Coalition Building towards Postintersectional Futures through Sámi Activist Music

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Abstract: This article analyzes Indigenous Sámi activist musicianship allied with LGBTQ+ rights and environmental movements opposing climate change and mining. It uses postintersectionality combined with assemblage theory, put in dialogue wih the (Indigenous) concept of density, to analyze how musicians through their music achieve resonance with listeners of social mass movements. Working with the traditional joik (yoik) genre frequently fused with diverse popular musics, renowned Sámi musicians are seeking to build coalitions across diverse cultural and ethnic groups associating with mass movements. These musicians and musical pieces focus on the positive and even utopian when it comes to issues too often characterized in terms of discrimination and exclusion involving indigeneity, gender, and the environment. They perform love-politics. The musicians and works prolifically employ specific strategies of musical sound, such as minimizing the sonically "strange" and starring Sámi sounds, when building coalitions.

Résumé: Cet article analyse l'activisme musical des Autochtones sámi allié aux droits des LGBTQ+ et aux mouvements environnementaux opposés au changement climatique et à l'extraction minière. Il utilise la post-intersectionnalité en lien avec la théorie de l'assemblage, mise en dialogue avec le concept (Autochtone) de densité, pour analyser la façon dont les musiciens, par leur musique, parviennent à entrer en résonance avec les auditeurs des mouvements sociaux de masse. Travaillant sur le genre traditionnel du chant yoik, fréquemment fusionné avec diverses musiques populaires, des musiciens sámi de renom cherchent à bâtir des coalitions à travers différents groupes ethniques et culturels qui s'associent aux mouvements de masse. Ces musiciens et leurs pièces musicales se concentrent sur le positif, voire l'utopique, lorsqu'il s'agit de problèmes trop souvent définis en termes de discrimination et d'exclusion impliquant l'indigénéité, le genre et l'environnement. Par conséquent, ils interprètent « la politique de l'amour ». Les musiciens et leurs œuvres recourent à foison aux stratégies spécifiques au son musical, comme la minimisation de « l'étrangeté » propre à la sonorité sámi lorsqu'ils forment des coalitions.

This article examines how Sámi musicians, their performances, and recordings spread activist messages and build coalitions. The Sámi constitute an Indigenous group numbering between 80,000–100,000 people whose traditional living areas, called Sápmi, span the north of Norway, Sweden, and Finland to Russia's Kola Peninsula. I argue that these actions seek to move audiences and listeners towards postintersectional futures — futures free of suppressing identity categories. As such, this article contributes to the study of music in connection to mass social movements and musical activism by instrumentalizing the concepts of postintersectionality, assemblage, and coalition building.

I focus on contemporary Sámi musicians who incorporate the Sámi vocal expression of joik (or yoik; in North Sámi, juoiggas) into popular and folk musics, or use solo joik, while presenting strong activist messages on social and environmental justice and Indigenous rights. The sound of joik involves a constant variability and improvisatory quality of monophonic vocalization most often performed by an individual. A conventional purpose of joiking is to present an experienced essence of its subject, often a person, place, animal, or event. Many performers also emphasize that joiking conveys emotions. Joiks may offer social and political commentary, call upon spiritual powers, and serve as therapy. Many of the variations are timbral shaped by how much energy the vocalist puts into chosen partials and harmonics and are greatly assisted by vocables called *smávvásanit* as well as words. Traditional joiks consist of short, repeated rhythmic phrases — also inflected and varied — as well as frequent use of pentatonicism and microtonal ornamentation (e.g., eighth tones, quarter tones and pitch slides). In Sápmi, regional types of joik use specific intervals as well as timbral emphases and voice formations. Joiks convey meaning through their sounds as well as their poetry (Gaski 1999). The smávvásanit, although somewhat distant from everyday Sámi language, have linguistic connotations as well (Tamás 2013). Sámi artists who fuse joik with globalized music genres are internationally known partly thanks to heavy financing of a Sámi music industry by the Nordic countries (Chen 2022), where Sámi who perform traditional, unaccompanied joik also achieve grassroots popularity through community music events.

The joik has most often been seen and studied as an indicator and expression of Sáminess (Hilder 2014; Jones-Bauman 1993). Here, I examine how diverse elements of selected music performances and recordings invite people from diverse backgrounds to relate with and engage in activism. I analyze joiks and joik fusions with techno, dance, and bluegrass music by the Sámi vocalists, producers, and activists Sofia Jannok and Maxida Märak, reaching culturally diverse audiences¹ (and respectively with 27.7K and 35.7K followers

on Instagram). I introduce the genre of power joik to academic readership through joiks by Sara Marielle Gaup Beaska and Sofia Jannok.

Jannok, Märak, and Gaup Beaska have created and performed joik musics that support the LGBTQ+ rights and the environmental movements, particularly by advocating for Indigenous land rights and resisting climate change and mining. I am interested in a) how these singers and their music build coalitions with audiences coming from diverse backgrounds and engaging mass sociopolitical movements, b) through which kinds of assemblages of listening components this occurs, and c) with which possible effects. Jannok and Märak assert that their music performances and recordings open the possibility for coalitions to emerge across ethno-cultural lines and to formulate within groups (for example, including different social and political perspectives). I analyze inter-group and intra-group coalitions, taking into account that coalitions aren't only positive — they can also feed societal divisions and conflicts.

Theoretical and Methodological Approach

I hear this music from my situated knowledge (Haraway 1988) as a music scholar (ethnomusicologist), an avid listener to almost all music genres and styles, a musician, a non-Indigenous woman, a family member of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, a Canadian, and a Nordic citizen and resident (respectively of Finland and Denmark). As a scholar, I engage the music through the theoretical lens of postintersectionality, a perspective that filters through how I "hear" the music's sensory and affective work. I engage postintersectionality in two ways, building on the work of gender scholar Jennifer C. Nash. Firstly, my discussion centres on its temporal dimension and, in particular, its utopian spirit for a future free from oppression and discrimination (Nash 2013). As such, postintersectionality does not mean that intersectionality is no longer useful. Rather it is an invitation to consider rich and heterogenous political traditions towards "freedom dreams" (Nash 2013: 8) in attempts to go beyond intersectionality. Intersectionality — i.e., intersecting identifications linked to oppression and discrimination — is an analytical framework and a tool for political intervention (Chun, Lipsitz, and Shin 2013), a statement that also characterizes postintersectionality (Nash 2013). Intersectionality assists with mapping the social locations of individuals that emerge from interplays between multiple forms of difference — particularly "gender, race, class, and all other forms of identity and distinction" (George 2007) — and that can form the basis for discrimination and exclusion (Manuel 2007).

