



## Arctic Studies

### Master thesis

*“Nuna”.*

*On the importance of territoriality  
in the elaboration of Inuit identity*

**Defense by:** *Julien Pongérard*

**Date:** *09/2016*

**Supervision:** *Jan Borm, professeur des Universités*

Contact : [julien.pongerard@ens-cachan.fr](mailto:julien.pongerard@ens-cachan.fr)





## Arctic Studies

### Master thesis

*“Nuna”.*

*On the importance of territoriality  
in the elaboration of Inuit identity*

**Defense by:** *Julien Pongérard*

**Date:** 09/2016

**Supervision:** *Jan Borm, professeur des Universités*

Contact : [julien.pongerard@ens-cachan.fr](mailto:julien.pongerard@ens-cachan.fr)



# Acknowledgments

This dissertation being based on a 2016 internship at Imaginaire | Nord (Montréal, Québec), I have to thank again all the people whom I had the chance to encounter there and who helped me make the best of this first research experience:

Professor CHARTIER, director of the laboratory, for your warm welcome and help, and Pr. BORM who kindly accepted to supervise this internship: thank you again, for I owe you most of the lot I learnt in the last several months.

Thank you again, Yannick LEGAULT and Charlotte COUTU, for your cheerful attitude and welcoming helped me more than you probably imagine by coloring all days. Making working hours so pleasurable was certainly as helpful as your insightful pieces of advice.

Léa and Alexis, my precious hosts and friends: I am definitely grateful for the pleasant setting you kindly offered — I wish I will be able to return the favor one day.

The writing of this dissertation involved many people, be they conscious of their importance or not;

To all the teachers whom I had the chance to meet and who have been around me this year at UVSQ in sunny as well as rainy days, great and many thanks — especially Pr. Jan BORM, Pr. Jean-Michel HUCTIN, Pr. Alexandra LAVRILLIER, if this work has any parts you think worth being proud of, it is you who should be. For your work, encouragement and everlasting patience for sharing your knowledge as well as passion, I cannot thank you enough.

To all my friends and relatives, co-workers in the libraries, coffee-lovers and travelers, who have been present during the days and nights, for your presence and inspiration, for all the cheerful smiles, I am especially thankful.

Writing a dissertation also requiring appropriate environment and surroundings, I have to acknowledge the importance of the Muséum library as a fruitful “territory” and FIP as an encouraging acoustic “landscape”.

And because landmarks — whether territorial or humans — are essential to go ahead, special thoughts to my closest family — for everything, really.

## Abbreviations and acronyms

<b>ICC</b>	—	Inuit Circumpolar Council
<b>ICNI</b>	—	Inuit Committee on National Issues
<b>Imaginaire   Nord; “laboratory”</b>	—	Laboratoire international d’étude multidisciplinaire comparée des représentations du Nord
<b>ITK</b>	—	Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
<b>ITN</b>	—	Inuit Tungavingat Nunamini
<b>UQAM</b>	—	Université du Québec à Montréal
<b>UVSQ</b>	—	Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines

## Abstract

Departing from the analysis of a vernacular Inuit vocable, “*nuna*”, this dissertation aims at discerning the peculiarities of the Inuit conception of the land and how it has pertained to the building of Inuit identities until today. Through an analysis of what the land is and means for the Inuit, some of the latter’s defining anthropological traits are put forward. Inuit territorialities are described and discussed, especially to the extent in which they get in contact and conflict with Western ones in the Arctic. Thorough attention is brought to the processes and mediums of identification along history and the recent imagination and construction of plural Inuit collective identities. Toponyms, regionyms, symbols and organizations are thus questioned, as well as the notion of a “traditional” land, and put into perspective with practices and representations of Inuit identities — be they internal or external.

**Keywords** : *nuna*, Inuit, land, territoriality, identification.

**Number of pages** : 81 (88 when including references).

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Main definitions and issues . . . . .	1
Methodology . . . . .	4
Statement of ethics . . . . .	5
Outline . . . . .	5
<b>I <i>Nuna</i>, the Inuit land</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1 “The Inuit land”: geography and beyond</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1 <i>Nuna</i> , the Inuit geographical space of living . . . . .	7
1.2 <i>Nuna</i> , the <i>inhabited</i> land . . . . .	12
1.3 <i>Nuna</i> as a cosmological entity . . . . .	14
<b>2 <i>Nuna</i>: a revealer of Inuit cultural-anthropological specificities</b>	<b>16</b>
2.1 A space of reciprocal relationships . . . . .	17
2.2 A holistic thinking . . . . .	19
2.3 A cosmocentric worldview . . . . .	20
<b>3 <i>Nuna</i>, a support for identity</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1 Attachment and identification to the land . . . . .	23
3.2 <i>Nuna</i> as the “authentic” land . . . . .	25
3.3 The Inuit body as a territory . . . . .	27
<b>Conclusion: a land to observe</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>II <i>Nuna</i>, a concept at the crossroads of Inuit and Western conflicting territorialities</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>4 Diverging territorialities in the Arctic</b>	<b>31</b>
4.1 Integrated space vs. separated space . . . . .	32
4.2 Territoriality crisis within Inuit societies: the lost <i>nuna</i> . . . . .	33
4.3 Inuit territoriality: everlasting peculiarities . . . . .	35
<b>5 From territorial to territorialities’ conflicts</b>	<b>36</b>
5.1 The land which is to be claimed . . . . .	37
5.2 The political stakes behind territorial negotiations . . . . .	39
5.3 Negotiating land, negotiating identity . . . . .	40
<b>6 Same space, differing cultural landscapes</b>	<b>42</b>
6.1 <i>Nuna</i> vs. the “great white North” . . . . .	43
6.2 <i>Nuna</i> vs. the “wasteland” . . . . .	45
6.3 “Wasteland” and “wilderness”: two sides of the same coin? . . . . .	46
<b>Conclusion: <i>nuna</i>, a territorial identity</b>	<b>48</b>

<b>III</b>	<b><i>Nuna</i>, the ground for Inuit collective identity</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Territoriality and collective identification</b>	<b>50</b>
7.1	The collective appropriation of the land . . . . .	50
7.2	The recollection of toponyms: identity recognition . . . . .	52
7.3	The invention of regionyms: identity affirmation . . . . .	54
7.3.1	<i>Nuna</i> enhancing the meaning of regionyms . . . . .	54
7.3.2	From regionyms to identification . . . . .	55
<b>8</b>	<b>The making of collective identity</b>	<b>60</b>
8.1	Imagining Inuit communities . . . . .	60
8.1.1	The imagination and invention of communities . . . . .	60
8.1.2	Land claims fueling nationalism . . . . .	62
8.1.3	Imagining communities through territorial symbolism: the inuksuk .	64
8.2	The plurality and evolution in the meaning of <i>nuna</i> . . . . .	66
8.2.1	An internal and an external meaning . . . . .	66
8.2.2	The “traditional” land and current practices . . . . .	68
8.3	Internal debates on — and changes in — Inuit identity . . . . .	70
8.3.1	Inuit identity and organizational legitimacy conflicts . . . . .	70
8.3.2	An identity negotiated between different (interacting) levels . . . .	72
<b>9</b>	<b><i>Nuna</i> and the contemporary challenges for Inuit territorial identity</b>	<b>74</b>
9.1	Towards and international Inuit identity . . . . .	74
9.2	Inuit identity at a time of global warming and changing environment . . .	76
	<b>Conclusion: an identity in the making</b>	<b>76</b>
	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>77</b>
	<b>References</b>	<b>82</b>
	Bibliography . . . . .	82
	Filmography . . . . .	87
	Webography . . . . .	88

## List of Figures

1	Distribution of Inuit populations in the different countries of the circum-polar region . . . . .	8
2	Inuit land use on Southampton Island as mapped in the 1976 <i>Inuit Land Use and Occupancy</i> report . . . . .	11
3	Syllabic definition of <i>nuna</i> in Qumaq’s dictionary . . . . .	12
4	Photograph of an Inuit camp, 1884 . . . . .	13
5	After the whale hunt: community gathering and meat-sharing . . . . .	18
6	The Greenlandic flag . . . . .	24
7	The linguistic analogies between a snowhouse and the human body (Therrien, 1987) . . . . .	28
8	The Inuksuk, symbol for the Inuit body <i>and</i> territoriality: Therrien’s 1987 front page . . . . .	29
9	Inuit settlement areas in Canada . . . . .	40
10	Two pictures analyzed by Joliet (2015) as symptomatic for the Inuit proper sense of landscape . . . . .	44
11	A picture from Joliet (2015): “We are from the land” . . . . .	45
12	Two figures illustrative of Aglukark’s article (1999) depicting the man/environment relationship with <i>nuna</i> . . . . .	46
13	The “great white cap”: four pictures depicting usual representations of the Arctic among non-Inuit populations . . . . .	49
14	Nunavut’s coat of arms . . . . .	56
15	Pictures introduced in the “Nunagram” challenge . . . . .	58
16	Inuksuit pictures from #nunagram competition . . . . .	64
17	The flag of Nunavut . . . . .	66
18	Two examples of the spreading of the inuksuk as a symbol. . . . .	67
19	The Inuksuk as a symbol of Inuit territoriality <i>and</i> claims: a report front page . . . . .	67
20	Cover of Bulbulian’s documentary: “Debout sur leur terre” . . . . .	71



# Introduction

*“We Inuit have lived in the Arctic for millennia. Our culture and economy reflect the land and all that it gives. We are connected to the land and our understanding of who we are — our age old knowledge and wisdom — comes from it.” (Sheila Watt-Cloutier, 2007, p. 15)*

Writing in 2007 — in a context of growing global awareness about climate change — and reflecting on her curriculum as an Inuit leader, Sheila Watt-Cloutier puts the “land” at the core of her thoughts. In the Arctic, the physical land is threatened by global warming; being passed on from a generation to the other, it could be the “common” *par excellence*, but it seems to be on the verge of definitive and tragic changes. Watt-Cloutier insists here on the fact that human beings are connected to the land, so that it is humanity which is put at risk by global warming. For an Inuit — which means “human being” in vernacular Arctic languages of the “eskimo-aleut” continuum — what is threatened is actually self-identity — “our understanding of who we are”, as Watt-Cloutier puts it. The word the Inuit translate as “land” is *nuna*, the very definition of which is given by Watt-Cloutier here: it is not just a geographic and physical extent, but the whole of the natural resources, living and non-living, which nurtures the Inuit, as well as the landscapes. This notion is so important that it seems to the Inuit leader that all what the Inuit collectivities know is derived from *nuna*; through everlasting land occupation, it has come to be at the very core of Inuit culture and identity. In times of global warming as well as deep identity redefinition, understanding what *nuna* means for the Inuit and how it came to be a key in these Arctic peoples’ self-definition helps understanding the long-lasting peculiarities of Inuit territoriality, the very process of collective identification and nation-building through the land, as well as the perspectives the Inuit adopt towards their social and economic development in a globalized and changing world.

## Main definitions and issues

In its 2001 article on Nunavut, Légaré sums up a lot of works on what identity is; he states that “‘identity’ is one such idea that is hard to define. It is in its essence a social construct”, for identity is what distinguishes an individual or a group from any other, and thus cannot emerge out of confrontations between several people — or peoples (Légaré, 2001, p. 145). Légaré focuses on collective identity, that is “primarily a sense of belonging to a particular region, a particular culture.” (*op. cit.*, p. 147), and he distinguishes between two main types of collective identity:

- *cultural*, which “refers [...] to a person’s attachment towards a particular cultural group”, and

- *territorial*, which refers to a person's attachment to a geographical and political unit.

Légaré also highlights that the distinction between the two is to a large extent conventional, if not artificial. Cultural and territorial identities are linked and often quite undistinguishable in reality, for no culture nor cultural identity is not anchored in some sort of known and appropriated space — even if fully virtual, as in today's communities of hackers with their own culture anchored in a virtual space — and for no territorial identity can exist if not mediated through a social collective, be it as small as comprising only a human couple, which always imply a sharing of norms and practices defining a certain (sub)*culture*.

Fully in line with Légaré's analyses, I try to highlight here the territorial aspects of Inuit identity, showing that identification to and with the land cannot be separated from the Inuit culture. The very notion of "territory" is all but self-evident. Collignon highlights it by putting forward three definitions which have emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, when the notion of territory became a trendy topic to be discussed and debates within the field of geography — and more specifically cultural geography. According to Collignon (1999b), "territory" may refer to:

- 1 — an extent of land or sea which is to be managed;
- 2 — an extent delimited by boundaries on which human domination is exercised;
- 3 — a tight relationship associating a land with its inhabitants, or the extent of land a society recognizes as its own and in which it inscribes itself.

The third and more original definition was elaborated by Collignon (1999b, p. 35) in her work with an Inuit cultural group, the Inuinnait, and it is this particular definition of the territorial relationship that I focus hereunder, understanding it in relation with the two other definitions of the territory which the Inuit may have to interact with.

Following these three characterizations, three definitions of "the Inuit land" may indeed be given. The first would be *nuna* as Inuit Arctic, the extent of land and sea situated within the Arctic circle in Greenland, Northern Canada, Alaska, and Russia, in which resources essential for Inuit survival and social life are to be found. In the second meaning, the Inuit land would be the spaces on which Inuit sovereignty has been more or less recognized. Today, the Inuit made their claims recognized, to different extents, in several areas — the best known being Alaska, Greenland, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and Inuvialuit settlement region. However, even though the term *nuna* may have been used in these first two meanings, Inuit often retain the word to mean the third dimension: *nuna* is not just a proxy for spatial territory, the analysis of which would lead me to reconsider the abundant literature in cultural geography on the relation between territorial space and identity. What is interesting here is that *nuna* is in itself a meaningful element pointing

out a specific territory as well as a specific way of relating to it — that is, a *territoriality*. Thus analyzing this vocable and its uses throws light on many Inuit territorial practices which are vectors for building a cultural identity. One of the most blatant uses made of the term is that of its inclusion in Inuit regionyms: Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut, and Kalaallit Nunaat (the official endonym for Greenland). The stakes behind such naming have to be explored and imply understanding to what extent populations may identify to this term — as well as questioning the aspect of pure diffusion by imitation, which may also be significant for the creation of a pan-inuit identity.

To focus on *nuna*, one is led to distance oneself from everyday conceptions of what “the land” is and the relationship with the land which prevail in the Western world — that of separation between human beings and the ground and of owning and dominating the land. Following the classical guidelines from Durkheim in *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895), to study what the Inuit consider as “the land” is thus the first necessary methodological step to study their territorial identity: this step consists in abandoning one’s “preconceptions” (Durkheim, 1895, p. 63), that is, the definitions of social facts that the observer uses in everyday life.

Dealing with the question of identity questions raises some difficulties, among which the risk of reifying cultural traits which the observer may tend to see as immutable while essentializing an “indigenous” condition. One way I tried to avoid such misconception — often close to ethnocentrism — is by focusing on the processes of *identification*. Revealing such processes helps understanding that identities have to be built and maintained dynamically rather than they do perdure in static states. Along this dissertation, identification is dealt with as a necessary dialectical process: it may be that the image of the Inuit reflected on the latter by the *Qallunaat* (that is, White people encountered by the Inuit) be later reinterpreted and adopted by the Inuit themselves as an element of self-identity. Among identification mechanisms and *apparatuses*, I focus on several symbols and media to study *how* the images of the Inuit are created and used — images both from the Inuit themselves and from the West, the two being often in interaction. Thus, as a first result of this research, the plurality and complexity of identity-building processes are pointed out — along with the plurality of identities themselves, as well as the need to distance from binary visions such as “the modern” *versus* “the traditional” which often carry residues of ethnocentrism.

Apart from distancing from preconceptions in order to better understand the Inuit social realities, this dissertation aims at establishing a state-of-the-art account of the main research axes on Inuit territoriality and identity. Describing the research already done and identifying some gaps in today’s knowledge, it aims at paving the way for PhD research which could be based on the definitions and characterizations produced here and confirm or infirm some hypotheses made in the course of the dissertation.

## Methodology

To a large extent, this dissertation consists in a review of scientific literature, and it has to be thought of as the first step for further research on Inuit territoriality. The main goal was to obtain the widest possible outlook on the question of Inuit territoriality and construction of identity, in order to build a general framework which could serve as the basis for later anthropological fieldwork.

This dissertation is based on a research report on the Inuit vocable “*nuna*” written during an internship in the Imaginaire | Nord laboratory at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM, Montréal, Québec). I had access to the laboratory’s wide database of references which I used as a departing point for my research; I first looked for the exact expression “*nuna*” in the database, and then for all expressions containing it (such as “Nunavut”, “Nunavik”), and in the end I gradually went on reading related articles and works referenced in the documents I found. I tried to diversify as much as possible the sources I used and the themes and stakes I focused on, in order to obtain a representative and encompassing view on the general question of space and identity in cultural, anthropological and political perspectives. At the core of the methodology used here is the analysis of a certain vocable, its meaning and uses, especially when re-used in other words — their subsequent meanings and evolutions being also analyzed as such.

This helped me getting the main landmarks and themes regarding the territorial aspects of the Inuit culture. Through researching “*nuna*” — that is, its meaning, denotation and connotation, its uses and the way it is understood... or not! — I came to realize that the word in itself is a fruitful key to approach the territorial aspects of Inuit culture and identity. Indeed, this word implies a whole cultural and anthropological context which is that of the Inuit specific perception of space. Analyzing its differences with Western concepts such as “space”, “land” or “territory” also casts light on the way inter-cultural relations between the Inuit and the West at large are influenced by these diverging conceptions of space — which are related to radically different cosmologies. In the end, through exploring the uses of the vocable “*nuna*”, one is also led to understand its dynamism and the evolution of its meaning, in line with the dynamic construction of an Inuit collective identity.

Methodologically, I therefore tried to identify relevant sources of various nature which helps framing the Inuit territorial conceptions. These sources consist in scientific articles (both on general topics and focusing on the Inuit), research works (such as PhD theses), but also Inuktitut dictionaries, Inuit literary sources, Native and Western newspaper articles, official statements from Inuit institutions, and other sources such as various pieces of archive, pictures, and films. The outline chosen here is meant to highlight the numerous stakes raised by the related questions of territoriality and identity among the Inuit, and

to build ground for further investigation — the prospective objects and methodology of which being described a conclusion which may be the premise of future research work.

## Statement of ethics

This first step in researching Inuit territoriality and identity involved no ethical conflict. As I did not come to encounter research participants and collected no personal data of any kind, no declaration of consent or ethical agreement was necessary. The only approval I sought was that of the Imaginaire | Nord laboratory's director, Pr. Daniel Chartier, for this dissertation builds on a research report I made for the laboratory and specific tools from the laboratory were used to investigate my subject. He orally granted me the permission to do so.

Of course, if this work is to be continued through interviews, participant observations and/or visual analysis, establishing a clear code of ethics and obtaining informed consent from any research participant would be of great importance. This is especially true since it would involve working with indigenous people, and the particular nature of such research implies “ethical standards that respect the principle of Indigenous self-determination and reflect sensitivity to Indigenous knowledge and the rights of Indigenous communities” (*Code of Ethics*, The Canadian Association for Physical Anthropology, 2015, p. 5).

## Outline

I chose to deal with my subject along three main points.

- I — First, I try to define what *nuna* means and to explain how peculiar this “land” may seem. The Inuit territory is not only geographical; *nuna* is also at the core of Inuit ontology and cosmology. In this dimension, the peculiar land *nuna* is may have served as a defining feature of the Inuit people — both as a self-defining characteristic and in the eye of the West, for people inhabiting such a peculiar space have been thought to necessary be themselves quite *special*. *Nuna* may also serve today's Arctic social scientists for it points out the Inuit peculiar anthropological and cultural features, since their definition of the environment is at the core of their system of values and representations.
- II — Second, I move on to discern the peculiar Inuit *territoriality*, that is, the way a people relates to the space it inhabits. Through land claims and negotiations with the Qallunaat, the Inuit have come to be defined by the peculiar way in which they relate to their environment. This made it difficult for colonial governments to find a common ground on which to negotiate land claims, and it still pervades in

Inuit/ Qallunaat relationship ; diverging territorialities in the Arctic also imply that even when relating to the same environment, Inuit and Qallunaat respective *cultural* landscapes greatly differ. Through land claims negotiations, one of the major stakes for the Inuit in different regions and countries was political; it was to provide ground for their recognition and preserve the means of their self-definition.

III — Third and last, I turn to a more constructivist point of view in order to examine the historical co-construction of Inuit territories and identities. Today’s Inuit communities were imagined and their territories and institutions invented through territorial symbolism. The point here is to understand which processes are at play when elaborating identity and through which concrete and social facts such collective identifications are made possible — and on which incentive, for instance organizational. Drawing on Benedict Anderson’s analytical framework, I focus on toponyms and regionyms as well as on material symbols and today’s attempts to make Inuit identities emerge on several scales — from the local to the global. This being done, I try to discern today’s topics out of which Inuit identities may be built in the future.

## Part I

# *Nuna*, the Inuit land

## 1 “The Inuit land”: geography and beyond

John Amagoalik, a prominent Inuit intellectual figure — writer and politician — depicts *nuna* as follows:

*“The land is cold. The land is immense. It is a desert. It is unforgiving? It can be cruel? The land is also home. It sustains life. It breathes. It can bleed. It is part of our mother, the earth. It is beautiful. It nourishes our culture. We are part of it as it is part of us. We are one!” (Amagoalik, 2001).*

In a few sentences, the author gives a good account of the wide range of meanings which is covered by the idea of land in Inuit culture. The Inuit land is defined by physical characteristics as well as metaphysical ones, for it has a personality and plays a role in the sustaining of human existence — individual as well as social, since it “nourishes our culture”. Amagoalik insists on the plurality of perspectives which may apply to the Inuit regions of the Arctic. Their land may be “cold”, “immense”, and a “desert” for the unaccustomed eye — that of White people, “Qallunaat”; but for the Inuit who have learnt to know it through everyday practicing, the land is “beautiful”. This small poem from

Amagoalik ends with what may be the most distinctive and important feature of the land for the Inuit: that of its inseparability from — and even unity with — the human collectivity. The land does not only sustains life in the sense that it shelters all natural resources, whether living or non-living, necessary for the Arctic life. It also sustains the cultural existence of the Inuit civilization, for it forms a single entity encompassing human and their environment. This is what *nuna* is, and it is at the core of Inuit identity. Any Inuit may identify with it, but as the excerpt puts it forward, just identifying Inuit to “the Inuit land” without noticing to what extent this definition of the land is peculiar to the Inuit means only seeing the small emerged part of the iceberg — if not adopting a totally false representation of this small part.

## 1.1 *Nuna*, the Inuit geographical space of living

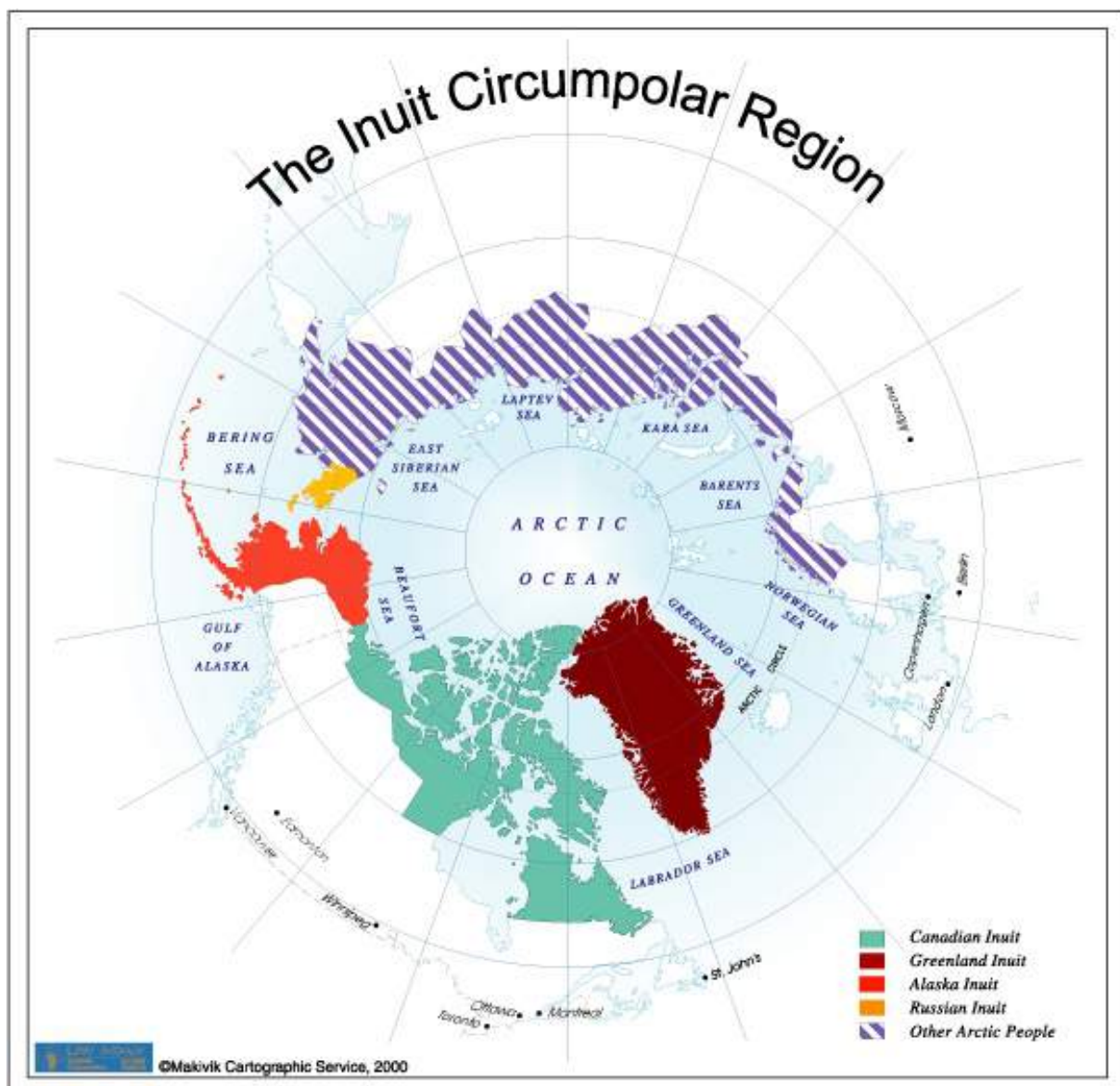
In order to introduce this paper on Inuit space and perception of space and the related identity, explaining briefly who the Inuit are seems to be a coherent first step — logically and didactically. It is worth noting that most of the time, Inuit are defined on the basis of the geographical space they live in. A former version of the institutional website of the Canadian government defined the Inuit as follows:

*“in one of the most remote places in the world, the Canadian Arctic, a people have survived over a thousand of years. They are the Inuit”<sup>1</sup>.*

In a different sphere, Therrien opens her handbook on the Inuit with a chapter on “the Inuit land” (Therrien, 2012), for the relationship between “the Inuit and their land”, to quote from the title of another important work (Purich, 1992) is seen as a distinctive feature. In the end, this “Inuit land” is a way through which “the Inuit” as a whole are commonly known among the general public. What is less well-known is the fact that Inuit populations and cultures actually are plural. Inuit have inhabited lands in different regions, different countries and even different continents along history, dividing themselves into different ethnic subgroups. Still, authors have defined an “Inuit continuum” for all Inuit peoples descend from the same relatively recent ancestors and their languages all belong to the same peculiar language family — called “eskimo-aleut” or “eskaleut”. Main Inuit populations (133 000 Arctic inhabitants) live in Greenland (they call themselves Kalaallit), Canada (living in four regions: Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik and Labrador. See map 1, p. 8, and map 9, p. 40) and in the United States of America, more precisely in northern Alaska (Inupiat). However, 40 000 people comprising the Yupigiet from Siberia, the Yupitt from Central Alaska, the Alutiiq from the Gulf of Alaska and the Unangan from the Aleutian Islands also belong to this ethnic family defined by their use of eskaleut languages (Therrien, 2012, p. 14).

