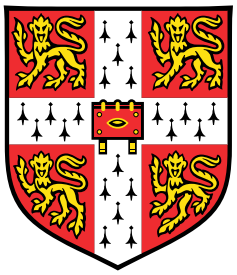
Moving Worlds Through Moving Pictures: Exploring the Emancipatory Force of the Contemporary Sámi Film Industry



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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work, and includes nothing that is the outcome of work done in collaboration with others, except where explicitly specified in the text and acknowledgements. This work has not been submitted in whole or in part for a degree at any other University. The dissertation does not exceed the word limit of 20,000 words, excluding the cover page, acknowledgements, table of contents, table of research participants, bibliography and filmography.

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Abstract

This dissertation collaborates with the insights of an assemblage of seven individuals involved in the indigenous film industry in the Nordic Arctic. Assisted by the qualified knowledge of this collection of film directors, screenwriters, producers, festival directors, programmers, academics and artists and experience as an audience member at this year's Tromsø International Film Festival - the thesis locates 'openings' for dialogue between indigenous and majority cultures. The essay argues that the Sámi film industry intentionally harnesses hybridity, creating a window of exchange and a mutual moulding between diverse worlds of experience. Tracing back an ethic of universality propagated by European Enlightenment thought, I seek to challenge the narrow notions that have confined Indigenous ways of knowing and being. The dissertation locates power in plurality by investigating the structures and relations that constitute the dynamism of the contemporary Sámi film industry, posing it as an articulation of indigenous creative sovereignty that works to resist the expectations and dichotomies imposed from outside.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Movies possess a unique ability to move: stir, rouse, and transport. The moving image has inspired, fascinated and allured since its inception in the late 19th century; film injects life into a subject matter, animating the world around us in captivating and evocative ways. Such dynamism is characteristic of the Arctic region, where the environment and its inhabitants are in flux. In the Arctic, "nothing stands still" (Bravo, 2022: 206). A flux exacerbated by the transformative nature of climate change, the alteration of land and livelihoods within the region demands different "formations of being-knowing-doing" (Escobar, 2012: 76). I argue that climate change does not signify a moment of unification for humanity, but instead makes visible the inter-existence of multiple worlds. But how do we create paths between these different communities and cultures?

Storytelling is one way we might conjure fruitful openings for dialogue between disparate perspectives and ways of existing (Guttorm, Kantonen and Kramvig, 2019). Film is an enlightening force in this regard (Read, 2018). Taking the multifarious notion of 'enlightenment' as a conceptual entry point to investigate the illuminating quality of film, I suggest that acknowledging the long durée of European Enlightenment thought acts as an essential foundation in unpacking the establishment of an authoritative singular worldview and the associated abuses enacted towards Indigenous epistemes. This Enlightenment impulse informs contemporary "redemptive fantasies around equality and diversity", desiring to circumvent history without altering ongoing colonial relations (Reeploeg, 2023: 3). Determined to move away from singular narratives and confining dichotomies, this dissertation embraces the 'pluriverse', a concept that refers to the inter-existence of multiple worlds, as an emancipatory notion (Kuokkanen, 2000; Escobar, 2018; Mignolo, 2018). I frame the thesis as a search for 'openings': a quest not defined by perfection but by identifying possibilities and potentialities. The Sámi film industry is a network constellation that resists homogenous narratives, traversing time and space: using the past to look forward, and operating between spatial scales.

Collaborating with the insights of seven representatives proximate to the Sámi film industry, having established relationships attending the Tromsø International Film Festival, this dissertation does not engage in filmic analysis. Instead, it attempts to locate the spaces in which Sámi creative sovereignty might be articulated, exploring how notions of resistance and emancipation emerge within the confines of the majority societies that the Sámi inhabit. Despite histories of grossly unequal power, Sámi forms of cultural infrastructure have evolved and persisted. The flourishing contemporary Sámi film industry is in a moment of action, harnessing the inherent hybridity of the "in-between" space between Indigenous and majority cultures (Greenblatt, 1991) to create a window of exchange and mutual moulding between multiple worlds.

1.2 Contextualising This Research

1.2.1 Colonial Geographies of the Nordic Arctic

In interrogating the dynamics of the modern Norwegian state and its relationship towards its Indigenous population, it is imperative to acknowledge the nation's colonial past. There persists an unwillingness to recognise the imperial history of the prosperous, social democracies of northern Europe. Still, the colonisation of Sámi territory and the forced assimilation of Sámi people into Nordic society was a crucial component of state formation and is a persistent dynamic that dictates Sámi life today (Greaves, 2018). The only formally recognised Indigenous group by the European Union, the Sámi are a transnational population whose traditional territory (Sápmi) comprises the northern parts of the Scandinavian and Kola peninsulas in modern-day Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. It is estimated that 100,000 Sámi live across the four nations, over half of which live in Norway. Whilst this dissertation bases its primary research in Norway, it is essential to acknowledge that the nation-state borders are an artificial imposition on the Sámi population, who, until forceful incorporation into nationalist ideologies, led semi-nomadic lifestyles in an un-demarcated homeland.

Archaeological evidence suggests human presence in Sápmi since the end of the last ice age. Thus, the Sámi and non- Sámi populations would have engaged in commercial and social encounters for centuries. Still, these interactions were increasingly defined by overt

domination of the Sámi population from the 16th century onwards at the hands of European peoples of Norse and Germanic descent. Occupation of Sámi land and lives was partially motivated by a strategic imperative to consolidate state power, as Sápmi resided between the rival Danish-Norwegian, Swedish and Russian polities (Greaves, 2018). A state-building process ensued, intended to render Sápmi and its people legible to the sovereign gaze. The land was measured, mapped, surveyed and apportioned into provinces, parishes, and tax domains. In combination with the impulse to define and delimit the land was a desire to rationalise its people; the Sámi population were subjected to religious conversion and education aimed at 'civilising' them into compliant subjects (Lindmark, 2013). Until 1752, the region of Finnmarken (which encompassed the Sápmi homeland) remained contested. Taxation of the Sámi was utilised to form grounds for claiming sovereignty by all three opposing powers. The permanent settlement of the border between Denmark-Norway and Sweden marked a pivotal moment for the Sámi population, establishing an enduring division of territory. The marking of sovereign spaces eroded the Sámi's power, as the opposing nations could now assert control along national lines with diminished fear that the Sámi might undermine national interests or territorial integrity. The process of quantifying land and people indicates the pronounced role that early forms of field sciences (collecting, sketching, measuring, recording and classifying) played in the "rational improvement" of Sámi people and the Indigenous people of the north more broadly, "as the means of knowing and describing the colonial frontiers" (Bravo and Sörlin, 2002: 18).

Norway only achieved independence in 1905, and it has been suggested that its history of quasi-colonial relations with Denmark and Sweden has facilitated an internal ignorance towards the nation's colonial past. However, the policy of 'Norwegianization' in the High North enacted in the 19th and 20th centuries was undeniably and explicitly colonial by design, "encompassing a variety of harsh measures aimed at forcing the inhabitants of the multi-ethnic north […] to reject their cultural identity and perceive themselves as Norwegians" (Berg, 2013: 157). Assimilation of the Sámi population was identified as vital to consolidating a strong, cohesive Norwegian national identity following independence. Assimilationist Norwegian policies have been increasingly challenged since the 1970s, reflecting a growth of social movements demanding greater recognition of Sámi cultural identity in affiliation with a growing global Indigenous rights movement. A force of Sámi political mobilisation, the Alta Dam conflict (lasting from 1968 to 1982) signified a moment of substantial dispute between the Indigenous and majority populations in Norway. The

Norwegian government's decision to construct a hydroelectric dam on the Alta River (destroying nearby Sámi communities and flooding significant reindeer pastures) was met with public demonstrations and protests: mass civil disobedience, hunger strikes and the occupation of the Prime Minister's Office. The Sámi were eventually defeated in the Supreme Court ruling of 1982 that approved dam building. Still, the mobilisation, cooperation, and social and cultural movement activated by the Sámi community established the Sámi as a potent force in Norwegian politics.

Since the 1970s, Sámi presence has been increasingly acknowledged in formal political arenas. Domestically, Sámi parliaments were established in Norway, Sweden and Finland between the late 1980s and mid-1990s. However, these parliaments function as consultative, as opposed to self-governing bodies. Norway signed the ILO's 'Indigenous and Tribal People's Convention' in 1989 and became the first state to ratify it a year later. The introduction of the Finnmark Act in 2005 considerably altered the administration of public lands in northern Norway, enshrining certain collective land rights for Sámi people (Broderstad, 2011). On an international scale, the Sámi are represented by the Sámi Council as a permanent participant of the Arctic Council (established in 1996). Yet, in many ways, these governing institutions force Sámi people to engage in what Bell labels 'mimesis' – a forced imitation of unnatural hegemonic societal structures and discourses on behalf of Indigenous populations, to claim a voice and ensure cultural survival (Bell, 1999; Toivanen, 2019). Despite apparent advances in terms of Sámi political presence and recognition, Indigenous lifeways continue to be at odds with the policies and priorities of the Norwegian state, which persistently spotlights the rapid growth of mining activities, often at the expense of reindeer grazing land, and always contesting the reciprocal relationship with the natural world that the Sámi foster. Although from an outside perspective, the relationship between the Indigenous population and the majority state may seem civil and democratic, as is deemed characteristic of Scandinavian societies, a deeper interrogation illuminates the ongoing and harmful mismatch of power that decrees Sámi sovereignty today.

1.2.2 Picturing the Nordic Arctic

Visual culture has a long history of being used to communicate the Arctic region to distant audiences. Continuously imagined as an "ultimate otherworld" (McGhee, 2005: 19), the High North has been subject to an ongoing imposition of external imaginings and projections.

While few have visited the Arctic, many hold an image of what it is and what it symbolises. As Lehtimäki, Rosenholm and Strukov argue, ‘visuality’ is a complex term, with intricate links to structures of power and perception. An image of the Arctic has been integrated into the narratives of European modernity; in many ways, it is via an image of the North that the South “projects on the Arctic its dreams and nightmares, including those about future societies, environmental disasters, political conflicts and so on”. Thus, we might view the picturing of the Arctic throughout time as “imbued by ideologies and interests and tied into material practices and cultural discourses”. In other words, image-making has been and continues to be an integral element in Arctic discourse's creation, perpetuation and enrolment (Lehtimäki, Rosenholm and Strukov, 2021: 2,5).

Within this image-making process exists a dynamic of tension and interdependence between local image-making and global spectatorship – a tension which this essay seeks to grapple with. The Indigenous people of the Arctic have been long subjected to outsider interpretations and representations. In the case of the Sámi, visual representations can be traced back to the *‘Carta Marina’* map of 1539 (figure 1) and its illustrated companion *‘Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus’* of 1555, both produced by Swedish clergyman Olaus Magnus. The map depicts a distinct Arctic landscape, and people engaged in hunting and gathering, reindeer herding and nomadism. Such Sámi iconography has constructed an image of the Sámi people as ‘noble savages’, activating their supposed wild and romantic nature as a critical part of Sámi identity. Similarly to the demarcation of land and the enaction of assimilation processes, this stereotypical and simplified representation created an order for a European audience ignorant of Nordic cultures, mapping boundaries of centre and periphery and aligning these with notions of legitimate and acceptable behaviour (Mecsei, 2015).

Figure 1: *Carta Marina Map of Olaus Magnus, 1539. Source: https://www.orkneymuseums.co.uk/the-carta-marina-of-olaus-magnus-1539/*

Recording the Arctic environment has always proved challenging. Before the days of photography and film, visual culture took the form of drawings, engravings and lithographs, with an emphasis placed on observation and documentation for crews voyaging to the North (Davidson, 2005; O'Dochartaigh, 2022). Yet, part of the allure of the Arctic was its perceived inaccessibility and the difficulty associated with its exploration. As cinema developed towards the end of the 19th century, the exotic environment of the Arctic offered a highly sought-after subject for films, with film cameras replacing sketchbooks on Arctic voyages. Robert Flaherty's film *'Nanook of the North'* (1922) is understood as an influential visual source, doing much to codify how the Arctic was seen and imagined cinematographically. Pioneering in terms of the documentary genre and aligning this documentary impetus with the Arctic region, the film represented Inuit cultural practices to a global audience (Kaganovsky, MacKenzie and Stenport, 2019).

The dominance of outsider representations of Indigenous communities began to shift in the 1970s, coinciding with the rise of Indigenous media and self-representations worldwide. The re-appropriation of visual culture by indigenous people operates in conjunction with the visual modes of remediation utilised by the Black civil rights movement (Wilder, 2021). The

establishment of Indigenous broadcasting corporations, such as 'NRK Sápmi' in the Nordic Arctic, enabled the production of television programming in Sámi languages for the Sámi population. The same decade saw the founding of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) in the Canadian Arctic, which sought to strengthen all facets of Inuit life through images and language of the North (Madden, 1997). During the 1980s, Indigenous filmmakers moved from broadcast to feature filmmaking, hailing the development of what Barry Barclay labels 'Fourth Cinema': the emergence of feature-length art cinema envisioned and developed by Indigenous people, serving as counter-narratives to a history of stories told by outsiders (Barclay, 2003; MacKenzie and Stenport, 2015).

