



**European Research Council  
Consolidator Grant, 2017-22**

***Arctic Cultures:  
Sites of Collection in the Formation of the European and American  
Northlands***

**Project Workshop 1  
Knowledge Formations and Colonial  
Encounters in the Arctic**

**9-10, January 2020**

Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, CB2 1ER

ARCTIC CULT is a research project funded through an European Research Council (ERC) Consolidator Grant awarded to Richard Powell. The project investigates the construction of the Arctic that emerged from the exploration of the region by Europeans and North Americans and their contacts with indigenous peoples from the middle of the sixteenth century. During the exploration and colonisation of the Arctic, particular texts, cartographic representations and objects were collected and returned to sites like London, Copenhagen, Berlin and Philadelphia. The construction of the Arctic thereby became entwined with the growth of colonial museum cultures and, indeed, western modernity.

The project is delineating the networks and collecting practices involved in this creation of Arctic Cultures. It involves research at museums, archives, libraries and repositories across Europe and North America, as well as in Greenland and the Canadian Arctic. ARCTIC CULT aspires to establish new understandings of the consequences of colonial representations and decolonial processes for debates about the Circumpolar Arctic today.

This workshop is part of a series of research events organized as part of the ERC Arctic Cultures project. It brings together team members, leading international experts and interested scholars into dialogue around the themes of the project. The focus for this workshop specifically is to examine the co-production of Arctic knowledge formations through encounters between indigenous inhabitants and non-indigenous actors. Presentations will draw upon empirical research and theorisation to investigate spatial formations of the Arctic and the role of Northern actors and institutions.



## **Workshop Organizers**

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## **Conference Registration**

There is no cost to attend the conference but prior registration is required. Please register at: <https://arcticculturesworkshop1.eventbrite.co.uk>. Registration will close on 16 December.



## WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

Day One: Thursday 9 <sup>th</sup> January 2020	
10:45am – 11:15am <i>Temporary Gallery</i>	<b>Arrival &amp; Registration</b> (Tea & Coffee Served)
11:15am – 11:30pm <i>Lecture Theatre</i>	<b>Welcome &amp; Introduction</b> Richard Powell and ERC 'Arctic Cultures' team
11:30am – 12:30pm <i>Lecture Theatre</i>	<b>Keynote</b> <i>Framing a 'Natural Region' and Forming 'Arctic Cultures'</i> Richard Powell (Geography/SPRI, University of Cambridge)
12:30pm – 1:30pm <i>Lecture Theatre</i>	<i>Observing the Observers: Suersaq's Ethnography</i> Nanna Kaalund (ERC 'Arctic Cultures')  <i>'Kalli on the Ship': Inughuit Abduction and Disciplinary Formations</i> Peter Martin (ERC 'Arctic Cultures')
1:30pm – 2:30pm <i>Temporary Gallery</i>	Lunch
2:30pm – 3:30 pm <i>Lecture Theatre</i>	<i>Between the Museum and the Field: Locating the Affordances of the Pitt Rivers Museum's Siberian collections</i> Jaanika Vider (Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, University of Oxford)  <i>The Arctic Air Route and Dorset Culture in the 1930s - the Cambridge Connection</i> Jonathan King (Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge)
3:30pm – 4:00pm <i>Temporary Gallery</i>	Tea & Coffee
4:00pm – 5:00pm <i>Lecture Theatre</i>	<b>Keynote</b> <i>bush/theory: indigenous cultural politics in the arctic</i> Peter Kulchyski (Native Studies, University of Manitoba)
5:00pm – 6:00pm <i>Temporary Gallery</i>	<b>Drinks Reception</b>



<b>Day Two: Friday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2020</b>	
9:30am – 10:30am <i>Lecture Theatre</i>	<b>Keynote</b> <i>Emerging Landscapes: Geosocial Relations in Thule</i> Kirsten Hastrup (Anthropology, University of Copenhagen)
10:30am – 11:00am <i>Temporary Gallery</i>	Tea & Coffee
11:00am – 12:30pm <i>Friends' Room, SPRI Library and Polar Museum</i>	<b>Practical Sessions</b> <i>Maps, Objects and Images of Arctic Formations</i> John Woitkowitz (ERC 'Arctic Cultures'), Johanne Bruun (ERC 'Arctic Cultures') and Alex Partridge (Polar Museum)
12:30pm – 1:30pm <i>Temporary Gallery</i>	Lunch
1:30pm – 3:00pm <i>Lecture Theatre</i>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Northern Co-Ordination and Research Centre as Nation-building Project</i> Pamela Stern (Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Frazer University, Vancouver, BC)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Planning the Arctic Welfare State: Decolonization and Improvement in Greenland</i> Søren Rud (SAXO Institute, University of Copenhagen)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>On the Credibility Gap in Arctic Research Governance: What Counts as 'Evidence'?</i> Pitseolak Pfeifer (Inuit Solutions, Ottawa/Iqaluit)</p>
3:00pm– 4:00pm <i>Lecture Theatre</i>	<b>Closing Discussion</b>