---

<sup>1</sup><https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/settlement/kids/021013-2071-e.html>



**Figure 1:** *Distribution of Inuit populations in the different countries of the circumpolar region.*  
Source: Makivik Corporation, <http://www.makivik.org/fr/nunavik-maps/>



The common cliché that the Inuit “inhabit the Arctic” deserves some further explanation. The Inuit have long been a semi-nomadic people, that is, they seasonally migrated from a Winter camp to Summer hunting grounds. In his famous thesis on the seasonal variations among the then-called “Eskimo” populations, French anthropologist Marcel Mauss described the variations of social organization among the Inuit from Central Canada according to the seasons. In the Winter, Inuit families gathered together and formed local communities comprising a few dozens of people living in snow or rock houses, while in the Summer, the group dispersed and dispatched to more individualistic campsites, and some of them would move during the Summer, following the game (Mauss, 1906). This pattern can still be observed — though less strong — as Inuit families may go camping away from the settlements in Summer. The Inuit thus did not “settle” in the Arctic in a Western way before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They did know and use vast lands around their occasional campsites, they travelled through the tundra and across frozen rivers or even seas in the Winter, thus covering areas as large as today’s countries — even though not establishing permanent facilities in all the regions which provided them with resources. This mode of occupation may be described as spatially “discontinuous” even though it was rather durative, for vast areas have been thus discontinuously occupied for centuries. Nowadays, the Inuit mostly live in settlements, villages, towns and even cities in the Arctic or outside of it — there are for example large Inuit communities in cities such as Montréal, Toronto or Nome.

The space inhabited by the Inuit is referred to as *nuna*, a word the Inuit usually translate as “the land” — primarily *their* land, that is, the part of the Arctic the Inuit occupied, but it may also apply to other areas. For an external observer, this term may seem useful for it encompasses the specific way the Inuit have occupied the land, using vast territories while not settling it (even once the Inuit became sedentary and gathered in villages, they would still go hunting and fishing in the wild for a few days) and periodically moving from a place to another one. This peculiar way of occupying the land was at the core of the negotiations between Inuit communities and the Qallunaat governments over territorial claims. The Inuit had to convince Qallunaat organizations that the land they did need to pursue their own way of life was far larger than the space needed for setting up a camp and sedentary agricultural activities. One of the landmarks in the awareness of such peculiarity was the publishing of a report, the famous 1976 “Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project” which provided detailed and comprehensive data to show that in the Canadian Northwest Territories and Yukon only, the Inuit have used and occupied more than 2.8 million square kilometers of land (see Freeman, 1976 and 2011). This report comprises articles in socio-economy, anthropology and geography, but also details maps depicting how the land was used and occupied by the Inuit in this regions. These areas have been extensively mapped, out of interviews with many members of the population

— hunters and trappers, families, elders, etc. For each zone, several maps are available: hunting and trapping areas in different periods as well as the total occupation (see figure 2, p. 11 for the outline of it).

This permanent but discontinuous inhabiting has led to characterize *nuna* as an environment mostly untouched or at least which has not been definitely altered by human activities — to put it in a nutshell, a “natural” space, even though this “natural” aspect is shown hereunder to be largely pertaining to a Western discursive category. Indeed, this is the way the Qallunaat characterize the Inuit territory. Inuit themselves may see *nuna* as consisting in the space (and the wildlife) out of the settlements, thus not contradicting the Qallunaat vision.

A danger inherent to such a use of the term “*nuna*” is that it erases many subtleties. The most obvious one is that *nuna* used as a singular noun for any Inuit space gives an irenic and encompassing image of the Inuit as a single people, united by a single culture, while there are numerous differences between different Inuit communities. Not only do they live in different countries and even continents, but they also do speak different dialects which they often cannot understand from one area to another. Common definitions relying on the idea of inhabiting a single “Arctic region” are to some extent theoretical constructs, framing a “pure” Inuit identity, while concretely Inuit cultures and populations are diverse and in constant evolution. For instance, Inuit populations are getting socially and ethnically more and more mixed with Qallunaat ones. Marriages, demographic mobility, the spreading of cultural habits and objects, as well as the diffusion of Southern languages in the North also make the Inuit culture a set of traits from diverse origins, and more and more entangled in Western — and actually global — cultural sets. I will later have the opportunity to nuance and specify this analysis which is only too brief and cliché, but it aims at highlighting that the identification of something like “the one Inuit culture” is nothing but simple. The delimitation of such a thing as “the Inuit” as a definite and single cultural group presents many difficulties and induces the risks for the researcher to reify some cultural traits as “traditional” and immutable without questioning their uses and interpretations as well as their evolution through history.

Second — and perhaps most important here — forgotten subtlety in the use of “*nuna*” as denoting an unquestioned “Inuit land” is that it obliterates the specific conception that the Inuit have of “the land”. *Nuna* is precisely not just another space that the Western one; it reflects a different *conception* of what space is and gives way to a specific relation to space — especially natural one, and to a peculiar way of defining, perceiving, inhabiting and practicing “the land”. In order to discern a consistent defining feature which pervades different — if not all — Inuit populations, it is rather this relationship to the land, more than the space it is embedded in, which may be worth focusing on.



(a) Trapping routes and lines on Southampton island, 1925-1962. 1962.



(b) Hunting areas on Southampton island, 1925-1962; in Winter, hunting can be realized on sea ice.



(c) Total land use in the Keewatin area, 1925-1974, with Southampton Island in the east.

**Figure 2:** Excerpts from the 1976 Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Report mapping land use by Inuit on Southampton Island (Nunavut, Canada). I didactically chose the latter as an example for its insularity allows a comprehensive view on land use on a given territory. [Courtesy of the Service des Collections, Bibliothèque centrale du Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle]

## 1.2 *Nuna*, the *inhabited* land

*Nuna* has been defined in the famous dictionary written by Qumaq (1991). This Inuktitut dictionary was the first one to be not bilingual but written solely in Inuktitut (as Qumaq was fluent only in his mother tongue) in order to help the Inuit teach and learn their own language. Qumaq defines *nuna* as follows :

*“Nuna. Does not move. Since a long time ago, it is the inhabited land and the place where humans and animals grow and also where they die. Nuna has plants, food, people in great numbers and variety; it is full of [different] language groups.” (Qumaq, 1991, p 394, translated in French by Dorais, 2008, p. 11<sup>2</sup> (my translation).*

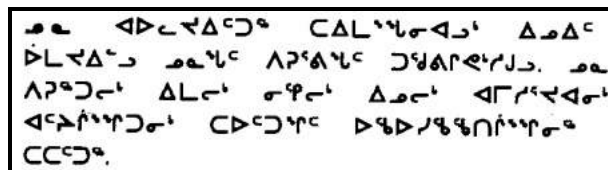
This definition makes clear the polysemy of the term as well as the fact that *nuna* cannot be restrained to a spatial entity — nor to natural and untamed environment. To quote from Hamelin (in Giguère’s 2012 documentary),

*“Reducing the meaning of the word [nuna] simply to ‘land [or earth]’ does not correspond to the meaning the Inuit give it. The concept bears everything, incorporates to nature the necessary presence of men. Human intervention brings space to existence.”<sup>3</sup> (my translation).*

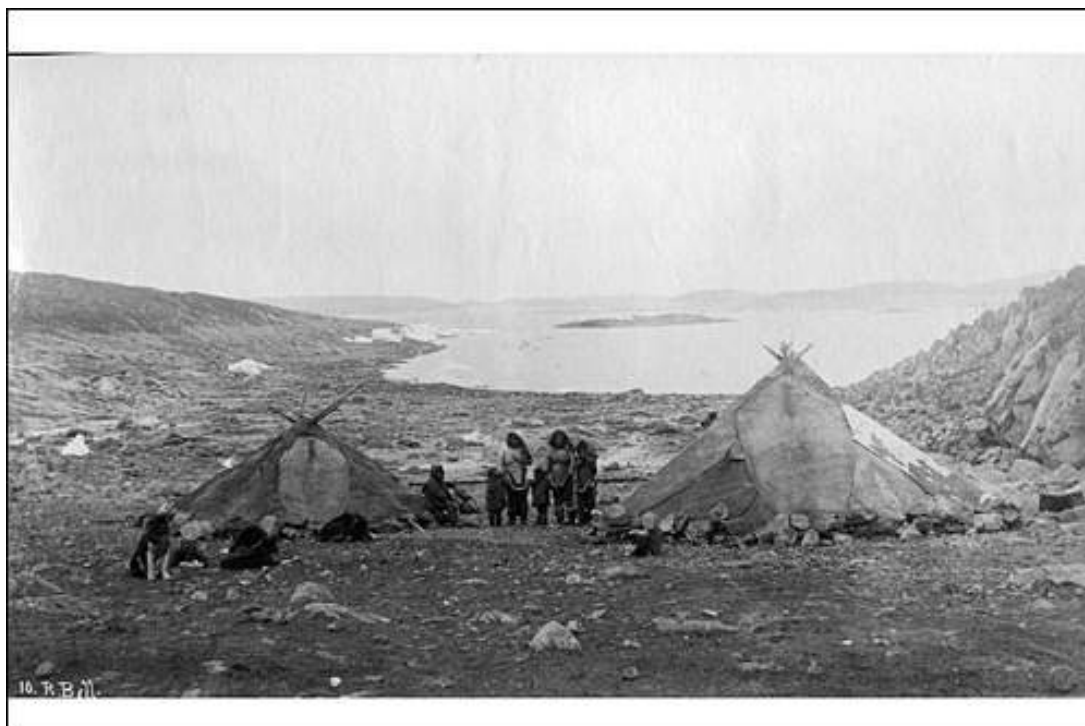
Therefore, *nuna* is not just “land” in the meaning of solid ground, nor natural Arctic land as opposed to artificial and settled one, but *the inhabited land*. *Nuna* is only that land which is “inhabited”, that is, consciously occupied, covered and traveled through by Inuit and providing them with living resources on a long-time basis. *Nuna* is an encompassing entity incorporating soil, human life, animals, plants, and all the resources which help forming a localized sustainable biome including the Inuit. *Nuna* is not just “space” in a Western understanding; it is a web of spatial land, living and non-living entities, existing only to the extent that it is used by the Inuit and presently made by practices uniting Inuit (that is, “human beings”) and their environment.

<sup>2</sup>*“Nuna. Ne se meut pas. Depuis très longtemps, c’est la terre habitée et le lieu de croissance des êtres humains et des animaux, et c’est là aussi qu’ils meurent. Nuna a des plantes, de l’eau, de la nourriture, des gens, en très grand nombre et dont l’apparence varie beaucoup, et elle est pleine de groupes de langues [différentes].”*

<sup>3</sup>*“réduire le sens du mot nuna à seulement “terre” ne correspond pas à celui que lui donnent les Inuits. Le concept porte tout, incorpore à la nature et la présence nécessaire de l’homme. L’intervention humaine donne de l’existence à l’espace”*



**Figure 3:** The definition of *nuna* in Qumaq’s Inuktitut-only dictionary (Qumaq, 1991, p. 394). First bold pattern on top left is the word *nuna* written in syllabic Inuktitut; it consists in two symmetrical symbols, first for [nu], second for [na].



**Figure 4:** Photograph of an Inuit camp near Prince of Wales Strait (Northwest Territories, Canada), in 1884, typical of the way *nuna* was collectively occupied. Two tents were often built next to each other so as to create communal space between the two.

Source: Northwest Territories archives, N-1993-006-0003, <http://www.inuitcontact.ca/index.php?fr/artifact/263>.

Collignon gives further explanation on this inhabited aspect by characterizing the Inuit “territory” as “humanized”. Out of long-term ethnographic work, she explains that “humanization, on the Inuit land, pertains to the idea more than to the material reality”<sup>4</sup> (Collignon, 1999b, p. 37, my translation). She explains that the spatial extent of the land is only a background on which a more complex whole, social by nature, is constructed through everyday practices which materially shape the territory (for instance drawing footpaths or arranging stones), but also through immaterial practices — that is, the emotional attachment to the land, as well as the intellectual understanding of it, which turn an extent of space and what lies on it and lives in it into a proper and distinctive land (Collignon, *op. cit.*, p. 36).

The separation of *nuna* from its strictly spatial extent may also be seen in the fact that depending on who uses the word *nuna*, the geographic space it covers differs. For every Inuit man or woman, *nuna* is the environment he or she inhabits and goes through, and with which he or she has a special relationship. Beyond these individual variations, *nuna* may also sometimes mean the solid land or the coast, as opposed to the open sea, the underground, etc., to the extent these spaces may be occupied by human beings and provide them with resources.

<sup>4</sup>“L’humanisation, en pays inuit, est plus id  elle que mat  rielle.”

### 1.3 *Nuna* as a cosmological entity

The polysemy of *nuna* has to be understood in the more general context of the Inuit ontology, in which space holds a place which greatly differs from the one it holds in Western ontologies. Indeed, *nuna* is a specific cosmological entity, that is, it plays a role in the Inuit myths about the origin of the universe — a role associated with a certain number of characteristics which may be traced in today's Inuit understanding of the land. This makes it clear that land is not conceived by the Inuit as a formal and measurable extent but rather as a whole integrating geographical surfaces, living beings and all the practices embedded in such an environment, and one of the key to understand it is to keep in mind the role of *nuna* in Inuit cosmology.

This role can be seen in tales and narratives where *nuna* is personified under the form of characters bearing this name. For instance, in “Nuna speaks to Nuni”, a story written by Amagoalik (2000), *Nuna* is the name metaphorically given to a crow which presents itself as follows: “I am Nuna, the voice of the land, the animals, and the fish in the waters. I am the brother of Sila, voice of the winds, the rains, and the stars”. The crow then speaks to a desperate young man to show him the beauty and greatness of the world he is involved in, in order to prevent him from committing suicide (which is one of the great problems encountered by today's Inuit masculine youth). In the Inuit traditional cosmological understanding, *nuna* thus plays an active role and may affect human lives just as human beings affect *nuna*.

In his article on Inuit cosmology (that is, the narratives about the creation and development of the universe and the forces involved), Saladin d'Anglure highlights the relationship between *nuna* and *sila* which form a mythical pair (Saladin d'Anglure, 1990, p. 19-25). *Sila* is an abstraction referring to the “cosmos” — sky and atmosphere, their meteorology, but also the world order, or reason. Saladin d'Anglure notes the polarisation within Inuit representations and narratives between two poles: that of the cosmos, *sila*, and that of humanity, included in the same whole as the earth and land: *nuna*. He also associates *nuna* with a feminine principle, which would be complementary to masculine *sila*, confirming the cosmological status of the “land”, complying to gender categories analogous to those applying to many living species. It has to be noted though that this gendered interpretation of *nuna* is debated, as Stuckenberg recalls it (Stuckenberg, 2007, p. 381). Dorais, a linguist and anthropologist specialist in Inuktitut language, explains the ambiguity about the gender of *nuna*: “Since there is no grammatical gender in Inuktitut, the word *nuna* is neither masculine nor feminine. Here I arbitrarily chose to take it as feminine, traditional Inuit thinking opposing solid ground — an entity chiefly feminine — to the sea — chiefly masculine”<sup>5</sup> (Dorais, 2008, p. 11, my translation).

<sup>5</sup>“*L'inuktitut ne possédant pas de genre grammatical, le mot nuna n'est ni masculin ni féminin. Je*

### *Nuna* as Mother-Earth?

On Inuit territorial cosmology, it is also worth noting that the notion of “Mother Earth”, which is commonly associated with Native peoples of the Americas, does not fully apply to the Inuit. Therrien vigorously contests the relevance of such a notion to understand the Inuit cosmology (Therrien, 2012, p. 60); *nuna*, she says, is in no way a progenitor “Mother Earth”. How to understand, then, that several authors still use it in their writings? The cases of such a use of “Mother Earth” within Inuit cosmology I found in literature can actually be dismissed through thorough analysis.

Savard, in a 1980 article (Savard, 1980), contrasts two conceptions and relations to the land in North America: that of Indigenous peoples, and that of Western peoples (Savard, 1980), which he opposes in a binary alternative between “private property” and “Mother Earth”. The latter is actually an encompassing phrasing taken from the cosmology proper to First Nations peoples, who consider the Earth as a mother which gave birth to human beings and provide them with all necessary means of life, human beings then having to respect the Earth in return. However, this “Mother Earth” concept often relies on a deification of the Earth and the land as anthropomorphic figures — whereas Inuit cosmologies do not — and implies a hierarchical relationship between a “mother” and her “children” while in the Inuit cosmology, human beings are *part of nuna*.

Second example, Saladin d’Anglure used the expression in his analysis of *Sila* (Saladin d’Anglure, 1990, p. 51), explaining that homage is paid by the Inuit to “Mother-Earth, *Nuna*, Father-Air, *Sila*, and wild game”. Quoted only once and not conceptualized at all, the use of “Mother-Earth” here can be considered rather cosmetic, the phrasing highlighting the author’s thesis on *nuna*’s feminine aspect and contrasting it with *sila*’s masculine definition, and the fact that they play a role analogous to that of human beings.

Last example of such a use is that of Amagoalik in the excerpt quoted at the beginning of this dissertation (Amagoalik, 2001, p. 9): “[the land] is part of our mother, the Earth”. Nowhere did I find other cases of including *nuna*, the land, within another more general entity which could be “the earth”, and *nuna* is already supposed to be a large encompassing entity. It may be that John Amagoalik didactically tried here to express what the land means for the Inuit with using a well-known and striking metaphor, that of Mother Earth; being a political leader (often consider “the father of Nunavut”), Amagoalik probably knows well this figure of Mother Earth often invoked

---

*choisis arbitrairement ici de le considérer comme féminin, la pensée traditionnelle inuit opposant la terre ferme, entité à dominante femelle, à la mer, à dominante mâle.”*

in international meetings by indigenous representatives and especially First Nations' peoples. In the end, it would be interesting to ask Mr Amagoalik what he meant in this text in order to better understand to what extent an acculturation to First Nations' concepts might have influenced the Inuit perspective on the land and the Earth.

On the whole, these examples of association of the “Mother Earth” trope with *nuna* do not contradict Therrien's statement that the two concepts are actually distant and pertain to different cultural environments.

A conclusion which may be drawn from these elements on the cosmological nature of *nuna* is that of its elusive definition, and the subsequent difficulty to understand what the land means for the Inuit since it aggregates several levels of signification. In their important essay on Inuit cosmology, Laugrand and Oosten mention that natural forces and landscapes' features are often personified in Inuit culture; this implies a systematic plurality of potential understandings of *nuna* and other spatial concepts (Laugrand, Oosten, 2010, p. 166). The very notion of *nuna* has changed a lot through time, for instance when Western missionaries associated *Sila* and *Nuna* with the concept of God — which so far did not exist among the Inuit:

*“missionaries used the term ‘nunaliuqti’ (‘maker of the earth’) to mean God. They linked the concept of God with fundamental Inuit concepts such as sila (reason, sky weather) and nuna (earth, land), facilitating a shamanic interpretation of christianity” (Laugrand and Oosten, op. cit., p. 67).*

*Nuna* is therefore more than “the land”, and goes far beyond geography — notably for this notion takes place on a cosmological background. Restricting *nuna* to a strictly geographical extension is a limitation which may come under Western ethnocentrism, as for the Inuit what they translate as “the land” actually aggregates several dimensions and is fundamentally defined by a cosmological aspect — *nuna* being an entity playing an active role in Inuit mythical and everyday life.

## 2 *Nuna*: a revealer of Inuit cultural-anthropological specificities

Focusing on the land as going beyond the traditional Western scope of geography makes clear some of the specificities of the Inuit perspective on their land, and in a broader sense it highlights some of the distinctive features of the Inuit “civilization”. By famously applying this notion of “civilization” to the then-called “Eskimos” as soon as in 1906, French anthropologist Marcel Mauss cast light on the wholeness and consistency of



the Inuit social and natural world as well as on the importance to consider indigenous peoples on the same footing as Western ones, against the evolutionary interpretation of the time (Mauss, 1906). Beyond national borders and beyond the limits of local groups in which everyone know each other, there is an Inuit *continuum* in which several social groups living in a similar environment share similar practices and perspectives, among which the relationship with the land. From the specific cosmological meaning attributed to *nuna* follows a specific connexion with the environment: *nuna* is a space of reciprocal relationships between all its elements. Two other distinctive features of such a civilisation are its holism and its cosmocentrism, which may be seen as defining features of the Inuit civilization, distinguishing it from the Western identity the Inuit were imposed along colonizing processes.

## 2.1 A space of reciprocal relationships

The cosmological meaning attributed to *nuna* is not limited to theoretical definitions. It has very concrete implications on the way the environment is perceived by the Inuit. Laugrand thus characterizes the way the Inuit see themselves in the world as follows:

*“The relationship between people and the world is embedded in a moral order according to which all actions are reciprocated by agencies such as the sky and the weather, the land and the animals.” (Laugrand, 2010, p. 134).*

Among the concrete implications of this, is the following of rules and rituals which are supposed to guarantee the maintaining of the cosmological order in which the human beings are inscribed. One of the best-known aspects of this is the respectful relationship between human beings and the animals they hunt; if this relationship within *nuna* is respected, then the game will offer itself to human beings — the latter then have to show respect to it, not killing animals if there is no necessity to do so, nor making it suffer pain in vain, nor wasting any of the resources provided from the animal. Otherwise, *nuna* is thought to cease to provide recourse to the Inuit as they proved undeserving of it.

The symbolic relationship of the Inuit with the whale may help providing insight in this relationship. In a documentary film on Inuit specific way of life in a small village — a film which is a piece of activism for the maintaing of Inuit peculiar practices and identity, as explained below, see p. 71 — an Inuit community stages the social practices surrounding whale hunting (Bulbulian, 1983; see also figure 5, p. 18). Members of the community gather and share the whale meat in an egalitarian way, reaffirming social bonds and thus sustaining the social group symbolically as well as materially — for the whale provides essential nutrients to survive in the Winter. Interviewed Inuit insist that nothing the whale can provide is wasted, so that is has not been hunted in vain. The whale is described as the animal which offers all necessary resources for living in the traditional Inuit way. An Inuit elder narrating this immediately goes on to explain what



**Figure 5:** This picture depicts an important moment following every successful whale hunt in Inuit villages: the whale is brought ashore and the whole community gathers to greet the crew and eat some of the whale. It is cut into parts and every family of the community receives a part, making sure no one is forgotten and none of the meat is wasted. Doing so, the close link between the Inuit of the collectivity *nuna* and between the Inuit themselves is entertained and reaffirmed.

Source: Yardley, 2001

*nuna* is, the transition between the two justified by the fact that as a resourceful and even essential being for Inuit life, the whale is a good symbol for *nuna*. The association between *nuna* and the whale is also made in ancient cosmological tales, as related during the 1981 Elder's Conference. As in many Inuit cosmological myths, there are no strict borders between nature and human life — animals being born from human beings, human beings being born from the Earth or from the mating of a human being with a non-human animal. One of the Inuit elders tells a story in which a huge cataclysm happens, flooding the whole surface of the Earth (Elder's Conference, 1981). The last surviving human beings, a couple of Inuit, are thus doomed to wander in a kayak, waiting for solid ground ("*nuna*") to surface again. *Nuna* does emerge periodically, for mountain peaks discreetly pop up at the surface and immediately go back in the deep waters, just as a sea mammal would do. At one point a hunter succeeds in harpooning *nuna* when it comes close to the surface and from this what is today known as the Earth, "*nuna*" emerges. *Nuna* is thus analogous to a whale as well as to the solid ground here, offering itself to the deserving hunter and providing resource for human life.

This tale makes clear two characteristics of the Inuit cultural specific way of conceptualizing and behaving in their environment: that of holistic thinking and that of cosmocentrism.

## 2.2 A holistic thinking

In his aforementioned 1980 article disputably identifying Inuit *nuna* with First Nation's notion of "Mother Earth", Savard aims at distinguishing between two broad modes of ontologically relating to the land in Northern America. First, a Western mode in which the land is divisible and subject to ownership, and second, an indigenous one in which the land is included in a broader whole including human beings on the same footing as non-human animals and what a Western observer would *a priori* classify as inanimate entities. *Nuna*, a notion at the core of the relationship of the Inuit with their spatial and living environment, therefore has to be understood within the Inuit peculiar ontology, as has been highlighted by several authors. Purich explains that "the Inuit, like other Aboriginal people, see land as a part of the larger whole that is part of life itself. Land is part of the community." (Purich, 1992, p. 67). Therrien also states that *nuna* includes "human beings, animals, landscape configurations, seasons, and even the invisible beings which may always be met"<sup>6</sup> (Therrien, 1999, p. 46, my translation); this is confirmed by Amagoalik in the sentence quoted above (see p. 14), in which he places "the land, the animals, and the fish in the waters" on the same footing, all united in *nuna*, a unique encompassing element comprising living beings (human and non-human) and non-living terrestrial elements which are resources for the life of others.

Collignon, working with Inuinnait people<sup>7</sup>, tries to make a sharper distinction between two potential meanings of *nuna*. This term has meaning on two different scales, helping understand the relationship of Inuinnait with the land. On a first scale, that of human beings' experience, *nuna* is the substratum on which *umajuit* lives — *umajuit* being all human beings, animals and mythical living beings. *Nuna* and *umajuit* are not opposed, according to Collignon, but rather complementary, and they are always thought of as integrated together. On a second and broader scale, that of the whole universe, *umajuit* is included *within nuna*— the latter being an encompassing entity which the universe comprises along with the sky, the air, etc. (Collignon, 2002, p. 49).

To sum up this idea, Jessen Williamson uses a category created by Mark Nuttall and writes on Inuit *nuna* as a "total habitat": the Inuit materially and symbolically live in a "total habitat" including the sea, the ice, the mountains, the air, the animals, fish, and even souls and memories of events and the people who lived in the past" (Jessen Williamson, 2006, p. 19). Many authors thus consider *nuna* as incarnating the holistic aspect of the Inuit ontology; as Joliet puts it, "Inuit cosmology relies on a holistic conception of beings (living world) and things (non-living)"<sup>8</sup> (Joliet, 2015, p. 3). Huse also

<sup>6</sup>"les humains, les animaux, les configurations du paysage, les saisons, et même les êtres invisibles que l'on est toujours susceptible de croiser"

<sup>7</sup>Previously known as "Copper Eskimo", Inuinnait live in Central Canadian Arctic.

<sup>8</sup>"la cosmologie inuit repose sur une conception holiste des êtres (monde vivant) et des choses (non

shows that there is no division, in Inuit ontology, between what Westerners may label “nature” and “culture”: “Inuit culture does not make the divisions, distinctions and dichotomies that we make between man and nature, man and animals. Inuit culture exists “in” nature, while our Western culture exists “apart” from nature” (Huse, 2005, p. 111).

By “holism”, what authors mean is that Inuit ontology has a propensity to integrate together in encompassing entities many elements that Westerners would rather separate. Hamelin defines Inuit holism by stating that *nuna*, the land inhabited and known by the Inuit, is symbolically structured so that it “is expressed through a type of philosophical holism where the ‘whole-ist’ aspect prevails over the differentiation of the components”<sup>9</sup> (in Giguère, 2012, my translation). For the Inuit, human beings are therefore not conceived as separate from their environment; there is no such thing as an essential separation between man and nature. This holism logically entails that territorial or environmental concepts such as *nuna* and *sila* display a large and equivocal range of meanings. Laugrand and Oosten, make it clear, after putting the emphasis on how such notions may have seen their meanings evolve along history — and more especially when Inuit interacted with people such as missionaries: “Nuna and Sila appeared as encompassing agencies in spatial as well as in temporal perspectives” (Laugrand, Oosten, 2010, p. 166). However, this does not mean that they are senseless, least non-significant, since they display the “inherent flexibility of Inuit categories in organizing and reorganizing the feature of non-human beings” (*ibidem*, p. 150). Such notions are thus characteristic of the Inuit way of thinking.

### 2.3 A cosmocentric worldview

Not only is Inuit cultural thinking defined by its holistic dimension, but it is also characterized by its cosmocentrism. Cosmocentrism, from “cosmos”, that is, Greek “order” and Latin “world”, means that the Inuit system of representations centers around the non-human world rather than on the human beings. This characteristic has been proved among the Innu, an indigenous people of Labrador different from the Inuit but sharing with them a similar territorial imaginary. Using the works from Vincent (1989), Lacasse show that “the indigenous tradition is cosmocentric, to the extent that it is more centered on universe and nature to which man belongs”<sup>10</sup> (Lacasse, 2004, p. 37, my translation).