In the context of climate change and the exacerbated vulnerability of the Arctic region, the melting Arctic has become an iconic symbol of the Anthropocene for a global audience (Lehtimäki, Rosenholm and Strukov, 2021). The demand for a new polar aesthetics reflects a broader discourse that suggests we need new forms of expression to bear witness to the novelty of existing on an ecologically damaged planet (Tsing *et al.*, 2017; Bloom, 2022). Because the Arctic has been "continually reframed and reimagined for consumption for a global audience" (Mackenzie and Stenport, 2015: 5), the current environmental crisis is the latest mobilisation of attention towards the North. Indigenous forms of visual culture, specifically the Indigenous film industry, play a key role in articulating a new polar aesthetics.

1.2.3 Creative Sovereignty

The notion of sovereignty is essential to my exploration of Indigenous visual culture as an articulation of new polar aesthetics. Sovereignty is a profoundly challenging concept because it exists in constant motion and flux. Though elusive, sovereignty has genuine practical, political, and cultural ramifications that unite experience in an Indigenous context. One of this dissertation's challenges is locating and fostering an Indigenous approach to sovereignty. I thus draw inspiration from Michelle Raheja's argument for the expansion of conceptions of sovereignty beyond conventional legal definitions. Raheja proposes a much broader notion of sovereignty that sincerely considers the importance of sovereignty as it might be expressed intellectually, politically, socially, individually and therapeutically via diverse cultural forms as "critical" to engage deeply in processes of decolonisation (Raheja, 2015: 28). Such an extended conceptualisation of sovereignty draws on Judith Butler's work on gender (Butler,

2004) as a process defined by its kinetic nature rather than a rigid set of principles. Dually a "being" and "doing", there exists a vitality inherent to Indigenous sovereignty that isn't captured by legal frameworks, concerning nothing less than the survival and flourishing of Indigenous life (Lyons, 2000). This dissertation contends that the visual, particularly the medium of film, is a germinal site for exploring sovereignty as a creative act of self-representation and understanding its potential to strengthen autonomous modes and infrastructures of creative expression and exploration as counter-narratives in both form and function (Raheja, 2007). Crucially, the creative sovereignty I seek to locate upholds the primacy of Indigenous empowerment and emancipation, as opposed to its 'usefulness' for the majority population.

1.2.4 Enlightenment and Emancipation

Exploring the Indigenous film industry necessitates interrogating the idea of enlightenment and its multifaceted meanings. Film may uniquely illuminate the complexities of an increasingly interconnected world by connecting us to the emotional realm and a sense of a global community by traversing borders and language barriers. However, the desire to nurture the idea of an international community is a complex and, in many ways, problematic impetus. As Dipesh Chakrabarty argues, homogenising human experience is based on European Enlightenment concepts that assume the European trajectory to modernity as the only path (Chakrabarty, 1992). This can be identified in film culture; as Richard Dyer points out, white artists from majority societies have a special privilege in claiming to speak for the commonality of humanity (Dyer, 2013; Liu and Baker, 2016).

Meanwhile, Indigenous and minority peoples are forced to speak for only their own communities. Moreover, there exists an expectation of 'enlightenment', in which we in the west must learn something, seeking improvement from Indigenous insights. The idea of emancipation achieved through greater knowledge is embedded in the modern philosophical tradition of the European Enlightenment period of the 17th and 18th centuries. In his 1784 essay *"What is Enlightenment",* Immanuel Kant observes that the Enlightenment created the conditions for emancipation in five major parts: liberty, progress, equality, reason and dignity. Yet, such an assertion is profoundly contradicted by the colonial past and present, with the European Enlightenment marking a significant enaction of violence towards Indigenous people and Indigenous epistemes (Clement, 2019). This dissertation thus moves

cautiously, paying critical attention to the alleged emancipatory character of the Enlightenment, an attention with renewed importance as the world turns to Indigenous people for instruction in the wake of the environmental crisis.

1.2.5 Pluritopical Thinking

Engaging with the 'pluriverse' is a fundamental facet of decolonial thinking (Kuokkanen, 2000; Escobar, 2018; Mignolo, 2018). Mignolo asserts 'pluriversality' as an integral means to question the universality asserted by the Enlightenment and its associated production of distinctly western epistemology and hermeneutics. Embracing the pluriverse means seeing beyond this claim to superiority. The pluriverse exists as a "world entangled through and by the colonial matrix of power" instead of a world of independent units. Thus, we must adopt a way of thinking and comprehending that inhabits the gaps between this enmeshment. To think pluritopically is to "dwell in the border" (Mignolo, 2018:10), to reside in the hybrid spaces: the openings between different domains. Such a reading means recognising the coexistence of multiple ontologies and an inherent friction to these encounters (Marenko, 2021). The key is not commensurability but rather the assertion that radically different worlds can co-occur without one subsuming the others (Hutchings, 2019). This claim indicates a dismantling of dominant colonial modes of thinking.

1.2.6 Thinking with Film

This research aims to understand how Indigenous forms of cultural expression might be emancipatory for Indigenous populations instead of serving a western project. I locate emancipation in the arts as a vehicle for political re-imaginings (Amin, 2023) and the micro-aesthetic form of film as potent in its imaginative potential and the opportunity it opens up for counter-narratives. I draw on Rupert Read's assertion that true freedom is achieved by linking enlightenment and ecology. This liberation resides in the capacity of film to afford the more-than-human a voice and incite collaborative experience. Read articulates the collaborative nature of film as "triply shared": films are collective dreams as books are, but also shared in their creation: the shared vision of the director, editor, cameraman, script-writer, actors, and shared between audiences, often in a cinema (Read, 2018). Meaningful Arctic research should take inspiration from such an ethic of collaboration, as understanding the Arctic relies on a dynamic of entanglement, cooperation, and the respectful exchange of knowledge.

Films are critical cultural producers and products, emerging from culture, departing from cultural discourses, and creating new forms of culture. They contribute to the 'social construction of reality' (Berger and Luckman, 1966). Advocating for films as uniquely affecting suggests that they might act as potential levers to move our world to a better place, facilitating an awakening 'from mind' and into a more present state, forcing us to look and see things we might not otherwise have noticed (Read, 2018).

Storytelling is a powerful tool for encountering environmental destruction and disorientation (Haraway, 1994; Tsing *et al.*, 2017). Defending the indispensability of narrative as a mode of academic knowledge production, William Cronon emphasises the broader social value of stories: "Narrative remains our chief moral compass in the world", especially when it comes to our relation to the natural world (Cronon, 1992: 1375). Film is particular and personal, yet inextricably expressive of broader social and political contexts (Cameron, 2012). Attending to these divergent scales signifies how film acts as an opening to traverse time and place.

1.3 The Research Process

In conducting the research for this dissertation, a constant process of reflexivity was required. As a non-Indigenous person operating in an academic context, it was crucial to repeatedly ask myself the following questions: Why am I doing this research, and why am I doing it in this way? Self-reflective praxis is non-negotiable when seeking to research in a non-extractive manner (Kovach, 2021). Endeavouring to embark on an alternative path to the one so often tracked by academia, I was guided by Maria Lugones' concept of "faithful witnessing" (Lugones, 2003: 3). The notion of 'witnessing' is inherently complex and deeply muddied by association with colonial voyeurism (Hartman, [1997] 2022). Yet 'faithful witnessing' aims to contest the powers that dehumanise others, looking to challenge master narratives by observing alternative accounts (Figueroa, 2015). As part of this decolonial practice, I wanted to pursue the 'pedestrian view', a vantage point that efforts to understand the perspective "from inside the midst of people, from inside the layers of relations and institutions and practices" (Lugones, 2003: 5). In the context of the Sámi film industry, adopting such a view guided a focus on the structures and relations of the industry, as opposed to a lofty analysis of the films. I contend that the films are works of art in their own right, and whilst they have played a formative role in the development of this research, they deserve to be interacted with

in their original, intended form, not interpreted and analysed through the lens of a non-Indigenous academic.

Tuhiwai-Smith highlights the importance of "witnessing" and "testimony" as mechanisms by which Indigenous peoples can "make claims and assertions" about their rights, demonstrating how testimonies act as vehicles through which witnesses' voices are accorded space and protection (Smith, [1999] 2021). The seven in-depth interviews I conducted with a mixture of Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals associated with the Sámi film industry (figure 2) are woven into the dissertation narrative as an illuminating force. My seven collaborators represent a constellation of people within the network of Sámi filmmaking: a mixture of filmmakers, editors, festival programmers and organisers, academics, artists, and curators (with many traversing multiple roles). They offer diverse expertise and informed and authoritative perspectives, illustrating the plurality of institutions and actors fundamental to creating an Indigenous film industry in northern Norway.

The reference to my participants throughout the dissertation reflects ongoing debate and a spectrum of perspectives relating to the ethical principle of anonymity in qualitative research. Although upholding anonymity is the default, in some cases, it could undermine the autonomy of the research participants (Tilley and Woodthorpe, 2011). Such a perspective was brought to my attention by Britt, one of my collaborators, who presented the idea that by not including people's names, I might be claiming the lives and stories of my collaborators as "material" for my research. Thus, the anonymity status was an open dialogue between my participants and me. According to preference, some collaborators are kept anonymous, and some are named. It was agreed that it was important to include information about everybody's role (described in their own words) within, or proximate to the Sámi film industry, to supply context and authority for their qualified and specific knowledge.

Collaborator	Description
Astrid Aure	*Astrid is a journalist and editor, with a Master's degree in film science focusing on Northern Indigenous films from a feminist perspective, who has worked on the operational side of Tromsø International Film Festival for the last 10 years, playing an important role in the programming of the 'Films from the North' sidebar.*
Participant B	*Participant B is a Sámi novelist, journalist and screenwriter from Lainiovuoma in Sweden.*
Egil Pedersen	*Egil is a Sámi filmmaker and screenwriter from northern Norway.*
Ekaterina Sharova	*Ekaterina is an Oslo-based curator, producer, educator and writer. Raised in Arctic Russia, she works with decolonial feminist ecologies, alternative knowledge systems, and reappropriation of memory and repair, focusing on the ways Indigenous artists and designers reclaim their lost histories through archival research. She has worked for 10 years with revitalization of Indigenous arts and culture through the Arctic Art Institute, and alternative pedagogies in Northern Russia, Norway and Finland.*
Oskar Östergren Njajta	*Oskar is a Sámi film producer, script writer, and director, and founder of the Sámi film and arts festival 'Dellie Maa'.*
Lisa Hoen	*Lisa is the director of the Tromsø International Film Festival, having previously worked as the Head of Culture and Sports in Tromsø Municipality. Lisa has attended the TIFF since she was 17, and volunteered at the festival as a young person. She grew up in Northern Norway and has Sámi heritage.*
Britt Kramvig	*Britt is a Sámi professor and filmmaker based in Norway. Her research centres around decolonization processes, locally embedded practices of reconciliation, and Sámi ways of knowing and storytelling.*

Figure 2: *Table of research collaborators.*

I wanted to include the voices of my participants within the work and create an explorative output in which my interlocutors speak for themselves. Of course, this is a difficult dynamic to achieve, as it was ultimately up to me to decide how to incorporate the knowledge shared with me into the thesis. However, I hope that by including conversational extracts, the essence of my interactions with those who know much more than me is portrayed. The interviews were recorded after receiving consent from participants and subsequently transcribed to allow me to engage more thoroughly with the material and its constituent themes.

In enacting reflective praxis, I necessarily encountered the dilemma of conducting primary research in the Arctic, without exercising the well-established dynamic of colonial researcher. My decision to attend the TIFF in northern Norway was partially dictated by practicality; attending the film festival would enable access to many films made in and about the North, not otherwise available. A sense of place is vital to the reciprocal interdependence of human and non-human worlds, which informs Sámi epistemology. To conduct research that articulated this fundamental link between dwelling and knowledge (Clement, 2019), I felt it was important to experience the landscape of Sápmi. Visiting places we study and experiencing an environment can contribute to better understanding. Still, it is also important to acknowledge the emotional attractiveness of "going there", the galvanising sense of legitimacy it confers, and how this plays into research decisions (Howkins, 2010). Attending the TIFF allowed me to understand the experience of the festival as an audience member, and it also acted as an essential opening for accessing films and connecting with filmmakers through its wide-ranging programme.

However, I encountered difficulty arranging interviews with people I met at the festival. This challenge is a testimony to the fact that the Sámi film industry is in a moment of unprecedented growth and development. Thus, filmmakers are saturated by enquiries for interviews. It also likely speaks to the fact that "the word 'research' is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world's vocabulary" (Smith, [1999] 2021) due to its inextricable links to European imperialism and colonialism. Thus, it is imperative that I "self-locate" (Absolon and Willett, 2005: 110) before moving forward and acknowledge my positionality within the history of epistemological abuses directed towards Indigenous people in an academic context. I seek to redress this power balance by pedestalling the knowledge exchanged with me as fundamentally formative in the generation of this dissertation; I don't intend to speak on behalf of Sámi or Indigenous people but rather wish to nourish my own reflections with the voices of others.

1.3.1 Research Aims

It is becoming apparent across scholarly, policy and educational settings that addressing human-made environmental change will require what environmental anthropologist Anna Tsing has described as "creative tools of survival" (Tsing *et al.*, 2017: 1). Facing the ecological crisis involves radical tactics and novel ways of thinking, especially in an Arctic context. This research endeavours to locate 'openings' for such distinctive dialogues. Looking at how an Indigenous film industry functions through the lens of an Arctic film festival, and forms of Sámi cultural infrastructure, I seek to engage in an 'anti-anthropological' exercise: reversing the lens, by studying the articulations and implications of Indigenous creative sovereignty as a way to get beyond the ontological limits of what is legible as western scholarship. I propose the Sámi film industry as one way of exploring how Indigenous epistemologies might operate as an alternative transmission mode (Hunt, 2014).

