

**Naalakkersuisut
Government of Greenland**



INUSSUK • Arctic Research Journal 2 • 2019

From Passive Observers to Active Participants



Klaus Georg Hansen

**Naalakkersuisut
Government of Greenland**

INUSSUK • Arctic Research Journal 2 • 2019

From Passive Observers to Active Participants



Klaus Georg Hansen

From Passive Observers to Active Participants

- **Mapping the mechanisms behind the last 150 years of social change and the gradual process of democratization in Greenland**

INUSSUK • Arctic Research Journal 2 • 2019

Copyright © Government of Greenland

The Ministry of Industry, Energy and Research, Nuuk, 2019

Layout: Monika Brune, allu design – www.allu.gl

Translation from Danish into English: Paul Cohen, Tuluttut Translations

Peer review: Aqqaluk Lynge

Typeface: Verdana

Publisher: Forlaget Atuagkat ApS

Print: AKA Print A/S, Århus

1. edition, print run: 500 copies

ISBN 978-87-92554-98-7

ISSN 1397-7431

Permission to publish extracts, including figures, tables and quotations, is granted as long as the source is clearly given. Copies are kindly requested of all works that refer to, announce, quote or make reference to this publication.

It is the purpose of this journal to disseminate results of research in Arctic regions to the population of Greenland as well as research communities in Greenland and Denmark. The journal wishes to contribute to strengthening cooperation in Arctic research, in particular within the humanities, social sciences and public health.

The editorial board welcomes proposals for publications.

Editor

Research Coordinator Najârak Paniula

Government of Greenland

The Ministry of Industry, Energy and Research

Imaneq 1a, PO Box 1601, 3900 Nuuk

Phone: +299 34 50 00

Fax: +299 32 20 73

E-mail: napa@nanoq.gl

Publications in the series can be ordered from:

Forlaget Atuagkat ApS

PO Box 216

3900 Nuuk

E-mail: ordre@atuagkat.gl

www.atuagkat.gl

Cover photo: Ceremony to mark the official launch of self-government on June 21, 2009 in Nuuk (Klaus Georg Hansen)

Dedicated to my father

Georg Hansen

1933-2015

***He showed me
the joys of immersing yourself
in a fascinating topic***

Table of Contents

- Prologue** 9

- Foreword by Kim Kielsen** 11

- Preface by the author** 13

- 1 Introduction**
 - 1.1 Presentation 17
 - 1.2 New research objectives 18

- 2 The research topic**
 - 2.1 The hypothesis 22
 - 2.2 The thesis statement 27
 - 2.3 Applied theoretical approaches. 29

- 3 Colonial history**
 - 3.1 Historicism. 32
 - 3.2 Colonialism 33
 - 3.3 Historiography 37
 - 3.4 Selection and prioritization 41
 - 3.5 Conceptual history and more 42
 - 3.5.1 Christianity 44
 - 3.5.2 Evolutionary theory 45
 - 3.5.3 Colonial administration 49
 - 3.5.4 Mental colonialism 53
 - 3.6 Political history 54
 - 3.7 Comprehensive historical overview 57
 - 3.8 Summary 67

4 Competing discourses

- 4.1 Discourse 68
- 4.2 Parallel worlds 69
- 4.3 Abnormality 73
- 4.4 Diachronic changes 76
- 4.5 How it was experienced. 78
- 4.6 Summary 81

5 Divergent notions of citizenship

- 5.1 Forms of governance. 82
- 5.2 Citizenship. 85
- 5.3 Forms of governance during the colonial era 89
 - 5.3.1 Theocracy — religion 89
 - 5.3.2 Xenocracy — colony 92
 - 5.3.3 Meritocracy — education. 95
 - 5.3.4 Technocracy — technology 97
 - 5.3.5 Autocracy — clan. 101
 - 5.3.6 Ochlocracy — protest 106
 - 5.3.7 Democracy — rights. 108
- 5.4 How has it been expressed?. 112
- 5.5 Summary 118

6 Varying degrees of legitimacy

- 6.1 Legitimacy 119
- 6.2 Popular legitimacy 121
- 6.3 Pluralistic legitimacy model 122
- 6.4 Non-legitimacy. 125
- 6.5 How has it manifested itself? 130
- 6.6 Summary 134

