Towards Decolonial Arctic Research Relations

Co-creating spaces for shared embodied experiences in a European research community

BY ANNE S. CHAHINE

Research Associate, reIMAGINE Arctic Research, Research Institute for Sustainability | at GFZ

NINA HERMANSEN

Associate Professor, Department of Child Welfare and Social Work, University of Tromsø, The Arctic University of Norway

NINA N. DÖRING

Research Group Lead, reIMAGINE Arctic Research, Research Institute for Sustainability | at GFZ

JAN-ERIK HENRIKSEN

Professor, Department of Child Welfare and Social Work, University of Tromsø, The Arctic University of Norway

ABSTRACT

This article is about ways of co-creating spaces of engagement that foster the development of decolonial research relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and practitioners. It uses the example of a specific European research community focused on the Arctic that is embedded in the history and lasting legacies of Nordic Colonialism. The article engages with academic practices that define these spaces of engagement, and we draw our empirical material from experiences in and observations from a joint workshop. We are interested in better understanding how relations are formed, and we place a focus on the body to take into consideration the varying histories and lived realities we carry when entering a workshop space. We highlight embodied and sensorial dimensions of our encounter to describe how we connect and communicate with and through our bodies. We suggest that this allowed us to co-create a space of engagement that enabled workshop participants to come together respectfully, considerate of various ways of knowing and being in this world, and reflective of their/our own positionalities.

KEY WORDS

RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING, SPACES OF ENGAGEMENT, DECOLONIZING RESEARCH COMMUNITIES, TWO-EYED SEEING, EMBODIMENT, CO-CREATION

OPENING WORDS

Out of respect, and to express our gratitude to those who have used a place before us, we always ask for permission (gulahallat) when we first arrive, and make sure that we take care of the place in a sustainable way. As academics, keeping in mind that movement and embodiment are the focus of this piece of writing, we want to honor the people who, day in and day out, engage in hard physical labor – especially Indigenous Peoples who engage in activities that connect their livelihoods to nature, such as reindeer herding, fishing, farming, and hunting. We acknowledge the importance of their work and ask for acceptance for our attempt to reconstruct some of what is essential for surviving and maintaining a livelihood (birgejupmi) in our academic practice. We hope and believe that this article can contribute to more equitable and decolonial research relations within Indigenous research and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

This article is about ways of co-creating spaces of engagement that foster the development of decolonial working relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and practitioners. It uses the example of a specific European research community focused on the Arctic that exists within the history and legacies of Nordic colonialism and which we, the authors, have been a part of. The article reflects on academic practices experienced and observed in a workshop that took place in Vienna, Austria, in Spring 2023, while acknowledging and making transparent the relationship between scholarly research and colonialism/coloniality. The authors write from the position of two Indigenous researchers from Sápmi[2], Jan-Erik Henriksen and Nina Hermansen, and two non-Indigenous researchers from Germany[3], Nina Döring and Anne S. Chahine, who have worked together for years.

Our empirical material is based on a workshop series connected to the research project *DÁVGI: Co-creation for biocultural diversity in the Arctic*[4]. The series aimed at strengthening the CO-CREATE collaborative, a collective of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers from across the Arctic and Europe (Co-Create Arctic, 2024)[5]. The workshop in Vienna provided an opportunity for members of CO-CREATE to reflect on collaborative methods, shared research objectives, and strategies for communicating their work (Morin, 2023). All sessions during the four-day workshop centered around knowledge co-creation, including different ways of working together and relationship-building. The workshop was co-organized by a team of Indigenous and non-Indigenous facilitators, who were also participants.

This article reflects on the lessons we learned from co-organizing and participating in the workshop and it is an example of working across knowledge systems. Our collaboration on this article continues this practice. The writing process started after the workshop and continued for over 1.5 years with regular online meetings. Between meetings, we either worked on individual writing tasks, such as noting down personal stories and observations from Vienna, or engaged in joint reading. All thoughts and reflections were collected in a shared document and later used as a basis for drafting the article's overall argument. Guided by our interest in understanding how relations are formed in social academic spaces we focus on the different ways we embody them. This helps us consider the varying histories and lived realities we carry when entering a workshop space. By highlighting embodied and sensorial dimensions of our encounter, we aim to describe how we connect and communicate with and through our bodies when coming together. We argue that paying attention to dimensions of embodiment was crucial to our process of co-creating a space of engagement that enabled workshop participants to come together respectfully, considerate of varying ways of knowing and being in this world, and reflective of their/our own positionalities.

In the following we first touch upon how the legacies of colonialism and coloniality affect our research collaborations. We then use three empirical examples from the workshop in Vienna, to 1.) show how room was made for bodies with different histories and lived realities; 2.) discuss the importance of embodied and sensorial dimensions in Indigenous/non-Indigenous collaborations; 3.) reflect on the relevance of establishing such spaces against the backdrop of coloniality.

COLONIALISM, COLONIALITY, AND BLIND SPOTS IN SÁPMI AND GERMANY

Writing as two Indigenous researchers from the Norwegian side of Sápmi and two non-Indigenous researchers from Germany requires critical reflection on colonialism and coloniality, and how they shape our research collaboration. The Nordic countries have long positioned themselves as standing outside colonial history and the enduring structures of coloniality (Eriksen et al., 2024). The need to correct this misperception has gained greater awareness only recently (Keskinen et al., 2016), drawing increased attention to how the Sámi were incorporated into settler colonial states through harsh racist policies (Kuokkanen, 2020). State-led systematic assimilationist policies from the mid-1800s onward are often emphasized as the consolidation of colonization (Minde, 2003), with the establishment of residential schools and detrimental educational policy having been central.

