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## Farewell to (post)colonialism in Danish-Greenlandic relations? And then again, maybe not...

The aim of the article is to investigate the allegedly new relationship between Greenland and Denmark in Danish political and literary discourses relating to Greenland, by approaching it from two different research perspectives – those of political and literary studies. The analysis draws on the theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu and his concepts of habitus, capitals and dispositions that together create a hegemonic order. It also applies the concept of framing, as operationalised by A. Pluwak, B. Scheufele, W.A. Gamson, and A. Modigliani in the social sciences. The essay is structured according to the core framing tasks: diagnostic, prognostic and motivational, and their confluence with the temporal frames of the 1950s, the 1970s and the period beyond the 1990s. The analysis employs examples from both post-WW2 official documents related to Greenland and produced in or on behalf of Denmark, and from Danish literature about Greenland published in the same time periods.

**Key words:** Danish discourse of Greenland, frame analysis, discourse analysis, interdisciplinary approach, analytic tools

In the past few years, a number of political documents and works of literary fiction have appeared, generating discourses and producing visions of a common future between Greenland and Denmark. At first sight, it may seem that a qualitatively new relationship is currently taking shape between the countries, beyond the colonial and postcolonial framework of the past. Our aim is to investigate this allegedly new relationship in a historical perspective on the basis of selected sources representing Danish political and literary discourses relating to Greenland. To this end, we apply framing analysis as a new methodological approach that allows us to engage two different research areas: political science and literary studies. This choice is motivated by the conviction that so far a satisfactory approach that would transcend disciplinary boundaries with regard to these domains has not been devised, and that requisite interdisciplinary tools are still inadequate. The overall aim of the article is, thus, to show that framing analysis can be the tool most fitting for the purpose of capturing the discursive realizations of the asymmetrical and unbal-

anced relationship between Denmark and Greenland, and of examining not only the role of culture but also the role of power resulting from political hegemony in the constitution of knowledge, meaning and understanding of the world.

Our understanding of frames and framing draws heavily on the tradition anchored in the social sciences, with the apparatus of Pierre Bourdieu, William A. Gamson, Andre Modigliani, Robert D. Benford and Bertram Scheufele to name just a few of the most fruitful theoretical inspirations for our work (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Benford and Snow 2000; Scheufele 1999). Furthermore, thanks to our socialization and academic experience gained in the Polish academic world, we recognize contributions to framing analysis made by Tomasz Olczyk and Karol Franczak, who have demonstrated for us the possibility of using framing analysis in the broad field of the social sciences (Franczak 2014). Last, we are indebted to Agnieszka Pluwak, whose text on the genesis and evolution of framing has convincingly demonstrated the analytical potential of framing analysis for us (Pluwak 2009). Nevertheless, none of these scholars has worked in a transdisciplinary way, joining literary and social science resources, so for the sake of our research their inspiring approaches had to be recontextualized and adjusted selectively to our needs.

In the following, we investigate various textual articulations within Danish discourse on Greenland, although it should be stressed that the factual sources, pertaining to politics, as well as sources from literary fiction that are analysed in this text, are for the most part a result of Danish-Greenlandic negotiations and cross-fertilisation. Hence their “purity” as products of solely Danish discursive practices is impossible to prove. Nevertheless, we still insist on calling our work an analysis of Danish discourse, since all analysed texts have been conceived in the profoundly asymmetrical power relations between Denmark and Greenland in the post-war period up till today, and, therefore, should be regarded as results of the lasting Danish hegemony and symbolic power with regard to Greenland and Greenlanders.

### 1. The impact of power structures on the construction of Danish discourse relating to Greenland

The following analysis has been inspired by Pierre Bourdieu’s two key terms of habitus and symbolic power, which draw our attention to structures that modify and shape human cognitive abilities and schemata. We have noted that habitus, defined as “systems of durable, transposable dispositions, [...] structures predisposed to function as [...] principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their own outcomes” (Bourdieu

1990: 53), captures the naturalized dispositions of the participants in the Danish discourse to see Greenland and the Greenlanders through the prism of the desired outcome of their mutual relations. Identifying this attitude as instrumental in generating and organizing Danish discursive practices and representations with regard to Greenland, we point to its utilization of symbolic power, i.e. a system consisting of patterns of behaviour, signs and meanings, often assumed as superior, delivered together with naturalised modes of their interpretation (Ibid.: 131). When applied to Danish-Greenlandic relations, the use of symbolic power has been manifested in the discursive articulations produced by Danes in history – missionaries, merchants, clerks, scientists, travellers, writers, but also officials and politicians – and its hegemonic codes and conventions have been, to a large extent, also naturalized and reproduced by Greenlanders themselves.

