they had a wish to generate in me, being one of their "guests") as an active and critical discontentment with the fixing of nature in time through picture-making. While informed by trends in new materialist ideas of human culture and non-human nature as inseparable entities, I will later stress that this care reflects a larger move towards humble epistemologies (which I find the productive way of engaging with new materialism). What is important is that the guides do not escape their own role in producing the Arctic. The ANG guides have shaped my interest in the guide precisely as a figure disclosing problems with representation without escaping them. Rather (as we have seen) the guide is deeply entangled in negotiating representation as an authenticity-effect; effects of representation condition their guiding.

The "Melttown" of Longyearbyen

It is perhaps simpler to point at the ways in which social imaginaries of Svalbard are closely connected to social imaginaries about nature: tourists travel to Svalbard to experience nature, based on the basic premise that there are areas on Svalbard where very few people have been.

Interestingly enough, and in the context of her ongoing research on Longyearbyen, the anthropologist Zdenka Sokolíčková has written about how this is locally "translated into difficulties that people living in the 'melttown' of Longyearbyen experience when being confronted with the overwhelming dilemmas

166 My use of the term "social imaginary" is here borrowed from Kathleen Stewart, who extends Benedict Anderson's famous concept of "imagined communities" beyond "meta-cultural, ideological claims to community into the micro-poetics of the density, texture, and force of everyday modes of discourse and sociality" (Stewart, "An Occupied Place," 164).

without the support of a collective sense of belonging to a community."[167] The notion of Longyearbyen as a *melttown* refers to the fact that while globally the limit of a 2°C target limit has been set (over the preferable 1.5°C), locally on Svalbard there is an increase in temperature of 8–10°.[168] Svalbard is becoming more humid, greener, and the sea ice in the fjords is disappearing. Some species are disappearing; new species are arriving. Sokolíčková offers further observation that while it may not be possible to talk about "communities" on Svalbard in any traditional anthropological sense, Longyearbyen residents strive to conjure a local community precisely and particularly by emphasizing certain values and attitudes towards living in nature. These values and attitudes do not match the geopolitically-motivated strategy of Norwegian central authority (sovereignty), which, interestingly enough, is how and why these values and attitudes in turn connect the question of nature to a politics and geo-aesthetics of belonging and "access" to Svalbard.[169]

167 Sokolíčková, "Longyearbyen: The Trouble with Local Community"

168 These data stem from the report "Svalbard and the Arctic Region on the agenda during Arendalsuka 2019," written by Lisbeth Iversen, The Nansen Center / NERSC.

169 The question of belonging in Svalbard relates also to the asymmetry that many guides experience in terms of rights and living conditions. In short: because Svalbard has no indigenous population, and inhabitants live there according to the terms of the Svalbard Treaty, questions of residence and presence play out differently than in other Arctic localities, not least in decision-making. Moreover, and despite the Svalbard Treaty, there is a difference between the rights Norwegian residents enjoy, being socially insured, and those from other nations; between permanent and precarious employees; whether you speak Norwegian or not. Most guides are not socially insured, are precariously employed and do not speak Norwegian (as a first language at least) – but feel that they belong as much to Svalbard as others do. Therefore, the question of what it means to belong has arisen in the form of questions about how it is possible to talk about belonging on Svalbard at all – and subsequently whether one can talk about indigeneity. This, to be clear, seems problematic to me, given that Svalbard is fundamentally a settler community, and thus the use of the concept of indigeneity is misleading in relation to other realities (postcolonial societies and communities) in the Arctic. A relevant question, however, is how to talk about precarity on Svalbard in a way of solidarity and how the question of belonging is recognized as both a personal and a political matter.

What I am hinting at is something we already know: the notion of nature is used and exploited in political institutions and public debate alike, often through the use of terms such as "eco-friendliness" and "sustainability," playing a central role in conversations about future developments in the Arctic. In fact, these terms arguably function as a ticket for participation in the conversation. This is despite questions having been raised with regard to what terms such as sustainability, for example, really cover; as scholar in Greenlandic and Arctic Studies Lill Rastad Bjørst writes in the introduction to a research project on the subject: "In talking about a sustainable Arctic, are we talking about sustainability in relation to the environment, climate and nature? Or about sustainability in economics? Or, in relation to broader societal needs or cultural identity?"[170]

These questions expose a discursive battle, and in seeking a mode of inquiry which fundamentally links Rastad Bjørst's questions through a radicalized understanding of landscape, nature emerges as useful *analytical* category.

Shallow and Deep Ecology

In the context of the emerging field of sustainable tourism in the Arctic, a critical stance is that the field is to a large degree reformist, and that much ecotourism is embedded within what has been termed "shallow ecology," typifying mainstream political green agendas in the West.[171] The proposed alternative, offered in part by the ANG program, is a "long-range" deep ecology

170 Lill Rastad Bjørst/Aalborg University. More explicitly with regards to Svalbard, it is relevant to note that the governor has decided to keep the archipelago out of the Paris Agreement (which is possible because of the Svalbard Treaty). While it applies to the mainland of Norway, it does not apply to Svalbard.

171 Lusine Margaryan, "Commercialization of Nature through Tourism" (Östersund, Mid Sweden University, 2017); Peter Varley and Dominic Medway, "Ecosophy and Tourism: Rethinking a Mountain Resort," *Tourism Management* 32, no. 4 (2011): 902–11.

recognizing "the importance of a search for ecologically wise and harmonious living, acknowledging human beings as just one part of an interrelated system in which place, community and self are intertwined with the natural world"[172] – so proposes Arne Næss, often held to be the founder of ecosophy.[173]

The suggestion is that deep and shallow ecologies operate within different and contrasting frameworks of value, with "deep ecology" covering a recognition of the intrinsic value of all living beings (humans are "just one particular strand in the web of life"),[174] and "shallow ecology" covering a market-driven logic, identifying and analysing value components of nature tourism in relation to their importance for clients.[175]

Unsurprisingly then, Næss's ecosophical tenet "concerning not only the 'facts' of pollution, resources, population, etc. but also value priorities" has played an important role in the context of sustainable tourism. That is, adopted as a mindset, Næss's

172 Næss in Varley and Medway, "Ecosophy and Tourism," 903.

173 Næss defines ecosophy as "a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium. A philosophy as a kind of sofia (or) wisdom, is openly normative, it contains both norms, rules, postulates, value priority announcements and hypotheses concerning the state of affairs in our universe. Wisdom is policy wisdom, prescription, not only scientific description and prediction. The details of an ecosophy will show many variations due to significant differences concerning not only the 'facts' of pollution, resources, population, etc. but also value priorities," Næss in Alan R. Drengson and Yuichi Inoue, *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology* (North Atlantic Books, 1995), 8.

174 As Varley and Medway write: "Shallow ecology is anthropocentric, or human-centred. It views humans as above or outside of nature, as the source of all value, and ascribes only instrumental, or 'use,' value to nature. Deep ecology does not separate humans or anything else from the natural environment. It sees the world not as a collection of isolated objects, but as a network of phenomena that are fundamentally interconnected and interdependent. Deep ecology recognizes the intrinsic value of all living beings and views humans as just one particular strand in the web of life" (Capra in Varley and Medway, "Ecosophy and Tourism").

175 In this instance value is defined as "the sum of the guide contributions in relation to how clients perceive the utility, the gain, cost reduction, or emotional contribution" Rokenes, Schumann, and Rose, "The Art of Guiding in Nature-Based Adventure Tourism – How Guides Can Create Client Value and Positive Experiences on Mountain Bike and Backcountry Ski Tours," 63.

words speak to the guide's transformative potential, in so far as encounters with nature are regarded as potential moments of re-identification and the transformation of the guest's psychological self. At stake in educating Arctic ambassadors through a transformation of the tourist's view on nature, is, in this sense, the very conception of selfhood. But such a strategy for self-identification and self-realization with nature is a matter of a modern dichotomization of nature and society.[176] Seeking nature as a kind of antidote to modernity, Næss is reeled right back in; as "nature" remains something out there to experience and worth travelling for, it is required to retain a representational function.[177]

There remains the question of the degree to which we can truly differentiate how deep and shallow ecology manifest, when, in both cases, nature remains a preconceived ontology.

Anthropology and Nature

In sympathy with the intent of the ANG guides, then, I seek to discontentedly complicate the idea of nature as a backdrop. What is required is a theoretical framework that allows us to approach nature as a proliferation of ontologies rather than as preconceived ontological *fait accompli* without losing sight of the political and social stakes in activating nature as a term.

176 An interesting discussion rests in whether Næss's strategies for self-identification and self-realization with nature can be reconceptualized through exercises in 'reconaissance' and collective living – recognition (reproduction) – whereby to increase an individual's preparedness to share resources with others, which is different to attaching importance to people's individual experience of reality as a source of bettered environmental attitudes. Precisely this discussion was recently pointed in a recent presentation at the Sixth Annual conference for Marxist studies on Climate Crisis and Capital, by philosopher Erika Brandl.

177 As the literary scholar Mark Safstrom points out Næss's ecosophy "promote a view on wilderness as being a space /entity that is ethically equal to or greater than human civilization" (Mark Safstrom, "The Polar Hero's Progress: Fridtjof Nansen, Spirituality, and Environmental History," in *Arctic Environmental Modernities*, (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 109.

This leads me to a postcolonial turn to ontology in anthropology, emerging in response to the representational crisis in the field in the 1980s. This was a turn that continues to fundamentally challenge Euro-American natural history (as founded by Linnaeus and other namers and knowers), by showing how modernity's objectivization of the world has kept other ontological perspectives in pre-modern subject positions. In response to post-structuralist investigations of textual practices – disclosing how ethnographic representation is frequently given authority through narrative operations and textual structures and keep "others" in eternal nows – strategies and inquiries within the field of anthropology shifted towards self-reflexive and multi-sited ethnography, and science-and-technology studies. But the representational crisis was also a starting point for an environmental anthropology then new in its way of challenging the dualism of the natural and the social worlds in Western societies.

"No longer simply relegating concerns with a modernist concept of ecology to the margins, constructionist and culturalist approaches in anthropology were now prepared to apply their perspectives to human-environmental relations and to nature itself,"[178] as the anthropologist and human ecologist Alf Hornborg writes with regard to the seminal *Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives* from 1996, written by the anthropologists Philipe Descola and Gisli Pålsson.[179] Up until then, ecological thinking in anthropology had primarily been addressed in terms of adaptation and determinism in an evolutionary perspective, and questions of ecology therefore regarded as outmoded. Notwithstanding areas of disagreement, European anthropology in

178 Alf Hornborg, *Global Magic: Technologies of Appropriation from Ancient Rome to Wall Street* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 97.

179 Philippe Descola and Gisli Pålsson, eds., *Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 1999).

the twentieth century was marked by a pervasive indifference to environment, ecology and climate.[180]

Meanwhile, the new environmental anthropology began to understand itself as a comparative anthropology of ontology – or "an ontological pluralism that is irreducible to social constructivism."[181] A non-universality of the concept of nature, as it was, which provided both an understanding of the variation in human conceptualizations of their non-human environments and historical perspectives on the role of Western science, and its infrastructure, in constructing environmental imaginaries.[182] Thus, while the kind of ecological discourse founded by Næss has been picked up in the emerging field of sustainable tourism, a crisis of representation – accentuated (as I have said) by the ever-worsening global environmental crisis – is implicit in how an environmental anthropology connects with wider discourses on decoloniality and approaches in Arctic humanities that challenge stereotypical depictions of the Arctic as pristine, vulnerable, homogenous wilderness. In formulating a conceptualization of nature as plural ontologies, Descola, being one of the movement's key figures, also formulated a basis for the emergence of other contemporary preoccupations with ontology, associated

180 In this account I am drawing from a lecture by social anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksson at the Climate Walk seminar series 2021. See also: Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), 313–14.

181 Yuk Hui, "Cosmotechnics as Cosmopolitics," *e-flux Journal*, 2017, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/86/161887/cosmotechnics-as-cosmopolitics/.

182 Descola explicitly proposes that recognizing ontological differences (between animism and natural history) can serve as an antidote to the dominance of natural history since the advent of European modernity (Philippe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture* (University of Chicago Press, 2013). The ontological turn in anthropology, then, is a call for a politics of ontologies encouraging a pluralism endangered by the global dissemination of naturalism brought about by colonization; see Yuk Hui, "On Cosmotechnics: For a Renewed Relation between Technology and Nature in the Anthropocene," *Techné: Research in Philosophy and Technology* 21, no. 2 (2017): 319–41.

with anthropologists such as Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Bruno Latour, and Tim Ingold, that we might understand as an explicit response to the crisis of modernity. This crisis is now pointedly associated with the Anthropocene.

Anthropocene

I am aware that I have avoided the term "Anthropocene," the most popular designation for the ways in which lived, shared conditions for human reason and affect fundamentally differ from the conditions articulated through the structural narratives of modernity.[183] As a socio-political label for our epoch and predicament – a grand new narrative[184] – the Anthropocene infatuates the academic and contemporary art worlds, while its imaginaries prompt political promises, ethical and sustainable banking portfolios, eco-friendly consumerism and carbon dioxide emission quotas – and, of course, environmentalist and ecocritical scholars to expose its hypocrisy. The inability to imagine anything beyond the perfection of science and the progress of technology is treated as a given.[185] All the while the promise of modernity, driven by the prospect of economic growth, is expressed largely in terms of environmental crisis.

The popularization of a term like "the Anthropocene" typifies the discontent with image production at the centre of my research, notwithstanding the increased awareness and recognition of the current global climate crisis for which "the Arctic" has become the threatened exemplar. While representing the crisis arising as the culmination of hundreds of years of industrialization, itself made possible through hundreds of years of imperial

183 Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015).

184 Isabelle Stengers, "In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism" (United Kingdom: Open Humanities Press, 2015).

185 More explicitly celebrated in the eco-modernist manifesto (http://www.ecomodernism.org/). See also Asafu-Adjaye et al., "An Ecomodernist Manifesto," 2015, http://www.ecomodernism.org.

colonialization, these two labels too often work "in support of neoliberal financializations of nature, anthropocentric political economy, and endorsement of geoengineering as the preferred – but likely disastrous – method of approaching climate change," as the art critic TJ Demos writes in *Against the Anthropocene*.[186] This applies to the ways in which the planet's raw materials relate to the landscape as image while, accordingly, serving to raise questions with regard to the role of the artist in screening (in both senses) the political aspect of this predicament in the contemporary context of late capitalism – the political and aesthetical implications of a representational breakdown.

Nature-Culture Dichotomies

Interestingly enough, the term Anthropocene, announced as a label for a new geological era, emerged from the natural sciences and a worldview determined by rationality and politics, where the human and non-human are inherently separate. The parameters of the Anthropocene, however, highlight the very arbitrariness of this dichotomy. As Chakrabarty has written, the emergence of humanity as a species with the capacity to transform, even to destroy, its own conditions of existence, fundamentally undermines the constitutive distinction between human and natural histories.[187] The problem however, is the kind of planetary conception of humanity that this highlighting too easily (re-)produces. It is an unfortunately apolitical view of the climate crisis which loses sight of the fact that only a minority is responsible for the climate crisis (and the many problems that result from this). Drawing from an eco-Marxist approach, the so-called Anthropocene narrative furthermore risks losing sight of the fact that the primary cause of climate change is a very specific historical organization

186 T. J. Demos, *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017).

187 Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Human Significance of the Anthropocene," in *Reset Modernity! R·M!* (Karlsruhe: ZKM – Center for Art and Media, 2016).

of the human metabolism with nature[188] – the capitalist organization of production and energy, as the human geographer Andreas Malm shows in his seminal book *Fossil Capital* (2016).[189] If the cause is the capitalist organization of the fossil economy, and not humanity in the abstract sense, states Malm, the solution lies in a fundamental break with the existing economic and social conditions.[190]

Nevertheless, it is a fact that the Anthropocene perspective has provoked practices and inquiries that challenge any clear distinctions between nature and culture, both physically, through biomedical technoscience, and theoretically, through speculative posthumanist inquiries into the contingencies of perceptive capabilities and cultural productions of meaning (or value/ethics). Further, in *techno fixing* and *new narratives* we see two differing responses manifesting politically through particular economies of representing and narrating the Arctic (which, again, demonstrates Eliza Scott's concern with climate crisis as a representational breakdown).

188 While metabolism usually covers an organic function of individual bodies, eco-Marxist literature uses the term in accordance with Marx's theorization of a rupture in the metabolic interaction between humanity and the rest of nature emanating among other from capitalist agriculture. An essential aspect of the concept of metabolism is thus "that it constitutes the basis on which life is sustained and growth and reproduction become possible" (John Bellamy Foster, "Marx's Theory of Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology," *American Journal of Sociology* 105, no. 2 (September 1999): 383. See also John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000).

189 In *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming*, Malm explains that fossil capitalism is a historically specific economic-political constellation that originated in Britain at the end of the eighteenth century with the invention of the steam engine. This invention marks a shift away from (particularly) hydropower and towards a dependency on fossil fuels, at this point coal (Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam-Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (London ; New York: Verso, 2016), 19.

190 Malm, *Fossil Capital*.

Climate Politics and Svalbard

Svalbard is an extraordinary location for the study of the consequences of an Anthropocene perspective through the lens of imaginaries. This is immediately tangible when looking up at the mountain ridges surrounding Longyeardallen, where the now-closed entrances to the former coal mines scar the terrain. Or in Pyramiden, the abandoned Russian coal mining settlement 80 km north of Longyearbyen, now one of Svalbard's most prominent tourist attractions. More explicitly, in 2015, Gruva 3, one of the long-closed mines in Longyearbyen, was launched as a kind of museum telling the story of Longyearbyen as a coal company town.[191] Here the tourist gets the opportunity to enter and experience extractive infrastructure from the inside.[192]

In 2021 a new initiative, FOSSIL, was launched to open up Longyearbyen's old coal-fired powerplant as an industrial monument, cultural arena and a visitor attraction.[193] New post-Anthropocene narratives manifest precisely in the re-structured use of old infrastructures. Having been abandoned for thirty years,

191 https://www.visitsvalbard.com/aktivitetsplanleggeren/besok-i-gruve-3-gruve-3-as-p2523693

192 In 2016, tourists were only allowed into the entrance of the mine, but the facility continues to be extended and as of today, tourists can enter the former coal wagons and continue deeper inside. Thus, as part of their new tourism investment, Store Norske has altered the safety in the old mining infrastructures.

193 Built in 1920, the powerplant was used to generate heat and electricity for the town until it was closed in 1984. As the building dates back to before 1946, the cut-off point for automatic cultural heritage protection in Svalbard, it has been protected since the 1980s. Until last year, however, it sat silently, unnoticed or undistinguished from its successor, immediately adjacent. At the end of 2020, the Svalbard Environmental Protection fund, which raises money via an environmental levy on flights to Svalbard, then granted the local council 400,000 kroner for preservation and restoration of the old power station. The board stated that "this is a cultural monument telling an important story about the Longyear community." I am currently actively following this process together with a research group affiliated to the Svalbard Social Science Initiative (SSSI, https://svalbardsocialscience.com/).

Longyearbyen's old powerplant (and all the old facilities remaining intact inside it) is being readied to assume a key role in the re-narrativization of a changing Svalbard.[194] The stories the plant will be impelled to tell, and how these will be incorporated into geopolitical and social imaginaries of a "greener" Svalbard remains the question. More pointedly, what are the political implications of turning old coal infrastructures into memories and remnants of industrial progression?

The Anthropocene is evinced elsewhere on Svalbard through wholly different means, too. At the Svea/Lunkfjell mining site and settlement 60 km south of Longyearbyen, the human intervention consists in what is promoted as "one of the most ambitious environmental projects in Norway."[195]

Coal mining on Svalbard was at its zenith in the early 2000s, and the Svea Nord mine in Svea was at the centre of this success.[196] In 2001, mined coal made a profit on Svalbard for the first time since the 1970s; in 2003, coal mining went without financial subsidies from the Norwegian State for the first time ever . Thus, until the drop in coal prices following the 2008 economic crisis, the Svea Nord mine enjoyed several years of solid returns, permitting Longyearbyen to become an increasingly family-oriented milieu where almost 50% were employed within the coal business.

I visited Svea myself in 2011 during a period characterized by a modest local optimism. A permit had been issued by the Ministry of the Environment to open a large new coal field next to

194 In their January 2021 communication portfolio the LPO architects in Longyearbyen articulates the potential of old powerplant in becoming a "unik arena for ulike kulturarrangementer, formidling og kunstneriske uttrykk, samtidig som den fossile historien fortelles". See also: https://www.lpo.no/prosjekter/fossil

195 See for example: https://www.pole-position.no/en/projects

196 In 2001 the Norwegian government decided to grant permission for permanent mining in Svea, where there had been no mining for years. At its height, some 350 people were employed in Svea, a little company town in its own right.

Svea Nord, Lunkefjell, signalling the continued willingness of the Norwegian authorities to invest in coal mining on the archipelago – job opportunities and investments in modern mining technology. The permit was issued, however, on the premise that the area would subsequently be cleaned from traces of human activity and restored to its original natural state.[197] So when the Lunkefjell mine was wound down after only a year's operation, followed by the shuttering of Svea Nord in 2016, the process of financing and planning the big clean-up project aiming to return the mining site back to its "natural state" began. The actual cleaning began in 2018, when several people lost their jobs as miners and were hired to dismantle their former workplace. On 4 March, 2020 both mines were finally sealed off, after 100 years of (discontinuous) coal mining in Svea.

Cleaning as "Gamechanging"

Polemically, it can be argued that the ethical imperative through which the clean-up project is articulated ensures a continued expansion of human technological control over nature. An eco-Marxist reading and critique might conclude that the current clean-up project expresses a form of eco-modernist belief that the ongoing climate and ecological crisis can – and should – be resolved within the framework of existing societies.[198] It has been argued from a critical cultural heritage studies perspective, meanwhile, that while it may be possible to erase all traces of

197 The question of course arises of which time period of "before" are we talking about? In that regard, it has been decided to use photographs of Svea taken before 1946 as a reference point. The argument is that all infrastructures dating back to before 1946 are preserved. Moreover, the Norwegian authorities have signalled that the area around the former Svea mine shall be included in the Nordensjöld National Park. (See Cecilie Vindal Ødegaard, "Sosiale Drama På Svalbard: Tilbakeføring Til Natur Og Fortellinger Om En Ny Tid," *Naturen* 145, no. 2–03 (2021): 138–47).

198 Mads Ejsing, "Antropocæne Fortællinger: Mindre End Én, Flere End Mange," *Kultur & Klasse* Klima, Magt, Modstand, no. 129 (2020): 59–76.

mining aesthetically, the violent and extractive intervention cannot be rolled back.[199] This perspective permits a consideration of the clean-up project as a way of embellishing history through a deletion of the "scars," with the help of visual profiles of the past and big machinery. This connects the problem of post-industrial heritage to my concern with history writing in general, which I will return to in relation to my proposal of a post-future essayism. Is leaving the scars a feasible alternative? If so, what does that entail?[200]

Interestingly enough, Store Norske has decided to let the Svea community re-appear through a digital reconstruction in the form of a 3D digital model. This implies a desire to preserve the cultural environment of the place for posterity, and emphasizes the dismantling of the mine as a focal point in Svalbard's transition from coal society to a showcase for the future – with there being various, partly competing, stories about what this future without coal precisely entails.

The concern with history writing, then, is this: when written and rewritten, whose interests and which power relations are allowed to dominate the narrative? Hence, coming at a price of 2.5 billion kroner, the clean-up of Svea/Lunkfjell is perceived by many as failed symbol politics, as local people wonder about the complex reasons behind it – geopolitical, economic, environmental. The closure of the Svea mine has been strongly contested; there is fear in not knowing what comes after coal.[201]

199 Avango and Roberts, "Heritage, Conservation, and the Geopolitics of Svalbard: Writing the History of Arctic Environments."

200 For a provocation to conventional thinking on the conservation on cultural heritage, see: Caitlin DeSilvey, *Curated Decay: Heritage Beyond Saving* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

201 I am relying here both on conversations with people I know in Longyearbyen and on a guest presentation at the Svalbard History course at UNIS 2021 made by the anthropologist and PhD researcher Alexandra Meyer (Dpt. Of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Vienna). As of today there is no new energy solution in Longyearbyen, while coal mining remains a significant part of the local identity, as Meyer pointed out. As of today, only one mine is still in operation. This is Gruva 7, operated by Store Norske (SNSK, a company, itself owned by the Norwegian Ministry of Trade and Industry, that owned practically everything in Longyearbyen until the 1990s, including infrastructure, housing, health care). Today Gruva 7 has 50 employees; in 2019 it produced 117,000 tons of coal (70% exported for industry and 30% to energy production in Longyearbyen). Interestingly, SNSK company itself stated in 2020 that coal reserves would be enough to sustain for twenty more years. But in January 2021, the Norwegian government decided, rather, that mining operations were to cease within two to five years.

Among the responses are different initiatives and investments within tourism, research and infrastructure, all intended to afford new modes of value creation. This is the situation and the arena that the ANG guides, among others, must navigate. But the rewilding of the Svea mine is an important process of generating competences and practical knowledge, established in tandem with research and pilot projects dealing with sustainable and renewable energy implementation. In short: with the aim of maintaining presence on Svalbard, the Norwegian state approaches the islands as a kind of test centre for industries and technologies within logistics, energy and safety for application elsewhere later. "To be a 'gamechanger' is to invent how to maintain settlements on Svalbard without coal extraction," as the head of Store Norske said at this year's *Svalbard seminariet*,[202] acknowledging that being one of the biggest environmental projects in Norway, the cleaning of Svea is also a potential economic vehicle. Knowing how to undo or rewild these former extractive sites and having the experience to do so will allow SNSK to pursue future contracts elsewhere in the circumpolar North where challenges such as permafrost are similar.[203] I do not mean to suggest that SNSK has some hidden masterplan. But the case exemplifies how a status quo in which the pursuit of profit is legitimized by certain discourses on sustainability and nature friendliness risks rendering the Arctic a waste where opportunism

202 Svalbardseminaret, UNIS, 28 January 2021.

203 I recently heard Svalbard described as a "testination" – a sort of testing ground. More specifically, Store Norske is in the process of redefining its role on Svalbard. Hence SNSK is not only investing in new energy solutions, but also in housing, logistics and tourism: Store Norske still owns the former coal infrastructure now being turned into museums and preserved as cultural heritage.

reigns.[204] As coalmining is transformed into memory, nature is narrated as "wild" and untouched – while redefined simultaneously as an artefact of human agency.[205]

I regard this insight as fundamental for artistic practice to move beyond the deconstructionist exposure of the world's injustice and to actually take on the task of considering how this relates to our thinking about the manner in which we do what we do – the political implications of which I will discuss later.

Polar Permaculture Solutions, AS

On that note, let me round off this post-Anthropocene account of Svalbard by mentioning Polar Permaculture Solutions, AS – a local farm explicitly aiming to "provide fresh and nutritious food for the local community using local resources, new growing technology and with a circular mindset" as it says on the initiative's website.[206]

In 2018, after having returned from the ANG ski excursion, I stayed in a guest house in Longyearbyen close to a dome housing the relatively newly established permaculture initiative, which also consists of an indoor hydroponic farm where plants are grown with the help of advanced computer algorithms. Knowing that in the 1980s vegetables were grown in greenhouses in Pyramiden,[207] I had wondered since my first visit to Svalbard in 2010

204 I take this formulation from Adriana Cracium, "The Disaster of Franklin: Victorian Exploration in the 21st Century Arctic," in *Arctic Modernities: The Environmental, the Exotic and the Everyday*, ed. Heidi Hansson and Anka Ryall (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 191–212.

205 I owe this observation to the social anthropologist Cecilie Vindal Ødegard who writes: "Mining is transformed from living life into memories, and nature in the area is redefined at the same time as an object of human design – and as wild nature" (my translation); Cecilie Vindal Ødegaard, "Sosiale Drama På Svalbard: Tilbakeføring Til Natur Og Fortellinger Om En Ny Tid.".

206 https://www.polarpermaculture.com/home-1

207 Pyramiden was then, in contrast to Longyearbyen, designed to accommodate families. Coal miners brought their families with them. This was also reflected in the range of social activities (swimming pool, psychological services, culture house) all absent in Longyearbyen.

why no one had continued experimenting with farming on the archipelago. I therefore organized an interview with the initiator of Polar Permaculture solutions, AS (whom I remembered having seen in Longyearbyen years before) about his vision for the project. Unsurprisingly he pointed to the many contradictions that characterize life on Svalbard with regard to environmental friendliness – among others, that fresh greens must arrive by air. This is a concern felt far beyond the settlement of Longyearbyen, perceived by many environmentalists as a "bipolar" city;[208] the well-preserved evidences of fossil fuel extraction in Longyearbyen serves as a near-constant reminder of the many paradoxes that play out between geopolitical and geoeconomic development trajectories on the archipelago. Longyearbyen is a "periphery-drawn-into-the-center"[209] of current debates on climate change along a historical continuum of environemental paradoxes when considering how coal mining is recognized as integral to accelerating global warming, precisely undermining the delicate Arctic ecosystems that make life possible. During the interview, a handful of new volunteers arrived in this peripheral centre, all enrolled on an Austrian environmental studies programme. They had never been on Svalbard before, and had only read about Polar Permaculture's progressive vision in Longyearbyen.[210]

The question remains, meanwhile, as to the precise kind of ecology enabled by the technological innovations of hydro-farming – "an almost intelligent design and space without seasons, without day and night, where the sun always shines (if desired),"

208 See, for example, the film *Longyearbyen, a Bipolar City* by Manuel Dellier, 2016 (trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPKMDhMXIGQ).

209 Roger Norum, "Barentsburg and Beyond: Coal, Science, Tourism, and the Geopolitical Imaginaries of Svalbard's 'New North,'" in *Postcolonial Perspectives on the European High North: Unscrambling the Arctic* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 56.

210 In the days since this section was written, Polar Permaculture AS has gone bankrupt. In an interesting way this only emphasizes how Svalbard exposes the temporary organization of any place – and the need of a mode of image-making that navigates the politics of this condition.

as the sociologist Eskil Halberg writes in relation to the emerging Danish vertical farmhouse Aerofarm. Here "the plants are dosed with the exact amounts of water, light, CO_2 and nutrients necessary. Nothing is left to the whims of nature ... Here plants are grown without pesticides, as no insects or fungi have access. Everything is wrapped up as if we were on a space station."[211] The Polar Permaculture solution embodies a hyper-constructed means of food production, radically freed from nature, as it were. Arguably, however, it effectively exposes the fact that Longyearbyen was designed, from the very outset, as a settlement freed from the constraints of nature. The fact that the foundational conditions for agriculture are not present on Svalbard is a predicament for Longyearbyen as hyper-constructed community par excellence.

Fossil Capitalism

> The ex-miner employed at the former coalmine to show tourists around, is a metonym for the structural change in the economy from one based on heavy industry to one based on tourists services.[212]

The belief that coal was a profitable resource, materially essential for the future, came to define Svalbard in the twentieth century: the establishment of year-round coal-mining on Svalbard in 1906 marked a shift from the early colonialization defined by boat tourism, whaling and minerals to the founding of a permanent settler community.[213] From then on, as we have seen, Longyearbyen was a company town where the Store Norske

211 Eskil Halberg, *Madpakker til revolutionen: hvori det vises, at kapitalen har taget kontrol over maden til skade for klimaet og alt levende, og at vi derfor står i en livsnødvendig kamp for at skabe en anden økologi* (Køge: Nemo, 2020), 63.

212 Urry and Larsen on British coal mines (John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (London: SAGE, 2011), 17.)

213 Arlov, *Svalbards historie*.

Spitsbergen Kulkompani AS was sovereign.[214] The authority of the state-owned SNSK, however, was devolved from Norway's geopolitically strategic aim of safeguarding certain political objectives – an important strand in the story of how early European colonialization connects with fossil capitalism. The Gruve 3 museum and Longyearbyen's old powerplant in and of themselves make manifest Svalbard's extraordinary status in the context of colonial Europe's pursuit of profit.

The re-structurations of the Gruve 3 museum and Longyearbyen's old powerplant evince the complexity of the *continued* struggle to retain presence on Svalbard. We are invited to question the ways in which attempts to tell the story of Svalbard's emergence as a settler community founded on Europe's need for coal is deeply entangled with its continued construction and value as a settlement of international geopolitical interests in the region.[215] In his essay "The Stratigraphic Signature of Capital" (2017), Søren Mau writes:

214 More precisely, Americans in 1906 formed the "Arctic Coal Company", with John Munro Longyear as the main shareholder. Initially having arrived in Spitsbergen in 1901 as a tourist, Longyear formed a mining community which in the early years was referred to as "the Camp", and later as "Longyear City". It was not until 1916 that the Store Norske Spitsbergen Kulkompani Aktieselskap (Limited liability company) acquired all 'annexation marks' in the advent fjord – including The Arctic Coal Company of 1906.

215 The idea is this: the current investment in climate adaptation mimics the investment in coal which throughout the twenty-first century has primarily been characterized by strategic and security policy motives for marking national presence and visibility. Thus, it is widely believed that the official narrative of the Svea clean-up as an environmental project is a kind of cover-up to more strategic political motives; not only to greenwash the government's Svalbard policy, but also for other strategic political purposes such as preventing other countries from pursuing their interests in the area. See Ødegaard, "Sosiale Drama På Svalbard: Tilbakeføring Til Natur Og Fortellinger Om En Ny Tid"; Avango and Roberts, "Heritage, Conservation, and the Geopolitics of Svalbard: Writing the History of Arctic Environments."

> There tends to be a flat idealistic conception of history and politics that locates the cause of political change in the way we think: climate change is the result of modernity's dualistic understanding of the relationship between man and nature, and the political solution is to develop "alternative narratives" that can counter "neoliberal growth thinking" and teach man to respect the nature of which he himself is a part. [216]

According to Mau, a lack of analysis translates into "an inadequate political strategy" which allows the continuation of "the destruction of the conditions of life is allowed to continue."

Aside from this eco-Marxist critique of "narrating" difference, however, and precisely taking into account the geo-aesthetical implications of how Svalbard imaginaries connect with social imaginaries about nature, I wonder if connecting imaginaries of Svalbard to histories of European colonialization and the development of fossil capitalism is, nevertheless, a viable political strategy. Is it adequate, in other words, to narrate the degree to which Svalbard is deeply entangled in, and not peripheral to, a global organization of nature subject to capital?[217] Despite Mau's claim, can local stories of coal extraction be used as a means to question whether there can be a climate policy which is not necessarily a critique of capitalism?

The first time I visited Longyearbyen, I was struck by the selection of exotic products in the local supermarket: watermelons, passion fruit, cashews, green salad and herbs, fresh milk, fresh meat and eggs. The selection contrasted with the experience that I had just had, hiking across plateau fjellet, of feeling "off the grid," feeling "free" – a word often heard used on Svalbard. As a kind of momentary Verfremdungseffekt, the watermelons

216 Søren Mau, "Kapitalens Stratigrafiske Signaturer," *Eftertryk*, May 2017, https://www.eftertrykket.dk/2017/05/01/kapitalens-stratigrafiske-signaturer/.

217 Rather, the employment of Svalbard as "nature's own place" (Ødegård) suggest that Svalbard is a place different from any cosmopolitical centre – another example of "nature" as a useful analytical concept.

on sale did something to my nervous system, not unlike a jump-cut in a film sequence. Do such kinds of tensions, contradictions and shifts emerging from material encounters hold a potential to crack the image as we know it?

The Ontological Turn as a Paradigm Shift

With Polar Permaculture Solutions A/S and the cleansing of Svea, I have drifted far into specific Svalbard exemplars of climate adaption and nature-friendliness; many others could have been mentioned. In striving to make the case for nature to be both untouched and wild (something which the people engaged in their promotion obviously believe wholeheartedly), these examples, employed as responses to the environmental crisis, disclose nature to be a useful analytical category and a sort of "representational" object of human design. This connects to my own experience of the ways in which "nature" is a far more troublesome term than I was ever taught to think and the kind of representational breakdown that the climate crisis accentuates – and which prompted me open this chapter by emphasizing the matter of talking about becoming landscapes; of radicalized landscapes.

In a sense, Heuer's observation that the renaissance Arctic upended conventions of European narratives about people and things for Europeans to mythologize or exploit, in travel writing and in science and, as Heuer shows, in art, questions what I have claimed to be driving my entire research: a discontentment with the ways in which the Arctic has been constructed by heroic figures announcing Arctic features – giving "strange things" a name, and by naming them bringing them into being. Historical experiences and explorations of the Arctic are significantly different from those characterizing narratives of the "discovery" of the Atlantic New World: rather than being full of stuff, so to

speak, Heuer shows that the Arctic was experienced as a strange circumstance potentially disrupting the very idea of representational efforts (techniques of perspective and description, and so on; "it offered more than new stuff to be mapped, plundered, or even seen," as Heuer writes).[218]

Nevertheless, this did not prevent the construction of the Arctic as peripheral to cosmopolitical centres, and hence as a subject for the kind of scientific visions and forms of governance fitting to a place at the edge of civilization. Post-Renaissance, it became a matter of course, in the widespread self-understanding of the bourgeoisie, that European societies had reached a more exalted and rational level to other societies. But beyond that, and ever since the European bourgeoisie's conceptualization of civilization as a product of history this self-understanding entailed the idea of achieving an even greater degree of perfection. An idea of history as linear and endlessly progressive. The construction of the Arctic as a peripheral to civilization, then, connects with certain representational concepts of nature, state and the landscape, effectively enabling the conquering and exploitation of Svalbard since the eighteenth century. And this continues today, in "nature's own place," as we have seen.[219]

But what I have been trying to disclose is that, in a rapidly changing Svalbard, engaging with the concept of nature as something that must be protected from human beings, or

218 In the abstract of his book *Into the White*, Heuer writes: "Icy, unpopulated, visually and temporally "abstract," the far North-a different kind of terra incognita for the Renaissance imagination offered more than new stuff to be mapped, plundered, or even seen".