1.4 The Structure of the Dissertation

The thesis begins with a process of orientation, acknowledging the long durée of the temporal othering of Indigenous people and their knowledge, and the role that the European Enlightenment played in this process. I track this entangled relationship and how it impacts the forms and function of Sámi filmmaking today, ultimately evolving a theory of enlightenment to an alternative emancipatory proposition of 'openings': spaces that represent a potential for alternative Indigenous articulations. Chapter three explores the TIFF's resistive capacities and how the festival's situated nature operates to challenge projected assumptions about the North and expectations about Indigenous belonging in the urban arena. Chapter four expands on the metaphor of a "window" for cultural exchange, arguing that the Indigenous cultural infrastructures that have evolved in response to cultural domination are fundamental in exercising notions of plurality. These infrastructures harness the spaces of hybridity between Indigenous and majority cultures to articulate influential forms of Indigenous being.

2. Challenging Expectations: Looking Backwards to the Future

"If you look at the Sámi films that have been made since 1985, till around 2019… There's been the 'Pathfinder', a historical film based on a historical myth. 'The Kautokeino Rebellion' is a historical film and a historical drama. 'Sámi Blood' is a historical drama, but it's fiction. 'Let the River Flow', which is based on a historical event, it seems like… I don't know if people have been saying, "You have to make historical dramas if you're going to make a Sámi film,"… but I think as a minority filmmaker, you understand what the majority wants. Even though it's not set out directly from the financiers, you feel the room. You feel how the financing system works. And when you talk to people in the industry, you start seeing, 'Okay, this story about a girl being adopted, it's not Sámi enough, then I guess I should write more Sámi stories that the majority think are more authentically Sámi'… As a minority member, you feel like there's some expectation of what you make. And if you've got to make something about your minority, it has to be the big themes that the majority will have read about in the papers and learned about in history lessons."[1]

Egil introduces an essential theme in this conversation: "As a member of the minority, you feel like there's some **expectation** to what you make". I want to explore the function of this weight of "expectation", a dynamic that deserves critical attention and desires a historically informed perspective. Harnessing the past to elucidate the future is an important facet of Indigenous culture, as oral storytelling traditions narrate ancestors' knowledge to inform a fluid present. I will demonstrate that this weight of expectation is imposed by a bounded western temporal logic that more broadly restricts the cultural autonomy of Sámi filmmakers and Indigenous knowledge.

Our discussion begins by reflecting on the multiple meanings of 'enlightenment'—its uses and misuses—and how such an impulse could guide us towards a more productive search: to locate the 'openings' that might foster a greater diversity of knowledge in the challenging times of the Anthropocene.

The action of 'enlightenment', or the state of 'being enlightened' refers to attaining deeper knowledge or insight. Such a process of education, understanding, and richer perceptiveness

[1] Egil Pedersen (21/02/2024) interviewed by author.

is often associated with a spiritual component. In the Buddhist tradition, enlightenment denotes a state of awareness that frees a person from the cycle of rebirth; this elevated state of consciousness is, to some extent, conditional on a transcendence of individual rationality (Klostermaier, 1991). Reflecting a geographical dynamic to enlightenment framings, the Buddhist concept is distinct from the European intellectual movement of the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

The 'discovery' of new lands that preceded the European Enlightenment brought diverse populations under the imperial gaze of Europe, and a juxtaposition between the cultures of Europe and those that were colonised moulded a confined vision of 'civilisation' versus 'savagery' (Pagden, 1993). This vision gave rise to the unitary intellectual phenomenon of the Enlightenment, which addressed the world based on science and rationality, as opposed to the whims of traditional reliance on faith, superstition and revelation—the period played a fundamental role in the theorising of the western world's trajectory to modernity. As Outram argues, although it led to a distinct progressivist theory, the Enlightenment period was defined by complexity, encompassing many different perspectives and novel ways of interpreting the world. Thus, it is limiting to restrict this breadth to a singular describing principle. Posing that Enlightenment structures of thought necessarily be recognised as underpinning the unification of a globalised world, Outram demonstrates a nuanced view of the Enlightenment, holding in tension its consumption of culture and emancipatory faculties (Outram, 2019). A foundational notion of freedom is inherent to these varied definitions of enlightenment, although the path to such liberation differs profoundly. Is enlightenment achieved through an engagement with the emotional terrain of human experience or via a greater commitment to reason and a resulting recognition of a common human condition?

There is undoubtedly something galvanising in the concept of a union of humankind and its emancipatory promise. However, a universalising of experience has relied on the imposition of western epistemologies (Clement, 2019), underpinned by an expectation that reason would bring universal manumission and profound social and economic benefits to all humankind (Withers, 2008). Said locates this imposition of 'positional superiority' in the west's production and diffusion of knowledge, initiated by the Enlightenment movement and its associated imperial endeavours (Said, 1978). Connected with a history of epistemic violence towards Indigenous peoples, the Enlightenment period is a valuable entry point for discussion of concepts of Indigenous political, cultural and creative sovereignty. Set in the context of the

Anthropocene, in which human impact fundamentally alters the earth's natural systems, the concept of unified humanity has contemporary value. However, a totalising view of humankind eradicates the fact of fundamentally disparate responsibility and projects the western industrial course onto a diverse world of experience (Chakrabarty, 1992).

The Enlightenment opened up one route to modernity for European nations, and in this quest, established a narrow view of progress and development. In the present, we orient ourselves quite differently to this sense of progress, as we must reconcile it with the ecological damage it has entailed. Now, we are looking for new ways to think and new experiences that might unite us in this thinking.

This chapter draws these threads together and demonstrates how the experiences of Sámi filmmakers represent the confluence of various expectations of enlightenment. On one hand, we might recognise a narrative of western redemption via the embrace of Indigenous epistemologies as one method in building the "creative tools of survival" (Tsing *et al.*, 2017) that the current mode of environmental crisis demands. A desire for specificity, alterity, and subaltern forms of storytelling suggests a move away from the totalising instincts of western Enlightenment thought. But a more cynical approach might recognise this desire as a re-animation of the 'noble savage' trope, a figure employed throughout time in various ways – but ultimately always serving to confine Indigenous people and their knowledge to a 'backward' temporal realm as a foil to western civilisation. As is demonstrated in the introductory conversational extract, an imposition of expectation from the outsider community has clear consequences for the creative sovereignty of Sámi filmmakers.

I argue that situated stories are more relevant than ever in the conditions of environmental demise that we find ourselves in. Attention to difference is a valuable leverage point for stimulating change on a global scale. Yet, Indigenous creatives are still subject to the expectations imposed on them by majority societies. The history of Enlightenment thought, which paved the way for a globalised world (Outram, 2019) and normalised a western mode of thought and action, still seeps into the everyday experiences of those trying to recount an alternative. Forced to cater to an expectation of enlightenment imposed by the coloniser, I expose the complex terrain that Sámi filmmakers must navigate, motivated by a desire to assert their existence: in the present, not an imagined past.

2.1 Moving Pictures

From its inception in the early 20th century, film has been quite literally 'enlightening', reliant on processes of illumination for its creation. In conversations with my research participants, film's capacity to traverse borders, overcome divisions, play with time and manipulate emotions, teach people about experiences that are not their own, and provoke one to think differently were presented as distinctive facets.

Film was proposed to hold a unique capacity in its ability to animate the storytelling tradition integral to Sámi society; as offered by one participant, *"Our storytelling tradition is very suitable for filmmaking… film is a really good way to translate the oral tradition to an audience"*[2]. Such oral traditions have long been dismissed as primitive folklore and an illegitimate form of knowledge (Kuokkanen, 2000). Yet, it was continually suggested that Sámi stories gift themselves to filmic forms of representation. Although my interlocutors recognised the suitability of Sámi stories to make good cinema, it was also acknowledged that traditional Sámi stories that adopt a cyclical narrative form don't necessarily adhere to western cinematic norms, that assume a linear form. The juxtaposition of a cyclical approach to time with notions of temporal linearity is symptomatic of a broader conflict between the Sámi and the majority society; this plays out in terms of approaches to the natural world, where linear approaches to time value capital resource exploitation and growth, and dismiss concepts of cyclical renewal (Kääpä, 2016). Media cultures are on the front lines of the ongoing struggle to express Indigenous rights and sovereignty, and film increasingly acts as "a critical forum through which Sami identity is negotiated and made visible". To some extent, establishing a Sámi film culture has helped create a "cohesive front for Sámi identity" (Moffat, 2020: 195/193).

This proposal of emancipation prompts me to introduce Rupert Read's concept of "film as freedom", moving away from notions of individualism often associated with Enlightenment thought, and towards ideas about shared and collective experience. Read believes that "film can facilitate a true freedom" from the "intellectual hegemony (of humanism, "progress", "growth", "individualism", scientism, technophilia etc) that is currently killing us" (Read, 2018: 217). Positioning the creative capacities of film in direct opposition to the rational

[2] Participant B (12/02/2024) interviewed by author.

ideals of Enlightenment thought, Read's philosophy locates a sense of enlightenment reflective of that in the Buddhist tradition; an enlightenment not opposed to community or ecology, but one that brings us closer to both these elements. The experience of watching something together is understood as "a way that one is inclined, aided, gently directed towards presence" (Read, 2018: 4).

In my experience attending the TIFF, I was made aware of the film's capacity to move. In a viewing of *'One With the Whale'* (2023), a story of an Alaska native community living on the remote island of St. Lawrence in the Bering Sea, in which subsistence hunting and the precarity of an Indigenous community caught between their traditional lifeways and the pressure to assimilate into modern America is poignantly explored, I (and my neighbouring viewers) were moved to tears. We were united in our human experience, our ability to be moved, and foster empathy for those leading lives distinct from our own.

But such an experience is rare. Reflecting changing distribution and consumption processes, a perspective that sees the collective nature of film as integral in its power to enlighten neglects the fact that cinema is increasingly consumed via streaming services, and thus a more solitary experience. Furthermore, a film like 'One With the Whale' is not yet available in mainstream cinemas or streaming sites, and only a privileged few can attend the film festivals that program such independent films, operating at the interface between activism and art and not necessarily aimed at targeting avenues of mainstream consumption.

Read heralds film as particularly powerful in capturing our imaginations, suggesting that certain films might be designed to produce "a personal or interpersonal, philosophical and even political aware-ing" (Read, 2018). A postulation of a deeper awareness achieved through artistic representations aligns with more general calls across the academy for a set of aesthetics that can speak to the nature of existence in the Anthropocene. Amitav Ghosh claims that the Anthropocene necessitates new cultural forms; in interrogating the neglect of climate change in literary fiction, he suggests that its severity can only be taken seriously if we imagine possible futures (Ghosh, 2016). A similar provocation can be identified in the impetus of the field of 'environmental humanities', which recognises the Anthropocene as fundamentally un-making many of our presumed truths about the world, and necessitating a "radical reworking of a great deal of what we thought we knew about ourselves" (Bird Rose *et al.*, 2012: 3). In relation to the polar regions, Lisa Bloom identifies art as "existentially

embedded within the interdisciplinary civics of our time" (Bloom, et al., 2023). However, this emphasis on imagination is at odds with a historical belief in film as a particularly truthful means of information distribution, lauded for its successful mimetic capacities compared to other forms of media (Aitken and Dixon, 2006).

In many ways, an authority of realism governs the 'documentary ethos' that has characterised filmic representations of the Arctic region. The documentary seeks to portray the world, as a means to impart new knowledge and information, in a more explicit way than any other form of cinematic expression. Whilst this might not always be in a transparently realist manner, there is always an underlying effort towards the enlightenment of the audience and a guiding pedagogical impulse. The documentary ethos has been entangled in the history of Arctic filmmaking, necessitating a critical perspective. Although documentaries adopt a sense of objectivity – there are no innocent choices in documentary filming (Kaganovsky, MacKenzie and Stenport, 2019). The desire to narrate the Arctic is a symptom of how the region has been continually imagined as an "ultimate otherworld" (McGhee, 2005: 19), as a blank canvas fit for the projection of imagination (and thus exploitation). Therefore, whilst we might recognise the emancipatory, enlightening potential of an instinct towards creative and imaginative practices as a valid and exciting prospect, we must remain critically attuned to who gets to conduct the imagining. Whilst the impetus of these processes of imagination might be guided by efforts to conceive the world in terms of a more plural intertwined reality, if such an imagination is projected from the west, it simply risks re-animating damaging tropes imposed on Indigenous people and their experience.

2.2 The Noble Savage

In many ways, an ongoing tension between imagination and reason/fact reflects the conflict at the heart of the Romantic revolution that emerged but sought to distinguish itself from Enlightenment thought. The 'Noble Savage' is a term that demonstrates this divergence. Although often attributed to the Romantic writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Ellingson argues that Rousseau was not the originator of the term. In fact, there is no document of him using the phrase explicitly. However, what the label came to denote was undoubtedly aligned with Rousseau's glorification of 'the natural man' (Lovejoy, 1923). Ellingson attributes the origin of the term itself to Marc Lescarbot, a 17th Century French traveller, who used the phrase in a poem, utilising the framing of Indigenous people as "noble" to diminish the

Native Americans' legal claims to sovereignty and recognition, but suggests that the term was institutionalised, and weaponised by the practice of anthropology in the 19th century (Ellingson, 2001). Thus, Ellingson posits that the concept should be understood as an integral component in anthropology's conceptual and institutional foundations: institutionalising the 'myth' of the Noble Savage in the 19th Century was crucial to establishing a narrative of the 'Other'.

