# A Companion to the Anthropology of Europe

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# CHAPTER 3

### Nordic Reflections on Northern Social Research

#### Hugh Beach

This chapter provides an introduction to some of the more pressing concerns of contemporary social science research in the North. In the pages ahead, points will be illustrated from cases derived primarily from the Nordic countries, while contrasting and confirming cases will be drawn from a much broader base. What follows is an anthropological discourse derived from qualitative data and field experience, making no pretense at representative sampling procedures or the stringency of quantitative data methodology. It is hoped that the discourse of patterns and trends will prove to hold validity that transcends the regional confines used to introduce them.

This effort to address social science issues and research will deal largely with so-called (and so-contestably-defined) indigenous peoples (Kuper 2003) and their relations to the environment both as encultured space, landscape (seascape), and also as what we in the West would define as "resource," a dis-encultured, and despiritualized, concept of so-called "material substance" needed for food and other material goods. Despiritualized lands are the more easily plundered, despiritualized animals the more easily commoditized for wealth rather than just sustenance, and the more we despiritualize our world, the more too we despiritualize ourselves. Hence, it is plain that we are dealing with variable views of the universe and humankind's place in it, as well as with the concrete policies and regulations controlling access to it or allocating it among those given access. Equally plain is the fact that in today's world no adequate description of Northern conditions and no attempted description of any of its native peoples can be remotely considered without involving the dominating presence (even when present at a distance) of the ambient, "White" majority (Csonka and Schweitzer 2004).

Finally, it should be emphasized that just as social science study in the North is generated through the relations of various peoples and cultures, indigenous and immigrant, minority and majority, peripheral local and central removed, rural and urban, so is there a decidedly relational aspect between the pursuit of social

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science research and the pursuit of natural science research. While some might claim that it is of no significance to the specific "truths" discovered by natural science research *per se*, there is no denying that the mere activity of natural science research, its funding, its inclusion or exclusion of local participation, and not least the policy impacts of its results, have significant dimensions for indigenous peoples, some of them liberating, many of them, unfortunately, colonizing. It will not only affect how they live (often with improvements) and where they live, but also how they think, how their cosmologies are affected and how they identify. These are certainly social matters, many of which we still barely understand.

Social science research among peoples of the North is flourishing as never before. At least three relatively recent major developments are arguably responsible for increased interest and activity in Northern social science. First, globalization has brought with it growing mutual awareness and collaboration among the indigenous peoples of the North. Second, the dissolution of the Soviet Union has opened the Eurasian continent all the more to Western researchers (even if the wealth and democratic freedoms of the Western world have reciprocated poorly in the hosting of Russian scholars to carry out social research in northern North America and Europe). Third, the threats posed by rapid climatic change have opened the coffers of politicians and the eyes of scientists eager to use funds, previously scant, to protect Northern landscapes and their inhabitants. Yet, the same climatic changes, estimated to occur with twice the speed in the Arctic as they do in the world in general (Broadbent and Lantto 2009:341), which have brought about the melting of glaciers and Arctic sea ice, have also opened the door to the exploitation of new mineral and oil resources, together with new transportation routes. These have predictably stirred a rash of economic and geopolitical interests often (but not at all always nor in every respect) counter to those of Northern local inhabitants, particularly those of indigenous origin. Social scientists sometimes eagerly rally to, and sometimes find themselves unavoidably dragged into, the fray, as the goals of environmental protection, ethnic and cultural indigenous rights, and national economic and political interests butt heads.

Adopting a wider historical perspective, and thereby shifting the scale of what we might consider as relatively recent, one should not fail to recognize that compared to the habitation of indigenous peoples in the North, the huge influx of peoples from the core, with their dominance of governance, law, social welfare, education, resource exploitation, and all the other accoutrements of colonization (much of it a boon to those impacted), is of recent origin. The creation of the new nations of Canada and the United States must be regarded in this wider historical frame as part and parcel of the same European blitz. We need only consider the languages spoken today by the peoples of the northern regions of the so-called New World. Besides the variety of indigenous languages spoken by them, the inhabitants of lands stretching along at least one half of the circumpolar rim speak also, and sometimes only, a European language, notably English. To the east, with the Russification of the Eurasian continent, we see an analogous situation, but one which, from an indigenous perspective (for better in some respects, or worse in others) has followed its own course with variable colonial intensity according to a number of radically shifting ideologies.

Paradoxical as it may seem, cutting across all these themes has been the continued decolonialization of the anthropological discipline – at times optimistically but

mistakenly believed to have been completed with the mere removal of European colonial regimes from the lands they have ruled in the South – which has brought with it the recognition of, and inevitable debates about, traditional knowledge as opposed to any other knowledge. Not surprisingly, the anthropological discipline has become immersed in a hermeneutic revolution about how we interpret, evaluate, and present any such knowledge, the so-called data of our science, be it traditional, Western, phenomenological, or otherwise. As with the struggles over accessibility to and usage of concrete resources of the sea, of the land, and their subsurface riches within the indigenous/colonial context, so are there struggles over the authenticity of tradition, whose voice can represent it, who "owns" traditional knowledge, what it actually might be, and if its content can be separated from its original purpose while still maintaining its traditional status (Krupnik and Jolly 2002). Is, for example, the knowledge of ecological relationships couched in cultural myths, structuring the identity of a clan group or supporting the survival of its youth by teaching useful skills by oral traditions, really the same so-called Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) when used to produce skin creams for European markets?