One of the most explicit phrasings about the peculiar relationship Inuit societies developed towards their land which highlights this cosmocentrism was coined by Brice-Bennett:

---

*vivant).*”

<sup>9</sup>“*ainsi structuré, ce substrat renouvelé [nuna, espace parcouru et habité par l’Inuit] s’exprime par un type de holisme philosophique où le caractère ‘ensembliste’ l’emporte sur celui de la différenciation des constituants.*”

<sup>10</sup>“*la tradition autochtone est cosmocentrique, en ce sens qu’elle est plus centrée sur l’univers et la nature auxquels appartient l’homme [...]*”

*“the land has long been, and still is, worked in complex and systematic ways. Along with a vast knowledge of places and animals, the Inuit of Labrador have also devised seasonal patterns and techniques of hunting, fishing, and trapping that, taken together, form a web of land use that weaves the land into the people’s lives, and their lives into the land” (Brice-Bennett, 1977, p. 325).*

In this quotation, Brice-Bennett makes it clear that among the Inuit, uses of the land and of the resources it provides are so inextricably imbricated in cultural practices that *nuna*, the inhabited, known or used land, is to be found at the very core of Inuit collective life. Beyond holism, focusing on *nuna* and on the land reveals the cosmocentrism which is a defining feature of the Inuit world. It is then radically different from the Western conception of the man–land relationship and therefore a crucial point to notice for anyone who wants to understand the Inuit perspective on their world and the way the Inuit think they take place in their environment. Collignon states that “the Inuit built up their relationship with a territory they cannot own for it contains them [...] it is not man which is in the center of the system, but *nuna*, the land, in the broad sense of the word (including *tariuq*, the sea)”<sup>11</sup> (Collignon, 1999a, p. 39-40, quoted by Collin, 2009, p. 3-4, my translation). In this sense, *nuna* is a term important for Inuit identity in several dimensions. It means the land occupied by the Inuit, and therefore is associated with a specific set of places and practices proper to Inuit groups. But it also is a notion referring to the peculiar Inuit conception of the world — and to their specific perspective on the world which surrounds them. *Nuna* therefore cannot be limited to mean “the place where the Inuit live or practice traditional activities”, even though this is a meaning commonly conveyed in mass media mainstream articles — see for instance the article written by Duchaine in *La Presse +*, 2016, associating *nuna* with “the Inuit territory” without mentioning the special relationship the Inuit maintain with this land, very different from the relationship a Western reader may have with the space she practices activities in.

To conclude, the question of cosmocentrism is important for conceptually framing Inuit identity since, as Lacasse phrases it, “it is man who belong to the land”, rather than the opposite — the latter being the most common view in the Western world (Lacasse, 2004, p. 37). This has of course concrete implications on the sense of belonging within Inuit communities; they may primarily feel a sense of belonging and attachment to the land, while Westerners may rather feel attached to such concepts as the nation.

---

<sup>11</sup>“*les Inuit construisent leur relation avec un territoire qu’ils ne peuvent s’appropriier puisqu’il les contient [...] ce n’est pas l’homme qui est au cœur du système mais nuna, la terre, au sens large du terme (qui inclut tariuq, la mer).*”

## Indigenous worldviews and contemporary problems

Following the analysis of Savard (1980), one may wonder whether the cultural specificities *nuna* reveals are actually widely spread among Americas' indigenous people rather than proper to the Inuit. I do not address this ambitious anthropological question in the present work, for my point here is to stress the characteristic of Inuit thinking for themselves, and to distinguish it from the Western worldview which it has interacted with through colonizing processes. However, it is worth noting that holism and cosmocentrism are also defining features of many indigenous peoples — see for instance Nakashima *et al.*, 2012. In fact, this might be one of the reasons why several authors have been calling for a reevaluation of indigenous traditional–ecological knowledge at a time when environmental changes threaten the sustainability of human inhabitation of the planet. Several anthropologists and philosophers have pointed out how Western industrialized societies might learn from societies which have retained so far a holistic and cosmocentric way of thinking themselves in their environment. In their report on “traditional knowledge” based on a comprehensive overview of literature in indigenous studies, Nakashima *et al.* thus point out that

*“In indigenous worldviews, however, [knowledge and practice, as well as rational and spiritual,] are combined in a holistic understanding of interaction with the surrounding environment” (Nakashima et al., 2012, p. 30).*

While today's Western and global political leaders seem to discover the virtues and necessity of sustainability, to think human beings not independently from their environment and putting natural landscapes and resources at the core of development politics might help paving the way towards social, environmental and economical sustainable future and transforming mentalities in order for everyone to get involved in the process.

The aforementioned distance between the Inuit natural–human nexus and the Western usual division between nature and culture also characterizes many Indigenous ontologies. It has been put forward in the famous book from anthropologist and philosopher Descola, “Beyond Nature and Culture” (2005).

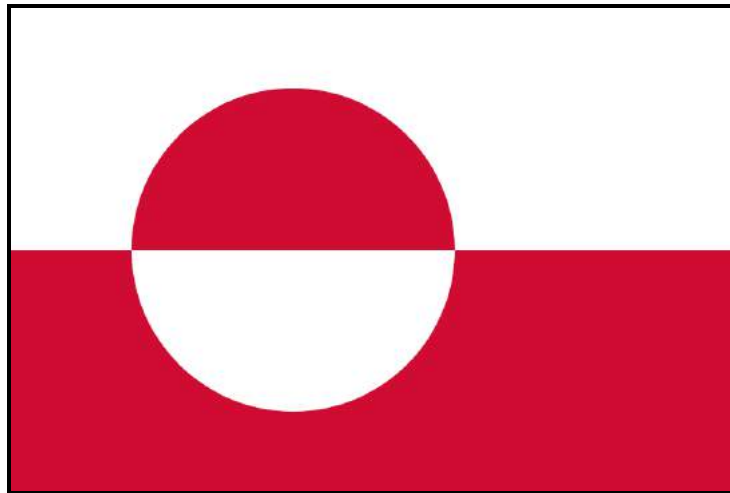
## 3 *Nuna*, a support for identity

### 3.1 Attachment and identification to the land

Holism as a cultural way of being in the environment and relating to it, that is, considering human beings on the same footage and not unseparated from their direct environment, has direct implications on individuals — and such has the aforementioned cosmocentrism. The worldview these two elements characterize entails a strong relationship with *nuna* which is felt by the Inuit; a relationship of identity follows from it. *Nuna* plays a role in Inuit communities — that is, social groups tied by specific bonds due to regular interactions and geographic proximity, therefore acquaintances and other social bonds. Inuit communities as such are part of *nuna*, for social practices — social ways of behaving, rituals, collective beliefs, etc. — are embedded in, and in relation with *nuna*. This is the case in the rituals surrounding hunting activities described earlier. Every Inuit individual, when engaging in everyday practices, may feel this relationship with *nuna*. *Nuna* is the reason why the game comes or does not come to the hunter; *nuna* is what one sees when getting out of her house; *nuna* is what allows the social group and each of its individuals to live and it unifies the community; it is the ultimate explanation for many rituals as well as the substratum on which all activities take place. Therefore, both at the community level and the (subsequent) individual level — the two being of course densely interlinked — the following statement from Amagoalik applies: “we are part of [*nuna*] as it is part of us” (Amagoalik, 2001, p. 9).

The extension of this local attachment to the land can be seen in the love for the landscape. Kleivan, writing on the Greenlandic flag, suggests that this love for the landscape might be one of the explanations for the choice of the Greenlandic flag — among numerous other reasons, often more strictly political. The flag is indeed thought to represent at the same time the rising and setting of the sun on the sea made of icebergs and the mountains typical of Greenland (Kleivan, 1988, p. 50). Elements of the physical landscape are depicted in both the Greenlandic flag (see figure 6, p. 24) and Nunavut’s coat of arms, while few other national symbols include them — one may think about the more metaphorical symbolism or arbitrary choices for the many flags striped with two or three colors, evocative of principles, institutions or political communities rather than of the landscape. The landscape thus *de facto* becomes a symbol for the national or territorial community and part of its identity, the very role of a flag being to represent and fuel identification to it.

There is a strong emotional attachment to the land often expressed in Inuit literature as well as in political discourses and even institutional statements. Far from the



**Figure 6:** *The flag of Greenland.*

*Kleivan (1988) describes how heated the political debate surrounding its choice was. In the end, the flag chosen is symbolic for Greenlandic typical landscape, distanced from the the Danish and other Scandinavian country's flags which depict crosses. "Thue Christiansen who had drawn the flag explained the symbolism by referring to the sun rising and setting like a red-hot ball over the mountains clad in white and painting the sea with the most beautiful colours." (Kleivan, 1988, p. 50)*

Source: *WikiCommons*, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/09/Flag\\_of\\_Greenland.svg/900px-Flag\\_of\\_Greenland.svg.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/09/Flag_of_Greenland.svg/900px-Flag_of_Greenland.svg.png)

Qallunaat cliché of a sterile and inhospitable land cursed with harsh climatic conditions, the Inuit perceive *nuna* as welcoming and generous, warmly beautiful rather than coldly splendid. This follows from the fact that every local Inuit community knows well the environment it inhabits, occupies or uses; through experience, this “ecumene” (from Greek *oikos*, “home”) gets to appear and being known as welcoming and providing all necessary resources. Berque defines the ecumene in a fruitful, though often sibyllin — if not cryptic — essay (Berque, 2000), renewing its classical meaning of “the inhabited part of the Earth”. Interestingly, this geographer rather develops the notion of “milieu” applied to human communities, and insists that there is an intimate unity which can be found, under specific conditions, between a community and the land it inhabits. The social group and the environment it lives in and off permeate each other; it stresses the fact that inhabiting, using and knowing a “natural” environment is a social process through which the structures and characteristics of both the social group and the environment are reciprocally altered. *Nuna* does quite well corresponds to the definition of the Inuit ecumene. Even though each Inuit community inhabits — and thus creates — its *nuna*, the similarities in this inhabiting as well as in the environments and Inuit communities which can be found all around the pole makes it meaningful to speak about *nuna* as the typical Inuit ecumene.

Since Inuit communities are to some extent tied to their close environment, Hamelin can state that “*nuna* is a term of identity” (in Chartier and Désy, p. 60) — in several dimensions which will be explored progressively in this dissertation, as this identity aspect



has actually come to be the core of *nuna*. First spur for an identification of the Inuit with their territory is that since *nuna* may refer to the region used and travelled through by individuals, families and communities to provide for their needs, these people get to be identified with this land. Correll (1976) states that *nuna* immediately evokes belonging and identity, because there is no Inuit who does not belong to her land. The vocable “*nuna*” is most often used and declined about belonging and identity. Using Briggs’ work with Inuvialuit, Correll explains that an Inuit, when describing herself, indicates her village or her geographical and linguistic community or origin — with the suffixe *-miut*. Thus, *Arviamiut* is “the one from Arviat”. However, it may also designate the place one considers as her home: “*Nuumi nunaqaapunga*”, “I am from Nome” (*ibidem*). The whole people inhabiting a common place is called *nunaqatigiit*, prompting Inuit communities to be defined by *nuna*.

Nuttall, in his 2001 article, explains that there is a specific identity base upon *locality* — that is, the close proximity with the immediate material, social and symbolic surroundings *felt* by the Inuit. It is one of the elements which may help distinguish between a more general national identity which, according to Nuttall, is less related to *nuna*— at least in Greenland:

*“Being a Kalaaleq may be based upon notions of belonging to Greenland, to a homeland, and having a Greenlandic history and culture, but being a Tasiusarmiog is based upon notions of belonging to Tasiusaq, being located on the social map of Tasiusaq, having a distinctive local history and culture, and having memories of past events that only happened in specific places” (Nuttall, 2001, p. 60).*

### 3.2 *Nuna* as the “authentic” land

In her 1996 work, Collignon provides a phrasing encapsulating the identity relationship to the land. Quoting from Inuinnait informants, she points out that it is only in the extent that they preserve *nuna*, that is, living in the Inuit land and adopting practices proper to the reciprocal relationship characterizing it — respecting its gaming, halieutic and symbolical balance — that they consider themselves as Inuit:

*“On the land, when we hunt and camp, we are Inuinnait. And then, we get back to the village, where we become Qallunaat”<sup>12</sup> (Collignon, 1996, p. 207, my translation)*

It has to be noticed that this discourse was that of Inuit settled in permanent villages. In their view, such settlement is not part of *nuna*: it is only when exiting the settlement that one enters *nuna* and can consider herself to be truly Inuit. It seems that Inuit identity is linked with the pre-settlement practicing and knowing of the territory. The stake raised here is that of *authenticity*. Identity basically relies on timeless permanence

<sup>12</sup>*“Sur le territoire, quand nous chassons et campons, nous sommes les Inuinnait. Et puis, nous rentrons au village, où nous devenons des Blancs.”*

— one’s identity precisely consists not only in the characteristics which are *proper* to the individual, but also characteristics which are considered to be *permanent* and not accidental. Inuit proper identity, that which does not change in the short term, relies on a definition of the territory and the relation to it which preceded settlement, and this can be understood in the two dimensions which make identity: first, it may seem more proper to the Inuit that today’s settlement for the latter was inspired — if not imposed — by the Qallunaat; second, it may seem more suitable to anchor collective identity than the settlement because it seems timeless and has been legitimized by centuries of everyday practice.

Brody also explains that the identification to the land may present some archaic traits — bringing to light the nomadic origin of such identity. Writing in the 1970s, he explains that “settlement Eskimos still identify themselves as the people of some place or other and, in answer to the conventional question, *Nani nunaqarpit?* (‘Where do you have land?’), a man will give a résumé of all the places he *has* ‘had land’”. Thus, Inuit living in settlements may indicate the place where their families used to regularly camp dozens of years ago (Brody, 1975, p. 127). According to Laneuville, before Inuit’s adoption of a sedentary lifestyle, a nuclear family would move between camps to find food and other resources. The territory a family was attached to therefore consisted in a region comprising several campsites rather than one specific place. “Having” this land did not mean more than being present in it and therefore passively prompting other families to avoid it in order to guarantee access to limited resources for everyone — this was in no way a sort of “owning” exclusive land rights (Laneuville, 2013, p. 11). *Nuna* thus helps identify someone out of the space she inhabits and exercises rights on, even though such rights are not exclusive and traditionally not formally defined.

This identification to the land is *internal*, that is, it is the Inuit who identify themselves with their land, considered as exceptional for it provides them with all the means to sustain a peculiar way of life. It has not to be confused with the *external* Qallunaat identification of the Inuit with what is thought to be “their land”, the Arctic. There is indeed an identification of the Inuit to their land made by Westerners, but it is often only made of clichés and linked to essentialist perspectives seeing the Inuit as a specific people for their land would be specific — and actually *extreme*, while the Inuit precisely do not consider their land as hostile or extreme, as Therrien insists (Therrien, 2012, ch. 1).

Jessen Williamson, working on Greenlandic Inuit, also states that among Greenlanders, there is a strong attachment as well as a strong feeling of belonging to the simultaneously geographic and linguistic area where one was born; *nuna* thus associates a localized place and a specific dialect with every Inuit (Jessen Williamson, 1992, p. 19). Working on Greenlanders as well, Nuttall, in his article on locality, identity and memory (Nuttall, 2001), highlights the fact that “locality remains an important marker of individual and

community identity” among the Inuit (2001, p. 53), and compares the senses of belonging relating to Greenland as a country and to a locality personally known and inhabited by the collectivity one belongs to:

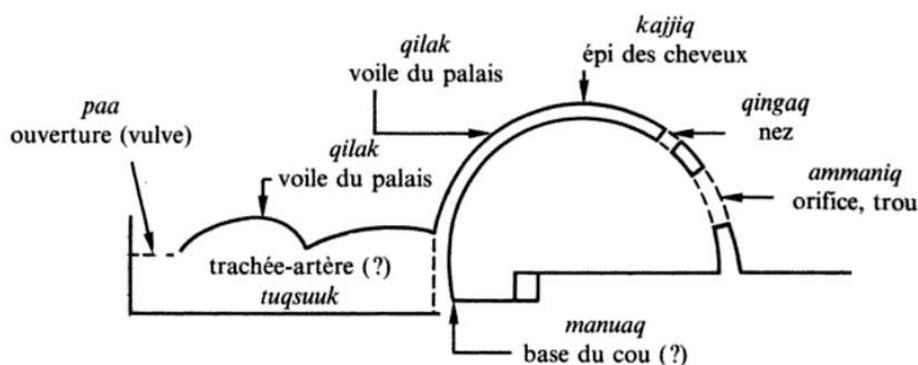
*“in the villages of south Greenland, ideas of identity and attachment to a local area, to nuna, the land, do figure prominently in everyday local discourse. Social relationships are crucial, of course, so that locality and feelings of attachment to the local landscape are markers of identity, rather than being the only or most dynamic ways through which identity is constructed.”* (Nuttall, 2001, p. 60).

This quotation points out that attachment to the land is an important marker of identity, though it has not to be overestimated as such: it is not the single one nor the “most dynamic”. As shown hereunder, one of the keys to understand it is the fact that this *territorial* identity is mediated by community attachment and identification. However, the strength of such an identification also proceeds from its anchorage not only among the human community, but also inside the human itself. Indeed, *nuna* is an idea in close acquaintance with the body, thus making the environment and living milieu *intimate* for Inuit.

### 3.3 The Inuit body as a territory

The strong and even intimate relationship the Inuit have with *nuna* is underlined by Therrien both in her handbook on Inuit (2012) and her account on the imagination and creation of Nunavut (1999). In the latter, she highlights that the intimate aspect of *nuna* can be seen in the literal *embodiment* of the environment by the Inuit. She states that language and words bear the traces of “the importance of the real and imaginary interactions between man and the environment, between the most intimate space — that of the body — and the vastest space, that of the outer world”<sup>13</sup> (Therrien, 1999, p. 49-52, my translation). There is an identification of the body with the land among Inuit societies; one of the most famous examples of it is the fact that when one suffers from intense fever, the family has to move, for the pathological warmth may be transferred to the land, or it may be that it is the land which is ill — and moving out is the only way to restore the Inuit health. Therrien also highlights the fact that the descriptive vocabulary used for the landscape is the same as the one used for the human body: rounded hills are called “heads”, mounts may be “bald”, etc. For Therrien, this signals the close proximity and “deep connection between the elements constituent of the univers and what is most precious for human beings” — his identity (*ibidem*). To quote from Dorais (2008, p. 12), this Inuit territoriality in which every one might use *nuna* as a support for identification can be framed as such: “everything is in everything, microcosm catching

<sup>13</sup>“L’importance des interactions réelles et imaginaires entre l’homme et son environnement, entre l’espace le plus intime, celui de son corps, et l’espace le plus vaste, celui du monde extérieur”.



**Figure 7:** A famous sketch from Therrien (1987) depicts the semantic analogy between the igloo — Inuit snowhouse — and the human body. The name of a part of the human body (notably the head) is associated with each part of the igloo. Even though applying to a house rather than *nuna* as the larger environment, it gives a good idea of how the landscape may similarly be perceived and understood from and through the body.

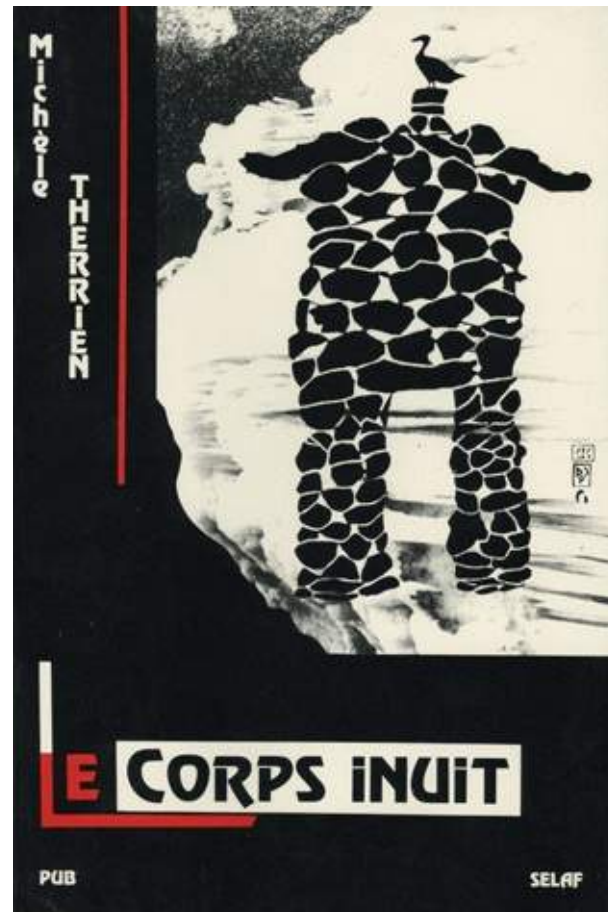
Source : Therrien, 1987, p. 28.

up with macrocosm inside the human being” — this “inside the human being” meaning inside the actual human *body*.

Anthropologist Michèle Therrien actually devoted several works to the analysis of “the Inuit body” (Therrien, *Le Corps Inuit*, 1987), describing the deep connections between the Inuit representations of the body and of the outer world. Each part of the body is related to all other parts, and to what lies outside of the body. The Inuit body thus plays the role of lenses through which the world is perceived and categorized, and thus *nuna* is understood by analogy to a living organism — that is, it *makes sense* as a living organism. This fuels the feeling of harmony between human beings and their milieu, and the sense of a deep unity of the social group included in *nuna*.

## Conclusion: a land to observe

As a first point, I have tried to define *nuna*, that is, to put forward the complexity inherent to such a definition. *Nuna* is a term the Inuit translate as “land” and apply to their own territory. In a first simplistic view, it might be seen as the extent of land on which the Inuit live, but deeper understanding makes it clear that the meaning of *nuna* cannot be restricted to such physical extension. When defining and observing “the land”, Inuit and Qallunaat definitely do not see the same thing. *Nuna* plays a important role in Inuit cosmology, being associated with other mythical entities and figures, and is actually at the very core of Inuit cosmology. It reveals a cosmology totally different from the one common in the Western world — and thus among the explorers and Southern inhabitants of Canada, the United States, Denmark of Russia, to quote some of the countries the nationals of which the Inuit have had to interact with for ages. *Nuna* is



**Figure 8:** Cover of Therrien's *Le Corps Inuit*, 1987. The *Inuksuk* is a symbol for the Inuit body to the extent that this pile of stones, disposed in Inuit landscapes, has a humanoid form, but also for it inhabits the landscape on a discontinuous while permanent basis, just as the Inuit themselves. (See section 8.1.3, p. 64, for specific analysis about the *inuksuk*)

“the land” comprising solid ground, sea ice, the nature, living and non-living beings — whether real or mythical — and therefore human beings among others, and all resources used to sustain life. The Inuit therefore see the land as an entity to be thought of on the same footage as human beings, the whole of it being at the very core of their worldview which does not rely on separation between what may be labeled as “human vs. natural” by Western observers. The notion itself is therefore a defining characteristic of the Inuit civilization. Brody sums up this importance in a telling phrasing: “the very idea of land permeates Inuit culture” (Brody, 2000, p. 15).

### ***Nuna*, a notion as implicit as it is fundamental**

Paradoxically, the vocable “*nuna*”, while at the core of the Inuit worldview, is not very frequent in the ancient Inuit tales recorded by early explorers and anthropologists. No in-depth observation or study of this term and its meaning has been led until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the work of contemporary anthropologist and cultural geographers (see for instance the aforementioned works of Brody, Saladin d’Anglure, Therrien, Collignon). As soon as in 1976, Arima suggests an explanation for this in the famous Friedman report on *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project* — a huge collection and mapping of the land the Inuit have inhabited and the practices attached to it, as well as of souvenirs and tales regarding the land. Arima makes the hypothesis that the absence of *nuna*— for instance in the tales narrated by the Inuit interviewed for the *Project* — means that the concept of *nuna* is actually as implicit as it is omnipresent. It is permanently implied in Inuit tales, it is the lenses through which they see the world but which are difficult to be taken as object themselves for it requires reflexivity to a degree hardly ever required in everyday life. Therefore *nuna* is actually as fundamental as it is *blatantly* absent from ancient accounts on Inuit lives (Arima, 1976, p. 220).

Taking into consideration not only “the land” as space but also its plural potential definitions as well as its embedding of social practices is a necessity in order to understand *nuna*. To the extent that this land is a defining feature for a community, this moves the focus of analysis from *territory* to *territoriality* — from the land as belonging to, and therefore defining a group, to the way this group *considers* the land and is defined by this very consideration and definition of what the land is.

The Arctic environment has long been a place where different territorialities met and opposed, where different groups had to negotiate not only the owning and uses of the land but also, jointly, their very definitions of the land. *Nuna*, the Inuit Arctic, is such a place where Western and Inuit territorialities have met, conflicted and arranged.

## Part II

# *Nuna*, a concept at the crossroads of Inuit and Western conflicting territorialities

In his 2001 article already mentioned, Légaré states that “ ‘identity’ [...] is in its essence a social construct: one’s own conscious identity is a product of one’s meeting with different forms of others’ identities” (Légaré, 2001, p. 145). In this respect, I have tried to investigate to what extent an Inuit identity could have been built while interacting with the “Qallunaat” — that is, the White, as the Inuit call them, meaning White people they have interacted with, often from Western colonial powers — whether Danish, Canadian or American. While interacting and often conflicting with Qallunaat, the Inuit have claimed and imposed their specific identity, beyond the limits of their localized social groups. One of the grounds on which this identity building happened is that of territorial disputes and land claims in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The distance between Inuit and Qallunaat territorial representations served as a catalyser for Inuit identification.

## 4 Diverging territorialities in the Arctic

The Arctic is often known as a disputed space — the conflict between Norway and Russia over Svalbard or the everlasting dispute over the ownership of the North Pole are recent examples of geopolitical debates through which the Arctic made the headlines as a coveted space. However, as explained previously, for the Inuits who have inhabited it for the longest time, the Arctic is more than just “space”. Conflicts about ownership of the land which have opposed indigenous peoples and colonial powers and then Western (or, from the Inuit point of view, “Southern”) governments reveal disputes about the very nature of the land and the legitimacy to define its uses. This is why the conflicts which arose around land claims in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century ought not to be labelled just as “territorial conflict”, as if it was only disputes over whom was to own the land, but rather are “territoriality conflicts” in which it is the very definition of the land and the modalities of its inhabiting which are at stake.

The peculiar meaning of *nuna* and the extent to which it differs from such terms as “land” or “territory” into which it is often translated is obvious in the misunderstanding between the Inuit and governments they have been conflicting with. First, the famous “land claims” to which the Inuit claims for sovereignty have often been reduced. Not only

do parties debate over the owning of territorial rights, but their opinions often also diverge over the very nature of such rights — that is, the very basis of what should be debated. Second, the perspectives the Inuits and the West have on the Arctic are largely divergent, proving the Arctic to be disputed even as a *discursive* space.

#### 4.1 Integrated space vs. separated space

For the Inuit, *nuna* is fundamentally a coherent and indivisible whole. Its strictly spatial aspect is only one of its accidental dimensions. *Nuna* cannot be separated from the community of living beings, nor from an individual who lives on it; no one owns *nuna*, and no Inuit can even imagine *nuna* to be ever exclusively owned. On the contrary, in Western modern societies, the land can be owned, sold and bought. The difference between the two, which was already expressed earlier with the idea that the Inuit belong to the land rather than the (Qallunaat) opposite also has implications when it comes to the concrete and pragmatic question of land rights. According to Polanyi's thesis in *The Great Transformation*, the commodification of the land (which he dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosure in England) was one of the major bases for the transformation of social and economic institutions in the West, paving the way for what is known as the “modern” market economy and related nation state (Polanyi, 1944, ch. 6-7). Considering the land as a commodity — even though a “fictitious” one, according to Polanyi, for the market fails to fully take their characteristics into account and to reflect them in prices — has been a constant in the Western world since. It has even been a defining feature of what “the West” meant when it was built as a political “bloc” of countries during the Cold War: Western governments distanced themselves from the Eastern Bloc and notably from its emblematic collectivization of the means of production, including the land. Western countries also brought this focus on private property of the land in the territories they colonized. Private property of the land implies a formal conception of space, its divisibility and the existence of exclusive rights essentially attached to it. It is on this premise that Qallunaat governments — especially in Canada and Alaska — have tried to negotiate with the Inuit populations in order to settle the disputes over the disputed occupation and uses of the land.