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's idea of assemblage (1987) is useful when conceptualizing such postintersectional moves. For me, postintersectionality and assemblage are complementary ideas (after Tiainen et al. 2020; for a relational genealogy of intersectionality, postintersectionality, assemblage, love-politics, and coalition, see Nash 2019). Thinking in terms of assemblage is suitable to this analysis because it is "a performative practice which carves out new routes of thinking" (Moisala et al. 2017: 17). Assemblage describes overlapping identifications and emphasizes their processuality as well as their semiotic, material, and social "flows" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 25). According to music scholars Pirkko Moisala, Taru Leppänen, Milla Tiainen, and Hanna Väätäinen, "Assemblage can be understood as any number of components, things, elements and aspects — forces, materialities, discourses, affects, expressions — forming an interacting and continuously transforming complex whole which does not have a permanent identity or an organization" (Moisala et al. 2017: 14). In music and sound studies, assemblages have been studied as "fluidly moving events which engage a multiplicity of social, cultural, bodily and material forces and elements" (14). Assemblage moves cultural music studies beyond studying musicking as socially relational events to include materialities and non-human elements.

Here, I use the idea of the listening assemblage, which acknowledges the coherence given by the composition that is listened to "while simultaneously destabilizing and opening up what meanings may be attributed" (Duffy 2017: 200). Instead of focusing on meaning and representation in music, it allows one to explore "varied and multiple entries into the sound world" (Moisala et al. 2017: 16). Queer theorist Jasbir Puar has advocated for the theorization of assemblages that underscore "feeling, tactility, ontology, affect and information" (2007: 215), a perspective that resonates with much Sámi activist music. In Indigenous studies, assemblage resonates with Chris Andersen's concept of density. Density refers to indigeneity being formed by Indigenous community teaching and experiences as well as historical and contemporary engagements of Indigenous Peoples with many other societies and cultures, factors and processes, among them colonial institutions and the globalization of products, institutions, and ideas (2009).

The second way I engage postintersectionality is specifically through the idea of love-politics. Nash usefully has conceptualized postintersectionality in second-wave Black feminist love-politics as "a particular kind of self-work, one that encourages ... the subject to transcend the self" and as being the vanguard of "nonidentitarian" politics that, thus, could fruitfully be considered as postintersectional (Nash 2013: 7). bell hooks has reminded us that "all the great movements for social justice in our society have strongly emphasized a

love ethic" (hooks 2000: xix). I argue that love-politics thrives in the LGBTQ+ and environmental movements, with which many Sámi activist musicians engage. It asserts love as a form of relationality when creating a shared affective community, utopian vision and public culture. Love-politics may orient itself to a future temporality, particularly the horizon of a utopian future and a "politics of the open end" (Nash 2013: 16; see also Puar 2007: 216). Following the affective turn in critical theory (Staiger, Cvetkovich, and Reynolds 2010: 5), and as a departure from identity politics, Nash has conceptualized love-politics as a type of affective politics that produces new forms of political communities. Together with Sara Ahmed, Lauren Berlant, Jose Muñoz, and Ann Cvetkovich, Nash has invited us to ask, "How do emotions work to align some subjects with some others and against other others? How do emotions move between bodies?" (Ahmed 2004: 118 in Nash 2013: 3). As so often witnessed by music scholars, sound and music are powerful tools to evoke emotions that move bodies to create togetherness and coalitions.

When analyzing Sámi activist songs, I map instances of postintersectionality, particularly where the musicians express care and love for self, others, and the other-than-human. These moments open a possibility to go beyond oppressive fields and experiences of discrimination. I also map performances of intersecting identities — intersectionality — freighted with discrimination and assemblages of related affects, experiences, and ontologies made towards social and political coalition-building. I argue that Sámi activist musicians mobilize such strategies in support of a "just social world" (Nash 2013: 17). This is not to say that postintersectionality as a theory cannot be used to ask hard questions about naming injury as a form of redress. While I differentiate postintersectional and intersectional strategies, the latter could also be read as asking "Where is the love?" (after Jordan 2003: 270). I concentrate on musical sounds and music genres and types, but I also pay attention to other social aspects of the musicking (Small 1998), for example the visuality of music videos and speeches within performances.

My approach is informed by ethnographic fieldwork on Sámi music since 2012. Of particular interest here is a performance featuring Maxida Märak at Tråante 2017. Tråante 2017 was an artistic celebration in Trondheim, Norway, of the centennial of the founding of the first Sámi Assembly, which then evolved into Sámi parliaments that exist as official governing bodies in Norway, Sweden, and Finland. Its public events were heavily attended by Sámi from across the Nordic countries as well as many non-Sámi. I also highlight a power joik workshop taught by Sofia Jannok in Umeå, Sweden, in 2016. Sámi and non-Sámi participated in this workshop as part of *Ubmejen Biejvieh* — Sámi Week in Umeå held during its *Aktasne* – Together II Sámi Studies conference. During

the COVID-19 pandemic, hybrid ethnography (Przybylski 2021) consisting of digital fieldwork on the Internet (e.g., interviews, performance, and music video viewings) complemented in-person fieldwork.

Sámi Popular Music for LGBTQ+ Rights

Through performances and recordings for mixed Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences, the Sámi artists profiled in this article target mass movements, such as those connected to LGBTQ+ rights. Publicly, such musicians present narrations — via song lyrics and video images — and musical soundings of multiple strands of their selves (Ramnarine 2017; Rosamond 2020); they also draw on experiences that engage mass movements, often through joik fused with popular song and music. These musical assemblages seek to inform assemblages of politics (e.g., in people and in mass movements).