The mere facile appendage of indigenous data on to the scientific repertoire fails fundamentally to embrace the essence of indigenous knowledge. So-called "indigenous knowledge" may not be uniform among, or universal to, indigenous peoples, but it often comprises far more than scientifically proven, ineffectual superstitions on the one hand, or detailed and accurate environmental observations on the other; it often contains deep understanding of the balance required by humankind to maintain a place in nature. Most importantly, it can hold a metamessage for us beyond the scientific truth of its details, through a purposiveness perspective dedicated to the survival and veneration of life/spirit which goes beyond that of any human ethnic group or any species alone, to embrace the Whole.

Obviously, these issues are not confined at all to Arctic social science. The Arctic, like every region of the world, hosts unique cultures and ways of securing a livelihood, but it also shares many of the same basic general trends of social change and social problems with the rest of the world. Many differences will be matters of degree rather than kind, and yet, due to the unique confluence of elements of extreme temperature ranges, geophysical location, and vulnerability of biotopes composed of relatively few species, Arctic environmental degradation and its social impacts will tend to adumbrate developments elsewhere, later.

#### COLONIALISM, YESTERDAY AND TODAY

With the partitioning of the northern regions of Europe, Asia, and North America into various nation-states, native peoples as well as immigrants have come to be ruled by different legal frameworks with different policies of resource access and allocation. Peoples united by culture and livelihood have been divided by national borders and colonial policies. Some states, for example, have come to reserve reindeer-herding rights for their native minority alone, the Reindeer Herding Act of 1971 (Sweden), while others have shunned any racial criterion in favor of an eligibility system linked to ownership of land. One finds many different criteria for herding eligibility, even

distinctions made between reindeer herders and reindeer owners, and a variety of definitions specifying who qualifies as a native under the law. The resources tapped by hunters and fishers will commonly fall under regulatory regimes quite distinct from those controlling pastoralists. This latter group owns real property, and hence domestic stock (lending to the term "stock" a social, and not merely a biological significance), whereas the animal resources of hunters and fishers are not owned until killed or caught (Paine 1971; Ingold 1980) and hence are commonly considered "wild" even if their future harvest, their kill or catch quotas, might be commoditized, owned, and sold (Einarsson 2011). As one might anticipate, the negotiations between environmentalists and resource users can have a distinctly different character depending on the status of the resource in question. Owners of domestic property are prone to enjoy legal protections which the hunters of a wild resource might not, as wild animals are generally thought to be totally within the environmentalist domain. Predators, especially, epitomize the wild no matter how managed their every movement, their reproduction, and survival, in a globalized world traumatized by the awareness of rapid climatic change and environmental degradation. Native minority policies of different countries have evolved, often over hundreds of years. With increasing population growth, globalization, global warming, discovery of oil in Northern regions, and increasing conflict over Northern resources, the laws governing ethnic definitions and the regulation of livelihoods accruing to them, evolve all the more rapidly along paths blazed by their fundamental, though often conflicting, premises.

It would be simplistic to view colonialism merely as a dominating "Southern" or "Western" agent exerting its will upon protesting "Northern" victims. Nor does the character of any constraint or possibility remain fixed; possibilities will shift with time and context and become constraints in different ways in different degrees to different parts of any local population. Indigenous peoples, like everyone else, will adapt to change and adopt creatively, internalizing some of the colonizers' ways while repudiating the rest. Unlike the situation for many other indigenous peoples, the native peoples of the North American and European circumpolar rim find themselves within highly developed First World nations that espouse the doctrines of democracy, liberal market economy, social welfare ideology, and solidarity with international covenants on human rights. While the core principles of these same practices and ideals can certainly be found within traditional indigenous societies, the inclusion of these societies as minority subunits in the frame of the far larger ambient society and nation-state will necessarily change the conditions of power and all variable relations. As external social categories become created and imposed upon other groups by intercultural contact, be it by colonization or any more benign form of globalization, and as resources become allocated according to them as the result of new pressures and possibilities, forms of allocation according to traditional social categories become shifted. A resulting new array of winners and losers, and subsequent new divisions, will be generated internally and unavoidably.

Indigenous peoples might certainly bemoan the (forced) loss of traditional ways on the one hand while demanding the right to develop (voluntarily) with new technologies and education on the other. This is no different from the song sung by people in general; the distinction between what is forced and what is voluntary is not always easily drawn, even for an individual, and all the more so for a group. Yet,

when sung by indigenous peoples, this refrain often arouses deep indignation among members of the dominant society. The indigenous are accused of wanting their cake and eating it too – an understandable and not always unjustified attitude by members of the dominant society – for the "cake" often involves special rights over land and resources which the nonindigenous, many with long generational depth of permanent local residency, do not share. During the last 50 years (especially since the discovery of vast oil and gas resources in the North), social science in the North has been very much concerned with consideration of what is, or should be, the indigenous "cake." The degree to which this question is considered to be ruled either by national historical legality (e.g. treaties or courtroom precedent) or by newly devised political policies varies among the Northern nations, and also within each nation over time.

Nonetheless, the last half of the last century witnessed the birth of the Sámi parliaments, the revision of Sámi herding laws, the establishment of Greenlandic Home Rule (and more recently Greenlandic Self Rule), the creation of Nunavut (and other comprehensive land claims acts in Canada), and, in the United States, the passage of the Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) for Alaska. The Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, (RAIPON) born as the Soviet Union dissolved – since 1993 officially called the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East of the Russian Federation – has been exceptionally dramatic and, especially at first, surprisingly effective, although beset with the most dire conditions following upon the abandonment of Soviet infrastructure. Social scientists have been active both in the processes involved in the creation of these milestones and in following the impacts these changes have generated.

