
The Discovery of the North: Towards a Conceptual Framework for the Study of Northern/Remote Regions

This essay is, in the vernacular of the academy, a "think-piece." I have, consequently, eschewed the standard academic conventions of lengthy footnotes and a substantial bibliography. I hope that readers will forgive this unconventional decision. I am currently working on a book-length manuscript on this theme. This work emerged out of lengthy discussions, over many Northern days and evenings, with a large number of Northern/remote regions specialists. While I do not hold them responsible for the conclusions and ideas presented herein, I would like to acknowledge my personal debt to the following individuals: Greg Poelser, Tom Morehouse, Lee Husky, Claus Naske, Terrance Cole, Steven Haycox, Bill Morrison, Doug Nord, Geoffrey Weller, Lyn Riddett, Gurston Dacks, Bill Waiser, Jim Miller, Eric Sager, Ian McPherson, Aron Senkpiel, Shelagh Grant, Peter Jull, and John Taylor.

The North, land of legend, mystery and misconception, remains very much a conceptual wasteland. After decades of scholarship, much of it excellent, insightful and methodologically important, the vast circumpolar region is still typically explained within the conceptual frameworks and intellectual paradigms of the Southern, or "outside," world. The failure, to date, to develop theoretical or conceptual concepts that are derived from the region, and that seek primarily to explain the reality and nature of Northern experience, has served to limit Northern scholarship and to restrict the ability of academic researchers to deal directly with the primary issues of Northern life.

These are strong words, but they are not intended to cast aspersions on the valuable work undertaken by the past generations of Northern scholars. I would include my scholarship in this wide-ranging criticism. Like so many others in my disciplinary area, I have waged an ongoing and far from successful effort to get our Southern colleagues to take Northern issues seriously. When the effort has been made, I have typically run up against systemic ignorance of

matters Northern, and feel compelled to provide extensive descriptive background to my analyses. Only recently has the number of Northern scholars grown to the point where sufficient information exists for the conceptual work that is necessary to bring the issues of Northern experience into broader perspective.

Northern scholarship suffers as well from the perpetuation of the tradition of voyeurism. For some academics, the North remains quaint and unique. This is particularly the case for those not specializing in the study of the North. It is the region's exceptionalism, the belief that it exists outside the realm of traditional conceptual frameworks, that helps account for their failure to take the region as seriously as they should. There is a considerable volume of descriptive writing on Northern conditions, designed to educate audiences of Southerners who have not even a passing acquaintance with the region. These works can be, and are often, impressive and reveal excellent research and analytical skills. Often, however, they stop short of searching for deeper understanding. As such, this style of presentation both perpetuates a tradition of approaching the scholarly understanding of the North as an exceptional region and misses an opportunity to consider the broader, systemic issues underlying regional issues. More directly, the pattern tends to place Northern scholarship on the intellectual periphery.

Interestingly, one of the most hotly contested areas of Northern scholarship has to do with a matter of debatable importance: the matter of boundaries. Where, the question is repeatedly asked, is the North? What boundaries—geographic, political, cultural, economic, social, ecological, climatic—should be used in defining the North? While on the surface of some interest, these questions are far from central to the reality of Northern life. The matter is of limited concern to Northerners, and the results generated to date have had little utility in understanding the North, if only because the answers given reveal more about the attitudes and disciplinary backgrounds of the scholars than they do about the reality of Northern existence.

In Canada, Louis Hamelin's *Canadian Nordicity: It's Your North, Too* established the base-line for this debate, although it was not the first entry into the field. Since that time, several works have appeared that call into question Hamelin's categories and offer alternate lines of demarcation. The reality, of course, is that each academic discipline, society and region has its own set of definitions, and therefore its own boundary between North and South. Boundaries may be useful for scholars for academic tribal reasons, but they are of much less relevance to the people of the North.

A small number of scholars have approached the North in a conceptual manner. Generally, these studies have drawn on theoretical constructs developed for other areas and have attempted to assess the validity of these conceptual frameworks for understanding Northern conditions. When one begins, however, with theories developed without reference to, or even knowledge of, Northern regions, it is doubtful that such constructs will address the central questions of Northern life. This does not mean that such studies are without value; they tend, however, to focus on the North's relationship with other districts, and therefore do not emphasize North-centred questions.

The dominant examples of these studies, analyses based on core-periphery relations and the more ideologically-pointed concept of underdevelopment theory, illustrate this pattern. Both approaches emphasize the role of the dominant force, either a metropolitan centre, economically and politically powerful region, economic class or colonizing power, and suggest that the best way to understand the North is in the context of these relationships. There is much to be said for such studies, for they draw attention to the importance of inside-outside power relationships, and illustrate a central process in the development of remote regions. Such theoretical approaches, however, tend to be predictive in orientation—the powerful outside region determines the future of the weaker Northern area—and leave the focus squarely on the agents of external control. These conceptual frameworks also lend themselves to polemical renderings of relationships, in that the "outsiders," be they government officials, corporate executives, Southern bankers, or Southern intellectuals, are presented as being of fundamental importance in determining the evolution of Northern life. The standard theoretical approaches, therefore, tend to limit the role of Northerners in shaping the destiny of their region.

Theorists like Andre G. Frank, who wrote on underdevelopment theory, did not have the North in mind when they developed their conceptual structures. There is something of a sense of unreality in the application of theories developed primarily for a European, Latin American or urban North American context to a Northern setting. While adding theoretical complexity and contemporary intellectuality to Northern Studies, works based on such theories tend to be more examples of "test-marketing" broader conceptual approaches than a detailed explication of Northern conditions. While it is useful to learn that analysis based on Frank's work, for example, provides insights into conceptions of the North, it begs the question as to whether or not a theoretical discourse that sprang—first and foremost—from the Northern experience might not go much further toward explaining

the reality of the North.

Most Northern scholars seek to place their scholarship within the existing literature in their discipline. A few, like anthropologist Julie Cruikshank, have contributed significantly to the advancement of disciplinary-based scholarship generally. Studies that are either descriptive in nature or efforts to apply externally-generated theoretical concepts in a Northern setting are useful additions to academic understanding of the region. Nevertheless, I would argue that Northern scholarship has suffered from a surfeit of the standard approaches and lacks the more specific, regionally-centred conceptual frameworks necessary for the formation of a truly Northern scholarship.

Towards a Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this essay is to propose a theoretical and conceptual structure for understanding the North. I will consider a wide range of topics, including the question of whether or not "North" is a useful concept or whether the broader descriptive unit "remote regions" is more valuable. The intent is to provide an analysis that is not limited to one discipline, one region or one country. Rather, I believe that there is an integrity to the concepts of "North" and "remote regions," and believe that an explicitly comparative agenda is a necessary element in the academic reconceptualization of the area. Further, I argue that disciplinary renderings of Northern reality have a tendency to limit our understanding of the North, by imposing artificial scholarly barriers on the questions and considerations at hand. Put more favourably, Northern scholarship has an opportunity to set a new standard in terms of interdisciplinary and comparative study.