One example of a joik-pop fusion supporting LGBTQ+ rights is "Snölejoninna" ("snow lioness" in Swedish) by Sofia Jannok (see Fig. 1). I hear its lyrics as alternating between a postintersectional and intersectional perspective that asks, "Where is the love?" A postintersectional perspective can be heard in the song's most-repeated lyrics, which transliterated from the Swedish are:



Fig. 1. Sofia Jannok. Photo credit: Elin Berge.

A native empress The rainbow you see A snow lioness; All that is me (2016)

Through the lyrics "native empress," Jannok celebrates her identity as LGBTQ+ and as Sámi; "snow lioness" points to her power as a Northerner. In the closing words of the song, sung in North Sámi, Jannok celebrates Sámi futurity, having the "strength of a lion's heart." She also refers to herself as being queer, but not confined to any one identity category:

An indigenous people, we will never disappear With the strength of a lion's heart I am everything, both here and queer; a rainbow stretching from one edge to the one over there (2016)

Queerness is implied by the rainbow but also the line, "I am queer," presented in a combination of North Sámi and English: "Mon lean queer." Her lyrics also use the North Sámi, third person singular pronoun son, which is gender neutral. She does not detail Sámi and Indigenous traditions of gender and sexuality (see Driskell et al. 2011), but references the internationally understood rainbow. Sofia Jannok stated in a media interview (the only type of interview she gives) that this song is "partly about how the box that society wants to squeeze me into doesn't have to be a box. Instead, I can be all of this and still have the right to be Sámi" (in Blomqvist 2016). This can be regarded as an act of a nonidentitarian politics (Nash 2013) that transcends the self through an act of self-love.

"Snölejoninna" is a popular song in verse—chorus format, and the chorus is a new joik. Ethnomusicologist Thomas Hilder has defined new joiks as "music based on 'traditional' joiks or 'traditional' joik practice, which are negotiated to fit with 'Western' popular, jazz, and classical musical practices, such as tuning, rhythm, meter, and forms like popular song, as well as incorporating instrumental accompaniment of different kinds" (2014: 85). New joiks may also involve fusions with other genres, such as so-called ethnic or "world" musics. "Snölejoninna"s chorus fuses joik with techno.

A musical transcription of the joik chorus was developed for publication here, in collaboration with and with permission from Sofia Jannok. The reason that the joik appears in diatonic western notation is that new joik adapts to western diatonicism, which means adjusting and minimizing the

conventionally called "microtonal inflections" of traditionally non-diatonic joik (Frode Fjellheim, interview, June 28, 2015). We aim to indicate that the melodic and rhythmic adaptation is a complex design process in which the artist selects, includes, and even redesigns distinguishing features of joik. In so doing, the artist can choose to minimize what is "strange" about joik to popular music listeners accustomed to diatonicism, thus inviting a greater number of listeners. Transcription 1 shows accents in the joik vocal line occurring in place of traditional "microtonal" pitch variations. Other joik features are present but not necessarily discernable if you don't know to listen for them. "Snölejoninna" features specific melodic elements of North Sámi joik (Krumhansl et al. 2000; Jouste 2009; Laitinen 1994), identified in the existing literature as few semitone intervals and a prevalent use of third and fourth intervals (between the fifth, third, and second degree of Ab minor). Jannok, as composer, builds out the short, repeated rhythmic phrases of joik with techno rhythms, performed on synthesizer, electric guitar, and drums by the Swedish duo Addeboy vs. Cliff.

Transcription 1 shows what kind of "listening assemblage" (Duffy 2017) the joik chorus of "Snölejoninna" is. Techno is put in service of joik. Jannok emphasizes the joik chorus, and by extension Sáminess, via the techno components — specifically thickening the texture and increasing the volume via rhythm and pitch shifts and instrumental entries starting at 0:42 on the recording at https://soundcloud.com/sofia-jannok/snolejoninna-snow-lioness-ledjonvaibmu. The transcription shows the textural shift: the cymbal moves from a roll to struck quarter notes by measure 5; the bass drum doubles the number of notes starting at measure 4; the toms move from a single pitch to a rhythm that incorporates multiple pitches and toms starting in measure 4; the electric guitar enters playing slides in measure 4; percussion sticks enter in measure 5; and a second vocal overdub interjects "A Woo! Uh! Uh!" in measures 4–6. The thick texture and loud volume established in this first iteration of the chorus is sustained and increased in its subsequent repetitions whereas the techno verses use a sparser texture and are much simpler melodically.

The complete lyrics, submitted by Jannok for this publication (Fig. 2), start out by playing with identity categories as she calls herself a feminist, an eco-warrior, a pacifist, a snowmobiler, an egoistic snob, a Buddhist, and a Christian while suggesting that she is also Indigenous (with "I've always been here, I'll always stay"). She then addresses an anonymous/imagined Swedish politician about racism, colonialism, exploitation, the environment, mental health, ethnic extermination, and the abuse of minorities, often seriously and sometimes with sarcasm. Regarding potential threats from the state, she asserts that "we will resist," stressing that "we've been here since time immemorial" and "for thousands of years." The music video of "Snölejoninna" stresses

Transcription 1. The joik – techno chorus of "Snölejoninna," by Sofia Jannok. Printed with permission.



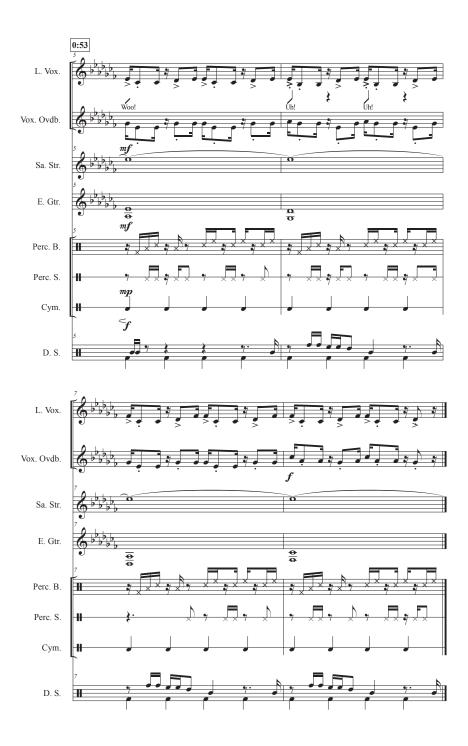


Fig. 2. The lyrics of "Snölejoninna" by Sofia Jannok and Addeboy vs. Cliff, transliterated into English by Jannok.