The image of the noble savage is by no means unambiguous; even those who have employed the figure most enthusiastically offer a fluid range of attributes. The deification of the natural man identifiable in the writings of 17th and 18th-century explorers is often assumed to reject the central creed of the Enlightenment ethos, refuting a belief in progress as based on and guided by reason. However, Bernard Smith argues that the noble savage had been a critical figure in the logic of Enlightenment thought, in that it represented the epitome of the virtues of the 'natural man', who inhabits the state of nature. For Enlightenment thinkers, the phrase embodied a utopian sense rooted in biblical and classical visions (Smith, 1985). Thus, the trope was crucial to solidifying Enlightenment thinking as a way of justifying the necessity of a standard power to keep the natural man's uninhibited desires in check and validate a narrative of European improvement and progress. Fundamental to this tension, we might identify the advent of two different readings of Indigenous people, ultimately both enrolled to bolster the arguments of those in the west.

On entering the Romantic period, faith in reason waned. The status of emotion and feeling was elevated, and the noble savage became the personification of the virtues lauded by the romantics; writings of the time speak not only to a sense of admiration, but also a logic of 'sympathy', depicting Indigenous people as emerging from barbarism, and thus in need of rescue and enrichment by the west (Smith, 1985). Ellingson explains the noble savage concept that somewhat departs from its assumed Romantic objectives and dismisses any essential ethos of admiration. Instead, he suggests that the concept has ultimately always been employed as a way of distinguishing Indigenous peoples as lesser and affirming a western notion of progress as the only valuable trajectory of society. He identifies a critical shift enacted in the mid-19th century, whereby imperial ambition and racial ideology solidified into national policy in the western world. Thus, the noble savage trope became a means to degrade Native people, as opposed to the early modern scholars' identification of native cultures as providing opportunities to criticise "civilisation" (Ellingson, 2001).

These interpretations and usages of the phrase point to an essential "denial of co-evalness", which cultural anthropologist Johannes Fabian describes as a "persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse" (Fabian, [1983], 2014: 31). Similarly to Ellingson, Fabian recognises this compulsion as fundamental to the roots of the anthropological discipline constructed by the west. Fabian argues that anthropology's uses of time have asserted the discipline's claim to power: establishing the 'Other' as its object of study is a fundamentally temporal act. Describing how Enlightenment thought signified a break from a Medieval Judeo-Christian vision of time, which entailed a shift in the quality of time from sacred to secular, Fabian proposes that this shift also involved an essential transformation regarding the nature of temporal relations. Contributing to an account of the age of discovery as integral in the secularisation and naturalisation of time (Pagden, 1993), Fabian explicitly pinpoints travel as a temporalising practice, a vehicle for man's self-realisation. Such a notion gained momentum in the 18th century, in which travel was subsumed under the reigning paradigm of natural history, with the assertion of the project of 'scientific' travel. Informed by the development of natural history, a construction of geological time became the basis for 19th-century efforts to formulate specific theories of evolution. In claiming to comprehend contemporary society by way of evolutionary stages, the natural histories of evolutionism initiated a specificity of time and place. This promoted "a scheme in which not only past cultures, but all living societies were irrevocably placed on a temporal slope, a stream of time" (Fabian [1984], 2014: 17): leading to the establishment of a somewhat conflicting narrative in which human time and nature are universalised. In doing so, delineation between the 'west' and the 'rest' is drawn.

2.3 The Ecologically Noble Savage

"climate change is so palpable in the North, it is so visible and scary. Indigenous practices and relations become more and more relevant and interesting to outsiders, because of this feeling of urgency; there is an expectation that indigenous people will have answers"[3]

In this testimony, Ekaterina articulates the most recent reincarnation of the noble savage trope. A pillar of the colonial enterprise, the story of the noble savage trope didn't stop in the

[3] Ekaterina Sharova (28/02/2024) interviewed by author.

19th century. The concept can still be identified today, emerging under the cloak of an environmental dialogue. The idealising associated with Indigenous nature relations is heightened in the context of climate change. The urgency and fear that Ekaterina describes dictates renewed attention towards Indigenous lifeways, determined to extract 'solutions' to environmental crises.

Contemporary environmental discourse frequently calls on the knowledge of Indigenous peoples as a remedy to the state of nature relations in the west. 2023's United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP28) on climate change, held in Dubai, saw the celebration of Indigenous Peoples' Day, highlighting their supposed vital role in finding climate solutions. Recognising these populations as on the frontlines of the destructive impacts of the climate crisis, the UN Climate Change Executive Secretary commented that "Indigenous Peoples… are well placed to lead just transitions based on their time-honoured values, knowledges and worldviews" (Emirates News Agency, 2023). Centering the 'time-honoured' character of Indigenous principles immediately temporalises Indigenous knowledge as 'traditional' or historic. Despite apparent respect for the longstanding nature of Indigenous knowledges, values and worldviews, many Indigenous people were left feeling that the COP28 agreement was fundamentally inequitable and symbolic of the fact that ultimately, the consensus is driven by the powerful nation-states (Lakhani, 2023). An expectation of enlightenment and admiration of Indigenous lifeways is reminiscent of the noble savage trope and similarly serves a narrative constructed by western powers. This dialogue is fundamental in the universalising of climate change as a challenge that has the potential to unite the world.

This ethos of union was founded by the UN's 1987 'Our Common Future' report (otherwise known as the Brundtland report). The major report, produced under the chairmanship of Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, who became the Prime Minister of Norway, ranged over many threats to the planet provoked by uneven development patterns (Keeble, 1988). The report aimed to establish a sense of a global community to sustainability discourse, expressing a melancholic feeling about "so-called Indigenous and tribal peoples", narrating their "disappearance" as a "loss for the larger society, which could learn a great deal from the traditional skills in sustainably managing very complex ecological systems" (WECD, 1987: 114-115). Not only does the report assume the inevitable 'disappearance' of Indigenous peoples and their lifeways, but it primarily narrates their value in a capacity to educate the west. Once more, we can recognise temporal othering enacted in suggesting Indigenous

people's skills as 'traditional', representing opposition to the rampant development processes in the west (Brynildsen, 2018). At a national level, Brundtland earned the nickname 'green goddess' as cabinet minister in Norway because of her advocation for sustainable development. Yet, she was criticised for prioritising the economy and employment over environmental and Indigenous concerns. During her time as Minister of the Environment and then Prime Minister, the Alta Dam was proposed and built despite significant Sámi protests (Ribberink, 2020).

The 'ecological noble savage' trope was initially introduced in an article of the same title by a conservation biologist, Kent H Redford. In his article, Redford refutes the contention that Indigenous people are ecologically noble figures, employing examples to make evident the destructive land practices that Indigenous peoples have engaged in throughout time. There exists a selection of denunciations and rebuttals of the ecological noble savage by way of discrediting Indigenous people's believed harmonious relationship with the environment.

Shepard Krech's 1999 book 'The Ecological Indian', endeavours to prove the image of the Indigenous peoples and cultures of the Americas, continually invoked as representative of humanity's ability to live harmoniously with nature, as ultimately misleading. He posits that the ecological Indian proposition is unconvincing, finding historical instances of overhunting and exploiting resources (Krech, 1999). However, this argument is highly problematic in its seeming dismissal of the term as a colonial invention. Indeed, an expectation of Indigenous societies as the ultimate custodians of nature is misguided and serves to limit the plurality of Indigenous experience. However, Krech's argument dangerously presumes "unified, ahistorical cultural identities", erasing the "logical and ontological continuities involved in current identity practices by colonised peoples" (Ranco, 2007: 33). Krech's argument disregards the contemporary issues experienced by Indigenous communities and the ongoing impact of colonial practices that have produced devastating ecological effects on American Indian environments. Ranco also makes the important point that, in some ways, the ecological Indian trope is a necessary image that Indigenous people must adopt for their land claims to be taken seriously and their knowledge seen as legitimate.
Most importantly, an argument that seeks to refute the basis of the ecological Indian does little to criticise its colonial origins, as it ultimately erases the experiences of colonised peoples. Such erasure is enacted in a politics of knowledge, wherein expertise exercised at a distance is normalised as authorising the fate of Indigenous rights (Ranco, 2007). This mode

of detached, disinterested objectivity returns our attention to the experiences of Sámi filmmakers that constituted the source of this discussion. Still today, it is the majority culture that asserts a weight of expectation on an Indigenous minority, denying their lived reality by articulating Indigenous histories on behalf of Indigenous people, which ultimately serves to negate their contemporary presence.

2.4 Frozen in Time

"We have so many traumas and so many stories in our families that tell about the colonisation process. And we must get them out of our system before we can talk about the situation today"[4]

In arguing that a western denial of co-evalness kerbs Indigenous peoples and their forms of cultural expression to the past, I do not wish to suggest that the exploration of historical events and traumas is redundant when narrated from an Indigenous perspective. As Oskar explains, there is a fundamental need to expose these stories. One of my collaborators explained the use of film to explore entrenched societal trauma incited by processes of colonisation as a form of "*community healing"*[5]. Importantly, such a process of remediation sees worth in recounting traumatic pasts as a fundamental means to cultivating restoration and resilience within the Sámi community, reflecting Iris Marion Young's assertion that the recognition of structural inequalities is dependent on the acknowledgement of the history of past abuses and processes of discrimination (Young, 2001). Although focused on past events, emphasis is placed on unearthing the ordeals of a minority culture as a prerequisite for establishing a future in which Sámi people can be empowered and claim presence. This practice distinguishes between efforts to confine Sámi lifeways to a former temporal realm. Whilst the majority culture may want to freeze Indigenous experience, as purely historical, and impose a distinct expectation of what 'Sáminess' constitutes, Sámi people feel that they are frozen, debilitated even, by the silence that has encased the generational trauma instigated by colonisation. We might, therefore, understand Sámi films made about historically traumatic events as an exercise of what Faye D Ginsburg calls "screen memories". Ginsburg employs this term to refer to how Indigenous peoples utilise media technology to "recuperate their collective stories and histories", "talking back" to the "dominant structures of power and

[4] Oskar Östergren Njajta (05/03/2024) interviewed by author.
[5] Participant B (12/02/2024) interviewed by author.

state that have denied their rights, subjectivity, and citizenship" for hundreds of years (Ginsburg, 2003: 41/51). It is this process of "re-membering" that can re-connect bodies with place and experience, in a precious way; turning the tables in terms of the expectations placed on Indigenous cultural outputs, by serving the needs of the Indigenous community (Aure, 2023), and ultimately motivating a dynamism to the dialogue.

2.5 Conclusion

I close this chapter by reflecting on why acknowledging the long durée of an expectation of enlightenment is a valuable and important foundation for analysing the dynamics of the contemporary Sámi film industry and articulating the aims of this dissertation. In reading the layers of colonisation imposed on Indigenous populations, it is clear how othering has been inscribed temporally. In a world increasingly defined by the experience of climatic change, a new prominence is being somewhat forced on Indigenous people. Echoing Ekaterina's assertion, Britt explained, "*People are interested in stories from the North because they think we have the key to the crisis"*[6].

Indigenous stories have for far too long been dismissed, hidden, and erased. Certainly, Indigenous stories possess immense value in their capacity to narrate and imagine alternatives to the dominant structures of power and knowledge that have created the conditions for environmental crisis. Film may be a unique medium for communicating these stories in multisensorial capacities. Film, film festivals, and related cultural forms provide a set of openings for the negotiation of the lived reality and ongoing struggles of Indigenous communities. But, critical attention towards the historical abuses enacted towards Indigenous knowledge, often under the pretence of respect and deference, is fundamental if we are to cultivate different relations to Indigenous knowledge that embrace plurality and locate autonomy within Indigenous communities. The search for Indigenous stories cannot be a western quest, defined by western raconteurs. The west must nurture a dialogue that fully comprehends the diversity of Indigenous knowledge and experience, taking seriously the spiritual and relational character of such wisdom – especially when it challenges western conventions of what constitutes legitimate knowledge.

[6] Britt Kramvig (08/03/2024) interviewed by author.

This brings me to conclude with a reflection derived from the critical theories of Horkheimer and Adorno on enlightenment as an ongoing process. Writing at a time of speculation and distaste for the modern condition, following two world wars and significant social and political unrest, Adorno and Horkheimer trace the European Enlightenment as the source of the establishment of a problematic dialectic between external nature and society, arguing this as the basis for the rise of fascism and totalitarianism. Importantly, they highlight a contradictory dynamism at the heart of the Enlightenment project. Whilst the Enlightenment sought to find ultimate illumination and a route to progress in the liberation of reason as a means to free people from superstition; they argue that it has ended up resembling the superstition and oppression it sought to dismantle (Horkheimer and Adorno, [1944] 1972). This paradox acts as a cautionary tale. This chapter has accounted for the various ways that perceived endeavours of liberation in the west have sanctioned the subjugation of Indigenous and minority groups, a dynamic that this dissertation is determined not to recreate.

Yet, observing this history does not warrant an abandonment of the enlightenment impulse. Rather, aiming for enlightenment based on a philosophy of understanding, empathy, and greater connection to community and ecology is a worthy pursuit, a necessary one in edifying the experience of the Anthropocene and imagining and realising emancipatory futures. Such a project may entail an embrace of storytelling, the essence of spirituality, and the imagination dismissed by the Enlightenment period. Opening ourselves up to enlightenment and new ways of thinking is obligatory in navigating a way out of our current state, and this mandates a thorough learning process to listen to contemporary Indigenous experience.

