Universität Bremen

# Modernity and culture of the Nunavik

## On which place are the traditional institutions in the social changes in the life of the Inuit in the circle of the global modernity?

**Prof. Dr. Thibault Martin**
Université du Québec en Outaouais

eGeneral Studies: Der Hohe Norden | The Far North | Le Grand Nord (Kanada/Québec)

# What is the world like in which the Inuits are living in ?

## Culture of the Inuit – art or artisan?

# Community and society

Two concepts/ideas (developed by the German author Ferdinand Tönnies)

- societies, which are communities
- Societies, which are societies

- Societies where the social relations are affected, their relations are bassed on the affection, too
- Max Weber: social relations are bades on a rationality

# Community and society

- Societies, which are based on instrumental rationality are ruled by money

  ⟶ that is why Sociology was much interested in Inuit, because they seem to be and have often been qualified as survivors of the prehistory, of the Stone Age
- In all the societies there are both types of social relations (values- and money-rationality)

# „The seasonal variations of Eskimos“ (Marcel Mauss)

- In the life of the Eskimos are fundamentally two periods
  - The time to hunt at the outside of their community
    → individualism
  - Community and the social elations are getting closer

- In every society there are two types of relations: a social model, a society and the result of combination both those types of social relations

# „The seasonal variations of Eskimos“ (Marcel Mauss)

- A society is not so much influenced by the tools we use, it is more important what we are going to be done by the prey - to sell it or to give it – two important questions, who the Inuit are asking themselves
- Important for the definition of the modernity are the way the social relations are organized between the people, regardless of the tools of production
- Every society are made up of institutions, which based of family, donations and the question to sell it or to spend it

# „The seasonal variations of Eskimos“ (Marcel Mauss)

- The way in which it is done that distinguishes a society
  - French society and modernity ≠ German modernity
  - Canadian modernity ≠ American modernity
  - Quebec´s modernity ≠ English-Canadian modernity
- This contemporary can be explained by the way the people and their social relation is structured in society and in what is finally a social basis

# Which type of relation do the Inuit have?

- The difference is lying in the social relation we want to create and that we create
- The Inuit of Greenland are the biggest users of cell phones and go hunting and sculpting at the same time

- Modern and traditional on the same time

# Traditional sculpting

- Traditionally the sculpting was a activity to make points of a knifes, harpoons and compositions out of stone and ambulates
- They had an artistic practice which entered into their life of all the day of economic or symbolic production – not art
- When the commerce of money started, the economic of the Inuit was far away behind and same anthropologists have advised the Inuit

# Commercial sculpting

- The traditional sculpting changed with help from an adviser to a commercial sculpting
- A new branch of economic activity was creating sculptures to sell them to the whites
- Sculptures become bigger and like the European taste, like animal from the north

# Change in the sculpting

- The Inuits would better organize themselves economically
- They wanted to have their own shop and did not want to buy products for fixed prices
- They started a cooperative system
  - Every village of Nunavik bought products and redistributed the profit within the community
- The result were only some profits

# Change in the sculpting

- They want to financed themselves and to help the Inuit to defend their lifestyle, the hunting of the fox, defend their traditional sculptures and defend the mode of social relations which is based on
- Principal of the redistribution

- Alternative they buy petrol and organized petrol services to have control over the petrol in Nunavik
- This is a big Matter in dispute with the regional government of Nunavik

# Life style

- The Inuits do not resist every change to solve their traditions
- Traditions are style of life
- style of life has developed in the all-the-day-life
- Life style is not developed according to which you continue living
- It is for creating a social relation, which is special and which characterizing ourselves

# Economic Changes

- All the sculptures would be sold by a central agency which is called the “federation of the cooperatives of the new Quebec”
- Global sales
- At first Sculptures without a commercial value were destroyed, but later they give them the old and wise at the hospital to resculpture the sculpture
- Everyone create sculptures to make money
- They were paid by the value of work, not paid by the value of the market

# Economic Changes

- Sculpting is an social activity for the Inuit to transmitting the language and the generations are approaching, like in the past the hunting
- In the case of the sculpturing the Inuit have reintegrated the society in the economic activity
- Creating a form of social relation where there is a bigger distribution within the community but mainly to conserve the relation between the generations

# Fundamentals

- Sales the sculptures only to the central agency, because they do not nobody sales to the cooperation
- Cooperation will go bankrupt
- Then they can not sales more sculptures
- Then nobody create sculptures, then there will not be sculptures anymore
- This is the beginning of a relation of donations, which does exist but it is not a relation of the market

# Fundamentals

- The social world of the Inuit is based on donation not on the market economy
- Anyway they are in the global system
- They know that the cooperation is in danger, because of the sales to other as the central agency
- There is a system of reflection to maintain their style of social relations, which is based on donation

# Government of Inuit

- Nunavik – „the earth to live, where you could live in a good manner“
- Possibility to obtain their own regional government
- Like the Canadian parliamentary model
- Supreme instants will be the Parliament, the Chamber of the people from Nunavi
- In the Parliament and elected deputies are from each village and a council of the oldest
- An old man is somebody who is plebiscited by his community to be a wise man

# Government of Inuit

- The two rationalities are forced two answer each other and to function together
- The other instances like the Canadian model
- There is a court of justice in every village
- The judgement is going from one village to the next
- The judgement can only applied if the communitarian committee is okay with
- Not transparency of justice

# Government of Inuit

- This results in a certain form of living together
- This sum of these two creating the Inuit society which is a distinct society which is written in the present but in its own way