Of course, such proclamations and land-claims settlements do not erase by any means the ongoing debates and struggles over resources in the North. They do shift the balance of power of certain forces, and they do introduce some new and important players with new rules of negotiation. In the last decades of the twentieth century, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, much of the European map was reshaped and Cold War power structures were realigned. The reach of the central authority of the Russian Federation, emanating from Moscow, cannot be maintained with the same force following the withdrawal of Soviet infrastructure and economic support from the more isolated interior regions and the far-flung borderlands. State-run collective farms have been closed or abandoned to fend for themselves, and the populations of the small towns and villages these state farms once sustained have either been decimated or forced to accept heavy industrial resource extraction and ravaged landscapes. In Alaska, extensive areas given protection as parklands under one regime come under new threat of exploitation as protections are lifted by the next regime. In Sweden, court cases contesting the immemorial right of Sámi herders to utilize winter grazing on lands in forested areas owned by settlers have become frequent, since the state has to date refused to pass general legislation on Sámi resource rights (as opposed to the rights of herders) and still will not ratify ILO Convention 169 concerning indigenous and tribal peoples in independent countries. Article 14 of this convention supports indigenous peoples' ownership claims to land. Instead, in 1993 the Swedish state confiscated, without due process or just compensation, exclusivity of Sámi small-game hunting rights, on the grounds that game was in sufficient abundance for the state to assert a parallel hunting right and to sell its

own licenses. The Sámi have fared far better in Norway during the last decades, among other things with the acceptance in 2005 of the *Finnmarksloven*, the Finnmark Law, in which the state specified the resource rights of the Sámi while at the same time securing the well-defined rights of non-Sámi in the Finnmark area.

Although indigenous land claims have become increasingly respected, even if by no means fully settled, in the North, further influx of Southern peoples, further globalized integration, and recognition of the worldwide holism of environmental impacts have led to an unavoidable (and easily exploited) condition whereby environmental concerns – including those misguided in good faith, or even purposefully falsified or exaggerated – trump native rights. Indigenous peoples generally share the unenviable position of being pressed to the wall by colonial policies, economic rationalization, and market integration, with ensuing commoditization of their own cultures and lifestyles, only to find themselves being accused of being ecological "fallen angels" who therefore do not warrant the special resource privileges once accepted to preserve their traditional cultures and sustainable environmental relationships (Beach 1997:127).

#### CONCEPTIONS OF ETHNICITY

A burning issue in the North (as elsewhere) concerns the criteria by which one is to identify the eaters of the "cake," that is, to identify those considered to be members of the group that is recognized to possess special land and resource rights. Within this realm of discourse, the Nordic nations hold to a relatively peculiar position. In Norway, Sweden, and Finland the Sámi constitute the sole autochthonous indigenous people. When considered from the bygone perspective of a Danish colony or protectorate, Greenland is also the domain of one indigenous people, the Greenlanders. Today Greenlanders on the home front are politically active in the quest for statehood rather than equitable treatment as a minority or disempowered indigenous group under the control of others (Nuttall, personal communication 2011; cf. Nuttall 2009:295). The immemorial rights of land ownership or use for indigenous peoples might not be recognized to the full degree of their original conception by the dominant societies of the Nordic nations today, of course a hotly contested matter of interpretation, but the complexity of the legal issues controlling such rights is made yet more problematic by the superimposition of claims of a number of different indigenous peoples (perhaps but not necessarily using different resources or the same resources differently) for the same lands. Situations like this are not unusual in North America or Eurasia with a great number of indigenous peoples. In the case of Iceland one can question the validity of the indigenous/colonizer distinction at all, for in a sense all are indigenous, while by other characteristics, none are. In either case no special rights result.

When defining the holders of special indigenous rights, Sweden, Norway, and Finland have been moving away from the kind of essentialist models used in many other countries where people are identified for eligibility according to forms of biological inheritance. For example, access to resources rights of the Sámi in Sweden (notably the practice of reindeer herding) has been, and largely still is, determined

by congenital credentials of "Sámi ancestry" (see the Reindeer Herding Act 1971). Until 1971, sex could also figure into the equation, for a Sámi herding woman who married a non-Sámi would lose her right to utilize Crown grazing lands, although a Sámi herding man who married a non-Sámi would not. Essentialist criteria such as these, acquired at birth and impossible to change, can take a number of forms - variable blood quotients, for example - and can also be combined with other kinds of criteria for resource use. Residency in defined areas is a common criterion for resource use, as is also the historical practice (with variable degrees of generational depth) of a particular form of livelihood. Until 1993 the right to herd reindeer in Sweden could be held only by those of Sámi ancestry who also had a parent or grandparent who had herded as a steady livelihood. This latter constraint formed a kind of phase-out clause over the generations, especially when combined with government policies of structural rationalization of the herding industry (Beach 1983). Its purpose was to reduce the number of herders to accommodate welfare ideologies for improved living standards for herding families. By reducing the number of herders, the number of reindeer available to each remaining herder within the total allowable limit would increase as would, it was thereby argued, the herders' living standard. The phase-out clause received severe international criticism, for it hindered Sámi from the right to pursue cultural traditions as specified in the United Nations Covenant for Civil and Political Rights, ratified by Sweden. This livelihood criterion was revoked with new legislation which established a Swedish Sámi parliament (Sameting), but little on this score has changed in practice, since the demand to adhere to total allowable herd-size limits for each designated year-round grazing zone gives those herders already members of the group permitted to graze there, so-called sameby members, the ability to close out those that seek admission. In effect, arguments of environmental sustainability are invoked to control Sámi livelihoods and hence govern Sámi cultural sustainability even though the reindeer-grazing resource itself is not otherwise utilized. It is the mineral deposits over which the grazing grows, the electricity-producing rivers which flow through the grazing lands, and the forests which dot and merge with them which cause modern states to show such concern for (the control over) Sámi reindeer grazing and accruing rights.