Going forward, I want to re-orient the discussion of enlightenment to one of the **openings**. An ‘opening’ is not defined by a pursuit of coherence, authorisation and control [OBJ] but rather by identifying possibilities. Sharing with enlightenment the quest for emancipation, yet acknowledging the complexity and plurality in definitions of such an achievement, a notion of multiple possibilities aligns with a pluriversal instinct intrinsic to Indigenous ways of knowing, which I will elaborate on in the following two chapters, interrogating the openings film might create in the Anthropocene, how these openings operate, and what these openings mean for notions of leadership and authority for Indigenous people today.

3. Openings: A Window of Exchange

A tenet of resistance is critical in tracing the 'openings' that enable cultural and political autonomy. Forms of resistance permeate The Tromsø International Film Festival (TIFF). Following geographer Doreen Massey's assertion that we must acknowledge that minority cultures "might have their *own* story to tell" if we are to conceive of space as a "genuinely existing multiplicity", I reveal how the constitution of the spatial requires "a degree of mutual autonomy, a genuine plurality" (Massey, 1999: 3). Recognising the multiplicity of stories, their immanence, and relative autonomy is an integral component in examining how film might encourage an opening up to alternative modes of being and shifts in dominant power structures. This chapter analyses how the TIFF harnesses and emphasises space as a genuinely existing multiplicity. Intensely rooted in its Arctic locality, yet international in its outlook, how the festival harnesses the "local" provides "hope for resistance" (Jacobs, 1996: 15). By claiming narrative autonomy, the festival resists the tropes of the noble savage discussed in the previous chapter, instead articulating a radical Arctic presence, with Indigenous identity as a vital part. I propose that the film festival offers a unique window of exchange, resisting imposed stereotypes and assumptions on two planes: challenging narratives about the North at the global level and challenging prevailing assumptions about Sámi belonging in the urban arena within Norway. Importantly, in opening a window to Arctic experience, the festival becomes a realm for cultural negotiations, in which underlying local, national and global conflicts come to the fore.

3.1 A Window to the Rest of the World

"There's a kinship we share across the Arctic… of course it's a huge area with lots of differences… but the festival has almost since the beginning been an important window to the rest of the world for the filmmakers from our region". [7]

I begin by speaking about my experience of attending the 2024 TIFF. Attending the TIFF acted as an opening for my own research, enabling me to experience the Arctic for the first time, immerse myself in the rich programme of cinema and related events, and contact the participants who have guided this work. Held in the central cultural hub of Tromsø, about

[7] Astrid Aure (07/02/2024) interviewed by author.

400km above the Arctic Circle, the festival was first established in 1991 (*About TIFF*, 2024). Despite its increasing reach on a global scale (the festival is now the biggest in Norway in terms of audience), stories about the Arctic remain a key component in its programming.

Such a place-based ethos has underpinned the festival since its inception. Astrid explained that TIFF was initially conceived as a reaction against how cinemas in Norway primarily showed American or western European films. The film festival aimed to encourage the development of a Northern filmic voice and the embrace of independent and art film genres. Such a foundation speaks to a sense of sovereignty and cultural autonomy at the festival's core. As an attendee of the festival, it was evident that an illumination of Arctic experience, from the diverse perspectives of those who call the Arctic home, was a fundamental value and guiding principle of the midwinter event. This was particularly apparent in the side-bar program 'Films from the North' (FFN), a selection of films that "showcases the best of the High North, including a broad representation of northern Indigenous films" (*TIFF*, 2024). Presenting a leading selection of short documentaries and fiction films made in northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia and Canada, as well as Sápmi, Alaska, Iceland and Greenland, the program was first introduced 24 years ago, in reaction to concerns from the local film industry that the festival wasn't doing enough to platform local films and stories. The sidebar has grown in scope and popularity since its establishment, which only presented Norwegian short films initially. *"The reason we do the FFN programme… It's about bringing stories that people can identify with, bringing stories made in the North, but also helping us understand our neighbours better."*[8]. This quote invokes the sense of an Arctic community. Appealing to a sense of 'kinship' and mutuality throughout the Arctic region, the FFN program carefully expresses a sense of commonality, whilst avoiding a universalising and homogenising of Arctic experience. This condition of exchange constitutes the festival as a two-way window.

Thus, in many ways, the TIFF refutes the prevailing visual history of the Arctic as defined by outsiders. For a long time, the Arctic has operated as a "blank canvas upon which the European imagination could project sublime territories and beings" (Duffy, 2013: 125-126). As detailed in the introduction, visual culture has a prominent history in the Arctic as a means

[8] Astrid Aure (07/02/2024) interviewed by author.

to record and disseminate the region to distant publics. Such a focus on documentation and information collection can be identified in the documentary theme that has historically characterised filmic and photographic representations of the Arctic. A desire to depict and document the "ultimate otherworld" (McGhee, 2005: 19) has constituted most films in and about the region (Kaganovsky, MacKenzie and Stenport, 2019). We might recognise a central aim of the TIFF as re-establishing the Arctic, altering its status as "a land of the imagination" to "a place in the real and everyday world, a place inhabited by people who have considered it home for over 4,000 years" (McGhee, 2005: 8).

Attending to the scales of both the local and the global is paramount when discussing the openings that the TIFF enables. Returning to Astrid's narration of the festival as a "window" to the rest of the world, I emphasise a sense of exchange inherent to this metaphor. Such an ethos has a history in the city, which has functioned as a hub of interchange and exchange with the rest of the world for centuries; when the municipality was established in the 1800s, Tromsø was renowned as a major Arctic trade centre. The TIFF marks an evolution in Tromsø's identity as a mediator between the High North and its international onlookers.

3.2 Culture Sits in Places

The idea of a "New North," a concept that declares the collision of global warming and global investment to mark an unprecedented moment in the circumpolar region, has gained significant traction in academic literature and popular media in the past twenty years (Anderson, 2009; Smith, 2011; Stuhl, 2013). These global challenges initiate a new gravitas to a sense of a global, interconnected world.

Yet, such a discourse can be met with a retaliation that climate change enhances the disparities between different localities: with overt distinction between places, in terms of both their contribution to global emissions and their experience of the consequences. Exemplifying this paradigm, the Arctic cryosphere is regarded as one of the most visible signs of global warming, with the retreat of sea ice, melting of glaciers and ice caps, and thawing of permafrost (Meredith *et al.*, 2019). These changes affect Arctic communities, necessitating significant alterations to traditional lifeways. Subsistence lifestyles are fundamental to Indigenous social, economic, cultural and political being. Being forced to adjust hunting and gathering practices thus has significant and extensive repercussions for

Indigenous societies and how knowledge can be passed on (Eerkes-Medrano and Huntington, 2021). As Whyte argues, industrial settler states have impending and pending responsibilities to Indigenous peoples to confront the loss and damage instigated by their industrial activities (Whyte, 2016). Such a dynamic of disparate responsibility is characteristic of how climate change acts at multiple scales, global in its assertion of influence in places distant from the sites of perpetration, and distinctly local in its real-time impacts on communities. Rather than a destruction of the local (as is a feature of an Anthropocene discourse that assumes a global experience), the force of climate change demands an embrace of localisation, accompanied by a re-assertion of the importance of place-based practices of culture, nature and economy (Escobar, 2001).

"I grew up in Tromsø, and the festival is one of the reasons that I still live here. I couldn't survive without the festival and other cultural events. We are so far away from everything in the Arctic that the festival brings the world to us. We can learn about the world, experience things through the films, and learn about ourselves… it expands our minds, and we understand other people's experiences. It's giving us a lot of energy. It's polar night; everyone is waiting for the sun to come back, everyone really lacks vitamin D, and then you get this surge of energy. I think people get a lot out of it. It keeps people going – and that is beautiful. I think for a city like us, a film festival is significant"[9]

Lisa's insight demonstrates the festival's integral role in the local community. The sense that the TIFF lights up a winter season characterised by the absence of daylight presents the annual festival as an illuminator via the films it presents and the energy it incites. The assertion that through this double process of illumination, an enlightenment about oneself, one's local community, and those further afield, once again evokes the notion of exchange intrinsic to the ethic of the festival, evidencing that the festival's nature and purpose are firmly rooted in the needs of the local community and the specificity of place.

One of the unique features of the festival, the outdoor winter cinema (figure 3), encapsulates a commitment to place. My own experience, sitting outside, cocooned in thermal blankets to protect from temperatures as cold as -18°C, with the dramatic background of the northern Norwegian mountains and fjords, was defined by a feeling of presence. Although cinema is

[9] Lisa Hoen (06/03/2024) interviewed by author.

often lauded for its ability to transport and facilitate a certain escapism, the experience of watching films at the outdoor cinema was accompanied by a strong sense of rootedness in time and place. In this way, the outdoor cinema encapsulates the dual ambition of the festival: a process of opening up to the rest of the world while maintaining a sure sense of Arctic identity.

Figure 3: *Photograph of the TIFF outdoor winter cinema in Tromsø's main square (2021). Source: https://www.tiff.no/en/news/tiff-2021-blir-heldigital. Photo: Jamie M. Bivard.*

Employing the notion of 'place branding' (Cassinger, Lucarelli and Gyimóthy, 2019), we might recognise how the specificity of place moulds the discourses and framings of the festival itself. Branding places is strategic, aiming to make particular places visible and competitive in the attention economy. There is a visionary element to the process, actively engaging in the imagination of futures for places, and it is thus necessarily a participatory and continual endeavour. Whilst the impetus to brand places is often motivated by political and economic principles, Kramvig poses that it is essential to relate to place as a 'home' for individuals, encompassing their hopes, losses, ambitions and everyday lives (Kramvig, 2019). Applying such a perspective determines the TIFF and cultural festivals more broadly as critical constituents in the 'branding' of contemporary Arctic places in their efforts to articulate Arctic identity internationally and foster commitment to local communities. Lisa

explained to me that nurturing this tension is what enables the richness of the festival, proposing that the locals create an atmosphere which is so welcoming and galvanising for the audience and the industry professionals who attend; in her opinion, it is this communal foundation that makes the festival attractive to those outside of the Arctic.

3.3 Tromsø: A 'hotspot' in the Arctic Circle

The place branding enacted by the TIFF must be recognised within this context of increasing global attention directed towards the Arctic. The Arctic is 'heating up', not just in a literal sense, but in terms of its global significance and scholarly attention (Nyman, 2012). As Ekaterina explained, *"People feel that many answers are in the Arctic… We are working with topics that are really important in the world, and the world is interested in our stories from the North"*[10]. In some ways, the northern territories have come to embody the simultaneous anxieties and opportunities presented by the 21st-century predicament. These varied interests and investments determine a dynamic of contestation across the region, defined by a "struggle for access and elbow room" (Viken and Granås, 2016).

Tromsø is an influential hub of knowledge generation and dissemination within the Arctic. Home to many research institutions, including the Norwegian Polar Institute and a leading university, in 2012, the city became the permanent host of the Arctic Council Secretariat headquarters. This presence has taken on renewed significance in light of the Russia-Ukraine War that broke out in 2022. At the beginning of the conflict, Russia was the chair of the Arctic Council (chairmanship is held for two years, and rotates between each of the eight states). The other states decided that Norway would take on Russia's chairmanship. The Arctic Council is an intergovernmental forum comprised of the eight Arctic states (Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden, and the United States). Indigenous peoples groups are represented as 'permanent participants'; other countries or national groups may be admitted as 'observer states' (*The Arctic Council,* 2023). Since its inception in 1996, the Arctic Council has been lauded as a trailblazing global governance model, progressive in including Indigenous organisations (Dodds, 2018). Yet, lauding the accomplishment of the Arctic Council risks eliding the ongoing struggles of Indigenous members, who are not granted the same status as the states in the council despite inclusion.

[10] Ekaterina Sharova (28/02/2024) interviewed by author.

Tromsø is a space to negotiate struggles for recognition within the Arctic region at multiple scales. These dialogues exist globally between Arctic states and other competing international powers. However, such tensions are reflected within the Tromsø municipality itself. An increased urban Sámi population characterises contemporary changes in Sámi settlement patterns, and dynamic Sámi identities have developed in response (Nyseth and Pedersen, 2014). In many ways, cities provide freedom and encourage creativity and diversity, but simultaneously, notions of an urban Sámi population are constrained by dominant discourses of 'authenticity' and stereotypical ideas; 'natural' indigeneity is assumed to be incompatible with the urban arena (Vuolab, 2016). I argue that the TIFF brings persistent power imbalances and voices of resistance to the fore.

3.4 Screening Struggles

From the picture painted so far, it might be tempting to interpret the TIFF relatively uncritically as a coherent force of unification, cohesion, and cultural commensurability. The harnessing of culture in practices of place-branding is essential, cultivating a sense of shared belonging and the empowerment that complements it (Bjorklund, 2000). Yet, cultural place branding exercises such as the TIFF reveal the difficulties in representing a heterogeneous culture. Whilst the TIFF indeed fosters the values of community and attends diligently to its local specificity, it would be irresponsible to ignore the underlying tensions between the Indigenous and majority culture at play within northern Norway. The actual value of the TIFF is in its role as a forum for negotiating these cultural tensions, not dictating a singular culture but encouraging a dynamic of fluidity and exchange. The festival is an important intervention in the cityscape, generatively bringing forward existing conflicts.

