



The nomadic landscape: People in a changing Arctic environment

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Abstract

The paper will explore the sense of place in the Thule district, Northern Greenland, including the emotional topography by which people live. The analytical framework is the notion of a nomadic landscape, drawing from the essay on nomadology by Deleuze & Guattari (2004). The nomadic landscape is constituted by a network of spatial centres – or points of reference – from each of which an infinite spa-

tial realm takes its beginning. The ambition is to demonstrate how, in a nomadic landscape, movement is integral to memory, sociability and experience; this is vital to the understanding of present day responses to the reduced mobility owing to changing weather and ice conditions in the Thule district.

Keywords

Arctic landscapes, climate change, hunting practices, Greenland.

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In this article the focus is on a community of hunters in the Arctic, whose livelihood is currently threatened by the changing climate and the concurrent instability of the sea ice, upon which both the hunt of marine mammals and the communication between settlements have depended. The idea is to show how the spatial orientation as combined with the seasonal variation of the life of the Arctic hunters enters into the current perception of the changing climate and its effects upon social life. My main observations are linked to the Thule District in northern Greenland, now centred on the town of Qaanaaq, inhabited by some 600 people who find their mobility increasingly constricted by the melting ice. While still vast by comparative standards, the landscape within which they have lived for generations is shrinking as is their room for economic and political manoeuvring.

In 1910 the trading station of Thule was established in northern Greenland at Uummannaq in the North Star Bay. The instigator was the Danish explorer and proto-ethnographer Knud Rasmussen, who had also taken the initiative to a mission in the same district the year before (Hastrup, 2006). He had first visited the place in 1903 and his explicit ambition was to help the Polar Eskimos (as he named them) make the transition from an isolated hunting community to a modern society – in the wake of Robert

Peary's prolonged sojourns there. The means were Christianity, trade, modern technical equipment, health care and local laws (Sand, 1935). The fur-trade was so profitable that it could help finance most of Rasmussen's seven Thule expeditions, among which the Fifth Thule Expedition (1921-24) – charting the links between the various Eskimo groups from Greenland across Canada to Alaska – is the best known to anthropologists (see for example Rasmussen, 1929).¹

The area in which Thule was established had served as the landing-place of several waves of immigration from the North American shores, in both prehistoric and historical time (Gulløv, 2004). When Knud Rasmussen and his party first arrived there after a northward crossing of the Melville Bay on sledge in 1903, he noted how: “among the Smith Sound Eskimos I met with some members of a foreign Eskimo tribe who had emigrated to the Cape York district, probably from the country round Baffinsland, a good fifty years before. They had become quite merged into the Cape York tribe, through wife-changing and intermarriage. They were generally taller than the Greenlanders, and of markedly Indian type” (Rasmussen, 1908: 23). A few of the original immigrants were still living, and he let the old Merqusâq tell his story about the breaking up of a small group of Inuit living ‘on the other side of sea’ who had

heard from white men occasionally touching their shores that other Eskimos lived across the sound. There was thus a living tradition of immigration, and the people of the district – who already travelled wide and far within it – thus lived within a wide horizon of movement and belonging.

The establishment of the trading station in 1910 induced the hunters of the area to congregate and to have their share in the profit, enabling them to maintain access to modern goods, for hunting as well as for domestic life. This is a well-known story, but in discussing present day movements of people in the polar region it is worth remembering the first wave of centralisation occurring in the Arctic, and to note the sequels as they unfold today. In terms of the seemingly innocent exploration of the Arctic, I would point to a statement made by Fabian (2000: 48) for central African explorations, namely that once stations – however scientific and friendly – were established, the political relations between hosts and guests changed; at the station: “exploration reached the end of the road and turned into colonization”. Thus also for Thule, being the last Danish colony to be included into the Danish-Greenlandic realm, and embodying the ancient metaphors of the far North (Hastrup, 2007).