The establishment of Sámi parliaments in Norway 1989 and Sweden 1993 (Finland had one in place about 20 years earlier) finally forced the states to consider a true definition for Sámihood. The Sámi parliaments are organizations for the representation of an ethnic group, with an ethnically based electorate. Hence there must be criteria defining who is a Sámi, not merely a definition stating who can herd. The bestowal of rights on those of Sámi ancestry fails to address the more fundamental question of who is Sámi. From whom can one count Sámi ancestry? In reaction to the terrible genocide of the Second World War, Nordic countries have generally been opposed to ethnic registration in any formal documents. In Sweden, for example, while old church books have records of those listed as "nomads," people who were therefore surely Sámi as opposed to the expanding settled Swedish agrarian population, such distinctions have been blurred over and, for a long time now, not maintained. There is no record permitted in the Swedish census concerning ethnicity of any kind. Security measures against ethnic negative discrimination, however, also block positive discrimination, and Sweden has found itself in a difficult position when

designing policies concerning its Sámi parliament and defining the Sámi electorate. This dilemma underpins the move away from ascribed to voluntary ethnic designation, while for the category of voluntary designees, new forms of ascribed nonessentialist criteria are devised to hinder the registration of so-called Sámi "wannabes" as opposed to the enforced essentialist ascription of "gottabes."

In the spirit of Nordic harmonization of Saami policies, the governments of Norway and Sweden (following the Finnish precedent) have instituted a combination of subjective and objective criteria defining those Saami who, if they so desire, can register themselves to vote in their respective Saami Parliament elections. In order to join the Saami electorate, one must feel oneself to be a Saami (subjective criterion), and one must have used the Saami language in the home or had a parent or grandparent for whom Saami was a home language (objective criterion). In Norway the descent requirement was extended in 1997 to at least one great-grandparent. (Beach 2007:10–11)

A couple of concrete cases have tested the possibility of someone lacking Sámi ancestry to transit to sufficient Sámi identity classification to gain the right to herd reindeer on the basis of cultural competency (for example learning to speak the Sámi language), but to date success for wannabes has been limited when it comes to access to or use of resources. While the objective criterion (language proficiency) for Sámi parliament electorate membership has proved to be so vague as to be satisfied by the most minimal degree of competence, and thereby to be hardly distinguishable from the subjective requirement (feeling oneself to be Sámi), the Swedish state will not confer reindeer-herding rights on someone with only a constructivist form of Sámi identity, lacking any biological Sámi ancestry. However, it has proven sufficient to gain entrance into the Sámi parliament electorate. This in turn has caused the recent development whereby members of the existing Sámi parliament electorate have gained the option of questioning the Sámi credentials both of wannabes and even of other current Sámi parliament electoral members (Beach 2007).

The number of herding Sámi constitute only about 15% of the Sámi ethnic group, and one can expect that the Sámi parliament will, over time, increasingly reflect this proportion. Hence, as the Sámi parliament comes to gain increasing responsibilities over Sámi-related issues, so too will the non-herding Sámi assume greater power over Sámi affairs. The gradual shift toward more constructivist sway over Sámi political power probably carries with it greater acceptance from the ambient majority population for special Sámi rights as a matter of cultural preservation. Yet it also carries with it the danger of further loss of historically based Sámi land rights, which today are linked almost exclusively to reindeer herding and legislated on the basis of an essentialist ancestry criterion.

The case of the Sámi in Sweden is but one of the many varieties of ways in which group categorization (such as ethnicity) is correlated with special resource rights in the North. With the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, native-American residents of 12 demarcated regions were made shareholders in their respective regional corporations. According to this scenario, while future native generations might inherit corporation stock, their native status and residency are not in themselves sufficient to become a stockholding member of the regional corporations.

Russia presents its own mix of criteria and formal census list for determining which groups qualify for the legal status necessary for special resource rights. Such criteria determine where those who qualify can access such resources and how they must utilize them in order to maintain these rights. Besides residency in specific areas, and the pursuit of a traditional livelihood, population size is also an important factor in this equation. The maximum size of a population to qualify for status as one of the so-called "indigenous small-numbered peoples of the Far North, Siberia and the Far East," and thereby be given special rights, is 50000. Yet, what we in the West might class as indigeneity might be neither necessary nor sufficient for a family in the forests of Siberia engaged in a traditional lifestyle to enjoy special resource privileges (Donahoe et al. 2008). The interpretation of the regulations and the emphasis given to any of the criteria mentioned can be quite variable from region to region when determining resource use.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, new policies were introduced for all citizens of Russia so that ethnic identity was no longer to be noted in newly issued passports. Yet, according to a wide array of ordinances, ethnic categorization remains determinative for access to and utilization of natural resources for numerous indigenous peoples in designated areas of the country. For many elderly people, old and even invalid passports might come to serve the vital purpose of establishing ethnic identity, but this is not an option for the young or for those obtaining passports for the first time. The matter of justifying or denying special resource use for individuals claiming indigenous heritage in Russia is handled in a variety of ways, often involving ethnic designation registered on birth certificates by parents, or sometimes by community consensus and membership in ethnic heritage societies with adherence to distinctive ethnic cultural idioms and their performative resurgence and reinvention (Beach et al. 2009).