I do exist, I'm a feminist, an eco warrior and a pacifist A fullblood member of the snowmobile mob, sure, I admit it, I'm an egoistic snob A devoted Buddhist, yet to Jesus I pray I've always been here, I'll always stay

Don't treat me like a longwinded legal debate, dividing things between us, creating borders in this state founded on deceit and historical hate
An outspoken anti-racist, my ass
You don't even recognize the people from whom you've stolen all your cash Son, he, she and ze;
Once you stole this land from me

A native empress The rainbow you see A snow lioness; Well, all that is me

All of it, yes it can all be found here, yet I am something more, as *mon lean queer** Residing here for thousands of years

[joik chorus x 2]

Dearest politician, I realize it is late, let's have a discussion, or do you have too much on your plate? Caring for the environment, won't you be on our side, did you know that my people is committing suicide? You think of us as too small to exist, our issues as too obscure to end up on your list If you try to get rid of us, we will resist We've been here since time immemorial, and we choose to persist

Is this what they call democracy, the majority abusing us, what a travesty I've been looking for mental and physical freedom for so long, and, let's get one thing straight, I sure do belong A native empress The rainbow you see A snow lioness; All that is me

[joik chorus x 2]

Eamiálbmot, álo gávdnon, mon lean ledjonváibmu garra fámuin Mon lean gait, bonju maid, arvedávgi ravddas ravdii**

A native empress The rainbow you see A snow lioness; All that is me

[joik chorus x 4]

- * I am queer
- ** An indigenous people, we will never disappear
 With the strength of a lion's heart
 I am everything, both here and queer;
 a rainbow stretching from one edge to the one over there

Sáminess, featuring Jannok in a "how to" video for putting on the Sámi traditional dress, *gákti*, in 3 minutes 30 seconds (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGc7c8U2aps).

In a prose poem published within the CD booklet of *Orda – This is My Land* (on which "Snölejoninna" appears), Sofia Jannok provides a metaphorical explanation of these politics that observe various identity categories, yet argues for futures free of discrimination, oppression, and conflict. Thus, she argues for postintersectional futures. *Orda* is the North Sámi word for treeline:

The many, many trees are the ones creating the beautiful unity. Many of us live with several mother tongues, cultures, identities. Why isn't the norm shaped as a tree line? Put guns down, let's meet in peace. One world, different souls. Show me love. (2016)

Jannok writes about the tree line between tundra (treeless terrain) and taiga or northern boreal forest, particularly her love for "diversity of terrain" (2016). Musicking identity categories here, for her, is also love-politics because it is a plea for love (following Jordan 2003).



Fig. 3. Mäxida Marak. Photo credit: Petra Rönnholm.

Other activist Sámi musicians and musicking likewise focus on postintersectional messaging through politics of love. Before one of her performances at Tråante 2017, Maxida Märak (Fig. 3) commented in Swedish about Sámi and Swedish mainstream acceptance of gender diversity:

A man may love a man and a woman may love a woman and there are many [people who do so] here. And it's fine here. You could not believe that it was here so not so long ago, but I am not that old³ and I have still seen that change taking place before my eyes. ... And it has taken so many important people, women, and Swedish men. ... But here is so much love for and [we] show that we are all colors. We're a fucking rainbow. (Tråante 2017)

Märak went on to joik Saga Becker, a transgender actress engaged in the pride movement in Sweden and a dear friend of Märak's. For Becker, this person joik

was one of love. Märak joiked over an electronically generated music track in the dubstep genre. A rapper and singer in diverse styles, as well as a joiker and music producer, Märak told me in an interview, "It might sound cliché, but joik is definitely an emotion" (February 10, 2017).

A Märak example aimed at coalition building with general publics around LGBTQ+ rights is "Eanan" ("earth"), a joik and electronic music fusion track. The album on which "Eanan" appears, We Are the Halluci Nation, released by the Indigenous electronic music group from Canada A Tribe Called Red,⁴ advocates for the inclusion, empathy, and acceptance of peoples of diverse races and genders; Märak features alongside various Indigenous North American artists (A Tribe Called Red 2016).

Musical Postintersectionalities and Assemblages for Coalition Building in Mass Movements

Various Sámi activist musicians, such as Jannok, Märak, and the rapper SlinCraze, take up concerns of social status, including LGBTQ+ issues and bullying in their art (Maxida Märak, interview, February 10, 2017; SlinCraze, interview, February 23, 2017). Dance theatre artist Ada Einmo Jürgensen engages intersecting colonial oppressions, particularly shame about being Sámi during colonization and forced Christianization (Harrison 2019; Ada Einmo Jürgensen, interview, September 3, 2014). Parallel trends exist in Sámi multimedia art (Fuller 2015). All music-artists I interviewed for this article expressed that feelings of being put down as a Sámi and as someone "different" — due to social experiences and identities associated with oppression within majority cultures — frame their musical recordings and performances to general publics. When presenting intersecting identity categories associated with discrimination, these artists also resist the discrimination, with the express goal of moving society beyond it — to postintersectional futures. Their musical acts "plug into" social movements and their ideal futures, for example anticolonial, anti-bullying, and LGBTQ+ positive futures.

Jannok and Märak seek coalition building around the issues they musick and often via love-politics in which audiences from diverse backgrounds can feel included. Märak regards such coalition building as "the way to actually get more rights, to get more power, because when you start to invite people, and start to grab [their attention,] that's when people want to understand you and they want to help you. If I shut the door in their face and ... no, they will not like Sámis" (interview, February 10, 2017).