Since then much has changed, but the challenges met by the Inuit at the time (or the Inughuit, as some would say today, if not simply referring to the North-Greenlanders) are of the same kind even today. People who are dependent on movement for their livelihood are now living in centralised settlements, necessitated by modern institutions like schools, medical care and the like and effectively implying an increased vulnerability in face of new climatic realities. In this article I want to highlight how people respond to changes through topographical activities, and how the actual engagement with the environment is a crucial factor in local reorientation and response to change. This is particularly pertinent in a region that has always been defined by shifting horizons, owing to moments of openings and closures partly beyond control.

Lived topographies: The spatial framework

“The experience of physical places and the journeys between them is one of the commonest underpinnings of the human being’s characteristic sense of living in a ‘formatted’ social space from early childhood and earliest memory” (James, 2003: 67; see also Hastrup, 2005). The formatting of the social space concerns social organisation and differentiation, grouping and individuality, and it

comprises evaluation and emotion – all of which combine into a particular space for orientation. It also implies a perceptual engagement with the surroundings that is critical to the conceptual ordering of space, and giving rise to a particular *sense of place* (Feld & Basso, 1996). Taking this point of departure in many ways echoes Casey’s (1996: 46) suggestion that: “as places gather bodies in their midst in deeply acculturated ways, so cultures conjoin bodies in concrete circumstances of emplacement”. Emplacement is a word we would like to remember.

Merleau-Ponty (1962: 254) suggested that: “Space and perception generally represent, at the core of the subject, the fact of his birth, the perpetual contribution of his bodily being, a communication with the world more ancient than thought”. While this may sound grand, the general point is really quite pragmatic, and simply implying that the features of texture, shape and fecundity: “provide a base line to our human lives, not only our pragmatic activities, but to our conceptual understandings of the organized qualities of differentiated space, and our orientation within it” (James, 2003: 213). In the high Arctic, this pervasive topographical communication with the world is closely related to the horizon of possible movements within it. Being ‘at home’ there is most certainly a matter of mobility – not stationariness (Rapport & Dawson, 1998). In Northern Greenland, being at home implied a constant orientation within an expansive area of potential hunting grounds, campsites and meeting-places – including an awareness of the lands beyond the immediate horizon. With centralization the horizon tended to shrink and even freeze.

The texture and shape of Arctic landscapes itself is a remarkable mixture of emptiness and solidity, of extremely sparse populations with long distances between them, intersected by massive gatherings and intense moments. The long seasons of summer and winter, the extreme temperatures and bursts of violent gales and snowstorms make life rather precarious. The slow rhythm of nature punctuated by sudden fissures related to natural events in the high latitudes demands an acute attention to the moment by everybody, lest the one seal of the week or the few days of spawning cod are missed. There is a sense in which the people must constantly be aware of the environment in its totality not to miss the salient moments.

This wholeness of impression and sensation likens the Arctic landscape more to a poem than a narrative, in the sense suggested by Bachelard (1994) when he speaks of the poetics of space. When the field of vision contracts due to winter darkness, snowstorm or mist, the power of the poetical image still affects people. Emplacement within

Arctic topography is literally towered over by geographical structures of such magnitude that there is no escaping from it, only a sensation of temporary emergence from topography – as subjects standing out from the landscape. In turn, this gives rise to a particular topophilia, defined by Tuan (1990: 4) as: “the affective bond between people and place or setting”.

This bond affects perception as an activity that immerses people into their environment. This immersion is carried out by all the senses; in modern society we have come to privilege sight and vision, and to rely very much on objects, boundaries and perspectives for orientation. In the Arctic, however, the visual field extends so far that it prevents space from being boxed in and organised into different distances and perspectives (Tuan, 1990). If only ‘seen’ it looks empty; truth evades the gaze, just as the landscape evades narrative, and confounds with poetry where no human-made structures or trees help providing a yardstick of scale. This, I hasten to add is still true in the age of satellite navigation, as recently shown for Inuit hunters of the Igloodik region (Aporta & Higgs, 2005).