#### POLITICAL ECOLOGY

Issues concerning resource rights, conceptions of ethnicity, and so-called traditional ecological knowledge, all of which are cultural as well as material, from the local to the global, are enveloped in spheres of power and lend themselves, therefore, to the rapidly developing anthropological subdiscipline called political ecology. Of course, studies of political ecological content have been ongoing long before the term was coined. There has been no dearth of studies related to struggles for resources both material and cultural, the exercise and distribution of power, indigenous rights or environmental protection since the dawn of social science. Enlightened academic discourse has moved to overcome much of colonial bias, Western bias, and to some extent, gender bias, even if these linger and are all too evident in a real world. Features of Northern indigenous struggles for resource rights can range from the well-intentioned but misdirected efforts of some external NGOs to the worst of suppressive national minority policies and brutal armed conflicts, fostered not infrequently by ruthless international economic organizations. Yet, with the advent of rapid globalization and the perception of rapid climatic change in tandem, there has

been a change along the western circumpolar rim in the premises of negotiation with respect to the resource "cake," notably land.

With all the bells and whistles alerting us now to climatic threats (that have actually been impending since the industrial revolution) to the survival of our species, it is little wonder that the social sciences, and Arctic social science in particular, have become preoccupied with practical matters concerned largely with issues such as resource sustainability and social resilience. Both of these concepts, sustainability and resilience, relate to the management of change, and both are predicated upon the recognition of some entity, be it an ecosystem, a species, or a society, by whose fate we are to measure the success or failure of such management. The core premise of ecological consciousness, however, rests upon the realization of the complex relations of hierarchically embedded survival entities. Each individual species, any survivaloriented entity, at any level, is also a part of a larger organism, ecological system, or so-called unit of mind (to use Batesonian terminology), and hence, any narrow focus for sustainability or resilience on one part of the system alone is not only theoretically bogus, but also likely to jeopardize the relations within which the part is embedded, resulting in unsustainability for its most immediately encompassing environment and thereby paradoxically, but naturally, for itself as well.

In systems of hierarchically and embedded homeostatic "units," adaptive change on one level occurs to keep unchanged more primary relationships (Bateson, personal communication 1971). This raises immediately the question at what level resilience is sought. What is the unit of purposive survival? This crucial political and moral question, the recognition of which forms the sine qua non for approaching the problem, is often camouflaged by a misconceived devotion to pure science and the notion that one need simply note the rise of temperature to understand that it must be brought down. But for whom? How far down? At what expense? From whose pocket? While some Northern natives have launched an initiative to lobby for "the right to be cold," in the effort to maintain traditional livelihoods, others sense positive effects by a slight temperature shift which might, for example, increase access to subterranean ore deposits. In the Greenlandic case under self rule, the Greenlanders should be positioned to draw advantage from access to "thawed resources" which their Inuit brethren in Canada or Alaska might gain little from in relation to their losses (Nuttall 2009).

It might be argued that scientists should not engage in such questions and should not promote the survival of one group over another. It can also be claimed that to the scientist such positioning becomes meaningless when all embedded units will surely perish in the furnace if the continual temperature increase is not reduced. Yet, when humans discuss ecology, we must be upfront with the admission that we are primarily concerned with our human survival within this complexity, and far too many of us are more concerned with the survival of our nation, group, ethnicity or personal comforts for which thousands of other humans (not to mention whales or gorillas) might be sacrificed to misfortune or death with lip service given to ecological concern.

Cultures have bravely faced extinction before, nor is this the first time that humankind has seriously reflected on the end of its kind or even of all species by flood or fire and brimstone. These thoughts of The End are not new, but the ways in which humankind perceives it, the moral retribution read into it, or the possible role of human agency to avert it can be quite different and far from uniform. To those who hold an animistic worldview, there may be comfort in the knowledge that modern systems theory supports astounding similarities of worldview. Even if couched in different metaphoric language, both ancient epistemologies and much of cuttingedge modern science hold that should the human experiment fail, the world will still turn, and the astounding relational integration between that which constitutes supposedly "dead" atomistic material and "living" evolving organism will still prevail. According to this view, the miracle whereby life is created out of dead matter occurs each time we consume food. Speed of informational feedback is not necessarily of prime significance to the measure of adaptation, evolution, and other forms of communication which constitute the life principle in any logical sense. Life, like matter - or rather with and in matter, for the two are inseparable - has never been created nor can it be destroyed. It might be more appropriate to conclude that if and when matter was created, so in that instant was life in its most rudimentary form. What has evolved since the origin of our universe was not the eventual spark of life, but rather the ever increasing complexity of relation of the mind-matter unity. Yet, many indigenous people feel that the enlightened truths of modern science go unheeded by most of modern people who find themselves in a spiritual "Dark Ages" where God, not humankind, has been expelled from Eden. To make matters worse, modern Western science powers an enormous propaganda machine, and launches massive missionary activity which, intentional or not, generates an understanding of the world devoid of immanent spirituality.

Reflections like these may seem totally misplaced in a scientific essay, but they are relevant to our discussion of social science research in the North. We must try to grasp alternative cosmologies in terms that make sense to us, not only as strange superstitions that make sense to others. How otherwise can we possibly perceive what we are really asking non-Christian, non-Western, indigenous persons who see no distinction between God and his *ongoing* creation when we question their perceptions of climatic change, their understanding of such change, and suggest what they should do to help counteract it, or what externally imposed human regulations they should accept to "save the environment"? Informants who have grasped such meanings have already converted to our scientific ideology of disjuncture between humankind and nature. We assume their complicity in the belief in a true lack of divinity in the agency of world change.

On the spiritual level, the moral imperative of rationalization obviates the role of the Animal Masters. It is no longer they who give freely or perhaps withhold whimsically; it is we who take according to our own ecology. *Our* ecology, even if supposedly sustainable, is dramatically distinct from any ecology dreamed of as universal or abiding to the holistic morality of equity among the purposive "needs and greeds" of all species. (Beach and Stammler 2006:16)

For many Northern indigenous peoples following traditional lifestyles and adhering to traditional worldviews related to hunting and gathering and reindeer hunting or herding, the process of rationalization within the paradigm of sustainability and scientific perspectives on "ecology" implies a positioning of humankind in the world

which is fundamentally different from their own. Immersed as we are in our own worldviews, we can be unaware of the ideological pressures imposed on others by our vision of ecology.

