

Arctic Modernities

Summary

Although the circumpolar Arctic since the late nineteenth century has become incorporated in global modernity via science, technology, tourism and international politics, very little research has so far been done on the impact of modernisation/modernity on the Arctic as a cultural formation. Likewise, we lack knowledge about how traditions of heroic Arctic images – whether such traditions are affirmed, contested or repudiated – have shaped, influenced and informed modern discourses of the Arctic. This project will investigate aspects of Arctic modernity through both these lenses. The focus is primarily literary/textual, encompassing a wide spectrum of textual genres, from media debates, documentation, travel writing, guidebooks and memoirs on the one hand, to fiction and poetry on the other. The geographical span of the material is equally wide. In addition to representations of specific geographical locations across the transnational circumpolar area, the project covers the generalised North of travel writing and fantasy (as in utopian fictions of the North Pole). The perspectives on the Arctic in the selected material are both external/touristic, as exemplified by fantasy literature, travel writing, expedition narratives and sociological reports, and internal/indigenous and based on intimate local knowledges. The emphasis of the individual contributions to the project will be on one or more of three nodal points that often are interlinked within discourses of Arctic modernity: gender, indigeneity and ecology. Gender is key to our understanding of modernisation processes in the Arctic, while indigeneity and ecology are inextricably linked in discourses of Arctic modernity that respond to the complexities and risks of Arctic developments – locally as well as globally. All three nodal points provide the possibility of critique and a necessary focus on the grey zones ignored in much present-day decision making about the Arctic.

1. Relevance

The Arctic is undergoing rapid changes both in its physical state and in the way it is presented and perceived, creating in the short term imbalances and blind spots in our understanding of the processes involved. Currently, the melting of the Arctic ice is taken both as a warning of ecological risks and as a promise of economic opportunity in terms of transportation (goods and tourists) and resources (mostly energy, but also minerals, food and genetics). Powerful interests, both political and commercial, are closing in on the Arctic and the circumpolar area in ways which are often both contradictory and simplifying. Both private and state research funding is mainly focused on the natural sciences: the understanding of climate change, the management of biodiversity, and the mapping and extraction of resources. Some secondary funding goes into social-science approaches to tourism development and problems in indigenous societies. Common for all these forms of research is that their perspectives are mostly short-term and that their object of research is the Arctic itself.

The Arctic Modernities project will contribute to the correction of these research imbalances by addressing the very basis of our Arctic decisions and desires: namely, our attitudes to the Arctic as formed by our perceptions and images of the Arctic. Some considerable research has already been done on “Arctic discourses” in an older “heroic age” of exploration, with its often masculinist and imperialist perspectives, but we will be addressing a post-heroic age in which our relationship to the Arctic has undergone a consolidated process of modernisation. The immediate relevance of this stage in the process is that it leads up to the ongoing challenges we are facing in the Arctic arena. In order to create a better understanding of the complexity of these ongoing challenges, Arctic Modernities will address the cultural and aesthetic field. It seeks to evaluate the field’s potential for a “de-simplifying” critique and exposure of the underlying historical attitudes. The project is therefore relevant to FRIHUM.

2. Aspects relating to the research project

2.1. Background and status of knowledge

This section outlines the background of the project in 1) studies of Arctic discourses and 2) theories of modernity, as well as the key challenges to current knowledge.

1) *Studies of Arctic discourses*. During the so-called heroic age of polar exploration the Arctic was typically represented in atemporal terms, as a battling ground for the superhuman struggles of a few exceptional men against the forces of nature – in which the values and masculine virtues of the hero figures were also seen to symbolise those of the nation. Remnants of this masculinist rhetoric survive in many contemporary narratives of technology-supported polar adventures (see e.g. Kagge 1990; Ousland 1994). But at the present time, and with the melting of the polar ice cap, the Arctic is increasingly represented as the site of urgent economic, geopolitical and/or cultural conflicts of interest affecting the global community, while the national and local focus has also been on issues such as indigeneous rights, resource development and the environmental impact of gas and oil production (cf. Grant 2010; Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Meld. St. 7, 2011–2012).