There is a fundamental disjunction here between the parties, for the Inuit do not even have a noun substantive to mean land property. Therrien mentions that Canadian Inuit actually had to create a neologism in Inuktitut while negotiating with Canada's government, for *nuna* could not apply to what was at stake in the negotiation. Therefore the word *nunaquti* was invented, based on but distinct from *nuna*, and meaning “the land which is possessed by rights”<sup>14</sup> (Therrien, 2012, p. 62, my translation). Researchers have focused on the same aspect in the Innu language. The Innu, formerly known as

---

<sup>14</sup>“le territoire possédé en propre.”



Montagnais, are a people living close to the Inuit, in Quebec and Labrador; they have a closely related territorial conception, but they do speak a different language as they ethnically belong to the Cree group. In the Innu language, there is no word for property or territory — land that is appropriated, either materially or symbolically. According to Vincent and Mailhot (1983), the idea of belonging is expressed in such words as *tipenitam*, which means “being in control of”, but also “being responsible for” and “taking care of”, as well as “matching, fitting in”. Applied to the land, this verb expresses the close relationship between human beings and the spatial entity they occupy. A second verb used in order to translate English “belonging to” is *kanauenitam*, literally “caring for, being careful of”. Language here makes it obvious that Indigenous peoples in Northern Quebec do not associate land with ownership, exclusive rights, unilateral use, domination nor conquering. The land is not known as a formal and divisible entity, it can not be owned, sold or bought. Savard tells this phrase from an Innu elder who is incredulous when explained the Western idea of landowning and property rights: “you cannot weigh a pound [of the land] in order to sell it” (quoted in Lacasse, 2004, p. 40).

The Inuit and Qallunaat therefore have different ways of referring to the land and develop different relationships to it. This can be seen with *nuna*, which does not exist on the abstract perspective of a cadastre, nor as a formal entity which might be bought, sold or even owned. It only exists in the relationship with the people inhabiting it, it is more a web of practices and representations than a geographical space. The wide gap between these two conceptions of what land is, is made obvious when the territorialities get in conflict with each other. Among the traces left by such conflicts, there is what may be called a “territoriality crisis” in several Inuit societies.

## 4.2 Territoriality crisis within Inuit societies: the lost *nuna*

The relationship of the Inuit to their land has to adapt to new situations — whether the changes be physical or pertain to representations, and this adaptation is not realized without frictions. Inuit territoriality may be threatened, damaged and even destroyed, as it has been the case in the late centuries. There were tragic impacts on Inuit communities: on communities as such, on the Inuit civilization itself and on individuals. *Nuna*, identified with the relationship between the Inuit and the Arctic environment, has been damaged since the settlement of Inuit populations in permanent villages — and damaged to such an extent that Inuit and external observers have feared that *nuna* as a relationship and the space it defines be lost for good. Thus one may understand the characterization of *nuna* as a *traditional* territory, which was put in place before the settlement period. Still today, Inuit may consider that only this link to the space out of the villages and only these periods when they go “out” hunting or fishing without being tied to a permanent

settling are the most prominent elements of their distinctive identity.

Colonial authorities from Denmark, Canada and the USA have encouraged Inuit settlement in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Several reasons may be given for this historical set of politics, from sincere concerns about Inuit health and well-being (their gathering in places with easy access guaranteeing better assistance and services provision if needed) to more cynical motives of affirming national sovereignty on Arctic territories (see for instance Amagoalik, 2012, p. 39, on the relocation of some Inuit from Nunavik to the High Arctic). Brody explains that “great pressure was put on Eskimos to move [...] informal and diverse, both as attractions (medical services, housing, proximity to store and church) and threats (no camp schools, illness in the camps)” (Brody, 1975, p. 167). Inuit were offered cheap housing in newly created settlements, and often found themselves tied to this housing because welfare support and social care was conditioned to such inhabitation. As Brody explains it, “the move was acknowledgement both of the Eskimos’ dependence on the Whites’ goods and services, and White hegemony over social, economic and moral life” (*ibidem*). Thus, there was a definite loss of some preexistent characteristics and elements of self-identification in this major move. Its colonial aspect was reinforced when colonial authorities decided to uproot young Inuit and to send them to boarding schools in the South. These controversial decisions have infuriated Inuit peoples until today, and Western governments have been compelled to make excuses for the trauma this inflicted on Inuit youth which were moved, their families who stayed North and the communities at large, for the latter’s spirit and practices continuation was ruined. By physically uprooting young Inuit, the idea was to “kill the Inuit in the child” (to misquote the famous phrase “kill the Indian in the child”, sadly representative of such initiatives) by crushing the link to the community and the territory. Inuit who were taken from their land have expressed their subsequent identity traumas since, and more specifically their inability to feel “at home” in their land of origin. Rogers thus explains that excuses from Canadian government are a necessary precondition for the uprooted Inuit to have a “chance to live on this land with some feeling of wholeness and integrity” (Rogers, 2012, p. 8). In the same collection of essays on residential schools, Wagamese explains that after having been taken to Western schools in the South, he “returned to the land of [his] people as a stranger” (Wagamese, 2012, p. 157) — stranger to the people and stranger to the land itself. To the extent that *nuna* is a certain relationship with the land which is effective only when concretely exercised, this was to a great extent lost during the period of settlement.

In an article based on long-term ethnographical work, Collignon (2001) analyses the effects in an Inuit community of the settling down in single-room permanent houses. She focuses on the change in domestic space which entailed a crisis in Inuit cultural identity, for the prevailing identity was in harmony with a certain spatial organization of everyday life, the structures of which were drastically changed when moving to permanent settlements.

Collignon subtly describes how gender relations were affected by such a change in micro-territoriality; traditional masculine role implied spending lot of time outside, while solid houses predisposed men to stay more inside — especially when coupled with easier access to subsistence. Thus, she highlights the fact that it is the prevalent relationship with “*nuna*”, understood as the traditional Inuit space of activities, which was threatened, if not lost. Both from a cultural and gender perspective, men’s identities were threatened by these changes.

However, the meaning of “*nuna*” goes beyond the wild environment and the physical proximity with it. The meaning of this vocable has evolved along history, and Inuit have proved capable of reinterpreting it and recreating specific territorialities. More that strict cultural deprivation — even if this might have been the unsaid project of some politicians along history — the Inuit have acculturated to the Qallunaat way of life and adapted their practices and representations, notably those regarding *nuna*. What has been lost is the one relationship which prevailed for long before the settlement period, and the familiarity with land practices regarded as traditional. However, *nuna* means more than this outside and natural territory on which the Inuit go or went hunting and fishing and trapping; the pessimistic discourse on the “loss” of identity may have been originating in prominent but non-representative voices, either Qallunaat exoticizing the Inuit, or Inuit political leaders dramatizing their condition. Inuit youth have built some new peculiar ways of inhabiting the land, and thus made another version of *nuna* emerge — see for instance Collignon (1999a). There exists an everlasting specific relationship with the land is explained hereunder; further analysis of the evolution of the notion of *nuna* and its historical reinterpretation is proposed further down, section 8.2.

### 4.3 Inuit territoriality: everlasting peculiarities

Inuit *territoriality*, that is, the relationship the Inuit have with the land they inhabit, strongly differs from the Western one, up to this day. It is not a peculiarity of so-called “traditional” Inuit societies — an adjective which has to be cautiously used for it is often a way of naturalizing and fixing a set of characteristics historically accidental — and it is still relevant to understand the way Inuit perceive and inhabit the world today. Laneuville provides a good example of this in an article analyzing the perception of land in a contemporary Inuit community at Baker Lake, Nunavut — their old-time space of living affected by the development of a mining project. The Inuit have retained the original relationship linking them to the land, even though its expression has adapted to a new reality. They interpret the new facilities — especially the new road — as accidental elements, doomed not to last long. They put today’s elements in a wider long-term perspective, and thus for instance they consider the mining complex as a temporary nuisance which cannot in itself

affect much caribou migrations in the long run. Moreover, new facilities do not change the way the Inuit look at their environment and know the places. Collective memory retains the meaning associated with places, whatever is built on them — one of the most telling examples from Laneuville’s paper is that of the burial ground where ancestors lay, which is now under the new collective kitchen. Even though the formal characteristics of the territory have changed, the Inuit from Baker Lake retain their particular territoriality — which is defined by the author as follows: “on the social perspective, territoriality expresses the link between a human group and the space it occupies — space that is shared between the members of this group through communication and cooperation”<sup>15</sup> (Laneuville, 2014, p. 201, my translation). *Nuna* is defined by a specific relationship to the environment frequented by a social group, and this relationship is made up of social practices (practices proper to the community) which have a certain generality and remain quite stable over time. Therefore *nuna* exists only to the extent that it is perpetuated in collective life, and it has a spatial extension only when this spatial extension — with all the resources it hosts — is used and constitutes the substratum for collective life.

This territoriality may be transferred from a territory of origin to a new living space, helping uprooted Inuit to (re)constitute community. Kushawa’s PhD thesis focuses on the way Inuit may retain their specific territoriality when moving from one place to another. The practices which are at the core of *nuna* and the sense of community which emerges from it can survive when Inuit move from the place they lived in and identified to in the Arctic to another one. Kushawa explains that in a southern and urban environment, Inuit individuals retain relationship and community bonds through territorial anchorage and common appropriation of space — notably through establishing indigenous community centers in southern cities such as Toronto (Kushawa, 2013, p. 5-6). A sense of community belonging among emigrated Inuit may thus emerge, far from the Arctic, enhanced by common territoriality and territorial occupation on a community basis.

## 5 From territorial to territorialities’ conflicts

Inuit peculiar thinking about the land makes their claims hardly reconcilable with the expectations from Western colonial governments. Therrien describes *nuna* as “an unalienable common good”, and states that “according to Inuit traditions, symbolic appropriation is preferred to physical appropriation in practice, which means that the individual or the familial group cannot claim to ‘possess by rights’ land, which is defined out of a mode of occupying and collectively exploiting. [While] for the governments, land is an extent depending upon a State — or another jurisdiction legally recognized — and is usually

---

<sup>15</sup>“*au plan social, la territorialité exprime d’abord le lien entre un groupe humain et l’espace qu’il occupe, espace partagé entre les membres de ce groupe au moyen de la communication et de la coopération.*”

individually or collectively appropriated.”<sup>16</sup> (Therrien, 1999, p. 45, my translation).

In this light, the conflicts which emerged around so-called “land claims” are less “territorial conflicts” than “territorialities’ conflict”, opposing different relationships with and visions of the land.

## 5.1 The land which is to be claimed

Taking this divergence of territorialities into account, one can measure how large the gap of misunderstanding is between the Inuit and Western populations who often sum up their demands as “land claims”, implying that what is at stake in such conflicts is just a matter of property rights. One of the clearest examples displaying what may be really at stake can be found with Northern Quebec Inuit and the territory which is now known as Nunavik. As Légaré tells it (Légaré, 1993), at the end of the Seven Years’ War between French and British coalitions, the Great Britain issued the 1763 Royal Proclamation which granted lands to First Nations’ peoples — but the Inuit were not subject of the proclamation. The lands they lived on either formally belonged to Canada and Quebec or to private companies — such as the Hudson’s Bay Company which owned most of today’s Nunavik. For centuries, only few Western explorers, missionaries and trappers would dare to venture in the Inuit Arctic. There was no competition over resources sufficient to lead to major conflicts which could have made it necessary to formally decide what could be done by whom at which place. The economic activities and networks between the Inuit Arctic and southern Canada intensified from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century on. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Quebec’s government and entrepreneurs began to develop a huge hydro-electric industrial project known as the James Bay project. Hydro-Québec, a state-owned utility, was to build up giant infrastructures in Northern Quebec in order to produce electricity and to transport it to southern Quebec, inducing the diversion of rivers crossed and used by local Inuit populations so far. The latter took legal action in order to make have their rights over Northern Quebec recognized. It led to the approval of the 1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement which settled what is known as Northern Quebec “land claims” between Canada, Quebec, Hydro-Quebec and Cree and Inuit organizations. In this agreement, Northern Quebec’s lands are divided into three categories, each one corresponding to a greater or lesser amount of rights on the land for the Inuit (from category 1 lands, a small minority of Northern Quebec’s surface, which are exclusively reserved for the use of

<sup>16</sup>“*un bien collectif inaliénable*”/ “*selon la tradition inuit, les pratiques privilégient l’appropriation symbolique au détriment de l’appropriation physique, ce qui signifie que l’individu ou le groupe familial ne peut pas prétendre ‘posséder en propre’ un territoire, défini à partir de modes d’occupation et d’exploitation collectifs. [Alors que] pour la partie gouvernementale, un territoire représente une étendue qui dépend d’un État, ou d’une autre juridiction légalement reconnue, et qui fait habituellement l’objet d’une appropriation individuelle ou collective*”

indigenous peoples, to category 3 lands where the authority is shared between indigenous and southern authorities). In exchange for the recognition by the Inuit of the limitation of their rights on Northern Quebec, they received financial compensation which is to be managed by Makivik Corporation. This division of the land has been opposed by some Inuit, namely ITN (Inuit Tungavingat Nunamini), an organization of “dissidents” which was formed in order to oppose the agreement. ITN members detailed their opposition in a 1977 brochure in which Qumaq, the Inuit intellectual and activist already mentioned on p. 12, explains that “our land, for thousands of years, has belonged to all those who have used them”<sup>17</sup> (Qumaq, 1977, p. 79, my translation). ITN opposed the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement for its members could not conceive that the land be divisible in separate territories with differential access and use rights, nor did they accept the cession of land in exchange for money. According to their vision, sticking to the strict Inuit ontological acceptance of what *nuna* is, dividing the territory into small saleable parts meant the extinction of the Inuit land as such — that is, a vast integrated land on which the Inuit move and which they use and occupy on a discontinuous basis.

The debates and negotiation processes which led to the signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement were part of the larger process of territorial and sovereignty negotiations between the Inuit and the governments of Quebec and Canada. After the specific case of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, similar questions emerged when negotiating the creation of Inuit “territories” — the status of such geo-political spaces being at the core of the debate — in Northern Canada, Northern Quebec, but also Greenland. When negotiating the “land”, it is a recognition of *nuna* in all its subtleties that the Inuit claim. They refuse the strict territorial acceptance of the land imposed by Western powers because Inuit populations have been inhabiting the land, even on a nomadic basis, for long, and thus they claim to have been the first to occupy it and want this occupation recognized; but they also refuse it because the very way the land is defined in Western treaties cannot suit their worldview. This can be seen in the fact that Inuit organizations claim rights over the sea ice as well as dry land. Depending on the season, sea ice, as well as the waters near to the coast, are indeed essential hunting grounds for the Inuit, just as the inner land can be. Their very survival has long depended on their ability to fish in ice holes or venture on sea ice to hunt walrus — two of the activities which have remained as most iconic and therefore strongly associated with Inuit identity. In a 1981 paper, Makivik Corporation, which represents Quebec’s Inuit and administers the compensation funds they received for settling land claims, notes that the Inuit are “a coastal people” and that keeping them out of Arctic seas management and recognizing them territorial rights only on dry land is “unjustifiable” (Makivik Corporation, 1981, p. 36-37, my translation).

---

<sup>17</sup> “*Nos terres, depuis des millénaires, appartiennent à tous ceux qui les utilisent.*”

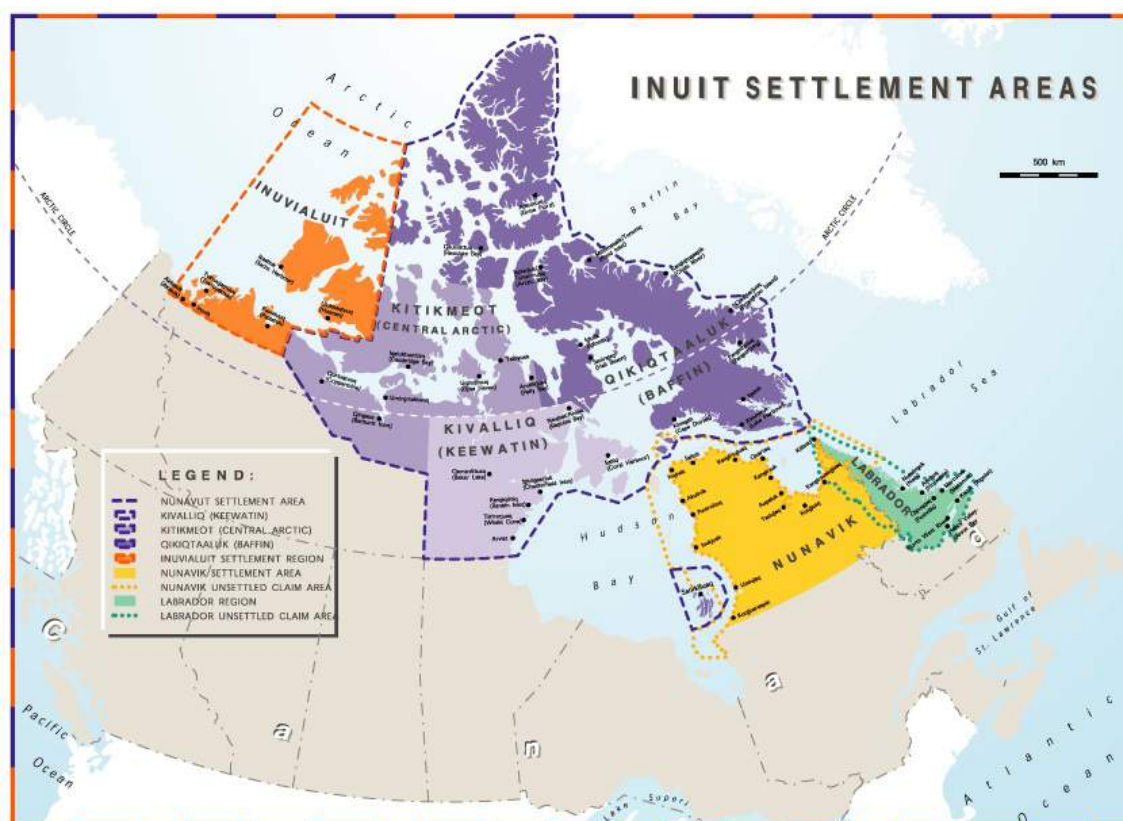
## 5.2 The political stakes behind territorial negotiations

The asymmetrical acceptations of the “land” that is to be negotiated can also be seen in the question of the political power that the Inuit wanted to negotiate jointly with the territorial space. Considering *nuna*, which integrates geographical space as well as community practices and more general relationships with all resources and the cosmological order of the world, the Inuit logically could not separate the question of the governance of the communities from that of the uses of the land. This was one of the everlasting debate over so-called “land claims” in Canada, for the question of Inuit political autonomy was inherently linked to it, making these debates even more complex. Purich explains it while describing the process of claiming Nunavut in the 1970s:

*“[For the Inuit,] land is part of the community. Therefore, to separate land rights from political rights was to them artificial [while for] the federal government [...] property is something separate and apart from the community” (Purich, 1992, p. 67).*

The governments from Quebec and Canada tried to separate the political and territorial questions, offering to settle land claims before turning to the political governance of today’s Nunavut and Nunavik. What Purich makes clear here is that *nuna* being thought to be a part of the Inuit community, the latter would lose its identity if losing its political rights over the land. There can be no self-determination if there is no land on which it applies, for the Inuit community does not exist without *nuna*. Last detail highlighting the role of the Inuit interpretation of the land in the negotiation process, Inuit organizations claimed — and to some extent obtained — *collective* governance over the land. One of the aspects of *nuna* is that of a collective experience, always anchored in a community of shared knowledge and social practices. The Inuit Commission on National Issues (ICNI) thus made it clear in a 1980 brief to the Parliament that “the collective nature of such rights is of vital importance to Aboriginal peoples since their property rights are generally held in such manner” (ICNI, 1980, p. 24).

Nuttall (2001, p. 66) describes how the claims were settled concretely. Different solutions were found for the different territories and negotiations processes. In 1979, Greenland internal autonomy was granted by the Danish Crown, recognizing Kalaallit Nunaat as an autonomous and unified territory — jointly political, geographical and demographical. Greenlandic laws apply to all Greenland residents, whether Kalaallit or Danish. On the contrary, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971 or the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Act in 1993 were established on ethnoracial grounds; they were negotiated with Inuit organizations as such. About Nunavut, it is only in 1999 that it fully became a territory on a geographical basis. Nunavik is a more complex case, for the 1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement settled land claims with Quebec Natives, but the question of an autonomous government surprisingly stumbled on the 2011 referendum when the inhabitants of the region rejected the proposal for a regional government.



**Figure 9:** Inuit settlement areas in Canada, with the populations inhabiting them and unsettled claim areas. Source: Makivik Corporation, <http://www.makivik.org/fr/nunavik-maps/>

### 5.3 Negotiating land, negotiating identity

These negotiations formed the background for a Western recognition of the Inuit as such. As Martin explains it for another Arctic people, the Gwich'in of Alaska, the beginning of the Inuit history in the eye of the West was the signing of such agreements as the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (Martin, 2016, p. 65). It formalized the existence of peoples which could be recognized as acceptable negotiating partners for they fitted into Western categories, on the basis of the common ground found for the negotiations. The debates among *what* had to be negotiated were crucial, and may have proved unsatisfactory for the Inuit, but the signing of agreement brought the Inuit to existence as political actors in the eye of the West and international organizations. Protest and political movements which formulated claims were the very starting point of a new definition of the Inuit — an institutional one, built towards and against the Qallunaat — a definition largely fitting Western ordinary institutions. Just as the identity built by the Gwich'in when they formally organized to oppose territorial exploitation, Inuit organizations — such as Makivik, Inuit Tapirisat Kanatami, etc. — were to define Inuit identity for the rest of the world. The most stable, institutionalized, and perhaps well-known aspect of the Inuit collective, the better-know, is indeed that of these organizations, created in con-



tact with the Qallunaat. It definitely changed the Inuit internal identity as well, as for the Gwich'in, for instance enhancing new contacts and collaboration between Inuit communities inside national boundaries (Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 63 and 69). Important factors of the definition of Inuit identity — such as the media funded by Makivik Corporation — thus emerged out of a dialectical process which shaped Inuit self-definition by reflection from an external characterization of their existence.

Negotiating the land was also an opportunity for negotiating the way the land would be handled afterward — and when Inuit succeeded in making their claim for self-government recognized, they could indeed handle land rights the way they wanted it. It is worth noting that in many Inuit communities, once the land had been successfully claimed and land rights recognized, the land was not separated in formal parts sold to individuals. Thus Inuit communities could formally infuse in land management the peculiar idea of *nuna* as a space for material and collective practices rather than formal and individual ownership. In Nunavik and Nunavut, land rights are to be managed by regional organizations, and their role is often limited to making sure every Inuit family has an equal access to the land. Dahl develops the same explanation about Saqqaq community in Greenland (Dahl, 2000, p. 157-173):

*“Territorial rights [...] are collective or communal rights [...]; rights to the land, the ice, or the water might be bestowed on the individual as a member of the collectivity [...]. Seen from inside the community, the right to use and have access to the territory and the right to participate in the hunt is the same for all members of the community. There is nothing to monopolize for oneself or one’s family” — under the condition that one abides by this community’s rules (Dahl, *op. cit.*, p. 157).*

To the extent that negotiating the recognition of Inuit land rights was a way to apply such specific and *collective* rights to the land, negotiating the land was indeed a way of negotiating Inuit collective identities.

When summarizing the negotiation processes and outcomes, Therrien (2012, p. 101-105) highlights that Inuit expectations were often not satisfactorily met. The great steps made in the 1970s — the signing of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, that of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, then the granting of Home Rule to Greenland — were thought of by the Inuit as meaning autonomy from the Qallunaat, and indigenous populations hoped it would help improve living standards and reduce issues. This did not happen. One of the reactions to this was to push for more autonomy; this is what was seen in Greenland, and the 2008 referendum on further autonomy easily passed, showing that political independence was favored by Greenlandic Inuit. The case of Greenland is however quite complex for not all Greenlanders are at ease with their Inuit identity; some claim to be “Kalaalik rather than Inuit”, that is, closer to the Scandinavian whole than to the Inuit continuum. However, this move provides an example of how the recognition of formal property rights — and financial compensations — was not taken as

satisfying by many Inuit. The long-lasting claims for for more autonomy and recognition prove that Inuit identity cannot be limited to strict territorial rights.

## 6 Same space, differing cultural landscapes

So far, territorialities have been taken into account as the specific relationship communities develop with the land they inhabit, occupy or use. One of the important aspect which still has to be dealt with is that of the geographical imaginary, that is, the question of the representations populations may have of a certain land. *Nuna* not only *denotes* something far different from what a Qallunaat may call the “Inuit land”, it also has very different *connotations*. The notion of cultural landscape can help understanding how *nuna* is situated at the intersection of nature and culture — for, as Dufour phrased it, “among the Inuit, this expression of a symbiotic relationship between human beings and their milieu spreads to the landscape; nature lives in man and man lives in nature, there is no divide between the two”<sup>18</sup> (Dufour, 1981, my translation). “Cultural landscapes” were defined by Sauer as soon as in 1925, and it was one of the landmarks for human — or cultural — geography: “the cultural landscape is fashioned out of a natural landscape by a culture group. ” (Sauer, 1925, p. 46). The notion invites the observer to look at landscapes with full consciousness of the extent they may have been altered by human activities. It was later extended to mean the way the landscape is *seen* and *mentally* shaped by human communities — for this shaping often has effects on the landscape in return, in terms of categorization as well as concrete effects on the physical activities performed in and on it. Therefore, the very perception and meaning of elements from the landscape do compose the cultural landscape of a society.

Inuit Arctic, that is, the area in the Arctic which has been occupied and used by the Inuit and is nowadays seen as such, is an interesting place in this perspective, for it relates to several different — though intertwined — cultural landscapes, that of the Inuit themselves and that of the Qallunaat — defined as such by the fact that they came to interact with the Inuit when exploring and using the Arctic. There are therefore elements of a proper Inuit identity in the very opposition between their way of perceiving and conceiving the landscape and that of the Qallunaat; this is the *interactional* dimension of identity. In a larger view of the Inuit/ Qallunaat conflicts, it helps understanding the social role of *territorialities*’ conflicts, which have shaped the institutional existence and

---

<sup>18</sup>“*Chez les Inuits, cette expression d’une symbiose entre l’humain et son milieu s’étend à la terminologie du paysage. La nature vit dans l’humain et l’humain dans la nature, il n’y a pas de coupure entre les deux.*”

therefore the identity of the Inuit as a collective.

## 6.1 *Nuna* vs. the “great white North”

The space the Inuit live in is one of these traits which has often been considered as an objective, immutable, defining and definitive characteristic of the Inuit. The Qallunaat see the Arctic landscape as extreme and remote, and identify the Inuit with this environment, without further questioning of the proper cultural identity the Inuit may have. The defining aspect of such imagined living space can be seen in the common stereotypes of the Inuit as people living far North, in *iglous* made of snow, surrounded by polar bears.

On the contrary, the Inuit associate *nuna* with a very positive aspect, and several authors have departed from this to characterize the opposite discourses on the Arctic — the indigenous perspective vs. the Western one; Antomarchi summarizes it quite synthetically in her 2009 article (Antomarchi, 2009, p. 55). Westerners often see the Arctic landscape as a cold and fixed place, an immense white desert, a definite vacuum evocative of original purity, whereas for the Inuit, *nuna* evokes a beautiful and rich place, favorable to biological as well as social life. This land offers all the resources Inuit communities have needed for centuries — for food, clothing, housing, spiritual and leisure activities. Therrien also focuses on this positive aspect of *nuna* when explaining this term in her handbook on the Inuit (2012). According to her, talking about *nuna* means evoking “a life experience, a privilege for the self and for those who are cherished, which makes tears come to one’s eyes for the beauty and the history of the places are moving”<sup>19</sup> (Therrien, 1999, p. 46, my translation). She recalls how an Inuit women once expressed her love and gratitude towards her country and her happiness to know it and to feel tied to this landscape: “this immensity is magnificent. It is soothing, good for the body. Here there are no trees, one could see far away and travel far away. This is perfect.”<sup>20</sup> (*ibidem*).

