

Cooperative economy and collaborative consumption in a “dissident” Inuit community : between activism and mundanity.

I study contemporary collaborative consumption patterns in an Inuit community where such practices were historically loaded with a strong political meaning. In the 1970s, three Inuit communities of Northern Quebec refused to sign the James Bay agreement with the government, declaring themselves “dissident”, because they did not want to give up their land rights, and wanted to define their own development path — rather than relying on Southern subsidies. This dissidence, formalized with “Inuit Tungavingat Nunamini” organization, was anchored in the growing Cooperative movement. The latter provided a socio-political milieu in which dissident and autonomous ideas emerged, and an effective economic example of Inuit-defined development. The cooperatives, followed by other institutionalized collaborative economic institutions, became a symbol of Inuit resistance to Western capitalistic marketization. They were branded as matching “authentic” and “traditional” Inuit economic practices of resource-sharing.

Fifty years later, many Inuit still chose to sell their catches to the Cooperatives, and to buy from their retail stores rather than from other chain stores which were set up in the North. But what is left of the activist spirit in mundane uses of the Cooperatives? Has their activities been “normalized”, and are they used indifferently from other stores; or is their specific autonomous ideology still known and acknowledged by younger Inuit generations who use them every day? And how do historical and political actors of the Cooperative movement see it?

I am in the process of doing this research, which is based on archives and historical documents, as well as interviews and fieldwork – the latter will be conducted in Spring, in the last Dissident community. This will complete previous works from Simard¹, Gombay², and Martin³. It is aimed at understanding current consumption practices and ideologies in an Inuit community, and highlighting a lesser-known historical example of Inuit political agency which is reflected in specific social-economic institutions.

Biographical details

[Julien PONGÉRARD](#)

École Normale Supérieure de Paris-Saclay, Sociology

Agrégation in Economic and Social sciences (2015)

Student and research fellow, Université de Montréal, Geography department

1. SIMARD, J.-J. 1982. *La Révolution congelée : coopération et développement au Nouveau-Québec*. PhD Thesis, U. Laval

2. GOMBAY, N. 2010. *Making a living : Place and the commoditisation of country foods in a Nunavik community*

3. MARTIN, T. 2003. *De la banquise au congélateur. Mondialisation et culture au Nunavik*. Presses de l'Université Laval