In the context of Norwegian colonization, Henriksen and Hydle (2022) distinguish between the state-led assimilation of Sámi from the 18th century (referred to as *Norwegianization*) and the brief occupation of North Sámi territories in Northern Norway and Northern Finland by Nazi Germany during World War II. During the latter, most inhabitants were forced to evacuate and German troops burned down Finnmark and the northern part of Troms as part of their 'scorched earth' tactics to prevent the Soviet Union from taking advantage of their resources (Hayashi & Lingaas, 2024, Olsen, 2020Henriksen & Hydle, 2022). Even though the occupation by Nazi Germany was relatively short, its impacts were profound: The rebuilding of the North Sámi areas that had been completely destroyed was turned into a process of 'modernization' by the Norwegian authorities, forcefully integrating the Sámi as 'good Norwegians' into the new Norwegian welfare state (Bjørklund Ivar, 1985).

The histories and their present-day repercussions in both nation states that we, the authoring team, live in, are often blind spots in the minds of the governments and civil societies. With regard to the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany during World War II, Alice Hasters (2023) ascribes German commemorative culture the function of creating discontinuity. She argues that present-day German identities do not develop as a continuation of what once was, but are disconnected from past cruelties (2023, pp. 120–121). Even though the atrocities of Nazi Germany in Sápmi are not prioritized in German commemorative culture today, their legacies are with us as we establish and nurture our relations.

In Sápmi, the underlying philosophical, religious, political, and racial ideologies that enabled the policy of colonial expansion in support of European imperialism in the past have a persistent impact on the present, which can be conceptualized as coloniality (Mignolo, 2013; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Quijano, 2000, 2007). The Norwegian Truth and Reconciliation[6] process is often critiqued for a lack of attention directed "to the political and administrative decision-making behavior of the governing levels, where Norwegianization is still being reproduced" (Josefsen et al., 2024). For instance, the ongoing practice of disregarding Sámi reindeer herders' rights and experiences in state-led development of renewable energy projects has been termed *Green Colonialism* by Sámi scholars and activists (Amnesty International, 2025; Fjellheim, 2023). Another example concerns Sámi language education in Norway, where pupils living outside the officially designated administrative area for Sámi language experience significant obstacles to

having their right to Indigenous language learning fulfilled (Hermansen & Olsen, 2020).

These interconnected histories and present realities have been the backdrop of our coming together as a mixed team of researchers, in turn raising questions around the mechanics of co-creative and co-productive research.

WORKING TOGETHER AND DECOLONIAL THINKING

> On Sunday afternoon, I felt as if the meeting room provided us with a little cocoon to pause for a moment and re-focus on what we had all come to Vienna for. The warm brick walls, heavy blue curtains, and the spirit of the people, who had all chosen to be here to work on our program, gave the place a cozy feel. As a co-organizer of the workshop, I felt a wave of relief washing through me. Finally, the pieces of the puzzle were falling into place, as the group was shaping and finalizing the program together. (Nina Döring)

> I remember observing how stressed you were, Nina D. *mu gaibmi* (name sister), and I wanted to assure you that we are in it together, as we had agreed to be, which is central to Two-Eyed Seeing. The puzzle fell into place because you were willing to let it happen. You didn't force your way through. It was something about the dynamics that made it possible. Already on that Sunday, we arrived as whole people, going beyond formal titles when we introduced ourselves. I remember thinking that this is an Indigenous-friendly social space. The whole atmosphere was important. (Nina Hermansen)

These vignettes were written to reflect on our workshop in Vienna in 2023. We had first met in-person during a writing retreat in Alta, Norway, half a year earlier. Together with other researchers we came together to develop a policy recommendation for the European Commission in support of the agency of Arctic communities and the rights of Arctic Indigenous peoples in research (Herrmann et al., 2023)[7]. We had varying experiences working in collaborative research settings with Western paradigms and/or Indigenous protocols in the Arctic and how different research norms and settings can influence the fabric of such collaborations. After the writing retreat we stayed in regular contact through various engagements.[8]

Jan Erik Henriksen (he/him) is a Sámi-speaking Professor of Social Work at UiT, The Arctic University of Norway, working on traditional Indigenous knowledges, decolonization, reconciliation, green social work, and One Health. Henriksen is the leader of the Indigenous Voices (IVO) research group. Nina Hermansen (she/her) is a member of the IVO group and a Sámi Associate Professor at the Department of Child Welfare and Social Work at UiT. She is from Alta, Norway, and has been involved in different projects in Sápmi, such as "Birth Stories", revitalizing Sámi language among young adults, and decolonizing methodology. Nina N. Döring (she/her) has a German background and works as a Research Group Leader at the Research Institute for Sustainability | at GFZ[9] (RIFS) in Germany. She is particularly interested in how academic institutions and funding structures in Germany need to change to better support just and equitable research practices and relations. Anne S. Chahine (she/her) positions herself as East German-German[10] and works as a Research Associate at RIFS, focusing on multimodal, collaborative, arts-based, and decolonial approaches to knowledge-making. Both Nina D. and Anne are significantly motivated by their first-hand experience of questionable – and at times exploitative – research practices in Arctic contexts during their graduate and PhD studies.