Postintersectional moves constitute an intentional strategy by musicians to "invite" (Marak, interview, February 10, 2017) listeners and audiences into and within social mass movements. These (would-be) allies and coalition partners come from diverse cultural, ethnic, political, social, and economic backgrounds. When listening to these Sámi music assemblages, audience members may resonate more with one component of the performance than another, for example, with certain values of a social movement, particular identities and/or musical sounds, as well as music types and music genres. The Sámi musicians engage multiple such identifications and their overlaps, densities (Andersen 2009), and fluidities with an aim to move beyond discrimination, and towards postintersectional futures. In my hearing, they musick politics of love and care to avoid or minimize hate, division, and oppression. Such performative acts, as Jannok sings, are ways of moving into "mental and physical freedom" (Jannok 2016).

Aesthetic and sonic aspects of music bring diverse listeners together across conflicts and differing backgrounds, values, and opinions. Ian Cross has written that music unfolds through "floating intentionality," which refers to a type of semantic indeterminacy that "permits specific, but not necessarily uniformly emotional experiences to peacefully coexist, and thus promotes accord" (Rabinowitch, Cross, and Burnard 2012: 485; see also Cross 2005). Musical performances thus include sonic elements — for example the rhythmic electronic music tracks accompanying Jannok and Märak's vocals or their voices themselves — to which audience members who don't necessarily resonate with political lyrics and descriptions of the Sámi music can respond. Audience response may be diversely emotional, psychological, and physical, for example, through muscular bonding (McNeill 1995) and congruent movements, such as when dance erupted in Märak's packed venue at Tråante 2017.

That Sámi activist musical sounds intentionally engage the listening and reception capacities of all kinds of people is a conscious strategy for making such invitations. Musical strangeness is minimized when music for social mass movements is made as sonically accessible to the greatest number of people as possible, through the use of diatonicism — particularly popular and folk music genres with diatonic tonalities. Majority languages of national populations (i.e., for Sámi, Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, and Russian) and English (which most Sámi speak) play central roles in these invitations to broad publics, either when making a verbal introduction to a joik or in being the language of lyrics within joik-fusion songs. Accessibility of musical sound allows listeners who wouldn't readily accept a political message in the music to nevertheless enjoy the music, and maybe consider its message.

From Power Joik to Bluegrass: Sámi Music and Environmental Movements

Music examples engaged with environmental movements are extensive across the Indigenous Arctic. Many popular songs for the general public address Indigenous land rights, including land ownership and use, such as for hunting and fishing. Other songs engage climate change and oppose natural resource extraction. Examples can be found in, among other genres, the power joik. The main distinguishing feature of the power joik is its functionality: power joiks are political Sámi joiks with a targeted purpose of political activism and resistance; whereas joiks with political messages have been heard in many contexts historically, power joiks are connected to specific movements and contemporary or recent protest events. As the Indigenous rights movement continues to gather momentum among Sámi, the power joik genre has bloomed, particularly in the last decade. Such joiks' contents are politically pointed, explicit, and forceful. The power joik is an anti-racist, anti-colonial, and anti-oppressive activist practice. Examples that I discuss below oppose colonial oppression and exploitation as well as devastating environmental impacts of climate change and mining. Power joiks extend a history of resistance joik, which proliferated during protests of the construction of a hydroelectric power plant on the Alta River, Norway, in late 1970s and early 1980s, and the long-standing use of joik as social and political commentary.

Power joiks may, in addition to their work towards political change, address people, places, animals, or events and serve other traditional purposes of joik (e.g., to act as an oral art form). A power joik may be any regional type of joik and is often a new joik. Power joiks are taught across ethnicities and cultures for use in political and social movements and, therefore, they are designed to be catchy, relatively simple, and easy to learn.

A 2016 power joik workshop given by Sofia Jannok in Umeå, Sweden, focused on teaching power joiks to the general public (Sámi and non-Sámi, Indigenous and non-Indigenous). During this workshop, Jannok used the joik and music video for "We Are Still Here" as an example (see https://youtu.be/EVH0jvnaIqU). Jannok taught the meaning of the joik by screening the video to workshop participants. Preceding the joik — which sounds from 2:58–3:28 and from 3:58 to the end of the song — the phrase "we are still here" repeats as the lyrics in the song's chorus celebrate Indigenous Peoples' presence, although the "still" implies colonial struggle. The song's other lyrics explicitly reference the erasure of Indigenous land rights (through the reading of a relevant court transcript and a lyric stating that laws are written by "thieves"); natural resource exploitation by settlers and corporations (e.g., with the lyric "dig out the

reindeer's land / Gold and iron, blood on greedy hands"); and violence against Indigenous women (Jannok sings that in the United States, 100 years ago, colonizers "[k]illed my sisters, cut their breasts away"; Jannok and Sunna 2016). The music video for the song presents an artistic collaboration of Jannok with Sámi visual artist Anders Sunna, and visually references such themes as settler occupation (with the graffiti "You have not been in this area!"), exploitation (with the spray painting of a rat king — referencing, for example, the German Rattenkönig which names people who live off others), and Sámi devastation (with the reindeer herder in gákti — but with a reindeer skull for a head holding a lasso as an open noose). The video also points to the activism of Sámi women, stencilling side-by-side representations of Sofia Jannok and Elsa Laula, founder of the first Sámi activist association in 1904. Similar to "Snölejoninna," in "We Are Still Here," the read, sung, and graffitied references to oppressions of Indigenous and Sámi Peoples are made to mobilize audiences to an alternative future, not to fester the "wounds" of these identity categories (Nash 2013: 19-20).

"We Are Still Here" is characterized by strong words and visuals. Audiences may wonder — as I did in the power joik workshop—to what extent "We Are Still Here" engages love for Indigenous Peoples; resentment, anger, and hate towards colonizers; or something else altogether. Jannok's poetic introduction of the *Orda* album states, "Here opposites come together, equally worthy of existing," but then, "Here the conflicts begin, if I fight the divisions" and "Here the storm gets its power" (2016). Puar's thinking on assemblage continues to be relevant here. As the piece struggles towards postintersectionality, it draws in affect especially feelings. As in the music video for "Snölejoninna," Jannok dances as she joiks in the "We Are Still Here" video. Puar's aspects of assemblage — from feelings and affect, to ontology evident in dancing, to tactility witnessed in the spray painting of graffiti on swathes of plastic wrap — are all engaged.

