

The Commoditization of Country Foods in Nunavik: A Comparative Assessment of its Development, Applications, and Significance

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ABSTRACT. The article presents the historical roots of development policy vis-à-vis Canadian Inuit as it relates to the commoditization of country foods in the Canadian North, with particular reference to Nunavik. Although Inuit place an emphasis on sharing country foods, they have developed various mechanisms that allow them to be sold. Such sales are complicated for a number of reasons. Legislation at various levels of government either prohibits or severely restricts the commercial sale of country foods, particularly for an export market. Despite this, individual businesspeople, Makivik Corporation (the regional Inuit development agency), and the government-sponsored Hunter Support Program (HSP) have all, with varying degrees of success, started to commoditize country foods. The requirement to meet conservation measures and respect government processing standards has restricted the commercial development of these foods for export, which, in turn, has limited such development both by individuals and by Makivik Corporation. The HSP, which pays people to supply country foods that are then given away to beneficiaries under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, is the most accepted and successful form of commoditization. The reason for its success is twofold. First, regulations generally favour the development of a local market for country foods. Second, at an ethical level the HSP is tolerable to people because it both curbs the practice of selling country foods purely for individual self-interest and underscores sociality by replicating the Inuit tradition of sharing food with the community. Although Inuit are consumers of the commoditized country foods to some extent, the Inuit who produce those foods for sale insist that they do not sell them to other Inuit, but rather continue to share. They have made a teleological distinction between the sale of country foods to Inuit, which tradition inhibits, and the sale of country foods to institutions, which is acceptable. The latter removes country foods from the domestic sphere, thereby enabling Inuit to sell the foods without challenging the principle that they be shared.

Key words: country foods, Inuit, Nunavik, Canada, economic development, commodity, Hunter Support Program, Makivik, commercialization, economy, sharing

RÉSUMÉ. Dans cet article sont exposées les racines historiques de l'élaboration des politiques concernant les Inuit du Canada en ce qui a trait à la commercialisation de la nourriture traditionnelle dans le Nord canadien, en particulier au Nunavik. Bien que les Inuit mettent l'accent sur le partage de la nourriture traditionnelle, ils ont créé divers mécanismes qui leur permettent de la vendre. Ces transactions sont compliquées pour plusieurs raisons. La législation à divers paliers du gouvernement soit interdit la vente commerciale de nourriture traditionnelle, soit lui impose des restrictions très sévères, en particulier pour le marché d'exportation. Malgré cela, des gens d'affaires, la Société Makivik (l'agence de développement inuite régionale) et le Programme d'aide aux chasseurs parrainé par le gouvernement ont tous, à divers degrés de réussite, commencé à commercialiser les aliments du terroir. Le besoin de respecter les mesures de conservation et de se conformer aux normes de conditionnement a limité le développement commercial de ces aliments pour l'exportation, ce qui a eu pour conséquence de freiner ce développement de la part tant des individus que de la Société Makivik. Le Programme d'aide aux chasseurs, qui paie des individus pour fournir des aliments traditionnels qui sont ensuite donnés à des bénéficiaires en vertu de la Convention de la Baie James et du Nord québécois, représente la forme de commercialisation la mieux acceptée et celle qui a le plus de succès. Le succès de ce programme a deux raisons. Tout d'abord, les règlements favorisent généralement le développement d'un marché local pour les aliments du terroir. Deuxièmement, sur un plan éthique, le Programme est acceptable aux yeux des individus car il met un frein à la pratique consistant à vendre les aliments traditionnels pour son intérêt personnel et il souligne la sociabilité en répliquant la tradition inuite du partage de la nourriture avec la collectivité. Bien que les Inuit soient dans une certaine mesure des consommateurs de ces aliments commercialisés, ceux qui les produisent pour la vente insistent sur le fait qu'ils ne les vendent pas à d'autres Inuit, mais plutôt qu'ils continuent la pratique du partage. Ils ont établi une distinction téléologique entre la vente des aliments du terroir aux Inuit, ce que la tradition interdit, et la vente de ces aliments à des institutions, ce qui, à leurs yeux, est acceptable. Cette dernière modalité soustrait la nourriture traditionnelle de la sphère domestique, permettant ainsi aux Inuit de la vendre sans contrevenir au principe selon lequel il faut la partager.

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Mots clés: nourriture traditionnelle/aliments du terroir, Inuit, Nunavik, Canada, développement économique, denrée alimentaire, Programme d'aide aux chasseurs, Makivik, commercialisation, économie, partage

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INTRODUCTION

Since the middle of the 20th century, with their gradual move into settlements, Inuit in the Eastern Canadian Arctic have become increasingly incorporated into the market economy of non-Inuit. In the process their vernacular economy—one based on reciprocity and lacking a functional equivalent to money—has had to adjust to many of the new institutions that are associated with the market economy. Country foods, harvested from the water, land, and sky, have played a central role in the economy of Inuit. In a place where the elements can be harsh and unpredictable, access to food has always been an essential aspect of survival. The Inuit practice of sharing food with others (Nuttall, 1991, 1992, 2000; Oakes and Riewe, 1997; Bodenhorn, 2000; Wenzel, 2000) developed in response to these conditions. With their immersion in the market economy, Inuit have developed various means of gaining access to money and of participating in that economy. One way that they have done so is through the sale of country foods. In the process, these two economies (vernacular and market), each with its associated institutions and logic, meet and adjust to one another.