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 Differentiation 135
- 7.2 The mechanisms 137
- 7.3 The concept of legitimacy 141
- 7.4 Two apparent tautologies. 142
- 7.5 Democratization 144

8 Bibliography 145

9 Appendixes

- Appendix 1: Abstracts of the seven articles 178
- Appendix 2: Foreword to the dissertation
(available online at kgh.gl/inussuk)
- Appendix 3: Academic approach
(available online at kgh.gl/inussuk)
- Appendix 4: Method
(available online at kgh.gl/inussuk)
- Appendix 5: Follow-up discussion
(available online at kgh.gl/inussuk)
- Appendix 6: The seven articles
(available online at kgh.gl/inussuk)

Prologue

“He told me that after going hunting we would continue on to Nunaqarfik ... This turned out to be a very large bird cliff that we were heading toward. When we arrived there, he turned off the engine, grabbed his rifle and fired into the air. From the hip. I counted 10 shots per magazine, and he emptied seven magazines in rapid succession, without a single bird falling to the ground ... I later learned that this bird cliff was protected and that there was a ban on killing birds within a five kilometer radius. I was also told that Valdemar was very law-abiding.”

(Jensen, 1975, pp. 22-23)

It was back in 1986 that I first read Flemming Jensen’s “Vejledning i sælfangst” (A guide to seal hunting), a collection of curious short stories that are entirely unpretentious. Like so many others, I chuckled over the delightful way in which the book focuses on the topsy-turvy world of cross-cultural encounters between Greenlanders and Danes.

But aside from having a good laugh, I gleaned something else from this little gem of a book, which is perhaps best expressed in the excerpt cited here. Not a single bird is killed, in keeping with the law, yet the birds on the cliff are undoubtedly disturbed by the shots, so they are effectively robbed of the peaceful setting that is mandated by law.

In “Vejledning i sælfangst” we find an elegant presentation of the schism between two different ways of comprehending our surroundings: an Inuit-Greenlandic approach, which is rooted in the Inuit understanding of the world, and a Western-Danish approach, which is rooted in the West’s understanding of the world. And there can be big differences between these two views of the same surroundings.

The story written by Flemming Jensen is no doubt largely fictitious, but the author broaches an issue here that — for 30 years — has helped define the primary focus of my research of the sweeping changes undergone by Greenlandic society over the past few centuries.

For me, it has become a lifelong project to study how the coexistence between Inuit-Greenlandic and Western-Danish cultures has changed over 300 years, and to consider how this relationship could conceivably be shaped in the years to come.

My dissertation "From Passive Observers to Active Participants," along with this revised version in book form, is my latest examination and interpretation of points of contact between two societies and two cultures that have coexisted for several centuries.

Foreword by Kim Kielsen

Klaus Georg Hansen — ‘Kilaasi’ — has written a captivating analysis of our colonial history from his own unique perspective. This story has been told many times before, but here it offers an important perspective on how we — in a new way — can grasp major developments in our history. Furthermore, this highly inspiring book makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the role that we have played and how we got to where we are now.

As citizens, we are actively involved in shaping our history, for better or for worse. The insights that ‘Kilaasi’ provides us with here can lead to new ways of understanding our own roles and the opportunities for further advancing our society. We have made great strides in developing our democracy, but it does not end here; our journey continues and it is extremely important that we cherish and respect this fledgling democracy and its codes of conduct.

Like other peoples around the world, we strive for our country to become an independent state, and this remains an inalienable right. We took the first steps back in the late 1970s when we introduced home rule on May 1, 1979, and then voted in favor of the Act on Greenland Self-Government on June 21, 2009.

This last step maps out the road to full independence. We, the elected representatives, cannot make this decision entirely on our own — it also has to involve the Greenlandic people. Together, we must actively work hand in hand and embrace our common goals. But if we are to achieve independence, we need to have more young people graduate from our educational system and, at the same time, assure a good upbringing for our children, just as we as a country must have a healthy and diverse economy.

In the debate on independence, there are many who believe that the goal is only to sever all ties with Denmark. But this is simply not the case. An independent Greenland also needs friends, allies and close partners. There are several models for the future. The Danish Commonwealth is one of many possibilities. An independent Greenland is not at odds with a new form of Danish Commonwealth.