Sizes and distances can only be ascertained in movement in such places. This stresses the point made by Tuan (1990: 12), that: “Perception is an activity, a reaching out to the world. Sense organs are minimally operative when they are not actively used. Our tactile sense is very delicate but to tell the differences in the texture or hardness of surfaces it is not sufficient to put a finger on them; the finger has to move over them”. Vastness and emptiness sometimes is a matter also of blocking out any distinction between land, sea and sky. It is not uncommon to experience everything as of one and the same greyish substance. Vision has to be supplemented by other senses (Tuan, 1990: 11). In the Arctic, tactility, sound and smell are extremely important, as reported in many recent studies as well. Feeling one’s way over a snow-clad surface, hearing the sounds of roaring or trickling waters, and smelling the winds all enter into people’s navigational skills. This again likens the Arctic landscape to poetry rather than epic. It is a landscape of such magnitude that it cannot be told, only experienced as a whole image, compressing vastness into intensity. This brings us to a question of scale.

In the Arctic, the slow breathing, the long seasons and vast expanses, sometimes violently broken by gales and snow that force the people to huddle together within the igloo, the stone- and turf-house or today’s modern house for days on end, contributes to a particular crossroads of moods and motivations, locating intention as much in space as in time. Moments of action insert themselves in periods of

collective hibernation, as it were, when people seek shelter from the torrents of ice and wind; when unpredictability reigns outside, condensed tradition is recycled inside. As noted by Boas in 1888:

Among the arts of the Eskimo poetry and music are by far the most prominent... Besides the contents their form also is very interesting, as most of them have been handed down in unchanged form and their narration demands a great deal of art. Many traditions are told in very abridged form, the substance being supposed to be known. (Boas, 1888 [1964]: 240)

Within this compressed poetical framework of landscape and tradition, people naturally move about and add their own, submerged stories to the space within which they find themselves. Recently, the story has become one of imminent threats to a well-established way of life; a dramatic narrative is beginning to infiltrate the timeless poem. But the lived topography still presents the world as a total social space, where hunting opportunities arise or disappear as the wind blows.

Arctic territories: The seasonal morphology of social space

There is more to living in the Arctic than poetry of course, but I wanted to alert you to a particular sense of place that cannot be described in exclusively natural scientific terms. It also presents a particular emotional topography (Hastrup, in press). What is more, geography itself is always in some sense imaginative, as Said (1979: 55) reminded us; in drawing upon received images and categories, in geography there is always: “something *more* than what appears to be merely positive knowledge”. In some ways, there is also something less, I would argue; when it comes to the Arctic, the ‘less’ has to do with the actual, locally perceived remoteness and vulnerability. In other words, the metaphorical qualities and the emotional values attached to Ultima Thule throughout the (perceived) ‘first’ European encounters with the Inughuit – representing “an extremity of the human race” in the words of Astrup (1898: 48), who participated in Robert Peary’s expeditions in the 1890s – were soon infiltrated by the pragmatics of the battle of existence, the day-to-day struggle for survival in a precarious environment. This exposed the ‘less’ of geography, and the stuff of anthropology, as I see it.

There is a clash of horizons going on in the early encounters, but my reason for drawing attention to them is not

simply to expose the historical asymmetries of the period, but to suggest – with Tsing (2006) – that even in a globalized world as we know it today, meetings and communications are always marked by an implicit or explicit sense of friction owing to the different frames and registers in which people speak. We cannot do away with that friction through simply relativization; in fact we may only aggravate it and complicate dialogue. A small example is provided by Tuan (1990: 34) writing about the northernmost people in general terms: “The Eskimo live at the Arctic margin of the inhabited world. They did not, however, know this until they came into contact with a large number of white men. Before the encounter they saw their habitat not only as the world’s geographical center but also its cultural and population center”.

