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# FRAMING THE LAND OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

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## **Abstract**

The development of affinities between the production and consumption of people and place is crucial for tourism development. We trouble front and backstage distinctions to examine how destinations are framed and critically explore the power of the imaginary in shaping how individuals apprehend and in turn create social worlds. Combining critical discourse analysis with stakeholder interviews, we scrutinise an influential television travel documentary as an instrument of cultural pedagogy, which recycles, recreates and re-enacts the tourism imaginary. The paper's distinctive contribution is to show the multiple means through which travel journalism enrolls tourists through imagined portrayals of people and place within globalised cultural texts by highlighting the multi-dimensional workings of power in and through a framing of Northern Norway.

## **Keywords:**

Film-tourism; framing; discourse; imaginary; power; Arctic; Norway.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

'The North' is a physical and 'on-screen' place of the imagination (Keskitalo, 2009), permeated by a complexity of meanings that are integral to an entrenched system of Arctic imaginaries (Ryall, Schimanski & Waerp, 2010). Dominant European narratives construct the North as an icy wasteland: a place of beauty, purity and exoticism (Hansson & Norberg, 2009). Whilst these Arctic lands have long fascinated explorers, travellers and writers (Mathisen, 2014), winter tourism has been slow to emerge there. In Northern Norway, for example, it began early this century with marketing campaigns and events organised by Finnmark Reiseliv, the local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) and the Hurtigruten, a coastal steamer company (Heimtun & Viken, 2016). However, during our research on the reasons behind the rise of interest in Northern Norway as a tourist destination, Destination Managers pointed specifically to the 2008 screening of the BBC documentary, *Joanna Lumley in the Land of the Northern Lights*. Following this, international winter tourist numbers rose dramatically (Statistikknett, 2015) and the numbers of Northern Lights tour operators in Northern Norway increased from a handful in 2004 to over 40 a decade later.

The on-screen projection of explorer travel as "glamorous, worthy and desirable has barely been touched upon" (Laing & Frost, 2014: p.9) and yet such narrations of travel "contribute powerfully to the construction of... cultures through language" (Cronin, 2000: p.22). Indeed, the development of affinities between production and consumption of people and place for the development of a tourism industry is crucial. Following stakeholder interviews, we scrutinised *Land of the Northern Lights* as an agent of cultural pedagogy (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998) and as film-induced tourism (Riley, Baker & Van Doren, 1998; Beeton, 2011). Thus, in this paper we have three core aims. Firstly, to advance critical explorations of the intersections between media representations and the tourism imaginary by analysing how television travel journalism represents the Arctic in post-romantic discourses of quest, longing and sublime nature (Ryall et al., 2010). Secondly, to show how travel journalism works to enrol tourists through imagined portrayals of people and place within globalised cultural texts (Norton, 1996) by highlighting the multi-dimensional workings of power in and through this framing of Northern Norway via an interactionist reading of frames. Finally, we bring together interactionist and [broadly] post-structural insights to make explicit the mundane, taken-for-granted nature of power. In this way, we draw upon media representations of place

as creating a desirable imaginary that inflects both the mysticism of the on-screen imaginary and creates a desire to see the Northern Lights themselves, to go backstage and become part of this world.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *2.1 The Significance of the Imaginary*

The imaginary constitutes within itself a loose frame for understanding that of which we have no direct contact, a cosmology (Goffman, 1974). It can represent a means of meaning-making that is felt, experienced and embodied. The possibilities of how an imaginary becomes a given set of practices remains a common theme across social science literatures (Du Bois, 1999) and whether real or otherwise, the imaginary in a general sense comes with us and impacts upon our apprehension of the world and in so doing shapes the sorts of worlds we create (Salazar, 2010; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012). We in turn become wedded to and invested in an apprehension of the ways the world is and work in accordance with this perspective. Indeed, the imaginary can become so entrenched that it becomes the way of seeing (Bruner, 2010) that is difficult to dislodge (Salazar, 2010). The strength of our commitment to certain ways of seeing (believing) has been made explicit through the tutorial experiments of Garfinkel (1967), where any breaching of an established order creates social tension. It is here that we locate the power of the imaginary, not just in terms of the vicarious nature of how we come to see ourselves within specific social worlds (Du Bois, 1999), but how imagined worlds become established as the way social worlds are.

The significance of these real and imagined social worlds is demonstrated through Goffman's (1959) formulation of 'front' and 'back' stage behaviour in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. We use these dramaturgical metaphors first offered by Goffman to describe the public self that individuals produce in everyday interaction (and expanded upon by Dean MacCannell (1992; 1976/2013) in his analysis of staged, touristic spaces) to explore the ways in which contrived imaginaries are constructed backstage and have prominence frontstage. This trope shows the ways in which to see backstage, to see things as they have now become manifest disrupt assumptions of the social world. Disrupted assumptions are the shattered imaginaries, where our investment in certain beliefs holds uncomfortable effects once our investment is seen to be unfounded (Goffman, 1963). The imaginary can be taken as a form of attachment that *holds* (Latour, 1987) us to social

worlds that effect and affect us. Such attachments are not passive as stable relations are worked (Garfinkel, 1967), holding strong emotional components into which we extend (Goffman, 1974). This perspective is wrought through in the work of Anderson (1983), where not only belief in a real and imagined community produce real effects, but of itself community (and nation) can only be ever understood as imaginary. Such productive alignments of an imaginary can be seen through Weber's (2005) articulation of the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, where an *elective affinity* between Calvinism and Capitalism binds specific actions and relations to the world. Generations of Calvinist belief provide an imaginary from which the affinity between two domains of belief provide the context from which the believers' attachments aligns with a specific mode of capitalist expansion. Whereas scholars like Berlant (2001) and Ahmed (2008) draw upon affective alignments and attachments, Weber points to the ways in which already existing affinities [imaginaries] direct action. Again, the imaginary is viewed as having 'real effects', even when deemed to be based upon fantasy (Salazar, 2010; Salazar & Graburn, 2014).