My goals are twofold: to propose a series of testable hypotheses about Northern/remote regions experiences and, secondly, to encourage other scholars to challenge, adapt or maybe supplant the ideas advanced herein. The intent is to encourage a wide-ranging discussion of the proposals advanced, but also to highlight the need for a regionally-based and North-sensitive theoretical approach to scholarship. I am convinced that such studies will significantly advance understanding of the region, and believe that a more substantial, less descriptive approach to Northern studies will both support and enhance existing academic inquiry. I am convinced that ideas drawn from, and based on, Northern experiences will provide the conceptual frameworks necessary for a sustained academic response to the issues of the contemporary North.

Further, I argue that one of the greatest barriers to understanding

the region is a preoccupation with Northern exceptionalism. Scholars in many disciplines and from many countries have, for years, argued that Northern themes have to be studied and understood in isolation, so great are the differences with other regions of study. I take a contrary position. First, I believe that there are excellent opportunities for comparative analysis within the circumpolar world (Arctic and Subarctic) and that scholars have only begun to examine the ways that developments in other countries help explain gains in their own region or nation. Second, I argue that the academic study of certain non-Northern areas—I have defined them as remote regions—have a great deal to offer to our attempt to understand Northern regions. The suggestion that patterns of development in Northern Australia might speak to the reality of Northern Canada, or that activities in the Amazon region of Brazil might shed light on the reality of Scandinavia, is often greeted with skepticism. I suggest below, however, that such skepticism stands in the way of understanding many of the broader conceptual and contextual realities of Northern regions.

Where Are the Northern/Remote Regions?

Any consideration of a theoretical conception of the North must begin with a definition of the region. There have, of course, been many such attempts at definition in the past, most ending with a line, sometimes rigid and definitive, often vague and flexible, bisecting nations into North and South. The false precision of some such renderings of the North concern me, for they provide a sense of scientific "certainty" to a process that is, at best, highly speculative. Further, formal definitions tend to be ahistorical, and do not properly take into account the evolution of thought and understanding that is inherent in the attempt to live in and understand "the North." What follows below is a brief description of each of the main variables in the definition of the North (and, less directly, remote regions).

Outsiders' Definitions of the North. Most of the definitions of the North have emerged from the realm of popular culture and mythology. Explorers' narratives, poems, novels and songs have done a great deal to create an artificial and stereotypical conception of Northernness. John Franklin's description of his travels across British North America, for example, help set 19th century attitudes about Northern Canada; similarly, contemporary television programs, like "Northern Exposure" in the United States and "North of 60" in Canada, have done much to establish a perception of the North among Southerners and thereby to define the region.

These definitions share several common characteristics, most noticeably the fact that they were set by outsiders. Visitors and observers, from the days of Martin Frobisher to contemporary "adventurers," continue to set and delimit general understanding of the region. At once vague and limited, these definitions render the North a land of ice, snow, polar bears and Inuit and also infiltrate the public imagination in a way that scholarly conceptions of the region have never been able to do.

Geographical Constructs. Physical scientists are strong advocates of a physical and natural definition of the North. The Northern Scientific Training Plan of the Circumpolar and Scientific Affairs secretariat of the Canadian government long ago adopted a boundary of the line of discontinuous permafrost as the border of the "true" Canadian North. While somewhat satisfying to scientists, the boundary takes no account of social or cultural concepts of region. Nonetheless, there is strong support for such definitions, which offer scientific certainty and cartographic clarity and do not require the exhaustive discussion that is inherent in any human-based analysis of the region.

Spatial Constructs. For some scholars, the North is best defined in relation to other populations. Under this approach, the region is described as including those areas that are isolated and distant from major population centres or from some other defined regions of concentrated settlement. Under this conception, the North ends up being essentially where there is only sparse non-indigenous permanent settlement. Canadian historians W. L. Morton and Morris Zaslow adopted the line of commercial agriculture as being the basic definition of the Canadian North, a model that owed much to American Frederick Jackson Turner's concept of the frontier as the westward advance of agriculture. Definitions based on this approach are evolutionary, moving as the frontier of settlement advances (or retreats). Such a definition is characteristically North American, for it neglects Northern regions like Yakutia in Russia, where commercial agriculture exists in a decisively Northern environment.

Socio-Cultural Definitions. For some scholars, socio-cultural indicators, such as ethnic mix and demographic structures, provide one of the primary determinants of Northernness. This approach often focuses on the indigenous population and emphasizes the contemporary nature of non-indigenous settlement. Across most Northern/remote regions, the indigenous/non-indigenous mix is, indeed, a vital element in the social structure; as a boundary marker, however, this conception does not speak directly to Northern conditions.

Economic Determinism. Following on the above, some scholars

suggest that the existence of specific economic structures—a-boom-and-bust, resource-based economy that supports limited non-subsidized settlement—provide a base-line for describing the North. Such a concept, however, is almost stereotypic in its assumptions about the region. The development of more industrial economic foundations, as in the Umeå district in Sweden, or the Oulu region in Finland, potentially eliminates otherwise Northern areas from consideration.

Climatic Considerations. One of the standard conceptions of the North is that they are harsh, forbidding lands, characterized by extreme winter climates. (For non-Northern remote regions, the climatic considerations are often expressed as extreme heat and exceptionally high levels of precipitation.) Under this approach, Northern regions are defined by their climatic conditions; the main matter of contention is where the demarcation line rests: Inuvik and Fairbanks are definitely cold enough to qualify, but Winnipeg, Manitoba, despite very cold winter temperatures, is not considered Northern because of the length of the growing season and the more benign non-winter temperatures.

Political Structures. Perhaps the most widely-adopted definition of the North is encapsulated in political boundaries. In most countries with Northern territories, the Northern extremities are expressed in political structures or jurisdictional boundaries. In the United States, Alaska is an obvious politically-defined region, although questions immediately surface as to whether the entire state, including the coastal zones, are truly Northern. In Canada, the Yukon and Northwest Territories are obviously Northern and are politically defined. In the provinces, most have internal political jurisdictional boundaries for Northern regions. Administrative units provide a sharp, functional and functioning definition of Northernness. Because of the practical operation of political units, such jurisdictional definitions are both appealing and legitimate.

Evolutionary Concepts. Historians, in particular, have difficulty with any conception of the North that does not take into account change over time. Like other definitions of conceptual areas—such as wilderness and frontier—these regions go through a cultural and conceptual metamorphosis. Areas initially conceived as Northern can cease to be so over time, as settlement advances, a permanent non-indigenous population emerges and the standard liabilities of remoteness are overcome through development.