## ABSTRACTS

### **Emerging Landscapes: Geosocial Relations in Thule**

Kirsten Hastrup (Anthropology, University of Copenhagen)

Thule is known as the home of the Inughuit, and as the point of departure for Knud Rasmussen's seven Thule-expeditions. The name first referred to the Thule trade station (1910) and by implication to the entire region of Avanersuaq ('the Big North'). Later it gave name to a prehistoric culture unearthed by the Fifth Thule Expedition (1921-24) and, more ominously, to the Thule Airbase in 1952. In this talk the name serves to facilitate an analysis across historical periods and to discuss particular geosocial relations and their implications for knowledge formation. The argument is based on historical sources and contemporary fieldwork in the region.

### **Observing the Observers: Suersaq's Ethnography**

Nanna Kaalund (ERC 'Arctic Cultures', Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge)

The majority of nineteenth-century exploratory missions to the Arctic included Indigenous peoples, many of whom worked as translators and intermediaries between the expedition and encountered peoples. Yet, Arctic Indigenous peoples were typically framed as unknown others, the objects of the European gaze; a purposeful strategy employed by the European explorers to position themselves as Arctic experts, and erase the multi-directional nature of encounters. This erasure, however, was disrupted by the publication of *Memoirs of Hans Hendrik*, by Suersaq (known as Hans Hendrik). Suersaq was an Inuk explorer from south-west Greenland, who worked as part of four expeditions towards the North Pole. As part of his travels, he encountered foreigners from many national and cultural backgrounds, and was originally also a 'stranger' himself in north Greenland. This paper is an intervention into the history of the human race sciences, as I interrogate Suersaq's ethnographical work in North Greenland.

### **The Arctic Air Route and Dorset Culture in the 1930s – the Cambridge Connection**

Jonathan King (Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge)

Happenstance, rather than purposeful planning, is often the context for discovery and new ideas. During the 1920s Diamond Jenness (1886-1969), anthropologist and curator in Ottawa, proposed from a casual find, a new mysterious ancient culture from eastern Nunavut, Kingait or Cape Dorset. Named the Dorset Culture, the makers of these non-Inuit artefacts, the Tuniit or ancient ones, c. 500BC-AD1000, became better known through a chance gift of a similar



collection from Igloolik. This was given to Arctic explorer and administrator Graham Rowley (1912-2003), by the resident missionary Father Etienne Bazin. Rowley, exploring the north from Cambridge in the 1930s, with general ideas of archaeology and air routes, deposited this collection, with additional excavated finds, in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

### **'bush/theory: indigenous cultural politics in the arctic'**

Peter Kulchyski (Native Studies, University of Manitoba)

The 'bush' is a colloquial term used by Indigenous people in the mid and far north of Canada. People take their bush radios and bush gear to bush camps, sometimes on bush planes, where they will pick bush medicine and eat bush food. Trails of thought also crisscross through the bush, which is neither 'nature' nor 'wilderness', perhaps better thought as nuna (Inuktitut) or aki (Ininev). Caribbean thinker Eduard Glissant has been said to have developed a 'poetics of the mangrove' influenced to some extent by the thought of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. bush/theory overlays the thought of Indigenous elders – Blondin, Bird, Freeman – with critical theory – Marx, Benjamin, Derrida, Spivak – with ancient Indigenous inscription – rock art, teaching rocks, sacred sites, embodied practices – with poetic anthropology – Brody, Taussig, Rosaldo, d'Anglure – with Indigenous academic and literary thought – Larocque, Coulthard, Tagak – to create a space of reflection as if it were lit by a kudlik.

### **'Kalli on the Ship': Inughuit Abduction and Disciplinary Formations**

Peter Martin (ERC 'Arctic Cultures', Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge)

This paper will examine the circumstances surrounding the abduction of Kallihirua, a member of the Inughuit community who was encountered by the crew of the Assistance during the 1850–51 expedition in search of the lost ships Erebus and Terror. Unpacking this important moment of cultural encounter, the paper will explore the ways in which Kallihirua's presence on board the ship became embroiled in wider scholarly debates pertaining to the 'origins of the Inuit' and to the historical migrations of human beings around the world. Furthermore, it will also explore the ways in which this 'indigenous intermediary' became an important influence on the emergent scholarly disciplines of anthropology and geography which were undergoing a process of institutionalisation and professionalization during this period.