The biases of our own scientific epistemology are commonly hidden under the appeal to "pure science," which might better be termed the "capitalistic ecological metaphor." According to this metaphor, one should live off of the "interest" of any resource, without tapping its "capital." While useful at times to strike a rudimentary point against overuse of resources, by its reduction of politics and its moral issues to mere arithmetic this metaphor is useless in helping to navigate the treacherous waters of political ecology. It is a kind of vulgar ecology, for there are an infinite number of long-term sustainable ecosystems that can be promoted in a given region; which, is a political question. Supposedly, if one follows the capitalist-metaphor rule of thumb, nature (or whatever ecosystem has been targeted by human purposiveness, for example "wetlands") will be sustained. However, in this monetary metaphor, even if amounts of it change, money is a qualitative constant. One is sustaining it, increasing it or depleting it. However, a balanced bank account says nothing about the content of your investment portfolio. Most importantly, ecosystems do not work this way at all. In whatever way they are being preserved or utilized and to whatever degree, they also thereby alter character (not just quantity; Beach 2004:122).

If we pursue this metaphor further, we find that it is not only inadequate, but that it also promotes a most unhealthy ecological condition, that which occurs when the precept of economic rationalization is added to the arithmetic equation. Its most destructive manifestation can be witnessed in the Nordic countries with their highly centralized governments and developed welfare ideologies, as these assert the rationalization paradigm on indigenous livelihoods, notably reindeer management.

Rationalization is the prescriptive ideology that one should use resources fully in order to provide the greatest benefit to users (humans) as long as one does not thereby endanger the continuation of this process. Logically, wastage, according to the precepts of rationalization, becomes synonymous with *not* being utilized for human benefit if it could be, without injuring sustainability. It is wastage if a deer which could be killed, without injury to the sustainability of the deer species, is not killed for the benefit of humankind. It is against the precepts of rationalization if grazing is not utilized (sustainably) which could have nurtured that reindeer. If "sustainability" means do not overuse, "rationalization" means not only do not overuse, but also use maximally up to the ceiling of sustainability. (Beach and Stammler 2006:15)

Note that rationalization is not simply a new, independent concept, but the necessary logical conclusion and practical solution to the capitalistic metaphor of resource sustainability when no restraints are imposed on the sustainable *development* of the resource *user* category. Rationalization positions resource use at the brink of overuse. Unless social mechanisms are in place to react swiftly and with force enough to curb a runaway depletion of resources, for example grazing depletion due to a runaway population increase of reindeer, sustainability is forfeit. It is a scenario as logically compulsive and potentially as destructive as the renowned tragedy of the commons. Yet tragedy of the commons differs from rationalization tragedy in significant ways. The former is driven by the cumulative maximizing schemes of individual players,

while the latter is commonly fostered by a centralized authority. The former builds off of an acceptable condition, until it has gone too far, whereas for the latter the situation (i.e. even the *under*use of resources) is unacceptable to the authorities until use has expanded almost too far and teeters on the edge of unsustainability. In the former case, social mechanisms to circumvent tragedy have often evolved within the society of users, while in the latter case the players look to the promoting centralized authority for the implementation of controls (and are on the one hand often disappointed by their lack, or on the other hand infuriated by the permits, quotas, or restructuring of property imposed upon them).

Most significantly, the individualistic strategies of property ownership under the paradigm of the tragedy of the commons make no pretense at environmental sustainability, whereas the rationalization tragedy paradigm includes this goal as part of its manifesto. It is all the more tragic not only for perching the resource category of users it is designed to benefit on the brink of overuse. Should this user category increase to the point where the need for acceptable living standards pushes members beyond sustainable use (not necessarily through increasing numbers of consumers, but through reduced flexibility by any means of the relation between consumers and resource capacity), then it can also impose mechanisms to address the problem and to redistribute resources and access to them from above. While one must recognize that the problems borne of resource and consumer pressure are not necessarily caused by the rationalization paradigm, which is, rather, devised to relieve them, and even traditional indigenous mechanisms for adjustment can be a painful and bloody business, the mechanism imposed by a strongly centralized state according to its own welfare ideology has hardly evolved within the society of users themselves, is of colonial rather than native social fabric, and of necessity therefore is open to purposive aims for the use of those same resources which extend beyond indigenous sociocultural benefit.

As its name implies, the research of those involved in the political ecology of the circumpolar North concerns the relations of power over the resources of Northern landscapes. Such resources are not simply material, but are also anchored in the historical, symbolic, and epistemological ways of knowing the world and constructing oneself as a social being. Not only are we interested in the physical realities of industrial encroachment in the North, we are very much concerned with the *discourses* employed by extractive industry, local people, those granted by various criteria "indigenous status," and environmentalists. The circumpolar North provides a fascinating comparative field, for on the one hand it encompasses enormous variation with respect to legal systems of resource governance, while on the other hand it is an area which still maintains in part and to degrees an epistemology essentially different from that of our own western, urban norms.

#### DOMESTICATING THE WILDERNESS

Ownership rights to land or rights to land resource use for indigenous people (variously defined) are often predicated upon physical remains or landscape alteration as proof of land occupancy according to specific degrees of intensity and time. However,

should the indigenous "footprint" be considered too large, they face exclusion from their traditional landscapes according to the self-righteous environmental concern of the empowered majority. For indigenous peoples, finding a sustainable space between the existential mark for resource rights without triggering environmentalist condemnation can prove difficult. Moreover, any such position once found, can never be secure, as the laws and lobbies which frame it are themselves often in motion.