Paradoxically, Tuan’s sympathetic attempt at relativising geographical knowledge has actually bypassed local understandings and orientations. While it is true that people always *experience* their world from their standing in its centre, it does not mean that they have no idea of their position in a larger geographical order. In the present case, it is significant that in 1888, at the time of the incipient scholarly interest in the Arctic, Franz Boas reported on the (mainly Canadian) Eskimo knowledge of the geography of their country in the following manner:

They have a very clear conception of all the countries they have seen or heard of, knowing the distances by day’s journeys, or, as they say, by sleeps, and the directions by the cardinal points. So far as I know, all these tribes call true south piningnang, while the other points are called according to the weather prevailing while the wind blows from the different quarters. (Boas, 1888 [1964]: 235).

True south invariably points away from the coastal habitat of the Eskimo to ‘somewhere else’, to lands beyond local experience, while the other cardinal directions are located in the everyday sense of weather and wind. The shared marking of true south is hardly a simple result of the colonial encounter; it is based in a firm knowledge about living on the northern edge of the world. On the whole, it has been widely documented how the migrating groups of Inuit have always had a well-developed sense of location and of geography and astronomy. And why not?

As indicated, seasonal changes implied dramatic shifts between open and enclosed spaces, peculiar to life in the Arctic. Expansiveness and free movement over vast stretches, travelling from one node in a vast network of acquaintances and relatives to another, is constantly cut

short by forced stillness within the confined space of the dwelling or the snow-blinded field of vision. In the words of Deleuze & Guattari, the territory is experienced as a unity where no distinctions are made between what properly belongs to and what simply relates to it; thus the forces of air and water are seen as forces of the territory along with soil and vegetation. They continue:

Moreover, although in extension the territory separates the interior forces of the earth from the exterior forces of chaos, the same does not occur in ‘intension’, in the dimension of depth, where the two types of force clasp and are wed in a battle whose only criterion and stakes is the earth. There is always a palace, a tree or a grove, in the territory where all the forces come together in a hand-to-hand combat of energies. The earth is this close embrace. This intense center is simultaneously inside the territory, and outside several territories that converge on it at the end of an immense pilgrimage. (...) Inside or out, the territory is linked to this intense center, which is like the unknown homeland, terrestrial source of all forces friendly and hostile, where everything is decided. (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 354)

The territorial expanse and indistinctiveness affords a peculiar prominence of intension in the Arctic, where the centre of the dwelling signifies the converging of inside and outside, and of long stories of movement and action with the moments of stillness and inaction. This also epitomises the social relationships, formatted both by extension and intension – and vastly complicating any notion of absolute marginality.

Marcel Mauss argued something similar already in 1906, if not in the same words. He spoke of a seasonal morphology, with scattered summer dwellings and larger communal gatherings in winter. While acknowledging variation, Mauss claims that:

It is generally true that the Eskimo have two ways of grouping, and that in accordance with these two forms there are two corresponding systems of law, two moral codes, two kinds of domestic economy and two forms of religious life. In the dense concentrations of the winter, a genuine community of ideas and material interests is formed. Its strong moral, mental and religious unity contrasts sharply with the isolation, social fragmentation and dearth of moral and religious life that occurs when everyone has scattered during summer. (Mauss, 1906 [1979]: 76)

The seasonal concentrations formed focal places within the entire Inuit area, places that have been found and explored also by archaeologists and ethno-historians (Gulløv, 2006). The opposition between summer and winter life – here used as a short-hand for the necessity of responding to matters of resources and seasonal environmental patterns of all kinds – is still a feature of life in the high Arctic, as is movement and awareness of both seasons and other people (see e.g. Stuckenberger, 2006).

The sense of belonging to ‘the margins’ was to some extent counter-balanced by seeking out each other. It was an important way of making sense of oneself; as Ingold (2000: 285) has suggested: ‘Making sense... lies not in the subjection of human nature to social conditioning... but in the involvement of whole persons with one another, and with their environment, in the ongoing process of social life’. With this in mind it is worth stressing that neither Mauss nor I want to suggest that life in the Arctic territories are simply determined by landscape and seasons (see also Bravo, 2006). While perception, movement and locality are closely inter-woven, the making of sense is still achieved by human agents. Topographical activities respond not only to physical demands but also to a sense of self and society – embedded in a particular territory marked by extension as well as intension.