Bourdieu's preoccupation with the structures that limit, control and influence social life, and his idea that power relations are embedded in the practices of everyday life (Bourdieu 1993), can be efficiently linked to analyses of framing practices understood as an examination of how meaning production is generated by a society and realized in texts of culture as discursive political weapons. As noticed by political scholars and historians, the asymmetrical power relations between Denmark and Greenland have structured the Danish discursive practices and rhetorical strategies over time with a clear political goal – to retain Greenland under Danish rule (Gad 2014: 104). Focusing on the impact of twentieth-century power structures on Danish political and literary discourse on Greenland is expected to uncover their complicity in the continuous exercising of authority over the polity which since 1979 has sought greater independence from Denmark, but also – according to Bourdieu – the way in which this authority can possibly be relegitimized as a result of the interplay between structure and agency.

## 2. How do we understand framing?

In a text on the genesis and evolution of framing in the social sciences, Pluwak (2011) introduces framing analysis with regard to the linguistic aspects of strategic framing and technique of wording formulation in political campaigns. With the point of departure in earlier research by Scheufele, Gamson and Modigliani, Pluwak distinguishes between three different dimensions of framing: 1) shared meanings in a given society and the socio-cultural aspect of experience acquisition (e.g. symbols, ideologies, values), recurrent within any public discourse; 2) the psychological mechanism of specific and selected wording, capable of influencing opinions and decisions, such as voting; and 3) a marketing-political use of culturally relevant symbols in order to influence public choices (Ibid.: 309). In our search

for a common analytical ground between the social reality manifested in political texts and the reality present in works of literary fiction, we have focused on the technique of wording selection and its application for political interpretation, and we have searched for goals and implications behind such wording.

In one of the most general and widely recognized definition of framing, Robert M. Entman maintains that “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman 1993: 52). Therefore, framing operates through defining problems, determining what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, diagnosing causes by identifying the agency of the problem, making moral judgements, and, finally, through suggesting remedies.

In order to fulfil our task of analysing the Danish discourse on Greenland on the basis of the selected body of literature and resources, we have decided to pay particular attention to three core framing tasks, i.e. diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing, and to consider their operational potential in relation to the temporal framework of Danish-Greenlandic relations after WW2. These framing tasks, as ideal types, have all got their recognised function: diagnostic framing is expected to naturalise the difference in order to foster or facilitate agreement, prognostic framing has a function to call for action, and motivational framing should foster action (Benford and Snow 2000: 615).

In the following analysis, we identify the core framing tasks within Danish discourse on Greenland, as they are specified by Benford and Snow, and examine their confluence with temporal frames of the 1950s, 1970s, with special attention paid to the period after the 1990s. We believe that particularly in the past two decades a new quality both in the political as well as literary discourses has emerged due to the on-going changes in the power relations between Denmark and Greenland. Our analysis will be structured according to three kinds of frames: “aggregate frames”, “consensus frames” and “collective action frames” which have been identified by Gamson in his research on social movements (Gamson 1992: 91; Gamson 1995: 91). Aggregate frames define issues as social problems and assign responsibility to those who hear the message of the frame to take action about the problem as individuals. Consensus frames (or strategies) define a social problem as one which can only be resolved by collective action; they construct a strong sense of identity for the people who are to act collectively, but do not determine the identity of the party responsible for causing the problem. Collective action frames define a problem as both intrinsically wrong and caused by an identifiable actor, us and/or them (Fisher 1997).

### 3. Frame of aggregation towards cohesion (“aggregate frame”)

To set the scene for readers who are less familiar with the history of Danish-Greenlandic relations, we precede each part of the analysis with a short summary of the core political events in the respective temporal frames of the post-WW2 period. With respect to the 1950s, it must be noted that politically Greenland had become constitutionally incorporated as a territorial unit within the Kingdom, and Denmark took the responsibility for the ongoing modernization of its “northern country”. To depict this event, we focus on the first passage from a political statement taken from the *Greenland Commission’s Report* of 1950 (Grønlandskommissionen 1950a), that presented overall guidelines for the upcoming development in Greenland. Among other things the report stated that: “It is estimated that the time has come, where one can deliberately work towards the aim that the Greenlanders will become equal members of Danish society”<sup>1</sup>