219 In Ødegård's account of the return of the mining site in Svea to its "natural state," she writes about how "nature as the focus for the phasing out of mining – through the healing of the landscape – Svalbard is made a 'nature's own place'" (my translation), disclosing also how the emergence of such a story of Svalbard as nature's own place connects to similar tendencies in other parts of the world, including a redefinition of the status of nature, legally and sacredly (Ødegaard, "Sosiale Drama På Svalbard: Tilbakeføring Til Natur Og Fortellinger Om En Ny Tid," 146).

with the state (in this case the Norwegian state), is to engage with how images or concepts do more than freeze or arrest "the world," as it were. Rather, conceptualizations of both state and nature are merely a part of the diverse variety of relations and effects that configure a place such as Svalbard, being permanently in motion, subsisting in potential.[220] Acknowledging that "seemingly bounded material objects should be understood as the products of wider and intangible fields of relations,"[221] I seek here to stress the importance of relationism as a concept, useful in disclosing the contemporary condition of the alienation of the human individual from the environment.[222]

Relationism complicates the term "ecology." While Linnaeus is widely considered to be one of the founders of modern ecology, Descola and Guattari (and many others before and since) have shown how Euro-American natural history fails to adequately respond to the problem of experiencing "reality" – an idea persisting as a legacy of Western imperial discourse. Instead, their approach to ecology in relationist terms allows the possibility of

220 Anderson, "Cultural Geography II."

221 I take this quote from the human geographer Alf Hornborg who precisely draws upon Bateson and Ingold, in his effort to connect their ecosemiotic argument that nature is communicative with an ecological economics. Hornborg discloses that social relations are ecological relations (as argued by Ingold for example) as far as they are *also* material, and "no less so than the flows of matter and energy which we identify as ecological system" (Hornborg, "Artifacts Have Consequences, Not Agency," 13).

222 Within the science of ecology and the environmental movements relationism is used as a concept to revitalize the insight that humans cannot be understood as separate from their environment. But, as Hornborg points out, an effect of this insight is also that the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution may be regarded as the opposite; as the abandonment of relation. Or as Hornborg puts it: "The Enlightenment illuminated the internal constitution of living and nonliving things, but obscured the significance of their external relations" (Alf Hornborg, *Global Magic*, 7). This offers a way of further addressing the "material metabolism and political economy of social infrastructures such as globalized technologies" (Hornborg, *Global Magic*, 14).

a fluid ontology[223] which emphasizes that we were never *in* nature; we describe and respond to a *conception of* nature.[224]

A simple way to grasp this approach is by returning to the notion of deep ecology and its easy adoptability within the Anthropocene framework – or, more precisely, to how advocates of ecology in relationist terms such as Félix Guattari and Gregory Bateson, and later Tim Ingold, in all their various ways, conceptualize an ecosophical principle crucially different to that of Arne Næss.[225] Holding, precisely, that this widely adopted mindset obscures the complexity of the relationship between humans and their natural environment (through its maintenance of the dualistic separation of human cultural and nonhuman natural systems), Guattari critically develops his idea of an eco-social self; while the deep ecology of Arne Næss is critical of anthropocentric or human-centred (shallow) ecologies, that is, Guattari is interested in social liberation within an ecological framework.[226] For Guattari, human relations are as natural as they are technological, and ecology is, accordingly, a study of complex phenomena, including human subjectivity, the environment, and social relations, all of which are intimately interconnected. Thus, despite his emphasis on interconnection, Guattari resists calls for holism, preferring to emphasize heterogeneity and difference,

223 Kirsten Blinkenberg Hastrup, *Viljen Til Viden* (SAGA Egmont, 2020).

224 It is worth considering how relationism means something specific to an Anglo-American tradition. This is what Strathern does in her recent book *Relations*, by exploring historically changing articulations and meanings of "relations" and how the term is bound up with evolving ideas about knowledge-making in the West. Strathern calls, in the abstract of her book, for "scholars in anthropology and beyond to take up the limitations of Western relational thinking, especially against the background of present ecological crises and interest in multispecies relations (Strathern, *Relations)*.

225 Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, Bloomsbury Revelations (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

226 Guattari argued for the necessity of proponents of Marxism to embed their arguments within an ecological framework, and for environmentalist to regard ecology as something encompassing social, mental and natural ecologies alike (Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*).

synthesizing assemblages and multiplicities in a tracing of rhizomatic structures.[227] I will later address how Guattari in this sense implicitly draws on Bateson – while being outspokenly critical of him – in so far as Guattari perceives "the stakes he assigns to techne and media" to be profoundly political or "ethico-aesthetic at all scales."[228] The idea of the radicalized landscape, in its temporality and momentary constellations, is fundamental to how the scale of individuals, and the scale that individuals cause to emerge together, can connect, thus permitting a more political ecology to emerge. This is a connection and political ecology envisioned from a discontentment with climate politics, that do not also seek a mode of life outside the dominance of fossil capitalism.

In other words, I propose there is relevance in the ontological turn in anthropology, as an important paradigm shift, because it prompts both the realization that the ways in which human beings organize themselves impact their conception of nature, and that the situated, particular and historical ways in which nature is conceived impact how human beings organize themselves.[229] This is the predicament of a conceptualization of "nature as plural ontologies": there is an ontological register that drives representation; that drives knowledge production. Knowledge exists

227 Further developed with Gilles Deleuze in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

228 While the notion of an ethico-aesthetical paradigm comes from Guattari (Felix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. Paul Bains and Pefanis (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995).), my understanding of its implications is also significantly informed by media scholar Matthew Fuller, *Media Ecologies: Materialist Energies in Art and Technoculture*, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005), 5.

229 Jesper Hoffmeyer, *Samfundets naturhistorie. Historien er de bølgeslag, som opstod, da tidens, stoffernes, menneskenes og energiens strøm blev tvunget samme vej* (Kbh.: Samlerens Bogklub, 1985); Eskil Halberg, *Madpakker til revolutionen: hvori det vises, at kapitalen har taget kontrol over maden til skade for klimaet og alt levende, og at vi derfor står i en livsnødvendig kamp for at skabe en anden økologi* (Køge: Nemo, 2020).

in relation to concrete social, political and material configurations. Hence, covering an understanding of geopolitics in relation to representation, my use of the term geo-aesthetics precisely grapples with the complexity of that which emerges from more temporal and relational forms of the image and image-practices. Claiming a geo-aesthetical discontent covers a critically engaged attitude towards the politics of this condition.

Returning to Svalbard, with its multiple and hyper-constructed particularities, this informs *how* I regard the archipelago to be an extraordinary location for contemporary studies of anthropocentric natures. Studies of *how* modes of perceiving and understanding nature carry deep implications for *how* a society like Svalbard is organized, alongside *how* responsibility for environmental change is assigned and *how* social impact is assessed.

Discontentment and Reproduction

The aim of returning Svea to a natural state, involving the imitation of an imagined and fixed landscape of how Svea once "looked," allows us to comprehend the ways in which "nature" is ascribed meaning through active and performative actions – and thus, how Svalbard at large is an interesting site for shifting inquiries (particularly in anthropological research) to re-contextualize epistemic categorizations, scientific disciplines, cultural narratives and imaginaries and value frameworks.

To probe nature as part of any anthropological analysis is "a search for a new understanding of the (temporary) wholeness of whatever worlds emerge in the anthropological study," writes the Danish anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup.[230] What I take from this is precisely how any description/depiction of Svalbard plays a contested but potentially key role as *mediated message* in "the

230 Kirsten Hastrup, ed., *Anthropology and Nature*, Routledge Studies in Anthropology 14 (New York: Routledge, 2014), 2.

cultural imagination of the future of the planet and its political and ecological systems,"[231] caught up, as it is, in definite geopolitical imaginaries.[232]

We must be aware, however, that it is functionally impossible to describe the colonial foundation of mainstream ecological discourse without contributing to its proliferation. How can we effect a shift from the prevailing association of ecology with the study of natural systems towards an association of ecology with the interrelatedness of both natural and cultural systems? Living more ecologically sustainable lives, I believe, means something that comes close to a commitment to what the anthropologist Kamari M. Clarke has suggested as a first principle towards a radical humanism in anthropological practice: to commit to a method of attunement through which we form relationships with others.[233] Effectively, the mandate to be geo-aesthetically discontented with image-making in, of, and in relation to the Arctic is also a mandate to seek to expose the kind of struggle played out between the expansion of fossil capitalism and the plurality of lives delimited, or simply made difficult, by this expansion.[234] To speak about a radicalized landscape, then, is to address the consequences of people's actions; stories about coal extraction on Svalbard that disclose the absurdity of purifying nature, as opposed to society. The nature-society dichotomy skews our thinking of the relationship between colonialization, economics, and technology.[235] However, the question is whether an analytical

231 Körber, MacKenzie, and Westerståhl Stenport, *Arctic Environmental Modernities*, 2017, 11.

232 I am thinking of geopolitical imaginaries deeply intertwined with the temporalisation of geographical space and the territorialization of historical difference, and hence how they relate to histories of colonialization and imperialism. This is something I will return to in my discussion of the term post-future essayism.

233 Kamari M. Clarke, "Toward a Critically Engaged Ethnographic Practice," *Current Anthropology* 51, no. S2 (October 2010): S301–12.

234 Halberg, *Madpakker til revolutionen*.

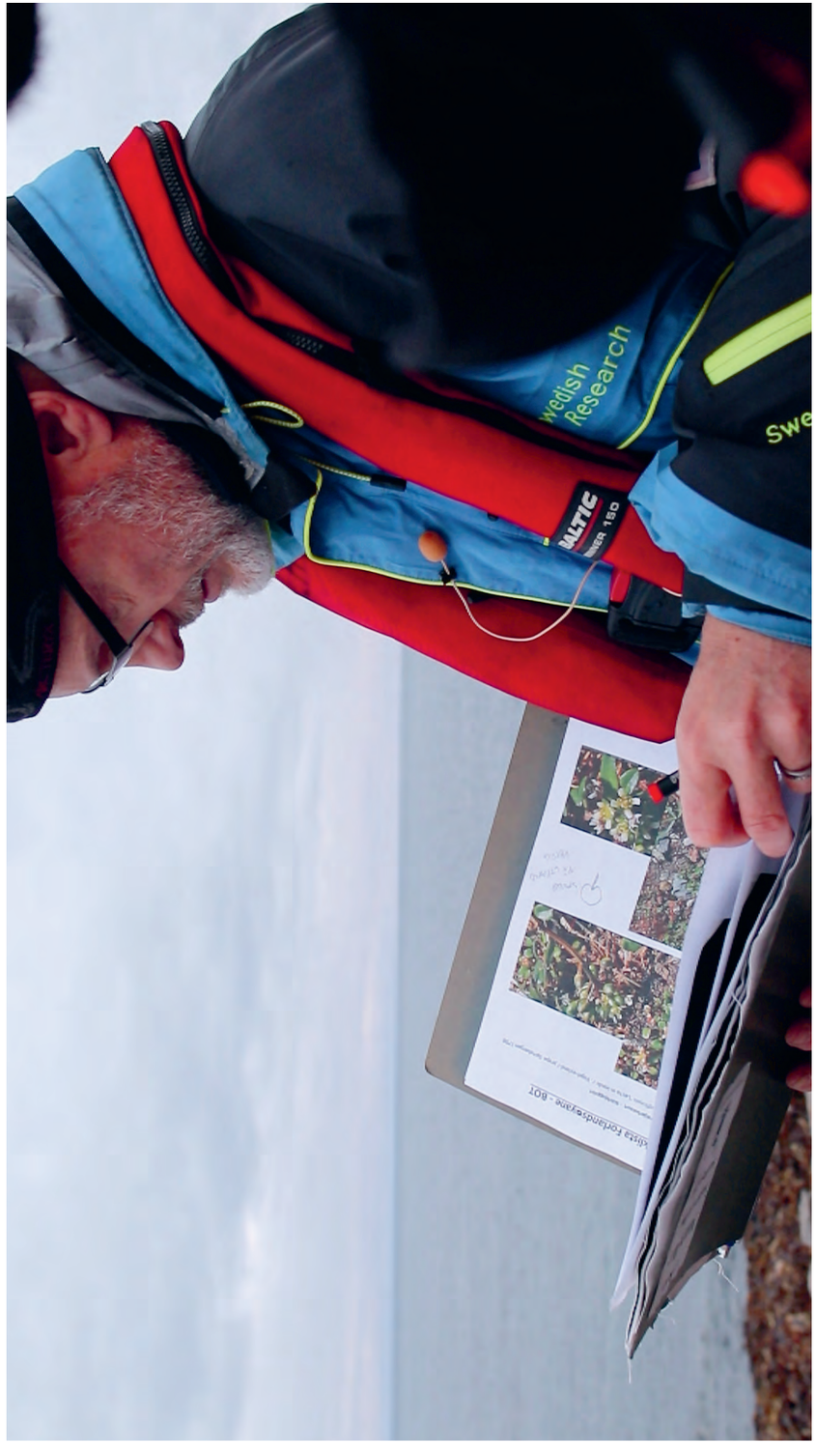
235 Hornborg, *Global Magic*.

distinction between nature and society is necessarily the same as a rigid ontological dualism?[236] Although exceeding the limits of this research, this question captures the paradox of the inevitable anthropocentrism of the Anthropocene logic.

Longyearbyen's old power plant, and the stories it will be employed to tell, exemplifies my concern with the geo-aesthetical implications embedded in its re-narrativization, when understood as an active mode of producing the Arctic. Less explicit in the case of the power plant, however, is my concern with the ways in which these geo-aesthetical implications, in turn, condition all kinds of myths related to community and belonging, wilderness and exceptionalism – and nature. Yet, this is what live editing, as the geo-aesthetically concerned artistic experimentality that I am developing in this research, constantly re-negotiates. This sort of practical proposition equally generates my preoccupation with the different kinds of field practices undertaken by the members of the 2016 expedition, listed at the beginning of the text. Hence, as I also stated at the beginning, the aim was never to deconstruct different actors' modes of nature-making, but, rather, to seek alliances in an attempt to unsettle the traditional critical stance of the researcher at a comfortable distance.

Finally, then, I have increasingly come to understand the crucial importance of acknowledging the broad community with whom I am developing my practice with live editing. A community of stakeholders, as I like to call it, possessed of very different senses of belonging and making meaning, by way of a dynamic understanding of cultural memory and trained sensibility – and which helps me comprehend the kind of Svalbard-nature-making machine I am part of myself, as cultural producer, trained visual artist and visual anthropologist.

236 For a discussion on this see: Alf Hornborg, "Artifacts Have Consequences, Not Agency.



Video still. Paleo-geologist on Midøya with data sheet, Lindholmen's Science Park, September 2018

Video still. On stage with script, Lindholmen's Science Park, September 2018

Video still. Museum Director in Skansabukta with dictaphone, Lindholmen's Science Park September 2018

Video still. Museum Director at the Polar Center in Grenna, Lindholmen's Science Park, September 2018

Video still. Bust of Lenin in Pyramiden, Lindholmen's Science Park, September 2018

Video still. World Cup trophy in Moscow, Lindholmen's Science Park, September 2018

Enskilled Synergies

Shortly after I returned from the Svalbard expedition with the group of Swedish researchers in 2016, I responded to a call for papers for a symposium on Arctic cinema. I proposed to present my PhD research related to Svalbard in its initial phase, in a form less a paper than speculative staging of a set of inquiries:

> This is a presentation about a female filmmaker and her work on a film about the Arctic Dwelling Project. The Arctic Dwelling Project is a self-institutionalized research ensemble invested in imagining Spitsbergen – an Arctic archipelago situated half-way between the northern coast of Norway and the North Pole. This archipelago is imagined as an ideal post-national zone and future testing-ground for local, self-sufficient, experimental communities consistent with eco-cosmopolitan notions of planetary sustainable citizenship.

I sought to present my research through the idea of a film, as a mode of questioning the role of cinema itself, with regard to the production of Arctic imaginaries. In talking about my research in the third person through a fictional female filmmaker, a character very close to myself, my aim was to indicate the ways in which, while the artist/filmmaker and the scientist/researcher may hold quite dissimilar positions of authority and scopes of work, they share a problem: their traditional exemplars no longer fit with the premises for knowledge production in the present day.

As both an artist/filmmaker and researcher, I am increasingly defined by competitive institutions and increasingly neoliberal academic environments, where being visible and productive

(expansive CVs) are recognized as having impact. In response to these conditions, critical practices and scholarships advocate and argue for cross-discipline engagement and co-authorship as imperatives of environmental ethics; of how more-than-human, participative, vulnerable, and experimental approaches in the social sciences, contest the very notion of research as discovery.[237]

As the human geographer Samantha Saville writes in her paper "Toward Humble Geographies," "shifts towards encountering 'lively matter,' taking other than human, material thingness into account, distributing agency and value more widely, all destabilise our certainty. Claims to knowledge are no longer absolute but provide some of many possible perspectives."[238] What emerges from these shifts, she argues, is a re-shaping of the self which potentially changes the way a researcher works. This is in line with Donna Haraway's highlighting of Strathern's apposite formulation "it matters which ideas we use to think other ideas with"[239] and Latour's early argument that we cannot separate the social dimensions of a scientist's work from any claim to truth they might make.[240] More specifically in relation to films about the Arctic, the film scholar Lisa E. Bloom's current research is committed to filmic expressions that "call forth new forms of representation and narrative on the climate crisis by pushing the viewer to imagine a different way of seeing, feeling, knowing and surviving in the face of a fast-changing landscape."[241] What does

237 Doreen Massey, "Imagining the Field," in *Using Social Theory* (United Kingdom: SAGE Publications, 2003), 72–88.

238 Samantha M. Saville, "Towards Humble Geographies," *Area* 53, no. 1 (March 2021): 4.

239 Haraway continues: "It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories." (https://adanewmedia.org/2013/11/issue3-haraway/)

240 Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*.

241 Lisa E. Bloom is the author of many feminist books and articles including her book *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions* (1993), written from a feminist and postcolonial perspective.

it mean, she asks, "to make art and film about a warming Arctic without sentimentalizing or spectacularizing suffering?"[242]

The question is, of course, inherently political. A politics of humble geographies, as it were, informs the figuration of the guide as central to my urge to challenge scholarship, in its contemporary cultural configuration, and policy and art which continue to portray Arctic terrains as wild, natural spaces outside society. Expanding on how strands of ideas in anthropology are concerned with knowledge production/meaning-making, I seek to further connect these concerns with my urge to critically engage with historical naturalisms (through a geo-aesthetical approach to image-making in/of and in relation to the Arctic).

More explicitly, I will expand how a postcolonial gaze connects with the anthropological notion of skilled visions and ideas around image-making as cut/splice negotiations and synthetizations which allow scenographic synergies to emerge. Doing this, I will assume that the various questions of representation, historicity, temporality and technological agency posed by postcolonial scholarship disclose a sense of need to train and care for affective sensibility and awareness. At stake, then, is not only the ways in which representations are more a question of action than of meaning, but the development of a practice as a resolution to research questions driven by discontentment.

Arctic Cinema as a Field of Concern

The Arctic Cinema symposium drew inspiration from MacKenzie and Westerståhl's edited volume *Films on Ice: Cinemas of the Arctic*.[243] In the introduction, the editors articulate the intention to "bring together a diverse array of films made in and about the

242 Recently, she has written extensively on the polar regions, contemporary art and film, and is currently completing her next book, *Critical Polar Aesthetics: Reimagining Art and the Climate Crisis in the Arctic and Antarctic* (to be published in 2022). The quote stems from an abstract for a public talk at UiT in 2021.

243 MacKenzie and Stenport, *Films on Ice*.

Arctic into one discrete category. We position different forms of Arctic filmmaking not typically placed in dialogue, whose interrelations are overlooked to uncover a counter-history that reveals the complexity of Arctic visual, cultural and ideological representation."[244] The intention is to stimulate critique concerning features we have come to recognize as "Arctic." The question of whether Arctic cinema as a label can be anything other than a vehicle for the visual economy of such features, however, remains open.

What would it entail, rather, to think of Arctic cinema as a field which is itself productive of (and part of) the Arctic? As concerned with the role of cinema in a contemporary geo-aesthetics, as it were? While beckoning Bourdieu's heuristic concept of a field as a total set of relations within a context, my use of the term "field" here resonates with a decentred understanding of the anthropological field.[245] Rather than the single privileged site of anthropological knowledge, the field emerges as an attentiveness to epistemological and political issues of shifting locations.[246] What this reveals is an urge to surpass preconceived notions of place and scale (think of documentary films from faraway places), while inquiring, also, into the production of social relations. That is, how have geo-historical relations been formed by and through film? Or, more importantly, how might we inquire into the relationship between mediated viewing and coloniality?

What these questions propose is both artistic methodology and political experimentation: rather than producing films *about* something, how are we to produce *a way of understanding* something? How are we to produce a film about the Arctic that sets in motion a mode of thinking?

244 MacKenzie and Stenport, *Films on Ice*, 1.

245 Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

246 Akhil Gupta, ed., *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science* (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1997).

Approaching these issues through experimentation with live editing, as a form of film practice in which the flow of images is performed in front of an audience in ever-new combinations of live-recordings and existing material, I seek a method to reorient linear storylines toward new constellations between thinking and image, archive and social process: as a performative and situated filmic expression, live editing becomes a means to intervene or enact a negotiation in the representational authority traditionally ascribed to both cinema and scientific knowledge. Clearly, this also takes into consideration my own research practice. In considering various mediating (and valorizing) field practices in and of the Arctic and their feedback within a larger image-political struggle of attention and access, I am deeply aware of my own entanglement in the ongoing formation of Arctic imaginaries.

The Arctic Dwelling Manifesto

Grappling precisely with such questions on my return from the 2016 expedition to Svalbard, I wrote a text I titled "The Arctic Dwelling Manifesto."[247] It is a thought experiment and programmatic piece of fiction through which I processed the puzzling feeling I had of having performed a role in the IK Foundation's expedition narrative, while realizing the equal degree to which all expedition members had become protagonists in my viewing (through my designating them as "the researchers" from early on). In the manifesto, written from an assembled "we" committed to speculative imaginaries of Svalbard futures, the researcher subject in the manifesto is thus deliberately dissolved. [248]

247 "The Arctic Dwelling Manifesto" comprises four chapters: 1) Arctic Dwelling, 2) The Specifics, 3) Community, 4) Me/We (https://thefigureoftheguide.net/the-arctic-dwelling-manifest).

248 The text is assembled from a range of quotes from what the manifesto considers to be affiliated experts and expertness: friends, colleagues and others – some entirely fictitious.

I eventually asked an actor to read the manifesto aloud as if he were speaking to a fictitious assembly of researchers gathered in a theatre space.[249] The intention was to stage the role of the expert, at once embodying the conference presenter and serving as explanatory male voiceover. As such, the actor was directed to stand in front of the cinema screen, by a lecture desk while a sequence of audiovisual recordings shot on Martin's Island was projected behind him.[250] There was no audience in the space, however, only two musicians, two cameramen (of which I was one) and an editing station with two editors – all responding to the actor's speech as much as to each other's operations, the screen and the space.

The outcome was a visual documentation montage (divided in four parts, similar to the manifesto), composed of audiovisual recordings shot during the expedition.[251] The actor's reading of "The Arctic Dwelling Manifesto" became a voiceover for a (simultaneous) assemblage of the Arctic from within the site of the cinema space.

249 The text was used as a script for the live edited film performance *Martin's Eye* (taking place in Bio Valand in Gothenburg, 3 April, 2017). It was read by the actor Philippe Christiansen and examined in the context of my 25% PhD seminar.

250 Martin's Island refers to the island where Anton Rolandson Martin alighted in Forlandsøyane, a group of islands off the south-western coast of Prins Karls Forland, within the archipelago of Svalbard, in 1758. Excerpt from Martin's Eye (The Arctic Dwelling Project, #4)

251 The conference presentation at the Mediating Climate Change Conference in Leeds, described in the introduction, is an elaboration of the experiment in Bio Valand.

INTRODUCTION

TITLE: THE ARCTIC DWELLING MANIFESTO.

CHAPTERS: 1. ARCTIC DWELLING, 2. THE SPECIFICS, 3. COMMUNITY, 4. ME/WE.

OVERVIEW: The Arctic Dwelling Manifesto is structured in four parts and assembled by the Arctic Dwelling Project. The Arctic Dwelling Project is a thought experiment that seeks to investigate and politicize contemporary Arctic discourses and geo-aesthetics.

CREDITS: Affiliated experts and expertness. Friends, colleagues and others — some entirely fictitious.

NOTE: This version of The Arctic Dwelling Manifesto was used as a script for the live-edited film performance Martin's Eye, taking place in Bio Valand in Gothenburg, April 3rd. 2017.

The manifesto was read out loud by the actor Philippe Christiansen and examined in the context of Eva la Cour's artistic research project The Figure of the Guide: Mediating the Arctic Terrain at Valand Art Academy, Gothenburg University, SE.

4. ME/WE

Operating in the Arctic as a research team often consisting of artists and scientists, we are well aware of our dissimilar positions of authority and scopes of work. However, a common problem is that the traditional figure we have at our disposal does not fit with the premises for knowledge production in the present day. That is a fundamental concern to us, which require a constant on-going examination of the discrepancy between imagination and reality in art, science and politics.

The Arctic Dwelling Project can be regarded as a manoeuvre, that tries to address itself speculatively to subjectivity. A manoeuvre that addresses bio-politics as the true realm in which political will and technology's power to shape things are manifested today. Thus, media does not operate in the environment as a backdrop. Rather, media itself becomes environmental, via the state, the global market and other ideological projects. It is in this turbulent environment, we insist on dwelling as a shared form of practice and knowing.

Unlike Capitalism, which can't do anything other than define every situation as a source of profit, we hesitate to come up with solutions, pathways or guiding manuals. Rather, we want to use our useless educations to try seriously to think to the future beyond notions of progress or apocalyptic extraction. In fact, our main ambition is to ask ourselves how to see what is at stake, in a manner that resists the grand narratives that have contributed to our blindness.

In other words, we refuse to design intentional communities but welcome collective exercises for the potential creation of new repositories of experience and becoming.

We are occupied with making and unmaking of Arctic data, and the feedback effects of these data.

Early Arctic Films

It was essential to stage *The Arctic Dwelling Manifesto* in a cinema space in order to highlight the role of this piece of architecture in the production of Arctic imaginaries. Nevertheless, early travel films were often screened outside the cinema; films from and about distant locations, apart from having entertainment value, were regarded as records of Western geographical and anthropological knowledge to be disseminated. Moreover, early films from and about the Arctic were often advertised as film lectures in the context of a visual travel series, screened silently accompanied by either a live-spoken lecture or a live performed soundtrack.

An example is Herbert Ponting's *The Great White Silence*, filmed during the British Terra Nova Expedition sailing from New Zealand to Antarctica and the South Pole in 1924. This silent film is a mixture of footage, photographs and intertitles, and thus in effect a lecturer's show with Ponting's words transferred to the intertitles. Most notable however, is the film's play with colour, which I initially imagined was generated by Ponting sitting in front of a magic lantern with a range of colour filters at his disposal. I later learned that colour tinting is a kind of colour gluing applied uniquely frame by frame, but the effort exemplifies an inspiring attempt to evoke different affective registers.

Following the conquest of the poles at the beginning of the last century, *The Great White Silence* can be considered a cinematic experiment in the context of an increasing popular focus on the Arctic emerging concurrently with the florescence of cinema in general. With the invention of cinema, the Arctic was brought to the European metropoles alongside a modernist temporalization of global expanse – and territorialization of historical differences.[252]

252 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

While the role of cinema in the construction of otherness is something I will return to later, here the relationship between definite geopolitical imaginaries and the history of cinema strives towards narrative.[253] Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* is a notable example – probably the most famous film made on an Arctic subject, and a key work in tracing and situating Arctic cinema historically. Since its release in 1922, the film has provoked much debate with regard to its status as documentary and ethnographic film; later, as MacKenzie has observed, it has been invested with over-determined meaning within fictional creations.[254] Images from *Nanook of the North* continue to be used as transparent and unchallenged images of historical authenticity.[255] Endless reiterations, and re-appropriations of its images and intertitles in the cinematic imaginary of the Arctic, make it worth recognizing the many narratives about the film's production and the central role it has taken in the conceptualization of the cinematic image of the Arctic.

Another documentary film often exhibited as an ethnographic record more locally (in a Danish/Nordic context, that is), is the film *Inuit* (1940), shot in Greenland in 1938–39 by the famous female Danish photographer and filmmaker Jette Bang (1914–64), who spent more than a year and a half travelling from the furthest south to the farthest north Inuit communities.[256] Portraying "the traditional Greenlandic way of life," the film has also been used widely in educational contexts since an explanatory voiceover was added in 1984. I will engage with Jette Bang's film further. But first I will introduce an additional set of films,

253 Thomas Elsaesser's "Film History and Media Archeology," 2016

254 Scott MacKenzie, "The Creative Treatment of Alterity: Nanook as the North," in *Films on Ice: Cinemas of the Arctic*, ed. Anna Westerstahl Stenport and Scott MacKenzie (Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 201.

255 MacKenzie, "The Creative Treatment of Alterity: Nanook as the North."

256 Anna Westerståhl Stenport and Mariah Larsson, "Women Arctic Explorers: In Front and Behind the Camera," in *Arctic Cinemas and the Documentary Ethos*, ed. Lilya Kaganovsky, Scott MacKenzie, and Anna Westerståhl Stenport (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019). See also: Jette Bang, *30.000 kilometer med sneglefart* (Hasselbalch, 1941).

significantly revolving around how we have come to know and assemble the Arctic; in a Nordic context, these films allow me to attend to the legacy of post-structural and postcolonial studies, in relation to the genre of so-called anthropological films specifically. This genre emerged at a time when the medium of film was considered a neutral tool in the production of visual knowledge; the ethnographer-filmmaker, in this sense, played a constitutive role for how we have come to know and assemble the Arctic and people associated with Arctic cinema.[257]

Geology – Is it Really Science?

In 1980 the Danish artist Per Kirkeby (1938–2018) made the film "*Geologi – er det egentlig videnskab?* (geology – is it really science?).[258] The film is shot in beautiful Icelandic, Greenlandic and Danish landscapes. Viewing the film, I follow two fieldworkers and geologists struggling to record and collect material, to organize themselves and (particularly) to observe in the northernmost parts of Greenland. It is summertime and the geologists are camping in barren terrain into which they have been transported by helicopter. Their 1970s clothes sufficiently resemble the colours of the geological formations they are studying to make them almost disappear in the rocks and the filmic image. But now and then my study of the image of the studying geologist is interrupted by a voiceover: "We see the geological materials; we see the geological results." This is a statement from the filmmaker and artist Per Kirkeby, who himself is educated as a geologist. "But the experiences and imaginaries of the processes take place in man, and the observation is the basis for everything," he continues. "Because do we really see what we see?"

257 Hans Richter, "The Film Essay: A New Type of Documentary Film," in *Essays on the Essay Film*, ed. Nora M. Alter and Timothy Corrigan (Columbia University Press, 2017), 89–92.

258 *Geologi – er det egentlig videnskab*. Per Kirkeby. 1980, 16mm on video, 41 min.

The filmic composition consisting of long camera pans across sublime Arctic landscapes is intercut with a voiceover inviting consideration of the relationship between the film's two geologists observing geological matter in the Arctic terrain and me – the viewer of the film – observing filmic images in the cinema space. Moreover, each time Kirkeby's voiceover is heard, it is as if the image is framed anew, further unsettling whether the expert is the object or the subject of the film.

In short, Kirkeby's film reminds me that there is a tradition for critical filmic practices addressing representations of the Arctic. I suggest that I work in that tradition. Several other references could also be mentioned, but a particularly important one seems to be the Greenlandic visual artist Pia Arke (1958–2007). I am particularly reminded, in response to Kirkeby, of Arke's video piece *Tupilakosaurus: An Interesting Study about the Triassic Myth of Kap Stosch*.[259] In it, Arke shows a paleo-geologist from the Danish Museum of Natural History scientifically explaining the characteristics of a *tupilak* – historically an evil spirit, but later, when the Europeans came to Greenland and wanted to see the tupilaks, pictured in the form of small carved figures, since then evolving into popular souvenirs – cross-cut with A4 sheets stacked in a way that they recall the spine of a large animal. Hence, while Arke and Kirkeby are obviously very different (and differently situated) artists, the films evoke parallel questions. What is the role of the expert? Who is the expert? How, where, and for whom, does expertise perform, guide and mediate Arctic imaginaries?

259 *Tupilakosaurus: An Interesting Study about the Triassic Myth of Kap Stosch*. Pia Arke & Anders Jørgensen. 1999, S-VHS on video, 10 min.

The Legacy of Post-Structural and Postcolonial Studies

Arke's critical approach to representation in relation to knowledge production is occupied precisely with modes of destabilizing and rethinking the traditional role (and authority) of the ethnographer. Or, as the scholar Kirsten Thisted emphasizes in "De-Framing the Indigenous Body: Ethnography, Landscape and Cultural Belonging in the Art of Pia Arke," relations between people and landscape were at the core of Pia Arke's artistic work – as was a contestation of the image of the Arctic landscape, achieved through an exploration of "new ways of communicating with it."[260] In this sense, Arke strove, precisely, a contestation of the notion of the landscape, as discussed in the previous chapter (Radicalized Landscapes).

In her film *Arctic Hysteria*[261] (1996) we see Arke's naked body in sensual and somewhat eroticized movement on a large black and white photographic print of a Greenlandic landscape. After sniffing, rolling and crawling around, she ends up tearing the large print apart bit by bit. From the very beginning however, we clearly see the room in which the print is laid out and the video is filmed. There is a date and time on the camera. Arke even opens the video by saying "Record," emphasizing her staging of the event.[262]

Arke elegantly discloses the complexity of the colonial and imperial gaze embedded in the very practice of photography and film. Alongside a theoretical body of post-structural and postcolonial critique of this gaze, emergent since the 1990s, her work effectuates the scenographic – and in a way interesting to live

260 Thisted, "De-Framing the Indigenous Body. Ethnography, Landscape and Cultural Belonging in the Art of Pia Arke," 284.

261 *Arctic Hysteria*. Pia Arke. 1996, S-VHS on video, 6 min.

262 Stine Lundberg Hansen, curator at Nuuk Art Museum, wrote a great review of *Arctic Hysteria* (at display at the museum in Nuuk) for kunsten.nu in 2020 (https://kunsten.nu/journal/hysteriet-om-arktis/)

editing (something I will discuss later). I am thinking both of the ways in which "the landscape" in the form of a large-scale photographic print explicitly performs a backdrop, and of how Arke stages her own body – or, indeed, how Arke stages a modern gaze that "captures" a pre-modern culture in harmony with nature (seeing the pre-modern culture to be an integral part of a given landscape).[263] But Arke's work is equally commenting on how individual perspective and experience are always contingent on, and affected by, historical relations (here, those of Denmark and Greenland). In fact, in subtle but precise and direct ways, the very contours of a European bourgeois conception of an universal history of humankind are discerned. I like to think that Arke synthesizes examinations of the colonial gaze in the context of the nineteenth century of high imperialism,[264] with how an epistemic field emerges in the eighteenth century in the context of the Enlightenment.[265]

This, then, is how Arke stresses the attention and importance historically paid to visuality in Western science, and how it connects to coloniality, not unlike the acclaimed critic of photography Ariella A. Azoulay. Examining photographic practices in historical archives, Azoulay explicitly takes the very shutter function of the camera apparatus to have a synecdochical relation to imperialism, a position sharing something with my reading of an implicit commentary in Arke's work. Azoulay detects how the shutter constitutes and authorizes Western imperial ontology when thought of as a metaphor of "the cut"; how the camera is a knowledge-political device that instrumentalizes, categorizes, organizes, labels, right from the early phase of the

263 Lundberg reminds us in her review to consider the many Danish male painters who have painted Greenlandic nature in scenic depictions since the middle of the nineteenth century.

264 The well-known focus of Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

265 The later focus of Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

European colonial enterprise.[266] In short, the idea is that imperialism frames history like a camera's lens. But while pointing to the role of media in the quiet assertion of the colonial gaze, the question arises as to how much space is left for a consideration of "vision in a wider sense." In other words, does the metaphor of the shutter risk simplifying Arke's complexification of colonial viewing, thus limiting our concept of history? Could a consideration of vision as a dimension of human sensibility "in a wider sense" afford us a wider sense of history, so to speak?

Skilled Visions

Since the 1980s, anthropological debates on practice and the construction of knowledge have been dominated by a critique of visualism, problematizing the idea of the "world view" as biased towards visualism – we do not speak, after all, of a "world taste" or a "world smell."[267] Hence, while the presumption that spontaneous representations (visual copies) of the world can be made is commonly rejected,[268] much contemporary debate rests on the proposition that "vision pervades our cultural forms of life in skilled ways that depend both on the way sight is physically trained and on social positioning."[269] Informed by the concept of

266 Ariella Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (New York: Verso, 2019).

267 Where smell and taste are concerned, "we at least concede that we do not all share the same sensitivity" as Grasseni writes in "Skilled Visions: Toward an Ecology of Visual Inscriptions," in *Made to Be Seen: Perspectives on the History of Visual Anthropology* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 38.