Through reading Berlant (2001), what we take as crucial are the ways in which the imaginary operates at an affective level; it is not the accuracy or distortion (Rapport, 2001) that ensures an imaginary comes to affective life, but affinity. Put differently, an affinity directs the way the social world can (and should within its own terms) be apprehended. Rather than examine notions of reality as such, we aim to show, following Goffman (1974), the ways in which we become engrossed in particular social worlds and the role that the imaginary has in feeding into such engrossment. The significance is that the imaginary has material effects, an insight that tempers recent engagement with 'new materialisms' (Van der Tuin & Dolphijn, 2012). As we will show, film also works to create these alignments and attachments to produce an affect, one that provides a basis for the *legitimate* view of another (Bagnall, 1996) that holds individuals to a certain line of action (Goffman, 1963). Thus, we argue that film works to create specific 'conditions of possibility' (Deleuze, 2001), 'episteme' (Foucault, 1981), or what may otherwise be considered the 'diagram' (Deleuze, 1988) from which Northern Norway may be appropriately considered through an interactionist lens. An on-screen imaginary, much like advertising, is not separate from everyday conduct, but is rather the *hyper-ritualisation* of everyday life (Goffman, 1974; 1979). It is in this sense we aim to trouble front and backstage distinctions to examine the ways in which Northern Norway is being

popularly framed but provide a subtle yet critical comprehension of the power of the imaginary to shape the very way in which individuals apprehend and in turn create social worlds.

## *2.2. The On-Screen Tourist Imaginary*

Tourism has always been mediated through 'high' and 'popular' culture, and tourists travel in anticipation of visiting places that modes of mediated culture have rendered familiar (Szerszynski & Urry, 2002). These expectations, which frame the tourist experience, are socially shared and collaboratively produced assemblages termed the 'tourism imaginary' (Salazar, 2012; Salazar & Graburn, 2014). This concept "refers to the sum of practices, images, texts, films, videos, books, websites, and forms of knowledge that, either directly or indirectly, contribute towards the creation and maintenance of spaces as tourist destinations... It also involves... a wider collective schema of tropes, metaphors, and other forms of cultural representation and production..." (Meethan, 2014, p.241). The tourism imaginary is therefore a practice of shared understanding of real and imagined places, which is both discursive and practical as it consists of dynamic public and private engagements in the production, consumption and affinity with places.

Film is a constituent of this tourism imaginary and together film and tourism are part of the "global sign industries," trading in continually re-appropriated, resisted and re-told cultural signs and globalised scripts (Tzannelli, 2008) in the 'circuit of culture'. The circuit of culture is based on the idea that certain representations circulate within a culture and acquire particular meanings, associations and values (Jenkins, 2003). Language, representation and meaning are connected in a continuous circuit so that a set of discourses or frameworks, which embrace particular combinations of narratives, concepts and ideologies, become so powerful that – reinforced over time – they come to form a self-perpetuating system or "way of seeing" peoples, places and phenomena (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998). This recursivity does not mean that local actors are passive recipients of globalization and processes of identity production-consumption (Ray, 2002), rather they are re-appropriated and worked into encounters. Rather than take a position of *scientia potentia est* (Hobbes, 1651), this framework of power holds potency as it shapes what counts for knowledge and how we can legitimately account for behaviours in the light of such an imaginary. Indeed, as Salazar (2012) makes explicit, local actors struggle to reconcile their worldly credentials given the strength of the imaginary associated with global media scripts.

In another sense, it is because we see ourselves vicariously that such global media scripts hold potency, forming an apparatus from which it becomes difficult to see otherwise (Foucault, 1980). 'Cultural intimations' (Tzanelli, 2008) may be reinterpreted by local brokers and tourists to create new emotional or ideological connexions. Put another way, they create specific imaginaries that are reproduced as common-sense social practices. As Cheong and Miller (2000, p. 372) say, 'there is power everywhere in tourism.' Crucially, the circuit of culture frames the ways in which tourist destinations, inhabitants, nature, nation can be understood (Goffman, 1974), the determinant of who or what determines such a frame and that this framework becomes *the framework* for comprehension is of itself imbued with power (Clegg, 1989). In this sense the imaginary is power-knowledge (Foucault, 1981) writ large and here we unpick some of the machinations of power-knowledge of the imaginary in shaping the conditions of possibility of engaging with social worlds. The extent to which on-screen signs are embraced or resisted by different local actors afford a host of uncharted opportunities for the examination of the contribution of on-screen tourism to influencing versions of social order and the public sphere (Ziakas & Costa, 2012). This paper adds to the connections between on-screen imaginaries and destination responses (Roesch, 2009; Heitmann, 2010; Beeton, 2011; Connell, 2012), particularly in relation to how travel documentaries, as a sub-set of film-induced tourism, frame tourism ontologies. To this end, we will specifically examine the effects of those who constitute part of the Arctic tourism industry.