The justification often invoked by colonial powers for denying special indigenous resource rights has commonly hinged on the concept of "terra nullius," alluding to land "untouched by humans" even when human habitation (by non-Western humans) has been recognized. The simple concept of land as "untouched" not only conflates a number of analytical possibilities but also rarely does justice to the historical context of the term when coined. One can argue for a distinction between (i) untouched meaning never even trodden by human feet; (ii) untouched in the sense that humans may have walked over it but departed, having left (supposedly) no trace at all; or (iii) untouched in the sense that human presence is to compare with that of birds and bears, an impact which composes rather than opposes (or scars) nature. Naturally, the categories are not necessarily firmly bounded. As noted, colonial powers employing the concept of terra nullius have commonly been interested in demanding "proof" of land-use and occupancy for granting land claims, evidence of land use in the form of fixed alteration and enduring human impact, indicating sustained resource extraction. Weightier than the mere matter of being "touched" or not has been indication of human "progress," a point which, after all, was thought to distinguish humans from animals. Increasing recognition of indigenous land rights and various forms of protection for indigenous landscapes since the latter half of the twentieth century has not merely resulted from better acquaintance with traditional forms of indigenous land-use; there has also been a marked change in the criteria by which states entertain such rights and grant such protective status.

There has been a strong trend toward the acknowledgment of cognitive rather than simply physical human-land relations, together with international harmonization of policies. The dramatic proliferation of World Heritage Sites, bestowing protected status on areas of unique natural or cultural value from a global perspective is one example. Another example is the bestowal of protected status on land areas which host identified and mapped religious sites. This has forced some indigenous people whose sacrificial sites are considered desecrated if revealed to "sacrifice" some sacrificial sites to the public domain in order to protect the lands containing other undisclosed sacrificial sites. A current and most extreme case is the granting of protected status to certain land areas in Russia where it can be demonstrated that particular places figure in traditional indigenous folklore. Opponents of the new policy claim that it has brought about a proliferation of supposedly traditional placeoriented folklore. Authenticity becomes a vital point in the negotiation of such policies, but with the realization that almost all land "touched" by human presence at all has figured in authentic folkloristic motifs and naming traditions, one can speculate that the decisive point for the bestowal of protected land status will most likely in time come to settle on the evaluation of what might be termed the "continuity of memory," that is, memories with unbroken pedigree of authenticity. In this case, the cognitive aspect of landscaping, like naming practices, comes to share the same

sort of dilemma as that discussed above concerning material resource usage and observable environmental "footprint." While landscaping is recognized as a creative cultural process, establishing legal claims, too much creativity can become counterproductive.

At the root of this dilemma seems to be the flawed concept of "wilderness" as that utmost realm of nature which embodies a primeval condition of lands bereft of both cognitive name and human physical impact. We can easily imagine wilderness as composed of millions of other species, but when it comes to humankind we mark a halt. Other primates may be VIPs of the wilderness world, but somewhere along the evolutionary path from hominid to human we have excluded ourselves. Admittedly we are distinctive in many ways, but if both wilderness and humankind are encompassed by nature, than wilderness must hold commonality even with humans. If nothing else, this discussion must underscore that the concept of "wilderness" is indeed precisely a concept, a *human* construct. Human attempts to preserve it and manage it, especially when trying to do so without allowing for human presence, become absurdly futile.

As one might expect, with world attention turning northward to the threat of melting ice and the lure of thawing riches and new transportation possibilities, pressures mount to harness Northern resources under various flags. Just as, predictably, the various nations will collaborate, not so much with regard to limiting the environmental impacts of what they take, but with regard to the relatively small areas they are willing to exclude from exploitation, Northern residents worry that the carving of parks and nature reserves out of nature, in the effort to shield fragments of the natural world as symbolic icons of the pristine, is in fact nothing other than a new form of colonization. It constitutes a domestication of lands which, as in so many previous cases, will lead to their commoditization as tourist goals. When forced to keep their traditional livelihoods operational at low-tech, low-income levels to avoid (purported) stress to the environment, indigenous peoples will come to sustain their societies increasingly through external subsidies in return for their environmental compliance. In effect, maintenance of both landscape cognitive continuity (and spirituality) and also a legal right based on the continuity of usage becomes commodifized through state support (perhaps in time international support, for example, by "elevating" indigenous residents to the status of World Heritage Site "Rangers"). Just what it is that constitutes a subsidy, what is actually subsidized, and who the recipients of such subsidies should be, are elusive, as they are grounded in our perceptions of what we consider to be nature's norm, or the way things have the right to be.

What can be termed here as a domestication of a wilderness with respect to land is precisely analogous to the domestication of "wild" animals like the wolf when, as mentioned above, their every movement, their reproduction, and survival, become matters of human legislation. In fact, so stubborn is the essentialist, self-contained perception of wolves as wild, that when Sámi herders are forced to feed them reindeer without interference, the compensation provided the herders for their lost reindeer is often conceived of as a subsidy to reindeer herding. More logical would be to class it as a subsidy to wolf herding (Beach 2004), for under Swedish wolf governance, the destruction they cause is no longer an uncontrollable act of nature, but a conse-

quence of human legal construction. The wolf may be unaware of his domestication by such process, just as parklands might be conceived of as unaltered in their pristine nature by the regulations that enclose them, but in fact, both have been changed to their core and, in a sense, domesticated.