The first striking feature of this statement is that there is no clear “we”, and throughout the passage it remains unclear who actually estimates that the Greenlanders (described in the third person) in the last sentence are ready to become an equal part of the Danish society. Taking a close look at the three clauses that constitute the passage, one can identify all the core framing tasks mentioned earlier. The opening clause, “It is estimated that the time has come”, is indicative of diagnostic framing and suggests fostering an agreement – in this case supposedly an agreement between the Danes and the Greenlanders, although the first are not mentioned directly in the passage. The subsequent clause, “where one can deliberately work towards the aim” is an expression of motivational framing, with an aim to foster an action, although its agents here too remain unclear. The last and most significant clause in this passage, “that the Greenlanders will become equal members of the Danish society”, is an example of prognostic framing, and communicates a call for action towards a future social change: achieving equality for Greenlanders as a consequence of the process of incorporating Greenland into the Kingdom of Denmark.

The colonial frame of the cited passage becomes clearer when read against a passage from the same report of Greenland Commission which reads as follows: “It is quite clear that a society like the Greenlandic people which in all respects is at a primitive stage must receive external financial aid, if in the foreseeable future it is to work its way up to a considerably higher financial, social and cultural level”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Det tidspunkt skønnes nu at være inde, hvor man bevidst kan arbejde henimod det mål, at grønlænderne bliver ligeberettigede medlemmer af det danske samfund” (Grønlandskommissionen 1950a: 18). Unless indicated otherwise, all translations into English are by the authors of this text.

<sup>2</sup> “Det er da også helt klart, at et samfund, der i enhver henseende befinder sig på et primitivt stade, som det grønlandske, må have økonomisk støtte udefra, hvis det i løbet af oversku-

In spite of the euphemisation (Danes are again “photo-shopped” out of the document), the message leaves no doubt: in order to become “equal members of the Danish society”, as the previous passage stated, the Greenlandic people will have to accept Danish hegemony in the form of economic aid and thus succumb to symbolic violence that naturalizes differences between the Danes and the Greenlanders. In other words, the implicitly postulated equalization of both societies will, in fact, mean no less than an intensive process of Danification of Greenland. The political frame of the 1950s can be identified as a frame of aggregation towards social cohesion.

Moving on to the field of literary fiction, the 1950s was a period where only very few novels appeared with Greenland as the main topic.<sup>3</sup> One among those was *Kala* written by Aage Bistrup (1884–1954) and published posthumously in 1956 – a story about a tough and brave woman Kala from a respected family of hunters, who strives to keep the traditional Greenlandic way of life alive, but ultimately must succumb to the dominating Danish culture. In the end of the novel, Kala finds herself back in the settlement that she established together with her husband. At the moment of her death, Kala sees a plane flying high over the sky and the novel ends with the following words:

And just as the first airplane which had ever crossed Greenland’s enormous ice cap carried out an emergency landing right beneath her old settlement, Igdluko, Kala gave up the ghost. The last of the illustrious hunter families – truly faithful to everything that once had existed. A new time had begun for the old hunter people behind the sea and the mountains that will always gleam blue.<sup>4</sup>

This example demonstrates that Danish literary fiction on Greenland in the 1950s seems to act straightforwardly against the previously analysed concurrent political framing. The last sentence in the novel clearly expresses a negative view on the process of introducing “a new time” to Greenland, which can be indicative of “diagnostic framing”, but the problem identified contradicts the positive view of the prognosticated development of Greenland. Instead of “prognoses” of cultural progress, the old colonial discourse of the cultural encounter between Denmark

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elig fremtid skal arbejde sig op til et væsentligt højere økonomisk, socialt og kulturelt niveau” (Grønlandskommissionen 1950b: 26).

<sup>3</sup> Energy was apparently mainly invested in filmic representations of Greenland, with such big productions as the Danish-Greenlandic movie *Qivitoq* (1956).