We have launched the debate here in Greenland, so let us take a positive look at the opportunities that lie ahead. Many of us have sensed that there is often uncertainty in Denmark over how we view the relationship between Greenland and Denmark. This book provides a new explanation of why many in Denmark cannot fully comprehend how we have evolved in our understanding of the relationship between the two countries, or how we in Greenland have grown, both in terms of our mentality and our role in the international community.

A partnership is a relationship in which both parties come together and have an equal and open dialogue about the past, present and future, speaking with an equal voice and mutual respect for feelings and other aspects of what is important — in a partnership.

Now that we have acquired new knowledge of our past, it is my sincere hope that this book can help inspire us to actively participate in shaping our country — the future of Kalaallit Nunaat — so we can work together to remove the obstacles along the road to independence.

Kim Kielsen

Nuuk, March 2017

Preface by the author

This book is an academic work. It is a revised version of my PhD dissertation and I have retained the same title, namely "From Passive Observers to Active Participants."

But I have changed the subtitle to reflect a number of important changes, especially to the conclusion. I hit upon the idea for the new conclusion after I submitted my thesis, but before I defended it. Hence, an earlier version of this new conclusion was presented when I defended the work before the thesis committee.

The subtitle of the work here reflects the fact that, since submitting my thesis for evaluation, I have further developed the conclusions that I feel are proven by my analyses.

To make the work more reader-friendly, the chapters on theory, method and the follow-up discussion have been removed.

The seven articles that are part of the PhD thesis are not included in the present work. Brief abstracts of each of the seven articles can be found in appendix 1.

The text has also been edited to reflect the revised conclusion. Furthermore, I have endeavored to render the text a bit more reader-friendly wherever there has been a particular need to simplify the language and make it more comprehensible. But the text has not been completely revised. This will have to wait until an abridged version is written.

This revised version of the PhD thesis has only been possible with support from The Ministry of Industry, Energy and Research, which has included the work in its INUSSUK series of publications.

I am very grateful to the ministry's research unit and would like to express my special thanks to Najârak Paniula for this outstanding collaboration.

In addition, I have benefited enormously from the comments that Aqqaluk Lyngé made while reviewing the manuscript.

Without the many comments and suggestions for corrections and improvements that I received, both before submitting my dissertation and during the subsequent process of revising it, I would not have been able to produce the current text. Nevertheless, the responsibility for these discussions and conclusions rests with me alone.

The book generally uses the new orthography for references in Greenlandic, but where the old spelling was used in quoted passages, the written form of the original quoted text has been retained.

When referring to place names, the official current forms are used, with older names occasionally added in parentheses.

Quotes are marked with quotation marks and are written in italics. However, the titles of books, articles etc. that are indicated with quotation marks are written in roman font.

Klaus Georg Hansen

Nuuk, March 2017

**Information on the PhD thesis
that forms the basis of the present work:**

Advisers:

Anne Merrild Hansen, associate professor, Aalborg University

Rasmus Ole Rasmussen, senior researcher, Nordregio

On September 7, 2015, the thesis was submitted for evaluation to the Department of Planning, Aalborg University.

The thesis was defended on January 29, 2016 before the Department of Planning, Aalborg University.

Evaluation committee:

Prof. Lone Kørnøv, Aalborg University, chairwoman

Prof. Peter Munk Christiansen, Aarhus University

Frank Sejersen, associate professor, University of Copenhagen

1 Introduction

1.1 Presentation

It has been nearly 170 years since the Greenlandic population was first allowed to participate in a democratic political process in accordance with European models. This began with the establishment of the Guardian Councils in 1857 (Gad 1984). It was, of course, not a democratic political process as we know it today. Only self-supporting hunters had the right to vote. It was not until later that other citizens were granted access to the same democratic rights.

The Guardian Councils were replaced by Provincial Councils in 1911. Starting in 1979, Greenland had a parliament, called the Landsting in Danish and known as Inatsisartut since 2009. For nearly 200 years, Greenland has clearly been on the road toward greater democracy as defined by the Western world.