North as a State of Mind. Of all of the potential definitions of Northernness, perhaps the least amount of attention has been paid to the region's conception of itself. Scholars have, in a variety of ways,

examined outsiders' understandings of Northern districts. The opposite side of the equation—Northerners' sense of themselves and their region—has attracted little scholarly work. Ironically, this may well be the most important area of analysis, for as with any concept of region or of belonging to an identifiable group or area, self-definition is a vitally important characteristic. Whatever definition of the North is finally settled upon must, therefore, include a strong consideration of how the region views itself.

There are countless examples of this process. Residents of Juneau, Alaska, a coastal community in the Panhandle district of the state, generally consider themselves to be Northerners, even though their climate is comparatively mild and decidedly un-Arctic. In Canada, residents of the Yukon clearly think of themselves as Northern but would likely deny such status to the people of Thunder Bay, Ontario, a community of some 120,000 people located close to the 49th parallel. Thunder Bay, however, very much maintains a strong sense of itself as Northern. In Finland, a community like Rovaniemi is aggressively and enthusiastically Northern, whereas the city of Helsinki, with an extreme winter climate and other Northern characteristics, would likely reject such a characterization of itself. In British Columbia, the central interior city of Prince George defines itself as Northern whereas the lumber town of Quesnel, approximately 100 kilometres to the South, tries to avoid the label.

Northernness is substantially a matter of self-identification. Descriptions and boundaries should therefore be North-centred and evolutionary and should avoid the more limiting definitions that ascribe greater authority to quantifiable natural characteristics. I will not, in this paper, attempt a single definition of the circumpolar North and remote regions. The above description of the primary approaches to this question indicates my belief in the need for an evolutionary, North-centred approach and a shift away from the physically-determined boundaries. I would hope, however, that the question of boundaries would receive less, rather than more, attention in the future and that scholars would turn their efforts toward more fruitful areas of analysis.

What are the Characteristics of Northern/Remote Regions?

I have argued to this point that scholars should take a more conceptual and theoretical approach to Northern research. While I have skirted the direct question of where the North might be, suggesting instead a more open and evolutionary approach to the question, I

believe that there are a number of characteristics that define Northern reality. One major problem emerges. Drawing particularly on the North American approach to regionality, I am concerned that conceptions of North might have simply become a surrogate for the old preoccupation with the frontier. The emphasis on the North as an isolated, predominantly aboriginal, resource-based region tends to define out of relevance whole areas that properly belong in the more general understanding of the North. The fact that scholars working on such areas as Northern Minnesota have difficulty marketing themselves as Northernists appears to be symptomatic of a broader process. Northern scholarship should not, therefore, be simply a re-definition of the long-standing preoccupation with frontier districts. Northern areas may well be "frontiers" in the non-indigenous and historical conception of that term, but so too might they be well-developed, modern regions with a sizeable permanent population. Such regions—Northern Minnesota, Northern Finland, Iceland, and Siberia come to mind—remain Northern but at very different stages of development and settlement than more stereotypically Northern areas like Baffin Island and the North Slope in Alaska.

In attempting to define the central characteristics of Northern and remote regions, therefore, I have emphasized a dynamic and evolutionary concept of the region. An area, in my conception, does not cease to be Northern simply because there is a substantial permanent population and a more industrial and diversified economy. I am searching for patterns that are characteristic both of the initial phase of non-indigenous development and the subsequent stages of change and reorientation. By adopting a dynamic view of Northern regions, I hope to move beyond the emphasis on the North of popular culture—of traditional Inuit and Laplanders, of miners and lumberjacks—and expand the focus to include the more complex North of the contemporary period. This region has some of the elements of the stereotypic North but also encompasses the North of universities and industrial complexes, of military structures and modern tourism, of multi-generational non-indigenous families and the linkages of telecommunications technology. This is not the North as understood in the South, for the old images are attractive, seductive and even internally satisfying (as the Alaskans' perpetuation of the frontier mythology illustrates). This North is, I argue, the North of the past and of the 1990s, a region connected to the world, part of a global reality, and striving to conquer the structures and implications of its history.

The characteristics of Northern/remote regions outlined below do not represent an exhaustive list of the defining attributes of such

areas. As comparative and analytical work proceeds, additional common characteristics and an equally important number of region- or nation-specific attributes will emerge. In arguing for a comparative approach to Northern regions, I do not recommend that the uniqueness of each case be ignored; rather, I suggest that the set of standard experiences, perspectives and structures represent the foundation for a general theoretical conception of Northern/remote regions and, hence, provide a starting point and not an end-point, for analysis. Conceptual constructs should, to be most valuable, stimulate questions, not provide certain answers, and should encourage innovative scholarship rather than provide predictive models.

The principal characteristics of Northern/remote regions are explained by way of a series of sub-categories.

Relationship to the Outside World. Existing theoretical models have typically defined the North in terms of its relationship to Southern or external forces. While I would not give these influences the singularity asserted in the past, there is no denying their importance. Northern regions have, indeed, been subject to external political controls through various systems. They tend to be constitutionally inferior, as in the case of the Yukon and Northwest Territories in Canada, have recently gained political equality, as in the Alaska example, emerged out of colonial status, as has Greenland, or exist within larger political structures that effectively limit the authority of the region, as has been the lot of the Russian North.

These constitutional structures need not always work to the region's disadvantage, as underdevelopment theory and other models implicitly suggest. In the Canadian example, for instance, the two territories have benefitted immensely from their status as internal colonies; the Northern provinces, richer in resources and with larger populations, have decidedly less call on national political leaders than do the Yukon and Northwest Territories. In both cases, however, it is external authorities who determine the pace and nature of regional development. As Northerners are loath to observe, these structures also ensure the massive subsidization of regional operations. In Russia, for example, millions of people were placed in the region primarily for industrial and strategic reasons. The Yukon, Northwest Territories, Alaska, Greenland and other jurisdictions live substantially off Southern subsidies, which prop up extensive social transfers and stabilize otherwise highly vulnerable resource economies.

External control also exists in the economic field. Northern regions are typically tied to outside influences in two ways: the direct control asserted by Southern-based or multinational corporations and

the indirect forces of world market pressures. Alaska provides an excellent example of this process. Major corporations, particularly in the oil sector, have had substantial economic and political influence for the past thirty years. Their development strategies, including the construction of the trans-Alaska pipeline, have dominated the state agenda. At the same time, market declines in the price of oil in the 1980s knocked the economic underpinnings from Alaska, resulting in a massive decline in state revenues. Such external influences naturally limit the authority local governments and business leaders can exert over the regional economy.

This structural relationship has an added dimension. Because of the nature of corporate control and a tendency to recruit workers from the South, most of the revenues and wages derived from Northern resources tend to flow out of the region. Matters were difficult enough for Northern boosters in the days of short-lived company towns; the new pattern of operating fly-in camps, with workers permanently based in Southern cities and coming to the work sites on rotation, is an even sharper example of the flow of income out of the resource-providing region.