In a 2015 article, titled “the other side of the Great White Cap — the Inuit sense of landscape”, Joliet uses techniques proper to visual methodologies in anthropology to study the “sense of landscape” peculiar to the Inuit which is put forward in photographs taken by the Inuit themselves. By “great white cap”, she means the Western cliché of a wide and white empty space that they think the Inuit live in, a desert perpetually covered by snow — a cliché commonly pushed forward nowadays by tourism industry. The other side of it is *nuna*, a web of positive relations allowing life to flourish, a land beloved. As Joliet summarizes it, “[there] is an original Inuit point of view concerning territories which are not considered virgin and are not always white with snow.” Analyzing pictures produced

<sup>19</sup>“d’un vécu, d’un privilège pour soi et pour ceux que l’on aime et qui fait monter les larmes aux yeux, tant la beauté et l’histoire des lieux émeuvent.”

<sup>20</sup>“Cette immensité est splendide. Elle est apaisante, bonne pour le corps. Ici il n’y a pas d’arbre, on peut voir au loin et voyager au loin. C’est idéal”.



(a) “I like the land green”, as the competitor explained it.



(b) “When we have sunset it is usually beautiful outside, you see colors, red, pink. [...] I like to look the sunset behind this island, the sky is bright above, and getting dark. I am still going to this place, before midnight in summer.”

**Figure 10:** Two pictures analyzed by Joliet as symptomatic for the Inuit proper sense of landscape and their ideal vision of it: far from being dominantly white, is colorful, and often green (source : Joliet, 2015)

and chosen by Inuit themselves as “my favorite landscape” during a 2010 competition, she shows that the proper Inuit landscape — that is, the landscape seen, interpreted and cherished by the Inuit — is not white as snow, but rather green and colorful. This is what may explain the Inuit taste for sunrises and sunsets which is visible on the Greenlandic flag.

What is more, many pictures taken by Inuit do not avoid the depiction of human activities and facilities — but often showing human occupation out of the settlements, and rather “on the land”. It depicts a “traditional” meaning of *nuna*, clearly separated from the recent settlement areas but still comprising socialized, inhabited and humanized land, far from the “wilderness” cliché.

One of the difficulties with the question of the “great white” is that it entails an idea of wilderness which may be differently claimed by both Inuit and Qallunaat. The “wild” Arctic is a common trope in Western touristic representations; to “experience the Arctic” is often depicted as a way for men (supposed to be more fit or receptive to this aspect than women) to confront untamed nature, to oppose natural forces — and to some extent to prove their masculinity in doing so. The Inuit have also been depicting “their” Arctic as natural and not domesticated, especially in the process of land claims, and the idea may have persisted since. Thus they could claim that they had a right to keep *nuna* alive, and this understanding of *nuna* was often that of undisturbed nature and wildlife, even though, as has been put forward earlier, the very representation of the Arctic wildlife in Inuit ontology is that of an entity in constant relationship with human communities. My hypothesis is that this association and to some extent restriction of *nuna* to untamed



**Figure 11:** Nuna as a beautiful space, away from settlements but still humanized and here turned into resources. Joliet summarizes it in a quote from Kumarluk: “We are from the land”.

wildlife can be explained as an interpretation of an untranslatable notion into Qallunaat categories, an interpretation pragmatically accepted by the Inuit, so that the Qallunaat they had to negotiate with could have an idea of what they were claiming.

## 6.2 *Nuna* vs. the “wasteland”

Amagoalik also wrote about the misunderstanding common among Qallunaat who have seen for long the Arctic as a vast and sterile empty ground — he tellingly titled his article “Wasteland of Nobodies” (Amagoalik, 2000a). Interestingly, he points out the responsibility of journalists, novelist-travelers and other opinion-makers, which he says often interview only White people on their experience of the Arctic, thus reproducing the Western distanced vision, blind to the richness of *nuna*. Amagoalik calls for filling this gap, stating that changing this attitude and eliminating the vision of the Arctic as a “wasteland of nobodies” would be important for Inuit cultural recognition. It would mean making the Qallunaat recognize *nuna* for what it is, and reversing a colonial perspective often stained with disdain. It would be a great step towards the proper recognition of the Inuit people and culture.

The use of the “wasteland” expression in Amagoalik’s title is telling for “waste” may connote that something has not been put to any purpose *while it could have*. This is part of the colonial perspective on the Arctic which is very contemporary. Governments as well as companies have often seen in recent times the Arctic as an important potential for industrial activities — especially through extracting its unexploited underground resources. The Arctic is thus seen as a pool of resources — and current trends in global warming only intensifies the risk for “resource rushes” in the Arctic — whether on the



(a) “John Kaunak provides a maktaaq (whale skin) snack in Repulse Bay”



(b) “James Taipana fishes with a traditional kaki-vak on the Thelon River”

**Figure 12:** Two figures which were chosen to illustrate Aglukark’s article in Nunavut ’99, “Inuit and the land as one”, celebrating the creation of Nunavut. The images well illustrate his thesis since they exhibit the close relationship between the Inuit and their land, that is, Inuit making the best of the land’s resources and using it to fuel a sense of belonging to one’s family, community and landscape.

Source: Soublière et al., 1999. [http://www.nunavut.com/nunavut99/english/inuit\\_land.html](http://www.nunavut.com/nunavut99/english/inuit_land.html)

ground, in the ground, on the sea or underneath it. In this respect, Inuit occupation of the land may be seen by Western powers as a difficulty, an embarrassment more than anything else. Hunting and fishing for food, as well as living in remote areas close to powerful rivers and resourceful grounds are indeed activities far less profitable than industrial exploitative ones, and they hardly fit in a globalized capitalistic economy. Still, they are at the very core of Inuit habits and cultural identity. It is therefore the Inuit way of life and identity which are threatened by visions obliterating their peculiar relationship with their land and landscape, for these perspectives may lead Western governments to ignore their attachment to the land and definitely alter the latter, or even relocate the Inuit, not realizing that the inhabited land is a part of themselves as individuals and an essential part of their communities, and thus can not be harmlessly left behind.

### 6.3 “Wasteland” and “wilderness”: two sides of the same coin?

In her 2016 book *Les Âmes Sauvages*, Natassja Martin reflects on her living among the Gwich’in, a people living in Alaska, on the Arctic Circle — even though not Inuit. She offers insightful comments on the fact that “wilderness” and “wasteland” are the two sides of a same *Western* coin; as she states it,

*“wasteland and wilderness [both written in English] do more than just cohabit in Alaska: they pertain to the same very Western attempt to create a two-tier world — exploitation and*

*environmental protection — which finds its final justification in the exteriority of ‘Nature’ as an object*<sup>21</sup> (Martin, 2016, p. 62, my translation).

The Western partition between “wasteland” and “wilderness” — the latter largely overlapping the “Great White” concept and practices — can be easily found in Alaska, for two opposite groups actively lobby in each direction. Environmentalist groups demand a strict protection of the environment, seen as one of the last untouched parts of the world, a pristine piece of land which has to be kept as such; on the opposite, there is a strong lobby largely made out of industrial entrepreneurs which longs for the exploitation of natural resources such as oil and gas. To some extent, the same applies to the Inuit land — and not only in Alaska. Whether in Greenland, Arctic Russia or Northern Canada, exploiting natural resources — especially underneath the ground — is strongly promoted by certain opinion groups, but also subject to heated debate. Among the most vocal opponents are non-indigenous groups which claim for the preservation of the environment are environmental organizations but also tourism advocates who embrace the vision of a pristine land which ought to be preserved for the respectful enjoyment of humans from all over the world. They claim for the creation of a “world sanctuary” for the Arctic, which is conceived as still “untouched”, thus able to be passed on to future generations in the very same “natural” state it has always been. According to Martin, the extractive logic prevails in both cases, for tourism as well as energy drilling are business from which mostly Western actors profit (*ibidem*).

To a large extent, both positions fail to take indigenous communities’ proper interests into account. Exploitative industry disturbs the milieu in which the Inuit live — damming rivers, building huge infrastructures, disturbing animal lives and cycles. Land claims often originated in the indigenous protests against such projects which definitely threatened their ways of life by deeply disrupting the Arctic original environmental balance — this is how James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement emerged. For the “wilderness” aspect, Martin insists that the specific sensitivity to landscape entailed by the “wilderness” imagery is a Western one, and often an urban one. To admire the Nordic landscape for its so-called “natural” and “untouched” aspect, one has to be foreign to such a place (Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 59). A well-known case in which environmental protection and Inuit way of life and relationship with the environment conflicted is that of the debate on seal furs commercialization. While the hunting of seals had for long been an Inuit activity and the trading of their furs a long-tested way for the Inuit to integrate the global economy while preserving an activity entailing the maintenance of their close relationship with the environment, the lobbying of Western environmental organizations led to a ban on seal fur imports and the subsequent collapse of this business. Both positions therefore fail to

---

<sup>21</sup> “wasteland et wilderness font plus que cohabiter en Alaska : ils participent de la même tentative toute occidentale de faire exister un monde à deux vitesses — l’exploitation et la protection de l’environnement — qui trouve sa justification suprême dans l’extériorité de l’objet ‘Nature’.”

fully account for the indigenous — and here, Inuit — perception of the environment as an integrated and therefore to some extent humanized space.

### **Conclusion: a territorial identity**

Hamelin states that “*nuna* gets the meaning of a solemn declaration. First of all, it is about affirming identity, not claiming property”<sup>22</sup> (in Giguère, 2012, my translation). The peculiar meaning of *nuna* seen in a first point reveals major cultural and anthropological differences between the Inuit and Western colonial societies. These differences end up in political conflicts between the two: land claims have long opposed the Inuit and the governments of Canada, Québec, Alaska, as well as the Danish government ruling over Greenland. Following their integrated perception of the land, the Inuit have associated land claims with political ones, linking territorial sovereignty with self-governance. In this respect, they negotiated some land on which collective rights apply, but one may wonder to what extent the effective agreement on Western-like treaties dividing the land and buying some of the them when exchanging rights against financial compensation does or does not follow the idea of *nuna*.

Blatant conflicts which can be seen in the “land claims” actually are the epitome of latent rivalries over the definition of what the land, but also conflicts between opposed representations of the Inuit Arctic — that is, between the Qallunaat vision of the Arctic as a great white wasteland and the Inuit feeling of belonging and identification to a resourceful land.

These oppositions which have framed, legally, mentally, and physically, the land, make it clear that “territories” are political and related to identity. Not only does the Inuit peculiar relationship to the land constitute an original identity, it is also a place for the building of a political identity, through the process of (re)claiming the land and officially appropriating the space recognized as necessary for the continued existence of Inuit communities, and when trying to make their perspective and relationship to land recognized and respected. *Nuna* has thus become an element of identity, objectified and claimed and put forward by the Inuit when negotiating land claims and affirming their autonomy towards Qallunaat governments. However, this “identity” link is far from timeless or self-evident; collective identity is imagined and constructed along various processes which have to be focused on.

---

<sup>22</sup>“*nuna* possède la signification d’une déclaration solennelle. Avant tout, elle exprime non une réclamation de propriété [...] mais une affirmation d’identité”





(a) A sailboat anchored in a Greenlandic bay. This is a common representation of the Arctic and the only one many cruising tourists will keep from the “Inuit land”



(b) Another classical image depicting the Western representation of the Arctic. The place inhabited by indigenous peoples are often taken as nothing more than basecamps for expeditions “in the wild”.



(c) This photograph won a competition organized by the famous National Geographic magazine, one of the most influential Western publication on indigenous spaces and peoples. It illustrates well the Western distanced vision of the Arctic, often thought of as a splendid and gigantic area, white and immobile, just as the icebergs are (wrongly) thought to be.



(d) One of the symbol of the Arctic, often and mistakenly associated with the Inuit land, as Therrien (2012, ch. 1) recalls it. Among environmentalist organizations, it is a common symbol for wilderness to protect.

**Figure 13:** Four pictures depicting usual representations of the Arctic among non-Inuit populations, especially Western. They combine the ideas of the “great white” as well as that of wilderness. Even though thought of as “the Inuit land”, Inuit settlements are usually absent from it, and the extent to which nuna is full of living resources is often blacked out.

Sources:

(a) & (b) <http://www.gngl.com/> — website of a travel agency specialized in trips in Greenland

(c) <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/photo-contest/2012/entries/gallery>

(d) <http://inhabitat.com/polar-bear-range-states-agree-on-groundbreaking-protection-plan-to-save-the-species/>

## Part III

# *Nuna*, the ground for Inuit collective identity

In a last point, I focus on the building of collective identities — that is, characteristics shared within a group and which are known as such. I describe hereby how collective identification emerged from the putting forward of territorial specificities by certain actors. This passage from a specific territoriality to a shared identity is all but natural and self-evident. Collective identities are to be constructed and negotiated through social processes and manipulated by stakeholders. Studying the uses of the vocable *nuna* in this perspective casts light on the processes along which collective identities are built, framed within institutions, and maintained, but also do evolve according to historical and environmental circumstances.

## 7 Territoriality and collective identification

### 7.1 The collective appropriation of the land

Identity consists in complex social processes, some aspects of which have already been exposed afore. Just as self-identity, collective identity — that is, the characteristics individuals recognized proper to their group as a whole — can be territorially-based. The passage from an individual sense of belonging to certain land may turn into an individual identification to the collective and a subsequent recognition of the collective identity of the group as such along several processes which are worth focusing on.

Laneuville, in her 2001 article, insists on the collective aspect of territoriality. She explains that territoriality is above all a relationship between a human group and the space it occupied, the boundaries of such a space being social rather than physical. It is more than a physical space, as has already been shown for *nuna*: it is a humanized space, it is a web of places (spaces invested with a peculiar meaning) connected along itineraries (Laneuville, 2001, p. 201). Laneuville adds that “on the cultural and symbolic level, the territory is the spatial transposition of the groups’ identity, for it bears the visible traces — such as campsites and footpaths — as well as the invisible ones — such as toponyms and myths — of the latter’s history.”<sup>23</sup> (*ibidem*).

<sup>23</sup>“*Au plan culturel et symbolique, il constitue la transposition spatiale de l’identité du groupe, puisqu’il porte les traces visibles — telles que les campements et les sentiers — et invisibles — telles que les toponymes et les mythes — de son histoire*”.

In an excerpt quoted afore, Therrien also associates from an Inuit perspective “the beauty and the history of the places” (see p. 43). This is made possible by the fact that *nuna* is simultaneously a human and geographical landscape; it is seen as a humanized space, not in the sense that human beings may have appropriated it, changed it so deeply that natural elements be only secondary, but “humanized” to the extent that the Inuit always apprehend it from their own point of view — even though thinking of the land as comprising natural space, cosmological entities, living and non-living beings and other resources. Thus the familiar landscape seen by an Inuk is not just *seen* as a set of visible traits as a painting may be; it is also *felt* as beautiful, and *known* as full of stories and historical details.

The role of space in the building of collective identity has early been highlighted by Halbwachs (1950) and his famous thesis on “collective memory” (Halbwachs, 1950, p. 134). While focusing on the importance of collecting and remembering meaningful stories within a group for its coherence and sustainability, Halbwachs insists that “if souvenirs are kept in a group’s thinking, it is because it stays firmly on the ground, it is because the image of the ground’s materially lasts out of it, and the group can seize it again at any time”<sup>24</sup> (Halbwachs, *op. cit.*, p. 207, my translation). Souvenirs common to all the members of a group, which effectively constitute a collective memory and build a collective history, are essential for a collective identity to exist. According to Halbwachs, it is when embedded in a common and sustained space that such souvenirs are most vivid. This is true of *nuna* for every Inuit local community, since all communities remember events associated with the landscape and surrounding places, and such souvenirs are passed on through story telling. Studying the way the Inuit inhabit their environment, and trying to discern a proper Inuit “sense of place”, Collignon shows that the tales which are told among the Inuit are inscribed in the landscape. She writes that “place names are a narrative about the land. They tell the story of the land and of its people, a story that emphasizes space rather than time” (Collignon, 2006, p. 199). Whether they are important myths or anecdotal stories, these tales are important for community identity: their transmission is by itself an important social act which fuels the sense of belonging to the community. These stories, Collignon states in another article,

*“do not ‘float’ in an undetermined space. On the contrary, they are inscribed in the territory — or even ‘incarnated’, one might say — for nuna is living — and this incarnating is done through quoting place names where some of the narrated events did happen.”*<sup>25</sup> (Collignon, 2002, p. 54-55).

To retake Collignon’s article’s title, Inuit toponyms compose a “memory of the territory”,

<sup>24</sup>“Si les souvenirs se conservent, dans la pensée du groupe, c’est qu’il reste établi sur le sol, c’est que l’image du sol dure matériellement hors de lui ; et qu’il peut à chacun instant la ressaisir”

<sup>25</sup>“Les histoires ne ‘flottent’ pas dans un espace indéterminé. Au contraire, elles sont inscrites dans le territoire, ‘incarnées’ serait-on tenté de dire — car nuna est vivante — et cette incarnation passe notamment par la citation des noms de lieux où se sont déroulés certains des événements relatés”

and doing so, they embody the memory of the community which they sustain.

Embedded collective memories in the landscape are also one of the main subjects in Nuttall's 1991 article and 1992 book. In the former, he coins the word "*memoryscape*", transparently made of *memory* and *landscape* to point out that the Inuit landscape in North-West Greenland is pervaded with collective memories. From this, a sense of "locality" emerges, that is, a sense of belonging both to the place and to the community infusing it with its collective memories. Local communities are actually delimited by boundaries which are at the same time social and spatial; the community's territory is the landscape with which memories are associated, and its boundaries are the spatial limits assigned to the collective memory (Nuttall, 1992, p. 154 *sq.*). In physical space, a sense of belonging to a community can arise from historical collective experiences, or the collective telling and remembering of individual experiences, and be reified when associated with geographic locations. It is therefore retained through landscape, and thus fuels a sense of belonging to the collective space.

This "humanization" of the land is one of the major points of Collignon's research on Inuit territoriality. In the following, after studying Collignon's analysis of the toponyms as a marker for humanization and identification with the land — in association with the politics of re-naming many places with their ancient Inuit names, I go on to reflect on the regionyms — names which in the contrary have been given only recently to Inuit regions.

## 7.2 The recollection of toponyms: identity recognition

One of the best-known works on Inuit geography is Collignon's famous *Inuit Places* (1996), in which one of her main points is to characterize the way the Inuit label their land. Collignon collected thousands of toponyms — names of geographical places, whether they be campsites, mountains, lakes, fords, etc. — then translated them and tried to organize and classify them in order to better understand the relationship the Inuit have with the landscape. One of her clearest results is that landscape is always humanized in Inuit culture — or even Inuit cultures, for the cultures of different Inuit groups may be slightly different, but they do have similar relationship with the landscape. The Inuit landscape is always named — that is, identified — after the experiences and the uses made by the inhabitants of the land. For instance, Collignon highlights the close relationship between human beings and nature: "even the toponyms which seem to be the most neutrally descriptive actually talk about a humanized milieu"<sup>26</sup> (Collignon, 2002, p. 49, my translation). Many elements of the landscape which would be considered as natural, objective, and unrelated to the observer in Western cultures, are named and known by the

---

<sup>26</sup> "même les toponymes qui semblent décrire de la façon la plus neutre le milieu naturel parlent en fait d'un milieu humanisé"

Inuit according to the role they (may) play for the human community and its resources, thus exemplifying what *nuna* is. One of the examples put forward by Collignon is that of a fjord which becomes “*Nalluq*, the place where the caribou swim”<sup>27</sup> during their migration, thus a good hunting spot (Collignon, 1996, p. 122, my translation).

Toponyms represent an major part of research on Inuit territory. This topic has been at the core of scientific works such as those from Collignon as well as localized studies such as that of Goerhing at Pelly Bay (Goerhing 1990), but toponyms have also been focused on in anthropological research, for instance in Alia (2006, ch. 5), linking a reflexion on toponyms in Nunavut with an analysis on names given to individuals. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, toponyms raise political questions; Muller-Wille’s works are quite emblematic for this. This author led projects on the collection of toponyms when the Inuit’s right to claim their land was recognized, and wrote in parallel articles theorizing the link between the naming of the land and the self-determination of the Inuit (see for instance Muller-Wille, 2000).

To collect, to record and to officialize Inuit toponyms in order to replace the names given by colonists is an activity of crucial importance in the building or actualization of identity. The study of toponyms confirms results exposed earlier (such as the humanization of the space) but highlights the process through which such peculiarities are integrated to Inuit identities. For the Inuit, acknowledgment of their usual toponyms is a great step forward in the recognition of their peculiar definition of the land and thus their existence as a specific cultural people (Muller-Wille, 1986, “Introduction”). This may explain the choice of the name “NUNA-TOP” for the project of toponyms collection in Nunavik, recalling that through re-establishing Inuit naming, it is *nuna* in all its peculiarities which is to be recognized. The very putting of Inuit names on maps imply both their recognition and their spreading. It makes the relationship between a linguistic-cultural people and its land more objective, for this relationship is mediated by what is perhaps most proper to a people: its language. The very act of vernacular naming constitutes a whole comprising the people and their environment, for it is an act at the interface between concrete space, cultural representations and social practices. Zebedee Nungak, one of the prominent writer and cartographer of Nunavik, acknowledges this importance of toponyms and hails the reinstalling of indigenous names for geographical elements in an article in the Inuit magazine *Atuaqnik*— an article for which he chose a telling title: “Definition of Identity” (Nungak, 1980). Toponyms indeed assume a major role in building collective identity, for they objectify some of the group’s peculiarities and thus its very existence when expressing its *power* to give names, that is, to bring external elements to existence through language. According to Collignon, the Innuinait she worked with proved immensely happy and grateful for her collection work, and made it clear that toponyms mean more than

---

<sup>27</sup>“*Nalluq, là où nagent les caribous.*”

just purely instrumental and utilitarian functions. Their role goes beyond allowing easier travels and journeys. Indeed, some great hunters and travelers know only few toponyms and do not need them to voyage (Collignon, 1996, p. 113-116). The function of toponyms is above all about cosmology and identity; “place names are essential not for journeys and men survival, but rather for their integration to the milieu, which thus becomes a humanized milieu where their culture may flourish”<sup>28</sup> (*ibidem*, p. 116, my translation).

## 7.3 The invention of regionyms: identity affirmation

### 7.3.1 *Nuna* enhancing the meaning of regionyms

A specific type of toponyms applies to regions, wider than the local spaces known by individuals or communities. The “regionym” has been created for this category<sup>29</sup>. In the perspective of understanding the relationship the Inuit maintain with their land and the identity derived from it, it is especially interesting to focus on the recent construction of regionyms. These names of Inuit regions were chosen during the negotiation processes for the constitution of Inuit territories and they reflect the meaning these regions may have for the Inuit — or at least the meaning that those who chose the name wanted to give to these regions. Most official Inuit regions — whatever their status — have “nuna” in their names:

- *Nunavik*, a territory in the province of Quebec, Canada, created in 1975 when the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement was signed. Its name was adopted in 1986 and means “the great land”.
- *Kalaallit Nunaat*, the endonym for Greenland, which means “the land of the Kalaallit” — the land of the Greenlanders. Greenland received internal autonomy within the Danish Kingdom in 1979.
- *Nunavut*, a federal territory in Northern Canada legally created in 1999. It means “our land”.
- *Nunatsiavut*, an autonomous territory within the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, created in 2005 with the signing of the Labrador Inuit Lands Claims Agreement. It means “our beautiful land”.

First possible interpretation of such a recurrence of *nuna* would be that “*nuna*” is a generic name, just as the vocable “land” is included in many English names of countries

<sup>28</sup>“Les noms de lieux sont essentiels non aux déplacements et à la survie des hommes mais à leur intégration au milieu, qui devient ainsi milieu humanisé où peut s’épanouir leur culture”

<sup>29</sup>See for instance TERMIUM Plus<sup>®</sup> tool on the official website of the Canadian government, <http://www.btb.termiumplus.gc.ca/tpv2alpha/alpha-eng.html>.

or sub-national territorial units. One could therefore wonder if this is just an indicator of toponymy, “*nuna*” playing in Inuit languages the same role as “land” in English, and perhaps spreading around the Arctic circle by an imitation effect. However, as it has been extensively shown previously, *nuna* is more than just “land”. When picking up *nuna* vocable, the Inuit — or their representatives — deliberately chose a name deeply meaningful, peculiar to Inuit culture, and to which all Inuit may identify. In doing so, they even enhanced the identity aspect of *nuna*, for this word in all its complexity — not only a geographical region, but also encompassing a specific relationship between human beings and their physical and metaphysical environment — became the very symbol of the Inuit claims for territories and self-determination. Hamelin explains that “when an Inuit pronounces ‘nuna’, whether in ‘Nunavik’, ‘Nunavut’, or ‘Nunaat’, she also speaks about herself, she doesn’t speak of something that would be exterior to her”<sup>30</sup> (quoted in Chartier, Désy, 2014, p. 60, my translation).

Including *nuna* in a regionym means creating an intimate relationship between this region and the Inuit who inhabit it — however recent and arbitrary the boundaries of such a newly established region may be; see for instance Légaré, 2001, and Dahl, 1988, on the recent construction of Inuit regions and the symbolism involved in this process. The originality of the Inuit land can even be pictorially seen on the blazon adopted by Nunavut. On this very codified and symbolic blazon, being the very symbol of Nunavut identity — what makes Nunavut and its inhabitants immediately recognizable from other territories — the base is made of earth, rocks, sea and ice, a multifaceted space which forms the ground on which caribou and narwal stand. This integrated environment surrounds the core circle of the blason, made of sky in its upper third under which are a lamp (symbol of the inside) on the same footage as an *inuksuk* — a human-shaped pile of stones which has become the symbol for inhabited landscape. Nunavut is thus presented as an integrated whole comprising land and human beings inhabiting it in a vast harmony reconciling elements of different natures. Its name and blazon recall it — see figure 14, p. 56

### 7.3.2 From regionyms to identification

The importance of recent regionyms is enhanced by the fact that Inuit may in return identify with them. Social groups are known by the name of region they inhabit, and Inuit may refer to themselves with demonyms including *nuna*— for instance, Nunavut inhabitants are called by themselves and other people “Nunaviammiut”, “those who inhabit Nunavut”. Newspapers and other regional media have also adopted names comprising the *nuna* vocable, thus spreading the word and reinforcing the identification with this specific element; one of the best examples of this may be *Nunatsiaq News* in Northern

<sup>30</sup>“Quand un Inuit prononce *nuna*, que ce soit dans “Nunavik”, “Nunavut” ou “Nunaat”, il parle aussi de lui-même, il ne parle pas d’une chose extérieure à lui”.





**Figure 14:** Nunavut's coat of arms.

The proximity of diverse elements depicts the specificity and variety inherent to nuna for the Inuit. On a base comprising earth, sea, and sea ice, stand a caribou and a narwhal — real animals also invested with cosmological meanings as well as strong metaphorical meaning as their presence may have determined the migrations and therefore occupation of the land by the Inuit. The igloo standing at the top highlights the collective dimension of land inhabiting, for the igloo is a collective house, built for the community during winters. The base reads “Nunavut Sanginivut” in syllabic Inuktitut, that is, “Our Land, our strength”.

Source : the assembly of Nunavut, [http://www.assembly.nu.ca/sites/default/files/nunavut\\_coat\\_of\\_arms.jpg](http://www.assembly.nu.ca/sites/default/files/nunavut_coat_of_arms.jpg)

For a detailed account of the coat of arms, see Morin, 2001, p. 20.