As a form of travel journalism, travel documentaries are descendants of guidebooks and travelogues (Dunn, 2005a) and are available as global cross-media online and offline texts (Damkjær & Waade, 2014); for instance, *Land of the Northern Lights* can be seen on television, YouTube and DVD. This documentary is a blend of the 'travelogue' and 'popular science' sub-genres; as a travelogue, its actress-celebrity presenter (Joanna Lumley), addresses her viewers on Northern Norway's nature and culture, whilst as 'popular science' the programme explains the Northern Lights phenomenon (Damkjær & Waade, 2014). These programmes are typically presented by celebrities, whose sole reason for being on screen is their fame, reflecting our "endlessly recirculated" world, so that the travelogue destination "becomes a space for [their] performance" (Dunn, 2005b, p.166). Travel series are a form of "celebrity-induced tourism" (Lee, Scott & Kim, 2008), whereby the presenters' 'para-social' audience

relationship (Horton & Wohl, 1956), can influence tourist visits (Glover, 2012). These travel programmes systematically orient a tourist gaze, which is evermore ‘intertwined with the consumption of media images’ (Jansson, 2002, p.431), a kind of virtual “contact zone” (Pratt, 1991), where cultures collide, shaping the fabric of power relations. They are a staple of consumer-oriented media entertainment focused on global lifestyles, a ‘feel-good journalism’ that frames peoples and places in unproblematic social and political settings; such travel journalism ‘would not lead us to expect new representational politics because it is... based on constructing difference’ (Fürsich, 2002, p.224), reproducing assumptions familiar to its audience and endorsing conventional preconceptions of destinations (Yoo & Buzinde, 2012). Therefore, they reproduce pre-existing (dis)connections to produce an affinity between place and viewer on various levels.

## 2.2. *Discursive Imaginings of the North*

Globalised imaginings of the Arctic are saturated with representations of the reciprocal interplay between utopian longings and dystopian trials; of the aesthetics of the awe-inspiring and the desolate; and of the explorer’s imperative to map its ‘blank’ spaces (Schimanski, Theodorsen & Wærp, 2011). From the earliest portrayals of the pagan Norsemen, through the history of polar expedition accounts (Gaupseth, Federhofer & Aspaas, 2013), to Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) and Disney’s *Frozen* (2013), the Arctic imaginary is entwined with a series of discourses of the North, which are entangled with discourses of exoticism, imperialism, and masculinity (Ryall et al., 2010). Framed by such views, the North is “the land of the extraordinary, a land of dreams... unsuited to civilised life... the space of the pilgrimage moment of ‘between-ness’, of travelling and of quest, between home and goal” (Shields, 1991, p.174). The construction of the Arctic as a transcendent and awe-inspiring absolute (Spufford, 1996) has become a consolidated, self-perpetuating idea of Arcticism, like Said’s (1993) notion of Orientalism, within which indigenous peoples are represented as the Other, whilst the Self is imagined as heroic scientist/explorer (Olsen, 2003, 2006; Mathisen, 2014). The polar waste evokes notions of metaphorical emptiness, of nameless spaces, waiting to be penetrated and mapped in national-imperialistic masculinist ventures (Eglinger, 2010; Griffiths & Green, 2011), a discourse critiqued by feminist and postcolonial researchers for its possessive imperialistic and sexualising gaze (Rose, 1993).



The idea of The North thus embraces not merely the notion of a physical space, but includes representations of its landscapes, often seen as the object of the masculine gaze, cast as an alluring but wild, untamed territory that must be observed, penetrated and mastered, by hunters, scientists, explorers and tourists (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000; Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2004). McClintock (1995, p.22) describes this as a 'porno-tropic' tradition, an imperialistic patriarchal narrative in which the Arctic is virgin terrain, awaiting male appropriation (MacKenzie, & Westerståhl Stenport, 2014). Such imaginings originate outside the Arctic region in a European/North American reference frame but are so dominant that even indigenous counter-discourses have developed in response to these hegemonic visualizations (Ryall et al., 2010). Conceptualisations of Northern lands remain framed by an anachronistic view of European civilisation in which civilisation diffused outwards from Greece and Rome. From this standpoint, the North is the farthest point from the source of civilisation and the last to acquire it; thus, consistently its lands have been regarded as the home of the last barbarians, hidden in mist and mystery (Childe, 1925).

A recent constituent of Arctic tourism imaginings is the Aurora Borealis or Northern Lights (Edensor, 2010). The Aurora, which appear especially in the Earth's high latitude regions, are caused by a constant solar wind of electric particles, which reshape the Earth's magnetic field, disrupting the magnetosphere (Aspaas, 2013). The Northern Lights have several folkloric associations and for the Sámi, the indigenous people of Northern Norway, disrespecting them causes misfortune (Eather, 1980). Nineteenth-century scientific explorers constructed mythical narratives about the Aurora Borealis, which exoticised the "primitive natives" and their culture (Mathisen, 2014). This type of colonialism (borealism), invokes an interest in the exotic and primitive authenticity of the subordinated Other, seen in contemporary marketing that links the Aurora to Sámi culture and transports Northern Lights tourists to an "Arctic Fantasyland" (Mathisen, 2014: p.86).

Drawing upon classical and contemporary social science literature, we have emphasised the significance of the imaginary for framing social worlds. The connections between the images imbued within such forms of imaginary are productive and partly shape our orientation. From ideas of nation as imaginary (Anderson, 1983), to imaginations of uncivilised people and places (Elias, 1994), we have highlighted the relations between an imaginary and the (dis)connections we forge with those deemed

Other. These *mythologies* of the other (de Castro, 2010), of the cultivation of people and places, are wrought through affinities we may or may not share. The ways in which film create natural and social frameworks that indulge the sublime, the fantastic and the wild (Goffman, 1974) are potent means through which certain forms of subordination create affinities. Consequently, we will show the layers of affinity within a travel documentary and the multiple means through which investments and divestments are not only produced within the film, but become embedded, embodied and reproduced within Destination Management Organisations (DMOs).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

Discourse and communication are crucial to tourism (Jaworski & Pritchard, 2005) yet researchers have been slow to explore the interpenetrations between on-screen and off-screen tourism worlds from a critical or interpretive perspective and few bridge the divide between the imagined and the lived (Tzannelli, 2008). We analysed semi-structured interviews (n=19) with Norwegian tourism industry stakeholders or ‘brokers’ (Cheong and Miller, 2000), nine of whom represented local, regional and national DMOs and 10 were leading winter tourism providers, selected for their roles on local/regional tourism associations (table 1). All were asked to reflect on the development of winter tourism in Northern Norway and almost all spontaneously identified *Joanna Lumley in the Land of the Northern Lights* (BBC, 2008) as a significant driver in developing the region’s winter tourism. Given these unprompted references to the 60-minute documentary, we performed a critical discourse analysis to explore the intersections between on-screen global tourism imaginaries and local tourism worlds.