There is an added dimension to the pattern of Southern control. National governments have tended to use Northern jurisdiction for national experimentation. Because of their constitutional authority or the weakened structure of regional governments, national authorities can and have treated the North like a *tabula rasa* for government action. One sees this in many ways, large and small. In Canada, for example, the Trudeau government implemented the National Energy Program at least in part to use Northern oil and gas revenues to deal with shortfalls in the national budget. In an earlier age, the government moved Inuit families and communities around in an exercise in geographic social engineering. More recently, the federal government's declaration of the Yukon and NWT as bilingual (French and English) jurisdictions illustrates the ability and willingness to subordinate Northern regions to national objectives.

There are many such examples of this process. At the more draconian end is the former Soviet Union's use of Siberia as an incarceration zone for political prisoners and as the base for its nuclear experiments and military operations. At the opposite extreme, the governments of Australia and the US have used their control over Northern lands and resources to negotiate unprecedented aboriginal land claims deals. But the mere fact of external control should not be taken to mean that the Northern region has suffered as a consequence. The reality of Southern domination has, in many countries, resulted in a

generosity of finances, programs and approaches that are the envy of citizens to the South.

Regions react very differently to external control. In the Canadian territories, while there is a fairly detailed awareness of the benefits of federal largesse, movements toward provincehood generate little support. Alaska, in contrast, has benefitted tremendously from federal investment and regulations, as is nowhere more evident than the economic role of the armed forces in the state. And yet the state has a deeply entrenched sense of grievance against Washington and has harboured a boisterous and aggressive, albeit small, separatist movement. The more predictive models of core-periphery relations would suggest that the existence of external control inevitably works against the region's interests; Northern districts provide considerable evidence that this is not necessarily so. In consequence, regional residents do not always struggle against the bonds of Southern domination with the enthusiasm and determination that the structures of control might suggest.

Internal Politics. Northern politics have produced a series of unique characteristics that continue to influence the nature and direction of regional response to changing realities. As suggested above, the political response is not as singular as constitutional and economic structures might suggest. In fact, most Northern jurisdictions tend to be embroiled in intense internal struggles that have limited the regions' ability to present and protect their interests against outside forces.

There are, first, often deeply entrenched differences between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. Until relatively recently, indigenous peoples enjoyed little, if any, political power. First Nations people in Canada did not enjoy the franchise until 1960 and did not exercise any significant political power until at least the 1970s. But as they emerged as a political force, it became abundantly clear that the indigenous people did not share the developmental, short-term vision of the non-indigenous population. Since, in most jurisdictions (the eastern NWT and Greenland being notable exceptions), newcomers outnumber indigenous people by large amounts, the non-indigenous peoples have generally had their way at the ballot box and therefore played the leading role in the formation of regional policies.

Strongly conflicting visions have consequently emerged about such fundamental issues as ownership of land, harvesting of resources, and social and cultural policy. The absence of a consensus did not prevent the non-indigenous majority from forging ahead; ironically, it has been the intervention of the national governments that

have ensured that the indigenous minority received some measure of power. The establishment of the Saami Parliament in Norway, a measure that has not been a resounding success, is but one example of the empowerment of an indigenous population over or aside from the political authority of the majority; the growing authority of Yakutia as a Republic within Russia is, in a radically different situation, an even larger example of political change that has empowered a regional minority population, in this case the Yakut people.

It is, however, misleading to suggest that the non-indigenous population in the North has exhibited anything approaching a consensual or common approach to Northern dilemmas. In most instances, internal politics has been characterized by intense localism, which in turn is fueled by a short-term outlook on opportunities. Inter-town rivalries are legendary across the North, perhaps even more so than in most Southern districts. The struggles between Port Arthur and Fort William, Ontario (now amalgamated as Thunder Bay) stalled the development of the Lakehead district for decades. Similar rivalries in Northern British Columbia have prevented the region from capitalizing on limited opportunities and have forced a diffusion of resources, which has left the region weaker as a consequence.

Overriding this phenomenon, and perhaps the cause of it, is the reality that many of the most crucial decisions in the North are often made by and for short-time residents and outsiders. Most non-indigenous Northern residents, particularly in western countries, tend to stay but a short time in the region. Drawn north by the prospect of a quick return from a development project or a career move, they tend to remain in the region only so long as economic circumstances dictate. Since their orientation is personal rather than collective or regional, the short-timers tend to view development projects from a very immediate perspective. Also, most do not remain in the region to live with the consequences of their decisions. The massive in- and out-migration associated with major hydro-electric, pipeline and mining projects are an excellent illustration of this process; so, too, is the large-scale movement of Russian and other non-Northern peoples out of Siberia and the Russian Far East after the collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in the elimination of many of the bonuses and other enticements to Northern immigrants.

When the role of the short-timers is combined with the activities of external agencies, it is clear that major internal decisions are often made by those with relatively limited commitment to the region and limited vested interest in the long-term stability of the region. This situation tends to exacerbate the North's tendency toward "get rich

quick" schemes and boom-and-bust developments. A desire to satisfy immediate, personal needs stands in sharp contrast to the wish to create a stable future for one's children or grandchildren. In only a few areas in the circumpolar North has the attention shifted from the short-term to the long-term prospects. The contrast between the political cultures in Greenland and Yakutia, where region-based agendas have emerged, and those in Alaska or the Yukon, is striking indeed.

While Northern regions must, therefore, accept a large measure of responsibility for the decisions taken and owe much of their stability to massive Southern subsidization of their economies, these realities do not always flow into the political arena. In most areas, political power is gained by attacking outside interests, not by praising or promising to work with them. In most regions, this is revealed as a deeply-ingrained sense of grievance, one that seems to be inherited very quickly upon taking up residence in the area. The ingratitude toward Southern agencies, in turn, makes it difficult for external authorities to look all that favourably on the region, which only intensifies local frustration. Put simply, although the structural arrangements do not always support the logical assumptions about external manipulation, Northern political rhetoric reinforces the sense of grievance and mistreatment at the hands of Southern agencies.

Socio-cultural Characteristics. The existence of common patterns of experience and outlook extends as well to the social and cultural realms. Here again, one sees a fascinating dissonance between myth and reality, between the region's conception of itself and the nature of Northern life.

Northern regions are generally characterized by tensions between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. Demographically, newcomers tend to outnumber indigenous residents, often by a substantial margin. The recent emergence of indigenous rights movements, however, has allowed local groups to place demands on the agenda that run counter to non-indigenous expectations for regional development. The tensions are not only structural and political. Racism is often widespread in Northern settings, leading to the harsh treatment of indigenous peoples and extensive racial segregation.

One of the roots of the tension, alluded to above, is the contrast between the indigenous peoples' commitment to homeland and the general (but by no means uniform) newcomer commitment to personal gain. Historically, non-indigenous northern populations have been known collectively for their lack of commitment to the region. Perhaps the best example is the highly-paid oil workers in the Beaufort Sea and on the North Slope. Most live in the South and come

North only for work periods. Their money, obviously, goes with them and their future lies outside the region.