268 As prominently shown in Jonathan Carry's *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005) formalized and disembodied forms of visualization carry the power of Western rationality or exercise forms of surveillance. This is in a sense precisely founded on vision as an "automatic, mimetic capacity for crafting 'copies' of things, processes, and images." Grasseni, "Skilled Visions: Toward an Ecology of Visual Inscriptions," 21.

269 Grasseni, "Skilled Visions: Toward an Ecology of Visual Inscriptions," 29.

skilled visions, as coined by the Italian anthropologist Christina Grasseni, I seek, more precisely, to signal an understanding of how "ways of seeing"[270] cannot be separated from specific ways of looking.[271] The concept of skilled visions thus usefully sanctions an understanding of embodiment as an educated capacity for selective perception shaped by social activity and engagement with the world. Considering the embodied aspect of vision, Grasseni writes of "apprenticeship." In this sense, the concept of skilled visions is to be understood as a realm of expertise in its own right depending heavily on trained perception and structured environments.[272] "Vision" exists only in the plural – as the professional, aesthetic, ecstatic, sensual and erotic exercise of sight and insight.[273]

I encountered Grasseni's use of the term while editing *Pre-Studies for a Film* (2015), a video piece about the Danish expedition of 1899–1900 to study the Northern Lights in Iceland. In 2013, looking through audiovisual material shot in the Icelandic town of Akureyri at the Danish Meteorological Institute in Copenhagen and my studio in Brussels, I was seeking a better understanding of how ecologies of everyday vision affect our perception of visual inscriptions of phenomena such as the Northern Lights. Since then, the idea of vision as a situated, practiced and socially trained aspect of human sensibility[274] has developed to become an important tool in my research, both practical and theoretical, as it offers a productive complexification of vision as a contested sense: while postcolonial, feminist and posthumanist scholars have provided extensive critical accounts of how vision, not least when mediated by a camera, has historically operated

270 John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, Penguin on Design 1 (London: Penguin, 2008).

271 Grasseni, "Skilled Visions: Toward an Ecology of Visual Inscriptions," 21.

272 Grasseni, "Skilled Visions: Toward an Ecology of Visual Inscriptions."

273 Christina Grasseni, "Skilled Visions: Toward an Ecology of Visual Inscriptions," 22.

274 Cristina Grasseni, *Skilled Visions: Between Apprenticeship and Standards*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007).

as a dominating gaze,[275] the scope and reach of methods of visual research method is clearly proliferating. According to Grasseni, this is owed to the ways in which vision touches on a strange relation at the heart of anthropology between proximity and distance; on the one hand, visual media "has a high profile in those processes that enforce the technological mediation of knowledge," as Grasseni writes; and on the other hand, "vision is being recontextualized within a newly rediscovered phenomenology of the senses."[276] Vision is not only something embedded in mediating devices, structured environments and routines, but an embodied sensibility, inevitably connected to the other senses.[277] A concern with "skilled visions" is a concern with the enskilled ecology of everyday vision.

A focus on the enskillment of vision, in this sense, couples with Azoulay's critical reading of the role of photographic practices in enabling a conceptual configuration of cinema. While in my experiments with live editing, then, I take from Azoulay the urge to create new histories, the explicit motive of her influential *Potential Histories: Unlearning Imperialism* (2019), Grasseni's notion of enskillment broadens my understanding of what it means to be skilled.

Moreover, that our viewing is always skilled is also Arke's point historically, commenting on the continuous idealized and romantic image making of Greenland sceneries. If our viewing is not authentic, it is always situated and lived in a process of enskillment, so to speak. But we are obliged to ask what it entails to acknowledge the enskilled dimensions of the senses. What does it take to endorse the veracity of the enskilled dimension of

275 "More than any other sense the eye objectifies and it masters. It sets a distance, and maintains a distance. In our culture the predominance of the look over smell, taste, touch and hearing has brought about an impoverishment of bodily sensation" (Luce Irigagray, quoted after Rane Willerslev, "'To Have the World at a Distance': Reconsidering the Significance of Vision for Social Anthropology," in *Skilled Visions: Between Apprenticeship and Standards*, (Oxford: Berghahn, 2010), 33.

276 Grasseni, *Skilled Visions*, 2.

277 Grasseni, *Skilled Visions*.

experience? Posing such a question, the concept of skilled visions not only offers a wider sense of what it means to know (effected by a wider sense of vision; of human sensibility), but also a way of thinking about live editing as a space for explorations of relations between agency and structure. It is these relations I find useful for thinking scenographically. As a method, live editing opens the way towards a wider sense of history, in so far as it allows scenographies to emerge synergistically between audio-visual material, archive and social process.

Ecological Anthropology

The skilled visions approach has an antecedence in the field of anthropological relationism, and the perception that mainstream Western sciences have encouraged representations of the world in which human and nonhuman organisms, and their products, are objectified and dis-embedded from their relational contexts and bodily experiences. In her theorization, Grasseni thus explicitly relies on Tim Ingold, as a contemporary proponent of ecological anthropology, and the idea that our perceptive capabilities are necessarily a function of the practical activity in which we are engaged – our practical relationship to the people and the world around us.

For my purposes, this makes productively explicit how experience and mediation are to be considered as simultaneously-occurring, mutually dependent processes. While being also a matter of learning a practice, enskillment is embedded in the ecology of every life, which effectively connects ecology and ideology in the sense of informing worldviews and practices.[278] The idea of enskillment allows for the understanding that, while skilled visions may be invisible, they are not without power;[279] multiple, complex, invisible forms of cultural knowledge render the world visible and meaningful.[280]

278 Grasseni, "Skilled Visions: Toward an Ecology of Visual Inscriptions," 29.

279 Grasseni, Skilled Visions.

280 Brenda Farnell, "Theorizing 'the Body' in Visual Culture," in *Made to Be Seen: Perspectives on the History of Visual Anthropology* (University of Chicago Press, 2011), 136–58.

This has implications for certain posthumanist positions relating to entanglements between the human and non-human. While acknowledging the entanglement of elements, forces, things, organic and inorganic materials, people, places, concepts and imaginaries, the understanding that there are no definite boundaries between nature and culture, or between the human and the non-human, requires a specifically human capacity for making meaning.[281]

Techno-Environments

The now-widely acknowledged proposition that human beings are part of something larger than intra-species "social integration" owes much to relationist principles. Relationism is part of an epistemological tradition closely connecting philosophy with ethics and aesthetics, understanding information to be "difference that makes a difference."[282] Ethical and aesthetic neutrality do not exist. Rather, according to Gregory Bateson, concrete forms and patterns (whether cultural or biological, as he puts it) are the products of wider fields of interaction – socioecological flows – for which all organisms are equally relevant. Or, as Hornborg writes about Bateson's eco-semiotic thinking: "the phenomena Bateson focused on were consistently interpreted as outcomes of communicative processes within less tangible fields of relation."[283] Effectively, "mind" is not something contained inside the individual but something existing between conventional

281 Tim Ingold, "Eight Themes in The Anthropology of Technology," *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 41, no. 1 (1997): 106–38; Hornborg, "Artifacts Have Consequences, Not Agency.no. 1 (1997"

282 Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

283 Hornborg also writes: "Bateson was aware that the form of each individual component of a living system develops in relation to the webs of interaction in which it is embedded", *Global Magic*, 2016, 12.

understandings of entities (and community).[284] Seeking a mode of integrative thinking, Bateson's idea of an immanent mind expresses a kind of ecological system theory, developed alongside his work in developing perspectives of cybernetics in the 1940s and 1950s (something I will return to). Existence is predicated on connection. There is no individual knowledge, only collective knowledge. I understand the Batesionian concept of the mind to be important for contemporary anthropology and studies of climate change in its challenge to the fiction of the monadic and bounded mind – the fiction on which the traditional figures of knowledge production are arguably predicated.

Shifting the focus back to the concept of skilled visions, ecological thinking in anthropology, in the sense informed by Bateson, is connected to the established understanding that our minds are shaped by our interaction with human-designed and manufactured objects and technologies. Firstly, cartographical technologies of all kinds have played a historically important role in the possession of territory, which can be understood in relation to desires of scientific, and thus authoritative, representations of totality;[285] the drone, to offer a contemporary example, affords the human eye the perspective of the broad overview. Secondly, many kinds of transporting, guiding, protecting or recording devices both serve and move the human eye and function through the operations of human bodies. In other words, if technology affects the ways we fundamentally relate to our surroundings, I

284 In the introduction to his book of collected essays, *Steps Towards an ecology of Mind*, Bateson explicitly writes: "The essays, spread over thirty-five years, combine to propose a new way of thinking about *ideas* and about those aggregates of ideas which I call "minds." This way of thinking I call the "ecology of mind," or the ecology of ideas. It is a science which does not yet exist as an organized body of theory or knowledge," (14).

285 Emily Eliza Scott speaks about pictures both as framing the planet as a natural body and as outcomes and embodiments of specific geo-techno-politics (Scott, "Archives of the Present-Future."climate change entails many (often correlated and at times seemingly contradictory).

have to talk about the becoming-landscape as a lived experience in conjunction with technology. There is no environment external to human beings.

When I find the concept of "skilled visions" (characterized by enskillment) so profitable, it is because it emphasizes vision as something shared and operative within situated communities of practice.[286] "Considering vision as a form of practice is hence a deliberate theoretical move, which allows us to supersede the current debate on visualism in favor of a more encompassing analysis, regarding the roles of *local contexts* and community in constituting knowledge," Grasseni writes. The rehabilitation of vision in terms of skill is also a function of the local and relational character of knowledge-making, even though this is often associated with anti-visualist stances, opposing vision as universal translator and mediator.[287] Practically, ways of doing things in "local contexts" are emphasized as being always part of a community of practice in which forms and meanings of practices are negotiated in a way which matters to a larger – and likely cross-national – network of communities.[288] In turn, this feeds back into the practice. Subsequently, the practice can also be regarded as an active mode of producing a space to manoeuvre (for the practitioners).[289]

The ideas of enskillment and of there being no environment external to human beings situates my research within a framework both theoretical and political.[290] A framework in the light

286 Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

287 Grasseni, *Skilled Visions*, 9.

288 Lave and Wenger, *Situated Learning Legitimate Peripheral Participation*.

289 A "community of practice" is an arena in which learning is "situated", but this embeddedness opens for a comprehension of one's own potential agency in setting the agenda within the community. See: Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning Legitimate Peripheral Participation*.

290 Haraway, "Situated Knowledges"; Kirsten Hastrup, "Comparing Climate Worlds: Theorising across Ethnographic Fields," in *Grounding Global Climate Change: Contributions from the Social and Cultural Sciences*, (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015

of which practical questions can be addressed of *how* the environment becomes and *how* different kinds of knowledge and ways of knowing are invariably both situating and situated. Understanding vision to be skilled recontextualizes questions of historicity, temporality and technological agency; it connects these with the need to train and care for affective sensibility and attention.

I propose that a shift in focus from representation to mediation can be achieved through the execution of artistic practices – in this case an artistic practice activating the potential of the guide as a means to navigate ties between a research focus on Svalbard and methodological questions regarding skilled visions. The guide embodies the realization that skilled practicing, and hence, affect, sensibility and care, humility and passion, are intrinsic to a politics of transmissibility. This transmissibility relates to what makes a place specific in the context of historical processes; for Svalbard, this is a matter of those historical geopolitical processes that produce "the Arctic." The guide not only circulates images and narratives; they constitute representation, as far as the imaginaries on which the guide draws, and to which they contribute, are evoked by our situated relations to our surroundings.

The Films of Jette Bang

I return to the connections between the figure of the guide and skilled vision and enskillment in the later chapter *Fade Out: The Figure of the Guide as Precarious Assembler*. Before I do, I would like to consider the guide and the postcolonial gaze through a longer consideration of the film *Inuit*, and to the experience of watching a handful of film reels at the Danish National Museum in August 2019.

The anthropologist Anne Mette Jørgensen has kindly lent me her computer and some empty office space at the Danish National Museum, where I and my artistic collaborator Tinne Zenner can look through a set of recently digitized film reels. We sit by a small table with Jørgensen's laptop and a digital hard drive in the corner of what is apparently a meeting room. It's a small room – a large oval table take up most of the space, shelves bearing books and folders much of the rest. There is another small table too, similar to ours but bearing a large computer and clumsy monitor. A computer that brings back my teenage years of the 1990s. My mum would sit there in front of it playing Tetris. A perfect excuse for staying up waiting for me to come back home late into the night – or was the excuse the other way around? Next to the computer is a small cardboard box containing index cards belonging to another age; analogue, handwritten. These would already have seemed antiquated to me as a teenager; the box and the index cards share the same patina of the old books on the shelves. I click on a folder and open one of the .mov files on the laptop.

The films we are watching are digitized versions of a series of reels forgotten in the museum archives for decades until Jørgensen discovered them during the digitization programme in 2012. The films subsequently became the cornerstone of her PhD thesis *Moving Archives: Agency, Emotions and Visual Memories of Industrialization in Greenland*.[291]

It is a warm day, so the windows are open and noise from the street in central Copenhagen becomes a soundtrack to the silent films as we play them; each is about eight to twelve minutes long. Rather than geographical sites, protagonists or narratives, the films seem to be organized around phenomena related to the early modernization of Greenland and transformations in the exploitation of natural and human resources. We see a bakery, a

291 Anne Mette Jørgensen, *Moving Archives: Agency, Emotions and Visual Memories of Industrialization in Greenland : PhD Thesis* (Department of Cross Cultural and Regional Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Copenhagen University, 2017).

grocery store and a gunsmith; motorized boats; patients being treated in a hospital; different kinds of schools; Lutheran religious practices, such as baptism, confirmation, and communion; the telegraph station and the radio station; the first printing office; a meeting at a provincial council; the collecting of eggs on bird cliffs, the processing of seals and the slaughtering and butchering of sheep, cows, hens and foxes; and we see, not least, scenes from the coal mine in Quillissat and the marble and cryolite quarries elsewhere.[292]

Officially, all that is known about the 16mm films is that they were shot by Jette Bang, and commissioned by the Danish colonial administration, Grønlands Styrelse.

The colonial administration wanted a film to promote Danish colonial policies at an international polar exhibition to be held in Bergen in 1940 (eventually cancelled due to the outbreak of the Second World War). Hence, between 1938–39, Bang travelled the entire west coast of Greenland with the explicit objective of documenting the supposedly successful modernization of Greenland and the Greenlanders.[293] As Jørgensen explained to us in the archive before we began watching, however, Bang omitted this material from the completed film *Inuit* of 1940. Rather than the evolutionist, patronizing, film that the Grønlands Styrelse had commissioned, she delivered a film focusing on traditional ways of life in a harsh and deserted Greenlandic environment. Perhaps because of this, *Inuit* existed only in a single edition before its restoration in 1984, when an explanatory voiceover was added and the film was distributed widely. In a sense, it had come into its own. From being an isolated colony before the Second World War, Greenland had become an annexed territory of the Danish Kingdom. It was a site of modernization, with an even more direct Danish presence in the following decades. Calls for political autonomy throughout the 1970s resulted in the Home

292 For an extended description see Jørgensen's PhD thesis *Moving Archives*. See also Anne Mette Jørgensen, "De g(l)Emte Jette Bang Film: Om Alle Filmene Fra Rejsen i 1938-9," *Tidsskriftet Grønland* 4 (2014): 296–305.

293 Ibid.

Rule Act of 1979 and an increased concern with, and mourning of, traditional Greenlandic ways of life in the 1980s. "Oh yes, this film," I tell Jørgensen. "I remember seeing it in primary school as part of our education on Greenland. I remember it being quite romanticizing."

This is the irony: in leaving out the footage of modernization originally intended as propaganda, Bang's film becomes, itself, somewhat adjacent to fiction.

I will return to the question of changing historical contexts in the next chapter, and consider the opposition of historical and lived time – "now time."[294] But right now, I am still at the National Museum with Tinne Zenner, playing silent films and taking notes in the form of visual annotations with my smart phone. I record entire passages of Bang's digitized 16mm films – the omitted footage.

I was excited to see this material that appeared so atypical of films from the Arctic. Or as Jørgensen observes –

> The focus on "modern," "inauthentic" and recently introduced elements, ranging from mining technologies and radios to grey foxes and vaccination syringes is one unusual aspect. The limited use of scenic images of nature is another. A third striking difference is the respectful, curious and descriptive camera style, which gives the viewer access to very different spheres of life.[295]

An additional dimension is added when considering how the prevalence of photographic devices during the mid-twentieth century coincided with social changes and modernization.

294 I will discuss the question of historical time opposed to lived time on the basis of Walter Benjamin's notion of a "now time," which I understand as a momentary affective register of a possibility in the loss, and which only by virtue of this loss preserves itself as a possibility for the future. (Walter Benjamin, "These on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zorn (London: The bodley head, 2015)).

295 Jørgensen, *Moving Archives*, 135.

Because Bang's work, in this sense, mediates her experience of Greenland in a double sense; while her photographs and films show how "it once looked," the mode of depiction, and the choices made in the execution of that depiction, are none the less deliberate, and hers. They are also, as an early example of lens-based culture in Greenland, an artefact of camera technology itself: consider the geo-aesthetical effect that Arctic sceneries have come to have on humans with cameras; recall the aesthetical and political implications of Arke's work as an effort to destabilize image-making practices in relation to coloniality and geopolitics.

Image-making as an artefact of the modern gaze was famously posited by John Berger in *Ways of Seeing* in terms of a relationship between mobility and portability and monocular perspectives – the dominant mode of Western representation. There is, for Berger, an exchange between objects and images: the circulation and mobility of images in the form of framed pictures turns them into physical objects, while that which is depicted become what we might understand to be an immaterial representation.[296] In other words, there is not only a connection between modernity and so-called "focusing media," in the sense of the role of media in the very production of distant geographies and exotic "others"; the very idea of modernity is founded on coloniality as much as questions of technology.[297]

This has been so since the inception of film production. Indeed, the famous Black Maria, the world's first "Cinematographic Theater" and studio for film production in New York, constructed by Edison in the late nineteenth century, offers an example of how the gaze of the modern world was applied in a different way. A box covered in black tarpaper and built on a

296 John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 2008). For a discussion on this see also Elsaesser, "The Essay Film, 241.

297 Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

turntable so a window in the ceiling could open to let in natural light and rotate toward the sun throughout the day, the Black Maria was certainly no mobile piece of apparatus – but it was designed to suspend the passing of time and thus the influence of the surrounding environment. In this sense, the Black Maria further discloses the modern gaze as entrenching distance and difference between nature and culture in a way which offers an easily-understood connection between mediated viewing and coloniality.[298]

The Black Maria helps me grasp not only how geo-social relations have historically been formed by and through film, but also how these relations are and have been conditioned by the fundamental ways in which questions of territory and sovereignty so central to the concept of modernity "lie at the heart of the contested modes of politics and representation in the Arctic."[299]

Notes From the Archive

Considering this in the context of discourse concerning contemporary photography's emphasis on technological agency, I seek a space for negotiation of standardized image-making – and the ever-more accelerated and intensified processes through which image-making is conducted.

Practically, I have speculated upon productions of such a space of negotiation, through juxtaposing sequences from the omitted films reels with *Inuit*, which, as a kind of record of historical time, affords a look both backward and forward in so far as the films voiceover, added in 1984, reflects back at the moment Jette Bang filmed and edited the film: "It was in the eleventh hour when Jette Bang's film salvaged for the world parts of a culture which had for four to five thousand years been the sole ruler

298 For a discussion on Black Maria see: Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, (New York: Zone Books, 2007).

299 Körber, MacKenzie, and Westerståhl Stenport, *Arctic Environmental Modernities*, 10.

in the Arctic area from the Bering Strait to East Greenland."[300] Moreover, in examining the archival films more closely, I realized both the extent to which particular image-sequences used in *Inuit* are identical with some of the sequences that appears in the archive, and the extent to which these identical image-sequences *do* something very different (in *Inuit* and in the forgotten films respectively).

My speculation is informed by the ways in which Jørgensen's practice-based archival research on Jette Bang's film foregrounds the productive and performative aspects of photography and film. While performing a discursive material analysis Jørgensen also considers the affects produced in revisiting the "lost" material in the archive. In this sense there is in her work a gesture towards a recognition of practice-based archival research as both situated and situating. Or, more concretely, her work gestures towards the ways in which discursive analysis of the Arctic as a constructed region connects with a critical turn towards performativity and image-practices. A wide range of enskilled relations are recognized.

By "a critical turn towards performativity and image-practices," I mean something that may also be called an onto-epistemological approach, meaning an approach at once questioning the nature of things and the way we understand them. Here Azoulay's work on photography again serves as an example, in so far as Azoulay's concept of an "imperial shutter" seeks to challenge representationalism through an understanding of "cutting" enacting a series of both temporal and spatial splits. In Azoulay's work, these are examined as differential splits between present/past, here/there, citizen/noncitizen, perpetrator/victim, and so on.[301]

300 *Inuit*, 1940, 76 min.

301 In his review of *Potential Histories: Unlearning Imperialism* in Art Forum, Ian Wallace writes: "Imperialism, in other words, frames history like a camera's lens; with the right tools, its exclusions, restrictions, and differentiations can be sensed as still-present potentialities" (https://www.artforum.com/books/ian-wallace-on-ariella-aisha-azoulay-potential-history-unlearning-imperialism-82405).

The crucial moment of visual inscription becomes a moment of cutting – and thus, these are the moments of writing history (or histories).[302]

But let us return to Bang's film.

Prior to my visit to the Danish National Museum, I had read in Jørgensen's PhD thesis *Moving Archives* about Bang's forgotten films, and Jørgensen's returning these to local town museums in Greenland (in Qeqertarsuaq, among others). Focusing on how the archive has been constructed, collected and brought to carry meanings and values in specific historical contexts, the thesis moves through the complex questions the films raise regarding the museum and the colonial archive itself. The forgotten films arguably offer an insight into a colonial past as equally unremembered in Denmark's collective memory.[303] In a contemporary context, Bang's cut material and forgotten films seem, exactly, to provide material that fits neither narratives of an authentic past nor a later paradigm of postcoloniality. In a contemporary context, they may thus engender considerations of a "forgotten" chapter in Greenland's colonial histories. Bang's film travelogues continue with Jørgensen's returning them to Greenland; they impact my understanding of film-making as a practice of historical subjectivization that creates both perceptual and epistemological challenges. I am confronted with past and future considerations of my own presences (with a camera) in Arctic terrains, when described in terms of neo-colonial geopolitics similar to Western interventions in the global South.

302 The analogue film camera, of course, functions similarly to the photographic camera: light enters through a lens and hits a photosensitive film spooling at a steady pace inside the camera. Less obvious is the connection to early scientific observatories measuring electricity in the air and geo-magnetism. Sealed from outside light, a source of light was set up facing a mirror, mounted on a copper wire with a magnetic needle under the constant influence of electrical activity in the atmosphere. The movements of the mirror caused light reflected from the internal source to plot as a graph on an evenly rotating photosensitive sheet of paper. In this way, analogue data, like the analogue film image, can be considered an inscription of light.

303 For a rich discussion on this, see Jørgensen, *Moving Archives*.

At stake are means to understand image creation as both social process and technological agency – as action both embedded within socially constructed imaginaries and as affective perception conditioned by technology. This is important to an understanding of the ways in which my consideration of Bang's films as omitted material may be spliced with the productive and performative aspects of my own viewing – initially tabled at the Danish National Museum's archive, but also later on my laptop in a coffee house, on the tram, at home, in my studio, and so on. These different settings affect more than my viewing. Referring to "splicing," I am suggesting that they become part of what I see.

The Cut/Splice Relationship

Yes; I am trying to think through a set of situated observations.

Saving Svalbard for a while, the following is thus more methodologically oriented: I am attempting to consider the splice in line with Guattari's emphasis (alluded to above) on heterogeneity and difference as modes of relating – and thus not unlike how onto-epistemological discourses within contemporary photography considers the cut. As the media scholar Sarah Kember and the photography critic and artist Joanna Zylinska precisely argue, by "cutting reality into pieces – with our eyes, our bodily and cognitive apparatus, our language, our memory, and our technologies – we enact separation and relationality as the two dominant aspects of material locatedness in time."[304] Thus, and with the idea of "potential histories" in mind, while the omitted material in Bang's films exists as a consequence of exclusion, its potentiality resides in differentiation, or separation, being regarded as prerequisites to the synthesis of assemblages and multiplicities.

304 That is, drawing on post-humanist discourses, and particularly from the science and technology scholar Karen Barad's critical examinations of how scientific apparatuses and detecting devices are not passive observing instruments but, rather, productive and part of phenomena (Kember and Zylinska, *Life After New Media*, 75).

Let me clarify. In naming splicing, I relate the theorizing I began following my encounter with Jette Bang's archival footage to my practice with live editing, adding to my understanding of geo-aesthetics. Through my experimentation with live editing, I have learnt that there is no way of cutting without splicing. Rather than asking what the cut leaves out, the persistent question in live editing is how cutting and splicing rub against each other. The cut is certainly the act with which something is omitted, deferred or even cut into pieces. The incision is about making a choice to eliminate or exclude a material. But the cut is also the decisive moment of cutting a relationship between two segments, *in as much as the decision to splice* is about bringing two things together. Thus, while having claimed that the fascinating thing about the idea of a film, to me, has always been the possibility of using the camera to "cut" a relationship in order to set in motion a mode of thinking (informed by assemblage theory and conceptualizations of filmic in-betweeness in montage theory), I am coming to think of live editing as a method permitting us to understand the cut/splice relationship as negotiation and synthetization. This has implications for a traditional critique of science; critique becomes a matter of destabilizing certainty from within a space of potentiality, where "images fixed" or identities of authority can be comprehended in other ways. What is fixed becomes an expression of an intensity; a situated emergence. Perhaps the shutter is, after all, better understood as a cut/splice device, and thus as a metaphor for something that comes close to writing in the retrieving of knowledge – or of potential histories? Can we think of scenographic synergies as that which occur?

This insight, I believe, is on fundamental and technical level informed by my skilled artistic practice. It is informed by a recognition of the shutter as a negotiating effect between letting in and leaving out light; as something that inscribes. And epistemologically, this makes a difference: cutting becomes a matter of selecting in order to splice.

Thus, to be clear, I am not opposing an understanding of photography as a process of cutting and thus differentiation; I am trying to understand the epistemological implications of considering video live editing in a similar vein – as a process of differentiation and thus as a practice of "bringing to life."[305] Moreover, drawing from Kember and Zylinska's understanding of cutting as something that operates on perceptive, material, technical, and conceptual levels, my concern with the splice is not about describing something that happens to separate entities as they are brought together. It is a matter, rather, of considering live editing as a temporary moment of historical time as much a description of co-existence as co-production. At least, the idea is not to assume a prior given set of material entities/identities, which then come into dialogue and cause something to happen, but the other way around: entities/identities emerge from, and are described through, their encounter. In live editing, scenographic synergies occurs as effects of negotiating the contract between cutting and splicing relation.[306] Something happens from material practices, in particular, and situated conditions of time and space regarded as temporary constellations.

Lindholmen's Science Park

At this point it seems relevant to provide a concrete example. In 2018, in the form of a travelogue structured as a letter to a friend, I narrated and live-edited a event at the Visual Arena at Lindholmen's Science Park, a production studio for the dissemination of knowledge with advanced immersive technology facilities in a "knowledge-intensive and expansive area in Gothenburg" described on the park's website as "an important hub for the

305 Kember and Zylinska, 71.

306 This further draws on Kember and Zylinska's onto-epistemological approach to the "cut" and the subsequent suggestion of focussing not on media objects per se but rather on processes of mediation in order to understand "our being in, and becoming with, the technological world."Kember and Zylinska, 15.

expanding city."[307] Some 350 companies have offices here, the biggest being Volvo Cars, Volvo Technology, Ericsson, IBM, Semcon; there are also two universities (Chalmers and KTH) and six secondary schools. In this context, Lindholmen's Visual Arena is a platform for the use and development of visualization and for partnership between the park's business community, academia and government authorities. More practically, it is a physical space located in close proximity to the visitor centre. It consists of a lobby with a very particular interior design and screen surfaces, a tech-heavy black box studio with a large back-projected floor-to-ceiling screen and surround sound, and, finally, an office space where a technician, project leaders and event coordinators work.

The intention is obviously for the visual arena to be used as a kind of black box theatre of representation (think of the Black Maria), allowing for the showcase of image performance constructions as a closed system.[308] Yet in understanding scenography as a highly significant part of what occurs, Lindholmen's Visual Arena becomes more than a closed system in the context of live editing. Its aesthetics and organization are operated to scenographically become part of the image-construction, in a sense where the Visual Arena is at once emphasized and challenged as a theatre of representation through the live mixing: while exposing the technical and organizational infrastructure (very literally through the visibility of cables and screens, less literally by the

307 https://www.lindholmen.se/

308 My choice of this site draws from an interest in the TV production studio, and how when making a documentary film, the idea is, usually, that the filmmaker decides on the kind of images they want. Talking heads, or precisely not talking heads, haptic close-ups or observational pans, shots framed for the camera to be reflected in a passing train, and so on. At least, the documentary filmmaker is usually not operating with two, three or four cameras and, thus, cannot draw simultaneously on multiple different perspectives. In the case of the TV production studio, however, with its usual setup of cameras offering live feeds in the context of the black box, the opposite is true. The TV production studio indeed offers an example of a synergetic orchestration operated by camera people, light designers, stage designers, directors, producers and editors.

rendering visible of capital through staging in the very concept of the "Science Park"), both the planned improvisations of the live mixing and the more opaque image-operations at stake are evoked. In this way, the scenography is evinced through encounters and as instances of responsive feedback between the space, live streaming cameras, performer, narration and video editors as well as the audiovisual material shot during fieldwork on Svalbard. The kind of live editing I am pursuing, then, is essentially about bringing audiovisual material to life in the context of that which takes place in a particular space, between people and in relation to other potential sources of live material (for example, live-streaming on the internet being an expanded context of the live).[309]

Operating the Hard Drive

The immersive technologies characterizing the Visual Arena emphasize that the notion of the cut in its traditional usage in montage theory – from Eisenstein to Deleuze – is rather restrictive when it comes to the practice and material I am dealing with. Genuinely digital media does not meaningfully allow the cut to be held as a form of edit. A cut is a multi-informational cluster. Digital media are date-registered and resolution coded, and in this sense, formats are determined and overdetermined in so many

309 See excerpts from the live edited documentation montage Svalbard – a live-narrated montage, Visual Arena, Lindholmen's Science Park, 2018.

ways that the idea of the cut (as a form of sequential editing) precisely seems to underplay some of the complexities at stake.

The hard disk, central in my research, is thus a device storing a collection as much as a tool I use in attempts to unsettle linear storylines; while my hard drive may contain ordered material, it is not narratively structured. As an algorithmic device, the drive is an object both informational and physical, operating as a prism through which my research occurs – an interesting conglomeration continuously operating to connect different sites in the research.

With the concept of skilled visions and the idea of the cut/splice, I suggest that the hard drive, precisely, makes Svalbard comprehensible as scenography (as a field emerging from a total set of relations) and fieldwork comprehensible as "narrative," as "situation," as "temporality," as "experience." The hard drive offers the idea of Svalbard as a site that re-emerges every time I edit my material, in a manner not unlike the way it emerges through different modalities of writing. In this sense, the hard drive is both a metaphor, in the sense of an image bank for a collection of audiovisual material and a tool with which I generate new material – something which of course always happens in situated conditions. Subsequently, the field is not "a source" "out there" to be researched, but a set of relations performed and produced when the hard drive is operated.

We may think of live editing then, as a particular kind of descriptive register. Affiliated with strategies in ethnographic writing,[310] engaged with modes of charging and enacting connections in the "sticky materiality of encounters,"[311] my experiments with live editing seek to enable different affective registers to those applied by the historical figure of the anthropologist as a scientist. Not for the sake of producing anthropological knowledge,

310 For example, in the sense of cultural anthropologists Michael Taussig or Kathleen C. Stewart.

311 For example, in the sense of anthropologist Anna Tsing.

but perhaps to better understand that I have many "friends" in the field. My aim, that is, is to suggest a parallel dissatisfaction with modernist colonial discourses of representation (knowledge production), historically safeguarding the traditional figures of both the scientist and the artist. My artistic experimentation seeks affiliated epistemological approaches that allow a degree of freedom for the scientist as well as the artist to cut/splice on both intuitive and intellectual levels, and for both scientific and artistic knowledge to be characterized by personal as much as institutional manifestations of its circulation.

Practically, I assert, the example of Lindholmen Science Park renders visible how, in live editing, different sites come together scenographically rather than through constructivist strategies of montage.[312] I propose that the production of relations in live editing, and collaborative live editing in particular, is not limited to a linear construction of images, but that it produces scenographic synergies. Live editing unsettles or destabilizes the question of editing by circling its sites of production at the level of methodology; it reconceptualizes affective relations, associative impulses and chance.

Svalbard as a Film Set

This, then, is the sense in which I think of Svalbard as a film set (which must not be mistaken as a relativization or deconstruction of observational practices in their trained and skilled dimensions). This is what allows me to assemble both handheld visual annotations and observational style video recordings of

312 Of course, live editing is itself a montage strategy with a history within broadcast television. Moreover, there is an interesting connection between collaborative ethnographies as anthropological research methodologies and collaborative live editing as assemblage strategy. A specific mapping of the history of live editing as an assemblage strategy could be interesting to look at and consider in the future – for example, by looking at different kinds of documentations of such edited events, with focus on their aesthetics, ethics and politics.

tourists, scientists, miners and artists "in the field" shot on the archipelago over the last ten years.

Moreover, the idea of Svalbard as a film set helps me understand how mobility allows for local knowledge to be part of a larger knowledge system (think of Jørgsensen's practice-based research *Moving Archive*); it helps me understand how "in a very important and profound sense, the creation of an assemblage is the creation of a knowledge space," as David Turnbull has written.[313]

Critical examinations have shown how particular knowledge spaces quickly adopt a "naturalness" obscuring their origins in social practices and certain interests. Kirsten Hastrup for example, drawing from fieldwork in Iceland and northern Greenland, provides important reflections on the increasing uneasiness within contemporary anthropology with the belief of local knowledge being opposed to and radically different from scientific knowledge.[314] To this end, she thus draws on the notion of the knowledge space in the sense suggested by David Turnbull, an "interactive, contingent assemblage of space and knowledge, sustained and created by social labour."[315] From this Hastrup concludes that there are no "natural" categories in the sense of them being disinterested – or ahistorical (or a-cultural).[316] Knowledge is, rather, precisely created and endorsed by a community.

313 Elaborating his notion of a knowledge space, David Turnbull further writes: "Though knowledge systems may differ in their epistemologies, methodologies, logics, cognitive structures or in their socio-economic contexts, a characteristic they all share is their localness. However, knowledge is not simply local it is located. It is both situated and situating. It has place and creates space. An assemblage is made up of linked sites, people and activities; in a very important and profound sense, the creation of an assemblage is the creation of a knowledge space", in *Masons, Tricksters and Cartographers: Comparative Studies in the Sociology of Scientific and Indigenous Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 19.

314 Hastrup, "Comparing Climate Worlds: Theorising across Ethnographic Fields."

315 Turnbull in Hastrup, 140.

316 Hastrup, 142.

The idea of assembling – splicing (bringing together) – knowledge spaces, through moving and scaling facts, emphasises how I suggest even the most observational of practices is lived and situated within a wider spectrum of affective registers. Svalbard is a continuity of discontinuities, perpetually repeating difference, never the same.

Meanwhile, the question about what and whose knowledge counts, and when knowledge is sufficient for action, remain largely defined by the capacities of institutions and nation-states to affect norms in that regard; a work of politically mediated co-production.[317] This is what the all-encompassing climate catastrophe testifies to all too well.

Moving Frames of Composite Knowledge

Climate change is ubiquitous in the fabric of Svalbard. In terms of scale, however, the sociologist Sheila Jasanoff has argued, interestingly, that climate facts arise from impersonal observations, whereas meanings emerge from embedded experience.[318] The implications of this can be analysed in the light of a historical and careful separation of science and politics, allowing a continuous separation of the epistemic from the normative.[319] Nevertheless, two crucial effects of the crisis, today, are the destabilization of the certainty of knowledge on one hand and a more widely distributed sense of agency on the other.

This is not unlike the way history writing is constructed both by museums and state institutions and by a myriad of less-institutionalized actors, when considering, for example, the proliferation of online networks and platforms engaged in historical

317 Sheila Jasanoff, "A New Climate for Society," *Theory, Culture & Society* 27, no. 2–3 (March 2010): 239.

318 Sheila Jasanoff, "A New Climate for Society."

319 MT Bravo, "Voices from the Sea Ice: The Reception of Climate Impact Narratives," *Journal of Historical Geography* 35, no. 2 (2009): 256–78.

revisionism. There is the risk that the destabilization of the certainty of knowledge leads to nothing but misinformation. But a more widely distributed sense of agency is inherently political; with its arrival comes a shift in focus from representation to mediation, invalidating the monopoly of institutional practices; the recognition of contradictory histories, and of knowledges happening in different forms, has both ethical and aesthetical implications.