Table 1: Key Stakeholder Interviewees

Critical discourse analysis focuses on how power is embedded in taken-for-granted understandings that privilege some actors over others in different constellations of advantage and disadvantage (van Dijk, 2011). More than a method, discourse analysis is a methodology, integrating methods of data collection and analysis with assumptions about the constructive consequence of language and social practice (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Whilst semiotic and textual analysis recognise the multi-layered nature of textual meaning, critical discourse analysis enables the researcher to uncover not only

Foucauldian deeply embedded and taken-for-granted implications but also Derridean secret, absent and occluded meanings (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000). It allows us to scrutinise texts as cultural products embedded in wider historically-specific knowledge systems (Hannam & Knox, 2005). This broader socio-cultural context is hugely significant as discourses structure our knowledge and social practice, shaping the ways in which we *know*, and therefore produce certain forms of conduct (Foucault, 1972, 1981).

If discourse theory is complex, then 'doing' discourse is opaque. As a methodology it is qualitative, interpretive, and constructionist but there are no shared meanings and few practical guidelines for 'doing discourse analyses', a lacuna that empowers the investigator to remain a methodological bricoleur (Müller, 2011). The researcher plays a pivotal role in critical discourse analysis, as it demands reflexivity and transparency and fine-grained reading to reveal knowledge/power relations (Hannam & Knox, 2005). A discursive methodology recognises that discourses may imbricate and intersect; it also highlights questions of power and scrutinizes interpenetrations between prevailing Western discourses. Our analysis is framed by Foucault's (1979) linking of discourse and agency to language and power, Said's (1993) work on Orientalism and Pratt's (1991) conceptualisation of contact zones - spaces of intersectionality that produce "transculturation" or learnings of different cultures. We also make crucial connections with the work of Erving Goffman on staging and framing and with the more familiar rendering of power through Foucault's (1980) conceptualisation of power-knowledge.

Recognition of the role of the researcher underlines how knowledge is partial, socially constructed and subjectively experienced (Shaw & Bailey, 2009). Critical to the doing of discourse analysis is how the researcher understands, makes sense of and reflects on the text's multiple, intersecting contexts (Hannam & Knox, 2005). Here, all co-authors viewed the *Land of the Northern Lights* DVD in excess of 20 times and the entire documentary was transcribed - a time-consuming but essential data analysis phase (Wood & Kroger, 2000). The transcription was annotated to identify images and sounds, music and text and emotional signifiers (e.g. voice tone, tempo and pitch and facial expressions). Each viewing and reading sharpened and deepened the researchers' interpretation of the meanings embedded in the documentary, as they read 'with' and 'against' the text. These readings were further refined by iterative literature reviews and multiple redrafting, both important stages in this highly reflexive 'messy method' (Law, 2004).

## 4. FRAMING THE LAND OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

### 4.1. Backstage

The travel media is extensively assisted by local, regional and national tourism and film agencies, which source locations, stories, facilities, studios and crews (Hanusch, 2012). This provides the local with subtle openings to re-appropriate, resist or re-tell globalised media discourses and demonstrates the multi-dimensional and dynamic nature of global-local power relationships (Glover, 2012). The scripting of *Land of the Northern Lights* began when a UK-based production company contacted the London office of Norway's national DMO, Innovation Norway in 2006 to discuss a Northern Lights documentary, commissioned by the BBC. Innovation Norway's Oslo office initially approached this as a simple familiarization request but the Director of Innovation Norway (interviewee 1) realised that it presented an opportunity to showcase the region, commenting that whilst "we did not want to influence the production company", its itinerary would be open to "suggestions," especially as only a few Northern Norwegian destinations then offered winter activities, limiting the film crew's options.

The production company was invited to contact local and regional DMOs for logistical assistance and the Head of Polarsirkelen Reiseliv facilitated the crossing of the Arctic Circle by hiring the crew snow mobiles, a dog musher and a cabin from the state-owned land and forest enterprise agency (interviewee 6). The Head of Marketing at Finnmark Reiseliv (interviewee 7) suggested Joanna's Finnmark itinerary and accompanied the crew on their reconnaissance and final shoots; this despite Joanna's assertions in the documentary that she had chosen her route, itinerary and guides. Joanna's Northern Lights guide, the Aurora Chaser Kjetil Skogli, was intimately involved in staging the documentary, not just in locating the Lights but in filming them as the crew did not know how to do this. He reveals that the Northern Lights sequence was actually filmed at several locations:

When they did the reconnaissance trip a month before... I showed them how to make a film..., for they had no idea how to film Northern Lights in HD quality. I had been doing it for a while. I spent many hours... to get them to understand. And then I said "you need transport when you come back. I have a big car, you can book me for the whole week", and so they did... Most of the filming is from a place out in Lyngen, but... the day before we were at the Finnish border and filmed some Northern Lights there, and they put them in too. It's okay for people

who are not from here, but we see it.... TV, it's not always things happening in order

(interviewee 16).

Skogli considers the documentary's impact on the regional tourism industry to be profound:

There is a time before and after Joanna Lumley... for Northern Lights tourism in Northern Norway. It was the big trigger.... without doubt. You can ask any random tourist, why are you here? The majority will answer Joanna Lumley. We have asked

(interviewee 16).