<sup>4</sup> “Og netop som den første flyvemaskine, der nogen sinde havde krydset Grønlands mægtige indlandsis, nødlandede neden for hendes gamle boplads, Igdluko, udåndede Kala. Den sidste af de berømmelige fanger-slægter – inderlig trofast mod alt det, der engang havde været. En ny tid var indvarslet for det gamle jægerfolk bag havet, og de fjelde, som altid vil blåne” (Bistrup 1956: 192).

and Greenland is reduplicated and framed as tragic – constructed through the logic of binary oppositions. Danes and Greenlanders in the novel are fixed as essentially different, which is highlighted by the words of a Danish doctor working in Northern Greenland: “We will never learn to understand the Greenlanders”<sup>5</sup>. The novel focuses mostly on the so-called Greenlandic essence – the close connection to nature, holding on to traditional values and ways of life – while hybridization – the outcome of the Greenland’s incorporation within the Kingdom, framed as “desired” in the political text – is portrayed as destructive and negative. However, this essence of the Greenlandic culture constitutes its very limitation at the same time. The old Greenlandic hunter culture is represented as doomed to decline when encountering Danish cultural, economic, as well as symbolic capital. In this vision, there is no space left for the agency of Greenlanders – both so-called “pure” and “hybrid” Greenlanders seem to be on their way to succumbing to the “new time” – that is the dominating Danish culture and lifestyle.

On the basis of these examples, it can be concluded that Danish literature on Greenland in the 1950s, with regard to its topical description of what was happening, lagged behind in relation to the political frame of the period. Like the political discourse, the literary discourse worked as a “diagnostic” and “prognostic” mirror, but it produced meanings about the problems and possible future of Greenland contrary to those generated by the political document in question. In the political discourse, the impact of power can be identified in the presence of the “frame of aggregation towards cohesion” that legitimizes Denmark as having the authority to act on behalf of the Greenlanders, whereas its presence has only minimal significance in the discourse articulated in the literary work. This raises the question as to the role of agency of the author of literary fiction in the production of meaning, which will be discussed in the next section.

#### 4. Frame of consensus seeking (“consensus frame”)

Within the temporal frame of the 1960s, and in particular the 1970s, the imposing of Danish political will on Greenlanders and the implanting of Danish cultural capital in Greenland produced a discourse of difference, in which ethnic rhetoric began to be used among both the Greenlanders as well as the Danes. In other words, the imposed consensus of the 1950s backfired due to the Danish application to join the European Community (EC) and to the subsequent EC-membership that produced a growing opposition among Greenlanders. The attempted reproduction of Danish cultural capital, through the introduction of a universal

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<sup>5</sup> “Men forstå grønlanderne lærer vi aldrig” (Ibid.: 168).

schooling system that was supposed to cause social advancement, failed to fulfil its goals. Furthermore, the establishing of the pan-Inuit organization the Inuit Circumpolar Conference in 1977 offered Greenlanders an alternative to the identity project imposed by Denmark.

In October 1975, a Home Rule Commission was set up consisting of seven Greenlandic and seven Danish politicians. The commission worked for almost three years and in 1978 delivered its report (*Hjemmestyrekommissionens betænkning*), from which the following passage originates:

It has probably been more crucial for the occurrence of the idea of home rule, that development efforts in Greenland at the dawn of the 1970s had lasted for almost twenty-five years and among other things had resulted in a significant improvement of educational standards in general and, by means of better communication conditions, also of the people's understanding of and interest in society's development. In short, the conditions were created so as the people of Greenland – just as had happened to be the case for the people of the Faroe Islands in 1948 – could take responsibility for their own affairs. And the claim for responsibility through obtaining home rule was expressed as a claim by Greenland.<sup>6</sup>

The first thing that strikes a reader is the lack of the well-established dichotomy between “us” and “them”. As a result of long negotiations and dialogue within the Home Rule Commission, the report should be perceived as a product of Danish-Greenlandic consensus. However, Greenlanders are mentioned in third person only, and the text consisting of an accumulation of passive constructions does not reveal the sender of the message. The “aggregate frame” identifies the Danish part as having the power to state that Greenlanders had earned the right to home rule owing to their having followed the instructions and fulfilled the requirements that were set up for them by the Danes. On the other hand, the euphemistic formulation of the Danish participation in the process, in spite of the explicit passive constructions, presents Greenlanders as active agents and “prognosticates” their taking responsibility for their own country, becoming initiators of changes and co-builders of the historical “consensus” with the Kingdom. The frame of the political text can be thus identified as the frame of consensus-seeking communicating a prognostic and motivational message.