For us, decolonial approaches encompass 'decolonial thinking' and how this can be put into practice (Graugaard, 2020; Walsh, 2018). Decolonization is not a one-off event but an ongoing, unfinished, and utopian project in which the colonial structures that perpetuate inequalities and injustices must be addressed and dismantled (Coulthard, 2014; Gray et

al., 2013; Spivak & Harasym, 1990) both at the institutional and individual level (Kuokkanen, 2023). In terms of methodological frameworks decolonial approaches involve making visible unjust political and epistemological systems and hierarchies (Henriksen et al., 2019), disconnecting from them and opening up spaces for other ways of thinking (Brattland et al., 2018; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). This is relevant as we share a history in which Indigenous peoples have been confronted with colonialism's precursor and ally: science and research. In an article on improving research relationships in the Arctic, Elle Merete Omma recounts a Sámi joke about how "a reindeer herding family in the late 70s and early 80s used to consist of a mother, a father, their children AND a social scientist" (Doering et al., 2022, p. 1). This story continues with research results rarely being returned to the communities, or being misused as 'experts truths' to undermine Sámi land rights in court (see e.g., Fjellheim, 2020; Tyler et al., 2021). In consequence, our work builds on scholars who have advocated for equitable and sustainable research relations in the Arctic (see e.g., Buschman, 2022; Fisher & Doering, 2023; Graugaard, 2021; Ikaarvik, 2021; Kuokkanen, 2019; Vold et al. 2014) and beyond (see e.g., Battiste, 2016; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 1999; Todd, 2016, Wilson, 2008). Specifically, we would like to acknowledge the work of scholars and practitioners that find new ways of working together, such as collaboration (Chin, 2016; Criado & Estalella, 2018; Rappaport, 2008), co-creation and co-production (Doering et al., 2022; Ikaarvik, 2021; Yua et al., 2022), and the Two-Eyed Seeing approach (Bartlett et al., 2012; Peltier, 2018; Reid et al., 2021).

The concepts of co-creation and collaboration refer to the use of collaborative processes for knowledge creation (e.g., Ikaarvik, 2021; Yua et al., 2022), and both motivate and shape our joint work. Co-creation aims to contribute to societal change via action-oriented research, and can be considered "one approach to moving research out of the ivory towers and closer to the real world" (Greenhalgh et al., 2016, p. 421). Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall's Two-Eyed Seeing approach has been central for us. Rooted in Indigenous Knowledge systems, it is a guiding principle for bringing together Indigenous and Western ways of knowing in order to better understand and address complex issues (Bartlett et al., 2012; Reid et al., 2021). In this context, relationality is especially relevant, taking into consideration our interdependency with nature, community, and spirit (Peltier, 2018).

In this article, decolonial thinking and doing translates to examples of how we moved through a physical space together, using our bodies as sensorial devices. While knowledge co-creation and collaboration were the purpose for our coming together, Two-Eyed Seeing was used as a methodological lens to initiate and reflect on relations within our setting in Vienna.

MAKING ROOM FOR DIFFERENT BODIES

We take inspiration from other mixed research teams working within the frame of decolonial research approaches (e.g., Fisher & Doering, 2023; Jensen & Chahine, 2022; Jones & Jenkins, 2008; Svalastog et al., 2021) and understand the practice of introducing ourselves to be what Michif-settler scholar Max Liboiron (2021) call an "ethics and obligation with each other" (2021, p. 4). Our bodies have different histories in relation to the colonial project and can bring different perspectives to the table. They become representatives, figures of speech, and metaphors of all that came before us. As Mignolo and Walsh (2018) suggest, "modernity/(de)coloniality [is a] shared project" (2018, p. 4) and concerns us all, as there is no outside position in the colonial matrix of power that continues to shape our common world. This, in turn, requires thinking about how we physically come together in a shared space."

In our workshop, we used circular seating arrangements for adjusting to each other. The circle is a fundamental concept in Indigenous knowledge systems (Harris LaDonna et al., 2011; Janelle, 2003) and is often used in restorative justice (Henriksen & Hydle, 2021, Lauridsen, 2020; Zehr Howard, 2015;). Talking or peace-making circles are usually led by one or two facilitators who invite participants to explore preju-

dices, feelings, and concerns related to challenging situations. They may use a 'talking piece' (a small, dedicated object) as a moderation device. Only the person holding the talking piece speaks, while the others listen. Each plenary sequence starts with exercises of reflection and is closed with participants sharing what they take from the session.

> When we arrived at the university that Monday morning, we were in a good mood, laughing and talking about what we had observed on the walk over from the hotel. We continued our conversations while preparing for our session, fixing coffee and snacks, and rearranging the chairs in the small seminar room, moving them into a circle. Jan Erik, as our Elder, did a welcome ceremony with us, followed by some bodily exercises in the circle, stretching our hands toward each other, up in the air. That morning, we shared stories by bringing a physical item, stories about our previous experiences. Mine was an artistic postcard from a project about midwives and birth stories in the north of Sápmi, and how it all started for me with an Indigenous student exchange, in Aotearoa New Zealand, back in the day. Then we started to work together – to co-create together – while facing each other in a circle (Nina Hermansen).