The film increased interest from the UK but also from other European markets, where the documentary was screened in subsequent years. Despite the popularity of the documentary, it was its initial screening that created the greatest impact; as the Head of Product Development at Hurtigruten said: "When the documentary was broadcast in 2008... our booking office in England was boiling over the next day" (interviewee 12). After this huge response, Innovation Norway sought to leverage it by marketing Northern Norway as *the* Northern Lights destination. The next year the national DMO included footage from the documentary in its television commercials and promotional DVDs and during 2009-2014 invested 42m NOK on Northern Lights-focused marketing in its key markets of the UK, the Netherlands, Germany and Sweden (Innovation Norway, 2014).

Although several locations featured in the documentary, its impact was most noticeable in Tromsø as further south and north winter tourism development was constrained by the lack of international airports (Heimtun & Viken, 2016). In Tromsø, Northern Lights tourism had been regarded locally as something of an oddity, largely confined to a small number of Japanese tourists. Joanna Lumley's documentary spearheaded a new tourism infrastructure around the celestial phenomenon (Bertella, 2013). As the Head of Tromsø's Visitor Centre commented: "many saw the opportunity to develop... an authentic winter product. If she is interested in Northern Lights, then others would also be" (interviewee 9). Moreover, Joanna's passion for the North was even more convincing as it had begun as a childhood longing, making "what she says genuine and real. Nobody has put the words in her mouth, which is funny considering that she is an actress" (interviewee 9). The Head of Administration in NordNorsk Reiseliv (interviewee 4) remarked that she has met many viewers of the *Land of the Northern*

*Lights* documentary at travel markets over the years and that each time the documentary is re-screened, there is a visitor uplift, including in the domestic market. As the Head of the Tromsø Tourist Information Centre observed: “It is great that the Norwegian market has grown. I don’t think the Norwegians have understood the Northern Lights; it has been there all the time. When others have discovered it, the Norwegians take after” (interviewee 9). It seems as though the *Land of the Northern Lights* documentary has not merely been a key driver of Northern Lights tourism in Northern Norway but has elevated belief amongst regional stakeholders that Northern Norway has the capacity to be a unique destination, even in the cold and dark season.

That film production enables a particular means of representing the real that does not need to be real of itself remains an established position (Benjamin, 1968). Indeed, we could surmise the participants’ discussions of the documentary as hyperreality in the making (Baudrillard, 1994). That there are disconnections between what was said in the film and what happened in practice are moot as they are a means of invocation that have specific intimations in terms of how they are experienced (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967). Yet such a disconnection between backstage and frontstage as witnessed in terms of the truth of scenes being shot in Northern Norway (or even Norway), that this was Joanna Lumley’s journey plan, that dog sleds are based in railway stations, that the Sámi were present in the film are of little consequence. These are backstage behaviours par excellence, where taken-for-granted rituals associated with framing the ways in which a response would be desired are akin to the hyperreal of Baudrillard. The distinction here, is that within the context of the film, those very frames which are partially and provisionally seen within ordinary social life take root and are embellished to directly frame audience response (Goffman, 1974; 1979). Film has the benefit of involving multiple takes from which there is an enhanced ability to make the sensational response; here hyperreal is predicated upon hyper-ritualisation (Goffman, 1979), where an imaginary becomes a closer approximation to real life and we are unable to break the spell of the show. This is the frame through which we interpret the film.

#### *4.2. Front Stage*

Joanna’s pilgrimage north opens with her standing in a desolate Arctic landscape. Her quest typifies exploration accounts, which must be read against the frame of the explorer’s life, so that the Arctic functions as an in-between, liminal space in their life journey (Eglinger, 2010). The Polar travelogue genre has transformed from its

nineteenth-century origins of neutral observer into today's subjective memoir, staging the explorer/traveller's self through the exposing of thoughts and feelings (Karlsen, 2013). Joanna intones: "The Far North. It's quite overpowering. Vast expanses. Silent fjords. Fairy-tale mountains. It's fabulously beautiful." She invites her viewer into this otherworldly, "Arctic Fantasyland" (Mathisen, 2014): "I feel as if I have come into another world... No people except you and us." This echoes Benjamin's (1968: p.231) exegesis of acting, whereby '...the "spell of the personality," the phony spell of a commodity' associated with *performing* in front of a camera rather than an audience represents a commodification of speech in front of a mirror. The mystery of The North is underlined as Joanna explains that an eight-hour journey to the Arctic Circle lies ahead. As she boards her train, Grieg's *In the Hall of the Mountain King* gathers pace to match the train's acceleration into the Northern darkness. Joanna is accompanied northward by individuals, who act as her guides, mediators, hosts and teachers (table 2) but ever-present is her audience, in whom she confides: "if we are very lucky, we might see the elusive Northern Lights themselves... I want more than anything to see the Northern Lights, just to see them."

Table 2: Joanna's Northern Guides

Every adventure begins with leave-taking (Johnson, 1988), much as the connection and disconnection are part of the same phenomenon (Munro, 1997). Joanna's reflective point-of-departure (Laing & Frost, 2014) is her meticulous "packing... I pack things which are going to be essential... so in here I've got... a lovely old guide book, it's called *The Land of the Viking*." Demonstrating the power of childhood experiences in shaping our travel dreams (Laing & Frost, 2014), Joanna confesses: "if it was not for one item in my case, I wouldn't be on this journey at all. This is the book *Ponny the Penguin*." It is in this children's book that she "first heard of the Northern Lights... there was this picture, which haunted me, of a sort of rippling curtain and a ...tiny penguin... that stayed with me forever." Her greatest fear is "that we won't get to see them.... I'm going to travel ever northwards spending my nights staring with hope at the dark sky." This "realisation of a lifelong dream," is a journey redolent with contrasts between the everyday and the extraordinary, the mundane and the transcendental, the banal and the exotic, contrasts that communicate the transformative power of The North (Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2004).