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<sup>6</sup> ”Mere afgørende for hjemmestyretankens opståen har nok været, at udviklingsindsatsen i Grønland ved indgangen til 1970'erne havde stået på i næsten 25 år og bl.a. havde resulteret i en betydelig højnelse af uddannelsesniveaueet i almindelighed og, i kraft af bedre kommunikationsforhold, også af befolkningens orientering om og interesse for samfundets udvikling. Betingelserne var kort sagt skabt for, at den grønlandske befolkning – ligesom det var sket for den færøske befolknings vedkommende i 1948 – kunne begynde selv at tage ansvar for sine egne anliggender. Og ønsket om ansvar gennem hjemmestyre var fremsat som et ønske fra Grønlands side” (Kommissionen om Hjemmestyre i Grønland 1978: 12).

Moving our focus on to the Danish literary fiction about Greenland published in the 1960s and 1970s and consisting of a considerable number of novels and essays thematising both the Greenlandic past as well as the current affairs,<sup>7</sup> we have selected one work for the purpose of the analysis: a novel by Niels Fenger entitled *Hvid anorak* (White anorak) published in 1977. The two main characters of the novel, Aron and Niels, a Greenlander and a Dane respectively, become friends in their childhood in the 1950s, when the large-scale modernization process begins in Greenland. After several years, they meet again in the 1970s, when there is no doubt for anyone that long-term development has led to rather dubious results: social problems, inequality and lack of respect. During a fierce discussion between the two friends, Aron, now a political activist fighting for the introduction of home rule in Greenland, reproaches Niels, or – to put it more precisely – Niels’s fellow countrymen, for having failed to establish equality between Greenlanders and Danes:

You undertook to colonize Greenland, and when you at last found out that time had run out, you experimented with something that you meant as democratization, but also in this respect you have failed, because we are a long way from democracy here in our country.<sup>8</sup>

In the novel, the imposing of Danish political will to modernize the country – conducted by a collective action and with the consent of the Greenlandic elite – is represented as having led to increased emphasis on the cultural and ethnical autonomy of Greenlanders. Aron utilises the ideology of nationalism delivered by the Danes, and the process of othering becomes reversed and directed towards the former colonizers. The templates provided by the colonizer have been filled with new meanings of the colonized – and turned against the former colonial power:

The only logical thing should be, that the indigenous inhabitants of the country retain the ownership of their own *inuit nunat* [...]. Why should we accept that such a chance shipmaster, who lost his way, planted any ridiculous flag on our rocks and thus declared the country his own?<sup>9</sup>

In *Hvid anorak* it is the Danes, who are “othered” by the Greenlanders who call themselves “the country’s indigenous inhabitants”; and, it is emphasized by Aron

<sup>7</sup> A.o. Jacob Bech Nygaard’s *Natten er nådig* (1963), *Solen står lavt* (1968), Jørgen Liljensøe’s *Barakkerne* (1977), Thorkild Hansen’s *Sidste sommer i Angmagssalik* (1978).

<sup>8</sup> ”I påtog jer en kolonisering af Grønland, og da I omsider fandt ud af, at tiden var rendt fra jer, forsøgte I med noget, som I mente var en demokratisering, men også i dét stykke har I spillet fallit, for vi har langt fra demokrati her til lands” (Fenger 1977: 122).

<sup>9</sup> ”Det eneste logiske må være, at landets oprindelige beboere beholder ejendomsretten til deres eget *inuit nunat* [...]. Hvorfor skulle vi affinde os med, at sådan en tilfældig vildfaren skipper har plantet et eller andet idiotisk flag på vores klipper og dermed erklæret landet for sit?” (Ibid.: 125).

that their cultural capital *is* essentially different from the one belonging to the Danes.<sup>10</sup> The logic of binary oppositions present in *Kala*, is then fixed, although in reverse, in a literary text published about two decades later. This reinforces the “aggregate frame” that defines the social problem to be solved – the social inequalities in Greenland and the failure to recognize Greenlanders as the rightful owners of the country they inhabit – along with the “motivational frame” in which the actor responsible for the problem – the Danes – is identified, calling for action that should result in “fostering” a permanent change – the introduction of home rule.

In Fenger’s novel, the ongoing hybridization of the Greenlandic culture is viewed negatively, whereas the old Greenlandic traditions are valorised. As in *Kala*, the true Greenlandic culture is essentialized as pure, stable and unchangeable, but instead of being its very limitation, this constitutes its strength and becomes the basis for the anticolonial fight for future Greenlandic self-determination. In order to break with the implanting of the Danish cultural capital in Greenland, Aron abandons his education at the clerical seminary in Nuuk and becomes a shipmaster, one who holds on to the old Greenlandic values. The dichotomy between Denmark and Greenland are, thus, still maintained and even reinforced. Nevertheless, between those two binaries there is a passage that enables mutual relations – mostly based on *agonism*. Aron does not agree with his friend Eric’s views, but they stay friends, and he even marries – a very atypical, but still “Danish” girl.