The political and social implications of climate change, industrial development and technology for the future of the Arctic, as well as of the militarisation of the Arctic during and after the Cold War, have been thoroughly documented in recent years (e.g. Tamnes 1991; Grant 2010; Sale and Potapov 2010; Williams 2010). Likewise, there has been a growing interest in the history of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century polar exploration (e.g. Bloom 1993; Spufford 1996; Moss 2006). We have also seen the publication of studies of the Arctic in national cultures, usually connected to one specific geographical location, Canada in particular (Atwood 1995; Grace 2001; Hulan 2002). Several collections of articles encompassing Arctic discourses from the whole circumpolar area are also evidence of an expanding field (Bravo and Sörlin 2002; Hansson and Norberg 2009; Ryall, Schimanski and Wærp 2010; Schimanski, Theodorsen and Wærp 2011). While some of this work deals with recent or contemporary Arctic discourses, the focus has rarely been on the Arctic as a site of discourses of modernity. Likewise, with a few exceptions (Bloom 1993; Hauan 2007; Ryall 2007; Hansson 2009, Ryall 2009), there has been little extended emphasis on gender in studies of Arctic discourses.

In terms of Arctic exploration, 1930 – the year the famous Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen died – marks a symbolic end of the masculinist heroic age. But for over half a century, at least since the 1870s, the Arctic had increasingly been seen under the sign of the modern, and even the famous polar explorers had made themselves increasingly dependent on modern technologies of transportation, as when Roald Amundsen, Lincoln Ellsworth and Umberto Nobile concluded the quest for the North Pole in 1926 by flying over it in an airship (Fleming 2001). During the past century the Arctic has gradually become a space of scientific investigation, tourism and industrial developments – *The Spitzbergen Coal and Trading Company*, for example, was founded in 1904 (Arlov 2003) – rather than geographical discovery and “firsts”. In fact, if tourism is a defining feature of modernity, as Dean MacCannell has claimed (MacCannell 1989), it may be argued that the Arctic became part of modernity through its growing accessibility and its discovery as a tourist destination from the late nineteenth century onwards. All these processes of modernisation are complexly related to changes in the practices and conceptions of gender. But the impact of such various factors as air travel, industry, tourism, urgent environmental concerns and changing gender norms on discourses of Arctic modernity remains largely unexamined.

2) *Theories of modernity*. The exact geographical delimitation of the Arctic is contested, and the same could with even more justification be said about the terms “modern”, “modernisation”, “modernity” and “modernism”. It has often been taken for granted that modernity, in the words of Anthony Giddens, is “distinctively a Western project” with roots in European history and radiating from there to other parts of the world (e.g. Giddens 1990; Giddens 1991; Punter 2007). Models of

power relations based on a centre/periphery binary still sometimes form an unexamined framework of studies of modernity/modernism. However, in recent decades theorists of modernity have rejected what the geographer J.M. Blaut has called “Eurocentric diffusionism”, a narrative of universal modernity based on the notion that metropolitan Europeans make history through progress and innovation while the rest of the world represents a permanent periphery that imitates the centre(s) and therefore always lags behind (Blaut 1993).

Abandoning a diffusionist perspective, many theorists now argue in favour of a polycentric view in which every location constitutes its own centre and represents a multiplicity of continually evolving and diverse modernities (e.g. Felski 1995; Eisenstadt and Schluchter 1998; Wittrock 1998; Booth and Rigby 2000; Eisenstadt 2000; Felski 2000; Friedman 2006). Theorists of both culture and literature therefore call for a new geography of modernity in which modernity/modernism is seen as transnational breaks with tradition (Appadurai 1996; Doyle and Winkiel 2005; Friedman 2006; Ramazani 2009). Such spatialisation of modernities, emphasising “the temporal rupture of before/after wherever and whenever such ruptures might occur in time and space” (Friedman 2006), has also necessarily had a crucial effect on historical periodization. Although this new work on plural modernities has usually focused on southern postcolonial discourses, its findings encourage investigations of discourses of Arctic modernity outside of the framework of a conventional centre/periphery perspective.