Canada, which is one the best-known and widely-sold magazine about Inuit communities. The main campus of Nunavut Arctic College in Iqaluit also took the name “Nunatta campus”, associating *nuna* with education — which is key in Inuit effective independence and national pride, for educated Inuit are seen as the future leaders of Inuit Arctic, and their emergence means that Inuit administrations may depend less on southern civil servants. Even the social media spreads the word *nuna* as a symbol for the Inuit world through the famous “hashtags” which are at the core of cultural radiance. Recently, a photographic competition was introduced with the hashtag “#nunagram”, a portmanteau word made of *nuna* (-vut, for it began as a way to promote this region over the internet) and *Instagram* (a social media used for sharing pictures), inviting inhabitants and tourists in Canadian Arctic regions to share their shots of the Inuit space — see figure 15, p. 58 for a few excerpts. The initiative was launched by the “Finding True North” website, a blog maintained by two women who emigrated to Nunavut and aim at depicting Northern Canada as it is, far from cliché — though the blog met with success and tends to be a company selling products and trying to bring in as many visitors as possible, thus choosing “bankable” pictures and articles<sup>31</sup>. The pictures published for the “#nunagram” competition depict the ground as well as the sea, and landscapes with human elements as well as the sky — proving the “Inuit landscape” not to be limited to Western clichés of desert of ice and snow. They may have help associate the idea of “*nuna*” with the land and landscapes while displaying their plurality, for the initiative and its success were the subjects of several articles in different media — the *CBC*, the *Hamilton Spectator*, and the *Huffington Post*, as the initiators of the hashtag recall it<sup>32</sup>.

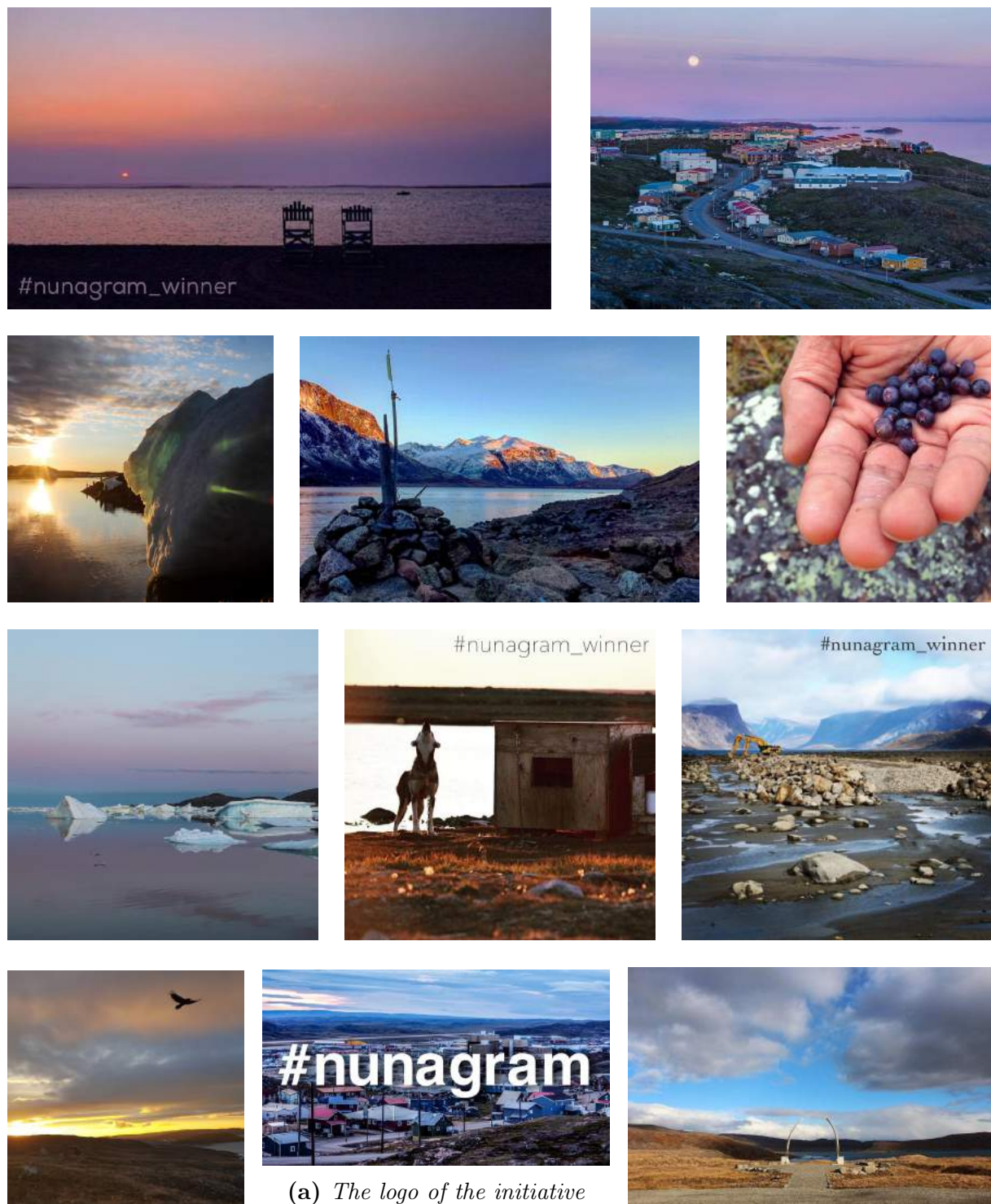
In terms of research, the systematic studying of such pictures may prove very interesting to understand the visual perception of the Inuit environment. Keeping in mind the social role of such media, it also has to be noted that the pictures taken through Instagram are to be shared, and therefore may also select some pictorial reality judged worth sharing. It is therefore informative about social norms — for one may try to comply and post only picture that are thought to be good candidates for being shared over the web.

Another elements showing to what extent the including of *nuna* in Inuit regionyms has become hugely important is that of the choice of “NunatuKavut” as the name for their region by the descendants of Inuit and Metis from Southern Labrador. They demanded a recognition of their Metis identity for decades, but it was recently scientifically proved that they descend from Inuit communities. This led their organisation to reorient their claims and to the invention and demand of NunatuKavut as their region’s name<sup>33</sup>. Then

<sup>31</sup>See <http://findingtruenorth.ca/blog-about-iqaluit/> for more details on the blog, its authors and their history.

<sup>32</sup>See <http://findingtruenorth.ca/blog/nunagram-in-the-news>.

<sup>33</sup>Traces of this process can be found in various documents on their website, <http://www.nunatukavut.ca/>, especially in the recent appearing of “NunatuKavut” in official activity reports of their organization.



(a) The logo of the initiative

**Figure 15:** Pictures introduced in the “Nunagram” challenge — some of them have been elected weekly winners. They display the plurality of representations of the Inuit territory involved, and they are representative of the fact that most pictures introduced contain human elements, thus depicting nuna as a humanized space. Nuna as colorful, resourceful, living, and humanized, is therefore spread over the social media with the “nunagram” hashtag.

Source : <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/nunagram/>, and <http://findingtruenorth.ca/blog/nunagram-in-the-news>

they chose the name NunatuKavut for their organization and their website, both staging their claims; it is only in relation with this logically pre-existing territory that they set their existence as a people. The use of the vocable “*nuna*” here acts as a marker for their Inuit identity as well as a reference to other Inuit territories and populations who succeeded in claiming their autonomy and recognition.

Légaré studied the invention of Nunavut and finely described how this region was constructed at the same time spatially and symbolically. Many actors — individuals as well as institutions — allowed the emergence of a collective nunaviamiut identity, using symbols, medias, and the sense of a common identity related to a particular place (Légaré, 2001). In Nunavut, an administrative region was constructed jointly with a regional identity.

### Researching the construction of regionyms

In his article on the construction of a collective identity in Nunavut, Légaré (2001) highlights the role played by stakeholders — especially organizations, which may be conflicting for the legitimacy to represent Inuit people. The regionyms quoted so far and including “*nuna*” have been chosen at some point; they have not always been used, and their recognition depended on their invention. Understanding who offered these regionyms, which alternatives were available, and how and why the final names were chosen, would therefore be of major interest to understand the construction of Inuit regions and identities. However, historical research on this subject still has to be done. Inuit regionyms have been debated before adoption, but the sources evoking these processes are elliptic, lacunary, contradictory or even nonexistent.

For instance, Purich states that before Nunavut was recognized as such, a former project consisted in establishing a territory of similar extension, resulting from a partition of the Northwestern Territories, but which would have been labelled “Nunassiaq”, “the beautiful country”. Purich explains that Robert Williamson told him the inhabitants of the region received a mail offering them to chose between different names, but the final decision was made in an opaque way — and this was one of the elements which undermined this “Nunassiaq” project (Purich, 1992, p. 65). “Nunavut” regionym emerged from the “Nunavut Project” document emitted by Inuit Tapirisat of Canada in 1976 — an organization which has established itself as the legitimate representative for Inuit of whole Canada. “Nunavut” designation is said to have been definitely chosen by referendum — a referendum supposedly held in Inuit communities in 1986. This referendum is elliptically mentioned by several authors (see for instance Muller-Wille, 2000, p. 19) but none of them gives the alternative names offered nor the conditions in which the referendum was held or the debates which probably sur-

rounded it. Exploring archives to find out more details would help better understand how Inuit concretely identified — or not — with the new region and its name, and the role played by the vocable “*nuna*” in the process. However, Avataq cultural institute which is supposed to have been organizing the referendum could not positively answer my request for archives on this subject yet.

## 8 The making of collective identity

### 8.1 Imagining Inuit communities

#### 8.1.1 The imagination and invention of communities

The institutional recognition of Inuit regions and Inuit sovereignty on these regions are a major step in the definition — or redefinition — of territorial identity, and they are constitutive of the imagination of a community — to take up the famous title from Anderson, “Imagined Communities” (Anderson, 1983). Today’s Inuit communities are *imagined* ones, as Anderson defines them, that is, not only do they exist on the basis of daily face-to-face interactions, but they are also mediated by other means and were *invented* at some point. Of course they were not invented out of nothing, on a *tabula rasa*, but their existence and characteristics which form today’s Inuit conscious identity were put forward, at some point, by certain actors, and then more widely adopted.

In his 1988 article, Dahl puts forward how the social groups known today as “Inuit communities” actually are recent constructions, and to what extent this construction was an imagined one. “Imagined” here is not the same as “imaginative”, and saying that the communities were imagined does not imply that these communities exist *only* in the mind. To stress the imagined aspect of such construction rather implies putting forward the fact that these communities have not always existed in the form under which they are known today, and that the material and objective characteristics they have today have not always existed and are far from “natural” or “self-evident”. This is especially true of Inuit regions and territories, mostly created in the 1970s and 1980s, on a level previously not associated with any sense of belonging. Inuit used to feel attached to “local communities”, but at this point, current Inuit “communities” (actually rather consisting in regions) were imagined and invented. A feeling of belonging to the same collectivities has been fueled since among Inuit by stakeholders — at the regional, national and even international level. Collective identity has an internal aspect as well as an external one; to identify as a Nunavimmiut or as an Inuk results from self-reflection entailing similar processes as the processes making *others* identify individuals or a group as Nunavimmiut or Inuit

at large from the outside. Today's Inuit territories — whether in Canada, Alaska or Greenland — were invented through history, often in parallel with land claims — cultural and territorial identity fueling each other and making it possible to elaborate homogeneous political communities.

Such framework emphasizing the construction of communities might be labeled “constructivist” — even though it does not necessary support the usual assumption of such theories of a social construction of reality <sup>34</sup>. The advantage of such a conception is to distance oneself from naturalizing and essentialist visions which tend to reify cultures — and especially indigenous ones, following an ethnocentric bias — and see them as immutable and having existed forever, or at least since a presumed and theoretical “state of nature”. This may entail a paternalistic approach of the peoples' relationship with their environment, for instance by labeling them “children of nature”. Showing that communities are invented along with belonging feelings, and that identities are constructed as well, helps realize that indigenous communities have been evolving just as the Western ones. Dahl, when studying the hunting community of Saqqaq in Greenland (Dahl, 2000), argues that social sciences have to get rid of the prenotional dichotomy between “traditional” and “modern”. The long-trying hunting way of life in Saqqaq and its maintenance nowadays on a given territory do not imply that such Greenlandic culture does not mutate. New understandings of such practices and of the environment itself have emerged and been popularized, especially in the direction of nation-building: this is what Dahl terms “Greenlandization”. Greenlandization is the long-lasting process of building a homogeneous Greenlandic identity, relying on the construction and awareness of a homogeneous territory and identity all over Greenland, a process launched in the late 1970s while political groups demanded the granting of the Home Rule.

My hypothesis here is that the term and notion of “*nuna*” and the wider claim of specific territories and above all territorialities played a role in the processes of community-inventing and identity-building. The recurrence of the vocable “*nuna*” when creating regionyms suggests that it progressively became a “banner” for Inuit claims — to take up a notion used by Muller-Wille: “place names have become a political as well as a cultural banner to prove sovereignty to oneself and to the Other” (Müller-Wille, 2000, p. 147). What is meant by “banner” here, deriving from its literal meaning of a flag used as a standard for a monarch, is that the term was used as a symbol and a support for identification *in itself*, that is, quite independently from its inner meaning (even though, of course, it is this specific meaning that made it possible for *nuna* to become a cultural banner, and even though the word retains this meaning and as suggested earlier may convey it, consciously or not, every time Inuit use it.) Légaré also adopts this vision

---

<sup>34</sup>To get a more general view of the debate behind such conceptions, one may want to read Berger and Luckman's 1996 *The Social Construction of Reality* and the criticizing Hacking's 1999 *The Social Construction of What?*

when explaining that the name “Nunavut” is one of the elements which was repeatedly pushed and used in order to make it a nominative symbol for the new political order. Just as the national day or the less-known blazon, the regionym became a symbol of the new territory and helped acclimatized Inuit and Qallunaat to the idea of a new territory associated with new political power and a new position for the Inuit in Canada (Légaré, 2002, p. 60). “Nunavut” was a name unknown until the 1970s, but it soon became an element of identity to be used internally (Nunavimiut identified themselves with it) and externally (the outer world would identify the population comprised within Nunavut’s new boundaries with it).

### 8.1.2 Land claims fueling nationalism

There have been attempts at fueling a nationalistic feeling and a common attachment among Inuit for long. The invention of a *nation*, that is, the introduction of a conscious feeling of belonging to the same community and being doomed to the same fate, is precisely one of the subjects of Anderson’s *Imagined communities*, in which he focuses on the importance of the media printed in vernacular languages which fueled nationalistic feelings in 19<sup>th</sup> century’s capitalistic Europe. A similar process may be seen in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century’s Inuit Arctic. During the 1970s and the 1980s, at the time land claims provoked an awareness of the common fate of many Inuit groups and a revived attention to national frontiers, collective stakeholders used the media to fuel feelings of community belonging. In Nunavik for instance, Makivik Corporation financed several newspapers and magazines and hold events which spread all around the region. It was a way for Makivik to make the claims for territorial autonomy more consistent by creating a feeling of regional identity among Inuit communities which did not identify on a regional scale at the time. Doing so, Makivik could secure its role as a representative for the Inuit of Nunavik. *Atuaqnik* magazine’s archives also display the efforts made by Kativik regional administration to create such a regional feeling by trying to lead consistent policies at the level of the region, especially in media industries. For instance, Kativik promoted the recording and broadcasting of regional programs which were thought to foster Nunavik’s inhabitants building of a collective identity. Such publications often included lots of maps which could have make the Inuit more knowledgeable of fellow Inuit communities and therefore more aware of what they all had in common — that is, a similar language, a similar territory and territoriality, and a similar experience of interacting with the Qallunaat.

At another level, the Inuit Circumpolar Council nowadays tries to materialize an Inuit nationalistic feeling across nation-state borders — its first explicit purpose is “to strengthen unity among the Inuit of the Circumpolar region” (ICC’s charter<sup>35</sup>). The

---

<sup>35</sup><http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/icc-charter.html>



ICC's website quotes from an earlier document that

*“we Eskimo are an international community sharing common language, culture, and a common land along the Arctic coast of Siberia, Alaska, Canada and Greenland. Although not a nation-state, as a people, we do constitute a nation”.*

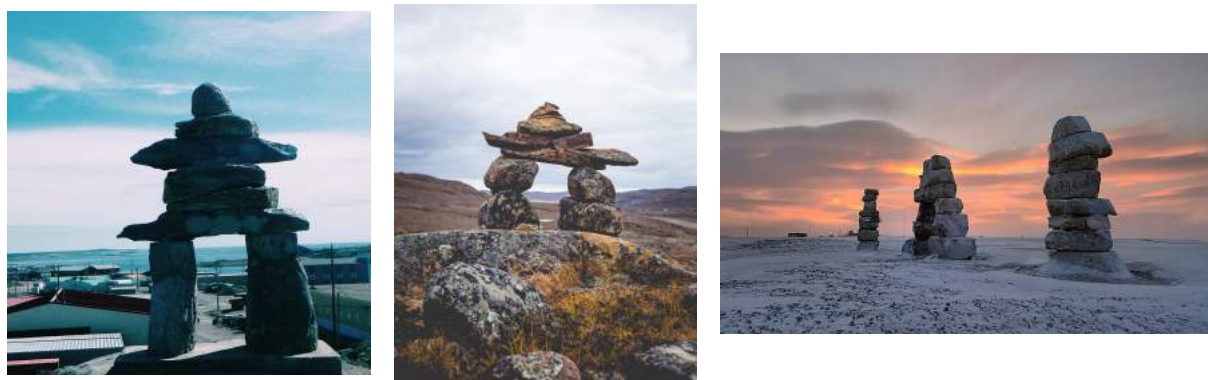
This reference to the “common land” — even though listed here after the common language and culture — is a recurring trope in the documents from the ICC. Its charter begins with explaining that “the Inuit are an indigenous people, with a unique ancestry, culture and homeland” and immediately afterwards, “that the worlds arctic and sub-arctic areas which we use and occupy transcend political boundaries” (*ibidem*). It can be interpreted as a technique for effectively building the community the ICC is supposed to represent.

Land claims have been presented as a way to overcome the perceived loss *nuna* due to settlement and increased interactions with the Qallunaat. As mentioned afore, this tragic changes have fueled the sentiment of identity loss among the Inuit, for the changes were deep and sudden. When settling in permanent villages, the familiarity with the natural environment diminished, as did the frequency of interactions with animals and natural landscape, which were part of the so-called “traditional” Inuit way of life. Brian Aglukark, head of the Iqaluit regional office of the Nunavut Planning Commission, explains in the brochure celebrating the recognition of Nunavut that “the bond between Inuit and the land and wildlife was weakened when settlements replaced their nomadic lifestyle. The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement aims to change that.” (Brian Aglukark, in Soublière *et al.*, 1999, *Nunavut '99*). “We’re so close to the wildlife”, David Aglukark adds — an Inuit negotiator on land claims (D. Aglukark, *ibidem*). Part of the land claim negotiation precisely aimed at making it possible for the Inuit to maintain a peculiar relationship with the natural environment.

To some extent, the same can be said about Greenland. Though movements in favor of self-determination had emerged as soon as the immediate post-war era. It was during the 1960s and 1970s that strong political movements appeared, along with politicization of the Greenlandic Inuit. A few major events were historical landmarks, stirring up anti-imperialistic sentiments: the closure of the mining town Qulissat and the forced relocation of its inhabitants (see Kuokkanen, 2015, p. 4); the 1972 referendum against EEC membership; and the opposition to offshore drilling in the 1970s (see Dahl, 1986, p. 320). The latter clearly shows how the question of land use fueled Inuit resentment against Danish imperialism and brought many Greenlanders to support self-determination. The Danish government, without consulting any proper Greenlandic authority, allowed oil drilling off the West Greenlandic coast. Opposition grew in the Greenlandic population to the point that the Provincial Council of Greenland unanimously resolved that “the land and its resources belonged to the resident population” in 1975 (*ibidem*). Out of this protest movement the Inuit political group Siumut gained popularity and radicalized

and was to be the leader of the later decolonization campaign — which paved the way for the granting of Home Rule in 1979. Self-determination thus emerged from territorial questions mediated by a political group contingently put in a prominent position.

### 8.1.3 Imagining communities through territorial symbolism: the inuksuk



**Figure 16:** *Inuksuit pictures entered in #nunagram competition (see p. 58). The very fact that they were entered in such a competition of pictures depicting the Inuit landscape significantly shows how they are anchored — symbolically as well as physically — in the landscape, and at the same time strongly associated with Inuit identity.*

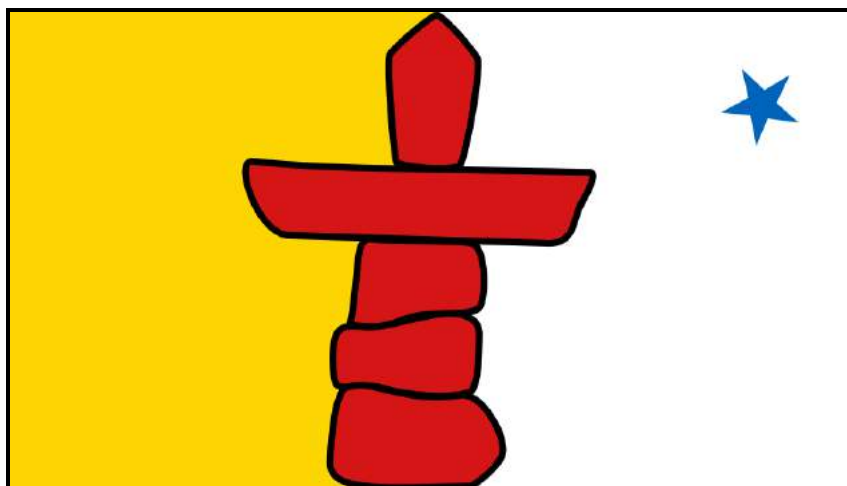
The imagination of communities, spreading through the media as Anderson explained it, is particularly efficient when based on visible symbols. In the case of Canada, Graburn analyzed in a 2004 article how the inuksuk (plural: inuksuit) was progressively imagined and used as a symbol for Canadian Inuit — and doing so, he casts light on the dialectical process of identity-building. The inuksuk, a humanoid pile of stones, was primarily made in Canadian Arctic for both practical reasons (guiding the traveller, frightening the caribou into a certain place where the hunters would be waiting for them) as well as non-functional reasons — built as a time-spending activity while waiting, or just to signify that “one was there”. The inuksuit probably did not have any special or identity-related meaning before the Qallunaat encountered them and got fascinated by them. For the Qallunaat, as Graburn explains it, the inuksuit retained some mystery and incarnated Inuit exoticism — especially for they may have been built for no practical reason. The Qallunaat therefore associated picturesque inuksuit with their mythified and exotic image of the Inuit, through the peculiar landscape design they composed — inuksuit being actually one of the rare obvious physical landmarks imposed in the landscape by Inuit. Inuksuit are also quite representative of the Inuit territoriality for these humanoid statues embody the Inuit inhabitation of the Arctic landscape and materially signify that Inuit have been passing and stopping by. Therefore an economic demand for inuksuk symbolism progressively emerged — the Qallunaat being ready to pay the price for inuksuk-designed clothes, postcards, jewellery, etc. Thus Western tourists could bring them south and tell other



people about Inuit and Inuksuit. The inuksuk thus became a tool with which identity circulates, and it became the symbol for Inuit culture and art in the eye of Qallunaat.

What is more, Canada then used Inuksuk as a symbol for its partly-indigenous identity; “at the World Fair Expo ‘86 in Vancouver [which worked as a display window on Canada for the whole world], the world’s largest Inuksuk graced the official pavilion of the Northwest Territories”, as Graburn tells it (2004, p. 72). This was the moment when Canada was coping with a certain lack of national identity — as any former settlement colony may have to face it — and thus relied in part on the Arctic and the proper culture associated with it to invent its own. The effect it had on Inuksuit and Inuit identity is that such exhibitions contributed to the growing popularity and the spreading of the Inuksuk, strongly associated Inuit identity. The inuksuk being a symbol through which the Inuit could make themselves recognized — as well as being a source of financial income — the Inuit accepted this identification, produced and used inuksuk items, and got to identify themselves with it. When the Inuit themselves encountered Qallunaat and travelled the Western world, as Graburn explains, they “must have learned the awe and alterity with which the visitors regarded what to the Inuit were one of their quotidian constructions” (*op. cit.*, p. 79). It thus became “a conscious marker of themselves vis-à-vis outsiders” (*ibidem*). from the Arctic landscape to the cultural Western landscape (that is, the common representation of the Inuit), territorial designs circulated and helped identify Inuit. The adoption of the inuksuk as an identity marker thus displays the dialectical process of identity-building. Inuksuit were appropriated and embraced and identified to only after the Inuit were reflected with such identification from an outside-group, that of Westerners. Inuksuit “have been selected by Inuit because (a) they are remarked on, admired and sought after as exotic by the Qallunaat (whitemen), who are the major outsider-reference group, and (b) they maximally express difference and ‘otherness’ in situations where ethnic recognition is of prime importance”, as Graburn states it (*op.cit.*, p. 78).

Today, the inuksuk is one of the best-known symbols for Inuit culture, and it can be found everywhere from touristic shops to official institutions. It is deeply anchored in the Qallunaat cultural landscape. One of the clearest examples of the identification to it by the Inuit themselves was the fact that it was chosen as an identity symbol for the whole of Nunavut when the latter was created. The choice of the inuksuk both on the flag (see below, figure 17, p. 66) and on the coat of arms (see afore, figure 14, p. 56) proves that it was perceived as a sign capable of bringing together Inuit from numerous different Inuit communities in Nunavut who did not have much in common beforehand — least a sense of collective belonging. The inuksuk thus became a symbolic marker of the territory it already physically marked when disposed all over *nuna*. Figure 18, p. 67 depicts the spreading of the symbol; after leaving the material Nunavut ground to symbolic meaning and transportable design, the inuksuk got anchored in cultural landscapes and reinforces



**Figure 17:** *The flag of Nunavut, revealed when the latter was created in 1999. It depicts the Pole star, guiding navigators and metaphorically evoking the immutable landmark of wisdom the Council of the Wise is; at the center of it is an Inuksuk, said to “guide the people” and to mark sacred and other remarkable places. Symbolically, placing it at the very centre of the flag shows how central a symbol for Nunavimmiut identity it is — and such positioning actually performs this identity link, because making the inuksuk pictorially so important induces Nunavimmiut into identifying with it.*

Source (image and explanation): [http://archive.gg.ca/heraldry/emb/02/index\\_f.asp](http://archive.gg.ca/heraldry/emb/02/index_f.asp)

the Inuit identity while spreading Canadian Inuit symbolical territoriality all over the world.

## 8.2 The plurality and evolution in the meaning of *nuna*

### 8.2.1 An internal and an external meaning

The meaning of *nuna* has changed along history, in parallel with the evolution of Inuit identity and of the nature of the territories Inuit communities have lived on. Dorais relates the evolution of the meaning of *nuna* when the Inuit they discovered that other living places existed — that of the Whites. *Nuna* then became a potentially plural word. Later, it was to be identified with the different Inuit geopolitical regions created since the 1970s (Dorais, 2008, p. 12-13); and perhaps will it be identified with the more general Inuit land made of all circumpolar Inuit regions.