It appears that *Hvid anorak* not only catches up with the Danish political discourse from the 1960s and 1970s, but it actually frames visions of far more equitable Danish-Greenlandic relations in the future. In its identifying the actual actor (the Danes) behind the main social problem (inequality between Danes and Greenlanders), the literary text is ahead of the political one. While the political text, being a result of Danish-Greenlandic negotiations, cannot be assigned to a single defined author, the literary text authored by Niels Fenger produces and communicates meanings that are formed by the power structures (present in the reduplication of the colonial view of Greenlandic culture as “pure”, “authentic” and totally opposed to Danish culture and, thereby, fixating the old dichotomies), but also by the agency of the author himself, whose view on the future of Greenland and its current problems must have been expressed more straightforwardly than it could ever be the case with the authors of any official document of political importance. Similar to Aage Bistrup, who spent many years of his life as a manager of a colony in Greenland, Fenger, a former state-appointed fur farmer in Narssak, was both familiar with Greenlandic conditions, but also involved in the Danish structures of power, and this interplay is clearly reflected in the text’s wording selection and its application for “political” interpretation.

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<sup>10</sup> ”Fordi vi er forskellige” (Ibid.: 130).

### 5. Frame of action-taking (“collective action frame”)

The first decade in the new millennium with regard to the Danish-Greenlandic relations can be briefly summarised as witnessing a movement towards increased Greenlandic independence from Denmark. This process culminated in a referendum on 25 October 2008, where 75,5 percent of the votes were cast in favour of future Greenlandic self-rule, entailing a greater autonomy and potential independence. Those historical changes were indicative of a shift in the Danish anticipation of Greenland’s position, which is clearly discernible when comparing two significant official documents concerning the future of Greenland in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: *The Home Rule Act of 1979* and *The Self-Rule Act* passed in 2009:

We, Margrethe II, Queen by the grace of God, of Denmark, declare: In recognition of the special status that Greenland has in the Kingdom of Denmark – nationally, culturally and geographically – the Folketing has, in accordance with the decision taken by the Greenlandic national council, and We, through our assent, ratify the following law on Greenland’s constitutional position in the Kingdom of Denmark.<sup>11</sup>

We, Margrethe II, Queen by the grace of God, of Denmark, declare: In recognition of the status of the people of Greenland as a people as defined by international law, with the right to self-determination, this law seeks to promote equality and mutual respect in the partnership between Denmark and Greenland. The law, in accordance with the abovementioned, builds upon an agreement between Naalakkersuisut and the Danish government, and arrived at as equal partners.<sup>12</sup>

Close-reading and comparing both documents reveals that, on the one hand we are witnessing a development towards recognition of equality between the two parties but, on the other hand, it is also evident that the hierarchical power relationship between Denmark and Greenland still exists. A change in Danish-Greenlandic relations is undoubtedly indicated by the use of the name of Greenland’s self-rule government “Naalakkersuisut” as well as the remarks about Greenlanders as “a people” by referring to international legislation and, consequently, about their right to self-

<sup>11</sup> ”Vi, Margrethe II, af Guds Nåde Danmarks dronning, gør vitterligt: I erkendelse af den særstilling, som Grønland i national, kulturel og geografisk henseende indtager inden for riget, har folketetinget i overensstemmelse med vedtagelse i Grønlands landsråd vedtaget og Vi ved vort samtykke stadfæstet følgende lov om Grønlands forfatningsmæssige stilling i riget”. English translation: Breum 2015: 33–34.

<sup>12</sup> ”Vi, Margrethe II, af Guds Nåde Danmarks dronning, gør vitterligt: I erkendelse af, at det grønlandske folk er et folk i henhold til folkeretten med ret til selvbestemmelse, bygger loven om et ønske om at fremme ligeværdighed gensidig respekt i partnerskabet mellem Danmark og Grønland. Loven bygger i overensstemmelse hermed på en overenskomst mellem Naalakkersuisut og den danske regering som ligeværdige parter”. English translation: Breum 2015: 34.

determination. The key words in the *Self-Rule Act* are “partnership” and “partners” as well as “equality” and “equal”, enhancing the Danish desire, here articulated by Queen Margrethe II, of equitable relations between Denmark and Greenland. The law is, thus, framed as a product of a bilateral agreement between two “equal partners”, which overshadows the real reason for this *action-taking*: the desire to prevent uncontrolled Greenlandic secession from the Danish Realm.

