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Reframing climate change into meaningful local experiences: critical reflexivity with stories from Ittoqqortoormiit (Inuit Nunaat)

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ABSTRACT Rescaling and re-grounding environmental upheavals and climate change's narratives into meaningful and salient place-based experiences of the world (s) is both urgent and crucial. There are robust evidences that the entangled crisis (that is not limited to climate) is threatening with higher intensity certain ways-of-being in the world, which are also the less accountable for the situation. Nevertheless, dominant narratives generate a discourse oriented towards uniformity and linearity. We, therefore, critically scrutinize the Anthropocene and Existential Risks, as global and western-based narratives that pursue historical dominance and epistemic injustice by underplaying alterity as expressed in power imbalance. Our analysis is grounded with empirical insights from the Arctic town of Ittoqqortoormiit (Inuit Nunaat), where long-dwelling and repetitive fieldworks are conducted. This approach sheds lights on unheard stories. Deploying critical ethnography, we reflect on our research position, trying to tame a (decolonial) way of being respectfully working with/within/for marginalized communities. Finally, we will be in a position to question the relevance and discuss the potential and conditions for bridging climate sciences and local narratives of change.

KEYWORDS

- narrative,
- place-based community,
- climate,
- local terminal risks,
- critical ethnography,
- reflexivity.

1. THE DARKNESS OF THE GLOBAL: WHAT GLOBAL NARRATIVES CREATE?

THE ANTHROPOCENE: as an unifying narrative where problem framing and solutions are embedded in the ideology of control.

↓↑ **Superposition of injustices** •

A moment that threatens certain ways of being and a narrative that pursue a dynamic of marginalization.

EXISTENTIAL RISKS, the loss of large fraction of expected value, support that the subsistence of humanity is desirable.

↓↑ **Conflict of ethics** •

The enunciation of local terminal risks expresses that the plurality of way-of-being has to be preserved.

THE ARCTIC: as a whole historically drew from the outside, and crafted by the narrative of (Arctic) climate change.

↓↑ **Deprivation of salience** •

A view that makes invisible local contexts and specificities, and doesn't fit salient categories.

2. TELLING PLURIVERSE STORIES: WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM STORIES TOLD IN ITTOQQORTOORMIIT?

NALUARNGA, and the acceptance of the inability to reduce uncertainties.

↓↑ **Living-with resilience** •

Associated to an history of marginalization ["we're born to be slaves"], a limited local agency ["we've to ask to Nuuk"], optimism towards future, place-attachment ["I'm born and raised here"], an entanglement-adaptation of daily life with the evolution of sea-ice thickness and extent.

RISKS, associated to decrease in population, strong (economic) dependency, changing climate (e.g., sea-ice conditions), environmental restrictions.

↓↑ **Narratives of terminality** •

Previous negative experiences with researchers, history of closing of settlements, etc.



3. CRITICAL REFLEXIVITY: HOW TO DEPLOY EMANCIPATORY RESEARCH?

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE, critical analysis, performance.

↓↑ **Critical ethnography** •

Ethical demands of fieldwork methods.

DOUBLE-EMANCIPATION:

Emancipatory research.

↓↑ **Critical reflexivity** •

Researchers' own emancipation.

POSITIONALITY, questioning the epistemic assumption of a disembodied epistemology.

↓↑ **Place-of-speech** •

Subverting concepts of universals, abstraction and objectivity, uncovering sex, class, gender, ableness and race of producers.

METHODS

- **Long-dwelling** and **iterative fieldworks**, with interview collection and fieldnotes;
- **Introspective reflexivity**, including collective discussions.

RESEARCH QUESTION

HOW CARING FOR LOCAL NARRATIVES, STORIES FROM THE MARGINS, STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES' ABILITIES TO SHAPE THEIR LIFE-WORLD, TO RECOVER FROM SHOCKS IN A RESPECTFUL WAY FOR THEIR CULTURE, IDENTITY AND WAY OF BEING IN THEIR WORLD?

FIELDWORK POSTURE

- **Intercultural understanding:** drag out judgement;
- **Respect, curiosity, openness:** deconstruct European schemes;
- **Empathy and deep listening:** feel closeness and love;
- **Intersubjectivity:** be constantly involved in a reflexive process;
- **Softness:** shutting down efficiency as an aim;
- **Giving back to the community:** through a solid voice or financial output;
- **Aligning values and research goals.**

ITTOQQORTOORMIIT

- Ittoqqortoormiit is the **northernmost community** (70°30' N 22° W) on Tunu (East), Inuit/Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland), located at the mouth of Kangerlussuaq;
- The nearest town is around 900 km south, and the population about **354 inhabitants (2022)**;
- The town was **founded in 1924-1925** by Ejnar Mikkelsen mainly as an intent to reaffirm the Danish sovereignty and block further Norwegian claims on the east coast;
- The community has long relied on **subsistence hunting** (polar bears, walrus, narwhals, muskox, seals, etc.) as its main source of income (11 professional hunters in 2021).