‘This is the most extraordinary journey of my life’, says Joanna as she climbs aboard an Alaskan husky dogsled, which she regards as the most “appropriate [way] across the Arctic Circle”, a mode of transport that holds no local connection, representing a contemporary tourism ‘product’ elsewhere in Northern Norway (Heimtun & Viken, 2016).

The Arctic can be defined geo-politically (the northern territories of eight Arctic states) or climatically and ecologically (e.g. the 10°C July isotherm). For Joanna it is at the limit of the midnight sun and the polar night and is at latitude 66° 33.70 North. Once there, she lays her scarf down to mark this abstract frontier between the mundane and the extraordinary. Pointing backwards with arms outstretched, Joanna proclaims the significance of this imaginary boundary: “that’s just the *ordinary* world and this is the Arctic Circle... This is quite incredible... I’m in the Arctic now and for the rest of my journey North I can obviously call myself an *explorer not a tourist*”. Joanna leaves her guide Tore Kristiansen (table 2) and his dogs and continues her voyage to the Lofoten Islands, which she describes as ethereal places in “the back of beyond.” As she sits in a rorbu (a fisherman’s cabin), Joanna’s next guide (retired school master Ottar Schiøtz) asks her why she chose “this *Nordic* Norway”, his emphasis hinting at the specialness of a region masked in myth, which beckoned to her across time and space as a child in tropical Malaysia. She replies: “...because I have had a dream all my life about coming to The North. When I was a child, I had this idea of seeing the Northern Lights....” She shares a photograph of herself as a child in Norwegian dress and seeks to affirm her spiritual connection to “The true North”. The Arctic explorer-hero typically highlights “the Arctic part of himself [sic]... taking on a hybrid position” (Ryall, 2010, p.xi) and Joanna seeks her symbolic connection through blood (Meyer, 2005). She whispers to Ottar, “Do you think I’ve got a bit of Viking blood in me...? Are you a Viking?” “Well, yes I think I must...” he says and she murmurs, “Yes I think you are” claiming a new, yet ancient mythic affinity (de Castro, 2010).

Joanna next encounters Sigurd Ellingsen, who reminds us of ancient human connections with these primeval Northern lands, a rootedness contrasted with the transitory, placelessness of modernity (Wang, 2000). He says, “I am born here... and my grandson is... the seventh generation on this spot.” Joanna quickly enquires, “Will I see... [the Northern Lights] here”, echoing journeys of medieval grail quests and pilgrimage. Sigurd dashes her hopes, replying: “Not now... it must be colder and then it’s flashing all



over the sky; it's absolutely marvellous." Later, sketching them in her *rorbu* with Ottar, Joanna suggests that: "Fjords... are so quintessentially picturesque that they've come to define our romantic vision of The North: sublime, savage and quite overpowering." The camera switches from the fjord to a snow-capped mountain and Joanna exclaims, "... they look like fairy-story mountains... They look like as though they would have trolls in them." Ottar replies, "fairy-tales connect us to them; giants and many trolls," whereupon Joanna's sheer joy overwhelms her and she gleefully hugs him.

This scene particularly demonstrates the documentary's framing of post-Romantic Arcticist discourses. Joanna's comments that the landscape evokes a mix of pleasure and fear is the very essence of the Sublime, which developed as a source of aesthetic experience when people began to appreciate raw landscapes that stirred their emotions during the Romantic Movement (Carlson, 2009). Joanna confirms how "in the nineteenth century this type of scenery inspired writers, artists and composers like Grieg to write down folk tunes and fairy tales and paint the landscape... in doing so, they helped forge a national identity for Norway and an image of The North that struck a chord with people like me." Today, such wild landscapes continue to "trigger deep, euphoric experiences", which have the capacity to transform and enrich (Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2004: p.856). Exploration and quest narratives are typically stories of tests and trials (Laing & Frost, 2014) and Joanna's desperation grows as her Northern Lights' hunt becomes challenging. "I want more than anything to see the Northern Lights..." she sighs and yet they remain elusive. Joanna's next guide, the artist Tor Essaisse, tantalises her with his own encounter with the Lights. "I went around the little sea in the night and so I see a red and green little light is coming and I stand up and see and so the light come, come, come around me [gesturing]... I stood after three minutes [in] its wash." Joanna cries, "It touched you; it came for you, it touched you"; to which Tor responds: "Yes, yes, so near me." Seemingly to bathe in the Lights offers benediction, perhaps because light itself has historically been a gift of the gods; to provide illumination is to share knowledge, as well as to guide in a crushing sea of blackness (Edensor, 2013).

Joanna next spends time with the Sámi people in Kautokeino, where she meets the mayor Klemet Erland Hætta and the reindeer herder Mikkel Isak Johansen Eira, who act as her cultural intermediaries (Cronin, 2000). Yet, there is little genuine "transculturation" here as this "contact zone" (Pratt, 1991) is a stereotypical encounter redolent with "emblematic" touristic signs (Olsen, 2003, 2006), that construct Sámi