What can we learn about relations through the way our bodies are positioned toward each other? What does it say about power dynamics between us as research partners? How can we become 'comfortable in our chairs', sitting in the circle? In a talking circle, we are all equal. No one is in front, no one behind. In her work, Sara Ahmed (e.g., 2006, 2007, 2014a, 2014b) uses chair arrangements in social gatherings as a metaphor for describing processes of becoming unseated. She analyses how spaces are oriented around certain bodies, and how the categories that one fails to inhabit become sources of discomfort (Ahmed, 2014a). This seating metaphor is helpful for reflecting on comfort and discomfort when coming together as a group, highlighting an affective state that is socially constructed and deeply embedded in political contexts (Ahmed, 2014b). Comfort entails a feeling of belonging, of not being a stranger: My body is not 'out of place'. It entails being part of the 'we', and not 'the other': My presence does not threaten the well-being of the 'we'. Achieving comfort requires mechanisms for being together, structures that enable the creation of a community, and that can cross the boundaries of the dichotomies of Indigenous–non-Indigenous and Sápmi–Europe. In our workshop sessions, the circular seating arrangement supported our ability to turn toward one another, share stories, listen, laugh, and gradually become 'comfortable in our seats'.

SHARING EMBODIED EXPERIENCES

A focus on balance and connection between body and psyche is common in family therapeutic and social constructive approaches (Jensen Per et al., 2019; Ulleberg & Jensen, 2017), as violations and traumas are often stored in our bodies as muscle memory (Batacharya & Wong, 2018; Pink, 2011; Snijders et al., 2020). Thommessen and Neumann suggest that 'helpers', such as meeting facilitators or social workers, must know their own preconceptions if they are to be able to assist others in vulnerable situations. They must reflect on how the professional caregiver is positioned in relation to others, and how they are influenced by their interactions, based on feelings, attitudes, and expectations (2019, pp. 14–16). Building on feminist theories (Harding Sandra, 1998; Haraway, 1988) and phenomenology (Zahavi Dan, 2018), they highlight that knowledge is not something outside the researcher, but something we produce as socially situated human beings. Our body is central here, and can be understood as a sensorial tool for experiencing and understanding the world around us (Merleau-Ponty Maurice, 1995).

> Having to move my body felt different from how I usually converse with colleagues; it is a different kind of connection. During the stretching exercise, for example, there was a push and pull between bodies moving through the narrow space of the hallway, trying not to bump into each other, respecting different levels of comfort, but also

> wanting to use this moment to connect, maybe to signal: I am here with you. I am here with you in this hallway, in this workshop, in this space of exchange and learning. And I appreciate you being here (Anne S. Chahine).

While using the body is common practice in the realm of social work and family therapy for mediating conflict and working through trauma, our adaptation of these practices explored how the body becomes relevant when applying a Two-Eyed Seeing approach. We considered it important to first build a relation to ourselves and then to other participants in the room. Building on the work of Thommessen and Neumann (2019), we chose various activities, such as stretching, power-walking, and communicative exercises, to center our senses and connect the mind with the body. Every workshop session started with strengthening the learning community (Dysthe Olga, 2001) and invited participants to engage in an active process of reflection. However, keeping the self-determination of each attendee in mind, this could also translate to staying silent and occupying an observing role. We also built on the importance of laughter, ending each session with a joyful physical exercise, such as 'the rocket' that invites everyone to 'take off' by raising their arms in the air above their heads and making a whooshing sound. This let us engage in play, enabling us to conclude sessions in a joyful manner and motivate ourselves to engage in the next session.

Our experiences showed us that embodied learning is not only effective in the realm of social work, but also for bringing together teams consisting of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers. Avoiding the separation of body and mind, we challenged the colonial project, as it allowed us to connect to ourselves, as well as the environment and people around us (Leon & Nadeau, 2018). Power relations shift when we *feel* and *sense* with more than one body. During the workshop, we took into account the conceptual positionalities of attendees as well as their physical presence and embodied experience. Through this approach, various opportunities were created by, and for participants to foster the building and strengthening of relationships. Almost all attendees were actively involved in preparing and hosting sessions, creating opportunities to co-shape the format and content of the workshop.

ESTABLISHING SPACES FOR DIALOGUE AND RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING

Our aim is to create spaces of engagement that enable us to be in proximity, to sit and walk alongside each other, to laugh with one another, to activate our reflexivity, and to build connections between different ways of thinking. If human thought is dialogical, knowledge production is inherently dialogical as well. Marshall's Two-Eyed Seeing approach reflects this. As a practice of co-learning, its strength lies in bringing together different perspectives for solving wicked problems. This leads back to the co-creation of social spaces toward decolonial research relations in a European Arctic research community. As Henri Lefebvre (1991) reminds us, space is never neutral; and in consequence, persisting colonial structures shape social spaces (see e.g., Mbembe, 2001; Said, 2003). When working together, physically being with each other in a seminar room in the heart of central Europe at the University in Vienna, we wished to co-create spaces of engagement that take these aspects into consideration. We understood the workshop as a miniature of the world that surrounds us, and an attempt to put theories into practice.