The move from a temporal to a spatialised view of modernity has caused a rethinking of the meaning of the term itself. In her influential provisional definition of modernity Susan Stanford Friedman rejects “nominal” (noun-based) definitions of modernity which connect it to a particular historical moment in Western history and argues instead in favour of a strategic “relational” (adjectivally-based) definition (Friedman 2001). In this view the term “modernity”, like its siblings “modern”, “modernisation” and “modernism”, acquires its meaning through negation, as a rebellion – often figured as a “new”, emancipated and secularised, woman – against a presumed past (Felski 1995; Friedman 2001; Friedman 2006). Hence, modernity is conceived as a global, shifting and unstable category that can only be understood within a geographically specific comparative “modern”/“traditional” binary (Subrahmanyam 1998). Across the circumpolar Arctic, too, there are many “alternative modernities” (Gaonkar 1999) that each requires a different contextualisation.

Some theorists, most notably Bruno Latour, have argued against definitions of modernity that rely on the assumption that there is a rupture between modernity and tradition (Latour 1993). Modernity in Latour’s definition depends on the work of “purification”, i.e. the creation of two distinct ontological zones, that of humans/culture on the one hand, nonhumans/nature on the other. However, he also argues that the practices of purification are always concomitant with practices of “translation” and “hybridisation”. The proliferation of hybrids between nonhuman and human – global warming is a good example of this; another is the militarisation of the Arctic, where the pristine-looking ice cap conceals an arsenal of far-reaching nuclear submarines – creates mixed categories, while modernity is dependent on keeping the two sets apart. Latour’s attempt to find a position beyond the either/or of modernity via an emphasis on the nonseparability of the common productions of societies and natures holds great promise for the study of Arctic modernities.

2.2. Approaches, hypotheses and choice of methods

The Arctic comprises more than the polar regions. According to geographers it includes the Arctic Ocean and parts of Canada, Greenland, Russia, the United States (Alaska), Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland. One often used boundary is demarcated by the Arctic Circle (at 66° 33’N), the approximate limit of the midnight sun and the polar night. Other definitions are based on climate and ecology, such as the 10°C July isotherm, which roughly corresponds to the tree line in most of the Arctic. Socially and politically, the Arctic region can encompass the northern territories of the eight Arctic states, including (in Fenno-Scandinavia) Lapland/Sápmi, although by natural science definitions much of this territory is considered subarctic. As is obvious in writings about the Arctic,

however, the exact demarcations of the area are less important than the cultural notions surrounding it as representing a generalised North. The question, then, is not where the Arctic actually begins, but where we imagine that it begins.

Put differently, the Arctic is also a discursive formation. As defined by Michel Foucault, discourse is the system of representation formed by a network of statements, or using Foucault's term, enunciative functions (Foucault 1972). It is the series of signs that combine into a meaning-bearing sign system with rules that regulate how a topic can be talked about. Edward Said goes even further and argues that authoritative texts actually create both the knowledge and the reality the texts seem to describe (Said 1978). Language consequently constitutes knowledge, it is not the means used to express any pre-existing knowledge or truth. Discourse joins knowledge with power and may function as a tool for oppression and control, but any discursive system is also inherently unstable since it constantly needs to incorporate new units or enunciations. As a result, discursive formations are necessarily incomplete and always contain what they do not articulate or actively seem to negate (Grace 2001). While discourse is an instrument of power, it also engenders opposition, and it is always important to ask what interests are served by a particular discursive formation and what may be invested in its continued circulation in culture (Grace 2001, Hulan 2002).

One of the most persistent discourses about the Arctic in the last two hundred years has been the image of it as a cold, empty, dangerous region imbued with notions of heroic masculinity and frontier rhetoric. This has to a great extent persisted in spite of historical developments over the past century, when the circumpolar Arctic has been incorporated in modernity in an array of locally specific ways. This project will examine to what extent these processes of modernisation have changed the discursive signification of the Arctic, and to what extent the traditions of heroic Arctic images – whether these traditions are affirmed, contested or repudiated – have shaped, influenced and informed modern discourses of the Arctic. Theoretically the project will be grounded in the three approaches to modernity outlined above – i.e. modernity as a multifarious phenomenon that has brought forward different transnational variants that have strong local roots and geographical specificity, modernity as a rupture between present and past, and modernity as practices of purification that deny the proliferation of hybrids between human/culture and nonhuman/nature. However, the focus will be less on theory than on case studies of particularised discourses of Arctic modernity. Some will be general in scope, others will be targeted studies of texts. All will be close readings informed by the historical and cultural knowledge necessary to produce what Clifford Geertz calls “thick description” (Geertz 1983).