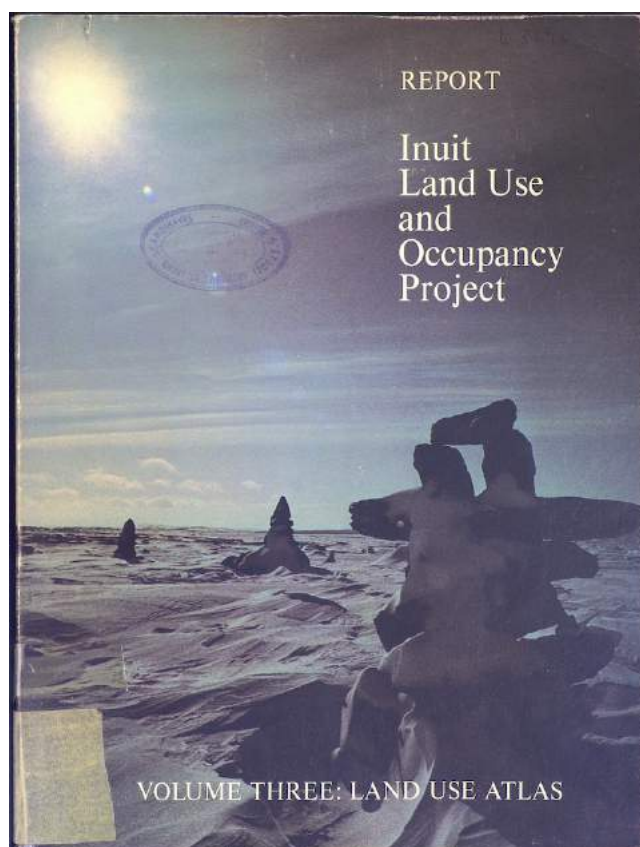
The uses of *nuna* have changed, and so has its meaning. What has to be understood is the two-handed process through which its meaning changed while adapting to new realities; the vocable was used in a different sense (typically while *nuna* became a “banner”) and the meaning it entailed (that of an unquestioned peculiar territoriality embedded in everyday practices). On the one hand, there was large spreading and reinterpretation of *nuna*: this is what can be seen in the fact that it was widely adopted as a mere synonym for “land”, taken in a Western land. The most blatant example of it is the inclusion of the vocable in regionyms, which formed the basis for the building of new Inuit identities. On



(a) Picture entered in the #nunagram competition — see above figure 16, p. 64 for the meaning of it.

(b) Official logo for the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

**Figure 18:** Two examples of the use and spread of the inuksuk as a symbol: (a) the popularization of the flag of Nunavut, here on the social media, and (b) the use of the inuksuk as a logo for the 2010 Winter Olympics. The latter shows that the inuksuk is now widely recognized as a symbol of identity as well as territoriality, and appropriated as a symbol of Canada as a whole.



**Figure 19:** Cover of the *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Report* (Freeman (ed.), 1976) [Courtesy of the Service des Collections, Bibliothèque centrale du Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle]. The Inuksuk embodies and symbolizes the Inuit discontinuous but impregnating occupation of the land, but it also is a symbol and vector for Inuit land claims. It thus finds its place as the cover of a report both scientific and establishing ground for political claims.

See also figure 8, p. 29, for an example of Inuksuk as illustrative of a scientific book on the Inuit body and territoriality.

the other hand, its meaning evolved within a rapidly changing context. The territoriality it depicted had to confront with the Inuit settlement, and Inuit youth do not practice the land as their parents used to do. *Nuna* was thus invested with a meaning of “traditional” territoriality and as such, pertained to Inuit identities in a new way.

Studying Nunavut, Therrien offers a subtle interpretation of this process: according to her, two meanings of *nuna* do cohabit, one used internally within the Inuit group, and the other dedicated to external uses — for the Qallunaat (Therrien, 1999, p. 47-49, my translation below). She explains that the Inuit of what is today known as Nunavut adopted a pragmatic approach when negotiating their autonomy and accepted to consider *nuna* as a commodity which had to be legally owned in order for the negotiations not to fail. They knew that this concession had to be made if they wanted the Qallunaat governments to go on with the negotiation. However, in doing so,

*“they made two pictures of nuna coexist: the first, true to the definition of landscape in Canadian law, was directed towards legal, economic and political specialists”*<sup>36</sup>

This is the interpretation written down in all official texts, and it is from this sense that the ordinary meaning of “the Inuit land” are derived. The purpose of such a definition was strategical: the idea was to adopt the Qallunaat categories because only in such phrasing would the Canadian government allow for power devolution from central administration to the Inuit. Therrien continues as follows:

*“the second representation of nuna, expressed solely in Inuktitut, is passed around at the family and community levels, and it has concrete implications on the way the Inuit behave. It is about a peculiar relationship to the natural milieu, reproduced by education, and it helps the youth develop respectful and modest attitudes towards the whole of the natural environment, far from any appropriation feeling”*<sup>37</sup>.

Thus, *nuna* may have two meanings according to which sphere it is used within. From this explanation it can be inferred that *nuna* works as a *shibboleth* for Inuit identity, those understanding its implied meaning and the attitudes induced recognizing themselves and being recognized as Inuit people.

## 8.2.2 The “traditional” land and current practices

Trying to understand the meaning — and actually meanings — of *nuna* among the Inuit, Collignon sketches a historical evolution of the meaning of the term which helps understanding the status of the territory in Inuit identity. She points out the fact that *nuna* was imagined as a defining feature of Inuit identity at the same time it was labelled

<sup>36</sup> *“Ils ont fait coexister deux images de nuna: la première, fidèle à la description du paysage selon la loi canadienne, s’adresse aux spécialistes du monde tant politique que juridique ou économique.”*

<sup>37</sup> *“La seconde représentation de nuna, exprimée uniquement en inuktitut, circule au niveau de la famille et de la communauté, et se traduit par des comportements; elle concerne une certaine relation au milieu naturel, reproduite par l’éducation, tendant à développer chez les jeunes des attitudes de respect et de modestie à l’égard de l’ensemble des éléments naturels, loin de tout sentiment d’appropriation”*

“traditional”, that is, when the generation born after the settlement period came of age to define itself. The idea of a lost “*nuna*” depicted earlier was actually made more vivid by the very attempts at rebuilding it, or at least at integrating it in contemporary Inuit identities.

In a 1999 article eloquently titled “Symbolic appropriation — legal appropriation” focusing on the move from the former to the latter, Collignon depicts a historical evolution in the meaning of *nuna*, influenced by the negotiations and the imposition of new territorial norms by the West. She states that *nuna* is an old concept of territory, nowadays put at the disposal of a new idea: that of an appropriated land, in the Western meaning (Collignon, 1999b, p. 41). *Nuna* used to identify a community at the local level — that is, a territory shared by no more than a dozen families: that of a small bay, or a peninsula. Inuit identified with this localized notion of *nuna* could indeed have an intimate knowledge of it, of the topography and the resources which were to be found, and how. But the term *nuna* has evolved — as mentioned earlier, it is now associated with huge regions such as “Nunavut” and “Nunavik”. *Nuna* therefore had to be accustomed to a new and far larger scale; the interactional networks built within it are more vast and loose — though they do exist, for instance through regional media. According to Collignon, these new *nuna* reflect new conceptions of the territory, to a large extent inspired by the Western one: it is a legal appropriation led by human beings. *Nuna-vik*, *Nuna-vut*, consist in administered and formally mapped land, legally rather than symbolically appropriated.

However, in another article published the same year, Collignon suggests that this new mode of appropriation reflected in a change of meaning of the vocable *nuna* still offers latitude to peculiar Inuit territorialities and a specific relationship to *nuna* understood as a “traditional” land and the traditional uses embedded in it. Many young people, as Collignon reveals after extensive interviews, hardly ever get out of the villages into what the Qallunaat would label as “the wild” (Collignon, 1999a). They recognize themselves to be as ignorant as tourists when they go “out” fishing or hunting. But still, an Inuit identity is built while accompanying elders “on the land”, as they say, very occasionally. However rare such contacts with the land which formed the basis of pre-settling Inuit life are, they serve as a ground for Inuit identity. It is out of the village that the youth do feel Inuit, for instance when speaking distinctive Inuktitut language while English tends to prevail everywhere else. Going into *nuna* holds the value of an essential introductory rite, often performed at the end of adolescence. It is through this process — from the end of the 1980s on — that *nuna* acquired its new sense of a “traditional” land, this tradition being then invented as a means to ground an apparently authentic Inuit identity — to follow from Hobsbawm’s analysis of the invention of tradition as a social act to perform society (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983).

Collignon (1999a) develops further the invention of a new territoriality by the Inuit

youth. Parallel to the cultivation of a distanced but still significant link to *nuna* perceived as a traditional territory and ground for Inuit identity dating from pre-settlement era, Inuit young people invent new ways of appropriating — physically and symbolically — their environment. She points out the intimate relationship with the village they live in, and the integration of new practices for building a collective memory territorially anchored, such as the remembering of all the successive inhabitants of a house. She also points out that this new “territory” is a web built with other Inuit living in southern cities whom are also occasionally visited. It is therefore split along several places, a discontinuous occupation confirming the afore-mentioned “everlasting peculiarities” of Inuit territoriality, helping to fuel a sense of collective belonging.

### 8.3 Internal debates on — and changes in — Inuit identity

#### 8.3.1 Inuit identity and organizational legitimacy conflicts

Even among the Inuit, this evolution of the uses and meanings of *nuna* has been debated while *nuna* became a banner for all Inuit claims — which put it at risk of losing its meaning when being used for *any* Inuit claim. One of the explicit debates making it clear happened when the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement was signed and ITN organization created. This group of Inuit from Puvirnituk, Ivujivik and Salluit who proclaimed themselves “dissidents” to the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement chose to put *nuna* at the core of their name, Inuit Tungavingat Nunamini, which means “those who stand on their land” . In this name, *nuna*, has to be understood in all the complexities already explained and as the necessary substratum for an “authentic” Inuit identity. ITN members meant to be representative of the “authentic” Inuit sense of landscape and therefore claimed to be the legitimate representative of the Inuit, in opposition to the organizations which negotiated the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. ITN claimed that these organizations had no legitimate mandate to negotiate and that the agreement they signed spoiled the Inuit from Quebec. In their discourses, the members of ITN associated the so-called “treason” of their representatives with the latter’s loss of understanding of what *nuna* really is, that is, non-divisible and not saleable. ITN members claimed to embody the true Inuit legitimacy, based upon respecting the original meaning of *nuna* as part of a larger cosmological order and protecting the old peculiar relationship of the Inuit with their land. They declared the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement to be void and asked for more debate among the Inuit in order for them to self-determine their future. This claim details how the land was at some point invested with a meaning it did not explicitly have before, along legitimacy conflicts between political organizations which tried to define themselves through their definition of the land.



**Figure 20:** This map is the first image shown in Bulbulian’s documentary on ITN — even though the organization is hardly mentioned as such in the documentary. Reading “Standing on their ground”, it is a literal translation of ITN’s name, and the subliminal idea conveyed here is that the specific territorial relationship of the members of ITN with *nuna* is the only one legitimate enough to be applied on the whole of Northern Canada — here colored in beige — as well as on all the Inuit lands, with no borders pictured from western Alaska to eastern Greenland.

In this respect, documents produced by ITN all put forward *nuna* in its original meaning — its “internal signification”, to follow Therrien (1999). Bulbulian produced a film staging ITN members in Puvirnituk where they display some of the traditional Inuit practices in interaction with the land: hunting, fishing, and the associated social practices of sharing. The idea here is to put forward how the Inuit identity and the very existence of Inuit communities relies on retaining this specific relationship with the land and therefore not leaving it to the Qalunaat in exchange for money (Bulbulian, 1983). This film is a piece of activism for it aims at giving voice to the opponents of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement who show their practices and how they adapt to the modern world without surrendering their land and the way of life it embeds. A brochure was also edited to make ITN’s positions better known. In this document, ITN members claim their attachment to *nuna*, “nourishing land rather than private property”, and they insist that “the relationship of the Inuit to the land is not characterized by property feeling but rather attachent to a nourishing land to which all and everyone traditionally had access to, on the basis of a balanced relationship between human beings and available resources”<sup>38</sup> (ITN, 1983, p. 11, my translation). These declarations are targeted against the organizations who negotiated the extinction of land claims in the 1970s. Claiming a certain meaning for *nuna* thus was a way of affirming a position and to position a new political organization on a ground all Inuit would know.

<sup>38</sup>“Pays nourricier plutôt que propriété privée”; “la relation des Inuit à la terre ne se caractérise pas par un sentiment de propriété mais par un attachement au pays nourricier auquel tous et chacun avaient traditionnellement accès sur la base d’une relation d’équilibre entre les humains et les ressources disponibles”.

Collignon also casts light on the fact that the question of territorial “authenticity” was made especially vivid when negotiating with Western governments for the land. When opposing Qallunaat governments, the “traditional” and “authentic” aspect of the land and land practices were perceived as strong arguments (Collignon, 1999a, p. 107). According to Collignon, it is this particular negotiation over land claims which led to put the “traditional” Inuit land at the core of Inuit identity — in a move analogous to the one observed by Martin among the Gwich’in (Martin, 2016). Indigenous identity was therefore circumscribed to a specific territoriality identified with pre-settlement practices, and de-legitimizing potentially new practices, especially those explored by the youth described earlier (creating networks of actual and virtual Northern and Southern places).

### 8.3.2 An identity negotiated between different (interacting) levels

About Greenland, Nuttall suggests that an analogous debate may be seen about the uses of the territory. What is at stake here behind the legitimacy of organizations is the mode of development to be promoted, and it still raises concerns on identity. In his 2001 article, Nuttall explains that Greenlandic authorities, wanting to foster a feeling of national identity, have promoted traditional activities when negotiating autonomy with Danish government. Hunting, fishing, sheep raising were therefore praised as elements supporting the maintaining of a specific relationship to the land — that of reciprocal exchange which is characteristic of *nuna*. While promoting these activities typical to the Kalaallit, Greenlandic authorities put forward a newly-invented national identity. However, more and more politicians and members of the administration claimed for moving the focus towards potentially more profitable activities, that is, exploiting non-renewable resources on a high scale, especially underground resources, which often come to conflict with traditional activities (Nuttall, 2001, p. 65-66). The instigators of such reforms have insisted that this is the only way to access real autonomy towards Denmark, since nowadays Greenland’s economy is largely in deficit and therefore cannot sustain itself. What is at stake in this debate is the place and role the environment is to play in collective human lives and how the land is to be used for fostering political identification. Praisers of extractive industries claim that developing unsustainable exploitation of the resources is the fastest and most rational way of getting independence, thus achieving the establishment of territorial and political autonomy — *nuna* in an external meaning. Those who are rather skeptical towards it favor the internal meaning of *nuna* and the preservation of the characteristic Inuit relationship with the environment — which does not easily put up with extractive industry.

The explicit construction of a national identity is one the complexities often highlighted when dealing with Greenlandic identity (see Dahl 1986, 1988, Nuttall 1992, 2001, 2015,



Graugaard 2009). There are two main levels of collective identity: that of the local identity and that of Greenland as a whole (even though one more levels may be added, for instance that of the three dialects spoken all over the island). As Nuttall explains it,

*“land is possibly one of the things that mediates both national and local identity, in that people have a concept of Kalaallit Nunaat as nunarput, but that when a person says nunaga (‘my land’, or ‘my home’) they also may be explicitly referring to their home village or area, as when they say ‘nunaga Aappilattoq’, ‘my home / my land is Aappilattoq’.” (Nuttall, 2001, p. 59).*

The invention of the Greenlandic nation induced a renegotiation of identities at the local level, and it was not without consequences on the way the land was identified with. Nuttall distinguishes between the notion of belonging to a place (especially the place where one was born) and that of belonging to the nation :

*“being a Kalaaleq and having a strong sense of identity as a Greenlander (kalaaliussuseq) is constituted in part through notions of belonging to a place or homeland (Kalaallit Nunaat [Greenland] as nunarput [our home]) — Greenland as a homeland is important to people’s identity as Greenlanders [...] Yet in the villages of south Greenland, ideas of identity and attachment to a local area figure prominently in everyday local discourses.” (Nuttall, 2015, p. 228).*

About the word *nuna* itself, he insists in 2001 that

*“While the idea or concept of nuna is used to refer to both the national and the local (rather like “country” in many parts of Europe is synonymous with both nation and countryside), I would argue that land is less of a fundamental marker of national Greenlandic identity than it is for local identity” (Nuttall, 2001, p. 59).*

Identity and attachment to the land are thus present at two levels of the cultural Greenlandic landscape: the nation and more prominently locality. The balance between the two is not fixed and may tip to the national side as mobility — both national and international — increase among Greenlanders. This is what Graugaard suggests after several months of fieldwork in 2008:

*“The idea of being attached to the land has undergone processes of transformation by which locality has been complemented with nationality. In recent years, the idea of ‘attachment to the land’ is increasingly understood as something related to place of birth, upbringing, living with the Greenlandic nature, and solidarity with the country [and not strictly ethnic]” (Graugaard, 2009, p. 20).*

Thus, territorial attachment, built along political processes, is highly dependent on a wider cultural context and may vary — thus entailing variations in the modes and levels of identification. Collective identities are mediated by processes, organizations and symbols, and the modes of identification — as well as their objects — evolve along the course of history. Such changes are permanent, as it may be seen in today’s Inuit territoriality’s confrontation with current global challenges.

## 9 *Nuna* and the contemporary challenges for Inuit territorial identity

### 9.1 Towards and international Inuit identity

Above-mentioned definitions of Inuit identity based on *nuna* and put forward in re-gionyms have been taken up on the international stage, especially by the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC). This council aims bringing together all Inuit peoples to a common ground for discussion, and at representing them in international organizations — such as the United Nations. The ICC therefore comprises Inuit from Alaska, Canada and Quebec, Greenland, and Russia. the ICC uses the term “Inuit Nunaat” to mean the whole of Inuit regions around the Arctic circle — whatever their status, autonomous or not. ICC’s 2009 declaration asserts the sovereignty of Inuit peoples on the Arctic, and it begins with a definition of the Inuit based on the specific land they inhabit. Indeed, the first article of the Declaration regards the Arctic as a whole as the “home” of the Inuit:

“1.1 Inuit live in the Arctic. *Inuit live in the vast, circumpolar region of land, sea and ice known as the Arctic. We depend on the marine and terrestrial plants and animals supported by the coastal zones of the Arctic Ocean, the tundra and the sea ice. The Arctic is our home*”

and the second article of the Declaration defines “Inuit Nunaat” (“the land of the Inuit”), on the basis of the historical use of the area by the Inuit:

“1.2 Inuit have been living in the Arctic from time immemorial. *From time immemorial, Inuit have been living in the Arctic. Our home in the circumpolar world, Inuit Nunaat, stretches from Greenland to Canada, Alaska and the coastal regions of Chukotka, Russia. Our use and occupation of Arctic lands and waters pre-dates recorded history. Our unique knowledge, experience of the Arctic, and language are the foundation of our way of life and culture*”.

It is only from the third article on that the Inuit as a people are defined (*1.3 Inuit are a people*). Thus it seems clear that the ICC adopts a strategical view according to which the Inuit unity shall be first made out of the similarities in the inhabited land and the way it is inhabited, rather than departing from a cultural or political feeling of togetherness which cannot be built elsewhere than on territorial ground. The ICC translates *nuna* as “homeland” rather than usual “land”, which puts forward its will to build an integrated and independent political space. The ICC also uses the same element which helped fueling Greenlandic nationalism out of (sub)territorial sovereignty when it points out that an Inuit homeland is a precondition for resource exploitation:

“*resource development in Inuit Nunaat must proceed only with the free, prior, and informed consent of the Inuit of that region*” (ICC, 2011, Articles 2.1, 2.3)

It should be noted though that the very choice of the term for an “Inuit land” conceals possible definitional conflict between Inuit organizations. ITK (Inuit Tapirisiit Kanatami), a Canadian organization representing Inuit from Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut, and the Inuvialuit, thus distances itself from the terminology used by the ICC, labelled as primarily Greenlandic and thus not adapted to Canadian realities:

*“Inuit Nunaat’ is a Greenlandic term that describes land but does not include water or ice. The term ‘Inuit Nunangat’ is a Canadian Inuktitut term that includes land, water, and ice. As Canadian Inuit consider the land, water, and ice, of our homeland to be integral to our culture and our way of life it was felt that ‘Inuit Nunangat’ is a more inclusive and appropriate term to use when describing our lands.” (ITK, 2009<sup>39</sup>)*

To what extent this statement embodies potential mistrust or even defiance between ITK and ICC — the former may have been perceiving the latter as a rival in the inter-regional representation of Inuit — would have to be determined by thorough analyses of the documents issued by these two organizations and interviews with of their respective delegates.

The use and even the very existence of such terms as *Inuit Nunaat* and *Inuit Nunangat* makes it clear that “*nuna*” has become a widespread vocable and thus a tool for building a pan-Inuit identity. A common identity might be expected to emerge from it, shared beyond national and linguistic boundaries, for the Inuit live in different countries — and even different continents — and do not share the same language (apart from rare words such as “*nuna*”, precisely). This opens up a research perspective on pan-Inuit identity: to what extent do Inuit people adhere to it? For instance, do Nunavut Inuit feel closer to fellow Inuit from Greenland or Siberia than to geographically-closer Native peoples of the North-Western Territories, or even Canadian Qallunaat? Apart from nominal claims from the ICC, what does a shared Inuit identity concretely comprises? This may be studied with a focus on Inuit exchanges and mobility, for example during pan-Inuit events such as the Arctic Games which bring together peoples from circumpolar Arctic to compete in traditional and modern sports and games. Once more, this could bring up the question of an Inuit identity and of its characteristics distinctive to those of other Arctic Native peoples — such as the Sami for instance. Such research should also put forward the initiatives which may fuel Inuit identity — for instance the media which are aimed at Inuit people in general. Thus, such research may in the end reflexively questions research itself, for social scientists researching Inuit cultures often talk about “the Inuit” as a whole — often not really asking themselves to what extent their result may apply beyond the boundaries of their field and of the small community or the limited number of informants they have met. Such studies may have had a performative effect in the long run, making people — Inuit or not — believe in a unity perhaps stronger than what it actually is.

<sup>39</sup>This explanation was found on ITK’s website: <https://www.itk.ca/maps-of-inuit-nunangat/>.

## 9.2 Inuit identity at a time of global warming and changing environment

As has been showed, Inuit identity strongly relies on identification with a specific land and land-related practices. The Inuit land and landscape, however, are threatened by current climate change — Inuit actually are at the front row of climate change, for their ecumene largely stands on ice and frozen ground (permafrost), physically and metaphorically. Inuit identity is therefore threatened by current global warming, and this necessity to question their identity in a changing world is also an opportunity to claim their place on the contemporary international stage. One of the prominent figure of such analyses and claims is Sheila Watt-Cloutier, a Canadian Inuit activist who has been successively chairing Makivik Corporation, the International Inuit Council and the latter's international chair. In a political stance, she explains that

*“Our struggle to thrive in the harshest environment has given us the outlook we need to survive in the modern world. That outlook — a respectful human one that sees connections to everything — should inform the debate on climate change.” (Watt-Cloutier, 2007, p. 14).*

The Inuit specific territorial identity, which as shown afore radically differs from the Western one, has been at least partly successfully retained until now. According to Wall-Cloutier, it is a great opportunity, for the specific relationship to the environment entailed by *nuna* is sustainable and may be able to answer some of the great challenges met today at a global level — namely, that of the necessary changes the world's in populations' habits. The sense of belonging to a community may also prove socially sustainable. However, based on the former analyses, it is clear that one of the great challenges raised by this idea is that it necessitates a sense of collectivity which is still to be found at an international level.

## Conclusion: an identity in the making

Identity, rather than a fixed pool of specific traits, as to be seized as a fluid process. Focusing on identification processes has helped understanding how a human collective can build self-identification out of territorial characteristics. The Inuit collectively appropriate the land, not only through a common use and occupation of it, but with the building of a collective memory for which the land is a repository. Stories fundamental for the community are situated in and recalled by the landscape, and toponyms work as markers of collective souvenirs. Recently, the invention of regionyms has been an opportunity to revive and invent collective belonging at a regional level, but also to express pan-inuit similarities through formal imitation when including “*nuna*” in regionyms — thus making this very vocable and the territoriality it entails strong markers of identity.

Collective identity is processed along history by certain individual and collective actors who offer the means and incentives for such identification. Following Hobsbawm's and Anderson's constructivist framework, I described the imagination and building of Inuit communities — especially national ones. Landmarks for it were the land claims negotiations all over the Arctic as well as the use of symbols — such as the Inuksuk in Canada. When used and circulating, such symbols may have their meaning changed; this was also the case for *nuna*, which itself became a political and cultural “banner”. Nowadays, it may have a meaning internal to the Inuit community and another one for interacting with the Qallunaat; and a “traditional” meaning for the youth coupled with a “modern” meaning used to describe contemporary territorialities. Such evolutions and changes make conflicts unavoidable, among the Inuit themselves — especially since the self-identification of the Inuit community raises the stake of their representation, for which several organizations may compete.

The representation and leading of the Inuit is an major stake at times when the territorial basis of their identity is threatened by the great changes global climate change induces, as well as by the ever-more intense level of globalization. One of the answers to it may be the building of a pan-Inuit identity, but it is still to emerge.

## Conclusion

This dissertation aimed at exploring the stakes implied by an Inuit specific vocable, *nuna*, which the Inuit often simply translate as “land”. Among the main stakes put forward are the characterization of a territory — whether physical or discursive; the comparison of interacting territorialities; and the subsequent definition of identities grounded in Inuit peculiar territorial practices. *Nuna* is a notion at the crossroads of cultural geography, anthropology, and social and political sciences.

The Inuit land is that part of the Arctic which the Inuit have for long used and occupied, that they know and relate to. A first interpretation of “*nuna*” may then arise, that of the “Inuit [geographical] territory”. This meaning is more or less congruent with the Qallunaat understanding of the land as a formal geographical extent, but it does not correspond to what the Inuit call “*nuna*”. Such characterization of the Inuit by the peculiarity of the imagined Arctic they inhabit often pertains to a mostly false Qallunaat cliché. Indeed, *nuna* also has a cosmological meaning for the Inuit, as the uses of the term in myths and tales display it. It is an entity which plays a role in the order of the world on the same footage as human beings, other living beings and non-living resources. It therefore entails a particular understanding of the environment as a whole, radically different from the Western conception of a definite separation between man and nature.

The Inuit *ecumene* is thought to be self-sustaining and made out of relationships between the species, especially human and non-human — one of the best examples of this being the reciprocal relationship between the hunter and his preys which are supposed to offer themselves if well-treated and respected. *Nuna* is therefore made of social practices taking place in a wider cosmological order and denotes an Inuit ontology which is radically different from the Western one. When reflecting on *nuna*, the Inuit way of thinking and organizing representations and values can be characterized by its holistic aspect and its cosmocentrism.

What makes the Inuit culture distinct from other ones is thus its way of relating to the environment, its specific way of inhabiting its milieu. This is especially true when contrasting it with Qallunaat's attitudes towards the land, the latter being most often thought in terms of appropriation and ownership, domination and exploitation — far from the reciprocal relationship the Inuit cultivate with their milieu. Inuit territoriality is in itself a distinctive cultural feature — and thus may easily be reflected as an element of identity. This divergence of territorialities between Qallunaat and Inuit is exacerbated when both territorialities directly confront. This is the case in the negotiation process regarding the land the Inuit have claimed, because the land and the whole cosmological and social orders embedded in it are threatened by contemporary exploitation projects set up by Western authorities. Negotiation conflicts put forward the discrepancies between Inuit and Qallunaat understandings of the land, especially when it comes to deciding whether political claims are to be negotiated jointly with strictly territorial ones or not — the Inuit not imagining separate processes, for their territorial practices which are determined by political sovereignty are embedded in the land. Land claims have therefore been an occasion for the Inuit to demand their self-government. Territorialities are also about the perceptions and imagination of the land, which greatly differ. Inuit and Qallunaat apply opposite meanings to the Arctic as large; the former see it as rich and beautiful, as a fruitful land full of promises, while the latter see it as a sterile desert, dramatically cold and wild. Research on tourism have put forward this disjunction, but research is still to be done in a cross-cultural perspective in order to determine to what extent the confrontation between territorialities might help reconciling the two visions — which is a major stake, especially at a time when Arctic “ecotourism” develops, aiming at bringing more thorough attention to local populations and developing more cultural exchanges. Last but not least, the peculiar relationship the Inuit have with their land is that of strong emotional attachment, allowing for identification of the individuals with the places they have known and of the collectivities with the environment they live in.