This is what I have tried to unpack above. The common problem of the traditional figures of the artist and the scientist lies in the disconnected nature of their customary roles – the scientist as the producer of facts arrived at through disinterested observation and the artist as culturally conscious, invested in meaning-making arrived at through the synthesis of experience.

In studying climate change, Kirsten Hastrup has formulated the idea that "there is no way to continue to mistake *located* knowledge for *local* knowledge." Rather, "recent studies of nature making in the wake of perceived climate change have shown that, far from reproducing a unified nature, all people operate within moving frames of composite knowledge – including scientists, whose concepts of nature are far from universal or fixed."[320]

Subsequently, and with Jasanoff in mind, the argument is frequently made that the social sciences and humanities in the field of climate science share the role of showing how crisis narratives and dominant categories – among them the very notion of the Arctic or particular understandings of nature – are continuously produced "collaboratively" by science and politics.[321] There is a need to show how epistemic regimes and politics alike impact cultural imaginaries, experientially embedded and embodied as they are, and hence a need to render sensible different kinds of knowledges.

320 Hastrup, "Comparing Climate Worlds: Theorising across Ethnographic Fields," 150.

321 Jasanoff, "A New Climate for Society."

Technopolitics

In response to this, a turn towards affective knowledges, where affect is regarded as a vehicle for knowledge, is also a turn towards the acknowledgement of lived experiences. This is a matter of affirming the veracity of experience and a recognition that our sensibilities are subject to processes of enskillment. Turns towards affective knowledges and skill disclose the dimension of technicity: enskillment and technics are inherent to the spread and movement of ideas, and hence much postcolonial critique has sought to expose the ideological framework intrinsic to technological propagation and authorization.

This is what the Chinese philosopher Yuk Hui has pointed to, cognizant that the age of the Enlightenment is the age of "the public use of one's reason": the exercise of reason is precisely expressed "in the freedom of speaking and publishing, which necessarily involves the technology of printing."[322] Or the manifestation of the ideological legacy of theatres of representation (what Edison's Black Maria leads us to understand). There is a connection between the domination of modern thought by Euro-American understandings of nature, or the disasters it has caused, with the development of modern technology – including its "focusing media."[323]

However, the question of technics risks being obscured with the assumption that the concept is European. That is, when technics fall on the side of culture as a means to recognize cultural

322 Hui, "Cosmotechnics as Cosmopolitics."

323 The term "focusing media" derives from Grasseni's "skilled visions" approach, in relation to which she has stated that "the making, exchange and manipulation of focusing media plays a fundamental part in the ecology of everyday vision and even of imagination" Cristina Grasseni, "Skilled Vision. An Apprenticeship in Breeding Aesthetics," *Social Anthropology* 12, no. 1 (February 2004): 44. In their "Introduction: Skilled Mediations," *Social Anthropology* 27, no. 1 (2019), Christina Grasseni and Thorsten Gieser however, articulate the notion of "focusing media" "in the light of key questions and theoretical developments regarding the role of the senses, practice, skill and media in the formation of anthropological knowledge" (6).

difference, while they are also – not least in a contemporary context of environmental crisis – celebrated as a uniting concept, there is a risk of de-politicizing the question of technology. In response, Hui has advocated for the notion of *cosmotechnics*, understood as "a verdict that anticipates technological globalization as a form of neo-colonization imposing its rationality through instrumentality."[324] In this sense, Hui has formulated a very explicit link between the question of technology and modernity's colonial foundations, which in interesting and very important ways complexifies the concept of the Anthropocene. With Hui, the Anthropocene becomes "a global axis of time and synchronization that is sustained by this view of technological progress towards the singularity."[325]

It is precisely alongside Hui's idea, then, of a "view of technological progress towards the singularity," that I find it relevant how scholars of ecological economics in the contemporary – a perspective that precisely addresses the material metabolism and political economy of social infrastructure – have stated the need to connect relationism in the sense of Bateson and Ingold (emphasizing nature's social organization, as it were) with materialist theories that shows how social organization such as globalized technology is also material.[326] That is, they (similar to Bateson and Ingold) differentiate between technique and technology, when the former (technique) is understood as being tacit, subjective and embedded in its practical application, while the latter (technology) is the opposite, in being explicit, objective and dis-embedded. But scholars of ecological economics use this differentiation to further emphasize the importance of technology's requirement of an external energy source and hence its connection to political economy, questioning relationism's historical lack of eye for how social power connects with energy power. Or

324 Hui, "Cosmotechnics as Cosmopolitics."
325 Grasseni and Gieser, "Introduction: Skilled Mediations," 1.
326 Hornborg, *Global Magic*, 14.

how, as Hornborg writes, "the very concept of power can be used to denote energy as well as social dominance."[327] I find this particularly important to point to when considering how the positive reappraisal of Bateson as a theoretical reference in much environmental anthropology, arrives with the danger of his contested theorization of "a whole." That is – relationism as developed by Bateson offers an epistemological approach that, while extending preconceived ideas of place and scale through a focus on relations, does not necessarily break with imperial ideologies; rather, as the scholar of political science Jodi Dean has written:

> apprehending what is significant, then, may require "escaping the fascination of the picture" by adopting another perspective—a partial or partisan perspective, the perspective of a part. From this partisan perspective, the whole will not appear as a whole. It will appear with a hole. The perspective from which the hole appears is that of the subject, which is to say of the gap opened up by the shift to a partisan perspective.[328]

The image as standardized viewing *is* the connection between mediated viewing and coloniality. And this is why/how a politics of technology is an implicit necessity in questioning authorized positions of knowing, and why a comprehension of the dis-embeddedness of our contemporary crisis requires a turn to skill, to practice.

All this contextualizes my concern with the role of the Arctic expert as mediator in "an expanding and polarizing global economy confronted with a finite biosphere."[329] This is also my concern with the guide; the guide holds in proxy the goals of theories and research precisely by being both part of and affected by the world. Even if often recognized as a figure embodying a kind of

327 Hornborg, *Global Magic*, 19.
328 Jodi Dean, "The Anamorphic Politics of Climate Change – Journal #69 January 2016 – e-flux," accessed March 6, 2017, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/69/60586/the-anamorphic-politics-of-climate-change/.
329 Hornborg, *Global Magic*, 8.

significance produced through processes of standardization, routine and infrastructure, the guide also enables recognition and exploration of the margins left for "improvisation." Or, to frame it with Grasseni's words, the need to explore the space and circulation between apprenticeship and standards.[330]

This is crucial in disclosing how a territory is produced, whether it be geographical or intellectual. The guide, as an enskilled synergizer, one might say, connects an aesthetics of potentiality – of image-making as cut/splice negotiations and synthetizations, allowing scenographic synergies to emerge – with an ethics of Arctic cinema.

330 Grasseni, *Skilled Visions*.

Video still. workspacebrussels, October 2019

Dear Bent,

My name is Eva la Cour and you don't know me. I don't know you either, but I'm writing this letter because I've been wanting to get in touch with you for several years. The reason? Your beautiful collection and mounts of Greenlandic plants.

Back in 2017, I visited the Arctic Station in Qeqertarsuaq, north-western Greenland with Tinne Zenner. We're both artists and so it wasn't entirely clear why we were going to the Arctic Station, which, as you know, usually houses researchers from the natural sciences.

I was interested, however, in the old geomagnetic observatory, the wooden building in Qeqertarsuaq, which forms a kind of compass, pointing towards each of the cardinal directions. You probably know the building I'm talking about.

My great-grandfather, Dan la Cour, founded the observatory in 1926. He was the director of the Danish Meteorological Institute when Greenland was a territory under Danish rule.

Kalaallit Nunaat is the Greenlandic name for Greenland, which, as you sure know, means "the Land of Greenlanders" – but which, back then, was considered the property of Denmark. Or, as under the protection of Denmark, as it existed in the Danish understanding, imaginary, and narrative.

Then as now, obviously, several powers had a stake in the Arctic region. But in the 1920s, they explored so-called "undiscovered territories." I'm thinking of Thule and Scoresbysund in Eastern Greenland. During that time, geographical studies, other kinds of scientific research and, of course, the construction of missions and trading posts, were part Denmark's strategy to achieve full occupation of Greenland.

Travelling to Qeqertarsuaq, in the autumn of 2017, outside the tourist season, evoked a painful awareness of this.

My limited knowledge of my grandfather was immediately reconceptualized.

I only know my great-grandfather from my mother's stories. Still, a fairly clear picture of Dan la Cour emerges: a dedicated geophysicist and member of the enlightened elite, with his passionate belief in the sciences.

But then, my grandfather's passion also relies on a view of history, typical of his time, as composed of a linear and ceaseless progression and, implicitly, a perception of Greenlanders as a backwards people in need of help.

You get the picture.

Meanwhile, as we drove through Qeqertarsuaq, out to the Artic Station, Tinne and I had to navigate being seen and encountered in the roles automatically ascribed to us as Danish students from the natural sciences out on field work in the present.

«»

Anyway. During the stay at the Arctic Station our interest quickly gravitated to something more to do with you than my great-grandfather: the Arctic Station's herbarium, the collection of Greenlandic plants that you helped to build during your numerous trips to Greenland. An alphabetically ordered time capsule and a product of botanical knowledge and practice.

In fact, the herbarium caught our attention on our very first day at the Arctic Station, when Tinne and I were shown around and introduced to the facilities. I don't know where it used to be, but in 2017 the library roof was under renovation, so the herbarium was temporarily housed in the lower parts of the library's annex. In a small room, the herbarium cabinets stood among small boxes of mosses and rocks. Maybe there were a few stuffed birds too. I remember an owl. Is that possible?

We ended up spending a lot of time in that room. Seated atop a chest freezer, we took the exsiccatae out of the cabinets and examined the dried specimens through our camera. Intuitively, that was how we preferred to see, sense, and grasp what we held in our hands.

And it was not just any camera but the heavy 16mm camera we had brought with us. In a kind of collective, mechanical trance, brought on by the repetitive work of meticulously handling and registering thousands of plant specimens, several thoughts and questions arose:

What kind of knowledge does this kind of herbarium contain, and where and how can it be used? What brings scientists to Qeqertarsuaq? The Arctic Station, of course. But, Bent, what made you interested in Greenlandic plants in the first place? And, as the years passed, with your many trips to the Arctic Station, what was your relationship to the local population of Qeqertarsuaq? And what was your relationship to the herbarium?

Every once in a while, the scientific director of the Arctic Station – a microbiologist – stopped by the workstation I shared with Tinne. He seemed just as curious and excited as we were by the opportunity to see some of the plants in the collection. He commented and provided context for us. He translated Latin plant names to Danish and shared his interest in the plants' respective locations, which, in most cases, were listed on a small datasheet at the bottom of the stack of exsiccatae. The name of the scientist who found the plant was also listed.

And it was here that Tinne and I stumbled across your name for the first time.

«»

On a wall inside the main building hang photographs of the Arctic Station's former scientific directors.

You know, in the common room, where the classic Danish design and furniture must have looked pretty much the same as when you were there.

Most of the portraits of previous directors were taken out in the field. Men, mostly.

All are on their knees, with their equipment, investigating some glacial formation, or in a rubber dinghy wearing a life vest. We carefully attempted to match the names on the portraits in the common room to the names from the herbarium.

We looked for a Bent Fredskild. But you were not the director, so there was no portrait of you on the wall.

What we did find, however, was the Arctic Station's centenary book from 2006. And from this book I know that you were born in 1929, and that you were employed by the Department of Natural Sciences at the National Museum of Denmark when you received your doctorate in 1973 with a thesis on the development of Greenlandic vegetation since the last Ice Age.

You had already travelled to Greenland in the 1950s, however. The herbarium bears witness to that.

In other words, you've been to Greenland since the Constitution was revised in 1953, when Greenland officially stopped existing as a colony and became incorporated into Denmark, and thus became even more heavily subject to the historical configurations of the Danish economy and global geopolitics. I wonder how you experienced that event. Did you experience it? Or did your botanical research exist in a vacuum protected from social and political change?

Flicking through the Arctic Station's centenary book, I also found the chapter you co-authored about founder, Morten Porsild. An account of a crucial person in your field, obviously. I found it a really interesting piece of botanical history, woven together on the premise of the significance of Porsild's personality and voice to his time.

I stumbled upon this quote from Porsild recently: "We can no long keep Greenlanders in a zoo. The bars must be lifted. The country opened. Its many resources used differently. We must empower Greenlanders and ourselves to prepare for the competition that we, sooner or later, maybe sooner than we think, will face against other nations in these parts."[331]

Porsild's research clearly did not exist in a vacuum.

Yet botanical history and plant geography – including works on humanity's influence on Greenlandic flora over time – seems to unsettle the settled in its own right. I mean, your work with paleobotany must make concepts of origin and authenticity seem abstract.

You write: "After another few centuries, various low bushes of the heather family began to form heaths, and a thousand years later, willows migrated to Greenland. Later came the juniper and finally the birch: first the American dwarf birch, and then, soon after, the larger European white birch. With the gray willow trees, the birch trees formed a large thicket of angelica, northern oak ferns, and fertile heaths, among other plants."[332]

I understand this as a kind of archeology of plant remains, gathered from the bottom of lakes, and I picture you in a white white lab coat, with your head poised a microscope.

How do we practice taking things as they are and how do we figure out how to create a life for humans and plants together, no matter where and who we are?

«»

I tried to call you. I think it was during the autumn of 2019. I found your number on krak.dk. But no one answered.

331 Morten Porsild quoted in Kirsten Thisted, *Stemmer fra Grønland – Den danske koloni i 1920'erne* (Kbh.: Kristeligt Dagblad, 2021), 39.

332 Bent Fredskild, "Vegetationen i Norrøn Tid," *Grønland* 30, no. 5/6/7 (1982): 190.

But recently, the news that the Arctic Station's herbarium was moving from Qeqertarsuaq to the Danish Museum of Natural History's archives in Brøndbyøster impelled me to contact you again. In Brøndbyøster, Tinne and I helped to digitally catalogue the herbarium, and therefore I had the chance to ask the archivists and curators about you. They didn't know you personally, but they emphasized how significant you had been for the Greenland Botanical Studies at the University of Copenhagen's Botanical Museum, which continued from the 1960s to the end of the 1980s.

"Of course!" I thought to myself. That explains why your name appears again and again, across decades and places – but also why there are basically no exsiccatae from after the 1990s. That is when you retired.

And yet, it's not your name that captured my interest in the first place. It was the other way around. Now and then, a few especially beautiful mounts stood out, and Tinne and I would check the datasheet: Yup, Fredskild again.

What does it mean to visually express something?

Science and politics occupy different fields.

In the same sense as science, historically speaking, is opposed to feeling and aesthetics.

But it's as if evocative voices are attached to the herbarium. The dried plants evoke shifting senses of the practical and living dimensions of scientific work. And then, the speculations:

What was it like to visit Greenland in the twentieth century?

«»

It was at the archive in Brøndbyøster that Tinne and I learned that the Arctic Station's herbarium is a bit of a bastard herbarium. The archivists didn't really know what to do with the collection. It's full of duplicates, and it isn't organized by the same standards as herbariums usually are. It's organized by plant family rather than genus, which is unlike the great Greenlandic herbarium, which has chronological data going back to Jens Vahl's botanical travels in the 1800s.

In that sense, maybe the Arctic Station's herbarium tells us more about the movements and functions of (passionate) botanists than it offers us scientifically relevant knowledge.

When the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources was asked to take over the Arctic Station's herbarium in 2019, they responded with a polite "no thank you." The herbarium is a Danish problem.

Are the exsiccatae from the Arctic Station interesting and significant because they are affective – i.e. representations that do more than they mean something?

And, then, can nostalgia avoid becoming the main effect?

How do I take responsibility for the "memories" I help form?

Beautiful Greenlandic plants.

Fantasy and material reality.

Can Greenlandic plants remind us that considerations of the past serve to drive us in envisioning possible futures?

Can the herbarium be seen as an instrument of historical becoming?

Imagine the sound of an old 16mm projector.

And seeing a 12-minute sequence of plants fixed to plates of cardboard, for about half a second each.

I am enclosing a few still images from a digital scan of the sequence. As you can see, the information on the datasheets is barely visible. Judging by the ways in which the plants are mounted, however, I am pretty sure which of them are the effects of your efforts.

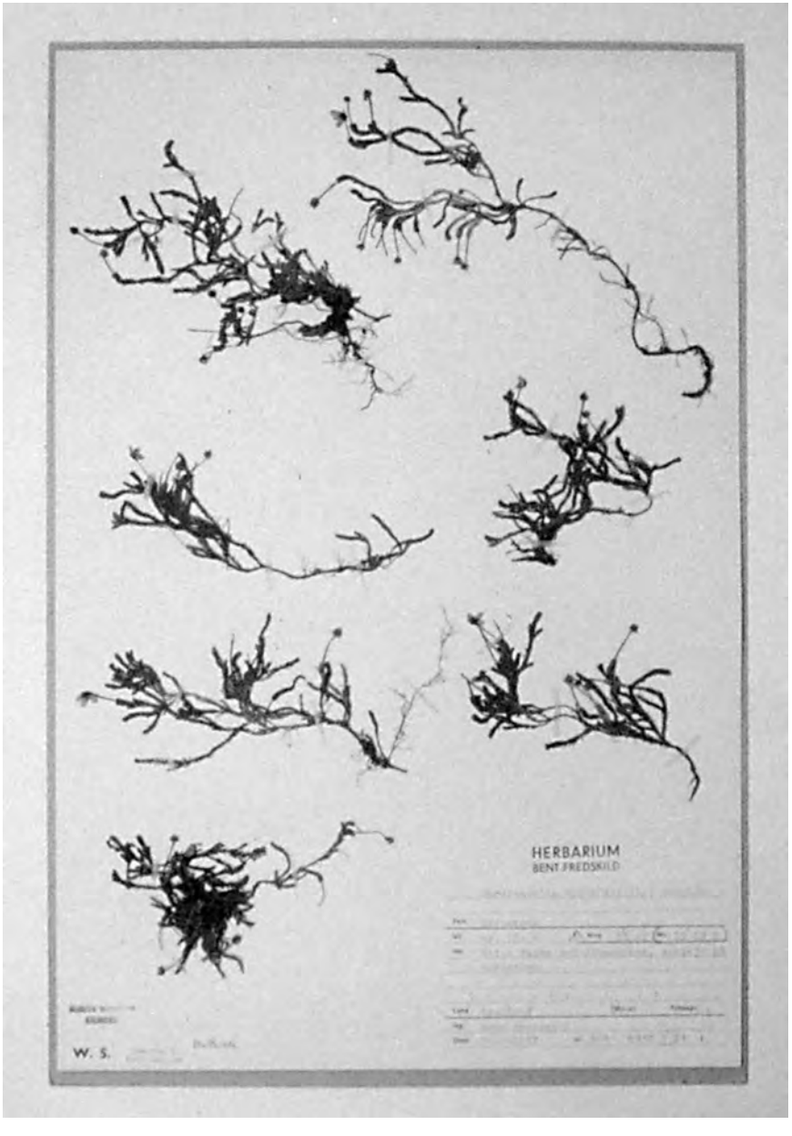
That said, I regret not driving to Odsherred and knocking on your door back in 2019, when I found an address next to your phone number on Krak. When I look you up now, it doesn't come up. Have you moved to a nursing home? And so I'm writing this letter in the hope that you'll receive it while you still have your sight. Because you must be 92 years old now. What I want to tell you is that you've been seen. That your botanical mounts with all their meticulousness and passionate dedication over a long lifetime have been seen and have provoked all kinds of thought at the intersection of art, science, and geeking out at the start of the twentieth century.

Thank you for that.

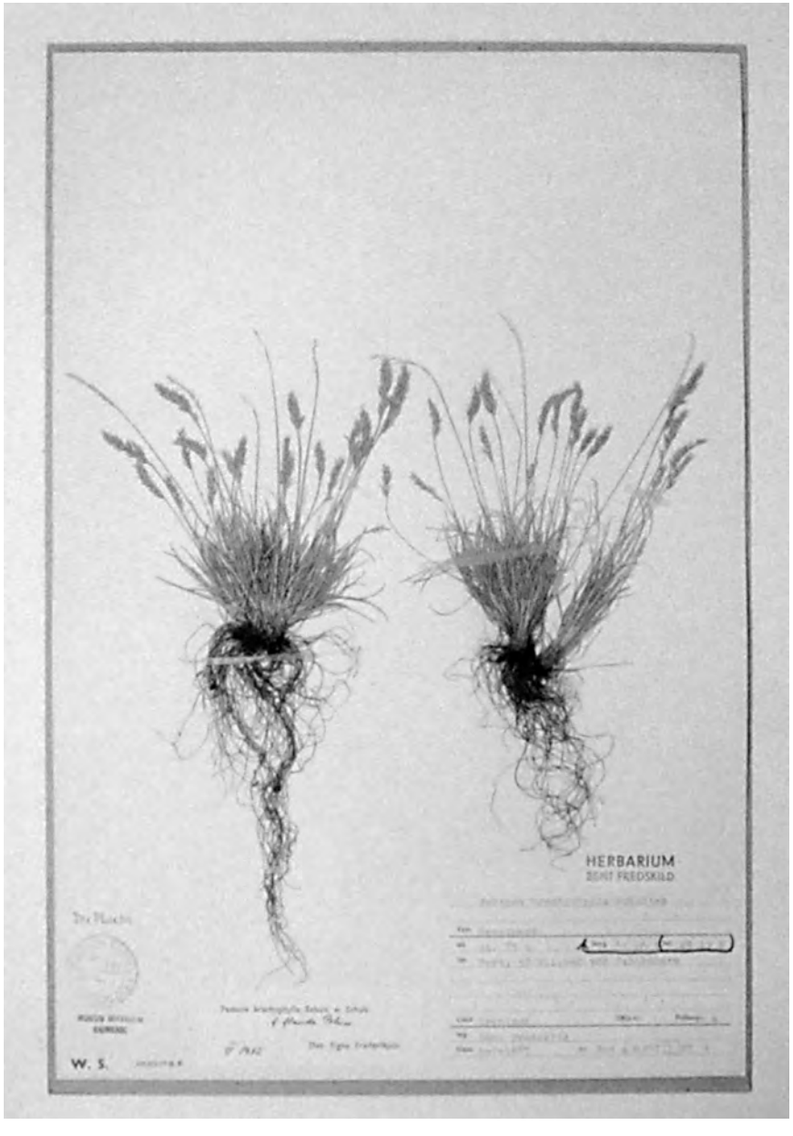
Best wishes,
Eva

P.S.
I've found a copy of **The Flowers of Greenland** on antikvar.net and ordered it from a second-hand bookstore in Viborg. A work from 1984 authored by you, Jon Feilberg and Sune Holt. I'm looking forward to having it in my hands in a few days' time.

Film still: *Plantae Groenlandica 1906-2019: A genealogy of botanist subjectivities (mainly men)*, with Tinne Zenner.



Film still: *Plantae Groenlandica 1906-2019: A genealogy of botanist subjectivities (mainly men)*, with Tinne Zenner.



Film still: *Plantae Groenlandica 1906-2019: A genealogy of botanist subjectivities (mainly men)*, with Tinne Zenner.

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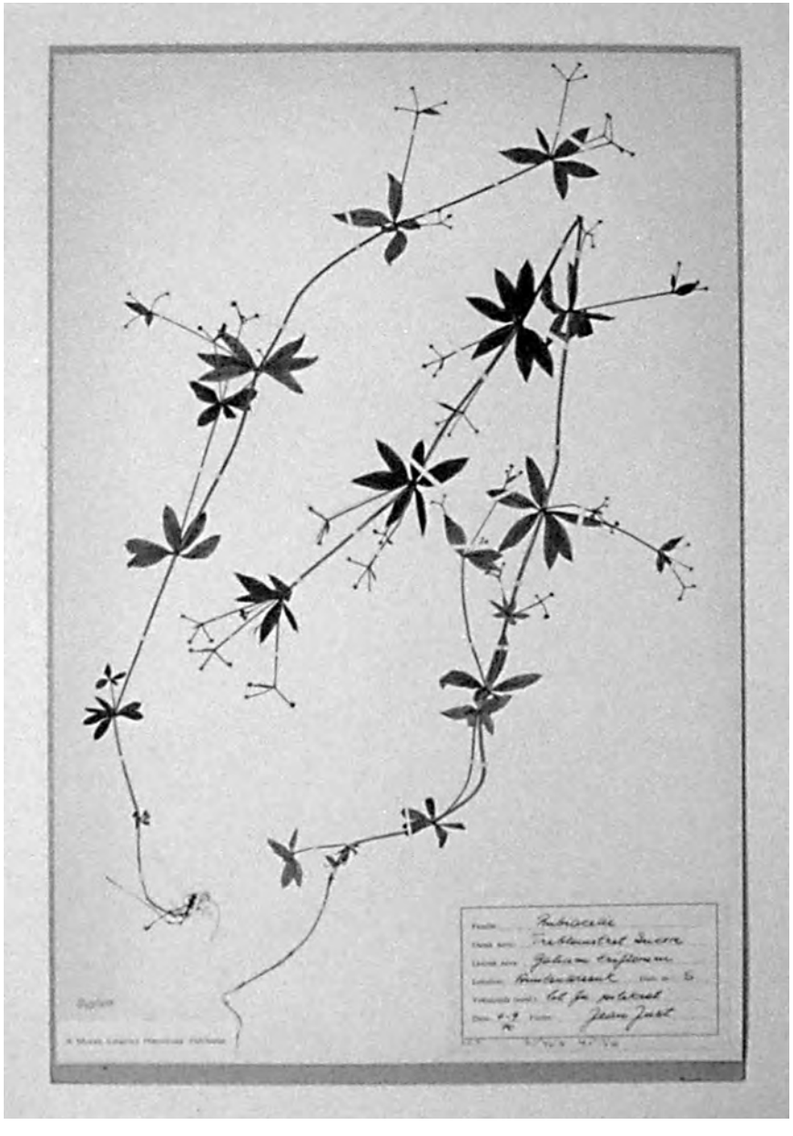


Film still: *Plantae Groenlandica 1906-2019: A genealogy of botanist subjectivities (mainly men)*, with Tinne Zenner.

PART 3

Documentation shot. Prekær Filmpraktik #1, Art Hub, April 2021

I read a Facebook post from a friend:

> chaos, violence, disease and death are already upon us. We're already unknown territory. Just not necessarily here where we live. The barbarism isn't on the way, it's here in full swing. We've simply outsourced it to the global south (or just southern Europe).
>
> More and more people are living in hunger and 25 million people are already fleeing drought, floods and other 'natural disasters.' The Mediterranean is currently functioning as the moat of the run-down welfare states, while the camps take care of the rest. 400-500 million jobs are believed to have been lost during the first wave of the corona crisis. Over a billion people live in permanent search for work. I'm writing this just to remind us together.

I think about temporalities as overlapping. What happens to my ten years of footage from Svalbard when it is projected onto a lifetime? And what happens to those ten years when set against a climate collapse increasingly held to be irreversible?

I think of the political tension between the possibility of the more-than-linear as an artistic methodology and the slow violence of a climate collapse. Or is there another way of talking about this? Not as conflicting modes of thinking and operating with time, but as some species of integrative temporality?

It has been three and-a-half years since I participated in the ANG ski excursion. In the meantime, Kongsberg Satellite Service has continued to expand its ground network and earth observation services. An end-to-end solution solving questions of coverage, resolution, price and monitoring frequency, delivered just minutes after purchase. Lunar and cislunar missions are also planned.

I film the mushroom-like antennae across the snow-covered mountain plateau from the front seat of a taxi minibus, pretending to be the co-driver for four Japanese men with special permission to enter the area above Svalbard Airport.

I read another Facebook post:

> [...] after 3.652 days and nights, 124 transatlantic flights, 3 presidencies, a lot of studio rent late fees, the rise and fall of Le Pain Quotidian and many made up utilities bills, i contemplate the many roles and narratives played out over the last 10 years while casually hanging around Union Square as an aspiring art student, Lasha from Latvia, a European Role Model, a semi pro soccer player, a fake bass player, a self-taught tennis coach, a Berlin impersonator. We finally received our US greencards yesterday.

After 4,017 days and nights, 24 flights across the Barents sea, 3 Norwegian prime ministers, 10,389,241 tons of contested coal, several polar bear attacks, a fatal avalanche, the establishment of a state-funded artist residency, the rise and fall of Polar Permaculture A/S and several applications for funding resulting in accommodation everywhere from a friend's couch in a garage to Radisson Blue, I contemplate the many roles and narratives played out over the last 10 years – as an aspiring artist, a twenty-first-century visitor, a semi-pro filmmaker, a fake tourist, a self-taught expert and Arctic impersonator.

Video still. Art Hub Copenhagen, September 2021.

Post-Future Essayism

Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, the Austrian photographer Herta Grøndal (1930–2019) shot a great number of widely recognized photographs of Svalbard. Reproduced on many postcards, on stamps and in museum displays, Grøndal's images are inevitably an important source for visual research related to Svalbard.[333] Less known however, is her role as a local contact for the Norwegian state broadcaster, NRK, when she lived on the archipelago in the early 1970s or her role as the maker of 16 mm films for the Store Norske Spitsbergen Kulkompagni and for the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. In contrast to the planned decommissioning of coal extraction, Grøndal's films of SNSK are thus artefacts of a time when Svalbard's settlements were still functioning and imagined foremost as coal company towns, making her an interesting historical character and female filmmaker in the context of this research. Grøndal's historical portrayals of Svalbard anchor a set of methodological concerns and speculations with regards to contemporary productions of Arctic imaginaries.

333 In 2014, Herta Grøndal donated more than 12,000 photographs to the University Museum in Tromsø, where most of them have been digitized. In the museum's archive, however, the photographs are labelled "Herta Lampert" on her instructions.

Grøndal's Film and Svalbard in the 1970s

In the 1970s, Svalbard underwent several changes; during this period, the Norwegian government actively started initiatives to "normalize"[334] Longyearbyen, intending it to become comparable to industrial communities on mainland Norway.[335]

But even more immediately intrusive was the Environmental Protection Act, instituted by the Norwegian government in 1973, which was followed by legislation in 1974 to explicitly recognize the human layers of the Arctic environment as cultural heritage.[336] While attention had already been paid to the need for the protection of individual species, entire biotopes and areas were now protected as nature reserves and cultural heritage, reflecting the period's political agenda regarding environmental issues. But the protection was legislated within a context of nationally driven motives to strengthen protection measures.[337] Both the Environmental Protection Act of 1973 and the following emphasis on cultural heritage were significantly motivated by the Norwegian

334 The Norwegian government's white paper of 1999–2000 explicitly speaks of the successful normalization of Svalbard. (St. meld. no. 9 1999–2000, 3.5.)

335 The establishment of an airport in January 1975 was invaluable for Svalbard's communities, no longer as isolated as they had been. Another important component of the so-called normalization process was the Norwegian state taking a stake in Store Norske Spitsbergen Kulkompagni; after this, state activities in Longyearbyen increased. In 1976, school operations passed to the state. From January 1981, the state took over the operation of the hospital and the health services. Changes on Svalbard have continued rapidly ever since, with SNSK divided into divisions and subsidiaries eventually taken over by the state: Svalbard Samfundsdrift A.S (SSD) and Svalbard Næringsudvikling (SNU), for example, nationalized in 1993 (arkivverket.no).

336 Since then, several more natural parks have been legislated into existence with the purpose of maintaining "a virtually untouched environment in Svalbard with respect to continues areas of wilderness, landscape, flora, fauna and cultural heritage" (Svalbardmiljøloven 2001, paragraph 1).

337 As Avango and Pedersen note, the Norwegian government's urge to increase influence had much to do with the context of the Cold War, and that both Russian and American companies were involved in oil prospecting around the archipelago ("Heritage, Conservation, and the Geopolitics of Svalbard: Writing the History of Arctic Environments," 141).

government's ambition to increase its influence on Svalbard.[338] The foundation was laid for the transition from company town to "state town"[339] – culminating in 2015 when the state became the owner of 100% of SNSK's shares, alongside other measures to the further continuing Norwegianization.[340]

Hence, *Naturrikdom og Kuldrift på 78N*, a film commissioned by SNSK to portray coal work and coal workers in Longyerabyen, shot by Grøndal in the early 1970s, testifies to a period when it was crucial to create images and tales of and about a life in rapid change: to promote Longyearbyen as the coal company town, just as it was about to become something else altogether.

This recalls Bang's films from the 1930s documenting the traditional way of life in Greenland. Similar to the way *Inuit*, decades after its premiere, was given a voiceover and distributed widely in the context of the rapidly changing relationship between Denmark and Greenland, current trends in the production of Svalbard (if we can call it that) prompt renewed interest

338 In "Heritage, Conservation, and the Geopolitics of Svalbard: Writing the History of Arctic Environments," Avango and Roberts argue that "cultural heritage protection legislation, as well as subsequent laws which strengthened these protection measures, should be understood as a continuation of Norway's environmental policy, and articulations of the same motives" – policies which in turn were supported by the mining company as they basically "shared a common aim of constructing the material legacies as resources for both symbolic and practical benefit" (134).

339 https://svalbardposten.no/nyheter/det-er-en-state-town-fordi-longyearbyen-styres-av-staten/19.14217.

340 The Norwegian government's intent to Norwegianize Svalbard is currently being stated more clearly than ever, of course, with its recent proposal that resident nationals of countries other than Norway should be restricted from voting for the local council in Longyearbyen without having lived on the mainland of Norway for a minimum of three years. But it has a long history, going back to Norway's attempt to secure sovereignty over Svalbard in the early nineteenth century. See, for example Roald Berg, "From 'Spitsbergen' to 'Svalbard'. Norwegianization in Norway and in the 'Norwegian Sea', 1820–1925," *Acta Borealia* 30, no. 2 (2013): 154–73.

in Herta's archival films. With SNSK's recent desire to disseminate the history of Svalbard's historic coal, the meaning of Grøndal's photographs and commissioned films shifts. As research, infrastructure and tourism become new modes of value creation and important new strategic investments, they become a means to break with the past in a manifestation of a (new) Anthropocene consciousness in the present. The recently designed online database on the history of SNSK offers an example: here, coal extraction in Svea is described in the past tense.[341]

Following my discussion regarding the redevelopment of old infrastructures on Svalbard, and the kind of narratives these processes are put to the work of telling, Grøndal's films, then, may be considered more than specific, interesting, components in these processes; they are examples of the ways in which films describe the present of their creation in being past anticipations of the future. This is not only a matter of a kind of "politics of remembering"[342] but a politics of the affective aspect of the aesthetical quality of these films. That is, in the media scholar Ina Bloom's formulation, "the kind of unconscious bodily impulses which pull us forward towards new horizons, new relations, new thoughts,"[343] since these kinds of forces directly connect us to the present as it constantly unfolds – or to future realities produced from the affective surplus of that which already exists.[344] Moreover, this further implies a space for financialization – strategic investments in experiential/cinematic expositions – to play a complex role with regards to geo-aesthetical relations in the production of futurity through imaginaries of the past.[345]

341 https://www.snsk.no/historie

342 I am here explicitly thinking of how the media scholar Bernard Stiegler has addressed a politics of forgetting in media capitalism; of course, this connects to discourses on cultural politics of memory at large.

343 Ina Bloom, "Informasjon, maskiner og estetikk," in *Mediecæstetik: en introduktion*, ed. Jacob Lund and Ulrik Schmidt, 2020, 32. (my translation)

344 Bloom, "Informasjon, maskiner og estetikk," 32.

345 I am aware that I am touching upon a much larger discussion here with regards to the role of media industries in the production of subjectivity through perceptual and affective processes, and how these are driven by finance capitalism towards the potentiality of being able to foresee and hence exploit "future" experiences and action patterns. See, for example, Maurizio Lazzarato, "From Capital-Labour to Capital-Life," *Ephemera* 3, no. 4 (2004): 187–208.

In the following I will unpack a set of methodological considerations in navigating geo-aesthetical relations, when also understood as productive relations within the conditions of cinema. This entails a mode of essaying, in the sense of "trying something out," rather than any investment in the improvement of idealized image-making. How are we to work with filmic grammar in a way which unsettles the scope of producing, say, a "great" film, "great" knowledge, "great" art? How are we to produce an artistic experimentality which, rather, sets in motion a mode of political analysis?

The Atmosphere Endangered and Endangering

Far from Svalbard, but equally reflective of increasing concerns with environmental issues, or with their radicalization, a huge conference was held in October 1975, bringing together several of the most prominent climate scientists at the time, among them William Welch Kellogg and James Lovelock.[346] Among them also was the legendary anthropologist Margaret Mead. In fact, Mead was a key figure in the conference's organization; subsequently, she wrote an essay and preface to a collection of proceedings from the conference: *The Atmosphere: Endangered and Endangering*.[347] Discussing the planet's climate from an anthropological perspective, Mead argues for the need to understand human societies as a whole. Her focus in the essay is on interactions between humans and the Earth's atmosphere.

Mead's essay is an early example of a later widespread and cross disciplinary focus. In revealing the fact that the world's climate scientists knew forty-five years ago what has become so

346 See: Emil Leth Meilvang, "Den fælles Sfære," in *Ny jord: Tidsskrift for naturkritik*, 2020.

347 This was also the title of the scientific report.

urgent today, Mead's essay precisely speaks to a key concern with the ways in which skilled practices relate to the huge environmental crisis Mead understood in 1975.