The struggle within the non-indigenous population, therefore, has been to establish continuity and thereby create a permanent society. In each region, there has been a cadre of long-time residents who have led this struggle; the effort, however, has been truncated by the cyclical nature of the resource-based economy and the mind-set of many non-indigenous peoples moving into the region. People who are induced to come north by the promise of high salaries and special benefits, and who come because of perceived short-term opportunities tend not to take a long-term outlook, thus limiting the ability to generate a consensus on the path forward.

The newcomer population, therefore, has been characterized by two related processes. The first, symptomatic of the lack of commitment, is a very high rate of transiency. Non-indigenous newcomers tend to stay only a short time, thereby creating very high turn-overs in such key areas as education, medicine, community service, religious leadership, resource work and the professions. Attracted by high wages, they come north willing to tolerate the harsh climate to secure a short-term benefit. If the high wages decline, as when a mine closes, people leave in droves. If the original objective—personal wealth—is attained, there is, likewise, a tendency to leave the region with the spoils. The second process, a sharper variant of the first, is the seasonal mobility of the labour force. Many northern workers define their commitment to the region in terms of the length of the summer season. In many key areas, particularly geological work, tourism and construction, most of the work is limited to the summer season. Workers stream north by the hundreds each year, eager to capitalize on opportunities real or perceived. As predictably as the geese and ducks, they migrate southward before the first snows come and rivers freeze.

Lack of commitment does not prevent the development of a powerful sense of identification with the region. Northerners, even many short-timers, exhibit a very powerful sense of distinctiveness. The idea seemingly originates in the vague and imprecise portrayal of the North in popular culture; even modern, contemporary and well-served northern cities are perceived in the South as "hardship" postings, worthy of additional pecuniary rewards or, at least, southern sympathy. The self-generated image of the Northerner, one that rarely has much to do with the reality of Northern existence, is often marked by the zeal and bravado of the frontier and an intense sense of individualism.

This identification with the region, which is deeply ingrained into the regions' promotion of themselves as isolated, forbidding, exotic and remote, builds upon and helps create a sense of isolation from the mainstream. The reality, of course, is much different than it was only a few decades ago. Satellite television, excellent telephone service, regular airline service and other benefits of the modern age have, in fact, destroyed remoteness and isolation as a meaningful concept in most North American settings (although, to be fair, some of these benefits are typically reserved for those with high incomes). Even communities that were previously extremely remote—the Russian North, the Arctic Islands of Canada and the Australian Outback—now possess ready access to modern telecommunications and the mixed blessings of contemporary popular culture. Isolation from the southern or national mainstream, however, remains an organizing assumption about Northern experience, and conditions the response of many newcomers to life in the region.

Isolation is a positive rather than a negative attribute to some Northerners. In decades past, wilderness was synonymous with danger and the unknown. "Civilized" folk avoided such areas, leaving them to the animals, indigenous peoples and intrepid explorers. Since World War II, wilderness has been reinvented and redefined. It now represents opportunity, openness and purity: sought after rather than avoided. Wilderness has also been packaged and made trite—a visit to Denali National Park in Alaska, with hundreds of visitors arriving simultaneously on articulated buses, quickly destroys the image of wilderness as isolated and untouched. As overcrowded cities and pollution become a fact of life in Southern centres, the North has now come to celebrate the very elements that, in the past, limited its attractiveness and scared off many potential residents. An increasing number of non-indigenous Northerners have, in fact, been drawn to the region by the opportunity to experience and live with wilderness.

While the image of the modern-day frontierperson is very attractive and is encouraged by many Northern residents (hence, in North America, an affinity for 4-wheel drives, snow machines and L. L. Bean clothing), the new image masks another reality. Across the North, non-indigenous settlement is overwhelmingly urban. The vast majority of Northern Canadians live in Whitehorse, Yellowknife, Inuvik and Iqaluit; most Alaskans live in Anchorage, Juneau and Fairbanks. Much the same is true of Scandinavia, and only marginally less so in Russia. People do not generally live in small communities, let alone off the land; they tend, instead, to cluster in modern, well-served cities that effectively mirror Southern centres.

Wilderness is something to experience at one's leisure and with the assurance of a quick return to town.

Again, and contrary to the image of a hardy breed of new Northerners, non-indigenous populations tend to be very imitative. The goal is seemingly to reproduce Southern reality, from urban design to housing construction, from the maintenance of lawns to the provision of entertainment, as quickly and as comprehensively as possible. The attractiveness of individual centres is, not surprisingly given the pool of non-indigenous peoples drawn to the site, determined by the extent of its Southernness. There has been relatively little effort—greater in Scandinavia and Russia than elsewhere in the Circumpolar world—to create a Northern reality that accepts the region rather than attempts to overwhelm it with Southern artifacts.

The societies that have developed in the North differ significantly from those in the Southern reaches of their countries. They tend, to offer a bold generalization, to be incomplete societies, in that they are often male-dominated, younger with few elderly people remaining in the region, and without the full range of social institutions (churches, clubs and other organizations) that give depth and substance to a society. (This does not, of course, apply to indigenous populations, which do not share these characteristics.) There are not, therefore, many regional role models to illustrate that the full life-cycle can be lived out in the region. This, in turn, can accelerate the pattern of mobility and transiency that is endemic to the region.

Perhaps because of the tensions between northernness and southernness, and between indigenous and newcomer experiences, the North is also characterized by intense social problems. While the origins of these problems are in dispute—extreme climate, limited sunlight in winter, cyclical economies—there is no doubting the magnitude of the social crises—racial tensions, indigenous unemployment and cultural difficulties, the absence of gender-balanced and complete societies. By virtually any indicator of social difficulty, from rates of teenage suicide to alcoholism, drug abuse to domestic violence, family breakup to crime, regions across the North face extremely serious problems. The social difficulties have eviscerated entire generations; it is difficult to calculate the cost, in human terms, of the entrenched tragedies of post-World War II Northern life, but there is no doubt about the pervasiveness of the problems and the long-term effects on the region and its population.

Overriding all of these social characteristics is one that relates again to the South's attitude toward the North. In most countries with substantial Northern regions, the Subarctic and Arctic regions

(and, in Australia's case, the Outback) have a powerful mythological role. In North America, the image of the frontier has long played a formative role in defining the continent's sense of itself. Similarly, Northern stereotypes figure prominently in everything from popular culture renderings of national identity to high-brow literary conceptions of national traits, to advertising presentations for tourists.

The North, therefore, has a national symbolic role that far exceeds the region's practical importance. Successful Northern regions have managed to turn this fundamental hypocrisy back on the nation-state and exploited an inherent sense of guilt about the North. This has been possible because Southerners tend not to know or experience the North and yet draw on it as a central element in their national character. By subtly drawing attention to this flaw in national mythology, namely the dissonance between rhetoric and reality, some Northern regions have been able to extract government support as a form of national penance for hypocrisy.