Danish action with regard to Greenland is currently taking place on various institutionalized levels, delivering “contingency planning” that aims to head off what threatens to happen in the future. An example of such a contingency-planning document from within the defence policy domain is *Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for the Arctic 2011–2020*, stipulating that “[p]ossibilities will be considered for closer involvement of Greenland’s citizens in the armed force’s education and training and tasks in the Arctic, including customized programs in Greenland with emphasis on the maritime domain” (Government of Denmark 2011: 36). It becomes evident that the Danish government is attempting to freeze any potential action on the part of the Greenlanders who, in the event of full independence, might potentially opt for military protection from a mightier neighbour, for instance, the USA. Sharing the domain of military training with the Danish army would certainly make Greenlanders more prone to remain under the Danish protection, while Denmark thereby would secure its influence and interests in the Arctic.

In the period after the 1990s, literary fiction witnessed a considerable number of novels addressing the question of Danish-Greenlandic relations during the period of colonialism.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, all those works of fiction create a discursive space for counter narratives to the grand narrative of colonialism. In the following, we have chosen to focus on a novel *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* (*The Prophets of Eternal Fiord*) that has recently gained much publicity, primarily due to the varying optional interpretations of its post-colonial message. This historical novel was written by a Danish-Norwegian author Kim Leine and published in 2012. The plot follows an idealistic priest Morten Falck, who sails to Greenland in 1787 to convert the Inuit to the Danish church and who comes to live in the outpost of Sukkertoppen. The natives from neighbouring villages unite to reject Danish rule and establish their own settlement above Eternal Fjord. In an open confrontation with Morten Falck, their charismatic leader Habakuk identifies, with the help of a few but very distinctive words, the injustice done by the Danes:

But we will not bow down to the king, says Habakuk. ... He is not our king. ... He is their king. ... They come here with their guns and their warrants and their chains and

<sup>13</sup> A.o. Peter Høeg’s *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* (1992), Kurt L. Frederiksen’s *Spor over isen* (2004), *Edderfuglens rejse* (2006), Linda Lassen’s *Håbets år* (2011).

their stories of children drowning. But we are not children, we are grown men and women and this is our country! We shall do what we please in our own country!<sup>14</sup>

In his passionate speech to the rebels gathered in a church building erected by themselves, Habakuk opposes the way in which Greenlanders have been traditionally represented by the colonizers and, at the same time, emphasizes the Greenlanders' own power to represent themselves. Due to the conventional dichotomy of "us" (Greenlanders) against "them" (Danes), the latter being a personification of evil itself, on the surface, the novel seems only to contribute to the strengthening of well-established (inverse) binary oppositions of the 1970s. However, in Leine's novel the Greenlanders who unite to struggle for their rights to the land and life according to their own traditions and beliefs, act within the frame originally defined by the colonizer – that is the Christian religion. It is Jesus Christ himself, from whom Maria Magdalene receives an instruction that her people "shall gather in a number and leave the colony and the Danish drunkards and philanderers, and they shall worship the Lord".<sup>15</sup> Habakuk tells his congregation to put trust in God and oppose the Danes under the banner of His name:

As long as we give heed to unto the word of the Lord, nothing bad can happen to us, says Habakuk calmly, taking his time to look them each in the eye. This land belongs to us, what washes on to the shore is ours to take without permission, and no one has the right to tell us what to believe in. The Lord is with us! He speaks to my wife and I pass His word on to you.<sup>16</sup>

Using the Christian religion as the main weapon against Danish dominance abrogates the dichotomy between Danish and Greenlandic values, so clearly highlighted in the previously mentioned *Kala* and *Hvid anorak*. As a result of colonization, no Greenlandic cultural "purity" can be identified any longer, which is represented in the main Greenlandic characters such as Maria Magdalene, Habakuk, Lydia or Bertel. But this impurity and hybridization are "diagnosed" as the necessary conditions for Greenlanders' "action-taking". From the position on a borderline, the

<sup>14</sup> "Vi vil ikke føje os efter kongen, siger Habakuk. ...Det er deres konge. ...Det er dem der kommer med deres geværer og deres arrestordrer og deres lænker og deres historier om børn der drukner. Vi er ikke børn, vi er voksne mennesker, og det her er vores land! Vi gør hvad vil vil i vores land!" (Leine 2012: 253). English translation: Leine 2015: 267.