More specifically, and when concerned primarily with anthropological and artistic practices, Mead and Gregory Bateson's black and white anthropological films – low resolution digitalized versions of *Trance and Dance in Bali* available on YouTube, for example – are fascinating to watch in reflecting an early version of ethnographic filmmaking; doing so, they express the colonial legacy marking much visual anthropology of the kind. These films are criticized for applying a "fly on the wall" approach, suggesting the possibility of a correspondence between scholarly representations – whether in film or writing – and the social world;[348] such reactions emerged in tandem with media philosophical debates fundamentally recontextualizing Mead and Bateson's early collaboration. In fact, Mead's 1975 essay reminds me of this convergence, and how it speaks to the methodology of post-future essayism that I propose. There is a productive tension between Mead as a pioneer in the use of film and photography in ethnographic research and as a pioneer in studies of visual communication: contemporary debate concerning the role of the observer in relation to cultural metanarratives informs my methodological attempts of geo-aesthetical navigation. A fundamental question remains: is it possible to know differently?

Hence, both as theoretical references and as individuals with a specific relationship, Mead and Bateson are conversation partners in my attempt to re-invent the essayistic, as far as they help me see the colonial legacy of ethnographic films as being largely a concern with the political ecology of knowledge production overall. Following their collaboration in Bali, Mead and Bateson came to hold significantly different positions with regard to the agency of the camera apparatus. In their discussions about these

348 Christian Suhr and Rane Willerslev, eds., *Transcultural Montage* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 8; Anna Grimshaw, "From Observational Cinema to Participatory Cinema – and Back Again? David Macdougall and the Doon School Project," *Visual Anthropology Review* 18, no. 1–2 (2002): 80–93.

differences, questions of the camera's colonial legacy were left, remarkably, unasked. In retrospect this makes the two more interesting with regards to questions of editing, where editing is understood as a compositing of both political and social matter (and not simply as a technique in an editing studio).[349] And it cements their significance to my proposal of post-future essayism. Founded upon a preoccupation with the traditional figures of the artist/scientist in knowledge production, this is a question of the essayistic aspect of the essay film in relation to a disciplinary concern with knowledge in anthropology.[350]

Anthropological Film

Recalling how early travel films from/about the Arctic (and distant geographies in general) were not simply regarded as having entertainment value but as records of Western geographical and anthropological knowledge, linear explanations and ideas of representational transmissions have remained associated with ethnographic film for much of the last century. It is worth recognizing, however, that what constitutes an ethnographic film has been debated for as long as the genre has been recognized, and that its authority has never been unchallenged.

At the one end of a continuum of opinions in terms of definitions, it has been argued that "in the broadest sense, most films are ethnographic … made by people and therefore say something

349 The main theoretical focus within visual anthropology has for some time been "the objective versus the subjective perspective of the anthropologist-filmmaker as sole creator" (Richard Stern, "Collaborative Ethnographic Film: A Workshop Case Study," *McNair Scholars Online Journal* 5, no. 1 (2011): 231–55). But the suggestion is that Mead and Bateson, as a pair in conversation, express the intermediary position that the very field of anthropology occupies territory between science and the humanities (Kelly Michelle Askew and Richard R. Wilk, eds., *The Anthropology of Media: A Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002)).

350 For a discussion on the essayistic, see: Elizabeth A. Papazian and Caroline Eades, eds., *The Essay Film: Dialogue, Politics, Utopia*, Nonfictions (New York: Wallflower Press, 2016).

about the culture of the individuals who made them"[351] – and, of course, use them; at the other end of this continuum it has been argued that only films made by professional anthropologists about their field research should be called "ethnographic." Anthropological films are not necessarily the same as films produced under the rubric of visual anthropology emerging in the latter half of the twenty-first century as a subfield in the scientific discipline of anthropology.[352] This is a subfield explicitly committed to questions of epistemology, which is to say knowledge production. It is worth noting that Mead and Bateson's collaborative studies in the 1940s are commonly cited as a major starting point.

Dissatisfaction with the authority of classical anthropology from within the field of visual anthropology associated with empiricist positivism is decades old. This dissatisfaction draws on claims made by critical film theorists that films do not represent time and movement (think again of early Arctic films), but, rather, produce time and movement: the film is not the event.[353] The practical side of Deleuze's contribution to the theory of film montage[354] has been crucial to the field and in developing critical strategies of, for example, "transcultural montage" – "the capacity of montage in transcending the boundaries of culture," and the title of a wide-ranging anthology edited by the visual anthropologists Christian Suhr and Rane Willerslev.[355]

351 Marcus Banks and Jay Ruby, *Made to Be Seen: Perspectives on the History of Visual Anthropology* (University of Chicago Press, 2011).

352 This is how Banks and Ruby distinguish between anthropologists and anthropological image creators in *Made to Be Seen*. Hence, they also account for the ways in which anthropology emerged as a scientific field in parallel with technological devices and ideas of objective, accurate, and complete methods of ethnographic studies.

353 M. Lazzarato, *Videophilosophy: The Perception of Time in Post-Fordism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

354 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986).

355 Suhr and Willerslev, *Transcultural Montage*, 2.

The implicit challenge is how to navigate/tackle the colonial legacy of the "problem of epistemology." Or how "an ideally non-colonial ethnography would remain challenged with the constant paradox of wanting to comprehend and describe the Other, while avoiding imperious claims of having comprehended and described the other," as Karen Lisa Salomon writes in her contribution to Suhr and Willerslev's anthology.[356]

The kind of post-future essayism I am proposing, however, offers the implication of a possible re-consideration – or re-framing – of the disruptive power of montage, even if it arguably remains a threat to scholarly representations of the social world. Post-future essayism is more concerned with the production of social experience of lived time alongside technological time and time-critical processes.[357] Post-future essayism, in other words, has a bearing on the ways in which I have repeatedly sought to consider how the Arctic is constantly produced; how the circulation of images and narratives constitutes representations. Considered an "imaginary geography," Svalbard is a space perceived through specific imagery, texts, and discourses that have helped the Arctic gain consistency as a political body and figuration over the

356 Salamon herself uses textual montage to assemble voices from different periods so they may speak about the same phenomena and establish a sense of dialogue across time without claiming synthesis. Hence montage becomes a strategy to "mind the gap" between people's different experience, as she puts it. Salamon, "Mind the Gap."

357 Alongside the idea of media as elementary, a materialistic media approach "refers to the necessity to analyze media technologies as something that are irreducible to what we think of them or even how we use them. [Media materialism] has come to refer to technology as an active agent in the ontological and epistemological sense. In other words, media structures how things are in the world and how things are known in the world", as Jussi Parikka writes in *A Geology of Media*, 1. This understanding (of a relationship between reasoning and technology) draws on a media analysis that considers unnoticed techniques of knowledge important to developments in cultural and intellectual history by turning the Foucauldian "historical *a priori"* into a "technical *a priori*" (by comparing the Foucauldian "archive" to media technologies). A link is thereby established between media and changes in knowledge and perception (see Knut Ove Eliassen, "Mediearkeologi," in *Medieæstetik: en introduktion* (2020), 41–62).

last century.[358] In the meantime, however, the label has changed: no longer synonymous with Cold War politics, the Arctic has become a virtual synecdoche for a climate equally endangered and endangering.

Theodor Adorno declared the death of montage as far back as the 1960s: "The principle of montage was supposed to shock people into realizing just how dubious any organic unity was. Now that the shock has lost its punch, the products of montage revert to being indifferent stuff. The method of montage has therefore been neutralized."[359] Suhr and Willerslev, meanwhile, claim that contemporary use of montage offers far more than any capacity to shock, and point at its ability "to push social theory beyond the visible and into the uncharted regions of the invisible."[360] As far as live editing is concerned, more is at stake than the disclosure of the fiction of cultural representation, and live editing is itself, of course, a montage strategy with a history (I will come back to this).[361] Montage thus covers a principle in editing hard to delimit. Elements are juxtaposed; "framing" takes place, instantaneously and within the frame itself, so to speak; and representation is situated as an effect of technology.

358 That is, the process of drawing boundaries through language and images, of what belongs inside and outside the Arctic and of selecting features advocated as "genuine for the region." Frank Sejersen, *Rethinking Greenland and the Arctic in the Era of Climate Change: New Northern Horizons* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, Earthscan, 2015), 8; Keskitalo, "International Region-Building."

359 Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, The International Library of Phenomenology and Moral Sciences (Boston: Routledge, 1984), 223.

360 Suhr and Willerslev also emphasise how tensions of montage have implications for modes of collaboration, allowing the reader-viewer, to insert their own images and to take an active part in the formation of meaning (*Transcultural Montage*, 2).

361 There seems to be an interesting connection between collaborative ethnographies as anthropological research methodology and collaborative live editing as montage strategy. Thus, a mapping of the history of live editing as a montage strategy could be interesting to look into – for example, by looking at different kinds of documentations of such editing events, with focus on their aesthetics, ethics and politics.

Being a basic filmic grammar, and like all grammar essential to the production of meaning, montage connects disciplinary concerns in anthropology with debates on the essay film as an effect of artistic practice. That is, widely theorized as a cinema of thought, the essay film, as the essay film scholar Laura Racaroli has written, precisely brings to the fore "issues of effect and of functioning, rather than of essence."[362]

Why, then, post-future essayism? And how can it be thought to contest received notions of "montage"?

Post-Future Essayism

I was trained as a visual artist in the first decade of the millennium, at a time when the essay re-emerged as a promising strategy for reflexive approaches towards an increasingly complexified media environment. Or, towards the I+environment. The essay film offered a mode of relating in a networked reality, with technologies increasingly understood to be entangled with the human brain and subjectivity to be an effect of this entanglement.[363]

A genre disregarded by scholarly study for decades, the re-emergence of the essay film is reflected in the many books and publications published on the form since the turn of the millennium. Consequently, it is worthwhile acknowledging an increasing concern, even a sense of fatigue, with the essay film becoming a genre-label celebrated by the "industry"[364] in a way that resonates with Adorno's declaration that "the products of montage revert to being indifferent stuff."[365] Hito Steyerl, for example, has questioned the continuous radicality of the essay within contemporary cultural production: "Has the essay as form been replaced by the

362 Laura Rascaroli, in *How the Essay Film Thinks*, (Oxford University Press, 2017), 15.

363 I am here thinking of the importance of the writings of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.

364 Elsaesser, "The Essay Film."

365 Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*.

essay as conformism? Or to put it more carefully: has the essay become a dominant form of [post]-narrative in times of post-Fordist globalization?" She further suggests that "the essay as form no longer necessarily meddles with standardized and homogenous identities. Instead, it runs parallel to the post-Fordist coercion of difference, mobility, extreme flexibilization, and distracted modes of attention, whose ideal subjectivity is hybrid and supple."[366]

One might respond by claiming it worthwhile to understand the essay film as a historical genre now becoming obsolete, subsumed by new hybrid media forms and genres of all kinds. These are genres of visual practice better suited to tackling, and politicizing, the current conditions for visual production.

One might equally respond by engaging with the notion of the essayistic in a way less about seeking definitions of the film essay as genre and more about identifying precisely what we might consider "essayistic" about it. Rather than entering into long debates on what characterises an essay film, and whether or not one ought to define this as a genre in the first place, the film scholar Luka Arsenjuk has proposed an understanding of the essay film as a place within the conditions of cinema, in relation to which the essayistic as such is to be understood as the "desire to emancipate these conditions themselves."[367] Hence, this is a formulation that allows for the reconsideration of older films, historically designated other labels, as essayistic.[368]

Considering post-future essayism as an attempt to mark out a distinct position in relation to the essay film, I'm drawn to the latter response.

As a methodological term, post-future essayism is not about the completion of a film as much as it is about process and practice – in this case, the emancipatory potential of knowing differently.

366 Hito Steyerl, "The Essay as Conformism? Some Notes on Global Image Economies (2011)," in *Essays on the Essay Film*, ed. Nora M. Alter and Timothy Corrigan (Columbia University Press, 2017), 276–86.

367 Arsenjuk, "To Speak, To Hold, To Live By The Image,'" 275–76.

368 Papazian and Eades, *The Essay Film*.

Post-future essayism is less occupied with any striving for the individual expression of envisioned futures than with participation in history while it unfolds – with the production of an experimentality through which to engender futures (in the plural) while, and because, they are lived together. Post-future essayism recognizes futurology both as political struggle and as an attempt to unsettle the function of the essayist in its current cultural configuration (a question of the authority of the artist as a productive subject). It is not, then, a tool with which to escape authorship (the essayist embodies the productive subject, both ideologically and practically) but a self-affective means with which to establish the conditions for something to happen. In post-future essayism as experimental film practice, the production of relations is not limited to linear constructions of images; it is an embrace of recursivity and overlapping temporalities.

Precisely tracing the essayistic "not within a fixed generic form but within a method of filmic thinking that exists and thrives in gaps,"[369] Rascaroli believes the essay film's "fortune and expansion" is owed to its "untimely" quality.[370] Acknowledging the changing socio-cultural context of the last decades, Rascaroli writes of the 1960s, specifically, as a turning-point marked by a general desire for increased participation, democracy, and self-expression; in the period since then

> the essay has continued to be at the core of critical nonfiction produced by oppositional, postcolonial, accented, exiled, feminist, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer subjects, among others, precisely because it is the most direct embodiment of the dream of a cinema of personal and critical expression, unencumbered by the constraints of systemic production, and better suited to escape the control of all forms of censorship.[371]

369 Laura Rascaroli, *How the Essay Film Thinks*, 21.

370 Rascaroli, 2.

371 Rascaroli, 5.

Technology, then, is key to the political significance of the essay film as a sort of cinema of the future; Rascaroli goes as far as to consider the possibility of "the essay film as future philosophy" (an idea she adapts from writings on the written essay).[372]

For Rascaroli it is fundamentally the essay's untimeliness that ensures its anachronistic character; she emphasizes the essay film as disjunctive practice, articulating the process of thinking *with*, *through* and *from within* gaps and discontinuities as effects of montage. This accounts for the form's political value (I will return to this later). In relation to an outline of post-future essayism as a methodological term, it is worth noting that Rascaroli links the significance of the essay film to the introduction of digital technology; if this resonates with the idea of this form offering the possibility of relating in a networked reality, it is surely an account relevant to our current predicament. "With its wide availability, portability, ease of manipulation, and suitability for the new channels of distribution and consumption of alternative audiovisual products, [new digital technology] provides the tools to make and share personal, unorthodox, idiosyncratic forms of audiovisual expression more readily than ever before,"[373] Rascaroli writes.

In this milieu, then, I take seriously Walter Benjamin's idea that, in very material ways, new and particular media shape perception, formally register and document the world, and affect the ways in which we are able to think, feel and know.[374] As the media philosopher Friedrich Kittler has posited, there is a discontinuity in the history of media; the potential of any media technology is not given in and of itself – such technologies are not revolutionary inventions added to an evolutionary

372 More precisely Racaroli adopts the idea from Michelle Boulous Walker, *Slow Philosophy : Reading against the Institution* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

373 Laura Rascaroli, *How the Essay Film Thinks*, 4.

374 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations* (London: Penguin Books, 2015), 217–52.

progression towards knowing more, but historical effects in larger media environments making a more profound difference.[375] In terms of media-technological epistemes, technics changes everything. What is at stake, then, is not an idealized version of the essay film but future ways of thinking historically about the essayistic. Post-future essayism is an experimentality contingent on a broader field of cultural practice.

For God's Sake Margaret

Margaret Mead insisted herself as a conversation partner in my speculative exploration of post-future essayism when I stumbled upon her 1975 essay on the atmosphere. A year after her involvement in the scientific climate conference, in March of 1976, Mead and Gregory Bateson met for a rare, and now famous, joint interview in Bateson's home near Santa Cruz, California. Initiated by the writer Stewart Brand, himself best known as the founder and publisher of magazine and catalogue *The Whole Earth Catalogue,*[376] the interview was published in an issue involved with the development of Earth system sciences.[377]

In the interview, Mead and Bateson reflect on their ethnographic collaboration in the 1930s and 1940s as a prerequisite for their joint contribution to the Macy Conferences (1947–53) – a series of symposia on scientific subjects now recognised as instrumental in the formulation of cybernetics. The field of

375 Kittler understands technological changes to be discontinuous ruptures in how material and technological systems are part of structural and discursive modes of thinking. In this sense, Kittler not only points at how formal modes of registering and recording are deeply entangled with all kinds of social, political, institutional, and psychological states and relationships, but also to how these historically can be thought of in terms of media or technology; as "discourse networks" (Friedrich A. Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

376 The Whole Earth Catalogue was published several times a year between 1968 and 1972.

377 The interview was titled "For God's Sake, Margaret," and published in Brand's *CoEvolutionary Quarterly* (21), no. 10 (1976): 32–44).

cybernetics was to provide a framework for Mead and Bateson's earlier research concerned with *relations*, as far as it importantly and fundamentally included the relationship between the observer and the observed.[378] Following World War II, the status of "the visible evidence"/testimony began to falter (in parallel with disputes of assumptions about scientific truth and state authority)[379] and as a subcategory of documentary film, ethnography thus gained a major stake in cinematic realism.[380] That is, a proliferation of reflexive documentaries of different kinds and styles killed ethnography's bond with the real, or, at least, the (traditional ethnographic) assumption of the camera recording a

378 In being concerned with and focused on the relationship between the observer and the observed, the formulation of cybernetics arguably played an interesting role in revolutionizing visual anthropology, by way of mobilizing a politicization of the production of knowledge. This was revolutionary as far as modernist frameworks of scientific inquiry historically were constructed so as to ignore the observer; cybernetics emphasized a comprehension of the relationship between observer and observed as concrete positions formed by technological possibilities. For a discussion on this see: Katherine N. Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

379 The filmmaker Eyal Sivan has claimed that the documentary practice was reborn after the Second World War after it died in the hands of totalizing powers during the 1930s and 1940s. More particularly, Sivan points to the Nuremberg Trials of 1945 as a crucial moment, when a cinema screen was built in a courtroom for the first time. A film shot as Allied troops liberated the concentration camps was presented as evidence during the trial and images were in this way given the role of political legal forensic evidence. Hence, Sivan's claim is precisely that documentary practice is reborn not in a scientific sense, but in a sense requiring us to consider that we rely on documentary fiction in order to write history; Sivan cites the French philosopher Marie-José Mondzain's assertion that in order to manufacture truth, we rely on human descriptions; see Erika Balsom and Hila Peleg, eds., *Documentary across Disciplines* (Cambridge, MA: The Mit Press, 2016); Marie-José Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Imaginary*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2005).

380 Catherine Russell, *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video* (Duke University Press, 1999), 12.

truthful reality "out there": a reality distinct from the viewer and the filmmaker's camera.[381]

Mead insists there remains potential in the use of a still camera; it is productive to exploit opportunity and chance, she insists, by using the camera to record something occurring in a particular instant. Bateson, on the other hand, insists that it is useful to use the camera in the pursuit of his own interests, much more openly involved in the data produced.

The two positions evinced in Brand's interview map out a balance between chance and control – a nexus running similarly both through my practice with live editing and through certain conceptualizations of guiding. In other words, Mead and Bateson's positions can serve a creative consideration of the essay film reinvented according to the possibilities afforded by ambitious visual anthropology. This is a visual anthropology conscious of its role in the production of knowledge, historically, and so capable of an essayistic mode in which filmic practices may unfold political meaning in the instant. Producing it is a matter of considering the relationship between the image as testimony and the image as historical effect and the political and aesthetical implications of re-circulating historical records/re-writing historical practices – and thus the role of the observer in relation to technology in the lives and afterlives of film and film archives. Can post-future essayism articulate a methodological navigation of a spectre of chance and control?[382]

381 Filmmakers such as Trinh Minh-ha, for example, have critiqued ethnographic films for implying a division of the world "out there" (the subjects of ethnography) and those "in here" (the audience in a darkened space, looking at them), and for perpetuating a so-called Cartesian duality between mind and matter. That is, while the Other is objectified, the filmmaker and his or her audience are subjects of perception; see: T. Minh-Ha Trinh, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

382 This comes close to the idea of a method being a practice that articulates as much as it captures a social problem, and hence to the notion of compositional methodology, or methodological exercising as a mode of articulating a "problem space." See Celia Lury, *Problem Spaces: How and Why Methodology Matters* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021).

Essay Film

Defined in 1940 by the experimental filmmaker Hans Richter as "a new type of documentary," the essay film is, interestingly, a form surrounded by debate closely echoing that surrounding the anthropological film. As a kind of filmmaking allowing the filmmaker "to transgress the rules and parameters of the traditional documentary practice, granting the imagination with all its artistic potentiality free reign,"[383] the essay film's changing forms promised a subjective, reflexive and "unmethodical method" and thus licensed its critical potential, as Adorno notes in relation to the notion of the literary essay. That the essayistic is characterized by an unmethodical method is not to imply that the essay form is random; it suggests, rather, that the essay allows for configurations of ideas and arguments outside a given aesthetic and logical order. Or, as Adorno has it in *The Essay as Form*, "the essay is what it was from the beginning, the critical form … it is critique of ideology"; more explicitly, he continues "the essay approaches the logic of music, that stringent and yet a conceptual art of transition, in order to appropriate for verbal language something it forfeited under the domination of discursive logic."[384]

I understand this not unlike the way in which the filmmaker Kodwo Eshun of the Otolith Group has stated his approach. "To me," he says, "the essayistic is not about a particular generic fascination for voiceover or montage, the essayistic is dissatisfaction, it's discontent with the duties of an image and the obligations of a sound."[385] For Eshun, the essayistic, then, marks out a stance, an irritation and frustration with the documentary's presumed

383 Theodor W. Adorno, "The Essay as Form (1958)," in *Essays on the Essay Film* (Columbia University Press, 2017), 22.

384 Adorno, 80.

385 Nina Power, "Waiting for the Future," *Frieze*, 2010, https://www.frieze.com/article/waiting-future.

authority and "forensic aspirations to truth-seeking, or its moral self-righteousness."[386] Similarly, Harun Faroki once described his practice as "images commenting on images,"[387] showing how "moving images on their own contain potential to shed critical light on themselves,"[388] when driven by a structure/process of thought, however apparently hidden or imperceptible at first glance.

While Richter's early definition and avant-guard/surrealist approach is a frequent reference, it is worth noticing that the essay film is more often considered a post-war phenomenon. Improvements in camera technology, synchronised sound and altered conceptions of the contemporary documentary allowed for a wide ranging experimentality in the emerging field of audiovisual practice.[389] In his 1948 film "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde, La Camera-Stylo," Alexander Astruc provides a seductive pronouncement on the cinematic possibilities that would come to lay the groundwork for Rascaroli's approach to the essayistic as a filmic method of thinking in the instant ("Thanks to new technologies, the possibility of using the camera as a pen, and of producing a fully personal cinécriture, has become much less utopian today than when Astruc coined the term "caméra-stylo," writes Rascaroli).[390] Claiming the new age of cinema to be the age of the *camera-stylo*, Astruc asserted that "the cinema will gradually break free from the tyranny of what is visual, from the image for its own sake, from the immediate and concrete demands of the narrative, to become a means of writing just as flexible and subtle as written language," able to tackle any subject,

386 Elsaesser, "The Essay Film," 246.

387 Sven Lütticken, "Images Commenting on Images: On Harun Farocki at Museum Ludwig, Cologne, and Raven Row, London," *Texte Zur Kunst*, no. 77 (2010): 155–58.

388 Kevin B. Lee, "Video Essay/The Essay Film: Some Thoughts of Discontent," *Otherzine*, 2016, http://www.othercinema.com/otherzine/2940-2/.

389 Timothy Corrigan, *The Essay Film: From Montaigne, after Marker* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

390 Laura Rascaroli, *How the Essay Film Thinks*, 5.

any genre. Astruc even went as far as to say that "contemporary ideas and philosophies of life are such that only the cinema can do justice to them."[391]

Largely drawing from the ways in which the essay film has used formal means in seeking to change habits of perceptions and to foster criticality towards images since the period of the early avant-garde filmmakers in the 1920s,[392] post-future essayism thus take up this agenda as a critical and historical stance and an ethics of an experimentality, rather than as a concern with a medium specific materiality.

Experimentality

Astruc's contemporary Maya Deren offers a beautiful account of investment in the pursuit of experimentation, indicating how shifts in new technology coincide with shifts in concepts of cinematic subjectivity.[393] In her text *Magic is New*, she relates how she needs to ask for a license in order to be able to use a tripod while filming in Central Park in New York.[394] The problem Deren faced is that a tripod is considered a tool of professional – meaning commercial – filmmaking. In order to get such a license, she must give a proper explanation of the kind of film she is making and how it is not commercial. Lacking any acceptable label for the kind of film she wishes to make, however, she is instead asked about the purpose of her film, and – failing to answer that successfully too – she is asked what the film is about. Again failing, she is finally asked why she wishes to film at all. By the end of her account, Deren states that after three years

391 Alexandre Astruc, "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde, La Camera-Stylo," in *Film and Literature: An Introduction and Reader*, ed. Timothy Corrigan (Upper Saddle River, N.J: Prentice Hall, 1999).

392 Thomas Elsaesser, "The Essay Film," 245.

393 Corrigan, *The Essaay Film*.

394 Maya Deren, "Magic Is New," in *Red Velvet Seat: Women's Writings on the First Fifty Years of Cinema* (New York: Verso, 2006).

and five films "I still had no succinct term or formula to describe their nature."[395] In the legacy of experimental film, Deren's work precisely constitutes an exploration of the medium of film rather than the fulfilment of a preconceived goal; a fascination with "precisely those aspects and methods of cinema which are as yet undefined and rarely exploited. I am concerned with it as a creative art form, and so I have tried to work as an artist, and independently of all the terminology, methods and institutions which are already established," as she put it herself in the 1946 text.[396]

What is interesting in pointing to Deren's experimentality is the sense of inspiration that she takes from the historical concern with a clear definition of visual anthropology in seeking a new cinematic language – a new magic! While offering a different kind of register, her experimentality discloses tensions and contradictions between different "orders" of epistemology[397] at stake in filmmaking as analysis. Thus, in *Trane and Dance in Bali*, for example, Mead and Bateson's twenty-minute film on possession rituals which indeed inspired Deren's work – there are cinematic moments that overpower the scientific language of Mead's voiceover; what they reveal is at odds with Mead's discursive and analytical presence as she explains the ritual. The point – or perhaps the irony – is that while Mead embodies the visual anthropologist's colonial gaze par excellence, setting with Bateson an early standard for observational film theory,[398] the "problems" of filming a possession ritual enacts a self-critical position in terms of how concerns with "content" (as the defining characteristic), relate to questions of "production," "intention" and "method," crucial to a critical tradition of possession films in the discipline

395 Deren, 226.

396 Deren, 226.

397 Faye Ginsburg, "The Parallax Effect: The Impact of Aboriginal Media on Ethnographic Film," *Visual Anthropology Review* 11, no. 2 (September 1995): 64–76.

398 Stern, "Collaborative Ethnographic Film." See also: Marcus Banks and Howard Morphy, eds., *Rethinking Visual Anthropology* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1999).

of visual anthropology from its inception. Effectively, *Trance and Dance* came to play a role in the avant-garde film world, with films made by Deren in response as primary examples, and for what has also been discussed as "ecstatic ethnography."[399]

Deren's experience in Central Park further testifies to the ways in which shifts in technology are important for the configuration of the essay film and for the role of the essayistic alike in expanding debates on visual anthropology to a wider field of visual culture. That is, in paying attention to historical shifts in media technologies, a historical lineage of ethnographic film as a critical category (attached to concerns with knowledge production largely drawn from anthropology as a science) can be combined with a historical lineage of experimental film practices; these can be considered as a discrete critical category possessed of a different set of concerns drawn from the domain of modernism.[400] In *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video*, Catherine Russell does precisely that, detecting a formal mode of cultural critique through the ways in which experimentality brings to ethnography "a laboratory in which the politics of representation and the conventions of observational cinema are brought under scrutiny."[401] Ethnography, meanwhile, brings to Russell's reading of experimentality (particularly of the early avant-garde) a recognition that what occurs in this "laboratory" is more than a mere formal play. These experiments imply a cultural investment and socio-political positioning. To Russell, experimental ethnography is not a category of film or filmic practice but a methodological "incursion on aesthetics of cultural representation."[402]

Mead and Bateson cannot agree on the appropriate use of the camera. And, rhyming with Maya Deren in Central Park, nor can they agree on the appropriate use of the tripod.

399 Russell, *Experimental Ethnography*, 193.
400 Russell, *Experimental Ethnography*.
401 Russell, 12.
402 Russell, xi.

B: […] it should be off the tripod.
M: So you run around.
B: Yes.
M: And therefore you've introduced a variation into it that is unnecessary.
B: I therefore got the information out that I thought was relevant at the time.
M: That's right. And therefore what do you see later?
B: If you put the damn thing on a tripod, you don't get any relevance.
M: No, you get what happened.
B: It isn't what happened.
M: I don't want people leaping around thinking that a profile at this moment would be beautiful.
B: I wouldn't want beautiful.
M: Well, what's the leaping around for?
B: To get what's happening.
M: What you think is happening.

Under discussion is the impact of the increasing recognition of film as an artistic medium – "manipulated to reveal some things in greater detail," as Bateson has it – on the kind of distinction, discussed earlier, between visual anthropologists and anthropological image creators.[403] Thus, in visual anthropology the concern is explicit: filmmaking has always been an aesthetic and affective practice, and ethnographic film, thus, always in danger of becoming art.[404] Experimental ethnographic practices risk

403 In *Trance and Dance in Bali* the filmed situation is anything but authentic, commissioned, as it was, for Mead's 36th birthday and a combination of two possession rituals put together for tourist production.
404 David Macdougall, "Beyond Observational Cinema," in *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, ed. Paul Hockings (Boston: De Gruyter, 1995). See also Anna Grimshaw, "From Observational Cinema to Participatory Cinema – and Back Again? David Macdougall and the Doon School Project," *Visual Anthropology Review* 18, no. 1–2 (2002): 80–93; Russell, *Experimental Ethnography*.

confusing the experiential knowledge of the culturally constituted with whom the anthropologist-filmmaker may be doing film; they risk that the traditionally dominant approach of observational cinema, with the anthropologist as a sole author, simply continues, albeit in a new form.[405]

Meanwhile, the danger that I am trying to navigate as a proponent of post-future essayism is that of the image as an end point – of ideas of artistic methodologies as a means to achieve a given goal. The urge is rather to catalyse thinking; to reconfigure conventional distinctions between knowledge producers and knowledge recipients, as it were.

Temporary and Shifting Grounds

Following the back and forth on the appropriate use of the camera, cited above, Mead and Bateson come to talk about a famous study by Sol Worth and John Adair called *Through Navajo Eyes*,[406] a study often considered the first of its kind in implicitly considering the interaction between film-subject and audience. Hence, Bateson uses the 1966 film *Intrepid Shadows* – an outcome of Worth and Adair's larger research project – by the Navajo artist Alfred Clah as an example of an artistic form, while Mead sees the film as a record of Clah's technique at the time, expressing a contemporary concern with the ways in which the use of a camera conveys something of cultural significance.[407]

405 As canonical figures in anthropology, Mead and Bateson ultimately fashion an understanding of collaboration precisely centred on the anthropologist-filmmaker rather than an inclusion of cultural constituents as integral to research design and execution. See Stern, "Collaborative Ethnographic Film."

406 https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/catalog/FRANKLIN_9922021743503681

407 This is the later prominent concern of media anthropologists such as Faya Ginsburg, Terence Turner and Eric Michaels. See for example: Faye Ginsburg, "Indigenous Media: Faustian Contract or Global Village?," *Cultural Anthropology* 6, no. 1 (1991): 92–112; Terence Turner, "Defiant Images: The Kayapo Appropriation of Video," *Anthropology Today* 8, no. 6 (1992): 5–16; Eric Michaels, *The Aboriginal Invention of Television in Central Australia 1982-1986* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1986).

Worth himself explains *Through Navajo Eyes* by alluding to what he calls "the shift from Visual Anthropology to the Anthropology of Visual Communication." He explains that "a major problem in thinking about the use of photography in social science, is not that photographs are not true, but that that is not the purpose we use them for,"[408] effectively questioning whether one can ever distinguish between the use of a medium and the study of how a medium is used. In doing so, Worth further engages the use of mass media, so bringing important context to Brand's 1976 interview: the historical emergence of broadcasting technologies in the middle of the twentieth century, making it possible for a viewer to see, in a two dimensional TV image, surrounded by home furniture, that which is currently happening somewhere else, mediated through cables and radio waves, and later satellites and fibre networks.[409] The establishment of visual anthropology as a field both embracing media as a mode of research and considerations of the ways in which media form cultural identities was sparked by the heyday of the medium of television; media anthropology, as a field in its own right, emerged in the 1980s and 1990s to address the specific implications of the reach, purpose, modes and methods of contemporary media.[410]

408 Drawing explicitly on the work of Mead, Worth also writes: "In effect, what Mead has been trying to teach us is what one of her teachers, Ruth Benedict, taught her: 'patterns of culture' are what we are presenting when we do anthropology, and taking photographs, or looking or taking notes are tools for articulating and stating the patterns that we, as anthropologists, wish to show to others. It is that old lesson about culture which we seem not to understand as it affects our use of the photograph. Somehow our myth system about photos helps us to forget that the photo is not the pattern. Somehow, we tend to think of a photograph not as something we use – as evidence, to illustrate pattern, to inform ourselves, or to make statements with-but as something we call 'truth' or 'reality'" (Sol Worth, "Margaret Mead and the Shift from "Visual Anthropology" to the "Anthropology of Visual Communication,'" *Studies in Visual Commnication* 6, no. 1 (1980), s. 17).

409 Worth explicitly draws also on Mead's role as a (controversial) public intellectual.

410 Dominic Boyer, "From Media Anthropology to the Anthropology of Mediation," in *The SAGE Handbook of Social Anthropology*, by Richard Fardon et al. (SAGE Publications Ltd, 2012), 411–22.

Mead and Bateson's 1976 conversation, then, reminds us how film holds the capacity to outlive the discursive constraints of its production: in Brand's interview Mead and Bateson reflect upon their 80-year-old film recordings which only exist because they were already conducting field research relevant to the production of images. In the early 1930s, that is, they were already engaged in anthropological analysis for which image analysis was a part (even if only a part);[411] the incorporation of visual data and visual method into a study is not a matter of applying a methodology confined within disciplinary mode of meaning-making, but an intervention into a specificity.[412]

As the anthropologist and scholar of indigenous media Faye Ginsburg has, more precisely, pointed out:

> Films made [by anthropologists such as Mead] as archival records in anticipation of the disappearance of indigenous cultural worlds, in fact, have been historically resigned as evidence of their persistence into the present. … [Indigenous activists] have gone back to early ethnographic films, from the 1890s on, and recuperated those films as the basis for a whole variety of claims on their cultural continuity: land claims, cultural property rights and religious freedom, to name a few.[413]

However much historical films encapsulate the moment of their production, they are inevitably reappraised, showing us something of our own time, and causing us to re-evaluate the past. There is no full control. While the particular content and form

411 Banks and Ruby, *Made to Be Seen*, 2.

412 This is precisely how *Trance and Dance in Bali*, perhaps Mead and Bateson's most-seen film, may serve as a contribution in a wider sense, in being an exemplar of the capacity of film to outlive the discursive constraints of its production.

413 Faye Ginsberg, "Now Watch This Very Carefully…: The Ironies and Afterlife of Margaret Mead's Visual Anthropology," http://sfonline.barnard.edu/mead/ginsburg.htm.

of a film may express and reproduce certain social structures, a concern with films as representations ought to be more, or other than, tied to "signifying systems." We are required to consider the capacity of film to affect, to make a difference within specific circumstances and situations. Hence, while Mead's films, writings, teaching or her mode of shaping the field of visual anthropology may not necessarily indicate any spirit of a revolution in that field, her position on the use of a camera, compared to Bateson, is a recognition of the potential effect of retrospective insights – not unlike how Mead and Bateson, as a pair in conversation in 1976, foresee a set of retrospective insights with regard to the circulation and significance of media.

Herta Grøndal's film *Naturrikdom and kulkraft på 78 Nord*, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, illustrates this significance. In its being both a historical expression and an attempt to offer an imagined future for coal, the film serves as potential material in the present, both scenographically and in relation to the kind of post-coal narratives and imaginaries that dominate the contemporary development of Svalbard as a (conspicuously Norwegian) pristine wilderness, attractive adventurescape and aspiring sustainable exemplar in the Arctic.[414] In this sense, Grøndal's films actuate materially anchored questions of access to the past (how Longyearbyen once looked) as much as to its recollection (how, where and by who Longyearbyen's past is being recollected), when considered in terms of their capacity to disclose how Svalbard has depended, and still depends, on coal – historically as an energy source and currently as an imaginary foundation for Norwegian presence.[415]

414 I take this formulation from a joint abstract with the title "Constructions and consequences of power-full imaginaries," with Sam Saville, Mathias Albert, Lisbeth Iversen and Dina Brode-Rogers, for the Royal Geographical Society's annual conference in London 2021.

415 As Dag Avango and Peder Roberts have shown, narratives about coal mining do not only emphasize the importance of coal for "the twentieth-century Norwegian history of Svalbard but also for the present day settlements, strengthening the narrative in which the material remains of mining possess value as heritage." See Avango and Roberts, "Heritage, Conservation, and the Geopolitics of Svalbard: Writing the History of Arctic Environments," 135.