Nomadic landscapes: The challenge posed by climate change

In view of the general points made above and not least in view of new modes of resettling people within the precarious Arctic environment, it is vital to keep in mind that environmental conditions always induced people to move about, either seasonally or more permanently. When travel takes over and dogs are as important as people in sustaining social life, the entire life world takes on a particular texture that by its nature subsumes sociality under a larger topographic vision of the world. This has profound implications for the present vulnerability of the Arctic peoples. In the most recent IPCC report (2007) it is once again stated that:

Previously, many Arctic peoples practised seasonal movements between settlements, and/or seasonally between activities (e.g. farming and fishing), and the semi-nomadic and nomadic following of game animals and herding. Today, most Arctic residents live in permanent communities, many of which exist in low-lying coastal areas. Despite the socio-economic changes taking place, many Arctic communities retain

a strong relationship with the land and sea, with community economies that are a combination of subsistence and cash economies, in some cases, strongly associated with mineral, hydrocarbon and resource development (Duhaime, 2004). The vulnerable nature of Arctic communities, and particularly coastal indigenous communities, to climate change arises from their close relationship with the land, geographical location, reliance on the local environment for aspects of everyday life such as diet and economy, and the current state of social, cultural and political change taking place in these regions. (Anisimov et al., 2007: 661)

The current vulnerability of the Arctic communities are thus related to their having always engaged directly with their environment as a *taskscape*. By introducing this notion in lieu of landscape we focus of *activity* rather than *form*; in other words, seeing the environment as a taskscape that is as part of the life-world of people, rather than a landscape or simply a surface upon which people move, also allows for understanding that all while performing their tasks – such as hunting, fishing, transporting – people also attend to one another (Ingold, 2000). In this world, skills and knowledge are two sides of the same coin: “the more skilled the hunter, the more knowledgeable he becomes, for with a finely tuned perceptual system, the world will appear to him in greater richness and profundity. New knowledge comes from creative acts of discovery rather than imagining, from attending more closely to the environment rather than reassembling one’s picture of it along new conceptual lines” (Ingold, 2000: 55-56). This would go also for the creation of new anthropological knowledge, one might argue.

Interestingly, this corroborates Rasmussen’s (1908) much earlier point that the Inuit are formed by the nature that surrounds them and that their finely tuned perception of the environment is the source of their wisdom. Rasmussen (1929: 33) even suggested that: “through the practical activities of hunting and gathering, the environment – including the landscape with its fauna and flora – enters directly into the constitution of persons, not only as a source of nourishment but also as a source of knowledge”. Knowledge is often thought of in terms of explicated propositions, but once again it is worth quoting Ingold to the effect that:

The differences between the activities of hunting and gathering, on the one hand, and singing, storytelling and the narration of myth on the other cannot be accommodated within a dichotomy between the material and the mental, between ecological interactions in nature and cultural constructions of nature. On the contrary, both sets of activities are, in the

first place, ways of dwelling. The latter... amount not to a metaphorical representation of the world, but to a form of poetic involvement. (Ingold, 2000: 57)

This double definition of dwelling finally leads me to the notion of a nomadic landscape. In their often-cited essay on nomadology, Deleuze & Guattari (2004: 420, original emphasis) claim that: “even though the nomadic trajectory may follow trails or customary routes, it does not fulfil the function of the sedentary road, which is to *parcel out a closed space to people*, assigning each person a share and regulating the communication between shares”. A sedentary landscape somehow encloses space and links it to a sense of territory in the sense suggested by Deleuze & Guattari (2004: 352), claiming that a territory: “is first of all the critical distance between two beings of the same species: Mark your distance”. We know how birds mark their territory by sounds, and we know how people all over the place draw boundaries – around their personal, familial or national spaces – by various other means. Sedentarism and territoriality go together.