<sup>15</sup> "skal samle sig i stort hobetal og forlade kolonien og de danske horebukke og drukkenbolte og tilbede Herren" (Leine 2012: 178). English translation: Leine 2015: 178.

<sup>16</sup> "Så længe vi retter os efter Herrens ord, kan der ikke ske os noget ondt, siger Habakuk roligt og tager sig god tid med at se på dem, én efter én. Det her land tilhører os, det der flyder ind til stranden, skal vi ikke bede om lov til at tage, og ingen skal fortælle os, hvad vi skal tro på. Herren er med os! Han taler til min kone, og jeg bringer Hans ord videre til jer" (Leine 2012: 180–181). English translation: Leine 2015: 188.

characters establish an alternative reality – such as Maria Magdalene and Habakuk's settlement – the existence of which, although in the long run not able to withstand the confrontation with the representatives of Danish colonial rule, proves the Greenlanders' "agency". It can be concluded that Leine's narrative "motivates action" which is not based on the old colonial and counter-colonial dichotomies of the 1950s and 1970s, but on their radical transgression, which points towards a yet unknown result in the future.

The novel ends with an epilogue depicting "new times" in Greenland when the country has to "look after itself". Bertel, the narrator, concludes: "In many ways it was good for us. We learned to stand on our own feet".<sup>17</sup> By saying so, the novel enters into a dialogue with the ongoing debate – in Denmark as well as in Greenland – about the possible future of Greenland, within or outside the Realm. A sort of aporia, meaning the peaceful coexistence of the Greenlanders and Danes, where both parts do not interfere in each other's affairs, is the solution proposed by the Danish-Norwegian author, who has lived in Greenland for fifteen years and does not hide his sympathy for the future independence of Greenland. Letting Greenland "look after herself" in his literary work transgresses the contemporary political frame, situating the literary text ahead of the concurrent postcolonial discourse.

## Conclusions

Political discourses analysed in this text have framed the reality of Danish-Greenlandic relations in three temporal stages. We have looked at the social worlds institutionalized by political discourses and development narratives during these stages through three kinds of frames: "aggregate frames", "consensus frames" and "collective action frames". Since WW2, political texts have demonstrated a slow progress from a colonial reality through a semi-colonial one to a postcolonial reality. Thanks to our approach of studying political developments concurrently with developments depicted in literary fiction, we can conclude that, in relation to the first frame, literature has lagged behind the political discourse. In relation to the second frame, it has not only caught up with the political discourse, but even has gone ahead of it and, thus, has become a mirror of social reality. In relation to the third frame, literature has fostered a reinterpretation of Danish-Greenlandic relations towards transgression of political reality, by seeking a way out through an aspirational cultural hybridity.

Based on the final part of our analysis, we tend towards a conviction that literature can propose alternatives to political discourses, such as an ideal type of new

<sup>17</sup> "Måtte vi klare os her i landet". "Og det viste sig på mange måder at være godt. Vi lærte at klare os selv" (Leine 2012: 520). English translation: Leine 2015: 556.

identity (hybridity), “agonism” or “aporia” (as a way of peaceful coexistence), or by showing dispositions towards action (working as a diagnosis). Contrary to the political discourse, those dispositions do not have to be specified, but rather they can afford to remain ambivalent or implied. Unlike a political text, a work of fiction does not have to convey unambiguous meanings, which, along with its more dynamic and articulate interplay of agency and structure, explains why it is easier for a literary text to move to the position of action. A political text that attempts to frame Danish-Greenlandic relations is most often bound to aim at consensus seeking, while it is not possible or is at least very difficult to designate an action. Hence, attempting to answer our initial question whether it is possible for works of literary fiction to induce a bidding of farewell to colonialism or postcolonialism in Danish-Greenlandic relations, we are full of hope for literary texts due to their ability to go beyond the dominant discourses. At the same time, due to the nature of political institutions, which always attempt to maintain durable structures and contain the unpredictability of the social world, it remains doubtful whether the same will be at all manifested in the political discourse. And then, again, maybe not...

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