Environmental politics constitutes an ongoing conflict between the Indigenous and majority cultures within the Tromsø municipality. Offering a way in which film might facilitate an opening to conflictual encounters, Egil explains, *"I think that films should be like a rock in the shoe, that annoys you. Films should force you to think, even if it is uncomfortable"*[11]. Via provocation, film can make evident the problematic dynamics of cultural negotiation in a creative, discursive manner.

[11] Egil Pedersen (21/02/2024) interviewed by author.

Several collaborators recounted an incident at last year's festival that captures how these underlying tensions might appear on the big screen. The festival relies on a series of funders and tends to attract sponsorship from local businesses. The publicly-owned renewable energy company 'Troms Kraft' has been one of the festival's official partners for several years. The partners and supporters of the festival are featured in the programme, website and a short promotional video at the beginning of each film viewing. In 2023, controversy was provoked by the Troms Kraft promotional video. The company states its aims as preparing "to lead the development towards a fully electric, renewable North" (*Troms Kraft*, 2024). A significant component of this aim has been the establishment of wind power plants across the region.

My participants explained that in the video, the company used a 'joik' (a profoundly evocative practice of song or chant, and form of cultural expression unique to the Sámi people), to accompany shots of the local landscape, dotted by wind farms. The coalescence of these auditory and visual symbols provoked outrage in viewers, as it is well-known that the establishment of wind farms throughout the region has encroached on Sámi reindeer herding lands and caused friction between the majority government and Indigenous communities. A commitment to the international climate change agenda and green energy transition within the Nordic states legitimates the imposition of these industries on Sámi lands, mobilising a perpetuation of the colonial politics of the Nordic states, by which the Sámi have been dispossessed of their ancestral lands (Fjellheim, 2023). These prevailing power asymmetries demonstrate what former Sámi Parliament president Ailo Keskitalo marked as 'green colonialism' (Keskitalo, 2020). It has been suggested that the consultation procedures that define such negotiations between Indigenous and majority societies act only as a form of inclusionary control. Echoing this experience, Dunlap finds in the example of a wind energy development in Oaxaca in Mexico that the consultation process offered to Indigenous actors to voice their concerns served only to "enforce colonial law and protect corporate investments" (Dunlap, 2019: 105). Thus, domination defines the dialogue, cloaked under a rhetoric of progressive politics and the moral imperative of sustainable energy.

Although not a programmed film, adverts still play an essential role in the cinema experience. The promotional video catalysed such an animated response due to its assertion that wind energy and Sámi reindeer herding could unproblematically co-exist. Via the medium of cinema, Troms Kraft attempted to forward its message of cohesion and harmony (a future vision defined by the majority culture) through a considered curation of sound and image.

This example illustrates another dynamic to the processes of exchange that the festival enables: whereby the financing and branding that facilitate the festival's function can work to mould particular, injurious narratives.

However, TIFF not only brings tensions to the fore; the festival and its harnessing of culture also act as a force of active resistance to these detrimental narratives and the prevailing modes of violence enacted towards the Sámi community.

"For me personally… the festival has played a huge role in helping me regain pride over my Sámi heritage. Many people feel that the Sámi culture doesn't belong in Tromsø or try to deny it exists. We wanted to make a statement. When we put on the Sámi language screenings at the outdoor cinema, in the market square, in the middle of the city, you can't deny it; you can't say that it doesn't exist!"[12]

The potential for emancipation through claiming cultural presence is marked in Lisa's testament. The Sámi community has been subjected to a continual process of marginalisation and regulation – which have served to exclude and make their culture invisible. Thinking about how places are constructed and formed, it is clear that identity and place are fundamentally intertwined. The stories built about particular places necessarily entail recognition, legitimacy and belonging. Suppose certain people, things and practices are denied a role in creating place. In that case, places and their associated norms can be sites for what Sara Ahmed labels 'strange encounters' for these populations, marked by disorientation and displacement (Ahmed, [2000] 2013). In other words, within places marked by uneven power distribution, certain bodies are produced as "politically present and others as missing" (Tedesco and Bagelman, 2017; Warren, 2017; Hudson, Nyseth and Pedersen, 2019). As the disputes over land use demonstrate, for groups classified as 'out of place', who don't necessarily fit the vision of places imagined by the majority culture, the capacity to engage in place-making is limited.

This explains why the TIFF's commitment to displaying Sámi language films at the outdoor cinema is such a meaningful statement. Directly contesting the processes of invisiblising Sámi culture, by making Sámi language audible in a public place acts as a literal practice of

[12] Lisa Hoen (06/03/2024) interviewed by author.

place-making and claiming. Similarly to the Troms Kraft promotional video, this moment in the festival conjures an ongoing tension within the Tromsø municipality. In 2011, a "conflict-loaded encounter" unfolded between the Sámi and the majority society regarding the implementation of Sámi language policies by the Tromsø town council. The proposal was to make the town officially bilingual, owing to the many Sámi inhabitants in the area, and a general incentive to improve Sámi language use, deemed endangered (*Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat*, 2019). It was met with significant contestation, contextualised within an "ideological meta-discourse about ethnic and linguistic boundaries" (Hiss, 2013: 178/195). This public dialogue implied the profoundly entrenched beliefs within the region about ethnic belonging and resistance to grant Indigenous languages an equal footing. Once again, a moment at TIFF can be harnessed to reveal the fundamental tensions that continue to compromise Sámi sovereignty within the region.

Chantal Mouffe proposes that the first step in fostering more equal relations within plural societies is a recognition of legitimacy (Mouffe, 2013). Lisa emphasises that the public presentation of the films in situ affords a certain undeniability. Those who wish to believe that Indigenous language and life are something confined to the past cannot deny its existence when it is assertively offered in the central hub of the city. When diversity is fostered as a dialogue, a space is opened up (Ahmed, [2012] 2020). It is through this opening that the possibility of change and new forms of action is enabled. By declaring Sámi language films as an essential feature of the TIFF program, Sámi presence is affirmed, challenging the majority population's place stories that have long eradicated Sámi modes of being. Lisa explained how, in recent years, many TIFF attendees have directly described to her how important such public evidencing of Sámi life has been for fostering feelings of Sámi pride and empowerment. Of Sámi heritage herself, she told me how meaningful these testimonies were, partly because they reflected her personal experience, verifying the festival's importance in empowering a revitalisation of her own Sámi identity.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the vital precept of resistance that underpins the TIFF and how this ethic creates an opening for the demonstration of "genuine plurality" (Massey, 1999: 3) within the contemporary Arctic. In some ways, elements of Sámi culture fit comfortably within the neo-liberal concept of branding the city to grow its visibility and attraction on the

global stage. As discussed in the previous chapter, the value of Indigenous knowledge is increasingly promoted within international forums. Yet, this works against a backdrop of centuries of violence and subjugation, and we must, therefore, remain apprehensive about any narrative that upholds Indigenous presence but ultimately appropriates it for its own means. There is a risk that in the process of cities 'rediscovering' their Sámi heritage, the culture might be presented as an exotic source of attraction (Wåhlin *et al.*, 2016), exercising the noble savage trope and co-opting Sámi presence to serve a neo-liberal agenda.

However, I have argued that the TIFF endeavours to resist this dynamic of co-option. TIFF avoids essentialising imagery and tropes of Sámi culture in its promotional material, and deliberately evades exceptionalising Indigenous films by delegating them to a distinct category, instead integrating them within the main programme. From an organisational perspective, the TIFF has many people who identify as Sámi within its structure: *"There is Sámi representation within the organisation both in terms of people that work here all year round and within the staff that we hire for the festival, and we have an important collaboration with the International Sámi Film Institute, who are one of our official partners... northern Indigenous voices create TIFF"*[13]. My collaborator identifies that it is essential that those within the Sámi community are intimately involved in the design and the cultivation of such forms of cultural demonstrability as the TIFF: "*The festival operates on a 'nothing about us, without us' philosophy*"[14].

However, rising international attention must be combined with tangible retributive action within national and local contexts. To some extent, the Nordic states have crafted a global image as the benign caretakers of the Sámi, activating a noble savage trope in which the Sámi are regarded as nature people, ultimately dependent on the benevolence of the nation-state (Toivanen, 2019). It is this assumption that has underpinned the brutal processes of assimilation and silencing of Sámi voices. This begs the question, can culture open doors? Or, do such forms of culture perpetuate this dangerous image of harmony and inclusion, glossing over the significant ongoing conflicts over land and belonging that continue to deny Sámi life? In this chapter, I have argued for the TIFF's importance and unique identity as a resistive force within its urban locale and a product of locally embedded relations. By

[13] Astrid Aure (07/02/2024) interviewed by author.
[14] Astrid Aure (07/02/2024) interviewed by author.

embracing the plurality of contemporary northern Norwegian society, the TIFF opens a window to the Arctic experience, repealing the tropes imposed by a visual culture from elsewhere and offering alternative narratives. The deficiency of current political and bureaucratic mechanisms for claiming Indigenous rights is evident in the processes that deny Sámi reindeer herders just legal consultation mechanisms, and the fierce debate incited by council proposals to endorse Sámi languages within the region: cultural interventions such as the TIFF provide alternative methods of dialogue.

***Figure 4**: The 2024 TIFF poster with the slogan 'frozen land, moving pictures' (2024)—source: https://en.unifrance.org/festivals-and-markets/953/tromso-international-film-festival/2024.*

The TIFF activates a contemporary Arctic identity defined by plurality and creativity. By thawing the assumption of a ‘frozen land’, locked in time and space, the ‘moving pictures’ that the festival presents encourage a fluidity of interchange that brings the dynamic and conflicting forces in the local community to the fore. TIFF works as an interface between different cultures, displaying differences as opposed to presenting unity, acting as a key ‘opening’ for hope, resistance, and multiplicative dialogue. However, the ‘opening’ of this exchange depends on developing independent Indigenous infrastructures that can foster original forms of cultural expression if they are to be equal and not just reciprocal. A Sámi creative voice is assembled on a foundation of Sámi epistemologies, and the next chapter will discuss this.

4. Infrastructures: Sámi art is Sámi life

The previous chapter argued that the TIFF acts as a window of exchange by claiming narrative autonomy over Arctic stories on a global scale and encouraging dialogue between the majority and Indigenous societies through the plurality that it seeks to demonstrate. However, for cultural events such as the TIFF to function as openings for bi-directional exchange, they must be underscored by Indigenous forms of cultural infrastructure. I use the word infrastructure to refer to the basic organisational structures and facilities that enable the articulation of Indigenous creative sovereignty, arguing that these are fundamental prerequisites for the persistence of Sámi life through time and place. This chapter employs the examples of the International Sámi Film Institute and the Indigenous artist's network *Dáiddadállu,* based in Guovdageaidnu, northern Norway. Although distinct in form and function, both organisations have aided a shift towards cultural autonomy and artistic sovereignty in the Sámi community. Indigenous leadership is exercised in these unique spaces. I argue that these organisations are also characterised by a particular dynamic of porousness with the dominant culture, expressing contemporary Sámi creative modes that recognise the unavoidable permeability of a globalised world. Sámi creative infrastructures necessarily exist within majority cultures, and this chapter works to identify how they engage in the process of mutual modification. Utilising Greenblatt's proposition of the "in-between" area that exists between cultures, characterised by "an unresolved and unresolvable hybridity" (Greenblatt, 1991: 4), I contend that such hybridity acts as a powerful, although complex, means through which to represent Sámi presence. Crucially, this is a process of exchange whereby Sámi infrastructures force the mutability of majority cultural infrastructure and vice versa. This perspective challenges Barry Barclay's concept of 'Fourth Cinema', which is explicitly framed as "an outlook outside the national outlook by *definition"* (Barclay, 2003: 7); arguing instead that the suggestion of an emancipatory fourth cinema that relies on a total rejection of the nation-state or majority culture, is misguided, dichotomising, and impractical in a globalised world.

A fundamental epistemic distinction underpins the form and function of Indigenous creative infrastructures. As Britt describes it, *"Sámi art is Sámi life"*[15]. This stark sentence brings attention to the fact that underlying all forms of Indigenous art is a dynamic of threatened

[15] Britt Kramvig (08/03/2024) interviewed by author.

vitality. I asked Britt about her perceived value of the Indigenous film industry, and she offered this reality to me, necessarily redirecting my analytical attention. An analysis of the dynamics of Indigenous film in the Nordic Arctic is fundamentally lacking without acknowledging the urgency that underpins it. Far from a strategic model of place-branding, Indigenous modes of creation and representation are guided by a need to assert Indigenous being and persistence. This signifies an essential distinction in framing art and its purpose; as Britt explained, *"In Sámi culture, there is no distinction between art and life"*[16].

In other words, art is the product of living, surviving, and dwelling. This outlook recalls the work of environmental anthropologist Tim Ingold, who proposes the concept of 'dwelling' to synthesise the environment and its inhabitants as mutually constitutive forces. The landscape comprises the lives and works of those (human and non-human) who dwell within it (Ingold, [2000] 2021). We can apply this fundamentally relational concept to elucidate the symbiotic relationship between a Sámi approach to cultural expression, as informed by, and a constitutive part of, the processual nature of existence. This chapter explores the liveliness of Sámi creative practice and the importance of genuinely Indigenous infrastructures underpinned by Indigenous philosophy as the foundation for presenting plurality on a global stage. For festivals such as the TIFF to demonstrate genuine plurality, Sámi creative networks must first define their own sense of self.