people as 'Other' and Joanna as modern spectator, questing for the exotic North (Wang, 2000). She meets Sámi wearing traditional dress, drives a snow mobile and enters a lavvo (a Sámi tent) to listen to Ante Mikkel Gaup, a Sámi singer of joik, which is said to invoke the essence of a person, animal or natural phenomenon. Joanna's next stop is the Alta Igloo Hotel (now the Sorrisniva Igloo Hotel) where she is met by her only female guide, the manager Sølvi Monsen. Joanna spends the night here and there is much focus on her need for many layers of clothing, endorsing dress as an integral element in "performing adventure" (Cater & Cloke, 2007). Joanna next meets Professor Truls Lynne Hansen at the Tromsø Geophysical Observatory. In despair of seeing the Northern Lights she turns hopefully to Western scientism; yet, despite his detailed explanation of the phenomenon, Professor Hansen's only advice is "to find a dark place... and look for it." Pronouncing "it's now or never", Joanna engages Northern Lights tour guide Kjetil Skogli, who duly locates them. In the very next scene, Joanna stands before the Lights. "This is the wonder of the world. This is it. I might just have to lie down and stare up at this. Oh, look at this [lights streak across the sky as Joanna lies prone, with arms outstretched], I can't believe I'm seeing this [laughing]. It's fantastic and it's coming again." She sits up and addresses the camera: "I have been waiting all my life to see the Northern Lights and now I'm seeing them on a scale that is beyond description... I'm as happy as can be... oh it's extraordinary [laughs with delight]; it's so exciting, it's so immense." Joanna's epic journey has reached an emotional and spiritual apotheosis (Laing & Frost, 2014) and we too finally understand the power of this elusive celestial phenomenon, which in unlike territorial quests, cannot be mapped or scripted, and as such offers an existential authenticity.

This scene positions Joanna to one side of the foreground, mirroring the picture of Ponny the penguin in her childhood book whilst Solveig's song from Peer Gynt plays in the background. Like Solveig, Joanna was prepared to wait until the Northern Lights finally rewarded her persistence and we appreciate the full extent of her immersion in them, as she describes her emotions and her aesthetic experience (Brady, 2010). "This is the most astonishing thing I've ever seen. I've a funny feeling it sort of knew. I know that it sounds a bit mad [crying, she catches her breath]... but it feels as though it knew that we wanted to see it so badly [she addresses the camera] and instead of just giving a little strip of light... I would have been so grateful for that. We've got the whole business." Joanna stands and stares at the sky, saying reverentially: "This is terribly, terribly moving.... Thank you. Thank you." Her quest completed, she confirms, "I can die happy."

For her the Lights are ethereal and bewitching, just like light itself, they transfix us and yet enfold us in a primeval protection against the unknown and unseen horrors of the darkness (Edensor, 2013). The final leg of her journey into the North brings Joanna to the archipelago of Svalbard. At the airport she is met by an anonymous guide who accompanies her to the end of her Arctic Odyssey. Ignoring Svalbard's significant tourism industry (Vicken, 2011), Joanna tells us that this is a frontier land of "whalers, hunters and trappers... this far North... isn't really the place for men... we're not built to live here." Looking out to sea, Joanna stands in the icy landscape and sighs, "I can go no further North."

#### 4.3. Framing

In this article we have advanced critical explorations of the connexions between the travel media and the imaginary. Specifically, through our analysis of the content, influence and affective displays of the *Land of the Northern Lights* documentary, we have revealed that imaginary to be both discursive and lived as it consists of multifaceted engagements in the production and consumption of real and imagined places (Jansson, 2002). We have seen how Northern Norwegian public and private-sector tourism brokers have embraced the documentary's framing of the region in post-romantic Arctic discourses of quest, longing and sublime nature (Ryall et al., 2010). Whilst the celestial phenomenon acts as the focal point of Joanna Lumley's narrative of the North, the *Land of the Northern Lights* is aligned with discourses of winter as beautiful, virginal and exotic (Hansson & Norberg, 2009) and of the North as an awe-inspiring fantasyland (Mathisen, 2014), the Ultima Thule at the limit of travel and discovery (Jacobsen, 1997). Such places at 'the end of the world' are often regarded as a kind of spiritual, liminal zone, offering the potentiality for transforming the self in a multitude of ways (Birkeland, 2005). For Joanna this occurred several times, including becoming an explorer at crossing the Arctic Circle, making peace with life on seeing the Northern Lights and experiencing an emotional epiphany on the northern most point on Svalbard.

Joanna's Northern quest is constructed as an expedition in the footsteps of explorers such as Nansen and Amundsen, a journey into uncharted territory (Schimanski, Theodorsen & Wærp, 2011) and yet the backstage interviews reveal it to be much more commonplace. She follows an itinerary suggested by the local DMOs and the activities she enjoys are, in fact, tourist guidebook highlights (Heimtun & Jacobsen, 2012). While

Joanna self-identifies as an explorer, she does not experience risk or isolation (Laing & Crouch, 2009) and her trip is a highly scripted soft adventure (Beedie & Hudson, 2003), rooted in imperial discourses of exploration. If Joanna's itinerary is less daring and spontaneous than it appears, then her engagement with local places and people is also highly structured and orthodox, offering little opportunity for deep transculturation (Pratt, 1991). Joanna's stories and conversations about the North are formulaic and shaped by 'emblematic' touristic signs, particularly those related to Sámi culture and history, which focus on their traditional clothing, tents and songs and reindeer husbandry (Olsen, 2003). In her touristic quest for the exotic North (Wang, 2000), Joanna is the modern spectator (Olsen, 2006) and the Sámi people are 'Other'. Similarly, Svalbard is represented as a place rooted in traditional ways of living and working; hunting and trapping figure prominently in the documentary, whilst in reality tourism is a much more significant industry (Viken, 2011). Plainly, here in The North, as elsewhere, "[t]he more modern the locals become the less interest they have for the... tourist. Tourists come from the outside to see the exotic..." (Bruner 1995: p.224).

We have attempted to extend how we can conceptualise imaginaries (Goffman, 1974) and suggest that the frames we extend into, much like the moral order associated with Garfinkel (1967), become very difficult to challenge as they shape everyday ontologies. In terms of stakeholder interviews and tourism documentary analysis, we showed the ways in which the imaginary frame shapes the conditions of possibility of legitimate forms of conduct. In this sense we have opened a means through which interactionism and continental social theory have affinity with one another. Indeed, through our empirical analysis of responses to a tourism documentary and the documentary itself, we showed how certain imaginaries are locked onto through the development of certain affinities that work on a visceral level as much as one associated with colonialism, the sublime and the exotic. In turn we made connections between interactionist sociology and social theory and showed the multiple layers through our analysis.