By contrast, “the nomadic trajectory does the opposite: *it distributes people (or animals) in an open space*, one that is indefinite” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 420, original emphasis). In the far North, the territory in the above sense is relatively unmarked. In the polar North the Inuit migrated, moved apart, regrouped, and exchanged news and kinsfolk as a matter of course. This in itself makes a huge difference from living within more confined spaces, where territory is closely related to property rights and other well defined social relationships. Territorialisation is a precondition for the emergence of specialised functions, and ‘occupations’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004); in the Arctic, such are absent – or were until recently. People virtually lived in the same way as everybody else, and equally emplaced. Space, once again, capacitates people in different ways, and conversely, “space is an emerging property of social relationships” (Corsín Jimenez, 2003: 140).

The perceived lack of territoriality in the Arctic is related to both the expansiveness of the land and to the precariousness of living. People would leave surplus game under heaps of stone for others to take if in need, and they would share whatever they had with each other. There is a remarkable openness to travellers, reflective of the shared knowledge of the hazards of exposure to the landscape, and the sudden need for shelter. The directionality of narrative and travel is constantly punctuated by nature, forcing people to regroup and redefine the social space as a particular moment; conversely – we should never forget

that we are talking about the mutual impacting of place and social possibilities – place effects peculiar encounters and social events. The general point is that in a nomadic landscape, constituted by a network of spatial centres – or points of reference – from each of which an infinite spatial realm takes its beginning, movement is integral to both memory, sociability and experience. This has been widely documented in the anthropological literature on the Arctic. More acutely, it is also vital to the understanding of present day responses to the reduced mobility owing both to centralisation and to changing weather and ice conditions in the Arctic.

For the people living in the Arctic the environmental changes are not external to their lives. Their emplacement in a particular physical space is closely related to their perception of self and society, and survival has always been dependent on the ability to follow the resources, wherever they were. This is a general truth, of course, but it gathers momentum in the Arctic – literally, because survival was always dependent upon being able to move. As recently put by Csonka & Schweitzer in the Arctic Human Development Report (2004):

Human colonisation of the Arctic is comparatively recent. It started at least fifteen millennia ago. Since then, marked fluctuations of the environment, some of which have been at least as rapid as those predicted for current global warming, have regularly forced human populations to adapt. In such an environment, they had to perpetually fine-tune their adaptations, or risk dying out. There are many such examples in the archaeological and historical record. (Csonka & Schweitzer, 2004: 46)

In the same report, Csonka & Schweitzer notes how the current changes are not unprecedented. There has been a sense of ‘rapid change’ in Arctic societies ever since the late nineteenth century, when colonialism became massive. In the report it was also discussed how colonialism was actually just the first in a series of changes; Rasmussen’s Thule was but a first and relatively modest introduction of a new, and permanent node in the nomadic network in North Greenland. This first change has been followed by a second change of perceived ‘culture loss’ – in terms of a loss of language and other cultural expressions – and a third one of urbanisation. The general conclusion of the report is that: “Arctic societies and cultures are highly adaptable and resilient and thus well-equipped for integrating change” (Csonka & Schweitzer, 2004: 64). This is a process that has been witnessed also in Qaanaaq and beyond.

There are limits as to how far adaptation can be stretched; with the effects of global warming, we may reach these limits, because we are now facing a 'convergent catastrophe'. A convergent catastrophe implies that two or more collateral disasters work to produce a major crisis. The Inuit have already had to adapt to patterns of urbanisation, or at least to policies of settlement centralisation. This has deeply affected a people who used to survive by way of mobility. In general terms this made them dependent on a smaller number of resources; meanwhile some species of prey have come under threat on a larger regional or even global scale, and life has become precarious in a new way. While modern institutions may prevent people from starving to death, as they did in previous times, life on social welfare is not really a happy one. With the current climate changes the threats multiply (Nuttall et al., 2005).

In North Greenland, the hunters are of course concerned with the manifest changes in the weather conditions. The ice breaks up 'too' early, making seal hunting on dogsledges difficult, while the narwhal hunting in open waters was still too far off. Communication between the settlements in the district became difficult for the same reasons. Helicopters were the only means of transport in the period between the solid ice and the open waters. Even they were affected by the weather, because of more frequent snowstorms and foggy conditions. So there was a definite sense of a shrinking of space; the network of the nomadic landscape had all too few knots – as compared to the network remembered and narrated.