4.1 Towards an Indigenous Paradigm

Rauna Kuokkanen's advocation for the need to "think and act from the spaces of Indigenous epistemes" (Kuokkanen, 2007: 6) is a footing for a discussion that seeks to identify how fundamental alterity can be harnessed and disseminated by minority cultures within a majority. The adoption of an 'Indigenous paradigm' encourages a direct disassociation from naturalised western categories, and works to embrace a "cognitive shift" (Kuokkanen, 2000). Such an endeavour necessarily engages with the concept of the 'pluriverse'. Pluriversal thinking demands a radical opening up to alternatives. Recognising interconnected diversity, fundamental relationality, and interpreting the world as constituted by a multitude of narratives, the pluriverse is comprised of a willingness to see beyond the west's claim to superiority and narrative autonomy: seeking other stories out, and inviting them in. This is a

[16] Britt Kramvig (08/03/2024) interviewed by author.

project aimed not at changing the world but at changing the beliefs and understandings, thus altering our praxis of living in the world. As Mignolo poses, renouncing the singular, homogenising narrative imposed by the west "sets us free to think de-colonially about the pluriversality of the world rather than its universality" (Mignolo, 2018: 10). Multiple narratives can co-exist, and all are enlightening in their power to elucidate varied experiences.

Notably, an Indigenous paradigm is unavoidably rooted in a holistic approach, avoiding drawing distinctions between human life's intellectual, social, political, economic, psychological, and spiritual forms. A desire for homogeneity and a generalising of Indigenous experience does not direct the Indigenous paradigm; instead, "it takes its form in the spirit of heterogeneity and affinity, leaving room for differences within" (Kuokkanen, 2000: 217, 427).

This philosophy thus determines some critical distinctions in forms of cultural expression. Notably, an Indigenous paradigm demands an alternative perspective on time. As opposed to a purely linear notion of time, an Indigenous paradigm is concerned with the past, present, and future, and it understands these temporal realms as fundamentally intertwined. Film offers one way to experiment with alternative temporal realms; *"when you're working with film and you use so many senses, you can move back in time, and you get so much closer to the feeling and experience."*[17]. My collaborator attests to the unique capacity of film to manipulate time in non-linear ways, directing the viewer to a more significant emotional tangibility. A fluid, dynamic approach to time is enlightening in the diverse openings it facilitates, connecting to a Sámi relationship to temporality, defined by cyclicity, as opposed to linearity.

A more flowing proposition of time has been an important mechanism in galvanising broader Indigenous cultural movements, such as 'Indigenous futurism'. First coined by Grace Dillon in 2003, the phrase describes a movement of art, literature, games, and other forms of media that express Indigenous perspectives on the future, present and past. Whilst the phrase might suggest a future orientation, forms of Indigenous futurism necessarily involve a recovery of ancestral traditions to adapt to a "post-Native Apocalypse world" (Dillon, 2012:10). Thus,

[17] Participant B (12/02/2024) interviewed by author.

Indigenous futurism blurs the distinction between past, present and future rather than embracing the interdependent status of all temporal realms. Importantly, Indigenous futurisms are distinct from science fiction or fantasy; despite efforts to categorise them as such, they resist compartmentalisation. Indigenous futurism offers an opening by "uncovering Black/Indigenous presence in the past, then asserting our existence in the present and into the future, as one way of seeing into, or even making better futures" (Vowel, 2022). Animating the argument that enlightenment be seen as an ongoing process, accessing the past is vital for the process of imagining the future: it is with this power in mind that I turn to the importance of Sámi cultural infrastructures in the mobilisation of Sámi rights discourse to demonstrate how these unique forms of organisation have constructed methods of Indigenous futurism that offer openings, as opposed to utopian closures. Sámi creative practices have played a crucial role in imagining and moulding self-determined futures, performing work that legal definitions of sovereignty and self-determination fail to attend to (Marzano, 2022).

4.2 Show Sámi Spirit!

Alessia Marzano determines the process of 'indigenising' to be somewhat synonymous with embracing an Indigenous paradigm. Indigenising indicates the creation of Indigenous-owned spatial temporalities based on Indigenous values and epistemologies. Crucially, and aiding the overall argument of this thesis, indigenising is not about looking for blueprints to save the world but is instead focused on recalibrating our gaze towards the world, honing our attunement to alternatives by listening to and attending to what surrounds us (Marzano, 2022). Indigenising is concerned with gaining sovereignty, a considerable element of which pertains to the capacity to create alternative futures and assert the "right to be a separate people with a separate destiny" (Mann, 2022: 53).

Yet, locating the power to define this destiny in the hands of Sámi creatives doesn't equate to the cessation of negotiations. The Sámi revitalisation movement of the 1970s is significant of a profound turning point in Sámi organisational history. An activist sentiment encapsulated by the ČSV movement, named after its slogan *"Čájehehkot Sámi Vuoiŋŋa!"* or *"Show the Sámi spirit!"*, united the Sámi population in a confrontation towards Norwegian society. Fundamental to this movement, and the wave of cultural revitalisation it catalysed, was the renaissance of traditional Sámi symbols and practices to express Sámi national unity and articulate a well-defined Sámi identity (Cocq, 2014). Through a necessary need to define a

Sámi self, to attain a political presence, a bounded notion of 'tradition' became somewhat prioritised and esteemed in Sámi creative outputs. In many ways, 'Sámi Spirit' became conflated with a singular Indigenous experience, symbolised by "traditional" art (*duodji*) – producing a dichotomy between tradition and modernity. "Modern" art (*dáidda)* was considered to be more aligned with "Norwegian" art (Hansen, 2016). This returns us to the dynamic of expectation put forward in the first chapter, in which Sámi, and indigenous people more widely, are expected to perform a restricted notion of indigeneity. However, in this case, a dual force is at play, with an expectation derived from within the Sámi community and being imposed externally.

"As a Sámi you can experience racism from the majority, but you also can experience exclusion from your own community… I have examples from my own life… I didn't feel that the Sámi part of my identity was that worthy among the majority people because of the assimilation processes, and I didn't feel part of the Sámi community; I didn't feel included by the Sámi community. I felt that the Sámi community could be a bit hierarchical and had a very determined view of what being Sámi was and what making Sámi art was. So I didn't think I had the right to be a Sámi filmmaker and didn't feel like that part of my identity had any value".[18]

In this quote, Egil demonstrates his sense of disorientation towards both the majority and Indigenous communities. In his early career as a filmmaker, he felt that he didn't fit either of these groups' expectations of how his Indigenous identity should inform the art he made. Such testimony is representative of how Indigenous communities are often forced to essentialise their existence to gain a foothold in broader political debates. Gayatri Spivak's concept of 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak, 1988) understands this dynamic as marginal groups playing into their own exotic imaginaries to cultivate an unarguable presence.

However, the conceptualisation of strategic essentialism needs to go further in recognising the importance of mobilising tradition to mobilise potential futurities. Such bounded expectations are erected as a mechanism of self-protection for marginalised societies, and thus, we might argue that they make up an integral phase of an emancipatory movement. The initial establishment of a shared identity (however flawed such a notion might be) underpins

[18] Egil Pedersen (21/02/2024) interviewed by author.

a movement on which notions of plurality can be nurtured. In reviving cultures that have been systematically oppressed, the recovery of traditional symbolism can be powerful and unifying as a preliminary step towards developing Indigenous pride and empowerment – they serve the community interpersonally, not only in terms of the tactical establishment of political presence. Increasingly, within Sámi creative practice, tradition is being interpreted as a dynamic concept. Reading tradition as a symbolic process that simultaneously presupposes past symbolisms and creatively re-interprets them offers a fruitful opening for temporal fluidity and alternative modes of expression (Hansen, 2016).

"Things are changing. People are starting to take risks, trying to show alternative perspectives. I think hopefully with my film and the other films I'm seeing coming to the fore, we are showing that minority films can be contemporary, and be about everyday life. Of course, there's some Sámi layer there, but it doesn't have to be all about reindeer herders or racism from the majority"[19]

Colonial institutions, in their educational, social or economic forms, have colonised people's minds, which has established a dynamic of internalised colonialism and the acquisition of what bell hooks refers to as "white lenses" (Hooks, 1992:1) in which the colonised population in some ways assume the majority perspectives that have been systematically imposed on them. These lenses complicate notions of what authentic 'Sáminess' looks like and entails. But, as Egil testifies, things are changing. A new generation of Sámi creatives is intentionally moving away from dichotomies and imagining new ways of performing Sáminess, fortified by Indigenous epistemes that encourage variation, experimentation, and difference, in distinction from the majority culture, but certainly not divorced from it.

4.3 The International Sámi Film Institute (ISFI)

Following the cultural revitalisation movement of the 1970s, Sámi film production and policy was first institutionalised in 1981, with the establishment of the North Norwegian Film Center (NNFC), which was attributed "special responsibility" for Sámi film (Mecsei, 2015: 7). Also during the 1970s and 80s, several regional film centres were developed in Norway, one of which was the *Internášunála Sámi Filmbmaguovddáš* (ISF), which gradually acquired

[19] Egil Pedersen (21/02/2024) interviewed by author.

charge from the NNFC for Sámi film production in the North. The International Sámi Film Institute (ISFI) was officially established in its current form in 2014, as the ISF transitioned from being a regional centre to a national and transnational hub of Sámi film production, representing the Sámi across nation-state borders (Lee, 2022). The ISFI is based in the village of Guovdageaidnu (or Kautokeino in Norwegian), within the Kautokeino municipality in Finnmark County, Norway.

I became aware of the ISFI at the TIFF, attending the *'Sámi Films Rising'* event, a panel of eminent Sámi filmmakers, convened by Maren Benedicte Nystad Storslett, the coordinator of *Sapmifilm* (a streaming platform developed by the ISFI for the distribution of Indigenous film). What became clear during this panel was an undeniable sense of energy, momentum, and hope. "*Sámi film could take over the world!*" one filmmaker offered. The dynamism and vitality of the Sámi film industry were overt, as the panel platformed film and television makers experimented with unique ideas and concepts, validating Egil's assertion that there is increasing enticement to challenge conventions and push boundaries. It was evident that the ISFI has played a prominent role in cultivating a creative community, and the power of such collaboration has led to the development of a flourishing network.

"The Sámi Film Institute has an open call and was searching for Indigenous horror stories, so I applied and was accepted onto the course. About 20 of us Indigenous filmmakers came to Kautokeino… it was amazing meeting other Indigenous filmmakers to work with their stories. And I felt like this was something for me. I learned so much during the course… I had lots of feedback and I had coaching, and of course, got lots of motivation from the other filmmakers"[20]

My collaborator describes how she first entered the world of film, having previously been an author of children's books. Via an open call from the ISFI, she had the opportunity to attend a workshop, an integral part of which was the interaction with other Indigenous filmmakers. Moffat suggests that the Sámi film industry distinguishes itself from the dominant Nordic media industries by forming such networks. By providing high-level training and other collaborative opportunities for aspiring practitioners, the ISFI promotes the "cultural closeness" of its workforce. Moffat identifies networking through training and education as

[20] Participant B (12/02/2024) interviewed by author.

one facet of the ISFI's node-based network system, recognising the institution's collaboration with companies who provide technical equipment and networking through distribution and regional and international film festivals as other crucial mechanisms towards building industry competence and claiming cultural sovereignty (Moffat, 2017: 12).

"The Norwegian government didn't support the Sámi film institute from the start; ISFI have been building stone by stone and have pushed the Norwegian government to recognise their importance by the international attention Sami films have got."[21]

Yet, as Britt explains, there has been a persistent reluctance on behalf of the Norwegian government to fund the ISFI, and complex power dynamics continue to impact the funding received. As Moffat contends, in many cases, the diplomatic processes that endeavour to protect Indigenous rights to culture "frequently mask the subtle economic and political marginalisation of the Sámi" (Moffat, 2018: 71). Norwegian cinema heavily depends on state funding due to its relatively small size; the film industry obtains financing from various national sources and operates locally via a series of regional film centres. Films are seen as necessary for the country's national branding and visibility, and inherent to this argument is an expectation that regional centres represent the diversity of Norway's local geographies (Sand, 2018; Lee, 2022). As elucidated by Britt, the ISFI has worked tirelessly to build a reputation for itself, and only through this success and increasing international recognition have the Norwegian cultural authorities started to recognise the organisation as a critical asset. This is reflected in a recent funding boost from the Norwegian government, but increased support results in increased influence. All activity reports must be sent to the Norwegian Ministry of Culture, and any alterations to institutional operations must be approved (Bjerkeland, 2015; Lee, 2022).

The transnational identity of the Sámi people further complicates the interaction between the ISFI and the state. Sámi film is subject to a confusing patchwork of institutional funding from the four nations where the Sámi reside, with differing levels of value applied to Indigenous film development in each state.

[21] Britt Kramvig (08/03/2024) interviewed by author.

"you always have to have a co-production if you want to make a bigger production… every Sámi film project is financed in, or produced in, at least two countries: Sweden, Finland and Norway. That's the structure right now. Of course, it would be great if we had a massive Sami Film Institute that could finance big feature films independently… but for now, the ISFI is still reliant on the majority when it comes to finance."[22]

As Oskar clarifies, the cross-border nature of the ISFI must be harnessed to derive enough funding for larger productions. This ethic of cross-border collaboration has strengthened a sense of a Sámi network and cultural movement in many ways, acting as a critical unitary force. However, in other ways, it has weakened the ability to secure financial support from the Norwegian state (typically the most significant state funder). As of 2018, the ISFI is no longer considered eligible to be part of Norway's regional funding system. Thus, reliance on the majority regarding finance is somewhat disempowering as the ISFI is subject to the whims of the funding rules dictated by nation-states.