Structural Characteristics. While the analysis thus far has focused on the human-oriented forces that have shaped the development of northern areas, there are a series of structural characteristics that help to define the region. These attributes are typically the starting points for the analysis of Northernness; I have switched the order of presentation if only to highlight the fact that the human hand has, alongside the natural, helped to determine the nature of Northern life.

Harsh climates are, indeed, an important element in northern regions. The cold of Northern winters (or, as in the Australian and Brazilian case, the heat of outback areas) stands as a major barrier to settlement and occupation by non-indigenous peoples. While the image is often more harsh than the reality—the climate in Whitehorse, Yukon is actually not a great deal more severe than that in the agricultural centre of Winnipeg, Manitoba—climate is a limiting factor.

Very much related to climate, the restricted prospects for agricultural development have done much to stifle settlement and determine certain economic and social characteristics of Northern regions. There have been attempts at northern agriculture and some have succeeded although, ironically, improved transportation links have tended to undercut regional production. Since, until recently, locally-produced agricultural products were an important element in permanent non-indigenous settlement, the absence of a substantial agricultural potential has limited the prospects for an expanded population base. Attempts to stabilize Northern economies have foundered on limited food supplies; this, in turn, is attributable in large measure

to the climate and soils of the Arctic and Subarctic districts.

The North has received natural blessings as well as curses. The resource wealth has long been the foundation of economic and social development, as well as a cornerstone of national mythology about the region. The unfortunate truth, however, is that the North has seldom lived up to the billing of its greatest promoters, who often exaggerated the possibilities for resource development, manipulating the unknown nature of the vast northern expanse to suggest an unlimited resource potential. The region has come through from time-to-time, like the Klondike gold rush, the Alaska oil boom of the 1970s, or the diamond mines of Yakutia. But more often the promise of Northern resource wealth has been either illusory or complicated by the practical realities of extracting the riches and delivering them to market. When resources have been exploited, however, the benefits and wealth have been quickly siphoned off for the benefit of the South. Perhaps the best examples, of many, are the massive northern hydro-electric projects in Canada, which deliver billions of dollars worth of power to southern centres, effectively subsidizing a standard of living with few long-term benefits for the region of origin.

Northern areas also suffer from the twin tyrannies of northern life: small numbers and great distances. Small regional populations make it difficult to capitalize on economies of scale or to develop substantial alternatives to the economic status quo. Similarly, limited population renders most Northern areas politically irrelevant, restricting their ability to demand quick attention to regional problems. The tyranny of distance has, for decades, added expense and time to the costs of doing business in the North. It has also generated a spirit of innovation in attempting to overcome the barriers of distance. Unfortunately, small populations limit the attractiveness of building the transportation and telecommunication systems necessary to effectively link North and South. The twin tyrannies have locked the North in a vicious circle: without the requisite population base, major investment in infrastructure is unlikely, while major government or private sector expenditure is unlikely until population expands.

Structural realities—distance and cold winters, resource potential, limited prospects for agriculture, and the tyrannies of small numbers and distance—have restricted the options available to northerners. Many of the region's greatest struggles have been to secure the resources necessary to overcome these structural barriers and thus to get on par with Southern communities and regions. Developments over the past twenty years have gone a long way toward redressing the balance, although they have typically come so slowly and episod-

ically that most people are not aware of the extent of the transition. But the basic elements, particularly distance and cold, can be compensated for but not completely overcome and will remain fundamental liabilities, affecting northern options for decades to come.

A Framework for Analysis

This essay has endeavoured to deal with the perceived need for a theoretical or conceptual understanding of Northern/remote regions and has argued that this vast, varied area has, in its human structures and patterns, shared a number of characteristics. I began with the belief that this search for understanding was best undertaken in a comparative fashion and that scholars should establish a series of descriptive and analytical hypotheses that could and should be tested in subsequent studies. This effort has focused on the desire to provide a structural perspective on Northern/remote regions, one that is sufficiently broad to draw attention to common threads in the evolution of northern life while remaining sufficiently flexible to accommodate differences in culture, national characteristics and specific examples. I have specifically avoided the traditional predictive models that, I argue, have not significantly addressed the need for a theoretical understanding of the region. While the ideas presented here may well be applied in a specific regional or national context, I believe that the ultimate test of their utility lies in their applicability across national and internal boundaries, as analytical tools for understanding the essential characteristics of those areas academics agree to label as Northern or remote.

An underlying intention here, then, is to attack one of the most sacred of all northern assumptions—that each northern region is unique and exceptional. The belief in exceptionalism, I suggest, has limited, rather than deepened, our understanding of the various parts of the North. It has, in fact, become an essential element in national mythology: that Alaska is somehow the embodiment of the American spirit, that in the Yukon and Northwest Territories one confronts the essential elements of Canadianism, or that in Lapland one discovers the fundamental characteristics of Finland or Sweden.

The tradition of relying on northern images and stereotypes to stand in for national identifications is deeply entrenched around the Circumpolar world. Scholars have, perhaps unwittingly, accepted the assumptions about exceptionalism, and have focused many of their efforts on documenting the uniqueness of situation rather than similarity of circumstance. Northern regions are different in some respects

from most Southern areas; they may not be significantly different from other remote regions. More to the point, there may not be as many differences across national boundaries as nationally-based scholars have long assumed. It is time that this assumption is systematically assessed and critiqued. I expect that the results will reveal important comparative connections.

In recent years, particularly through such organizations as the Northern/Remote Regions section of the Western Regional Science Association, scholars have begun to question even more fundamental assumptions. Is the North a useful organizing concept for our studies? It has been accepted as a basic article of faith that northern (for this read cold) areas are inherently different from southern jurisdictions. The extensive and relatively unproductive debate over boundaries has been implicitly founded on the assumption that there are important differences between North and South. But even this assumption is open for discussion.

Consider, as suggested earlier, the possibility that remote regions like outback Australia or the upper Amazon basin have a great deal in common with Northern areas. They are obviously not cold, but extremes of heat and/or precipitation can place similar restraints on social and economic development. It is possible that distance, size of land mass, limited population and isolation from centres of power represent more important determinants of commonality than do isotherms and severe winters. This, of course, borders on the heretical. Without even pressing this argument to its extreme, this position challenges the intellectual assumptions that rest at the centre of Northern Studies. What if there is nothing particularly significant about the impact of climate and Northernness on regional evolution? I believe that there are special characteristics associated with being northern, but would argue that they are much fewer in number than is generally assumed.