Given their habitual exposure to extremely varied weather conditions, the Inuit have always been astute observers of their environment. Through hunting and other activities, they assemble massive information on the weather, and process it in detailed descriptions of changing ice-conditions and other natural features (Krupnik, 2006). Attention to these perceptive skills is salient when dealing with environmental issues, and it has been established that the Inuit are acutely aware that: "the Earth is faster now" (Krupnik & Jolly, 2002).

With a convergent crisis, as the one the Arctic peoples are now facing, it is no longer a matter of perceiving, knowing and moving. People are stuck to an unprecedented degree as has happened for the people of Qaanaaq. The new unpredictability of the ice has limited both seal-hunting and communication. But not only are they stuck in space they are also stuck with new, global quota systems. Mobility is necessary for hunting and fishing practices, always displaying a strong element of seasonality. Seal, walrus, narwhal (and the lesser prey, polar cod and birds) not only belong

to different places but also different seasons. Hunting has been carried out in the same way for ages; thus, kayak and harpoon are still used for narwhal hunting. This is an ancient measure of local resource protection of which the hunters are very proud (Qujaakitsoq, 1990); and which actually date back to the Thule Law – first established in 1929, when the early effects of centralisation took their toll on the prey, and made a measure of explicit protection expedient.

Today, however, the living, *local*, tradition of protection clashes with a new scientifically based, *universal*, quota system (Sejersen, 2004). As they say up north, because people further south over-hunt – and do so in unacceptable ways – the people of the Thule district have to suffer the sinister consequences of new limitations on catch all while the traditional seasons of hunting expand or shrink according to species – and in consequence of climate changes.

Concluding remarks: The future?

By way of conclusion, let me quote a couple of paragraphs from the ACIA Report (2005), summing up some of the implications of the current climate changes in the Arctic (Nuttall et al., 2005: 685):

- Hunting, herding, fishing, and gathering activities provide the primary means for obtaining and producing food in indigenous communities. These practices have endured for over thousands of years, with cultural adaptations and the ability to utilize resources often associated with or affected by seasonal variation and changing ecological conditions.
- Arctic peoples cannot adapt, relocate or change resource use activities as easily as in the past, because most now live in permanent communities and must negotiate greatly circumscribed social and economic situations.
- Hunting, herding, fishing, and gathering activities are determined to a large extent by resource management regimes, land use and land ownership regulations, and local and global markets. The mobility and flexibility that indigenous peoples once possessed to move in response to shifts in the pattern and state of their resource base is no longer possible.

In view of these challenges, the main challenge of globalization becomes one of dealing with climate change in a way that pays heed to local, often very local needs at various points of the nomadic network, as well as local

perceptions of the place in which they live. In Qaanaaq I was again and again met with the statement that the village was doomed: "In ten years, we are no longer here." People are acutely aware of changes in the environment and climate, but they also have a strong memory of having coped with massive changes before. Climate, therefore, is but one agent in a complex pattern of mutually constitutive causal agents in local change. Coping or not coping with climate change depends as much on national political developments, and on politicians down south who (from the northern perspective) do not know the extent to which social life and sense of place are interwoven; and secondly, resilience is closely linked also with international policies on species protection that cannot take the fine-grained nature of local knowledge and local needs into consideration, but tend to even out the quotas on a mechanical basis.

The nodal points in the nomadic network of the people in North Greenland may now extend far wider than before, opening up the world of global connection. Yet, the locals are much less in control of their movements and possibilities than they used to be. In view of this, people are remarkably patient in their prolonged state of social intension, while waiting for 'summer' and for a renewal of their immersive relationship to the environment.

Note

1. I am using the term Eskimo when citing authors for whom this was the generic term for the Arctic populations of Canada and Greenland. Today the term Inuit is often the preferred term, when indigeneity is stressed.

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