In terms of “a new geography of modernity” the project will investigate some *specificities* of Arctic modernity. In general, however, the modern Arctic seems to have a double discursive signification. On the one hand it signifies something accessible, everyday and mundane; on the other it is a never-never land of romance and adventure. While the exploration narratives of Nansen and his contemporaries may be viewed as quests for sanctuary from modernity (Wærp 2010), much recent writing on the Arctic has made it synonymous with modernity itself. Hence in Soviet writing of the 1930s, for example, the Arctic is promoted as an exemplary region in which technological innovations, social warmth and imagination would irradicate the hardships of remoteness and a cold climate (Frank 2010). Related utopian images are also found in representations of the Nordic North as exemplary of progressive gender politics in women's travel writings from around 1900 (Ryall 2009; Hansson 2011). As a utopian space the Arctic points to a different future – manifested, for example, in Ralph Erkin's Arctic architecture and in Mars mission tests on Devon Island and Svalbard. At the same time it often seems to have become an expression of the continued survival – within modernity – of the past as nostalgia, longing, dream and myth. In the words of Sherrill Grace, “unlike the permafrost and ice, myths are less amenable to climate change” (Grace 2010). Hence the Arctic often appears as a countermodernity, embodying mythic or romantic dimension existing beyond the modern everyday world while remaining thoroughly imbricated in modernity.

One hypothesis linking many of the contributions to the project is that the Arctic may be seen as a stark embodiment of the paradoxes of modernity. This is one reason we believe that a study of the discursive significations of the modern Arctic may throw light on general processes of modernisation. We want to investigate both how discourses of the Arctic have been inflected by various kinds of modernisation and how traditions of heroic Arctic images – whether these traditions are affirmed, contested or repudiated – have shaped, influenced and informed modern discourses of the Arctic. Our focus is primarily literary/textual, encompassing a wide spectrum of textual genres, from media debates, documentation, travel writing, guidebooks and memoirs on the one hand, to fiction and poetry on the other. The geographical span of the material is equally wide. In addition to representations of specific geographical locations across the transnational circumpolar area, the project covers the generalised North of travel writing and fantasy (as in utopian fictions of the North Pole). The perspectives on the Arctic in the selected material are both external/touristic, as exemplified by fantasy literature, travel writing, expedition narratives and sociological reports, and internal/indigenous and based on intimate local knowledges.

Preliminary investigations suggest that three interlinked nodal points are central to discourses of Arctic modernity: 1) gender, 2) indigeneity, and 3) ecology. The incorporation of the circumpolar Arctic into modernity via tourism, technology and resource exploitation, is complexly related to changes in the practices and conceptions of gender. We therefore consider gender as key to our understanding of modernisation processes in the Arctic, as well as to the persistent images of the Arctic as countermodernity. Indigeneity and ecology, while often connected to questions of gender, are inextricably linked in discourses of Arctic modernity that respond to the complexities and risks of Arctic developments – locally as well as globally. All three nodal points provide the possibility of critique and a necessary focus on the grey zones ignored in much present-day decision making about the Arctic.

2.3. The project plan, project management, organisation and collaboration

The project will start by advertising/recruiting a two-year postdoctoral fellow and a three-year doctoral student. In the first quarter of 2013 all project participants will submit their final research plans. Throughout the three-year period there will be regular (monthly during the semester) reading group meetings for the University of Tromsø participants in the project. There will be one guest lecture each semester given by national/international project partners. Each of these guest researchers will stay in Tromsø for a week in connection with their lectures in order to have discussions and develop the collaboration with the Tromsø group. The whole extended group will meet for two workshops (planned for the third quarter of 2013 in Tromsø and the third quarter of 2014 in Longyearbyen) in order to discuss and develop individual contributions to the project. In the first quarter of 2015 we will arrange an international conference at the University of Tromsø based on an open call for papers. The final year of the project period will be devoted to publication. Finished articles will be submitted to relevant journals (e.g. *Tidsskrift for Kjønnforskning*, *Acta Borealis*, *Journal of Northern Studies*, *Studies in Travel Writing*). We will also be completing two books, one monograph and one edited volume containing of articles written by the project members.