"We Are Still Here" — as well as the other musical examples discussed in this article — opens the possibility for listeners to engage according to their own (post)intersectional identities. Sámi listeners, for example, may identify differently with a joik depending on whether its sonic qualities are from their region or through other sonic markers. Joik as a genre encourages an experience of pan-Sámi unity (pan-Sáminess) despite regional variations. Jannok employs several characteristics of North Sámi joiking, such as a distinctive vocal timbre that involves noticeable energy put into pitches' higher partials. Jannok also uses joik elements common across Sápmi regions, such as the smávvásanit (including "he," "le," and "na") and, as annotated in Transcription 2, the asymmetrical repetition form of joik (here A A A¹ A²) and microtonal ornaments, particularly eighth-tone inflections indicated in the transcription with extended notation

(upwards or downwards arrows are added to the stems of accidental markings; all grace notes are microtonally inflected except for grace note 2, bar 10, and grace note 2, bar 14).

"We Are Still Here" opens a creative space between joik and dance music. Made from its recording on *Orda*, from 2:00, Transcription 2 shows the fusion of the joik vocal with pitched and unpitched layers of synthesizer, guitar, and drums playing often busy/fast dance rhythms. I hear the queer roots of electronic dance music but as popular music scholar Luis Manuel Garcia-Mispireta has written, even though this genre was "born" in LGBTQ+ communities, today's audiences often need to be reminded of that. One reason "for this absence is that history is written by victors: as [electronic] dance music became more mainstream and had more crossover success, the people writing its history followed the 'more relevant' threads into primarily straight, white, middle class environments, quickly forgetting about the more queer and colorful scenes that were still dancing and making music" (Garcia 2014).

Jannok commented on the power joik genre after she attended protests of the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris (COP21), underscoring the importance of teaching power joiks to all people. She said,

Transcription 2. The power joik – dance music fusion of "We Are Still Here." Printed with permission.









"When the voice of Indigenous peoples is silenced in official rooms, the joik MUST echo in civil society" (Såkie 2016). This sentiment relates to a second power joik that Jannok taught in the workshop, the monophonic joik "Gulahallat Eatnamiin" that is often taught and sung in Indigenous contexts in the Nordic countries.

The power joik "Gulahallat Eatnamiin" was created by North Sámi vocalist Sara Marielle Gaup Beaska (Fig. 4) to be sung by anyone willing to learn it, in protest of climate change. Through the streets of Paris in the 2015 protests, Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists joiked the composition together. In the 2017 workshop about power joik, Jannok introduced workshop participants to Gaup Beaska's joik. In a YouTube video (https://www.youtube. com/watch?v=H2LhBAi-Q8I), Gaup Beaska invites climate change activists to joik "Gulahallat Eatnamiin." She begins with a fervent anti-climate change speech and ends with a quote by Sámi cultural icon Nils-Aslak Valkeapää (known in North Sámi as Áillohaš): "Take a stone in your hand and close your fist around it until it starts to beat, live, speak and move." Gaup Beaska's climate speech, made in North Sámi with English subtitles, points out that the average temperature has already risen by 1.5 Celsius in Sámi areas. She says that if global warming is allowed to continue, "it means the end of us." She announces that these climate concerns are why she and others travelled to COP21 in Paris, "to try and affect the world's politicians to stop the destruction of the Earth and



Fig. 4. Sara Marielle Gaup Beaska in her gákti. Photo credit: Iris Egilsdatter.

instead begin to listen and speak for it" (Gaup Beaska 2015). The joik came to her when thinking of this context. In the video, Gaup Beaska joiks as she walks, in her gákti, through nature, to a river in which she picks up a round, white stone. She invites people watching to learn "Gulahallat Eatnamiin," then to film themselves joiking it, and to share those films on the Internet and social media. The major point of the Gaup Beaska joik (audible most clearly in the YouTube video from 0:44–1:31) is a postintersectional future where climate change is mitigated. For many Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous identity and environmental identity are inseparable (Clayton 2003: 45–46). Gaup Beaska asserts that she is musicking to avoid their extermination.

The power joik "Gulahallat Eatnamiin" also performs a Sámi postintersectional present by celebrating that colonial suppression of Sámi ontologies was unsuccessful and that those ontologies are still here. Various ways of being Sámi emerge through handicraft and joik, which colonial authorities heavily discouraged until the 1960s. Gaup Beaska wears her gákti dress with its regional and local-specific colours and style. Her regional North Sámi joik-style — celebrated through mass media sharing — is featured in this

piece, which includes the following: characteristic vocal placement emphasizing higher partials; non-diatonic pitch orientation; and what the (non-Indigenous) joik literature calls grace notes (which, in this case, number from two to six for each phrase of eight beats) and the raising of (two) pitches by an eighth tone. This traditional joik features typical yet ornate timbral variation made by subtly shifting the frequencies of long vowel sounds and held pitches (e.g., "lo" at 1:01-1:04 and most other long vowels). Another ontology sustained is a Sámi way of being with the earth, currently popular within pan-Sámi political discourse and environmental politics. Sámi studies scholar, Sámi language instructor, and politician Irja Seurujärvi-Kari told me that "Gulahallat Eatnamiin" best translates into English as "We Speak with the Earth." The title is a metaphor that draws a parallel between the earth as a being, and human beings (or other animals) as beings. In Sámi ways of thinking, the earth breathes like a person. The phrase "we speak with the earth," then, involves relating with the earth as a being. The relationality happens through sound and silence (Irja Seurujärvi-Kari, pers. comm., April 15, 2019). Thus, Gaup Beaska's postintersectional assemblage has, in addition to local, regional, and pan-Sámi elements, also material and non-human dimensions.

Maxida Märak also performs Sámi, Indigenous, and environmental affiliations threatened with extermination on her CD *Mountain Songs & Other Stories* and a pre-issue of two of its tracks, titled *Mountain Songs*. Both are collaborations with the Downhill Bluegrass Band based in Sweden. These albums, with their American-derived bluegrass settings, present regional Sámi elements, language, and joik. Like all the examples discussed in this section, the main language of both albums is English, suggesting an effort to reach global audiences.