In this article, which is one component of a larger community-based research project on the subject, I explore some of the processes of that adjustment, with particular reference to Nunavik (Northern Quebec) (Gombay, 2003). The findings are derived from approximately seven months of participant observation, as well as semi-structured interviews with people involved in commoditizing country foods in the region. Thus, much of the discussion in this article is particular to Nunavik.

The birth of this article came as a result of a conversation I had with a man who sells country foods. He agreed to discuss his experiences with me because, he said, he wished people to understand what he had had to confront in setting up his business. He was referring to the various regulatory hoops through which he felt he had had to jump in order to develop his business. For this reason, I examine the various regulations that have determined the commercial development of country foods in Nunavik. It struck me, however, that these regulations reflect more general trends in the development of the Canadian North, so I emphasize the role that policy and regulations have played in the process of northern development in general, as well as in their particular role in the commoditization of country foods.

Yet the individual who sparked the genesis of this article was involved in only one of various forms of commoditization of country foods that exist in Nunavik. It seemed, then, that to focus exclusively on his experience

would be to misrepresent the variety of people's experiences in commoditizing country foods. For this reason, the article widens the discussion to consider the range of forms that commoditization has taken, from the efforts of individual business people to government-sponsored programs.

Finally, although assorted regulations do indeed represent difficulties for Inuit involved in commoditizing country foods in Nunavik, these difficulties are, I believe, complicated even more by Inuit notions about how economic systems should function and the place of country foods within those systems. To focus only on policy and regulatory issues in the selling of country foods is to tell only part of the story. Thus, this article also discusses the role that Inuit notions of country foods have played within their own economic system, and assesses what effect these notions have had upon the commoditization of those foods.

This article draws together a number of issues that have yet to be discussed in a Canadian context, let alone with respect to Nunavik. Sources include materials related to policy and historical endeavours to promote the commoditization of country foods both in Canada (Nasogaluak and Billingsley, 1981; Stager, 1984; Goldring, 1986; Reeves, 1993; Weihs et al., 1993; Dragon, 1999; Myers, 2000) and abroad (Marquardt and Caulfield, 1996), as well as ethnographic literature that explores the nature of subsistence production and its relation to market forces (Balikci, 1959; Graburn, 1969; Usher, 1971; Nuttall, 1991, 1992, 2000; Wenzel, 1991, 2000; Condon et al., 1995; Oakes and Riewe, 1997; Dahl, 2000). Drawing on these resources, I explore how, through the commoditization of country foods, some Inuit in Nunavik have been able to accommodate both the obligation to share country foods and the need to sell them.

This research focuses on how Inuit in Nunavik have experienced the commoditization of country foods. In the process, I explore how initiatives to sell these foods have developed and discuss the reasons for their varying success rates. I begin, then, with a broad discussion of the motivations that drew governments to promote the commoditization of country foods among Inuit, follow that with a general overview of such commoditization processes in Canada, and explore how these processes have played out with specific reference to Nunavik. I conclude by discussing how Inuit have confronted the various strands woven into the commoditization of those foods—ideas about development, the application of regulatory controls, various forms of commoditization, notions about the role of country foods in society, and conceptions of economic systems—in ways that allowed them to sell those foods while still respecting the imperative that country foods be shared.

THE HISTORIC ROOTS OF GOVERNMENT
APPROACHES TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
IN THE NORTH

Economic systems in the North do not operate in a void, especially today. Government has increased its presence in the region, and larger political processes play a vital role in shaping what people do and how they do it. As Seavoy (2000) so succinctly puts it, economic development is not so much an economic process as a political one. This means that any market development involving country foods in the Arctic must be viewed, in part, as the outcome of government policy. It is important, then, to have a grasp of how policy has directed the commoditization of country foods in the Arctic. Such policy has determined, directly or indirectly, the course and scope of economic development in the North.

Truth be told, for the longest time the British and then Canadian governments essentially disregarded the Arctic. In the process of colonization, and later, nation-building, it was little more than a blurry image at the edges of the country, left to the domain of traders and the odd missionary. Given its inhospitable climate, colonizers had no great wish to settle there. Instead, the Arctic was viewed, above all, as a source of raw materials.