The project will be led by Professor Anka Ryall, who is adjunct professor (professor II) of gender studies at Kvinnforsk (Centre for Women's and Gender Research) at the University of Tromsø (UiT) until December 2012, and who will then be employed by the project. In collaboration with a steering group consisting of Dr. Johan Schimanski, associate professor of comparative literature, and Dr. Henning Howlid Wærp, professor of Nordic literature, she will coordinate all the local, national and international activities of the project. Like Schimanski and Wærp, the rest of the project's interdisciplinary core research group are senior scholars at the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education (HSL) at University of Tromsø: Professor emeritus Fredrik Christian Brøgger (American literature), Dr. Kari Aga Myklebost (history) and Professor Roswitha Skare (documentation studies). All have extensive research records in Arctic literature and culture. The

group will be supplemented with one postdoctoral fellow. In addition, two doctoral students – Sigfrid Kjeldaas, financed by UiT from 2012 and supervised by Schimanski and Brøgger, and one new appointee – will be attached to the group. Kvinnforsk will facilitate the practical work related to the project coordination.

The core research group will collaborate with a group of national and international scholars with interests in the discourses of Arctic modernity. The Norwegian group consists of Dr. Silje Solheim Karlsen (associate professor of Nordic literature at Finnmark University College), Dr. Ulrike Spring (associate professor of history at Sogn og Fjordane University College) and Dr. Audun Mørch (associate professor of Russian literature at the University of Oslo). The international group, invited because of their eminence in the field of Arctic studies, consists of Professor Susanne (Susi) Frank (professor of East-Slavic literatures and cultures at Humboldt University Berlin, Germany), Professor Heidi Hansson (professor of English literature at Umeå University, Sweden), Professor Renée Hulan (professor of English at St. Mary's University, Canada), Dr. Peter Stadius (associate professor of Nordic studies at the University of Helsinki, Finland) and Dr. Kirsten Thisted (associate professor of minority studies at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark). Members of the core group have previously collaborated with most of these scholars in various capacities, as well as in the “Arctic Discourses” project (2006–9) led by Ryall, Schimanski and Wærp. A common conceptual platform for the “Arctic Modernities” project was achieved at a two-day preparatory workshop at the University of Tromsø in February 2012, at which both the core group and all the external partners participated.

All individual project contributions will be developed over time and through collaboration with the other project participants. In order to make the results of the project as coherent as possible, the project will be divided into four groups of research activities: 1) coordination, 2) Arctic modernities and gender, 3) Arctic modernities and indigeneity, and 4) Arctic modernities and ecology. Although the last three activities are based on the nodal points of gender, indigeneity and ecology that often overlap in individual contributions, they are listed separately for the purpose of this overview. Under each heading the participants are listed alphabetically. The postdoctoral fellow will be expected to contribute at least three articles in one or more of the research activities.

Research activity 1: coordination. This will involve the administration of the project, including a three-month period of preparation at the outset, the advertising and appointment of one postdoctoral fellow and one doctoral student, as well as the arrangement of the guest lectures, the two workshops and the international conference. Anka Ryall will coordinate this activity in collaboration with Johan Schimanski and Henning Wærp. Towards the end of the project period we will also devote time and resources to collating and editing the volume of articles written by the project members.

Research activity 2: Arctic modernities and gender. This research activity will be constituted by the contributions that take changing conceptions of gender as their central focus. In some, notably Ryall's, questions of ecology and indigeneity also play an important part:

Heidi Hansson will contribute an article provisionally entitled “Arctic Utopias and the Paradox of Nostalgic Modernity”. This will deal with the generalized Arctic of utopian fictions, both texts in which the North Pole functions as the setting for fantasies of gender that are eventually rejected, and texts that use a polar setting for imaginative explorations of new female identities and roles.

Silje Solheim Karlsen will contribute an article about gender and masculinity in recent Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish novels of the rural North. These are texts that combine elements of both dirty realism and magical realism, and as a group the novels display the contours of a distinct “Arctic Realism”.