*Nuna* therefore encompasses territorial identity in several dimensions: the occupation of a specific territory; the specific relationship to one's or a collectivity's land and the way it is managed; and the very imagination of the land, the way it is understood — the

*cultural landscape* it forms. However, collective identity backed upon the land does not emerge naturally, or spontaneously, from it — nor from the very fact of aggregating people together. The land is a substratum not only for identity but also for strategical elaboration of an identity which may be fostered by stakeholders. *Nuna* is a support for identity, and it is made clear in the collection and officialization of toponyms which are a support for the recognition of the existence and legitimacy of locally-based Inuit communities. More generally, toponyms recognition acknowledges indigenous occupation of the land, for associating places with names and therefore anecdotes and tales turn the landscape into a repository for properly collective memory, affirming the proactive role of communities in shaping their environment. *Nuna* also plays an identification role when being included in many regionyms around the circumpolar Inuit world. This is one of the concrete ways in which identity is produced and spread through symbols, and *nuna* may be thought of here as a banner for Inuit identity. Collective identity often relies on the elaboration of symbols and depends on their spreading which foster larger identification; both channels are used when *nuna* is symbolically included in regionyms, which are then spread over the world and subsequently used in demonyms and other names. These symbolisation and spreading also applies to physical items, such as the inuksuit. Following Anderson's theoretical framework on the *imagined* nature of communities, one can trace back such processes in Inuit communities, from the local level to the international stage where the ICC tries to implement its theorization of an Inuit circumpolar nation.

It is often highlighted that identity is a concept difficult to define — and this is why I chose to focus on the processes, actors and elements of identification, more concrete and easier to put forward than identity in itself. Therrien states that “each Inuk has a triple identity: personal, social, and cosmological”<sup>40</sup> (Therrien, 2005, p. 40, my translation). These three dimensions are defined in relation to *nuna*, the Inuit ecumene, the environment to the extent that it is humanized, inhabited, known, and used. This way, *nuna* definitely is at the very core of Inuit identity, encompassing its main dimensions. Inuit identity is territorial not only in the sense that all Inuit inhabit similar environments, but rather in the sense that they inhabit their environments *the same way*. *Nuna* reflects an attitude towards the land more than a essential feature of the land itself. It may be transferred to other places than the ones traditionally occupied by the Inuit, and territorialities themselves may change over time while either varying in contents and retaining a constant structure, or keeping the same contents reinterpreted as ancient and permanent and from then on considered as traditional and authentic. Thus the Inuit identity is plastic and has evolved in time, following concrete elements of identification. This is of high importance in a context of global warming in which the Inuit environment is rapidly changing; one may wonder to what extent a proper Inuit identity can remain, and under

<sup>40</sup>“chaque Inuk à une triple identité, personnelle, sociale et cosmologique”

which forms, while the Inuit territory encounters unprecedented tremendous changes.

Focusing on the processes, the means, and the media of identification, the social nature and historical contingency of such a social fact has been made clear. Inuit identification happens at several levels, from the local to the global. It may be fostered by self-interested organizations and rely on the adoption and spreading of certain symbols. Inuit identity is not a fixed set of traits, for it is diverse and in constant evolution; the forms under which identification is actualized are not necessarily nor essentially attached to the populations. Even though stable and displaying regular patterns traits, identity is being negotiated within Inuit communities and in confrontation with outer groups — here the Qallunaat. Thus identity may proceed from complex dialectics, self-identification potentially being the result of re-appropriation of traits selected and reflected by actors external to the community. It is a process always in evolution, the richness of which suggests way more research still is to be done. One may wonder whether speaking of plural Inuit identities rather than of a single “Inuit identity” would be more accurate. However, I have tried to show that even though there are differences between different Inuit communities (especially between Inuit regions or even countries), and even though Inuit identities do evolve and change, beyond the plurality in traits and environments, Inuit identity is a specific *form* of identity, defined in relation with the land (seen as central, resourceful, an element of identity) and in opposition with Qallunaat perspectives.

A wider look on different other indigenous groups, the territorialities of which may be close to that of the Inuit, may be worth studying in regard, in order to discern more precisely what the identity boundaries distinguishing the Inuit from them are. Other perspective for future research have been evoked along the dissertation; a first step which seems to me to be necessary would be to resolve once and for all the question of the regionyms and referendums which are said to have happened in Nunavut and Nunavik. Further enquiry may also question directly the stakeholders responsible for naming and try to discern what they do associate with the notion of “*nuna*” — between a vocable picked up with full consciousness in its wide peculiar cosmological meaning, and an unquestioned choice following from other regions, media titles and other institution names.

This analysis is of course highly limited by its theoretical aspects. It may also have been undermine by the author’s lack of linguistic knowledge. Archive work as well as fieldwork — interviews and participative observation — would be necessary to confirm the hypotheses proposed here. Using techniques from visual methodologies might also prove most useful in order to question the nature and the role of a landscape so much invested with discursive elements and cultural representations as the Arctic is. For instance, a PhD questioning Inuit territorial identity may draw insightful data from the methods of visual anthropology, asking contemporary Inuit of all ages and living in different areas to take pictures or chose pictures depicting what *nuna* means for them, and in which spaces



they feel at home — according to Collignon’s interpretations, built on enquiries in an older generation, the younger the people are, the more the notions of “*nuna*” and “home” should be disconnected, *nuna* being associated only with the formal traditional land and practices for the youth while the elderly may see it in a more encompassing sense. The plasticity of such a notion requires thorough attention be brought to the subject.

Another aspect which seems highly interesting to study is that of the circumpolar Inuit identity: does it exist, under which form, and to what extent? Analyzing it would require to study not only the institutional discourse of the ICC and other international stakeholders — some motives and strategies of which have been evoked here — but also concrete representations from Inuit around the world. What do they know about other Inuit peoples? How close to them do they feel? Such study would also benefit from the comparison of such declarations with the study of concrete exchanges: are there cultural exchanges, what are the artifacts, symbols or expressions transferred, and to which ones do the Inuit identify to? And does human mobility highlight the existence of an Inuit group, that is, a community of people within which the networks and relations are denser and closer than those with external groups and individuals? This could be seen in the voyages made by people, the spreading of the media, but also the virtual connections — for example the number of common friends on social media such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and the frequency of virtual interactions in order to see if there exists something as an “Inuit global network”.

The sociology of globalization obviously has a lot to learn from the study of Inuit peoples, be it only for understanding the complex dialectics between localized identity and the building of a wider sense of belonging in interaction with an image reflected by the Qallunaat. The Inuit may indeed be getting closer than ever while being still dispersed around the Pole or even the world.

## References

### Bibliography

- AGLUKARK, Brian, “Inuit and the Land as One”, in SOUBLIÈRE, Marion, COLEMAN, Greg (eds.) (1999). *Nunavut '99: Changing the Map of Canada*, Iqaluit NU: Nortext Multimedia, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. 132 p. <http://www.nunavut.com/nunavut99/english/> [5 July 2016].
- ALIA, Valerie. *Names and Nunavut. Culture and Identity in the Inuit Homeland*. New York, Berghahn Books, 2006, 208 p.
- AMAGOALIK, John (2000a). “Wasteland of Nobodies”, in DAHL, Jens, HICKS, Jack, JULL, Peter (eds.), *Nunavut. Inuit Regain Control of their Lands and their Lives*, Copenhagen, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, p. 138-139.
- AMAGOALIK, John (2000b). “Nuna speaks to Nuki”, NUNATSIAQ NEWS, 30 juin 2000, <http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/archives/nunavut000630/corner.html> [19 May 2016].
- AMAGOALIK, John (2001). “What is this land?”, in BLOHM, Hans-Ludwig, AMAGOALIK, John, *The voice of the natives: the Canadian North and Alaska*. [Ontario]: Penumbra Press.
- AMAGOALIK, John (2012). “Reconciliation or Conciliation? An Inuit Perspective”, in ROGERS, Shelagh, DEGAGNÉ, Mike, DEWAR, Jonathan, LOWRY, Glen (eds.), *‘Speaking My Truth’. Reflections on Reconciliation & Residential School*, Aboriginal Healing Foundation, p. 37-48.
- ANDERSON, Benedict (1983). *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London, Verso, 240 p.
- ANTOMARCHI, Véronique (2009). “Tourisme, identité et développement en milieu inuit. Le cas de Puvirnituk au Nunavik”, *Téoros. Revue de recherche en tourisme*, vol. 28, no 1, “Le tourisme polaire”, Spring 2009, p. 52-60.
- ARIMA, Eugene (1976). “Views on land expressed in Inuit oral traditions”, in FREEMAN Milton (ed.) *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project: a report — vol.2*, Ottawa: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, p. 217-222.
- BERQUE, Augustin (2000). *Écoumène. Introduction à l'étude des milieux humains*. Paris, Belin, 272 p.
- BRICE-BENNETT, Carol (1977). *Our footprints are everywhere: Inuit land use and occupancy in Labrador*. Labrador Inuit Association, Nain, Newfoundland.
- BRODY, Hugh (2000). *The Other Side of Eden*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 376p.
- CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY [THE] (2015). *Code of Ethics*, adopted at the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Meeting, October 2015, Winnipeg, [http://www.capa-acap.net/sites/default/files/basic-page/capa\\_code\\_of\\_ethics\\_-\\_oct\\_2015.pdf](http://www.capa-acap.net/sites/default/files/basic-page/capa_code_of_ethics_-_oct_2015.pdf) [9 September 2016].
- CHARTIER Daniel, DÉSY Jean (2014). *La Nordicité du Québec*. Québec, Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2014, 141 p.
- CHARTIER Daniel (2007). “Towards a Grammar of the Idea of North: Nordicity, Winterity”. *Nordlit*, 11(2), p. 35-47.

COLLIGNON, Béatrice (1996). *Les Inuit. Ce qu'ils savent du territoire*. Paris and Montréal, L'Harmattan, coll. "Géographie et cultures", 1996, 254 p.

COLLIGNON, Béatrice (1999a). "Les Fondements territoriaux de l'identité Inuit d'hier et d'aujourd'hui", in BONNEMAISON Joël, CAMBRÉZY Luc, QUINTY-BOURGEOIS Laurence (eds.), *Le Territoire, lien ou frontière? — 1. Les Territoires de l'identité*. Paris, L'Harmattan, 1999.

COLLIGNON, Béatrice (1999b). "Appropriation symbolique — appropriation légale. Le sens du territoire", in TEVENY, Sylvie, THERRIEN, Michèle (eds.), *Pour mieux comprendre le Nunavut. Actes de la Journée Nunavut du 30 janvier 1999*, Paris, INALCO, p. 35-44.

COLLIGNON, Béatrice (2001). "Esprit des lieux et modèles culturels. La mutation des espaces domestiques en arctique inuit / Sense of Place and Cultural Identities: Inuit Domestic Spaces in transition", *Annales de Géographie*, vol. 110, no 620, July-August 2001, "Espaces domestiques", p. 383-404.

COLLIGNON, Béatrice (2002). "Les toponymes inuit, mémoire du territoire. Étude de l'Histoire des Inuinnait", in TRUDEL, François (ed), *Anthropologie et sociétés*, vol. 26, no 2-3, Mémoires du Nord, p. 45-69.

COLLIGNON, Béatrice (2006). "Inuit Place Names and Sense of Place", in STERN, Pamela, and STEVENSON, Lisa, *Critical Inuit Studies. An Anthology of Contemporary Arctic Ethnography*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, p. 187-205.

COLLIN, Chloé (2009). "Echoing Voices. The Indigenization in Canadian Postmodern Arctic Literature", in COLLIGNON, Béatrice, THERRIEN, Michèle (eds), *Orality in the 21st century: Inuit discourse and practices. Proceedings of the 15<sup>th</sup> Inuit Studies Conference*. Paris: Inalco, <http://www.inuitoralityconference.com/art/Collin.pdf> [8 September 2016].

CORRELL, Thomas C. (1976). "Language and Location in Traditional Inuit Societies", in FREEMAN Milton (ed.) *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project: a report — vol.2*, Ottawa: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, p. 217-222.

DAHL, Jens (1986). "Greenland: Political Structure of Self-Government", *Arctic Anthropology*, vol. 23, no 1-2, p. 315-324.

DAHL, Jens (1988). "Self-government, land claims and imagined Inuit communities", *FOLK*, 30, p.73-84.

DAHL, Jens (2000). *Saqqaq. An Inuit Hunting Community in the Modern World*, University of Toronto, 278 p.

DESCOLA, Philippe (2005). *Par-delà Nature et Culture*. Paris, Gallimard. 640 p.

DORAIS, Louis-Jacques (1990). Inuit uqausingit. *1000 Inuit Words / Mots inuit*; Quebec, Association Inuksiutiit Katimajit, coll. "Inuit Studies Occasional Papers", 215 p.

DORAIS, Louis-Jacques (1996). *La Parole inuit. Langue, culture et société dans l'Arctique nord-américain*, Paris, Peeters, 331 p.

DORAIS, Louis-Jacques (2008). "Terre de l'ombre ou terre d'abondance? Le Nord des Inuit", in CHARTIER, Daniel [ed.], *Le(s) Nord(s) imaginaire(s)*, Montréal, Imaginaire | Nord, coll. "Droit au pôle", p. 9-22.

DUCHAINE, Gabrielle (2016). "Chasse et pêche en terre inuite", *La Presse+*, 24 May 2016, p. 5 [5 July 2016].

DUFOUR, Rose (1981). “Au corps de l’‘anthropie’, vers une santé publique écologique”, Conférence Winnipeg, 22-24 septembre. <http://www.bibl.ulaval.ca/doelec/pul/chap10.html#SECRDU.9> [10 August 2016]

DURKHEIM, Émile (1982 [1895]). *The Rules of the Sociological Method*, Introduction by S. LUKES, Translation by W. D. HALLS, New York, The Free Press, 269 p.

Elder’s Conference, OKAKOK Kisautaq-Leona, KEAN, Gary (1981). PUIGUITKAAT: THE 1978 ELDER’S CONFERENCE. Barrow, Alaska: North Slope Borough, Commission on History and Culture.

FREEMAN Milton (ed.) (1976). *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project: a report* — 3 volumes, Ottawa: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

FREEMAN Milton (2011). “Looking back — and looking ahead — 35 years after the Inuit land use and occupancy project”. *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe canadien*, vol. 55, no 1, p. 20-31.

GOEHRING, Brian (1990). “Inuit Place Names and Man-Land Relationships, Pelly Bay, Northwest Territories”, PhD Thesis, Vancouver, University of British Columbia, 346 p.

GRABURN, Nelson (2004). “Inuksuk: icon of the Inuit of Nunavut”, *Études/Inuit/Studies*, vol. 28, no 1, p. 69-82.

GRAUGAARD, Naja Dyrendom (2009). “National Identity in Greenland in the Age of Self-Government”. Centre for the Critical Study of Global Power and Politics, Working paper, Ontario: Trent University, 71 p. <https://www.trentu.ca/globalpolitics/documents/Graugaard095.pdf> [10th July 2016]

HALBWACHS, Maurice (1997 [1950]). *La Mémoire collective*, G. NAMER (eds.), Bibliothèque de l’évolution de l’humanité, Albin Michel.

HAMELIN, Louis-Edmond (1988). *Le Nord canadien et ses référents conceptuels / The Canadian North and Its Conceptual Referents*, Ottawa, coll. “Réalités canadiennes”, 92 p.

HAMELIN, Louis-Edmond et Marie-Claude Lavallée (2002). *Le Québec par des mots. Partie II: L’hiver et le Nord*, Sherbrooke, Presses de l’Université de Sherbrooke, 720 p.

HOBSBAWM, Eric, RANGER, Terence (ed.) (1983). *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge University Press.

HUSE, Patrick et Jón Proppé (2005 [2003]). “Diversity and Engagement”, in Huse, Patrick, *Intimate Absence*, Oslo, Delta Press et Henie Onstad Art Center, p. 110-114.

INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR COUNCIL (1980). “Inuit Circumpolar Council Charter”, <http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/icc-charter.html> [4 August 2016].

INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR COUNCIL (2009). “A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic”, <http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/uploads/3/0/5/4/30542564/declaration12x18vicechairssigned.pdf> [4 August 2016].

INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR COUNCIL (2011). “A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Resource Development Principles in Inuit Nunaat” Inuit Circumpolar Council, May 2011, [http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/uploads/3/0/5/4/30542564/declaration\\_on\\_resource\\_development\\_a3\\_final.pdf](http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/uploads/3/0/5/4/30542564/declaration_on_resource_development_a3_final.pdf) [4 August 2016].

INUIT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL ISSUES (1980). “Brief to the joint senate and house of commons committee on the constitution”, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1980.

- INUIT TAPIIRIT KANATAMI (2009). “Maps Of Inuit Nunangat (Inuit Regions Of Canada)”, <https://www.itk.ca/maps-of-inuit-nunangat/> [2 August 2016].
- INUIT TUGAVINGAT NUNAMINI, CHICOINE, Louise (1983). *Les Inuit dissidents à l'entente de la Baie James / Inuit Tungavingat Nunamini Povungnituk*. Inuit Tungavingat Nunamini and Montréal, Comité d'appui aux nations autochtones and La Maîtresse d'école inc., 104 p.
- JESSEN WILLIAMSON, Karla (1992). “Inuit Post-Colonial Gender Relations in Greenland”, Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Aberdeen.
- JOLIET, Fabienne. (2015) “À l'envers du Grand Blanc, le sens inuit du paysage”, Projets de paysage (site web), June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015, [http://www.projetsdepaysage.fr/a\\_1\\_envers\\_du\\_grand\\_blanc\\_le\\_sens\\_inuit\\_du\\_paysage#texte](http://www.projetsdepaysage.fr/a_1_envers_du_grand_blanc_le_sens_inuit_du_paysage#texte) [14 July 2016].
- JULL, Peter (1989). “L'Arctique et l'internationalisme inuit”, *Études internationales*, vol. 20, no no 1, p. 115-130.
- JULL, Peter (2000). “Inuit and Nunavut. Renewing the New World” in DAHL, Jens, HICKS, Jack, JULL, Peter (eds.), *Nunavut. Inuit Regain Control of their Lands and their Lives*, Copenhagen, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, p. 118-136.
- KLEIVAN, Inge (1988). “The creation of Greenland's new national symbol: the flag”, *Folk: Journal of the Danish Ethnographic Society*, vol. 30, p. 32-56.
- KUOKKANEN, Rauna (2015). “ ‘To See What State We Are In’: First Years of the Greenland Self-Government Act and the Pursuit of Inuit Sovereignty”, *Ethnopolitics*, p. 1-19.
- KUSHAWA, Anita (2013). *The Significance of Nuna (the Land) and Urban Place-making for Inuit living in Ottawa*, Ontario, Canada, PhD Thesis in Geography, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario.
- LACASSE, Jean-Paul (2004). *Les Innus et le territoire: Innu Tipenitamun*. Sillery, Éditions du Septentrion, coll. “Territoires”, 274 p.
- LANEUVILLE, Pascale (2013). “Chasse et exploitation minière au Nunavut : une expérience inuit du territoire à Qamani'tuaq (Baker Lake)”, dissertation for the *Maîtrise en anthropologie*, Université Laval, Québec, 192 p.
- LANEUVILLE, Pascale (2014). “Ontologie et territorialité inuit en contexte d'exploitation minière à Qamani'tuaq (Baker Lake) au Nunavut”, *Études/Inuit/Studies*, vol. 38, no 1-2, p. 197-216.
- LAUGRAND, Frédéric, OOSTEN, Jarich G. (2010). *Inuit Shamanism. Transitions and Transformations in the Twentieth Century*, Montréal, McGill-Queen's University Press, coll. “McGill-Queen's Native and Northern Series”, 467 p.
- LÉGARÉ, André (1993). “Le projet Nunavut: bilan des revendications des Inuit des Territoires-du-Nord-Ouest”. *Études/Inuit/Studies*, vol. 17, no 2, p. 29-62.
- LÉGARÉ, André (2001). “The Spatial and Symbolic Construction of Nunavut. Towards the Emergence of a Regional Collective Identity”, *Études/Inuit/Studies*, vol. 25, no 1-2, p. 141-168.
- LÉGARÉ, André (2002). “Nunavut. The Construction of a Regional Collective Identity in the Canadian Arctic”, *Wicazo Sa Review*, vol. 17, no 2, “Sovereignty and Governance”, Autumn, p. 65-89.

- MAKIVIK CORPORATION (1981). “Position Of The Inuit Of Northern Quebec With Respect To Quebec-Inuit Relations And To The Proposed Resolution Of The Federal Government Concerning The Constitution Of Canada”, *Brief to La Commission de la Présidence du Conseil et de la Constitution*, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 1981.
- MARTIN, Nastassja (2016). *Les Âmes sauvages: face à l’Occident, la résistance d’un peuple d’Alaska*. Paris, La Découverte, 320 p.
- MAUSS, Marcel, with the collaboration of BEUCHAT, Henri, (1906 [2012]). “Essai sur les variations saisonnières des sociétés eskimos”, *L’Année sociologique*, vol. 9, 1904–1905, Paris. Edition used: “Les classiques des sciences sociales”, 2012, electronic document, Chicoutimi.
- MORIN, Françoise (2001). “La Construction de nouveaux espaces politiques inuits à l’heure de la mondialisation”, *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, vol. 31, no 3, p. 25-36.
- MÜLLER-WILLE, Ludger (1986). *Gazetteer of Inuit Place Names in Nunavik / Répertoire toponymique inuit du Nunavik*, Québec, Canada Inukjuak, Avataq Cultural Institute, 368 p.
- MÜLLER-WILLE, Ludger (2000). “Place Names and Self-Determination. Some Reflections”, in DAHL, Jens, HICKS, Jack, JULL, Peter (eds.), *Nunavut. Inuit Regain Control of their Lands and their Lives*, Copenhagen, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, p. 146-151.
- NAKASHIMA D.J., GALLOWAY MCLEAN K., THULSTRUP H.D., RAMOS CASTILLO A., RUBIS J.T., 2012. *Weathering Uncertainty: Traditional Knowledge for Climate Change Assessment and Adaptation*. Paris, Unesco, and Darwin, UNU, 122 p.
- NUNGAK, Zebedee (1980). “Definition of Identity”, *Atuaqnik*, February 1980, p. 12.
- NUTTALL, Mark (1991) “Memoryscape: a sense of locality in Northwest Greenland”. *North Atlantic Studies*, vol. 1, no 2, p. 39-50.
- NUTTALL, Mark (1992). *Arctic Homeland, Kinship, Community and Development in Northwest Greenland*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 194 p.
- NUTTALL, Mark (2001). “Locality, Identity and Memory in South Greenland”, *Études/Inuit/Studies*, vol. 25, no 1-2, p. 53-72.
- NUTTALL, Mark (2015). “Building a Nation Today. People and Places in Greenland”, in J. Magnus FLADMARK, Thor HEYERDAHL, *Heritage and Identity: Shaping the Nations of the North*, Routledge, p. 223-237.
- POLANYI, Karl (1944). *The Great Transformation*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart.
- PONGÉRARD, Julien (2016). “Nuna”. Rapport de recherche non-publié, Laboratoire international d’étude multidisciplinaire comparée des représentations du Nord, UQAM, 24p.
- PURICH, Donald J. (1992). *The Inuit and their Land. The Story of Nunavut*, Toronto, James Lorimer, 176 p.
- QUMAQ Taamusi (1991). *Inuit uqausillaringit: ulirnaisigutiit [The Genuine Inuit Words: a Dictionary of Definitions in Nunavik (Arctic Quebec) Inuktitut]*. Montréal, Institut culturel Avataq, and Québec Association Inuksiutiit Katimajit, 600 p.
- ROGERS, Shelagh (2012). “Foreword”, in ROGERS, Shelagh, DEGAGNÉ, Mike, DEWAR, Jonathan, LOWRY, Glen (eds.), *‘Speaking My Truth’. Reflections on Reconciliation & Residential School*, Aboriginal Healing Foundation, p. 5-10.

SALADIN D'ANGLURE, Bernard (1990). “Frère-Lune (Taqqiq), sœur-soleil (Siqiniq) et l'intelligence du monde (Sila). Cosmologie inuit, cosmographie arctique et espace-temps chamanique”, *Études/Inuit/Studies*, vol. 14, no 1-2, p. 75-139.

SAUER, Carl (1925). “The morphology of landscape”. *University of California publications in geography*, vol. 2, no 2, p. 19-53.

SAVARD, Rémi (1980). “Le sol américain. Propriété privée ou Terre-Mère. En deçà et au-delà des conflits territoriaux entre autochtones et blancs au Canada”, *Anthropologie et Sociétés*, vol. 4, no 3, p. 29-44.

SOUBLIÈRE, Marion, COLEMAN, Greg (eds.) (1999). *Nunavut '99: Changing the Map of Canada*, Iqaluit NU: Nortext Multimedia, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. 132 p. <http://www.nunavut.com/nunavut99/english/> [5 July 2016].

STUCKENBERGER, Nicole (2007). “KAISER, Ulrike, 2006, Die Inuit: Ein Volk der Arktis, Zurich, Verlag Pestalozzianum und Voelkerkundemuseum Zuerich, 142 pages (and a CD).”, *Études/Inuit/Studies*, vol. 31, no 1-2, p. 380-382.

THERRIEN, Michèle (1987). *Le Corps inuit (Québec arctique)*. Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 199 p.

THERRIEN, Michèle (1999). *Printemps inuit. Naissance du Nunavut*, Montpellier, Indigène éditions, 140 p.

THERRIEN, Michèle (2012). *Les Inuit*. Paris, Les Belles Lettres, coll. “Guides Belles Lettres des Civilisations”, 265 p.

VINCENT, Sylvie, MAILHOT, José (1983). “Montagnais Land Tenure”, *The Indian and Inuit Supporter*, vol. 3, no 1, p.16-27.

VINCENT, Sylvie (1989). “Le patrimoine faunique et le territoire national”, in BISSONNETTE, Alain, SAUVÉ, Louise, *Peuples autochtones de l'Amérique du Nord. De la réduction à la coexistence*, Québec, Télé Université, p. 412-485.

WAGAMESE, Richard (2012). “Returning to Harmony”, in ROGERS, Shelagh, DEGAGNÉ, Mike, DEWAR, Jonathan, LOWRY, Glen (eds.), *‘Speaking My Truth’. Reflections on Reconciliation & Residential School*, Aboriginal Healing Foundation, p. 153-164.

WATT-CLOUTIER, Sheila (2007). “A Human Issue”, in LEAN, Geoffrey (ed.), *Our Planet Magazine: Climate Change and the Cryosphere*. UNEP, Nairobi, Kenya, p. 14-15. <http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc28526/> [28th August 2016].

WATT-CLOUTIER, Sheila (2011). “The Inuit Right to Culture Based on Ice and Snow”, in MOORE, Kathleen Dean, NELSON, Michael P. (eds), *Moral Ground. Ethical Action fo a Planet in Peril*, San Antonio, Trinity University Press, p. 25-29.

YARDLEY, William, OLSEN, Erik (2001). “With Powerboat and Forklift, a Sacred Whale Hunt Endures”, New York Times, US | Barrow Journal, 16th October. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/17/us/in-sacred-whale-hunt-eskimos-use-modern-tools.html> [10 August 2016].

## Filmography

GIGUÈRE, Serge (2012). “Supplément: Nuna”, in *Le Nord au coeur. Parcours d'un géographe*, Québec, 85 min.



BULBULIAN, Maurice (1983). *Debout sur leur terre*, Québec, 1983, 54 min. [http://www.onf.ca/film/debout\\_sur\\_leur\\_terre/](http://www.onf.ca/film/debout_sur_leur_terre/) [28 July 2016].

## Webography

<http://www.nunatukavut.ca/home/> • The website of the organization representing the Inuit of NunatuKavut, who reside in southern and central Labrador. [10 August 2016]

<http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com> • The website of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, which serves as a platform trying to unite and represent Inuits from the whole circumpolar regions. [6 September 2016]

<https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca> • <https://www.canada.ca/en/index.html> • Canada's government websites, with official documents as well as pieces of archive and various definitions and glossaries. [6 September 2016].

<https://www.itk.ca/> • The website of Inuit Tapirisat Kanatami, the organization representing Inuit of Canada — but not those living in Quebec. [10 August 2016]

<http://www.makivik.org/fr/nunavik-maps/> • The website of Makivik Corporation, the legal representative of Quebec's Inuit (mainly in Nunavik) and the one in charge for managing the compensation funds from the government. The organization was created by the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement [6 September 2016]