The geopolitics playing out on Svalbard and the imaginaries embedded in Grøndal's films, then, emphasize a significant aspect of Mead's position compared to Bateson's position, both an understanding of the dynamic nature of images and of their being representations-in-relations inevitably constituted by a "host" of other processes, events and things.[416] A deeply conditional "force of representation."[417]

A Relativized Concept of History

This is the insight in Russell's (1999) claim for "experimental ethnography" as a vehicle for rethinking both aesthetics and cultural representation, when both the notion of ethnography and experimental film had come to fill new cultural roles in the critical contexts of postmodernism and postcolonialism.[418] However, twenty-five years later, the question remains as to how this claim is reconciled with a contemporary media reality where networked devices have become ubiquitous, and where questions of the documentary have been greatly reconfigured. That is, to rebel against the duties of images and obligations of sound is perhaps also to take a critical stance against the public sphere of the documentary, increasingly produced to circulate in film festivals, online and in art galleries.[419] Contributing with a feminist/Marxist understanding of a relationship between form and content, Russell, writing before the turn of the millennium, indicates how "in postmodern culture when reflexive techniques have become recognizable as style, the evidentiary character of visual culture necessarily shifts."[420] This postmodern relativization of the

416 The idea of embedded imaginaries draws on wider discussions in the field of cultural geography on 'the matter of the medium', discussed for example by Ruth Machen and Simin Davoudi in their presentation "Climate Imaginaries: The Matter of the Medium' at the Royal Geographical Society's annual conference in London, 2021.

417 Ben Anderson, "Cultural Geography II."

418 Russell, *Experimental Ethnography*, xi.

419 Elsaesser, "The Essay Film."

420 Russell, *Experimental Ethnography*, 12.

concept of history has been widely discussed with regards to authorship, temporality and editing. What the intellectual history of the essay film adds in this time of post-Fordist globalization, as it were, is the time-critical – or techno-political – stance of the essayistic, potentially embedded in any media practice.[421]

It is worth returning here to Walter Benjamin, and his early insights into the ways in which technology causes changes in affective registers – and how hosts of cultural effects are generated in the process. Consonant with current media philosophy, Benjamin offers an early theory and useful understanding of how historical time and space are necessarily bound to the technologies that mediate human experience. This is revealed in his critical studies of mechanical reproduction, famously photography and film, in relation to which he coins the notion of the *auratic*;[422] for Benjamin, auratic purety is "commensurate with the production of historical memory as a form of representation that is inherently allegorical."[423] The allegorical filmic image, then, is a form that marks a historical break with its referent, belonging to the pro-filmic time of shooting, while maintaining a dialectical relationship to it: a model of representation in constant flux.

Methodologically, and in relation to an image politics of the Arctic, much can be said about auratic experience represented in allegorical form. That is, considering how the Arctic – or simply nature – has been sold to us through a proliferation of time-technologies in the twentieth century, it is possible to conceive "the future" as a desire for auratic experiences, which is what experimental filmmaking has disclosed using allegory. In fact, this is highly significant to my discontentment with much image

421 "Video's process orientation and its tendency toward discursive density are deeply consonant with the essayistic project," writes Micheal Renov. See Renov, "The Electronic Essay" (1995), 178. It is interesting the degree to which standardization may be held to be a consequence of the suspension of disbelief, disclosing an ideological project.

422 Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."

423 Russell, *Experimental Ethnography*, 6.

making in the Arctic, because it renders "future making" comprehensible as a core product of a techno-economical regime at large. What I seek to stress at this point, however, is how auratic experience is conditional on a fragmented and transient present. More precisely, I seek to stress Benjamin's notion of the impermanence of history, which manifests precisely, it seems to me, as technology offers an increased spatially mobilized visuality alongside temporal mobility; or, a still-accentuated proliferation of fragmentary moments fostered by a paradigm of space-time mobility in the present.

Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1940)[424] has impacted on both my thinking on this and my practice with live editing. Having read his work as a dedication to the practice of thinking, and particularly thinking through the concept of history in relation to filmmaking practices, I understand "history" to be a series of independent fragments that do not *necessarily* have any connection; written precisely as a kind of fragmented reflection on the notion of history, both in the sense of history as it unfolds and in the sense of history as a science, Benjamin's theses treat history as something unfinished, and as something that continues to affect our ability to orientate ourselves towards a future.[425]

424 Walter Benjamin's theses on the concept of history were published after his death in 1940, but (likely) written over the course of a decade.

425 I have used Benjamin's "These on the Philosophy of History" in a live editing experiment with Joen Vedel at Art Hub, spring 2021. In this context, which resembled a kind of reading group session, Benjamin's text was unpacked by the philosopher Marie Krogh, who pointed to how the text in and of itself consists of several entangled theses, which do not constitute one single argument. Rather, Benjamin's text is constantly mirroring and rewinding; the form of the text is an exposition. The theses kind of reflect one another once unpacked one by one. Suddenly, one finds oneself in the corner of a mirror room, which characterizes the text as a whole. From here you can see the entire text reflected. To the left: excerpts from Prekær Filmpraktik #2.

While this challenges the orthodox concept of history, it is not a challenge that must inevitably lead to a dystopian postmodern stasis, banality and repetition; Benjamin's influence persists in a desire for historical transformation from within a kind of "non-teleological critique of modernist progress."[426] This is a critique emerging from within a melancholic gaze on, or a kind of sensitivity to, the historical and the forgotten; it seeks an impossible intervention into the present by unfinishing "finished" history. In other words, as the philosopher Marie Louise Krogh has expressed it, Benjamin's thesis can be thought of as describing a kind of care directed to a potential that was never allowed to unfold; and as the bearer of a dream that things might be different, it thus connects, also, to a tradition of the oppressed – which is a tradition that it, then, also offers the possibility of establishing. Perhaps, as Krogh further has expressed it, the thesis describes a latent, potential, struggle for things to be different to which the storyteller can return, to somehow take care of, to give a new life.

History writing, in this light, becomes equally about writing something into existence, about drawing a picture of a historical moment, and about an engaged attitude towards something existing only as potential. Post-future essayism explicitly draws inspiration from Benjamin's theses in its seeking to grasp "something" at a potential stage.

The Temporalization of Geography

As much has been written about the position of film in relation to the construction of history, I will limit myself to an anecdote, borrowed from Russell, about a group of young American filmmakers boycotting a film congress in Toronto in 1989 with the words: "It is time to shift focus from the History of Film to the position of film within the construction of History."[427] Farocki offers a supplementary perspective in the form of the consummate

426 Russell, *Experimental Ethnography*, 6.

427 Russell, 15.

essay film *Videogram for a Revolution*. In it, Farocki analyses and visually investigates the role of film in the propagation of historical events and sites while remaining attentive to the fact that change and struggle are required – the driving force of historical becoming. Without acknowledging or provoking change and struggle, film cannot play a role in the production of history in the first place.

For post-future essayism as a methodological term (and in relation to anthropological films) it is relevant to acknowledge anthropology's traditional construction of otherness through time.[428] Meanwhile, critical anthropology has specifically sought to break with the idea of the ethnographic inscription as a stage in a progressive historical development,[429] the better to embrace this inscription, rather, as an epistemology of the moving image. This embrace must be understood in relation to a contested epistemology of the cultural "essence" of the ethnographic other – and the idea of its loss as history progress. Benjamin's concept of history and his notion of the auratic productively conflate concerns with cinema and with ethnography in their modernist configurations. They demonstrate "two sides of a similar modernist preoccupation with loss."[430]

With this informing post-future essayism as a methodological term, then, I attempt to stress how concepts such as history (and, indeed, nature), being themselves historical, have everything to

428 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other*.

429 I am here drawing on Russell's discussion of how the history of ethnographic film is a history of the production of otherness, implying considerations of its resistance. That is, the resistance of "the salvage regime" (James Clifford, "The Others: Beyond the 'Salvage' Paradigm," *Third Text* 3, no. 6 (March 1989): 73–78.) where any specific involvement also represents a future version of reality. At stake is the possibility of acknowledging the allegorical structure of the salvage regime without seeking to abandon it. Drawing on the anthropologist James Clifford, and from Benjamin, Russell states that to open oneself to different histories is a matter of opening oneself towards voices and histories of the colonized and to new forms of subjectivities; it is a refusal of a teleological historiography. See Russell, *Experimental Ethnography*, 5.

430 Russell, *Experimental Ethnography*, 9.

do with notions of universality and globality. As Marie Louise Krogh has shown in her PhD thesis *Territory and Temporality: The Geopolitical Imaginary of German Philosophy*, conceptions of universal world history of the eighteenth century, when travelling across the globe was thought to be equivalent to travelling backwards in time, totalized history itself.[431] The very idea of universal history, with respect to its beginnings, ends, and global reach, is "caught up in a definite and historical and geopolitical imaginary," Krogh writes, reflecting "views of socio-political, cultural, and racial differences that are deeply intertwined with the temporalisation of geographical space and the territorialisation of historical difference."[432] Now, Svalbard, as we know, has never been home to any indigenous people. But the temporalization of the Arctic, fostered by cultural imaginations of the region as a place outside time, is precisely what territorializes the region as a geopolitical space in the contemporary, for future imaginations of the planet's ecological and political systems.

The Relationship Between Brokerage and Mediation

"I am concerned less with the usual focus on the formal qualities of film as text and more with the cultural mediations that occur through film and video works,"[433] Faya Ginsburg has stated. Doing so does not mean considering film to be mere record of culture, or choosing to entrench the classical notion of demarcated "cultures" each embodying some particular way of using the medium of film; here, "cultural mediation" reflects the kind

431 Marie Louise Krogh, "Territory and Temporality: The Geopolitical Imaginary of German Philosophies of History" (London, Kingston Uiversity, 2021).

432 Krogh, 13.

433 Faye Gingsberg, "Native Intelligence: A Short History of Debates on Indigenous Media and Ethnographic Film," in *Made to Be Seen: Perspectives on the History of Visual Anthropology* (Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

of materialistic approach to media propounded by Benjamin, in expressing the contrary, radical, idea of the impossibility of film as an end point. Films are available for posterity as visual testimony as much as historical artefact. Hence, the idea of "cultural mediation" summons Mead and Bateson's dispute on the appropriate use of the camera, as far as it recontextualizes questions of experimentality in anthropology in relation to a politics of technology.[434]

> "I think the photographic record should be an art form," says Bateson.
> "Why shouldn't you have some records that aren't art forms? Because if it's an art form, it has been altered," replies Mead.
> "It's undoubtedly been altered. I don't think it exists unaltered," Bateson claims, to which Mead elaborates in response: "I think it's very important, if you're going to be scientific about behavior, to give other people access to the material, as comparable as possible to the access you had. You don't, then, alter the material. There's a bunch of film makers now that are saying, 'It should be art,' and wrecking everything that we're trying to do. Why the hell should it be art?"[435]

Then, after a continued back and forth on the question of artistic and handheld camera use as opposed to long sequencing, Mead explains:

434 In the context of teaching a course on the essay film at HDK-Valand, it has been interesting to notice how my students, when I presented them with the interview with Mead and Bateson, have largely agreed on who "got it right," so to speak: Mead is the conservative, while Bateson is open to the agency of artistic practices. I am seeking to propose a more complex reading of their dispute.

435 Brand, Bateson, and Mead, "For God's Sake, Margaret."

> There were times in the field when I worked with people without filming, and therefore have not been able to subject the material to changing theory, as we were able to do with the Balinese stuff. So when I went back to Bali I didn't see new things. … One of the things, Gregory, that we examined in the stills, was the extent to which people, if they leaned against other people, let their mouths fall slack. We got that out of examining lots and lots of stills. It's the same principle. It's quite different if you have a thesis and have the camera in your hand, the chances of influencing the material are greater.[436]

I read this moment in the interview as a negotiation of larger debates in visual anthropology at the time whereby, while being key figures in a contemporary anthropology founded on colonial epistemologies, Mead and Bateson emerge as epistemic brokers *through* the interview as a process of editing. Manifesting a shift in attention from media records as a form (media produced by cameras, for example) to mediation as processes of interaction, what emerges is an understanding of editing that comes close to brokerage as a social process.

This is important, firstly, because editing/brokerage, in this sense, can be understood as an engaged attitude towards material, allowing the editor/broker to hold a dynamic position – a position less encapsulated, as it were, than it is engaged in processes of encapsulation. As we have seen, this is different from the traditional understanding of anthropological brokerage. Secondly, it is important because this connects debates within visual anthropology and the later subfield of media anthropology with the intellectual history of the essay film, as far as a I understand a re-invention of the latter to be equally shaped by shifting conceptions of media and mediation.

436 Brand, Bateson, and Mead.

Media Anthropology and the Imaginary as a Paradigm Shift

Shifting the focus back to a contemporary context, studies of networked producing, circulating, and receiving users in internet-based communication requires a continuous rethinking of the production–reception polarity. The idea of researching media phenomena by studying production and reception is still more challenged by, and inseparable from, greater discussions of the role of media in the social imaginary; research that was once either technological or representational in its basis is increasingly glossed as a matter of social mediation, to be understood in the light of broader social-political processes of circulation, exchange, imagination and knowing.[437]

In this, the geo-aesthetical, refusing technological determinism while recognizing human and social-economic power, emerges as a bridging concept. Considered an effect of processes of social mediation (that is, processes of "social transaction in its broadest sense of the movement of images, discourse, persons and things,"[438] as the media anthropologist David Boyer writes), the geo-aesthetical discloses "circulation" and "exchange" to be equivalently significant conceptual problems to those of "production" and "reception."[439]

This is the contemporary paradigm shift.

437 Boyer, "From Media Anthropology to the Anthropology of Mediation." See also: Lila Abu-Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London ; New York: Verso, 2006).

438 This is finally how I understand a change of inquiry – from practices of communicational media-making and media-receiving (think of Sol Worth), and questions of how "media" should be conceptualized "media" in the first place (think of historical media philosophy), to explorations of the intersection of semiotic, social and material aspects of mediation – to be an effect of media anthropology's historical conceptualization. That is, as Boyer rightly asserts, there arises the question of whether media anthropology was always more than communicational media research (Boyer, "From Media Anthropology to the Anthropology of Mediation," 383).

439 Boyer, 383.

As we have seen, rather than simply being an adaptation to a new media environment (that of communicational media), the concepts of circulation and exchange emerge with and from within new and developing understandings of their historical framework. In short, "the importance of the collapse of cold-war geopolitics and geo-economics, the rise of market (neo)liberalism on a global basis, and a concomitant exploration throughout the human sciences of analytical models based on liquidity and flow," Boyer states, makes "the relationship between brokerage and mediation" a core question for anthropology.[440] The potential of the essayistic, then, is a matter of social imaginaries as geo-aesthetics when mobilized from a recognition of the significance of a relationship between brokerage and mediation – a relationship arguably at the core of the intellectual history of the essay film. Crucially. post-future essayism is a re-positioning of the essayistic so it may manifest a discontentment rather than any medium-specific materiality. Nevertheless, the specificity of a given media shapes how we can explore any critical stance – the media environment conditions how modes of practice are consonant with the essayistic project.

To summarize: historically, a survey of the intellectual history of the essay film shows us the ways in which documentary projects are not simply artefacts of the shot; they arrive in the edit – after the event, when discontinued material sequences are cut and splice, to form a continuity. The documentary is not a representation of the past; it is, as Florian Schneider has observed, a space that reconstructs past(s) by anticipating a future.[441] I understand Boyer's discussion of media anthropology to be foundational to my urge to produce an artistic experimentality that speculates on what a post-future essayism may entail. My urge

440 Or, as Boyer asks, "why could the anthropological study of roads and migration, currency and finance, commodity chains and values, and the formation and dissemination of expert knowledge, not be productively connected to anthropological research on communicational media under the rubric of a broader anthropology of mediation?". Boyer, 387.

441 Florian Schneider, "Rewriting Memory," in *Politics of Memory* (S.l.: Archive Books, 2015).

is different from that which has come to be associated with the essay film; I am resistant to the idea that a singular reconstruction can escape the "progressive" (neo-colonial) futures of linear thinking. I am positively seeking a kind of epistemological strategy that embraces the iterative organization of temporality. I mean, specifically, the different kind of temporalities that play out in situated relations, navigated in the making of a film.

My urge is a precarious film practice, as far as it embraces both the technical errors and social impulse of artistic experimentality.

Montage as Event Technology

I understand my proposal of a post-future essayism alongside disciplinary concerns in anthropology in order to suggest it as an epistemological strategy. While filmmaking, just like ethnographical writing, may begin in the field, the crafting of an analytical pathway requires an experimental purview. An essayism capable of superimposing the twin trajectories of observation (out there) and editing (in the studio) rather than holding them to be asymptotic or divergent. Here, I specifically draw inspiration from the anthropologist Marilyn Strathern who writes that "any ethnographic moment, which is a moment of insight, denotes a relation between immersement and movement" – a double field separated by time, yet simultaneously managed and inhabited.[442]

In other words, and to connect the dots, I find it useful to think of live editing as a sort of montage strategy that comes close to being an event technology: obviously invented with the impact of the emergence of television and broadcasting technologies, as we have seen, historically live editing has taken place in an editing room at a television station. Characterized by different cameras in different angles and positions, filming one or more

442 Strathern, *Property, Substance, and Effect*, 6.

subjects, routed through an image mixer, edited and transmitted in real time, live editing has allowed complex productions of studio-films from the inception of television broadcasting.[443] The live programme may be taken as the very acme of television in its capacity for continuity and simultaneity. The television medium has "exploited its assumed ontology as ideology."[444]

The film and television scholar Jane Feuer writes:

> In the concept of live television, flow and unity are emphasized, giving a sense of immediacy and wholeness, even though network practice belies such unity, even in – especially in – "live" coverage of events such as Olympics. … Whole events are segmented and fragmented through excessive commentary used for narrativization: the figure ice-skating pairs competition becomes the saga of the young couple's unrealized dream. We cut back and forth between discrete events. Boring events such as cross-country skiing ("boring" being the equivalent of "not designed for television") are enlivened through time-lapse editing. Instant replays and slow motion endlessly analyze the unique and spontaneous events in the name of the broadcast. The ideology of liveness overrides all of this. Network television never truly exploits its capacity for instantaneous and unmediated transmission. Only the ideological connotations of live television are exploited in order to overcome the contradiction between flow and fragmentation in television practice.[445]

Contemporary with Sol Worth's reflection on Mead, but from a perspective more aligned with media philosophy, here Feuer states how the television medium has never merely mediated events; since its heyday in the '50s and '60s, the medium has

443 See for example: Douglas Gomery, "Television, Hollywood, and the Development of Movies Made for Television," in *Regarding Television: Critical Approaches* (University Publications of America, 1983).

444 Feuer, "The Concept of Live Television: Ontology As Ideology," 16.

445 Feuer, 16.

generated events and relationships. Its stream of seemingly spontaneous and simultaneous images and their eternal interruptions is a transmitted mix of the immediate and of the illusion of the immediate: a kind of theatre represented as moving images and distributed to a geographically dispersed mass.[446] If live editing is an event technology, it is more obviously a geographically dispersed process. Think of live news helicopters, or network-connected drones and high-speed cables, globally organized and administered as elements in capturing "the now of the news": weapons in the battle of the second.

In the autumn of 2018, my colleague the Swedish film director Axel Danielson told me about how he had sought permission to "suck" data from the signal the Swedish state broadcaster SVT received from the World Cup in Russia. That is, the many cameras covering events such as the World Cup, both centrally "on site" (in this case somewhere in Russia), but also, fractionally later, in various national editing studios ready to translate what they receive into national perspectives and priorities. In short, if live editing is an event technology that shapes and stages relations and communities – spacious navigation – as it is being streamed and negotiated globally, then it is also in and of itself comprehendible as a geographical event.

Questions proliferate. What is an event? And how do events (re)make space and time, rather than just happening "in" space and time? How does the expansion of networked media, with its "planned" and "unplanned" delays,[447] play out in live editing as an operational image practice?[448]

446 For a discussion on this see Andjeas Ejiksson, "Television Without Frontiers", (Gothenburg, Gothenburg University, 2021).

447 I am thinking of how broadcast delays may be both technical and administratively intentional when meant to prevent mistakes or unacceptable content from being broadcast – unexpected interruptions by terrorists, for example – or repressed peoples?

448 Farocki speaks about operational images as images that "do not represent an object, but rather are part of an operation" (Harun Farocki, "Phantom Images," *Public* 0, no. 29 (January 1, 2004): 12–24, https://public.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/public/article/view/30354).

I will restrict myself to simply clarifying the essence of my question by posing another question: can live editing be considered a method of freeing film from the grip of constructivist montage? "Montage" is a term difficult to delimit, as we have seen, ranging from the simplest to the most complex joining of elements. One thing montage is not, however, is monadic; it is manifold. Hence my speculation is whether collaborative live editing can be considered a post-future essayistic methodology in generating something different from constructivist montage as far as it generates precisely just "one thing"? That is, one outcome of a situation? One uninterrupted process, consisting of a myriad of uninterrupted impulses, of which the montage of image representations simply plays a role, in a more comprehensive and highly entangled process of filming, film editing, film showing and film watching? Precisely because this entanglement inevitably unfolds not just in time (constructed in a video editing studio) but in space, does the end product then not become a kind of non-film? In other words, can collaborative live editing be regarded more as a sort of continuous composition, a constant recomposition and simultaneous decomposition, and thus as a method recognizing and (radically) embracing the degree of a film's historical becoming? A film's "force," as it were.[449]

"What is special about video is its ability to move between different image registrations, to perform these shifts in coding," writes the film and media scholar Maureen Turim in her influential analysis *Video Art: Theory for a Future*. [450] "By splitting the image or superimposing images," she continues, "video can present different views or temporal instances simultaneously. … The results are images that challenge and train human perception."[451] Accordingly, live editing makes for a filmic method that

449 Anderson, "Cultural Geography II."

450 Maureen Turim, "Video Art: Theory for a Future," in *Regarding Television: Critical Approaches--an Anthology* (Frederick, MD.: University Publications of America, 1983), 134.

451 Ibid.

pleasingly subverts the definition of what, precisely, the "outcome" is – the essay film; the "work of art" – and, equally, who the sender or the author is, who the recipient or the audience is. I suggest that live editing corresponds to the tenets of post-future essayism as far as it has more in common with reality TV than constructivist montage; as far as it is a process-oriented, inevitably collaborative, open-ended experimentality.

Recalling how media anthropology emerged in the wake of the arrival of broadcast media, and on an account of a "redistribution of emphasis from cultural form to process and thus greater attention to the cultural agency of media producers" (and receivers),[452] post-future essayism as time-space analysis may precisely have more in common with an "anthropology of mediation" than with the established field of visual anthropology. To echo Strathern, as methodology post-future essayism is less concerned with knowledge production in any fixed generic sense, and more with question of how to engage the fields of observation and editing together.

The Precarious Assembler

While a turn from representation to mediation has been a core concern in my PhD research from the outset, I have struggled to precisely define the term.[453] Nevertheless, mediation productively emphasises a foregrounding of a performative turn at the heart of discussions around politics of representation in media studies; the idea that representation is performative rather than objective, neutral or balanced, effectively requiring a fundamental understanding of "mediation" as productive; transformative

452 Boyer, "From Media Anthropology to the Anthropology of Mediation," 386.

453 From the outset, I genuinely considered a turn from representation, arguably functioning as a stand-in for a virtual someone/something to mediation, arguably functioning to transform of this someone/something. It was never simply a matter of thinking of my own artistic research practice as a mediating mechanism, but the (valorizing) agency of image-making practices more generally.

rather than informative.[454] How are we to think of transformation "media anthropologically"? What, that is, are the politics of transformation, when derived from the dynamism of a process rather than any final judgement?

We may think the reinvention of the essay form to be a kind of response to this, when considered as a new agency creating, or modulating, distance with the ultimate purpose of encouraging critical thinking. "The essay is a judgement, but the essential, the value-determining thing about it is not the verdict … but the process of judging," as Lukács wrote in his often-quoted foundational essay *On the Nature and Form of the Essay* (1910).[455] What this clarifies is also how post-future essayism is not the post-essayism of a futurity (which is to say – I disagree with Hito Steyerl and the idea of the essay film as outmoded genre), but a post-future in essayism. Again, I am less concerned with envisioning a future than I am concerned with the status of the post-future: with "living." This, however, should not be understood as a disregard for future consequences for my/our actions, but more as a method of shifting focus from temporal linearity, authenticity and origin to historical effect; historical becoming.

What the use of archival material in the manner of, say, Grøndal's films has in common with trends in a form conspicuously oriented to historical becoming, that of science fiction, is the expressivity of a present. A re-invention of the essayistic seeks differentiation rather than transformation. And this arguably breaks with the way we have learned, or are trained, to imagine the future.

454 This is a fundamental discussion in media theory: does technology transform us, or do we transform technology? Following Kember and Zylinska "it is not simply the case that 'we' – that is, autonomously existing humans – live in a complex technological environment that we can manage, control, and use. Rather, we are – physically and hence ontologically – part of that technological environment, and it makes no more sense to talk of *us* using *it*, than it does of *it* using *us*" – original italics in Kember and Zylinska, *Life After New Media*, 13.

455 Georg Lukács, "On The Nature and Form of The Essay," in *Essays on the Essay Film*, ed. Nora M. Alter and Timothy Corrigan (Columbia University Press, 2017), 21–40.

What is at stake in turning to the essayistic, in other words, is the emancipation of the essay film from its post-millenium rejuvenation as a strictly personal and subjective form of expression; an individually authored intent and ideal.[456] It is on account of the essay film as a "place within the conditions of cinema" that post-future essayism is a methodological term while live editing is my method. Disclosing and activating the expansion of temporally layered experiences of filmmaking as transmittable, as I will discuss in the following chapter, live editing is the method with which I interrogate/explore montage as filmic grammar – and thereby, also, the method with which I seek to define the latent potential of post-future essayism itself.

Can the essay film as genre or label, concerned with value and meaning, be emancipated by a post-future essayism giving way to a collective expression of cinematic experimentality? Could reconceptualizing affective relations in film making as a social process allow the form to be more concerned with experience and knowing differently?[457] If the essay film can be defined by potential responses to the question of constructing an altered sense of historical narrative, the epistemological experimentation of post-future essayism might be defined by potential responses to the question of sharing authorship in a live situation.

Recognizing that a lot has been written about collaborative strategies in the field of anthropology, what is significant in post-future essayism is how authorship becomes a matter of

456 Here I am again referencing Arsenjuk's understanding of the essay film as a "place within the conditions of cinema" (Arsenjuk, "To Speak, To Hold, To Live By The Image.")

457 And if so, does it afford the possibility of the "emancipation" of a label such as Arctic cinema too? More importantly, what informs this question is a recognition of the ways in which the essay film in its early post World War II cultural configuration gave way to a collective expression of cinematic thought during the New Left and Third Cinema film movements of the 1960s. In fact, a concern less interested in possibilities of "expressive subjectivity" than in the use of the cinema to address complex conceptual problems, can be located even early – for example in Hans Richter's writing, cited above (See Morgan Adamson, *Enduring Images: A Future History of New Left Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018).

trying something out in a cooperative fashion – of producing, collecting, editing, speaking, doing and sharing visual, auditory and written text in a cooperative sense without claiming an idealized distribution.[458] This in and of itself unsettles the meaning of authorship and origin – and is thus what characterizes the proposition both as epistemological strategy and as concern with productive relations.[459]

This, then, recalls the way in which the guide on Svalbard cannot escape the problem of representation. As a figure embodying both a conceptualization of nature as something authentic and worth travelling for and a turn to mediation, the guide, in a location such as Svalbard, emerges as an interesting tool with which to seek a change to this precondition. What the essayist shares with the guide is the role of assemblage-maker, and thus the possibility of redefining a paradigm concerning the source and transmission of knowledge. The editor, the assembler, the producer, and so on, are all figures that may emerge from an understanding of the guide as an agential figure (and thus as someone with power), without, however, originating in authorship as a first principle. The guide's agency is quite different to that of the traditional figures of the artist and the scientist; it is more an engaged attitude towards skilled differentiation.

It is in this sense, finally, I find the figure of the guide to be interesting – as a vehicle for the enablement of an essayistic experimentality in the context of Svalbard, where the functions and editing of images are closely connected to questions of territory, sovereignty and ownership.

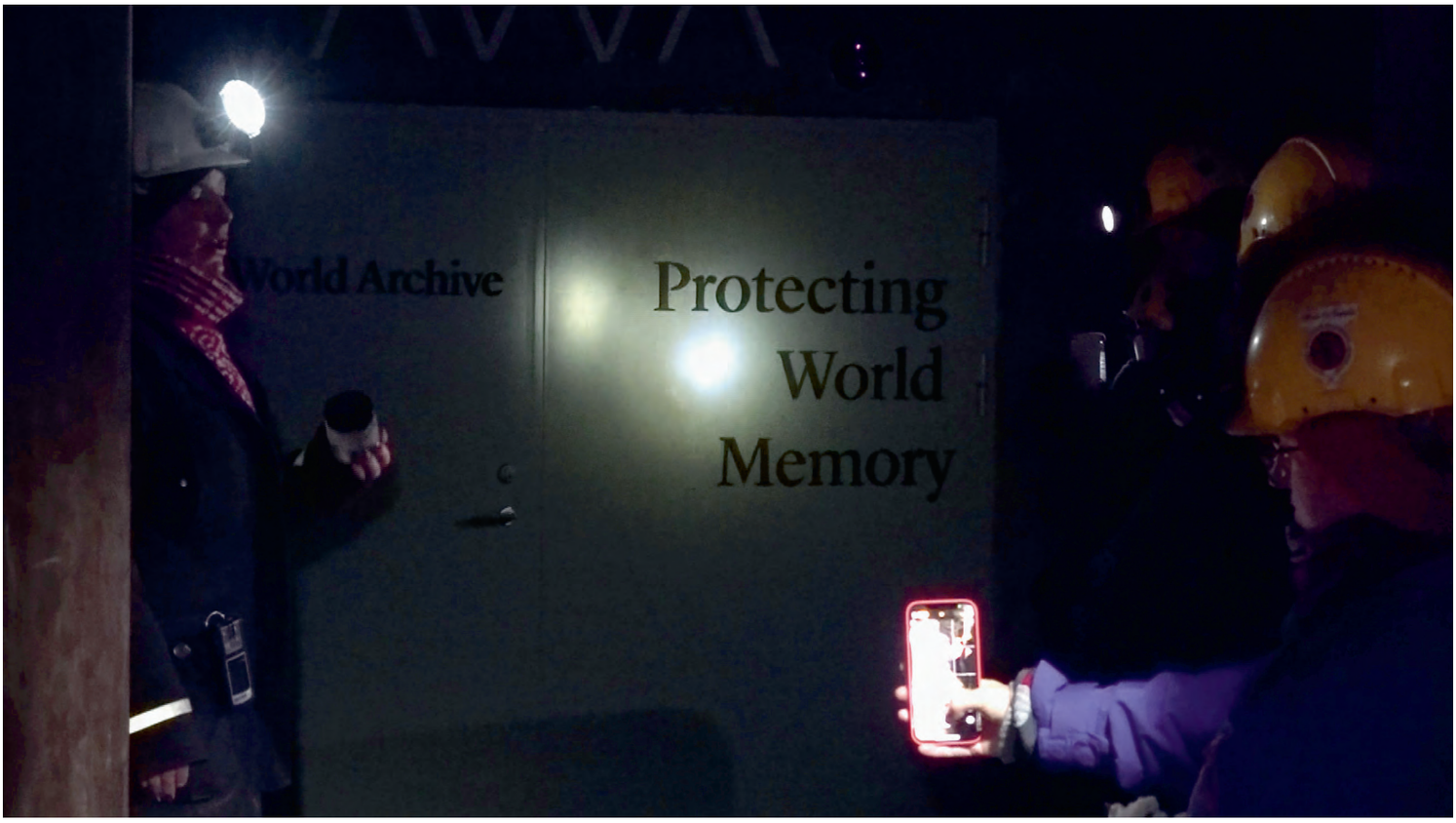
458 I refer here to ideas of the democratic distribution of authorship, e.g. within discourses on so-called "data documentaries," using online editing software. But I also seek to recognize that authorship, in general, is frequently activated and developed through dispute, argument, contested experiences.

459 I wish to acknowledge the inspiration I draw here from the writing of the artist Søren Andreasen (*Towards a Lightness of Mind and Matter* (Kbh.: Emancipa(t/ss)ionsfrugten, 2017)).

Mobile image (considering my cultural knowledge of reading the visual). Home with sick child, November 2021

Mobile image (considering my image bank and how it has been assembled over time). Museum visit with child, November 2021

Video still (trying to capture and convey sentiments and complex information). Guided tour in Gruva 3, October 2021



Video still (a history of banking on images?). Protecting World Memory, October 2021

Video still (considering some of the choices made when my image bank is used in public). October 2021

Dear Eva and Mia

Thanks for the live show the other day, Mia and Eva, I was with you around the neighbourhood in the first half of the show before I ran out of data. And it was a lot of fun to see you as street interviewers and see what the archive material did to your roles.

What does it mean for two woman to be doing fieldwork in the form of vox pops?

What did the guards at the central station imagine we were doing, catching us on their surveillance cameras?

What does it mean to share a process with a dispersed audience not directly involved?

Hi Joen
Thanks for writing. It was a fun experience but, yes, strange not to be able to share it with anyone. I am actually back at Central Station just now, waiting for the train to to Malmø. I am doing the interview with a professional live stream photographer, that I told you about.

Mobile image. 50 meters to a better burger, October 2021

A Slow Fade Out: The Figure of the Guide as a Precarious Assembler

In the initial shots of post-industrial Paris, late at night and at daybreak, there is a voice-over saying: `This film was not played by actors, but lived by men and women who have given a few moments of their lives to a new experience of cinéma-vérité.`

Following, one of the first scenes is an after-dinner discussion. A man says: `What Rouch and I want to do is a film on the following idea: How do you live? … We start with you, and then we're going to ask other people.` Then a woman walks around in the streets in a vox pop kind of way, asking people if they are happy. At a later point we see the same woman speaking aloud to herself, while driving a car. Later, an entire crew of "subjects" eats lunch and discuss. By the end of the film, the two filmmakers show footage to "their subjects" and discuss it with them, before the filmmakers finally turn to themselves to discuss whether the film is a success or not.[460]

Chronicle of a Summer by Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin (1961) is one my favourite films. The film reminds me of the fact that fragmentation, indeterminacy and failure are intrinsic to the fabric of "essaying" in the sense of attempting something.[461]

460 *Chronicle of a Summer*. Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin. 1961, 85 min.

461 *Chronicle of a Summer* as an essay film in the sense of an 'essaying', is discussed by Caroline Eades and Elizabeth A. Papazian (*The Essay Film*).

I turned to *Chronicle of a Summer* during a production residency in the autumn of 2019 at workspacebrussels[462] in Belgium. Primarily a production residency for dancers and performance artists, my intention was to use the opportunity to reconnect with my PhD research and practice after a year of maternity leave. Soon, however, I found myself in a mini-crisis. The experience was challenging with a baby: live editing selected video sequences from my travels to Svalbard, cutting and splicing them to the soundtrack of my child in the background. Whilst initially intending to live edit several sequences every week, I felt an odd desire to "direct" the edit: to order images, that is, to insert a communicative order leaning on narrative. *I am confronted with my desire – or habit? – to direct. Make a film. To live edit alone just doesn't make sense,* I noted.[463]

Precarious Film Practice

I recently re-watched the opening of *Chronicle of a Summer* in preparation for the fourth edition of *Prekær filmpraktik* ("precarious film practice") – a series of events exploring live editing as an artistic method, jointly organized with my friends and colleagues Joen Vedel and Mia Edelgart at Art Hub, a centre for art and research in Copenhagen.

For the fourth and last edition, Mia Edelgart and I explicitly took inspiration from Rouch and Morin, as well as from other film works from the same period in which vox pop elements are used,[464] in an attempt to examine the vox pop format as a precarious method equal to live editing. Practically, we invited online viewers to watch what was, by definition, an unpredictable, collaborative and polyphonic interview, as, with video and

462 https://www.workspacebrussels.be/

463 Quote from my residency logbook.

464 Eg. *Comizi d'amore* af Pier Paolo Pasolinis, 1964 Jag er Nyfiken (gul) af Vilgot Sjömans, 1967 *Le Joli Mai* by Chris Marker, 1963, *Under Uret* by Poul Martinsen, 1985

audio transmitters in a backpack, we walked towards Copenhagen Central Station while an editor at Art Hub edited the broadcast for live-streaming. Encounters and interviews with people during rush hour were mixed with excerpts from film history, in a fashion embracing both technical errors and social impulse.

In many ways The Precarious Film Practice series, encompassing a total of four events,[465] emanated from Brussels and political consequences and implications of Covid-19. With a new desire to make an actual film on the politics of live editing, I decided to approach Art Hub in my search for a co-producing host that would allow me to set up a set of experiments during lockdown. The film I envision reflects upon live editing as a situation of overlapping temporalities and a filmmaking practice that relies on other people – the precarity of needing more bodies. At Art Hub, I sought for an infrastructure permitting the loss of control; for a framework in which to experiment with different formats of live editing.

In a sense, my desire to make an actual film came to further prompt a process of constant beginnings. The four different events that took place in the spring and autumn of 2021, and in close parallel with the writing of this text, generated material for a potential later film and a process of constant re-experimentation.[466] Twists, couplings, and turns were captured in the material recorded as an effect of repeated attempts to make something happen rather than as an effect of a storyboarded vision.