Here, we draw inspiration from Cree scholar Willi Ermine's (2007) concept of an 'ethical space' that "offers itself as the theatre for cross-cultural conversation in pursuit of ethically engaging diversity" (2007, p. 202); that is, a space that enables participants to remove themselves from the cages that occupy their minds. This is important, Ermine argues, given the massive influence of Western thought as an 'undercurrent' affecting Indigenous-Western relations (2007, p. 198). For Ermine, creating such a space allows shifting an "asymmetrical social order to a partnership model" (2007, p. 203), where people work at eye-level and are

reflective of their biases. For Margaret Kovach, an Indigenous scholar of Nêhiyaw and Saulteaux ancestry, Ermine's idea of an ethical space, as well as Marshall's Two-Eyed Seeing approach, can be understood as a 'shared space–liminal space theorizing approach'. This approach "focuses on how differing worldviews might coexist together in a non-assimilative, respectful manner" (Kovach, 2021, p. 190), and is not necessarily about the "colonial power dynamic between Indigeneity and Eurocentrism, as it exists within contemporary zones of contact" (Kovach, 2021, p. 189). We would like to broaden this perspective and argue that creating ethical spaces that allow sensing with diverse eyes and bodies aligns with a decolonial framework. Such practices can help participants actively address power asymmetries, reflect on their biases, and open up other ways of thinking, relating, sensing, and perceiving (Brattland et al., 2018; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Reid et al., 2021). This comes back to dissolving norms of what is considered knowledge, who gets to speak, who gets to listen, and whose bodies get to shape these spaces.

Central to the fabric of the workshop in Vienna was the back and forth between physical and conceptual activities, allowing plans to spontaneously give way to the group's preferences. We did not just 'do' or 'think'; we oscillated between these two stages, slowly dissolving hierarchies and distributing responsibilities. Flexibility was an engrained part of the design. We practiced what Walsh describes as "thought-actions-reflections-actions that give shape, movement, meaning and form to decoloniality" (Walsh, 2018, p. 17). The physical and digital social academic spaces that we established – in Vienna and with other activities before and since – can be considered other ways of being together, striving to embody diverse ways of knowing for building and strengthening our relations.

CONCLUSION

Our reflections in this article have necessitated thoughtful consideration, and we continue to interpret our experiences, communicate our insights to others, and intend to further refine our thoughts and practices in the future. We suggest that engaging with dimensions of embodiment in social academic spaces is central to establishing decolonial research relations. Based on our experience in a specific Arctic research community, we argue that European academia – with its blind spots regarding colonial histories and presents – needs spaces of engagement that bring together people without disregarding or trying to streamline different ways of knowing and being. These spaces should instead acknowledge and celebrate such differences as strengths and as a fertile basis for addressing the complex challenges we face locally and globally. Their co-creation can be understood as decolonial practice – one that experiments with alternative ways of thinking and doing. In our collaborative effort to work toward more ethical and equitable research relations within European Arctic research, we found that placing a focus on sensorial dimensions in a workshop setting opened up possibilities for building deeper understanding and connection across diverse ways of knowing and being in this world.

While the aspiration to co-create was our motivation for co-developing a space of engagement, the Two-Eyed Seeing approach was a methodological lens for us to think and work through the intricacies of collaborating in a mixed research team. What becomes apparent is the complexity of different elements coming together to make the establishment of such spaces possible. Caring for and deepening research relations across knowledge systems requires a long horizon, constantly reaffirming and negotiating our relationships over time. In such long-term commitment, we have found that a central aspect of working together is to arrive as a 'whole person', thinking beyond academic achievements and titles.

CLOSING WORDS

We seek to leave a place in the same or better condition than it was upon arrival. We also say goodbye by expressing the wish that those who stay and those who leave do so in good health. We hope that we have adhered to holistic health principles during this visit. Báze dearvan (stay in good health).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank the reviewers for their comments and questions, and the editors for engaging with our work. We would also like to thank the CO-CREATE collaborative, and all participants of the workshop in Vienna, who were closely involved in the experiences shared. In addition, we are grateful to the funder of the DÁVGI project, the BMUV, who made the execution of the workshop possible.

FUNDING DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

This research is affiliated with the work we carry out at our respective research groups and institutions UiT and at RIFS.

NOTES

[1] We would like to acknowledge the many other people that are part of these working relations beyond our author team, especially the partners around the CO-CREATE collaborative (Co-Create Arctic 2024) and who took part in and co-organized the workshop in Vienna. Even though the focus of this article is on the European academy, we would also like to acknowledge our CO-CREATE partners from beyond Europe, such as Nunavut and Alaska, bringing additional, valuable perspectives to the table.

[2] Sápmi is the name of the traditional homeland of the Sámi, the Indigenous People of Finland, Norway, Russia, and Sweden.

[3] Germany is a nation state in Central Europe.

[4] The DÁVGI project was a collaboration between the Research Institute for Sustainability | at GFZ, Sámiráđđi Saami Council, and Ecologic Institute, and was funded by the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV) through a grant from the European Environment Initiative (EURENI).

[5] The CO-CREATE collaborative developed out of the workshop series Ethics and Methods in Transformative Arctic Research (Research Institute for Sustainability, 2020), and its first instalment was organized by RIFS and the Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ) in 2020.

[6] The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was appointed by the Norwegian parliament in 2018 to examine the Norwegianization policy and injustice against the Sámi people, Kven people and Forest Finns, and was submitted to the Norwegian parliament in 2023.