Anka Ryall will write a monograph provisionally entitled “Narrating Modern Femininity in the Arctic” about post-heroic narratives of adventures in the High Arctic written by women during the

1930s. It will focus on books by four writers – primarily Louise Arner Boyd’s *The Fiord Region of East Greenland* (1935), Ruth Gruber’s *I Went to the Soviet Arctic* (1939), Christiane Ritter’s *Eine Frau erlebt die Polarnacht* (1938) and Jette Bang’s, *30.000 kilometer med sneglefart* (1941) – and is based on the hypothesis that the High Arctic, which had newly been made accessible by modern technology, lent itself to textual experiments with alternative forms of femininity during a period of backlash against women, and that these experiments also served to “unmake” the heroic tropes that had previously dominated narratives of the High Arctic. Aspects of the argument will be reworked as a contribution to the collection of articles.

Johan Schimanski will contribute an article provisionally entitled “Children Imagining the Arctic: Modernity, Gender and Play in Arthur Ransome’s *Winter Holiday*” about an imaginary Arctic (in the British Lake District) as the context for utopian negotiations of empire and gender set within interwar modernization processes.

Peter Stadius will contribute an article provisionally entitled “White Landscapes and Black Legends: Roland Huntford’s Northern Geographies” about Huntford’s role as an essentialiser of Nordic masculinity in a post-heroic era, not only as a biographer of famous Arctic explorers but as a critical commentator on Social Democratic Welfare State modernity.

Research activity 3: Arctic modernities and indigeneity. This research activity will be constituted by the contributions that take renegotiations of indigeneity as their focus. Some of these contributions, most notably Myklebost’s and Mørch’s, are also centrally concerned with the connections between discourses of indigeneity and ecology, while gender is an important factor in Thisted’s analysis:

Kari Aga Myklebost will contribute an article provisionally entitled “Minoritie Modernities: A Comparative View of Russian and Norwegian Minority Policies in the North”. This will investigate the debates about indigeneity on either side of the border, focusing on different views on the rights to natural resources, on modernisation vs. traditionalism in the definition of indigenous peoples, and on preservation vs. integrationism in state policy.

Audun Mørch will contribute an article provisionally entitled “The Arctic Chronotopes of Iurii Rytkeu”. This aims at arriving at an understanding of a fictional universe of one writer as a representative of an indigenous (Chukotka) worldview spanning all eras of human civilisation from Mesolithic times to modernity.

Roswitha Skare will contribute an article on the different versions (from 1922, 1949, 1976 and 1998) of Robert Flaherty’s film *Nanook of the North*. This will investigate the different elements of the film’s paratexts and their influence on viewers’ perception of it as an authentic documentary about Inuit life.

Kirsten Thisted will contribute an article provisionally entitled “Discourses of Indigeneity: Branding Greenland in the Age of Self-Government and Climate Change”. Using examples from modern Greenlandic media – from films to women’s magazines – this will investigate the branding programme of changing the world’s image of Greenland in order to show that present-day Greenlanders are not first and foremost victims of modernity, but also *producers* of modernity.

Research activity 4: Arctic modernities and ecology. This research activity will be constituted by the contributions that take nature, ecology and the conflicts between resource development and environmentalism as their central focus. Some of the articles, most notably Frank’s, Hulan’s and Spring’s, are also vitally concerned with connections between gender and modernity, in Hulan’s case between gender, indigeneity and modernity. In Kjeldaas’s dissertation project indigeneity is an important theme:

Fredrik Christian Brøgger will contribute an article investigating the rhetoric of resource development and environmentalism in public debates concerning drilling of oil in Alaska, Canada

Greenland and Lofoten-Vesterålen (Norway) since the 1970s. This will throw light on contemporary images of the Arctic as a social, collective arena where current economic, political and cultural interests contend and conflict with each other.

Susi Frank will contribute an article elaborating on the modern semantics of cold in Soviet culture of the 1930s via a study of its castoffs – the GULAG convicts – and their literary texts. This will focus on the changing and unstable images of the Siberia landscape and climate, represented both as a space of cold death and in terms of warmth, as a conquest of environmental conditions.

Renee Hulan will contribute an article provisionally entitled “Sovereignty or Sustainability? Arctic Modernism in Canadian Poetry, 1960–the Present”. This will deal with the impact of Arctic travel by airplane on Canadian literary culture, with an emphasis on poetry, and show how the Arctic serves as a battleground for competing discourses of modernity: either as an image of vast, untapped resource potential, or as an image of the challenges of protecting sustainable ways of life against environmental devastation.