There can be no doubt that the island's population has gradually gained more influence in shaping modern Greenlandic society. This is an ongoing process that continues to evolve. *But what mechanisms have had a particular impact on the societal changes and the gradual process of democratization that have occurred since Europeans first came to Greenland more than 300 years ago?*

There is a wealth of evidence that changes have taken place and many diverse influences have come into play, arising from both inside and outside the country. This wide range of influences makes it particularly compelling to research changes in Greenland, and this is precisely the focus of the present work.

Over the past 50 years, several representatives of Greenland have articulated, with various degrees of intensity, the desire to achieve an ever-greater degree of independence from Denmark. In Greenland today, there is a broad political consensus that the way forward is to achieve both greater economic independence and more political autonomy from Denmark. This is true not only from a constitutional perspective, in which the adoption of the Act on Greenland Self-Government on June 21, 2009 was a clear step in this

direction, but also in terms of the desire to formulate a more decisively Greenlandic-rooted version of Greenland's colonial history.

Greenland is carving out a place for itself in the international community, with greater autonomy from its former colonial overlords in Denmark. Greater autonomy from Denmark will mean closer ties and a greater emphasis on working hand in hand with other countries. This heightened degree of cooperation may be with diverse regions, including the West Nordic countries, the Nordic countries, the EU, North America, the Arctic, the Western world and countries all around the globe. It could also be with international corporations, institutions and organizations, although it is almost anyone's guess what this aspect of Greenland's near future holds.

What most interests me here is the human factor. I have been particularly motivated to study whether and, if so, to what extent and how the people who have been affected by the changes outlined here have been personally involved in the increasingly democratic governance of Greenland.

1.2 New research objectives

The overall framework of my academic approach is described in the chapters that can be found online (appendix 3 and appendix 4 at kgh.gl/inussuk). This is where the research objectives of the work are outlined.

Simply put, my research addresses questions like: "Who have I been inspired by?" "What is my contribution?" "Why is it relevant?"

My interest is to analyze changes in Greenlandic society from a historical perspective. I am particularly interested in analyzing changes in power relations and the gradual process of democratization. This is my overriding research goal in the present work.

Ever since early in my studies during the 1980s, I have been interested in the works of Danish anthropologist Jens Dahl (1946-). Dahl received his master's in anthropology in 1974. He first worked as an assistant professor and, after 1981, as a tenured professor at the Department of Eskimology, University of Copenhagen. From 1998 to 2006, he was the director of the International

Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA). In 2007 Dahl was awarded the title of professor emeritus at the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen.

One of the things that inspired me early on was Dahl's work on identifying sectors where Greenland could achieve a greater degree of self-regulation. Already in his analysis of Greenlandic migrant workers in Marmorilik (Dahl and Lyberth 1980), one of the main topics is greater Greenlandic influence on the country's development. In the work, a number of recommendations are made to shift responsibility and control from the Danish state and mining companies to Greenlandic society (ibid., pp. 100-103).

In an article published in 1985 (Dahl 1985), Dahl stated that the new political structure of Greenland was "*far from being only passively determined by colonial dominance,*" noting that it "*expressed a great leap forward in political consciousness and resistance to colonialism*" (Dahl 1985, p. 175). Dahl highlights this perspective in his analysis of the dynamic processes during the 1970s that led to the formation of the first political parties with broad popular support (Dahl 1986a).

In his seminal work "*Arktisk selvstyre*" (Dahl 1986a), one of the elements that particularly inspired me was Dahl's description of "*the home rule state's relative autonomy*" (Dahl 1986a, pp. 138ff). Back when I read it for the first time, I found the arguments for relative autonomy somewhat inconclusive. My desire to contribute to a deeper understanding of this autonomy has been one of the driving forces in my work.

In his book on Saqqaq (Dahl 2000), Dahl focused on a small hunting community as a means of illustrating Greenland home rule's first 20 years of dynamic social development, in which a decolonization and a nation-building process go hand in hand, and where tradition serves both as an obstacle and an enrichment in Greenland's ongoing path toward integration into an increasingly globalized Western world.

From 2002 onwards, Dahl was a member of the Steering Committee for the Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR) (Einarsson et al. 2004). Starting in 2004, Dahl was involved in working groups for the Arctic Social Indicators (ASI) project (Larsen, Schweitzer and Fondahl 2010). In 2014 both the AHDR