[7] The writing retreat received funding from EU-PolarNet 2, the Sámiráđđi Saami Council, The Arctic University of Norway, and the University of Oulu.

[8] For example, we co-hosted the panel Sharing and Caring: Arctic Indigenous Knowledges

[9] GFZ Helmholtz Centre for Geosciences.

[10] Anne S. Chahine's lived experiences before and after the fall of the Berlin wall have shaped the way she approaches her work, providing sensibility towards the effect that unequal relations of power, biases, and preconceived narratives can have.

Ahmed, S. (2006). *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Combined Academic Publ.

Ahmed, S. (2007). A phenomenology of whiteness. *Feminist Theory*, *8*(2), Article 2. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700107078139

Ahmed, S. (2014a). Mixed orientations. *Subjectivity*, *7*(1), 92–109. https://doi.org/10.1057/sub.2013.22

Ahmed, S. (2014b). *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2nd Revised ed). Edinburgh University Press.

Amnesty International. (2025). *Just transition or "Green Colonialism"? How mineral extraction and new energy projects with free, prior and informed consent are threatening Indigenous Sámi livelihoods and culture in Sweden, Norway, and Finland* (p. 84). Amnesty International.

Bartlett, C., Marshall, M., & Marshall, A. (2012). Two-Eyed Seeing and other lessons learned within a co-learning journey of bringing together indigenous and mainstream knowledges and ways of knowing. *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*, *2*, 331–340. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13412-012-0086-8

Batacharya, S., & Wong, Y. R. (2018). *Sharing Breath: Embodied Learning and Decolonization*. AU Press.

Battiste, M. (2016). *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit* (Reprint Edition). Purich Publishing.

Bjørklund Ivar. (1985). *Fjordfolket i Kvænangen: Fra samisk samfunn til norsk utkant 1550-1980*. Universitetsforlaget.

Brattland, C., Kramvig, B., & Verran, H. (2018). Doing Indigenous Methodologies: Toward a Practice of the "Careful Partial Participant." *Ab-Original*, *2*(1), 74–96. https://doi.org/10.5325/aboriginal.2.1.0074

Buschman, V. (2022). Arctic Conservation in the Hands of Indigenous Peoples. *The Wilson Quarterly*. https://www.wilsonquarterly.com/quarterly/the-new-north/arctic-conservation-in-the-hands-of-indigenous-peoples

Chin, E. (2016). Collaboration: Deviation. *Society for Cultural Anthropology*. https://culanth.org/fieldsights/collaboration-deviation

Co-Create Arctic. (2024, November 25). *Home*. https://co-create-arctic.org/

Coulthard, G. S. (2014). *Red skin, white masks: Rejecting the colonial politics of recognition*. University of Minnesota Press.

Criado, T. S., & Estalella, A. (Eds.). (2018). *Experimental Collaborations: Ethnography through Fieldwork Devices* (1st ed.). Berghahn Books. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvw04cwb

Doering, N., Dudeck, S., Elverum, S., Fisher, C., Henriksen, J. E., Herrmann, T. M., Kramvig, B., Laptander, R., Milton, J., Omma, E. M., Saxinger, G., Scheepstra, A. J. M., & Wilson, K. (2022). Improving the relationships between Indigenous rights holders and researchers in the Arctic: An invitation for change in funding and collaboration. *Environmental Research Letters*, *17*(6), Article 6. https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/ac72b5

Dysthe, O. (2001). *Dialog, samspel og læring*. Abstrakt forlag.

Eriksen, K. G., Jore, M. K., Loftsdóttir, K., Mikander, P., & Sund, L. (2024). Education and Coloniality in the Nordics. *Nordisk tidsskrift for pedagogikk og kritikk*, *10*(3), Article 3. https://doi.org/10.23865/ntpk.v10.6338

Ermine, W. (2007). The Ethical Space of Engagement. *Indigenous Law Journal*, *6*(1), Article 1.

Fisher, C., & Doering, N. N. (2023). Shijyaa haa research: Reflections on positionality, relationality and commonality in Arctic research. *Ethical Space: International Journal of Communication Ethics*, *2023*(2/3). https://doi.org/10.21428/0af3f4c0.31584421

Fjellheim, E. M. (2020). Through our stories we resist Decolonial perspectives on south Saami history, indigeneity and rights. In A. Breidlid & R. Krøvel (Eds.), *Indigenous Knowledges and the Sustainable Development Agenda* (1st ed., pp. 207–226). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367853785

Fjellheim, E. M. (2023). "You Can Kill Us with Dialogue:" Critical Perspectives on Wind Energy Development in a Nordic-Saami Green Colonial Context. *Human Rights Review*, *24*(1), 25–51. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12142-023-00678-4

Graugaard, N. D. (2020). *Tracing seal: Unsettling narratives of kalaallit seal relations.* [PhD Dissertation]. Aalborg University.

Graugaard, N. D. (2021). Arctic Auto-Ethnography: Unsettling Colonial Research Relations. In A. M. Hansen & C. Ren (Eds.), *Collaborative research methods in the Arctic: Experiences from Greenland* (pp. 33–50). Routledge.

Gray, M., Coates, J., Bird, M. Y., & Hetherington, T. (2013). Scoping the Terrain of Decolonization. In *Decolonizing Social Work* (pp. 7–26). Ashgate Pub. Company.