Sigfrid Kjeldaas will write a doctoral dissertation provisionally entitled “Redeeming Visions: Portraying Arctic Landscape in a New Cultural Climate” focusing on recent American environmentalist writings about the Arctic (by Barry Lopez, Gretel Ehrlich and Seth Kantner). The aim is to investigate the manner in which these texts – representations of North America and Greenland – offer portrayals of the Arctic landscape as a lived and *living* space, far removed from traditional Western notions of it as a *terra nullius*.

Ulrike Spring will contribute an article provisionally entitled “Arctic Tourism, 1890s–1930s”. It will focus on guidebooks and magazines as a way of investigating images of the European Arctic as an anti-modern place of wilderness and incomprehension during a period in which it was developed as an increasingly popular modern tourist and leisure destination with a growing infrastructure facilitating the tourist industry.

Henning Howlid Wærp will contribute an article provisionally entitled “The Arctic Pastoral of Fridtjof Nansen and Helge Ingstad”. This will discuss the Arctic pastoral as an attempt to develop a human economy that is responsive and responsible in its relationship with the economy of nature – a modern redefinition of the pastoral as a psychological necessity rather than a myth of a Golden Age.

3. Key perspectives and compliance with strategic documents

3.1. Compliance with strategic documents

On the institutional level the project contributes to the international orientation of the University of Tromsø and, more importantly, to prioritised research on the different cultures of the north (cf. *Strategidokument for Universitetet i Tromsø, 2009–2013*). The focus on the north also reflects a national research strategy, and the project will contribute to knowledge about the cultural context of areas emphasised by the Research Council’s research initiatives (cf. *forskning.nord.to. Revidert strategi for nordområdeforskning, 2011–2016* and *Norsk polarforskning. Forskningsrådets policy for 2010–2013*) concerning environmental issues, economic development (e.g. cultural production and tourism) and living conditions (cultures and values).

3.2. Relevance and benefit to society

By investigating how aesthetic practices participate in the processes by which people relate to the actual and conceptual geographies in which they live and through which they move, this project represents humanities-based research that has clear relevance to society. As demonstrated above, it has the potential of throwing new light on issues of great social importance that need to be investigated from perspective other than those of climate change, geopolitics and development of natural resources.

3.3. Environmental impact

Discussions of ecology and environmental impact are central to many of the contributions to the Arctic Modernities project. It will help develop greater appreciation of the complex and fraught relationship between nature and politics/culture in the modern Arctic.

3.4. Ethical perspectives

As has been indicated throughout this project description, the ethical issues arising from a focus on gender, indigeneity and ecology will be key concerns in our investigations of the discourses of Arctic modernity.

3.5. Gender perspectives and gender equality

Historically, Arctic discourses have been predominantly masculine, even masculinist, in orientation. This has continued down into the present. But one important sign of Arctic modernity is a new kind of writing about the Arctic, much of it by women, and much of it imagining the area as a kind of blank page encouraging the inscription of new models of femininity. At the same time there are also indications in some Arctic literature of new images of masculinity, for example in contemporary novels representing what may be called “Arctic realism”. Such gender-related issues will therefore be a central focus of the project, and the participants will be encouraged to explore the possible gender dimensions of all aspects of their material.

From the perspective of gender equality the project is lopsided in favour of female researchers. Although the core group of six senior researchers consists of three women and three men, and there are two men in the three-member steering group, only two of the eight external research partners are men. This is simply a reflection of the fact that many of the most prominent, innovative and influential scholars in humanities-based Arctic studies are women. There will be an attempt at creating gender balance in the project by giving equal weight to female- and male-authored texts.

4. Dissemination and communication of results

4.1. Dissemination plan

Two doctoral dissertations are planned. The results of the project will be disseminated in one monograph and one collection of articles, as well as in articles published in national and international journals. We will have a web page with information about and results from the project, and all guest lectures will be open to the public. The project coordinators will mobilise their extensive experience with public dissemination of research. For details see application form.

4.2. Communication with users

There are three main user groups addressed by the project: 1) other researchers in a wide interdisciplinary field, 2) policy makers and 3) the general reading public (cf. dissemination plan above).

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