In the work *Television Without Frontiers*, a hybrid of television and theatre, the Swedish artist Andjeas Ejiksson applies cinematic method to the medium of television. The whole film is shot in a TV studio; this is crucial to the work's outcome. No amount of preparation for the live recordings – the casting

465 The other three events were organized in the format of reading group, a visual mediation that incorporated webcams from around the world, available online, and a workshop for ten participants/audiences, respectively.

466 By a "later" I mean after the completion of my PhD research.

and production of scenography, and so on – afforded Ejiksson complete control of the situation. I participated as an audience member and remember it being fun – like being a prop in a TV theatre where everything is arranged for dozens of cameras. I was intrigued by how the situation would look in images. I remember looking forward to watching the final film. In short, the communicative order that makes *Television Without Frontiers* work as a film was inserted in a post-editing process.[467] The fact that the film shoot was not a live broadcast or live streamed but produced "live-on-tape" allowed for control and sections to be inserted afterwards. Meanwhile, my experience as a member of the audience emphasized the paradox underpinning my urge towards post-future essayism; montage, in the sense of editing and cinematic strategy, challenges the idea that it is ever possible to represent actual events; live editing, meanwhile, when open ended and not 100% controllable, challenges the cinematic constructivism of montage.[468] The question however, is whether live editing as an artistic method risks re-producing the fantasy of representing "reality." Or, whether collaborative live editing is an event technology as far as it seeks to exploit the open, layered and delayed space(s) of directionlessness, of sensibility, of the sociality of an event as it unfolds. Can collaborative live editing as precarious film practice, through attempts to train sensibility and attention, unsettle the way the carefully managed and planned narrative capitalize on the illusion of the immediate and contemporary?

467 This is something Andjeas Eijksson also writes about in his PhD dissertation of the same name ("Television Without Frontiers").

468 Live editing in its conventional aspect is arguably not open ended; it is driven by purpose of the content. Yet, as a *practice* live editing is subject to the multiple variables at play in the situation of construction. It is as a practice – and not as an interpretation of its conventions in broadcast television/streaming – that live editing challenges the construction of Arctic narratives, as singular historical constructions.

The Methods and Processes of the Research Practice

Considering the idea of live editing as an artistic method for the training of care, attention and sensibility, I have outlined a set of parameters characterizing the method of this research.

1. I am not in what is traditionally understood to be a video editing room, next to the stage, so to speak, but in the middle of it.
2. I am in a scenographic space with objects, people and sensibilities that work with and on each other, with an acute awareness that the power is not equally distributed.
3. The intention is to navigate the tensions of an encounter with the aim of resisting any communal story. It is not about gathering around national television or creating a subcultural cinema space. Instead the process invites participation in a story while it unfolds; in the production of a territory.

In listing these parameters for a film practice that does not rely on strategies of montage alone, it is worth recalling my discussion of live editing as a method of scenographical synergism. Live editing circles its sites of production at the level of methodology; live editing allows for a site such as the Visual Arena at Lindholmen's Science Park and a Russian guide in Pyramiden on Svalbard to come together scenographically while rendering visible the process that makes their coming together possible. The outcome of live editing in the context of the PhD research, then, is something other than a mapping or documentation. The iterative set of experiments that constitute the research design

continues to shape my thinking and artistic practice. And it was in Brussels that I better grasped the precarity of the practice I am producing; how it is predicated on shifts and temporary grounds.

Coming to a better understanding of the artistic experimentality that this enquiry produces brings with it a better understanding of its mode of producing the Arctic – that is, the kind of image of the Arctic that I am pursuing, in which, I suggest, the guide should be understood as both critical figure (as in critique, but also as being a key figure) and an analytical tool. In fact, the Arctic that I produce might be better understood as a series of momentary occasions. Or glitches, maybe. "Effects" in the margin of epistemological standards, scientific facts, and eco-modernist sustainability logics, together making it perceptible that something more, something else, is at stake. The Arctic as "image effects" that aim, even if for just a short while, to expose the constructed nature of standards, while tensions, contradictions and shifts emerge as material conditions or historical weight in the situated social process.

Further Notes on a Spectrum Between Chance and Control

In seeking to bring together a discontented production of the Arctic and the production of an artistic experimentality, the resolution outlined above manoeuvres an underlying tension between being responsible towards the ethics of representation (for example, towards my audiovisual material records of places and people) and an openness towards the affective knowledge of live production, emerging through social or emotional triggers in the situation of experimentation. I recognize media technologies to be active agents in both the ontological and epistemological sense.[469]

469 As discussed earlier with reference to Kember and Zylinska, *Life After New Media*.

More precisely, since Brussels I have been increasingly thinking of the risk that my audiovisual material from Svalbard could become secondary to an improvised live editing meta-exercise, and hence of balancing the continuum between the radical openness of improvisation in live situations and an urge to "know," or to understand, what is happening.[470] The danger is that live editing may be reduced to a system of change-based operations (something like vj-ing), or to the spectacle of a rehearsed choreography. A balancing, then, aims for some sort of situated transmission or passionate engagement that requires improvisation while acknowledging that improvisation alone is not enough.[471] Live editing is a materialistic practice; to seek a situated transmission is to seek the effects of moments of tension.

My appreciation of *Chronicle of a Summer* lies, in fact, in its precise mode of providing a "densely textured poetics"[472] of such a tension. The film reminds me that to let go of control in a responsible way is not about (individual) self-reflexive positioning but about a relational understanding of, and approach to, the larger framework's operationality. *Chronicle of a Summer* helps me understand that to approach filmmaking as the production of a reality is to approach reality as an ontology emerging in the process of filmmaking; it is not an absolute ontological reality in its own right. Owing to a long artistic tradition of critical improvisational practices, my concern is oriented towards a politics of

470 In Brussels I met other artists working with live editing in some kind of way, and particularly artists that I came to know of by sharing my project in Brussels: "In all cases their practices are highly inspiring both in terms of experimentations relating to what I am trying to develop, but in terms of experimentations that differ by being either**: Too random** in a kind of vj'ing sense, which at the end appears too 'riskless.' **Too scripted** and controlled in a kind of storytelling way with illustrative backdrops. Or**, too staged**, in a kind of theatre-performance way with an explicitly staged differentiation between performer and audience" (my residency logbook).

471 As Andrea Phillips concludes in an essay on the politics of improvisation. Andrea Phillips, "Cornelius Cardew: Play for Today," in *Improvisation Rights* (London, 2009).

472 Stewart, "An Occupied Place," 137.

filmmaking as the production of an ontology, discontented, as it were, with ideologies of a transmittable live ontology.[473] But the question remains of transmitting the experience of filmmaking as the production of an ontology. More particularly: what happens in collaborative live editing? What exactly is being edited? Why is it interesting? And how does this set of questions relate to a broader context of cultural practicing, telling of contemporary politics and sensibility?

In the following I will relate discussions in earlier chapters to my practice with live editing in order to return, also, to the guide as a figure predicated on shifting and temporary grounds not unlike the live editor. This, in turn, actuates live editing as a mean to collapse illusions of authenticity, undisturbed authorship and pure knowledge production – effects discussed in relation to the Arctic nature guide. Yet, when considered in terms of guiding, the idea of the stakeholder becomes crucial. The tension between chance and control at the core of live editing as an aesthetics of potentiality relies on skilful navigation from the intermediary position of the live editor. Hence, in the following section I describe the roles of the "stakeholders" in my research environment and then proceed to discuss a set of examples from my practice that helps us to grasp the figure of the guide as a precarious assembler.

Stakeholders in the Venture of My Research

Jean Rouch's ideas of "shared anthropology" have been significant to my anthropological training. Rounded off by Benjamin's claim that the potential meaning of images and objects is fundamentally "open," inherently dialectical and politically double-edged, the idea of shared anthropology has been formative

473 At stake in relation to live editing, then, is the significant difference between the (ideological) idea of a live-ontology and filmmaking as the production of ontology. Meanwhile, in *Against Transmission: Media Philosophy and the Engineering of Time* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), Timothy Baker offers a more genuine media philosophical discussion of the relationship.

to my understanding of the kind of role that technology might play in the production of both theoretical and empirical space. As Paul Henley writes about Rouch's work, "the feedback screenings were only the prelude to what would become a much more active process of collaboration, for he discovered that at the end of a feedback screening, one or more members of the audience would typically come up to him and suggest an idea for a new film. The way that the screening of one film could lead to another was crucial to his conception of 'shared anthropology,' since the subjects who proposed an idea for a new film following a screening became not merely protagonists, but active 'stakeholders' in the new venture."[474]

The idea of stakeholders in the context of film is crucial. Permitting filmic practice to be a space, or an environment, for rethinking and focusing on relationships,[475] it has thus informed critical approaches both to documentary practices[476] and scholarships on indigenous media[477] in important ways – two critical discourses, in my proposition of post-future essayism. More specifically, the idea of stakeholders is useful in comprehending the environment that I have created for my research and my work, when considering at least three differently scaled constellations of temporary relations. Among these are particular, personal and material encounters during fieldwork on Svalbard (and continuously afterwards); collaborators in live editing situations; and my continually re-worked archive of historical records.

While I shall unpack these stakeholders in more detail below, I emphasize the importance of the ways in which the stakeholders delimit – or materialize – the kind of guide I am trying to

474 "Shared Anthropology" in Paul Henley, *The Adventure of the Real: Jean Rouch and the Craft of Ethnographic Cinema* (University of Chicago Press, 2009).

475 Reconceptualizing the relationship between anthropologists and informants.

476 I am thinking, for example, of Bill Nichols, "Documentary Film and the Modernist Avant-Garde," *Critical Inquiry* 27, no. 4 (2001): 580–610.

477 Here I am thinking, for example, of Faye Ginsburg's "The Parallax Effect."

effectuate.[478] While informed by a wide range of filmic practices occupied with modes of altering, or undoing, the narratology of cinema ever since its invention, among them experimental films, ethnographic films, essay films and anti-films, the idea of there being stakeholders in a research environment elicits some sort of de-authored or de-guided zones of mediation rejecting any idea of linear progression in form and idea.[479]

Svalbard Ladies and Networks

As described, Svalbard is a vector in my research characterized by particular encounters, spanning ten years with shifting existential intensities: as a fellow at an artist residency, as an MFA student of visual anthropology, as a friend and curious individual and a cultural producer anticipating new ventures.

Throughout this period, both Svalbard and my experience of time have changed. I gave birth to my son and only a few of the people I met during my first long-term stay are still on the archipelago. In retrospect, most of them were only temporary residents, and live elsewhere now. I vividly recall three days of winter camping during a guide training program in 2015, but realize it is likely that most of my co-participants have never been back to Svalbard since then. The encounters that continue to affect my relation to Svalbard, as site, as image, as memory are those who have instigated a particular curiosity and feeling in me, even if I no longer have contact with many of those who have left the deepest impression (albeit I may look them up on Facebook once in a while). The local transience, arising from Longyearbyen's status as a basecamp for further adventuring, allows many to experience strong relationships – with other human and

478 I am aware that the term "stakeholder" normally applies to people rather than things, yet I am deliberately using the term in a broader sense (think Latour).

479 I am drawing inspiration here from how media archaeology reinterprets media history, which seems to me to be the more interesting idea behind this emerging field.

non-human beings, sites and phenomena alike. There are certainly a handful of people and phenomena, human and non-human beings, that I cannot imagine Svalbard without. But that, of course, will change too.[480]

Svalbard is a story that could have been otherwise. It is particular and iterative. Every time I have returned to Svalbard, the story takes a slightly different direction. Often I have had to connect with people I knew from earlier visits, to make my previous experiences seem relevant, before I felt that I could take up from where I left off.

While I wasn't able to travel to Svalbard for some time after giving birth to my son, the Svalbard Social Science Initiative (SSSI) has come to make up an important part of my Svalbard.[481] Formed in 2019, the SSSI is a growing network of scholars from the social sciences and the arts aiming to allow its participants to share experiences and references, and even "data," to coordinate and organize meetings, and to formulate guidelines governing things such as ethical fieldwork for practitioners coming to Svalbard. This has become a significant resource with which to continue to rethink/ negotiate Svalbard in my research (certainly during the Covid pandemic).

My Svalbard is also an image. This image is shaped by all the music videos, travel magazines features, BBC documentaries, fiction films, stock photographs, art works and research exhibitions which in one way or another seek to delineate or represent Svalbard. It is an image shaped by occasional readings of *Svalbard Posten*'s headlines – on the newly established Svalbard Guide Association, on the decision to phase out coal in Longyerbyen by 2023, about the military use of image data retrieved from the satellites on Plateaufjellet, about the world's only banknote from

480 Recently, a US citizen was deported after ten years, which received a lot of attention because he, as the sole publisher of Ice People, an English-language local newspaper, has been central to the international community's access to local information (see Svalbardposten: https://svalbardposten.no/leder/jobbet-til-siste-slutt/19.14180).

481 https://svalbardsocialscience.com/

Grumant or simply about the bankruptcy of Polar Permaculture Solutions A/S. Reading *Svalbard Posten* online can make me full of longing, and excited, but also at times highly irritated and frustrated.[482] It usually makes me think of the people I know, or once knew, in Longyearbyen. I have an old drawer full of scraps of paper bearing contact information, among more formal business cards, just in case. Opening *Svalbard Posten*, then, is an act of making myself available for the potential of remembering a forgotten impulse or perspective, for the momentary caress of an old idea.

This was the case with Herta Grøndal's films. I became acquainted with her photographs in 2011 on meeting her daughter, Eva Grøndal, who also told me about the films commissioned for SNSK in the 1970s. I didn't succeed in getting hold of them for some time; all I managed to find was a music video using some of the footage.[483] But my interest was in the original films; I wanted a better understanding of the Svalbard that Herta Grøndal had filmed, and of how her filming related to my own. This was interesting both because of the geopolitics embedded in the film material and also, more intuitively, because Grøndal was a woman who had left her three children in order to pursue her dream of living on Svalbard, which she did between 1965 and 1974.[484] In 2015, I heard that Grøndal's photographic collection had been moved to the University Museum in Tromsø; finally,

482 The Norwegian Ministry of Justice's proposal to deprive those who have not already lived on the Norwegian mainland for at least three years of voting rights, for example, contrary to the Svalbard Treaty, signals an attitude deeply affecting the multinational community in Longyearbyen.

483 Since 2013, Eva Grøndal's daughter Annie Frost and Per Martinsen have performed their musical release "FROST" with Grøndal's films and photographs in spectacular shows.

484 Elin Haugdal, ed., "Mediating Everyday Life in Svalbard: Herta Grøndal's Photographs, 1950s–70s," in *Arctic Modernities: The Environmental, the Exotic and the Everyday* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017).

in 2021, thanks to the SSSI network, I managed to get hold of one of the films; it is material on which I intend to found a joint research project on Svalbard imaginaries in relation to environmental and Arctic imaginaries in general.

These are examples of how I regard my encounters on, with and in relation to Svalbard to be encounters occurring within "the sticky materiality of things." This is what I mean by my practice drawing on a weight of experience, and what I mean by tensions, contradictions and shifts conditioning my research practice.

My Trusted Colleagues

My iterative practice with live editing has been collaborative to the extent that it has involved a number of collaborators. Among these, a particular handful of trusted friends and colleagues from Copenhagen, have been crucial in both practicing and developing my experimentation since the outset. Mia Edelgart, Rasmus B. Pedersen (and later Joen Vedel) were initially invited along on account of a shared interest in some of the questions that live editing addresses. Since then, this has developed towards collaboratively organizing workshops, expositions and experiments, among them the experiments conducted under the title of *Prekær filmpraktik* ("precarious film practice") at Art Hub.[485]

We – this undefined "we" – do not necessarily share the same precise understanding of the term "live editing." But through

485 While with Mia Edelgart I explored the vox pop phenomena, with Joen Vedel I organized a live-broadcast conversation with the philosopher Marie Louise Krogh, the art critic Frida Sandstrøm and the visual artist Kirsten Dufour, about Walter Benjamin's historico-philosophical theses and the outcome of a live-edited film. The reading and the conversation was filmed, edited and transmitted live, to create a dialogue and a tension between the text and the context of the reading itself. While text fragments were mixed with images of bodies, cameras and editing equipment, Art Hub's interiors and passers-by were also components of the outcome. Vedel, Edelgart and I also invited Rasmus Brinck Pedersen to be involved in organizing one of the events taken form as a workshop.

repeated experimentation, we have arrived at an unspoken idea of live editing as a performative situation in which audiovisual material is edited before, with, or in relation to a spatially-organized group of people at a particular moment in time so that this moment becomes, simultaneously, one of presentation, production and living. To be clear, we have not come to any definition through discussion. I am offering a summation of the format to which we make reference when we occasionally talk about the ways in which our artistic practices engage with live editing in different manners, both methodologically and theoretically.

Visual artists themselves, Mia Edelgart, Rasmus Pedersen and Joen Vedel were already using live editing equipment in their practices before my research had begun, and their work has informed my interest in the format. But there were synergies between our practices prior to this; we share a critical approach to, and an engagement in, the aesthetical and political implications of artistic practice as social process.

Subsequently, live editing scenarios have unfolded in various constellations. Sometimes with Vedel, Edelgart and B. Pedersen as skilled colleagues invited to help me, sometimes as collaborative endeavours, sometimes as co-authored experimentation; sometimes within the framework of my PhD research and sometimes on its periphery.[486] In every case, relationality, connectivity, impulse and chance were reconceptualized – and often control lost. This has since helped me to understand the equivocal significance of an inevitable loss in the creation of community at the level of practice and experimentality. Questions of collaboration and temporality merge through the accumulated experiences I share with listeners, editors, colleagues, friends, actors and readers (co-producers in the broader sense) that have taken part in the different iterations of my research practice.

486 I set up, for example, a workshop at the Art Academy in Copenhagen in the context of a self-organized school (for friends, activists and colleagues), in the fall of 2018.

Historical Protagonists and Characters

Significant stakeholders in my research are manifested through a handful of historical and fictitious protagonists. The Arctic Dwelling Manifesto, written by a fictitious group of researchers, for example, and the various theoretically constructed and historical characters that have emerged both as analytical tools and as conversation partners, serving to situate my artistic articulations in a historical space. They help help me to comprehend these articulations as guidance in the present.

Jette Bang, Pia Arke, Per Kirkby and Herta Grøndal; Emilie Demant Hatt and her collaborator Johan Turi; Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson. As pairs, the latter in particular have helped me analytically, albeit in different ways, to further think through the ways in which the figure of the guide agglomerates power, care, passion, humility, relationism and enskillment. Demant Hatt and Johan Turi are enthusiastic amateurs situated in the sub-Arctic, anchoring questions of authority and gender in relation to textual representation. Mead and Bateson reflect on the historical emergence of an intellectual discipline through which they, as respected figures in the discipline of anthropology, add a different definition of power to questions of authority, territory, brokerage – and gender.

In the following I will revisit three different moments of practical experimentation, in which Demant Hatt/Turi, Mead/Bateson and finally Jette Bang, respectively, have played a role. I will first turn to live editing as a mediatic space and to my idea of mediation passion and how it implies a politics of transmittability. Then I will turn to live editing in the format of a repeated table reading – the read-through of a film script in its final stage – and discuss gender politics of many kinds are attached to the guide figure. In fact, I suggest that a gendered reading of modernist discourses – whether on polar exploration or on art history

– offers a revaluation of my concern with mediation, enabling a shift in focus from representation to mediation to further actuate a concern less to do with narrative and more to do with inherent contradictions of image-making, transferability and scale. Effectively, and paradoxically, live editing becomes comprehendible simultaneously as a geographical event and as a means to articulate the unique value of location and site-specificity. Coming to this understanding by way of a discussion of particular examples of practical experimentation, I will finally return to the Arctic nature guide, who, while aiming to articulate the unique value of a site and phenomenon such as Svalbard, discloses genealogies of the place other than those historically sold to us as authentic.

Live Editing at Astrid Noack's Atelier

In the opening chapter I situate the colonial Arctic as we know it by introducing the Danish painter Emilie Demant Hatt (1873–1958) and the Sámi wolf trapper and writer Johan Turi (1854–1936). More precisely, I introduced the idea of their relationship being both affective and colonial, as a means to speculate upon the politics of guidance as a relating practice.

In August 2020, I invited the authors Dorte Smedegaard and Helle Askgaard to contribute to a live editing scenario at Astrid Noack's Atelier, a project space in Copenhagen.[487] I found it interesting that Askgaard and Smedegaard had met in the archives of the Royal Danish Library as pensioners and decided to join forces, when realizing a shared passion for the archive material they encountered. This despite their different backgrounds; Askgaard is a feminist geographer and historian and Smedegaard a musicologist undertaking research on Carl Nielsen – a celebrated Danish composer who happened to be one of Demant Hatt's early lovers. In the spirit of their collaboration, I invited Askgaard and Smedegaard to give a lecture about Demant Hatt and her role in the construction of Turi's *Muitalus Samiid Birra* – the first book

487 https://astrid-noack.dk/

published in Sámi on a non-religious subject. I live-edited an audiovisual record of their lecture, based on both live camera feeds and material pre-recorded from the site of Astrid Noack's Atelier, then under re-construction. Doing so, I tried, with the support of B. Pedersen and Edelgart, to evoke thoughts on the power of editing and framing – effectively the role of Demant Hatt in the realization of *Muitalus Samiid Birra*.

During the event, however, I was confronted with the authors deliberate use of the term "lapperne" – the Lapps. Strongly uncomfortable with this, the question arose of how to respond from behind the editing table. Was I to turn down the volume and intervene in the documentation of the lecture? Was I to raise a question, or directly comment on the situation? The authors enjoyed a position of authority. As editor, I had the power to frame and confront this authority.

The many constituents and miniscule differentiations that occur within both the live technological and non-technological improvisations disclose live editing to be a situation exploiting mediation as a dynamic and relational process. Imagine me looking discontented from behind the editing table or imagine the sudden noise of pre-recorded excavators. Or questions raised by the audience, causing the lecture's storyline to shift and turn. Paying attention to interacting layers and levels of juxtapositions it becomes clear that in the "rough landscape" of performing, writing and thinking – amplified in this case by the rough landscape of the construction site of Astrid Noacks Atelier[488] – many kinds of improvisation take place at once, including improvisations not necessarily designated as such. Improvisation occurs as a kind of para-improvisation in the form of a relationship between the planned and the unplanned.

Moreover, while cameras and microphones are mediators in the sense that they are "in between," other components – cables, bricks and bodies, whether these bodies are primarily watching, listening or operating cameras and microphones – constitute

488 And in other cases by my rough footage from Svalbard.

mediation in the sense of an "environment." Through a form of ideational and technical feedback, the central component of the camera stages itself as an intermediate within a larger techno-material environment. Drawing from a materialistic media approach, we might begin to consider media as ecological; live editing as a synthetic space is constituted equally by media time (in the sense of both the scenario being recorded, and in the sense of pre-recorded material being part of it) and by phenomenological time (the two hours of the live edited event at Astrid Noack's Atelier).

I am unfolding the experience at Astrid Noack's Atelier because it is an example of live editing as a situation in a given space that includes both other individuals and live-feeding cameras; it allows me to elaborate on the question of mediation in relation to the guide considered as a figure both situated in "the middle of things" and as a figure embodying a set of conditions in time and place. Guidance is emphasized as an operation contingent on an individual within social spaces, simultaneously forming the framework for any individual perspective.[489] In being both trained and drawing from lived experiences, the guide embodies a kind of "skilled engagement" not as a matter of individual workings of the mind, or of the brain, or of the body, but as a matter of engagement through highly socialized means. These means include a great number of devices that mediate, shape and enable perception, expression and representation.[490] While the notion of skilled visions is a practical and theoretical concept

489 I partly draw here on the art historian Jacob Lund's writing on Bernard Stiegler. Lund quotes Stiegler: "If the time of the I is certainly not the time of the we, it takes place within the time of the we, which is itself conditioned by the time of the Is of which it is composed" (Stiegler in Jacob Lund, "Tid," in *Medieæstetik: en introduktion*, ed. Ulrik Schmidt and Jacob Lund, 2020, 133). Also relevant is Deleuze writing on mediators: "Mediators are fundamental. Creation's all about mediators. Without them nothing happens . . . I need my mediators to express myself, and they'd never express themselves without me: you're always working in a group, even when you seem to be on your own" (Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972-1990*, 125).

490 Cristina Grasseni, *Developing Skill, Developing Vision: Practices of Locality at the Foot of the Alps*, European Anthropology in Translation 3 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 129.

in relating, reconfiguring or adding to the idea of the guide as a figure in knowledge production (identified in a previous chapter and in relation to the need of more "humble" epistemologies), I suggest that the idea of live editing as a kind of mediatic space makes it possible to conceive of affection and passion as qualities conducive to mediation.

Mediation Passion

The idea of affective impulses in processes of mediation allows us to connect the quality of being skilled to the practical need of employing the guide figure as an analytical tool. That is, the need to intervene and negotiate the relationship between the "author" and the editor. The guide figure emphasizes this need by virtue of the importance of her skilled engagement, whereby she (the author-editor-guide) mobilizes more general questions concerning the agency of an inquiry/research as intervention.

Conceptually, I have come to understand such a skilled engagement in terms of some sort of *mediation passion*. Following the idea of the guide as a trained position involving some sort of passionate subjectivity (think of both the example of Turi/Hatt above and of the ANG guides), the idea of mediation passion is, moreover, a sort of techne passion in the Guattarian sense – that is, in the sense of technology approached as an essential part of being human, and evolving from the ways in which human beings pass on their knowledge across generations, through modes of doing and valuing things.[491] In opposing the rather pathological epistemology of a subject separated from the environment or society (already pointed to several times), Guattari allows us to understand how subjectivity emerges from, or is immanent to, the transversal experiences of the world.[492] Subsequently, affect, along with a series of other flows, takes on a role in subjectivation.

491 Jacob Lund and Ulrik Schmidt, *Medieæstetik: en introduktion*, 2020; Bernard Stiegler et al., *Acting Out*, Meridian, Crossing Aesthetics (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2009).

492 Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*.

For Guattari, subjectivity can be thought of in terms of how the mental, social and environmental ecologies precisely amalgamate in methodological practice; in techne.

Hence, the idea of mediation passion covers an understanding of how subjectivity (as resulting from the interaction of these various flows) is a condition for "skilled visions" being a useful concept in disclosing the matter of practice; the senses, skill, and media plays a role in the formation of knowledge as being equally relational and technical in the sense of being part of constituting/producing time and place. The idea of mediation passion articulates passion as a quality conducive to mediation, and the guide as a trained position involving some sort of passionate subjectivity but without essentializing individual agency.

At stake in the seemingly contradictory idea of a mediation passion is thus the possibility of considering the affective knowledges of the assembler – how the guide's knowledge derives from lived experience. As W.J.T. Mitchell has suggested, life as such is a kind of mediatic space, within which our experiences, actions and exchanges take place.[493] A shift from representation (and its politics of "nature," "culture," "self" and "other") to mediation becomes a matter of considering an aesthetic interest, or passionate engagement in images and anecdotes. Images and anecdotes of the Arctic, for example, are both historical or contemporary testimony *in relation to* the historical or contemporary treatment that mediates their political bearing/significance, and are *situated within* several ontological settings. The idea of a mediation passion requires less of a shift from, say, a focus on "meanings of representations" in the manner of cultural studies to a media-philosophical focus on their operational agency (conditions of representations). How these foci connect, however, is key to a further consideration of the transmittable as a feasible trait of knowledge.

493 W. J. T. Mitchell, *Image Science: Iconology, Visual Culture, and Media Aesthetics* (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 2015), 114.

Live Editing as Table-Reading

Another moment in my research that afforded me a grasp of the politics of the transmittable involves Mead and Bateson, the two canonical figures and (impassioned) mediators in anthropology, as they appear in Brand's interview of 1976. As we have seen, Brand's transcript of the conversational interview is a historical reference like the many other references that appear in my writing. But the interview can also be considered a kind of found object. I have repeatedly used it as a script for table readings. On several occasions, I have organized different readers to read Mead and Bateson's voices aloud, and have often taken on an altered version of the role of Brand, the interviewer, who occasionally appears in the script posing clarifying questions.[494]

To approach the interview as a script, to be read over and over again, is a mode of revisiting the script as an image and a source. Every time it is revisited, in each iteration of the table-reading, it does something different. This is partly due to the table-reading format allowing me to invite other people to participate as readers rather than simply as viewers and listeners. More and different bodies are allowed to make different kinds of emotions and social triggers affect the relations played out. As a kind of found object, the historical interview with Mead and Bateson is activated as a script not only in a particular (and different) historical context, but also within the complexity of live editing as a spatial event. This makes it possible both to think differently of the script as a source, and about that which happens in the space

494 See excerpt from The Affective Economy of Doing Data (For God's Sake Margaret!) [a table reading], 2020

of its mix. Every time, I am left with a new idea for a possible reconfiguration of the format. If editing is recognized as knowledge production, reading emerges as editing.[495]

It is interesting to identify a vehicle allowing us to consider the ways in which any situation of transmission – fieldwork as "narrative," as "situation," as "temporality," as "experience" – produces reocurrence and open-endedness. There is a difference between reading a script and observing a performative reading of a script in a given situation. While the historical script is there as a source, the table-reading allows one to consider its performativity as a bearer of a significance; a first gesture towards "something more." The situation of guiding, in other words, produces something different from that which the guide guides through. The repeated reading of the historical script adds, and makes intelligible in a very basic sense, an understanding of guiding as a kind of differentiation.

What Is Being Edited?

Due to the Corona pandemic I have had to organize the table-readings on Zoom. This has given the experimentation an extra dimension; I have had to engage with different analogies, contradictions, geo-aesthetics attached to online meeting platforms – including of course the larger conditioning politics of Covid-19. While these, obviously, were never intended to the object of my research, the circumstances nevertheless added an interesting set of contingencies.[496] In addition to the performative

495 In the context of my artistic practice, Mead and Bateson's ethnographic practice is considered; in the context of the live editing situation as a method of transmitting a situated experience, Mead and Bateson's conversation about the use of cameras in knowledge production is staged. Live editing as an image practice, where production and presentation constantly merge, rubs against Mead and Bateson's conversation about the image in an ethnographic sense.

496 A virtual meeting platform such as Zoom obviously increases awareness of different contexts of "live" in relation to live editing. Moreover, as a space in which the domestic language of rooms has been adopted but in which participants sit alone, looking into a screen, never having eye contact, Zoom seeks suspension of disbelief. The platform's layers and levels of mediation simultaneously insert additional distance. Nevertheless, there is the question of whether the increased distance to ourselves and to our surrounding environment may potentially expand our ideas of what "our surrounding environment" entails, Moreover, if this question is regarded as an effect of being forced to rethink what liveness means in the context of a non-physical-studio, other effects are questions around the conditions one creates for guiding, or orchestrating, an experience.

function of Mead and Bateson's conversation, the contingencies of Zoom also, due to the subject of their conversation (cameras in anthropology), effectuated an awareness of the performance of screen culture itself. The scenario did not become a matter of transmitting a performance but about clearly making my research understood as an exposition taking place *in* as much as *through* the layers of mediation of Zoom. While the practice of live editing has a history in broadcast television, its use in the broadcast context of Zoom is more a question of producing the experience of a presentation than it is producing the presentation of an experience.[497] The aesthetics and organization of media become part of the image construction: its materiality.

This relates to implications of ethnographic or anthropological observation. The debate on practice and the construction of knowledge in anthropology, we realize, is deeply entangled with the (open) question of what, exactly, is being edited in live editing. An observation often repeated in relation to my table-reading experiments was that Mead and Bateson's conversation about the use of cameras disclosed a power game. When reading the interview transcript from 1976, the camera is centre stage. Mead and Bateson discuss the use of cameras. But read aloud, I repeatedly

497 The contingency of Zoom became an interesting environment when understanding my research methodology in line not so much with a tradition of staged live performance (and the problem and questions of how to document that) but more with a tradition of expanded cinema/experimental cinema essayism. Effectively considering Zoom a cinematic experience makes it possible to talk about the fact that part of what is so exhausting about Zoom is the limited nature of its ontological register; that we are stranded with the portraits of talking head. The kind of attentive presence played out in the performative situation collides with the extremely limited and directed viewing of a camera.

observed a gendered power dynamic between the script's two characters, a pair of anthropologists asserting that their methodological approach trumps the other's. Effectively, while my aim is not, of course, to resolve questions of knowledge production in anthropology, the implications of this entanglement of the field's disciplinary concern with knowledge production and the question of what, exactly, is being edited is a source of inspiration; it offers insights into gendered politics associated with the guide.

Moreover, it is worth keeping in mind how Bateson has gained a form of cult status in contemporary discourses on ecology, while Mead is often held to be a colonial and problematic figure. A gender-political perspective makes available, however, the possibility of understanding Bateson as celebrated because he is today read in the context of ecological crisis rather than for any innovative methodology in environmental studies he might have evinced – as an epistemological symptom rather than an active principle. That is, I understand a gendered reading, meaning a concern with the situatedness of knowledge, to disclose the risk of ideology: the risk that Bateson (and system theories) are being used ideologically, rather than as a way of securing/generating new kinds of knowledges.

A Gendered Perspective on Ecological Discourses

To explain, the transgender feminist philosopher Paul Beatriz Preciado has written that "feminism is not a humanism"; rather, he writes, feminism consists in exposing the colonial and patriarchal roots of European humanism.[498] People experience the world using their bodies, according to the different ways those bodies are constituted in the different locations in space and time those bodies find themselves. In the context of the Arctic, then, a fundamental feminist observation is that masculine ideals are

498 Paul B. Preciado, "Feminism beyond Humanism, Ecology beyond the Environment," Automies, 2015, https://autonomies.org/2015/07/paul-beatriz-preciado-feminism-beyond-humanism-ecology-beyond-the-environment/. Note, since the author changed his name, he has used the he/his pronouns.

woven into the narratives of polar exploration, alongside the very construction of the Arctic as a blank and empty – and, indeed, sometimes female – space that males could conquer, further making the region an ideal territory for colonial expansion. In Lisa Bloom's *Gender on Ice*, a seminal reference in a gendered reading of the Arctic, Bloom precisely exposes how "ideologies of gender were central to polar 'discovery'" in being connected to the dominance of positivist knowledges in the natural sciences; subsequently, in turn, polar exploration narratives "played a prominent part in defining the social construction of masculinity."[499] Here, Bloom applies a postcolonial perspective leading to questions of who gets to produce knowledge, and of what kind of knowledge is produced.

In post-humanist feminism and queer feminism, however, this observation is used to reduce humanism to a historical invention explicitly cultivating the sovereign, white, heterosexual, healthy, seminal body. Humanism is expressed as an idea of natural order, which manifests as a geo-political and historical order. In this sense, feminist epistemologies do more than function as a sort of commentary on the Foucauldian idea of authorial constraint; post-humanist feminist scholarship proposes fundamental "differences of perspective" understood not as "a plurality of views of a single world" but as "a single view of different worlds."[500]

What does this all have to do, then, with the use of Bateson's scholarship in the present?

In the first chapter, I discussed Arne Næss and Fridtjof Nansen, and how they, as protagonists of a "different" sensitivity to

499 Gender on Ice, p. 6

500 I am taking these quotes from the anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, while seeking to stress the importance of an ontological turn in anthropology for a wider mobilization of post-humanist feminism (e.g. in the sense of Preciado) and philosophy of science (e.g. in the sense of Isabelle Stengers). (Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "Perspectival Anthropology and the Method of Controlled Equivocation," *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 2, no. 1 (2004): 5, https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti/vol2/iss1/1/).

nature, play a major role in the literature on the ANG guide studies. Their sensitivity to "nature" makes them important figures in the broader field of deep ecology. Indeed, the degree to which their conception of, and approach to, nature contrasts to that of the nineteenth century male Arctic hero-conqueror, allows them to serve as historical mentors – guides – for today's ANG guides.

I deliberately turned to Bateson, by way of Guattari, as a critical response to the assumptions undergirding this. Guattari has shown how deep ecology risks reproducing a fundamental separation of the human and the natural by elevating nature to something existing apart from humanity, an observation widely recognized as explaining Batseson's relevance to discourses on ecology and contemporary anthropology.[501] Bateson's ideas of mind permit a concept of ecology inseparable from the human social sphere while exposing anthropology's historical blindness to non-human agents.

What a gendered reading of ecological discourses distils, however, is that certain post-humanist positions speak from "nowhere," or at least without a body – that is, certain post-humanist positions are unable to account for where they speak from. In this sense, a gendered perspective discloses the danger of a crucial political dimension of our ecological predicament being overlooked. Human agency has brought us to where we are (crisis). So, while a feminist account affords us the possibility of understanding human beings as being equal to all other forms of life, it simultaneously exposes us to the risk of losing sight of the subject's epistemology in a post-humanist philosophical reading.[502] One of the key scholars of neo-materialist feminism, Rosi Braidotti, writes that "our flesh is framed by the morphology of the human body,"

501 I am thinking specifically of Thomas Hylland-Eriksen's ideas of "overheating" and anthropology of accelerated change, as well as of his own description of his work as anthropology of a world-in-motion (Overheating: *An Anthropology of Accelerated Change* (London: Pluto Press, 2016)).