Greenhalgh, T., Jackson, C., Shaw, S., & Janamian, T. (2016). Achieving Research Impact Through Co-creation in Community-Based Health Services: Literature Review and Case Study. *The Milbank Quarterly*, *94*(2), 392–429. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0009.12197

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, *14*(3), Article 3. JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066

Harding, S. (1998). *Is science multicultural?: Postcolonialisms, feminisms, and epistemologies*. Indiana University Press.

Harris, L., Sachs, S. M., & Morris, B. (2011). *Re-creating the circle: The renewal of American Indian self-determination*. University of New Mexico Press.

Hasters, A. (2023). *Identitätskrise* (3rd ed.). hanserblau.

Hayashi, N., & Lingaas, C. (Eds.). (2024). *Honest Errors? Combat Decision-Making 75 Years After the Hostage Case*. T.M.C. Asser Press. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6265-611-6

Henriksen, J. E., & Hydle, I. (2021). Refleksjonsverksted som ledelsesverktøy i NAV. In A. A. Kane & Ø. Spjelkavik (Eds.), *Arbeidsinkludering, læring og innovasjon i NAV* (Print, pp. 381–408). Orkana Akademisk. https://doi.org/10.33673/OOA20211/15

Henriksen, J. E., & Hydle, I. (2022). Sámi reindeer herding as resilient way of life. In *The Routledge International Handbook of Indigenous Resilience* (1st ed., pp. 257–270). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003048428-22

Henriksen, J. E., Hydle, I. M., & Kramvig, B. (2019). *Recognition, Reconciliation and Restoration: Applying a Decolonized Understanding in Social Work and Healing Processes.* Orkana forlag. https://doi.org/10.33673/OOA20201

Hermansen, N., & Olsen, K. (2020). Learning the Sámi language outside of the Sámi core area in Norway. *Acta Borealia*, *37*(1–2), 63–77. https://doi.org/10.1080/08003831.2020.1751410

Herrmann, T. M., Alfani, F. B., Chahine, A., Doering, N., Dudeck, S., Elster, J., Fjellheim, E., Henriksen, J. E., Hermansen, N., Holmberg, A., Kramvig, B., Keskitalo, A. M. N., Omma, E. M., Saxinger, G., Scheepstra, A., & Schot, J. van der. (2023). *Comprehensive Policy-Brief to the EU Commission. Roadmap to Decolonial Arctic Research*. University of Oulu, Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, The Indigenous Voices (IVO) research group – Álgoálbmogii jienat, Arctic University of Norway UiT, Saami Council. https://phaidra.univie.ac.at/detail/o:1653557

Ikaarvik. (2021, December 22). *ScIQ: An Invitation.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPomVTav90k

Janelle, S. (2003). Peacemaking Circles: The Original Dispute Resolution of Aboriginal People Emerges as the New Alternative Dispute Resolution. *Hamline Journal of Public Law and Policy*, *24*(2), 329–367.

Jensen, L. L., & Chahine, A. S. (2022). "It's a bit like saying: I don't see colour": Unpacking Coloniality in Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland) through Epistolary Collaborative Practice. *Collaborative Anthropologies*, *15*(1), 1–31. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/cla.2022.a936632

Jensen Per, Ulleberg Inger, Jensen Per, & Ulleberg Inger. (2019). *Mellom ordene: Kommunikasjon i profesjonell praksis* (2. udgave.). Gyldendal.

Jones, A., & Jenkins, K. (2008). Rethinking Collaboration: Working the Indigene-Colonizer Hyphen. In N. Denzin, Y. Lincoln, & L. Smith, *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* (pp. 471–486). SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483385686.n23

Josefsen, E., Broderstad, E. G., & Hernes, H.-K. (2024). Sannhet for forsoning?: Om den norske sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonens rapport. *Nytt norsk tidsskrift*, *41*(1), 72–81. https://doi.org/10.18261/nnt.41.1.8

Keskinen, S., Tuori, S., Irni, S., & Mulinari, D. (2016). *Complying With Colonialism: Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region*. Routledge.

Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations and contexts*. University of Toronto Press.

Kovach, M. (2021). *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts* (Second edition). University of Toronto Press.

Kuokkanen, R. (2019). *Restructuring Relations: Indigenous Self-Determination, Governance, and Gender*. Oxford University Press.

Kuokkanen, R. (2020). Reconciliation as a Threat or Structural Change? The Truth and Reconciliation Process and Settler Colonial Policy Making in Finland. *Human Rights Review*, *21*(3), 293–312. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12142-020-00594-x

Kuokkanen, R. (2023). Are Reindeer the New Buffalo? Climate Change, the Green Shift, and Manifest Destiny in Sápmi. *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*, *22*(1), 11–33.

Lauridsen, M. (2020). *Læring i sirkel*. https://doi.org/10.33673/OOA20212/2

Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space* (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). Wiley-Blackwell.

Leon, A. Y., & Nadeau, D. (2018). Embodying Indigenous Resurgence: "All Our Relations" Pedagogy. In S. Batacharya & Y. R. Wong, *Sharing Breath: Embodied Learning and Decolonization*. AU Press.

Liboiron, M. (2021). *Pollution is colonialism*. Duke University Press.