This suggestion, of course, throws the ball back into the court of the Northern specialists, those who argue the exceptionalism of the region and the existence of a separate and unique set of regional issues or concerns. It is instructive to note that these arguments have been implicit in the vast majority of Northern scholarship and have rarely been brought forward for discussion and analysis. It is time to do just that, for to proceed further with the development of Northern Studies programs, courses, conferences and projects without serious analysis of whether or not there is some substantial intellectual core to the field of inquiry is at best risky, and at worst misleading.

An alternative approach could be that Northernness has, in fact,

become a latter-day surrogate for the frontier. The 19th and early 20th century fascination with emerging settlement zones, particularly as exemplars of national and regional characteristics, may simply have shifted northward. What we now describe as Northern Studies may be little more than a more contemporary manifestation of this important earlier intellectual tradition. If this is even partially the case, then Northernness and remoteness may best be understood as a process rather than a reality. The focus of our inquiries should then shift away from the idea that the North is a useful analytical concept and should turn instead to the forces of change and evolution that have accompanied the advance of non-indigenous settlement in the area.

There is substantial evidence for such an approach. Can one usefully understand such communities as Rovaniemi, Tromsø, Whitehorse and Anchorage as "Northern?" Amenities are the same, or better, than in southern communities of similar size and the settlements bear more resemblance to their southern counterparts than they do to stereotypic notions of northern towns. The winter nights are longer and the extremes of temperature colder than in the South, but central heating, modern public building design, improved transportation systems, and excellent telecommunications systems have effectively overcome almost all of the established barriers to life in the North.

If one were to put this in analytical terms, Northernness would be a phase, like the frontier, in which human populations challenged the environment, developed economic, social and technological resources to overcome the climatic barriers, and then joined the southern or non-frontier part of the nation. This structure would, ultimately, render Northern Studies a sub-discipline of history—a process of transition rather than an issue of continuing importance—but it would help explain the continuing scholarly preoccupation with description of change rather than the development of new analytical frameworks to explain the evolution and special characteristics of northern societies.

There are, to me, two likely paths forward from this point. Northern scholars could develop a new set of concepts and theories that encapsulate the idea of nordicity and that illustrate the enduring significance of Northernness as a feature of regional life. Alternatively and, I suggest, more constructively, scholars could surrender some of the implicit assumptions about Northern exceptionalism and recognize that it is remoteness, as defined above, rather than Northernness that is the fundamental characteristic of life in northern regions. This latter approach, I suggest, does not deny that the northern areas have

experiences and face structures that help determine their options within the national and global framework. Rather, it argues that these characteristics are generally shared with other, non-Northern regions that are similarly remote from densely populated areas and, therefore, find themselves in a particular set of structural relationships with the dominant sources of power.

Further, I am convinced that an expanded comparative framework, in which non-northern regions are incorporated into studies with the areas traditionally understood to be northern, will ultimately draw our attention back to those elements that are uniquely northern. Contrasting southern remote regions with northern remote regions, while revealing strong similarities and important theoretical insights, will likely also reveal a smaller set of characteristics that separate northern from non-northern regions. It is here, in a more detailed comparative analysis of regional variation, that we are likely to find more substantial explanations of the essence of northern reality.

Advancing the argument for a broader, remote regions agenda in place of the unsubstantiated assumptions about the commonality of northern areas does not represent a retreat from a research interest in the North. Rather, I suggest that an expanded comparative agenda will support and enhance our understanding of areas now defined as Northern, and hence will encourage broader and more useful conceptual approaches to the understanding of Northern/remote regions. I am convinced that the current absence of a theoretical structure for understanding the North and remote regions has both encouraged the intellectual marginality of northern scholarship and has limited the contribution of northern scholarship to contemporary discussions about the future of northern regions. Given the multi-faceted challenges currently facing Northern/remote areas, scholars can no longer expect that essentially descriptive and first-order analytical work will attract sufficient attention. The urgent search must be for scholarly and public policy relevance, and this, I am convinced, will come only by illustrating the fundamental importance of comparative and theoretical explanations for patterns of northern development.

How Best to Understand the North?

Given the above, how then should scholars seek to understand the reality, historical and contemporary, of northern and remote regions? I believe that the best means of approaching the area is by conceiving of the human populations in northern areas as engaged in a series of struggles against a variety of forces, external and internal, conceptual

and physical. These struggles, and others that could be added, illustrate the fundamental tensions in Northern life, and suggest potentially valuable areas of future study.

Struggles against climate and distance. As argued above, the depredations of winter (or, in the case of Southern remote regions, heat) and the tyranny of distance have erected enormous barriers in the path of Northern societies. Each Northern region has, since the advent of non-indigenous settlement, struggled to overcome the limitations of place and climate. The contest is, for most areas, still underway, and remains a serious obstacle to regional development.

Put in more general terms, the fundamental struggle in the North is between the people and the environment. The indigenous peoples, of course, long-ago came to terms with the limitations and possibilities of Northern/remote regions. Most newcomers, in contrast, have attempted to overcome or even conquer the environment. Technology has helped to moderate the less attractive features of extremes of climate and geography, and have succeeded to a substantial degree in re-establishing Southern arrangements in the North. This means, of course, that non-indigenous residents have generally not adapted to the region; they have, instead, relied on expensive, subsidized technology to pretend that the environment does not exist or, more directly, should not be allowed to limit or control human activity. It is an important, but perhaps not sustainable, approach to life in Northern districts.

Struggles between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. Scholars and public observers have often drawn attention to the dissonance between indigenous and newcomer perceptions of place. In Canada, the phrase "Homeland or Hinterland" has come to symbolize the simple reality that indigenous and non-indigenous people conceptualize the land and therefore their futures in the region in strikingly different ways. This tension remains a core element in the struggle for control of the North.

Struggles between transients and permanent residents. Across the North, outsiders and newcomers continue to exert considerable authority in the evolution of the region. Constitutional arrangements typically privilege outsiders, particularly business leaders and government officials, and in democratic societies newcomers are accorded the same electoral rights as long-time residents. In most circumstances, transients outnumber the permanent residents, establishing a pattern whereby those individuals with the longest commitment to the area are not ensured the ability to make decisions about long-term development. This structure, not surprisingly, en-

trenches conflicts over visions and priorities.

Struggles between the region and nation. In each Northern area, the remote region finds itself in a systematic struggle with the national government. Constitutional struggles, the political strength of the South, and the concentration of economic, social and cultural might in Southern metropolitan areas often render the North powerless in determining its destiny. Some Northern regions have been able to generate national support for their causes, but there is little evidence that these "victories" can be sustained over an extended period. Continual reliance on Southern generosity—or, to be more frank, guilt about the North—is a frail foundation for regional evolution.

Struggles between the source of the resources and global markets. Northern regions have considerable resources, albeit somewhat fewer than the inflated visions of most Northern promoters. The North typically exercises little control over the resources. In most jurisdictions, they come under the authority of national or non-Northern subordinate governments, and when developed are exploited largely for the benefit of Southern interests. To add to the North's vulnerability, these resources are further dependent upon fluctuating world markets, which can stimulate intense interest or kill enthusiasm for Northern projects. Given the North's dependence on resource developments, market processes represent a further weakening of the North's ability to determine its future.