502 This is usefully pointed out by Mikkel Frantzen in his recent book. Mikkel Krause Frantzen, *Klodens fald: æstetiske og økologiske perspektiver på olie, plastik og andre hyperabjekter* (Askeby: Laboratoriet for Æstetik og Økologi, 2021).

always already "sexed and hence differentiated." [503] And a few lines further down: "To me, however important it is that we concern ourselves with a-subjective or non-human matter, the politics of locations of the subject is something we cannot let go."[504]

This usefully summarizes the proposition that "Feminism is not a humanism" as a philosophical response to the crisis of modernity, including modernist discourses on ecology, and the way I understand post-humanist feminism to be related to an ontological turn in anthropology rather than an expression of a flat ontology. I acknowledge that certain strands of post-humanist feminism might be about exactly that; certain strands of post-humanist feminism may subscribe to a critique of anthropocentrism more concerned with the speculative idea of a level playing field of equal "actants"[505] than with political economy. Meanwhile, the gender-political power-play repeatedly observed in the performative reading of the conversation between Mead and Bateson adds an important complexity: holding on to Foucault's critique of the authorial function, understood as a question of power and in relation to ideology, the performative reading permits this important insight with regard to the discourses that enable the subject's behaviour.[506]

503 Rosi Braidotti, Borrowed Energy, 2004, https://rosibraidotti.com/2018/06/29/borrowed-energy/.

504 Ibid.

505 Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007).

506 What I mean by this can be elaborated further with reference to Preciado's complex contestation of gender dialectics, precisely showing how much intellectual discourse, in itself, functions dialectically, through a mode of including the self in a theoretical approach from the position of "[the] smuggler between two worlds, the world of 'men' and the world of 'women' – these two worlds which might very well not exist, were some people not doing their utmost to keep them apart by means of a kind of Berlin gender Wall. … I want to give you some news from the 'found object' position or rather from that of the 'lost subject' – lost during crossing." Here Preciado offers a philosophical response to the crisis of modernity by expressing the need for epistemological transformation. Paul B. Preciado, "Letter from a Trans Man to the Old Sexual Regime," *Texte Zur Kunst*, 2018, https://www.texte-zurkunst.de/articles/letter-trans-man-old-sexual-regime-paul-b-preciado/.

If an epistemological transformation is in focus here, this is not a question of a turn to a flat ontology but to the possibility of a politics of plural ontologies.

The Figure of the Guide

Feminist epistemologies reveal the male-female binary as a fluid spectrum socially and structurally constructed. And they significantly expand the kind of knowledges considered to be interesting, useful, and valuable, to the benefit of my reading of the status and potential of the figure of the guide.

A gendered reading of discourses on ecology connects with the idea of live editing as a mediatic space, through the idea of mediation passion, when thought of as a procedure continually deconstructing itself and becoming something else. Every time I work with the method, it makes me consider it in a new way. In other words, a politics of plural ontologies does not only emerge as an artefact of theoretical debate; it emerges from my practice with live editing, having been produced in the course of research conducted in the context of a geo-aesthetical discontentment and a concern with the figure of the guide.

What arises from the politics of plural ontologies produced in this process is, itself, generative, and concerns the role that the artistic practice may take in relation to environmental issues. Having in mind how much image-making dealing with climate change is often expected to "raise awareness" about the Arctic crisis by showing something specific – struggling polar bears, for example – which is then supposed to change our minds, the figure of the guide challenges the ability of such image-making to "develop any kind of new critical language" able to "connect a concrete work and an ostensible cause," as the critic Christopher P. Heuer writes (for him, a "miasma of 'moving' Arctic experiences" relies upon "a very traditional sublime").[507]

507 Heuer, *Into the White*, 186.

Drawing precisely from a gendered reading of ecological discourse, the guide figure I am activating offers a more complex mode of querying the Arctic environment in its refusal to universalize the idea of the human. That is, while much image-making in the Arctic reproduces an "activist angle" at the level of spectatorship and production, where the Arctic environment is either compatible or incompatible with a genuine "human" I, the feminist epistemology's refusal of ecologies simply of mankind versus environment, or "humans in nature" permits the operation of other ecologies: ecologies of politics; of information; of history. Refusing neoliberalism's universalization of the human as the agent of global warming, a consideration of such a plurality of ecologies is crucial to the geo-aesthetical discontentment I am seeking to actuate. This occurs through what is specifically produced in the course of my fieldwork based research into the practice of live editing, and the subsequent understanding of cultural activities as amalgams of art and inquiry.

In pointing here to my live editing being fieldwork-based, I am pointing also to the connections between infrastructures and different approaches, sensibilities, and preconditions for doing fieldwork. I refer here both to the infrastructure that allows someone like me to come to a place like Svalbard in the first place and to the infrastructure enabling different kinds of art works/practices to circulate afterwards.

I have often been confronted with the expectation of being in affinity with artistic productions, for the sole reason that they have to do with Svalbard. But artistic research is not interesting or sophisticated because of the location in which it was conducted, or the location of the institutions that fostered it.[508] On the contrary, we are obliged to consider the ways in which Svalbard

508 I am reminded of Hal Foster's seminal essay *The Artist as Ethnographer?* in which he discloses how the artist conducting filedwork "projects his or her practice onto the field of the other, where it is read not only as authentically indigenous but as innovatively political!" Hal Foster, "The Artist as Ethnographer?" *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*, 1995, 307.

is reproduced through the mechanisms of its imaginaries. Doing so, we must consider what connects modernist discourses on ecology and traditional ideas of the kinds of image-making that feature the Arctic; and doing that, we must consider how these things are related to ideas of the artist as a productive subject.

Looking at Jette Bangs Films With Others

On this note, as a final example from my practice, I wish to return to my encounter with Jette Bang's films in the archives of the Danish National Museum.

In September 2018, the Hospital Prison University Archive (HPUA), a research project, physical space and radio-broadcast site in Copenhagen run by the artist Jakob Jakobsen between 2017 and 2020, hosted a collaborative project by Jakobsen and myself under the title *Where and Whereto? Sumu Sumullu?* Locally, I contributed formal treatments of Bang's material from the 1930s.[509] I also made Bang's films the subject of a series of conversations for radio conversations, recorded both in the exhibition space in Copenhagen and during a trip to Sisimiut in Greenland.[510] The exhibition space was, in other words, a radio studio in which an attempt was made to facilitate conversations, particularly about the role of images and other kinds of cultural production that have played, and continue to play, a part

509 One of my contributions was the already mentioned juxtaposition of *Inuit* and the forgotten film reels from the Danish National Museum. Another took the form of a 16mm film loop and a formal treatment of a digitized sequence of one Bang's film reels found at the Danish National Archive. Rotated on a vertical axis in Adobe After Effects, and lit it as if this virtual space contained spotlights, the digitized sequence was re-filmed with a 16mm camera, frame by frame. See http://hospitalprisonuniversity.net/eng/eng_index.php#displays_eng.php (display #8).

510 Jakobsen and I visited a high school in Sisimiut and talked with students, partly about Jette Bang and her films from 1940, and partly about the rock band Sumé and their record Sumut from 1973 – the other object of material culture that we examined in the context of our collaborative exhibition project at the Hospital University Prison Archive.

– affectively, politically, historically – in the formation of contemporary Greenlandic identity in the context of a neo-colonial and geopolitical Arctic.

In this sense, the methodological approach of my collaborative project with Jakobsen drew on an approach that Jakobsen has developed for many years: that of approaching the exhibition space as a reading room (where archival artefacts of material cultural are studied, read and discussed), and the exhibition as a moment of remediation.[511] Such an approach to exhibition-making suggests that the exhibition, rather than a "finished" moment of presentation, should be considered a process of investigation and thus production, through looking and speaking with an audience consisting in part of invited professionals and experts of different kinds. The exhibition thus allowed me to invite, among others, the visual anthropologist Anne Mette Jørgensen, who found Jette Bang's forgotten films in the archives of the Danish Museum in 2012, so affording me a more anecdotal and conversational insight into her work with Bang's material than her written PhD thesis.

The project with Jakobsen at HPUA touches upon questions of temporality and the exhibition relevant to my experimentation with live editing. How are we to understand, or refuse to understand, the live editing scenario as a form of exhibition (in its most basic sense, where people who are not directly involved in its material production are watching)? While I found in Brussels that it does not make sense to live edit alone, another question emerges: for whom does it make sense to live edit? Who are my audience?

I am increasingly obliged to consider whether live editing is something that simply cannot be done before a neutral audience. That is, I wonder if it needs to be done for, by, or with people who are all invested in one way or another, not unlike the audience

511 By remediation I am understand an exploration of relations between text, material and representation.

Jakobsen and I invited for, and encountered through, conversation broadcast on the radio, both in Copenhagen and in Greenland. May the live editing scenario, perhaps, be understood more like a science experiment?

I draw a connection, here, with the politics of the guide in the context of the figure's core function of exposing, or showing, something to others. That is, in being a performative situation, the guided tour is also a space, for negotiations and investigations, with all kinds of front and backstage politics tied to it. In the context of artistic practice and in relation to gallery tours, this is something Andrea Fraser has shown through appropriations of formal institutional gallery tours – as the fictional docent Jane Castleton, for example, leading a tour of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.[512] The mediation of conventional elements, such as the history of the institution and its collection, can also be mediated as a means to examine the structures and ideologies underpinning museums and galleries.

Yet, while I owe much to Fraser and the tradition of institutional critique, there is a dimension of the guide role which is more relevant to my practice and in relation to the idea of live editing as a science experiment; my concern with the guide is not so much about deconstruction as it is about maintaining a stance open to the acquisition of knowledge. This is fundamental to my propounding of post-future essayism as an epistemological strategy.

This implies the recognition of research as practice and as an ongoing and messy process often marked by failure, limitation, and plural notions of knowledge. Moreover, in complicating the fetishization of place, it contests the idea that the "Arctic" requires the labour of rendering something, even something tragic, visible

512 For example in *Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk*, which is a video from 1989 in which Fraser leads a tour of the Philadelphia Museum of Art in the guise of a fictional docent named Jane Castleton (See: https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/fraser-museum-highlights-a-gallery-talk-t13715)

and meaningful; it favours, instead, the suggestion that what is required is an interrogation of "the limits of Arctic visibility, of Arctic meaning, via practices that academia and the art worlds (as complicit in polar melting as any other capital-based forces today) cannot easily frame,"[513] as Heuer writes of the Renaissance Arctic in *Into the White*. And this connects the High Arctic as it appears in accounts of the period prior to its romanticization in the nineteenth century – as a condition more than a finite "place" – to critical contemporary art practices exploring the (unevenly distributed) effects of the region's crisis in the contemporary.

This, then, is what I mean by there being an additional dimension to the role of the guide to that played out in Andrea Fraser's deconstruction of institutional authority, and what I mean by it being disclosed as a politics of the transmittable. An additional dimension perhaps better grasped in the sense of an artist such as Dan Graham and his performance piece *Performer/Audience/Mirror*. While it may be a phenomenological inquiry into the audience/performer relationship and the notion of subjectivity/objectivity, his way of pointing to the role of an instantaneous self-perception for the representational authority of a performer's discourse[514] resonates with the idea of a politics of the guide. It is a question of disclosing fractures in powerful relationships between those who know and that which is known.

513 Heuer, *Into the White*, 190.

514 Standing in front of a mirrored wall facing a seated audience, he describes the audience's movements and what they signify. Then he turns and describes himself and the audience in the mirror. As Graham writes himself: "Through the use of the mirror the audience is able to instantaneously perceive itself as a public mass (as a unity), offsetting its definition by the performer (and the performer's discourse). The audience sees itself reflected by the mirror instantly while the performer's comments are slightly delayed. First, a person in the audience sees himself 'objectively' ('subjectively') perceived by himself, next he hears himself described 'objectively' ('subjectively') in terms of the performer's perception" (https://www.vdb.org/collection/browser-artist-list/performer-audience-mirror).

Capturing a Delay

Let me confess: the outcome of my live editing experiments has often seemed uninteresting, even terrible, to watch afterwards – at least at a first glance.[515] Often, however, after a while, when I look back at the material record of the event, something interesting happens. It is as if it takes a while before it is possible to grasp what is happening; it is as if there is a delay.

I have been confronted with this delay-effect in cases of live editing when I have agreed with attendees of an experiment that its outcome would not be screened anywhere and anytime outside the live editing scenario itself.[516] The idea behind such contracts as been to create a safe space for experimentation, and to defer a focus on the live-edited outcome in favour of an emphasis on the process. Yet I am increasingly concerned with live editing as a mode of capturing a delay, which might be the better descriptor for what the practice "produces." This is twofold, in being both a technical delay, due to cables and physical infrastructure, and a delay in terms of anyone participating fully grasping what is happening. Perhaps it even implies a kind of deferred recognition of what is happening. In that sense, the deferral is an aesthetic choice with political implications, manifesting as ephemeral situations, of which the outcome – as in my research – is a memory, a timeline, a material document, but not a film (or, rather, "a Film"). The negotiation of cutting and splicing, as I have tried to show, as a means of careful/engaged

515 "I was surprised that so many talented artists could come together and produce something so crappy," as a friend and colleague taking part in a workshop expressed it.

516 The idea behind making such an agreement has been to ensure a focus away from the "film product" and towards the collaborative filmic process as meaningful and productive in its own right. This was the case, for example, at a workshop at the Royal Academy of Arts in Copenhagen in 2020, and at a self-organized mini-school that brought together friends, activists and visual artists from both Sweden and Denmark in 2018. But when I look at the material output now, I feel we missed the point. And I would like to find a way to make an agreement that takes into account the potential of a delay.'

improvised synergising, connects to the idea of a poetics open towards moments of radical connections and re-connections; a poetics of how certain historical moments live on through particular forms and moves of cultural production.

Drawing from this, the figure of the guide is an image-producer more than an editor according to cinematic orthodoxy, as far as linear causal relations are concerned. The idea of capturing a delay connects with the guide as a precarious assembler. And the reason I like to include the *Where and Whereto?/Sumu Sumullu?* in this analysis is that it, in very particular ways, formed of the presentation-space a site for the reading of a generic image's concealed, potential, and unexpected implications. Here, we can speculatively rub Bang's *Inuit*, shot in 1940s Greenland against Grøndal's *Naturrikdom paa 78N* from the Svalbard of 1974. Something is generated, in this moment of environmental crisis, through the ethnographic friction of this rubbing. Differently, what is generated in this friction if we rub Bang's film with a visual ethnographic and anthropological reading of Morin and Rouch's *Chronicle of a Summer* from 1960s Paris?

I am struck by the idea that an ethnographic vision can be thought of as a kind of delay, both ontologically and epistemologically situated.[517]

Geo-Aesthetical Implications of Stakeholders in a Media Environment

The idea of live editing, as a means among other potential methods of producing delays, then, finally connects the two ideas with which I opened this chapter: the idea of stakeholders in the

517 This relates to the question of futurity discussed in the chapter on post-future essayism, as far as it relates to a potential discussion about how digital media are largely pre-cognitive. As the media scholar Ina Bloom writes, "the half second that the brain needs to connect from the detection of sensory stimuli to conscious perception corresponds to the microscopic leap in time that always exists between data" (my translation). In this sense, digital media increasingly externalize and operationalize pre-conscious sensations.

venture of a film (making filmic practice an environment for rethinking and focusing on relationships) and the idea that media has the elementary function of making syntheses possible across temporary constellations and historical situations.[518]

The stakeholders provide a kind of dense texture. They contest the idea of a harmonic model of mediation[519] – the widespread cultural configuration of "guiding" in the contemporary, discussed earlier. Guiding, as a social, temporal and often institutional practice, discloses an effect of mediation that is also a delay and, in this sense, a supplement to that which is being guided/mediated, not unlike the ways in which affects emerge as a significant effect of my practice of live editing. While such affective supplements may hold agency as effects of a practice, whether in live editing or guiding, they are constrained by materiality, bio-physical circumstances and the social prerequisites among those involved in the situation. While live editing is live, it is always constrained in ways similar to those in which particular contingencies resist the liveness of the guided tour.

In other words, as a practice both deconstructive and highly materialistic, with live editing I seek to destabilize modernist dichotomies without giving in to an idea of "free" or "detached" speculation.

Isabelle Stengers offers an interesting consideration of this in relation to the question of ideology and the guide figure, particularly when rubbed against the model of mediation as harmony. Explicitly denying any relationship with Kant's notion of cosmopolitanism as a political project of perpetual peace, Stengers applies the term "cosmos" to

> the unknown constituted by these multiple, divergent worlds, and to the articulations of which they could eventually be capable, as opposed to the temptation of a peace intended to be final, ecumenical: a transcendent peace with the power to ask anything that diverges to recognize itself as a purely individual expression of what constitutes the point of convergence of all.[520]

518 Lund and Schmidt, *Medieæstetik*; Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks*, Electronic Mediations, v. 21 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

519 Dahles, "The Politics of Tour Guiding."

This unsettles the guide as an instrumental figure; it serves to clarify that mediation is not a settled concept, but, rather, full of political contradictions and antagonisms; of alienations and over-identifications. Alongside a material approach to media – the idea that media structures how things are in the world and how things are known in the world[521] – Stengers accentuates the manner in which representations must be understood as involving the materiality of media in the broadest sense (including their technicality, discourse networks, cultural techniques and formations of knowledge). "Knowledge there is," she writes; what needs to be questioned is the self as "authorized to believe we possess the meaning of what we know."[522] In other words, drawing from Stengers, it is the implications of the understanding of a relationship between reasoning and technology as a politics of the transmittable.

This is to relate skilled artistic practice with environmental issues. And it is the struggle Svalbard embodies as a geo-aesthetical terrain.

On a very fundamental level, my urge to crack a regime of representation in relation to geopolitics is shaped by encountering Svalbard. The place is visually representative of an Arctic sold to us, at the height of twentieth century modernism, as authentic. It is, if this word designates the facts of thawing permafrost, its coal deposits, the necessity of management, of struggles of belonging. In my encounter with the hyper-constructed nature

520 Isabelle Stengers, "The Cosmopolitical Proposal," in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, ed. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press ; ZKM/Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, 2005), 995.

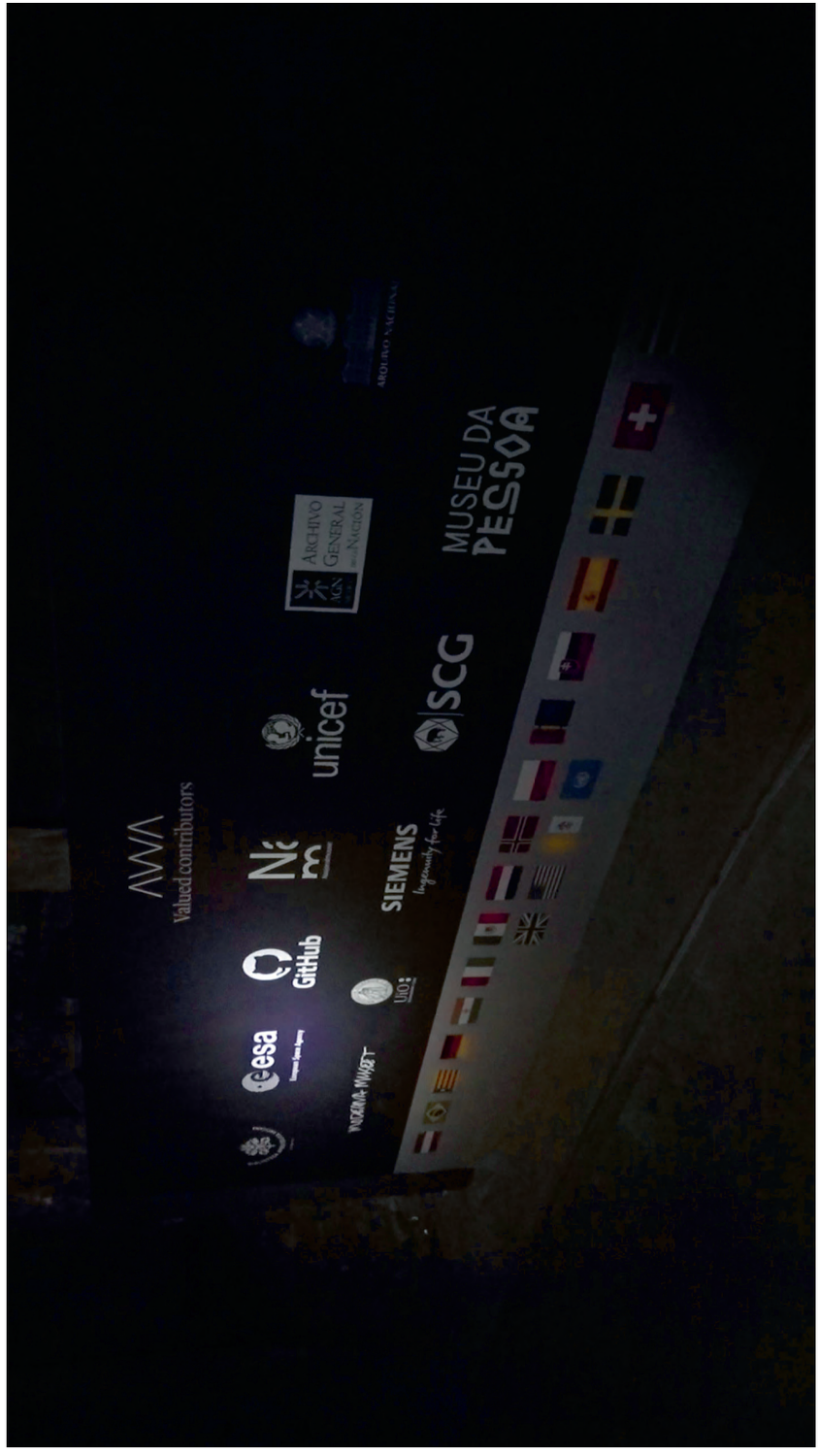
521 Parikka, *A Geology of Media*, 1.

522 Stengers, "The Cosmopolitical Proposal," 995.

of Svalbard, captivating and contradictory, the guide – whether embodied by the taxi driver, the polar bear guard, the guide at Pyramiden, the Arctic Nature Guide – has stood out as fascinating, stuck in the "sticky materiality of encounters" and their affordances for bodily experience, while living from a speculative economy of experiential value, narrativization and strategic envisioning; both ontologically and epistemologically situated, the guide serves perfectly as an analytical tool.

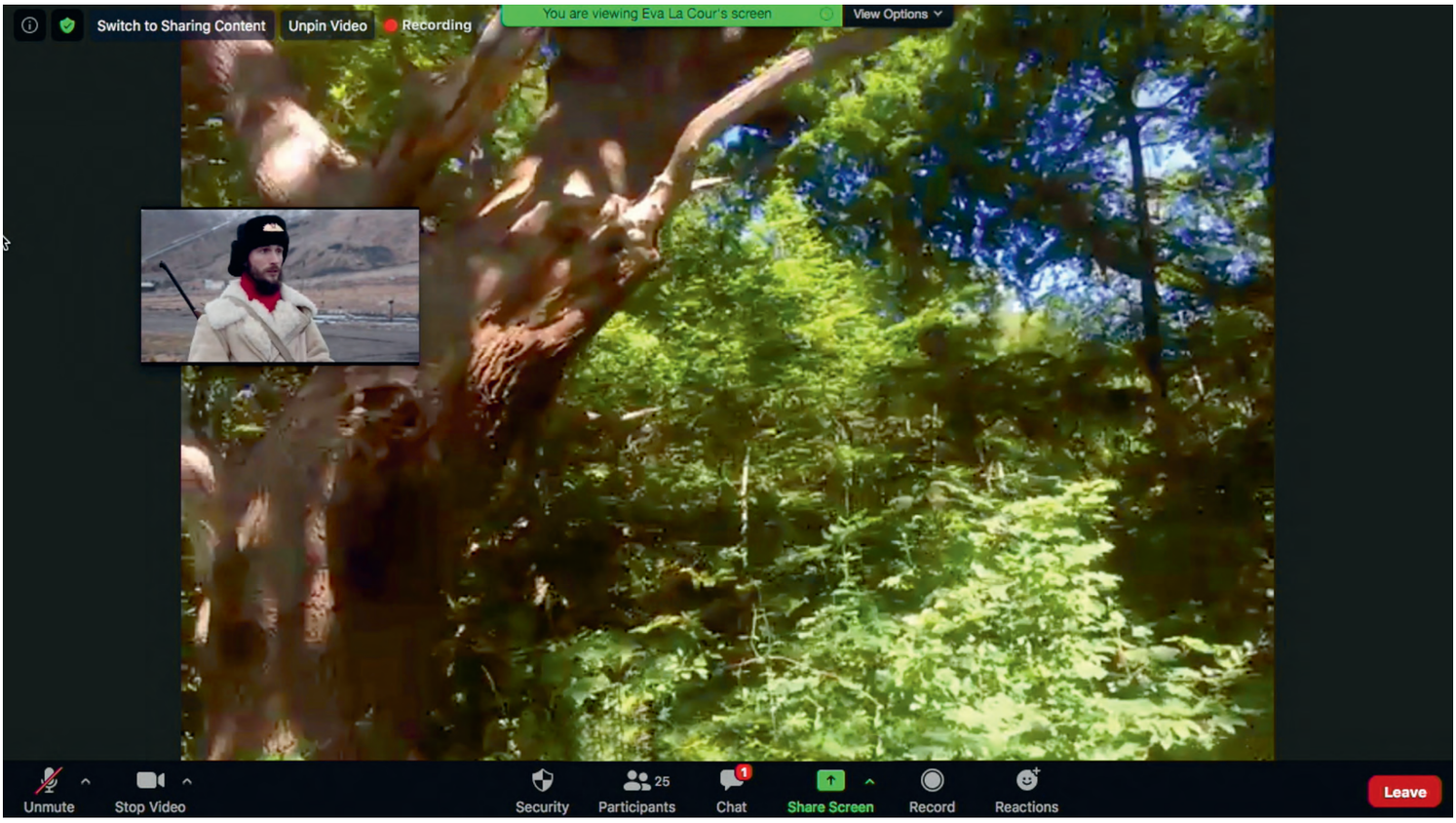
In speaking of the guide as a useful tool for navigation in the sense of a precarious assembler rather than as an author, then, I am fundamentally speaking about productive behaviour. For the many different reasons hinted at throughout this chapter, could it be that there is no authorship, only guidance – a form of action through which temporality is equally presented, produced and lived?

It is true that Svalbard belongs to Norway. But everything on Svalbard is owned by private companies or research stations funded by nation states from all over the world. This might lead one to conclude this landscape to be radically open. In exposing Svalbard as a place constantly narrated, the authorial function is revealed as residing in the authority to claim Svalbard a territory as much intellectual as geographical. But this is also to reveal Svalbard a territory that cannot be (totally) owned.

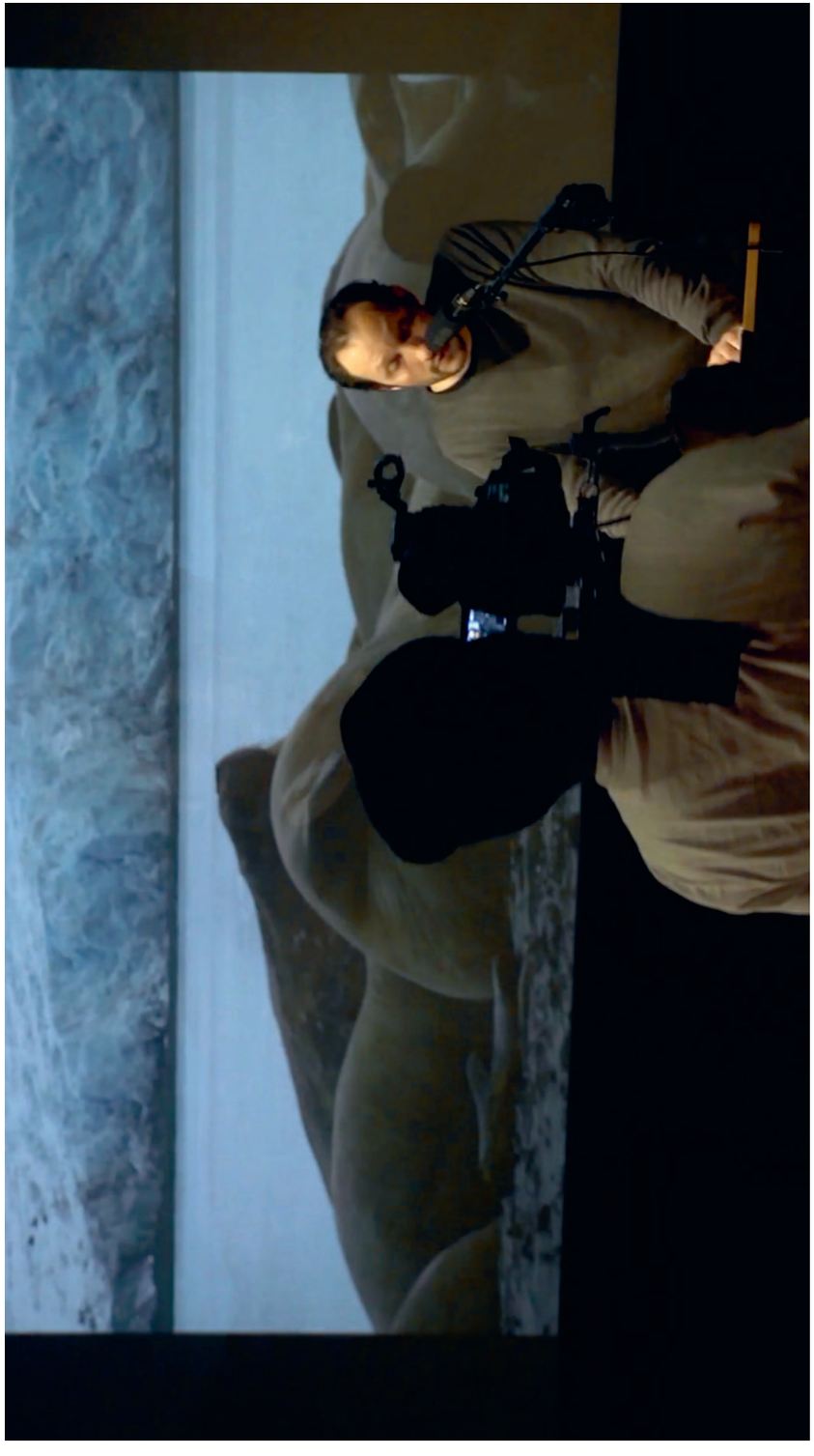


Videostill. Protecting World Memory, Gruva 3, 2021

Video still. M/S Polarsyssel, Hotelnesset, 2021



Screen capture. Live editing screens, Zoom, 2020



Video still. Live editing experiment, Bio Valand, 2017

After Word

A research practice like this resists a conclusion.

A colleague from Norway, born in Rwanda, suggests that we need be neither proud nor ashamed of our colonial heritage. Art, like science, relies on what colonial history has created – all the discomfort bound to the stories that make us who we are. And yet I'm a product of a system that seems to have continued, even in a period of so-called decolonial processes.

The research, then, seeks an intervention into the imaginary of Svalbard as an Arctic place.

If the industrial revolution's exploitation of coal served as the impetus for colonial explorers' ideas of the future, then climate crisis is the engine of my generation's need to radically rethink progress, growth and futuring – and, as part of that, images, thought and knowledge.

To follow an iterative approach is to enter into a process of re-configuration. "Problems have the solution they deserve depending on the terms in which they are stated … stating the problem is not simply uncovering, it is intervention", writes Deleuze.[523] A search for better questions to ask.

How may the guide epitomize the twenty-first century visitor to a Svalbard understood to be more condition than bounded place? Can the guide, as a figure distinguished from issues of authority and generality, nurture our relationship with place as an indeterminate possibility?

523 Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism* (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 15–16.

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Geo-Aesthetical Discontent: Svalbard, the Guide and Post-Future Essayism

Dansk resumé:

Med udgangspunkt i nutidens akutte og altomfattende økologiske krise bevæger afhandlingen sig på tværs af kunstneriske tilhørsforhold og akademiske discipliner med henblik på at udforme en intervention i forestillinger om Arktis. Designet som en set af iterative kunstneriske praksiseksperimenter med live-redigering søger ph.d.-projektet at demonstrere en geo-æstetisk utilfredshed med Arktis-repræsenterende diskurser og deres utilstrækkelighed i kontekst af koloniale terræner for visuel produktion.

For at undergrave den historisk monolitiske og singulære fortælling om Arktis fokuserer projektet eksplicit på den arktiske øgruppe Svalbard som et sted for billedskabelse med historisk betydning for kulturelle forestillinger om planetær fremtid, politiske og økologiske systemer. Men som en stigende udbredelse af begrebet "mediation" vidner om, kan billedskabelse ikke fuldt ud forstås med reference til repræsentationsdiskurser og kunstnerens og videnskabsmandens traditionelle eksempler. Derfor forsøger projektet at mobilisere *guiden* som en figur, der legemliggør, hvordan trænede praktikker – og dermed affekt, sensibilitet og omsorg, ydmyghed og passion – er iboende spørgsmål om mediering, når dette forstås som en åben proces og et påvirkeligt miljø. Antagelsen er, at der ikke findes nogen cirkulation af billeder og fortællinger uden for forestillinger båret af vores situerede forhold til vores omgivelser og beskrives i relation til

historiske billedskabere som Jette Bang, Emilie Demant Hatt og Johan Turi, Margaret Mead og Gregory Bateson. I den forstand betragtes mediation som en geografisk begivenhed og repræsentationer (af alverdens slags) blot som delelementer i relationelle konfigurationer. Det er det geo-æstetiske forhold.

Da det er et praksis-baseret ph.d.-projekt, undersøges alt dette imidlertid gennem en metarefleksiv (og politisk) eksperimentering, der behandler spørgsmål om teknologi i relation til affektiv og historisk viden. Placeret i krydsfeltet mellem traditionen for eksperimentel etnografi på den ene side og essayistiske tilgange til film som praksis på den anden foreslås det, jeg kalder *post-fremtids-essayisme*: en prekær filmisk metodologi og epistemologisk strategi for det levende billede; en fragmentarisk og momentan kompositorisk effekt, der søger at navigere og forhandle filmens rolle i forhold til et historiografisk fremtidsbegreb, tid og rum.

På spil er altså forholdet mellem produktionen af en kunstnerisk praksis og produktionen af Arktis med et kritisk mandat antaget fra den krise, for hvilken "Arktis" er blevet emblematisk i det globale vest.

Afhandlingens tre dele

Afhandlingen består af tre dele, der på forskellig vis afspejler forskningsprojektets bevægelser: gestaltet argumentation og teoretisk diskussion, detaljerede beskrivelser og brevskrivning samt anekdoter fra notesbøger og opdateringer på sociale medier.

Del 1 introducerer et historisk par – den danske kvindelige maler Emilie Demant Hatt (1873–1958) og den samiske ulvejæger og forfatter Johan Turi (1854–1936) – der karakteriserer det koloniale Arktis, som vi kender det, men som ligeledes afslører, hvordan koloniale relationer også kan være affektive relationer

og omvendt. Det er vigtigt, fordi det geo-æstetiske terræn, som guiden navigerer i nutiden, er baseret på historiske relationer og forestillinger. Med henblik på en refleksion over min egen billedskabelse i min introduktion af øgruppen Svalbard – gennem feltnoter og detaljerede beskrivelser – handler del 1 således om, hvordan Arktis konstant produceres; om Arktis som en uafsluttet mulighed. Foruden Demant Hatt og Turi er hovedpersonerne en gruppe nutidige arktiske naturguider.

Del 2 introducerer nye karakterer. Et hold svenske forskere anno 2016 sætter scenen for en kamp om fortællingen om Svalbard som et historisk sted for kuludvinding. I lyset heraf vises det, hvordan skabelsen af arktiske og miljømæssige forestillinger på og om Svalbard har materielle konsekvenser. Scenografien skifter herefter til Grønland med henblik på at adressere en grundlæggende problemstilling i forskningsprojektet: den euro-amerikanske naturalismes koloniale arv og vigtigheden af at gøre op med både kunstnerens og forskerens traditionelle roller som vidensproducerende figurer i en (neo)kolonial produktion af fortiden. Ved at redegøre for forskellige former for billedskabelse – blandt andet af Jette Bang (1914–1964) og gennem brevskrivning til en dansk botaniker, hvor jeg også anvender antegninger fra notesbøger – reflekterer jeg over betydningen af, at Arktis aldrig har været "autentisk". I modsætning til den udbredte måde at tale om menneskeskabte klimaforandringer og den økologiske krise som "tab" hævder jeg, at disse overvejelser muliggør en tænkning, hvor "tabet" består i de stadig mere umulige betingelser for historisk tilblivelse.

Del 3 beskriver mine performative strategier med henblik på at diskutere forholdet mellem guidefiguren og det, jeg kalder post-fremtids-essayisme. Igen vender jeg mig mod et historisk par: antropologerne Margaret Mead (1901–1978) og Gregory

Bateson (1904–1980), som diskuterer deres respektive holdninger til den bedste eller mest interessante brug af et kamera. Det åbner yderligere for en diskussion af guidens evne til at besvære illusioner og ideer om autenticitet, 'rent' forfatterskab og uforstyrret vidensproduktion. På baggrund af specifikke liveredigeringseksperimenter og scenarier samt noterede eksempler på, hvordan jeg konstant påvirkes af flygtige møder og intensiteter – for eksempel en vens Facebook-opslag – spørger jeg: Kan det tænkes, at der slet ikke findes forfatterskab, men bare 'guiding'? Guiding som en form for både trænet og engageret adfærd, hvorigennem temporalitet ligedele præsenteres, produceres og udleves?

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