Mbembe, J. A. (2001). *On the Postcolony*. University of California Press.

Merleau-Ponty Maurice. (1995). *Kroppens fenomenologi*. Pax.

Mignolo, W. D. (2013). *Globalization and the Decolonial Option* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315868448

Mignolo, W. D., & Walsh, C. E. (2018). *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11g9616

Minde, H. (2003). Assimilation of the Sami – Implementation and Consequences1. *Acta Borealia*, *20*(2), 121–146. https://doi.org/10.1080/08003830310002877

Morin, E. (2023, April). *Building a network for sustainable research relationships.* Research Institute for Sustainability. https://www.rifs-potsdam.de/en/blog/2023/04/building-network-sustainable-research-relationships

Morin, E., Chahine, A. S., & Doering, N. (2024, July 15). Sharing and Caring: Arctic Indigenous Knowledges and Co-Creation. Research Institute for Sustainability Blog. https://www.rifs-potsdam.de/en/blog/2024/07/sharing-and-caring-arctic-indigenous-knowledges-and-co-creation

Olsen, P. K. (2020). *Jevnet med jorden: Brenningen av Finnmark og Nord-Troms 1944*. Aschehoug.

Peltier, C. (2018). An Application of Two-Eyed Seeing: Indigenous Research Methods With Participatory Action Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *17*, t. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918812346

Pink, S. (2011). From embodiment to emplacement: Re-thinking competing bodies, senses and spatialities. *Sport, Education and Society*, *16*(3), 343–355. https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2011.565965

Quijano, A. (2000). Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America. *Nepantla: Views from South*, *1*(3), Article 3.

Quijano, A. (2007). Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality. *Cultural Studies*, *21*(2–3), Article 2–3. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601164353

Rappaport, J. (2008). Beyond Participant Observation: Collaborative Ethnography as Theoretical Innovation. *Collaborative Anthropologies*, *1*(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.1353/cla.0.0014

Reid, A. J., Eckert, L. E., Lane, J., Young, N., Hinch, S. G., Darimont, C. T., Cooke, S. J., Ban, N. C., & Marshall, A. (2021). "Two-Eyed Seeing": An Indigenous framework to transform fisheries research and management. *Fish and Fisheries*, *22*(2), 243–261. https://doi.org/10.1111/faf.12516

Research Institute for Sustainability. (2020, January 1). *Ethics and Methods in Arctic Transformative Research (WEMA)*. https://www.rifs-potsdam.de/en/research/ethics-and-methods-arctic-transformative-research-wema

Said, E. W. (2003). *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (25th Anniversary Ed with 1995 Afterword Ed). Penguin Classics.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples.* Zed books.

Snijders, T., Aussieker, T., Holwerda, A., Parise, G., van Loon, L. J. C., & Verdijk, L. B. (2020). The concept of skeletal muscle memory: Evidence from animal and human studies. *Acta Physiologica*, *229*(3), e13465. https://doi.org/10.1111/apha.13465

Spivak, G. C., & Harasym, S. (1990). *The post-colonial critic: Interviews, strategies, dialogues*. Routledge.

Svalastog, A. L., Wilson, S., Gaski, H., Senior, K., & Chenhall, R. (2021). Double perspective in the Colonial present. *Social Theory & Health*. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41285-020-00156-8

Thommessen, C. S., & Neumann, C. B. (2019). *Gode hjelpere kjenner seg selv Traumebevisst omsorg i arbeid med barn og unge*. Cappelen Damm Akademisk. https://utdanning.cappelendamm.no/_gode-hjelpere-kjenner-seg-selv-cathrine-scharff-thommessen-cecilie-basberg-neumann-9788202651220

Todd, Z. (2016). An Indigenous Feminist's Take On The Ontological Turn: 'Ontology' Is Just Another Word For Colonialism. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, *29*(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12124

Tyler, N. J. C., Hanssen-Bauer, I., Førland, E. J., & Nellemann, C. (2021). The Shrinking Resource Base of Pastoralism: Saami Reindeer Husbandry in a Climate of Change. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*. *4*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2020.585685

UiT. (2024, June 25). *EU-prosjekt skal styrke arktiske kystområder*. https://uit.no/nyheter/artikkel?p_document_id=850264

Ulleberg, I., & Jensen, P. (2017). *Systemisk veiledning i profesjonell praksis*. Fagbokforlaget.

Vold, V., Graugaard, N. D., Christensen, M. E., & Lassen, H. B. (2024, July 14). Ny grønlandsk forskning: Fra vestlige til inuitiske perspektiver. *Baggrund*. https://baggrund.com/2024/07/14/ny-groenlandsk-forskning-fra-vestlige-til-inuitiske-perspektiver/

Walsh, C. E. (2018). Decoloniality in/as Praxis. In W. D. Mignolo & C. E. Walsh (Eds.), *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (pp. 13–103). Duke University Press, Duke University Press Books. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11g9616

Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Fernwood Pub.

Yua, E., Raymond-Yakoubian, J., Daniel, R., & Behe, C. (2022). A framework for co-production of knowledge in the context of Arctic research. *Ecology and Society*, *27*(1). https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-12960-270134

Zahavi, D. (2018). *Phenomenology: The Basics* (First edition.). Routledge.

Zehr, H. (2015). *Little Book of Restorative Justice: Revised and Updated*. Good Books.