4.4 The Dáiddadállu Network

Whilst the ISFI has provided integral support to Sámi artists, progressing ownership of Indigenous narratives in film and storytelling, its work is complicated by its engagement with the majority state. Such an engagement is necessary, as the ISFI operates at the interface between Indigenous filmmaking and the majority film industry, necessarily leaning on non-Indigenous structures for funding and distribution. In contrast, the Dáiddadállu collective is a highly localised, situated organisation that has in many ways aided the development of the talent and creativity fostered by the ISFI but is intended primarily to promote a Sámi creative community uninhibited by the organisational structures of the majority culture.

"*Dáiddadállu is all about building with integrity, an infrastructure that is embedded in a Sámi way of knowing and Sámi values. We need to be part of a community to know who we are as filmmakers, what Sámi film is, and what Sámi art is. We must build this sense of identity for ourselves before offering it to the rest of the world."*[23]

[22] Oskar Östergren Njajta (05/03/2024) interviewed by author.
[23] Britt Kramvig (08/03/2024) interviewed by author.

Dáiddadállu was established a decade ago and has ever since represented "a central junction between Sámi contemporary art and the local, regional, national and international professional community and the public", through its cultivation of a distinctive interdisciplinary Sámi art environment representing wide-ranging art forms: "visual art, film, dance, theatre, choreography, TV production, performing arts, design, writing, music and yoik" (*The Dáiddadállu Sámi Artist Network*, 2024). The network was set up in the village of Guovdageaidnu, where the population comprises more than 75% Sámi people. Established as a nucleus for Sámi activism owing to its prominence in the Alta/Kautokeino dam controversy, the municipality has continued to play an active role in cultivating a Sámi presence and developing Sámi industry. Dáiddadállu was formed by the choreographer and filmmaker Elle Sofe Sara, and the artist and writer Máret Ánne Sara, both of whom were raised in Guovdageaidnu, and still live there today.

The Dáiddadállu website states that "Sami epistemology is the basis of Dáiddadállu's work", concepts of community, communication, holistic thinking and sustainability are emphasised (*The Dáiddadállu Sámi Artist Network*, 2024). A notion of symbiosis between people, animals, and nature informs the Sámi epistemology underscores Dáiddadállu's function. Katya García-Antón, director of the Northern Norway Art Museum, has proposed that Indigenous sovereignty may only be attained "when the inter-substantiation between the human and the natural worlds that underpins Sámi worldviews is acknowledged" (García-Antón et al., 2022: 10). We must thus recognise the stated aims and guiding principles of the Dáiddadállu network as enacting creative sovereignty, operating in distinction to the formal art institutions of majority states.

In many ways, Dáiddadállu is powerful because of its reclamation and contemporary reinterpretation of the *'dáidda'* term. In the traditionalist framework of Sámi art in the context of the 1970s cultural revitalisation movement, dáidda was established as a term in northern Sámi language, as a means to break away from the duodji practice, which encompasses craftsmanship. Dáidda was used to refer to what could be understood as 'visual art' in the western sense, but became associated with an inauthenticity when it came to assessing its value to the Sámi cultural heritage (Hansen, 2016). However, the work of Dáiddadállu intends to rewrite this narrative.

Practically enacting an Indigenous paradigm, Dáiddadállu is both directly and indirectly activist. Many of its artists work with intensely political and emotionally demanding themes, challenging the status quo. But Dáiddadállu is particularly potent in the activism it empowers simply through the nature of its structure and values. "Our foundation and our starting point is Sápmi" (*The Dáiddadállu Sámi Artist Network*, 2024). For a community that has long been denied its organic culture and dispossessed of its lands – the starting point for the cultivation of cultural sovereignty must be the land itself. Founding itself in the landscape of Sápmi informs how Dáiddadállu operates, embodying the relationality between the human and non-human world that is so important to Sámi ontology: Sámi art is Sámi life.

4.5 Situated Stories for a Universal Audience

Infrastructures that are place-based and serve the local community are powerful and indispensable. But as both the ISFI and Dáiddadállu articulate themselves as international in their outlook and engagement, I want to further this discussion by speaking to the rich networks fostered beyond the nation-state, that have been an essential facet in the flourishing of the Sámi film industry in the Nordic Arctic.

"When I watch another Indigenous film, I can see the references; I can see that this is an Indigenous filmmaker. We maybe have our own language to tell stories; we have this rich culture and these similarities connecting us… I can connect with the film themes in another way from a majority group. Maybe Indigenous people understand each other more. Yeah. We have this thing, cultural context, the cultural understanding, of living and being in a minority."[24]

My collaborator highlights a sense of commonality shared by disparate Indigenous groups. Such camaraderie and unity in distinction have been frequently called upon when articulating the unique essence of Indigenous film. The ISFI has drawn on an international Indigenous network to fortify its presence, collaborating with Canada's leading Indigenous film and media platform ImagineNATIVE and forging links with the Indigenous program at Sundance Film Festival. However, whilst mutuality and recognisable experiences might cultivate a

[24] Participant B (12/02/2024) interviewed by author.

cultural closeness between diverse Indigenous societies, these are not the only fruitful transnational relationships fostered.

Whilst engagements with majority cultures activate colonial power dynamics, they can be productive in bringing these challenges to the fore and opening up these persistent undercurrents to a global audience. One interesting example is the Sámi film industry's engagement with the Disney corporation. With a setting and plot inspired by Sámi culture and Scandinavian myth, conversations about cultural appropriation and erasure erupted following the diffusion of the hugely popular Disney animation *'Frozen 1'* (2013). The second instalment, 'Frozen 2' (2019), was released six years later. This time, Disney approached the filmmaking process in a more culturally sensitive way. A formal contract was drawn up between Walt Disney Animation Studios and a group of cultural consultants brought together by the Sámi parliaments of Norway, Sweden, and Finland and the Sámi Council, to ensure that the film was "culturally sensitive, appropriate and respectful of the Sámi and their culture" (Simonpillai, 2019). This consultation process was a novel attempt by Disney (historically prolific in its misrepresentation and essentialising of Indigenous people and their stories) to foster Indigenous inclusion and input. A foundational acknowledgement that Sámi cultural heritage must be treated with respect and that Sámi people must own their own stories underpinned this collaboration. We might hold reservations about Disney's motivations, as governed by an economic incentive and a desire to stay relevant to an audience increasingly critical of the corporation's employment of cultural appropriation. Even so, the partnership was symbolically and practically meaningful. The film was the first Disney film dubbed into a Sámi language, launching simultaneously with the other Scandinavian versions. It was attended by many in traditional Sámi dress, functioning as an opening for the celebration of Sámi culture. In this way, we might recognise the nurturing of a network between the Sámi and international bodies as a potentially transformative agent in a global articulation of Indigenous cultural sovereignty (Kvidal-Røvik and Cordes, 2022), not necessarily signifying the completion of a 'happy ending', but rather, in the words of Christina Henriksen (Vice President of the Sámi Council), representing "the beginning of a long story" (McGwin, 2020).

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the ongoing complexities concerning articulating truly emancipatory Indigenous politics within the limits of majority frameworks. It is certain that "dual existence beyond but still within the nation-states" produces "dilemmas of marginalisation and dependence versus sovereignty" (Bohr, MacKenzie and Stenport, 2015; Kääpä, 2015; Aure, 2023: 28). In acknowledging the Sámi film industry as in some ways operating in radical alterity to the nation-state, but simultaneously relying on the operational infrastructures of the status quo, we are made overtly aware of the conflicting dynamics of marginalisation and dependence, versus emancipation and sovereignty, that this chapter has sought to wrestle with. Perhaps more galvanising than a label of fourth cinema in the pursuit of sovereignty is the embrace of the "in-between" area at the interface of cultural exchange (Greenblatt, 1991: 4). This hybridity is empowered by ways of Indigenous being that resist dichotomy, and instead seek to embrace plurality and relationality.

Whilst engagements with majority cultures activate colonial power dynamics, they can be productive in bringing these challenges to the fore and opening up these persistent undercurrents to a global audience. Attending to the infrastructures that characterise the Sámi film industry, which is burgeoning and increasingly attracting critical international attention, this chapter has intended to illustrate the power of organisations underscored by Indigenous epistemes, presenting such forms as a prerequisite to engagement with majority culture infrastructure. Both the examples of Dáiddadállu and the ISFI represent Indigenous-owned mechanisms built on values of relationality, collaboration, heterogeneity and affinity.

Although defining a Sámi cultural identity has been historically challenging due to the systematic subjugation of Sámi culture, which has produced a specific internalised suppression, networks such as Dáiddadállu and the ISFI have fostered a move away from rigid dichotomies. They are increasingly embracing the plurality of Indigenous being. Whilst Indigenous creative presence may have initially been founded on the reclamation of a set of 'traditional' tropes, by cultivating artistic networks and creating infrastructures founded on and moulded by Indigenous values, these tropes are progressively being challenged; varied, experimental forms of creative expression are being offered. Both organisations demonstrate the importance of collaboration on varied spatial scales, from the local to the global. But

despite these complex relational entanglements, Dáiddadállu and the ISFI are ultimately rooted in the land, constituted by, and forming the identity of Sápmi.

5. Conclusion

It is perhaps surprising that this thesis, premised on visual culture, utilises very little visual material. This conscious and directed choice aims to guide attention away from the bright lights of the cinema screen towards the form and function of the infrastructural frameworks that underpin the evolving landscape of the Indigenous film industry in the Nordic Arctic. In elucidating the sites of agency that constitute the Sámi film industry, I have argued that understanding Indigenous cultural institutions; and crucially, the "in-between" spaces that characterise interactions with majority cultural forms, is a fundamental requirement in a project that seeks to locate a Sámi voice.

The dissertation began with an orientation towards the past as a mechanism to open up new potentialities for the future. Adopting a temporal fluidity, characteristic of Sámi society, an acknowledgement of the conflicting motivations of the Enlightenment period was harnessed to work towards a more generative concept. Through this, we indulge the desire for emancipation through more profound knowledge and understanding whilst reorienting the achievement of such freedom via a commitment to plurality. Moving away from the confining dichotomies proposed by Enlightenment thought that signified a denial of Indigenous epistemes towards the embrace of multiple stories; this work situates the emancipatory instinct within the wants and needs of Indigenous people to maintain their vitality through the exercise of creative sovereignty.

The TIFF was identified as an essential space of resistance, opening a window for exchange between the Arctic and the global gaze and the broader Indigenous and majority populations within the city and the nation. A site of both friction and emancipation, the TIFF is characterised by complex interacting discourses: a cultural moment of confluence between ranging ethnic identities, investments, and branding incentives – heightened by a contemporary fascination with Arctic stories. Speaking to the genuine plurality and fluidity of identities within the Arctic, the festival asserts a distinct Arctic voice, situating Indigenous people as essential within this dialogue.

Yet, the TIFF would not function without the Indigenous cultural infrastructures that have evolved and persisted despite the assiduous denial of Sámi lifeways. Indigenous modes of knowing and being markedly govern organisations such as the ISFI and the Dáiddadállu

network. Adapting to the reality of existing within a dominant culture, they exercise distinction but still engage with the majority infrastructures, demonstrating a generative meeting between. Working to resist histories of unequal power, I argued that the hybridity of these cultural forms should not be framed as a determinist narrative of disempowerment, but rather as a powerful window of exchange, in which Indigenous films and filmmakers are gaining international recognition, forcing the Norwegian state to mirror this acknowledgement.

The one-sided story of colonisation, in which the coloniser transforms the colonised, is misleading and denies Indigenous agency. Indigenous people have survived despite the constant predictions that insisted they would not, catalysed by the Enlightenment's progressivist theory (Greenblatt, 1991; Sahlins, 1999; Subramaniam et al., 2016). This power of endurance demands the acknowledgement of permeability between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures and the identification of the tenacious practices of agency and resistance that have enabled Indigenous continuation. Acknowledging this permeability allows us to recognise the entanglement of worlds (Mignolo, 2018).

The contemporary Sámi film industry is one form of agency and resistance, relationally thick, caught in a diverse web of networks within its creative community, the nation-state, and internationally. The Sámi film industry is a product of entangled relationalities between the human and non-human world and the Indigenous and majority populations. Adopting a proposition of enlightenment as an ongoing process, the hybridity that characterises the Sámi film industry is processual and in constant motion. Indigenous identity is plural, dynamic, and continually reworked in a rapidly changing world. The possibilities opened up by the Sámi film industry reflect this vitality.

With a limited research period, this dissertation cannot claim to understand fully the form and function of the Sámi film industry, let alone the scope of Indigenous cultural infrastructure more broadly. I depended on a narrow personal engagement with the TIFF and the landscape of northern Norway. As a non-Indigenous researcher, I relied heavily on the conversations I shared with my seven collaborators. This dissertation identifies reciprocity and porosity as fundamental to fostering equal relations between Indigenous and majority cultures. Still, it marks only the beginning of a more meaningful window of exchange between Indigenous knowledge and the academy. Meaningful exchange is necessarily a long-term project; it must

resist fleeting engagement with Indigenous knowledge and scholarship and oppose the expectation that reciprocity be defined by a redemptive moment for the settler-scholar (Reeploeg, 2023). There is undoubtedly more to be done in thinking through the logic of reciprocity and how this can be integrated into research and writing. I hope, in some small way, this contribution gives back to the indigenous practitioners and their work that inspired it.

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