### **On the Credibility Gap in Arctic Research Governance: What Counts as 'Evidence'?**

Pitseolak Pfeifer (Inuit Solutions, Ottawa/Iqaluit, Canada)

The historical record of 'credible' Arctic research begins in colonial times with International Polar Year 1882. Yet, today's Arctic research continues to underpin a colonial framework and an academic mind-set that overly privilege Western scholarly approaches to evidence-based policy, failing to address Northern societal issues, in particular those experienced in Inuit



communities. Canada's reconciliation efforts with Indigenous peoples must extend to Northern research practices and its governance. Research principles have gone from research on Inuit to research with Inuit, which is progress. What about research by Inuit for Inuit though? If research informs policy, and policy arguably leads to change, Inuit need to have a central say in how research in Nunangat is governed to better their lives. This paper offers insights into Arctic research governance through an Inuk's perspective, mapping out some of the solutions and opportunities for a research paradigm shift that serves Inuit self-determination.

### **Framing a 'Natural Region' and Forming 'Arctic Cultures'**

Richard Powell (Geography/SPRI, University of Cambridge)

It is a commonplace amongst scholars of the Arctic that methods of representation and formulations of expertise have resoundingly silenced peoples *from* the Arctic. This process has facilitated the dispossession of indigenous peoples and cultures for over 500 years. Efforts have been made to redress this balance and are continually required. This paper takes a slightly different aim, in that it tries to understand how this situation came about in the first place. That is, how did it become possible to depict the Arctic as a region-without-culture in the face of the refuting evidence? The paper argues that this process derives from a dominant framing of a 'Natural Region' – a region where the environment dominates culture and cultural formation – and attempts to begin its intellectual history.

### **Planning the Arctic Welfare State: Decolonization and Improvement in Greenland**

Søren Rud (SAXO Institute, University of Copenhagen)

This paper offers an analysis of the ways in which various actors rendered the field of public health in Greenland ripe for transformative intervention. In the 1940s medical authorities singled out tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases as problems that needed to be resolved. Alongside a call for better treatment and more physicians came recommendations for improved sanitation and housing. These recommendations played into comprehensive transformation schemes known as G-50 and G-60, entailing planning and building projects conducted mainly by the GTO (Greenland's Technical Organization). Overall, this amounted to visions for a transformed Greenland: decolonized and improved to be an arctic version of the Welfare State.

### **The Northern Co-ordination and Research Centre as Nation-building Project**

Pamela Stern (Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, BC)

In the 1950 and '60s, the research division of the Canada's Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, the Northern Co-ordination and Research Centre (NCRC), employed academic researchers to document Inuit life in the newly established "urban" centres. While knowledge of how to administer these new Inuit communities was a stated goal for NCRC-



sponsored research, the purposes of the research were much more wide-ranging. Many of the NCRC researchers were students, and their activities formed the basis for what became a Canadian social science in the Arctic. This paper, based on archival research and interviews with NCRC researchers offers a survey of the research conducted for the NCRC and considers how that early work contributed to sovereignty claims to the North.

## **Between the Museum and the Field: Locating the Affordances of the Pitt Rivers Museum's Siberian Collections**

Jaanika Vider (Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, University of Oxford)

This paper examines the role of Siberian ethnographic objects and photographs within early anthropological research in Oxford. Locating the Siberian collections within wider assemblages of Arctic materials at the Pitt Rivers Museum, I ask how the ethnographic representations of Northern Indigenous communities changed between proto-anthropological and early professional practice. Conceptualising anthropology at the turn of the century as an 'objectual practice' operating with, what Karin Knorr-Cetina terms, 'epistemic objects', I argue that things acquired at field sites were made to work within particular disciplinary frameworks through practices of juxtaposition, exclusion, and transformation. However, objects of knowledge are also characterised through their incompleteness and ability to unfold infinitely. Responding to this tension between museum objects as strictly defined and yet incomplete and drawing on recent fieldwork, I will discuss how the Siberian collections afford opportunities for the co-production of knowledge with originating communities.

## **Practical Sessions: Maps, Objects and Images of Arctic Formations**

John Woitkowitz (ERC 'Arctic Cultures', Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge)

Johanne Bruun (ERC 'Arctic Cultures', Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge)

Alex Partridge (Polar Museum, Cambridge)

These practical sessions will invite delegates to consider the entangled dimensions of geographical and cultural knowledge production about the Arctic through object-oriented conversations. Led by researchers working with different collections, these 'break-out' sessions will allow smaller groups to examine a selection of polar maps, museum objects and visual representations. The sessions will provide an opportunity for discussion and reflection about the role of such materials as vehicles of scientific knowledge, colonial encounter and in the formation of spatial imaginaries.