Struggles between popular culture and reality. The North is as much a creation of the imagination as it is a physical or human reality. Decades of writers, poets, singers, film-makers and artists have invented and re-invented the North. They have portrayed, generally, a region of harshness and isolation, a land with few prospects for permanent development. Often exaggerated and even inaccurate, the depictions in popular culture have nonetheless entered into national and international discourse. Northern regions are consequently engaged in a constant struggle against public imagery and stereotypes. Ironically, the advent of the contemporary tourist industry has encouraged the Northern/remote regions to play to the frontierist and wilderness images, thereby helping to perpetuate less than accurate statements about Northern zones. In so doing, the regions have helped to further entrench conceptions of the North that have long served as a barrier to increased non-indigenous settlement.

Northern/remote regions, therefore, are perhaps best understood in terms of a series of struggles. These tensions, between the region and the dominant South, between residents and environment, between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, between local and

global economies, sit at the core of Northern and remote region life. They can be seen in the early years of non-indigenous occupation and remain central features in the contemporary Norths. Human populations have not, of course, remained static, and they have responded variously to the opportunities and limitations placed on their activities in the region.

Within the themes outlined above, however, lies the makings of a potential research agenda for Northern/remote regions studies. The tensions that are inherent in the evolution and operation of Northern societies require far more detailed analysis before we can speak with confidence about the impact, variation and structure of Northern responses to the forces outlined above. As research results emerge, Northern scholars will be much better able to explain the comparative dimensions and analytical aspects of life in Northern regions. While it is somewhat risky to advance a theoretical proposition in advance of detailed studies along the lines advocated above, I am convinced that there are central patterns in Northern transition that can be identified at this point, and that should be tested by further analysis.

As described earlier, extant theoretical conceptions of Northern development have relied on constructs developed for other regions. The core-periphery and underdevelopment approaches were useful within a limited range, and in fact served to reinforce the sense of Northern grievance. For reasons outlined earlier, I am convinced that such narrow, predictive models actually do not respond to our need for a North-centred and regionally-sensitive theoretical approach. Other analytical models, like Benjamin Orlove's sectorial model and interest group theory offer useful methodological structures for approaching specific problems. But these approaches, likewise, do not speak directly to the specific nature of the Northern experience and therefore do not provide a basis for an extended discussion and debate about the central elements of human activity in the North. Drawing on the ideas and arguments advanced above, I suggest that there is a structural and conceptual approach that helps to explain the specific nature of Northern/remote regions and that might provide the foundation for development of additional theoretical conceptions of Northern life.

A Culture of Opposition

I believe that the central features of Northern life cannot be encapsulated in a single casual explanation, particularly one that attributes the difficulties of regional evolution to external forces, like the actions

of colonizing governments. Such simple structures are not useful in explicating the internal tensions, struggles and patterns of Northern life. As I considered the historical and cultural experiences of a number of Northern and remote regions around the world, I identified an organizing pattern of behaviour that appears to get to the core of Northern life.

Northern/remote regions, I suggest, are characterized by a culture of opposition. This opposition originates with the fundamental non-indigenous struggle against the environment and against the indigenous inhabitants. From this base, the conflict expanded over time to include struggles with Southern governments, transients, corporate influences, and Southern/popular conceptions of Northern realities. Northerners, therefore, developed in relationship to others and in conflict with various natural, economic and social forces. With the oppositional approach rooted in historical events and perpetuated by contemporary influences, Northern regions have maintained and internalized a culture of antagonism and struggle.

The culture of opposition has had wide-ranging impacts on Northern peoples and regions. While it has engendered something of a regional consciousness, built primarily on a sense of grievance (one, I argue, that is often ill-founded when judged in financial and constitutional terms), the internal manifestation of this force has divided the region from within. The struggles between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, transient and permanent residents, prevent a sustained sense of common cause against enemies, real or perceived.

The implications of entrenched opposition go further. It can lead to excessive individualism (as expressed in contrast to national norms that, of course, vary dramatically across the Circumpolar world). The frontierist-type individualism, of course, further inhibits the development of common cause. It can also be used against the region by outsiders, who can divide regional populations and capitalize on support within one or more sectors of the society to illustrate to other outsiders that there is regional encouragement for their projects.

Opposition also has the effect of establishing and sustaining a heightened sense of regional importance, based on a sense of grievance and perceived status, that is not generally shared outside the North. One repeatedly hears of strong, assertive statements from Northern representatives that are not in keeping with the regions' relative irrelevance on the national scale. Sustained by a culture of conflict that rewards and highlights strident demands for attention to regional interests, Northern leaders are encouraged to take strong, confrontational stances. Moreover, the oppositional perspective limits the

ability of Northerners to place their situation in comparative terms. Although among the most heavily subsidized societies in the world, the Northern regions nonetheless project an image of constant grievance and abuse by external agencies and forces.

The culture of opposition, I would argue, has been a severe barrier to the development of Northern/remote regions. Manifested in dozens of different forms, from constitutional demands to inter-community rivalries, and from struggles between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples to appeals for expanded government subsidies for economic development projects, the pattern of internal and external conflict has distracted Northern attention from the construction of internal and external networks of support. Instead of pulling together to capitalize on the availability of limited resources, Northern regions tend to engage in internal contests and struggles that ultimately make it easier for Southern authorities, be they corporate or governmental, to skirt Northern expectations and to exploit divisions within the region.

I believe that the scholarly analysis of historical and contemporary developments in Northern/remote regions would benefit from considerable attention to what I have labelled the culture of opposition. This pattern, internally destructive and ultimately self-defeating, has nonetheless come to dominate a variety of Northern regions. Finger-pointing at external agents of control does not enhance our understanding of Northern development; it is time that the focus shifts inward, to encompass both external and internal tensions, conflicts and relationships. Opposition has, from early times, seeped into the very culture of Northern societies. The resulting structures might well, as in the case of the culture of opposition, shine an unwelcome light into the nature of these societies. As scholars identify such patterns, which help us to both conceptualize and understand Northern realities, they will significantly advance our conceptual understanding of Northern regions.

The challenge facing Northern scholars is an important one. For many years, Northern scholarship has been sustained by the uniqueness of our region of study, but there is little indication that our work has seeped into the broader academic consciousness. Southern scholars seemingly expected little from Northern specialists, and did not expect that Northern research would contribute directly to the understanding of broader trends and phenomena. The field of Northern Studies stands at something of a cross-roads; I hope that further debate and attention to the need for broader conceptual and comparative frameworks will lead Northern specialists in new, exciting

and important directions. It is time to re-invent Northern Studies and, perhaps thereby, to rediscover Northern and remote regions.

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