The staging of frames is significant, not just in terms of the disingenuous nature of film production to produce interpretations that are more real than real, to reinterpret Goffman's (1979) analysis of commercial images. Indeed, Goffman draws on the idea of hyper-ritualisation and editing to make explicit processes of 'standardisation, exaggeration and simplification' (p84) to show how images (and here we extend the core

ideas into tourism journalism) are presented without the dull footage of everyday life. So rather than reinvent the world anew, such travel journalism holds its potency in developing affinities in terms of ritual, display, biography and history that enchant the audience. It is here that the power of such a film lies, not because it is disingenuous, nor because it glamorises through processes of editing, but simply because it reflects and reinforces knowledges already held; only here through the promotion of a certain imaginary the hype makes sense. That the documentary may be considered banal of itself, shows in part the ways in which the power of the documentary is in hiding its own mechanisms. Here we make an attempt to marry social theory and ethnographic insights to sketch the mechanisms behind film-induced tourism. The call that is made is through the mediation of everyday affects, which are orchestrated through the music of Grieg, the trope of the power of nature and the mysticism associated with the exotic. These are all means of framing for Goffman and what is more the narrator talks to the audience individually, making private accounts public to persuade the viewer, much as con artists 'cool the mark out' by making invoking private knowledge (Goffman, 1952). The significance here is the ways not just that Northern Norway is being framed, but how the viewers are all a part of this framing.

The significance of framing and power is that we all, by contact with the film product, become framed in one way or another. The film is of itself a framing and leans on certain discursive sets to make affinities that latch onto a certain imaginary. Indeed, we have a guide in Lumley, much as other journeys require guides to protect, provide secrets and enable access to other worlds (Myerhoff, 1975), yet the necessity to maintain connections with social worlds is crucial and here we see a celebrity-cum-spirit guide. The film operates as a framework of power, a mode of power-knowledge that tacitly connects to the viewer, whilst amplifying certain core characteristics to share on multiple levels: the spiritual, sublime, gendered, colonial, exotic and affective. Consequently, it shapes the possibility for how self/Other can be understood. The power is held in its effects. In the globalised media industry, the constant demand to increase ratings and reduce costs has stimulated a growth in television travel journalism, focused on "friendly and optimistic coverage" of destinations (Fürsich, 2012: p.207). Thus, the tourism industry (especially DMOs) and television travel journalism share common goals of profit and entertainment and both produce "glossy fantasies" (Dunn, 2005a: p.102). There is seemingly little symbolic resistance to the documentary's Arcticist discourses, which

clearly present Northern Norway's indigenous peoples as Other (Olsen, 2003, 2006; Ryall et al., 2010; Mathisen, 2014).

Indeed, the region's tourism stakeholders, especially the DMOs, have embraced its discourses, which stereotypically construct the North as an Arctic fantasyland (Mathisen, 2014), seeing the documentary as a key driver of tourism development and economic value. Tourism professionals are part of the 'experience economy' and as "brand builders, place marketers, event managers, multi-media technicians, storytellers, trend spotters, sensuality scenographers, aura magicians, creativity consultants"; their role is to reproduce an imaginary that is "eventful, rich or fulfilling" and need not represent local realities (Löfgren, 2008: p.86). Thus, their aim is to promote The North in its dark and cold season as a wonderful dreamscape of Northern Lights and beautiful and picturesque winter landscapes, seasoned only with the emblematic Sámi, and the popularity of *Land of the Northern Lights* documentary provided them with the perfect message and platform for creating emotional attachments. As the impact of *Land of the Northern Lights* illustrates, television has tremendous power to bring new worlds to different audiences (Morkham & Staiff, 2002) and to inspire them to seek out similar experiences - here transforming the Northern Lights into the region's core tourism product to the extent that: "There is a time before and after Joanna Lumley... for Northern Lights tourism in Northern Norway" (interviewee 16). Clearly, such programmes can have tremendous impact and there remains much scope to extend our understandings of such global texts as agents of cultural pedagogy.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

In drawing upon the imaginary as a framework from which the mythic gives rise to certain social worlds, we have highlighted the ways in which affinities are created. Whether accurate or disingenuous, wild or civilised, associated with imperialism or profit, the affinity, wrought about through popular conceptions, emotions and stories chimes with tourism professionals, politicians and professionals alike. Real and/or imagined, we have shown how social worlds are crafted through the work of the imaginary, how they frame understandings and as a consequence create new social practices. These imaginaries come to *hold* us, they become true because they hold and at the same time hold because they are true (Latour, 1987). Put differently, through the layering of affinities through television journalism, we become invested in the imaginary

and given the relations to our own beliefs, we cannot challenge the image of what the North has now become.

The extent to which on-screen signs are embraced or resisted by different local actors and the ability of on-screen tourism to influence the social order and the public sphere (Ziakas & Costa, 2012) afford a host of uncharted research opportunities. For example, given more space, we could have explored Joanna's relationships with (or absence of) her many different guides and examined how they contributed to the imaginaries created. In addition, future studies could explore how the imaginaries produced involve or impact on people at the level of the tourism places visited by celebrity presenters such as Joanna Lumley and the tourists who have followed in her footsteps. Further work with tourists and tourism brokers would be instructive. Indeed, our appreciation of the cross-fertilisation of celebrity and travel is meagre (Lee, Scott, & Kim, 2008; Beeton, 2011), notwithstanding decades of media research demonstrating the intensity of the celebrity-audience relationship (Horton & Wohl, 1956). If we are to advance understanding of the interpenetrations between on-screen and off-screen tourism worlds and the connection between the imagined and the lived (Tzannelli, 2008), we need much greater collaboration between tourism, marketing and communication and media studies in genuine cross-disciplinary scholarship.

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