My general point is that in order to understand the determinants which influence a herder's knowledge, desire, and practical ability to implement any given form of livelihood, one must grasp his or her situation in a broad social context, encompassing not only the given family's own economy, but also the economic situation of one's herding partners, the economy of the sameby (a Sámi social and territorial grazing unit) in question as well as the relative labor capacities of these units. The combined determinants of herding law, taxation policy, predator policy, and other regulatory constraints on the one hand, combined with the possibilities occasioned by such things as new technological developments and government catastrophe aid for starving reindeer on the other, shape the variable responses of herders when it comes to labor investment and animal-handling techniques. For example, among the Swedish samebys, there is a wide variety of methods to drive reindeer, and even within a single sameby different herders hold widely different philosophies about what is stressful for the animals. On the collective sameby level, the gradually advancing implementation of the wage system funded by membership herding fees has resulted in greater labor efficiency, but also altered settlement patterns and, on occasion, increased herding extensivity (meaning less control over and contact with the reindeer), loss of skills, and reduced internal sameby solidarity. We have at hand discourses of indigenous rights, welfare policies, environmental sustainability, biodiversity, collective labor solidarity, rationalization for increased efficiency, maintenance of traditional skills, and humane animal care. In comparison to these discourses, awareness of rapid climatic change has been sudden and by its nature globally compelling. Not only will rapid climatic change itself alter the physical living situation of Northern indigenous peoples, but its power as discourse integrates in various ways with the delicate alliances and contentions which constantly develop among the major discourses noted above.

For example, despite obvious differences, there are also close parallels between what happened in Sweden following upon the Chernobyl disaster of 1986 and what we encounter today with rapid climatic change. While both are very real, they are also subject to dramatically variable perceptions and interpretations making politics out of what is to be considered nature or natural enough. Swedish Sámi herders might never have known about the effects of Chernobyl, or been made to feel them, had it not been for the scientists who informed them, tested their reindeer meat and read values off of strange instruments. In the first slaughter season after Chernobyl, reindeer meat was to be confiscated in Sweden if it held cesium-137 at a concentration above 300 Bq/kg, while in Norway at the same time the confiscation threshold value was 6000 Bq/kg. What does either value really mean with respect to human health? The following year, Sweden raised the marketability level of reindeer meat to 1500 Bq/kg. Herders who had meat in the freezer from the slaughter season before Chernobyl submitted that for testing too and found that it was already above the 300 Bq/kg limit due to the atmospheric nuclear bomb tests in the Soviet Union during the 1950s (Beach 1990). How long had global warming been going on before we became (at least somewhat) aware of its impact? Where should we position the thermostat of our worries?

Climate change will bring new pressures to bear on the relationships between ethnic groups, their forms of land-use, and what the majority ambient population is willing to accept as "traditional" and thereby warranting special rights. Are indigenous peoples to become barred from access to their traditional resources and land "privileges" because climate change forces them to alter livelihood? Key to this moral discourse on land-use is the variable interpretation of Sámi immemorial right. Do Sámi have an immemorial right to herd because their ancestors herded on the land, and an immemorial right to fish in a specific lake because their ancestors fished there (the Swedish model)? Or is it not a generalized right to use the land used by one's ancestors as one pleases, with the same ability to be entirely flexible as they had been? (This latter interpretation has been applied by the Norwegian court in the Black Forest case.) Exactly how and to what extent the Sámi have used the land are issues raised during the famous Taxed Mountain case in Sweden (Supreme Court verdict 1981), and they have only gained in importance with a rash of new court cases contesting immemorial right.

The increasing scope of human power, heated by population growth and rapid technological change – occurring at a rate far faster than that of rapid climatic change - gives humankind the potential to do more than ever before to the environment even if it chooses not to. Regardless of whether or not this power is actually exercised in fact, even if it is exercised to remove specific regions from forms of human influence (for example, by the creation of parks, nature reserves, or World Heritage Sites), nonetheless it signifies a form of human colonization of the world. The condition of the world becomes increasingly a matter governed by the exercise of human choice. Even when the choice taken is one for environmental preservation, either with a "hands off" policy (forcibly removing people from their homelands) or all the more with policies of active repair, wilderness becomes tamed. It becomes our nature preserve, our environment. Ironically, the very struggle by which we attempt to preserve our environment and maintain sustainable systems envelope the world in yet further forms of control and modern forms of colonization. Perhaps the best we can do for the world is nothing different from what we can do for ourselves as individuals. We must accept our certain demise, someday, but with neither despondent resignation nor with manic environmental restorative fanaticism. Instead, we must first learn to appreciate our world as it is today and can become, even with the demise of our species tomorrow.

The perspective captured in the photograph of the earth, the Blue Planet, from a manned vehicle in orbit in outer space has been regarded as the starting shot of the global environmental movement. A necessary companion of this photo and the environmental movement it has fostered is carried in the positioned perspective of the photographer who took it. In a sense, it is the culmination of humankind's evolutionary path, which, once put in orbit, embodies significance no less profound than the Copernican Revolution. While we have known forever that the fate of humankind is in the hands of the World, we now perceive that the fate of the world is in *our* hands. Both perspectives are inadequate. Without the humility to match the hubris inspired by technological feats such as human planetary orbit, this "new" perspective, new in

evolutionary time, can become the ticket to ultimate colonization and the destruction of both ourselves and the environment. Still, the end of humankind is decidedly not the end of the World, and there could be no more exciting challenge to the evolution of life forms and the Whole in which they are embedded than if humans could come to exercise the self-control and the wisdom necessary to live on.

#### NOTES

1 Some of the thoughts presented here have developed from the remarks I made at the IPY meeting in Oslo, 2010 and recently published in the newsletter of the Arctic Studies Center, Smithsonian Institute under the title "When Push Comes to Shove: The Political and Moral Discourse of Rapid Climate Change."

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