Märak's musical activism seeks a postintersectional future specifically free of the damage done by mining to Sámi, Sápmi, and Earth and, implicitly, the related ontologies Gaup Beaska mentions. On *Mountain Songs & Other Stories*, the tracks "How Can You Sell What's Mine?" and "Next Step" take a stance against mining in Sweden. In "How Can you Sell What's Mine?," after asking that question, Märak's bluegrass vocal muses that we "[n]ever knew that generosity would be met with greed." "Next Step" specifically resists the mining of the largest iron ore deposit in Gállok, Sweden (the North Sámi name for Kallak), near Kiruna. The CD liner notes introduce the song with, "In Gállok we have seen greed taking over sense in men. Will it ever end?" The lyrics ask a greedy man what his "next step" is: "You dig a hole and take what you need; I bet you got a big market to feed." The protest bluegrass song sides with Sámi and environmentalists in an ongoing conflict about mining proposed by Jokkmokk Iron Mines AB, a subsidiary of UK-based Beowulf Mining PLC (see DuBois

and Cocq 2020). The lyrics also comment on how mining corporations can simply retreat after exploiting a local environment. Meanwhile, locals must live with the long-term environmental damage.

"The Mountain (Várre)," by contrast, considers the concept of mountain as home (Maxida Märak and Downhill Bluegrass Band 2014). On *Mountain Songs & Other Stories*, Märak presents "The Mountain (Várre)" in the regional language of Lule Sámi. Märak also presents two joiks of the Lule regional joiktype: one is Märak's daughter's joik ("NikeSunnas Joik") and the second is "Várálasj (Dangerous)." Märak explained to me how "Várálasj (Dangerous)" came to her:

I was sitting on my snowmobile, in very early springtime . . . and the whole landscape was black and white. I remember sitting on my scooter and thinking, "Wow, in the summertime this place looks so inviting, and so warm and so soft, and this time of year it's dangerous. It's pure danger here. If the wind strikes [in] the wrong direction, it gets me. I'm nothing out here. I'm so small." So then I started to joik because I really had this emotion: I could hear the wind, it was cold (no sun). Then when I came back to the [vehicle], I forgot about the joik because the feeling was gone. I wasn't in that landscape anymore. The joik disappeared from my head. And I was like, "Damn, I want to remember that one." It took me a couple of weeks and I went back to the same place just by accident because we were driving pas[t]. The joik came to me again, the exact same joik. Then I took up my cellphone, and I recorded it so I could remember it. That for me is just so typical for describing that joik is a feeling because if I'm sitting in here [in a café] I cannot feel that feeling. This is not dangerous. Here is a table, I'm safe here. They're making coffee back there. I can't get that feeling of something being dangerous and that I feel very small. So, the joik comes to you. That's when it's pure. I never sit down and try to figure out a melody. Then it's something else. Then we start to talk about singing. That's a song. (Interview, February 10, 2017)

This interview excerpt clearly describes a compositional process frequently heard about joik: an energy is "transmitted" to the joiker as sound which spontaneously emerges from the joiker as joik. "Várálasj Joik (Dangerous)" is a place joik. It vocalizes the essence of a mountain site that Märak experienced as dangerous, which echoes the dangers of mining protested in other tracks of

the album and clearly communicated to English-speakers through lyrics and CD liner notes. The pieces on *Mountain Songs & Other Stories* powerfully bring together Märak's Indigenous experience of place with the threats of resource exploitation. Märak's joiks are high-profile Sámi cultural expressions for the general public for a future free of a Gállok mine.

Inter- and Intra-Group Coalition Building and their Problematics

Coalition building between different groups — inter-group coalition building - becomes possible through musical assemblages that engage different and multiple identity constructs and subject positions. Through discursive and material components, feelings, affects, ontological shifts, and information, these musical assemblages are essential to building mass social movements; indeed, their "semantic indeterminacy" minimizes sonic strangeness while inviting the greatest number of listeners possible. Love-politics, such as asking, "Where is the love?" may be used to encourage audiences towards postintersectional futures that are the goal of much Sámi coalition building. Other sounds target specific musical in-groups, sometimes at the same time. Certain "entries into the sound world" (Moisala et al. 2017: 16) are not necessarily perceivable to non-Sámi, for example. Specific sounds of regional joik types, specifically of North Sámi (in the Jannok and Gaup Beaska examples) and Lule Sámi (in the Märak examples), could go unnoticed. Without Seurujärvi-Kari's explanation, cultural outsiders would not know the relationship of the power joik "Gulahallat Eatnamiin" to a pan-Sámi ontology and epistemology of nature popular in pan-Sámi environmental politics, which Gaup Beaska echoes (Irja Seurujärvi-Kari, pers. comm., April 15, 2019). The Lule Sámi words of Maxida Märak's bluegrass-joik fusion tracks remain untranslated in performances and in their CD liner notes: people who do not understand that language do not know their meanings.

Coalition building through activist Sámi music, then, happens through musical meanings understandable both to general publics and to Sámi from specific cultural areas. According to my interpretation, the latter enable intragroup coalition building; they can build coalitions among members of different Sámi linguistic and cultural groups. Some musical expressions have the potential to generate togetherness among individuals within the group, such as speakers of Lule Sámi through Märak's tracks. For another example, at Trånte 2017, SlinCraze rapped in North Sámi language while a band member displayed the Sámi flag (Fig. 5). A settler listener would likely not understand the rap's activist words and perhaps some would not perceive the Sámi flag as signalling pan-



Fig. 5. SlinCraze raps during a display of the Sámi flag at Tråante 2017 in Trondheim, Norway. Photo by author, 2017.

Sáminess. Lyrical contents close to the hearts of many Sámi (for instance about mining and climate change impacting multiple Sámi groups and threatening traditional Sámi ways and livelihoods throughout Sápmi), also build coalitions.

At the same time, coalition building may not always be successful: it may be partial or not what an artist hoped for. In Sámi communities and among joikers, some of the musical activism and its messages could be rejected due to debates about whether the musicians who perform new joik are authentic; those who learned to joik in childhood may be considered more "authentic" joikers. Furthermore, non-Sámi may hear joik as stereotypically "Sámi" and/or "ethnic other" if it is not (intentionally) cloaked in diatonicism. Approaches to music that dichotomize in- and out-groups have the potential to deepen ethnic and cultural divisions in society. For such reasons, politics of love can be powerful for coalition building. Love-politics embraces and includes. An open question is when the fusion of diverse musical genres, for example joik with techno, dance, and bluegrass, can be heard as a kind of love-politics. Is this not the sonification of a "diversity of terrain" (Jannok 2016)?

Intra-group coalition building can be undertaken in the same performance as building inter-group alliances. The former can facilitate important work towards decolonization. For Sámi, performing joik continues a revival of the

joik formerly suppressed during colonization (Hilder 2012); Gaup Beaska's joik revives Sámi ontology and epistemology, which were among other experiences of Sáminess suppressed during the colonial period; and Märak's joik and SlinCraze's rap respectively revive Lule and North Sámi languages, which suffered similarly. Since intra-group aesthetics are nested within artistic expressions for the general public, but often illegible to settlers, they have been called "fugitive aesthetics." Fugitive aesthetics are characterized by Indigenous studies scholar and artist Jarrett Martineau and writer Eric Ritskes as "a strategic motion of refusal: to evade capture, resist cooptation, and renew Indigenous life-ways through the *creative negation* of reductive colonial demarcations of being and sensing" (Martineau and Ritskes 2014: V). Fugitive aesthetics exist in Indigenous arts for public consumption, globally.

Intra-group coalition building can also mean building alliances between people from different Indigenous groups around the world. Some elements of Sámi activist songs cater to the international Indigenous rights movements. Examples include references to Indigenous oppression in Peru and the United States, heard in the English lyrics of "We Are Still Here." When Jannok joiks in the music video for "Snölejoninna," she moves in ways reminiscent of the fancy shawl dance of the Indigenous North American powwow, perhaps inspired by experiences she had at the protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock. The fancy shawl dance, in one interpretation, represents the opening of a cocoon from which a butterfly emerges, lending a beautiful meaning to her LGBTQ+ positive song.

It is also worth noting that any distinction between intra- and intergroup coalition building may be subject to blurring. For example, at Tråante 2017, an MC introduced anti-mining activist Maxida Märak with a joik that, he said in English,

is about a woman who took settlers who wanted to get all the silver and all the iron and whatever from all the mountains, so she took them on a little trip to the mountains. She had a torch in her hands [leading them to the resources]. This [the stage edge] is almost like the mountain cliff, and when you get here, if you have a torch, and you throw it in here, all these settlers will jump after [it] and die. So, this is how you defeat settlers according to joiks from the 1700s. (Tråante 2017)

After the MC's explanation in English, all Sámi and non-Sámi people present knew this joik's historical meaning. Sámi often use English as a lingua franca in

mass settings, among themselves, because Sámi and the national languages — Finnish, Norwegian, Russian, or Swedish—are not understood by all.

In addition, strategies normally used for intra-group coalition building can be adopted for inter-group coalition building through music. One example emerged in a joik workshop featuring president of the Norwegian joiker's association Berit Risten Sara that I organized for University of Helsinki students and faculty in 2017. Sara described how person joiks convey a joiker's sense of the essence of a person (Fig. 6). They also perform the joiker's relationship to and emotions about that person. Such relationality is important in establishing social bonds in Sámi communities; many Sámi people have their own joiks which are considered their personal property. Sara then joiked me. She included members of the university community in learning to perform traditional joiks such as this one. Inter- and intra-group coalition building through activist Sámi music unfolds through an array of creative strategies.



Fig. 6. Berit Risten Sara gives a joik workshop at the University of Helsinki, Finland. Photo by author, 2017.

Conclusion: A Postintersectional Perspective to Listening Assemblages

Listening to Sámi activist music and viewing music videos that convey intersectionality, when enacting artist intentions to move societies beyond them in a postintersectional spirit, holds potential for further scholarship of music vis-à-vis social movements. So far, music scholarship on intersectionality and postintersectionality has identified different identity categories present in musical expression, for instance race, gender, and sexuality (Berggren 2014; DeCoste 2017; Schippers 2000). It has not, however, tackled how activist musicians can practically move or hope to move their audiences towards postintersectional futures. By connecting Indigenous music to movements such as those supporting LGBTQ+ rights, Indigenous rights, and the environment, and by seeking resonance in many kinds of listeners, the Sámi musicians discussed in this article promote new futures, futures that are free from intersecting discriminations at the root of inequities of gender and sexuality as well as colonial and climate injustices.

In my analysis of Sámi musicking, I examined new joiks fused with techno, dance, and bluegrass as well as traditional joiks by Sofia Jannok and Maxida Märak for LGBTQ+ rights and against mining. I spotlighted power joiks by Jannok and Sara Marielle Gaup Beaska that support Indigenous land rights and oppose climate change. In many instances, these musicians use love-politics, expressing love and care for self, others, and the earth, which have the potential to diminish suppressing divisions in their audiences. I questioned whether fusing joik of Sápmi and diverse genres from elsewhere could sometimes be heard as a kind of love-politics embracing different musical identifications and sonic worlds among their audiences.

Within social mass movements, music audiences from diverse backgrounds can latch onto aspects of a listening assemblage that resonate most with them; at the same time, sound and congruent artistic expressions such as video and dance offer additional bodily, emotional, and psychological experiences. This builds inter-group affiliations whereas "fugitive aesthetics," discernable only to Indigenous cultural insiders, build intra-group coalitions. I have argued that listening assemblages that combine diverse identity categories together with affect, tactility, ontology, discursive information, and with material and non-human components move music audiences beyond sensing race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, class, or other identity categories as oppressive, discriminatory, and exclusionary. The intersectionality of musical moments becomes an asset and love-politics, a means of mobilizing others to postintersectional futures.

Notes

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- 1. Jannok and Märak tour and sell their music internationally as well as perform for Sámi and non-Sámi audiences in Sápmi and throughout the Nordic countries. This is clear in their social media posts (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) and my communications and interviews with them (Jannok, 2021, Märak 2021).
 - 2. There also can be a harmonic setting; see Transcription 2.
 - 3. Märak was born in 1988.
 - 4. A Tribe Called Red subsequently changed its name to The Halluci Nation.

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