Although interest in northern resources was, and is, an ongoing concern of governments, little by little the North was forced for other reasons into the consciousness of those occupying seats of political power. At first, it was because of concerns about sovereignty in the face of American whaling ships that plied the northern waters (Dorion-Robitaille, 1978). Later, it was because of concern about the plight of the Inuit (Duffy, 1988). Struck low by diseases introduced by Europeans and suffering from periodic shortages of food, Inuit were at times in need of aid. So, during the 20th century, how to deal with the “Eskimo problems,” as the director of Northern Administration and Lands Branch called it, became a matter of increasing concern to the Canadian government (Duffy, 1988:147). Before the federal government formally assumed responsibility for the welfare of Canadian Inuit in 1939, any hardship experienced by Inuit had generally been alleviated, and only occasionally, by traders (Duffy, 1988; Drummond, 1997; Damas, 2002). However, starting in about 1939, the federal government increasingly introduced various components of the welfare state to the northern territories, such as old age pensions, family allowance, and “relief” to destitute Inuit. These were at first disbursed through the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC). Later the RCMP took over these responsibilities. Eventually, in the 1960s, Northern Service Officers moved into the North to administer these programs (Damas, 2002). Throughout the implementation of these policies, the government was concerned that they might create excessive dependence by the Inuit upon the government purse and upon Euro-Canadian institutions. Thus, for example, the federal government adopted the “Flour and Sugar Act” in

1949, which gave out ammunition, rather than food, in order to encourage the Inuit to continue to hunt (Commission Scolaire Kativik, n.d.). Despite this approach, however, government spending in the North grew exponentially.

Between 1945 and 1951, during the period when government involvement in northern development began in earnest, the amount of money spent on relief to Inuit increased from \$11 000 per year to \$115 000 per year, with a total during that period of \$405 000. If family allowances are added to this sum, the total outlay by the federal government was \$1 687 000 (Duffy, 1988). During the same period, the price for foxes dropped from \$25 per skin to \$5 per skin. Thus, in the Baffin Island-Ungava Bay area, 53% of the income of Inuit came from government sources. By 1952, this had increased to 59%, with only 28% of the income of Inuit coming from earned income (the rest being in unrecoverable debt and relief issued by the Hudson’s Bay Company) (Duffy, 1988). This trend continued. Simard (1979) notes that between 1965 and 1975, public expenditures on the administration of the North increased tenfold. As a result, various levels of government felt the need to improve the situation, in part to ensure that Inuit would not increase the drain on their coffers. How this was to be done was not obvious. Both Duffy (1988) and Damas (2002) describe the debate that arose about whether to leave Inuit untouched or to bring them into the larger Canadian fold, with all of the social, economic, and cultural changes that entailed.

In 1952, the federal government set up the Committee on Eskimo Affairs, whose main goal was to determine the fate of the Canadian Inuit (Duffy, 1988). As the invitation to the organizational meeting of the Committee put it, “The basic issue seems to be this, are we to regard the Eskimo[s] as fully privileged, economically responsible citizens with the right to spend [their] income as [they] please, or are we to regard the Eskimo[s] as backward people who need special guidance in the use of their income[?].... I personally feel that, if we are realistic, we must consider the Eskimo[s] to be in the second category” (Damas, 2002:45). The Committee concluded that the federal government should encourage Inuit to live off the land and follow a traditional way of life. Yet shortly thereafter, and in contrast to this position, Prime Minister Diefenbaker introduced the “New National Policy” to be implemented between 1957 and 1963, which was designed to give private enterprise access to northern resources (Mitchell, 1996).

With this view in mind, the federal government published 15 area economic surveys between 1958 and 1967. These surveys were designed to assess the renewable and non-renewable resource bases of the North, and identify the present and potential exploitation of those resources. Generally, these surveys came up with three recommendations: first, to expand non-renewable resource exploitation by non-Inuit; second, to expand capital investment in such things as airfields, telephones, and education and health services; and third, to improve harvesting of renewable resources with an eye to improving the lot of the Inuit, for

example, by encouraging the harvesting of eiderdown and the development of tourism, handicrafts, and commercial fisheries (Mitchell, 1996).

At the same time, Inuit were encouraged to move into settlements in the late 1950s and early 1960s so that they might, among other things, learn the skills necessary to take up wage employment (Ross and Usher, 1986). As part of this process, for example, the government sponsored the development of the co-operative movement in the North, intended to provide Inuit with a means of self-directed economic development (Riches, 1977; Duffy, 1988; Mitchell, 1996; Iglauer, 2000). The government also developed various programs, such as the Eskimo Loan Fund and the Canadian Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy (Lyll, 1993; RCAP, 1996), to promote the economic development of Inuit communities.

Throughout many of these government-sponsored initiatives, from the Eskimo Affairs Committee in 1952 (Damas, 2002) to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in 1996, the idea that Inuit should be encouraged to use their traditional economy as a way of promoting economic development has been a recurring theme. As an RCAP publication put it, economic development “is about maintaining and developing culture and identity; supporting self-government institutions; and sustaining traditional ways of making a living” (RCAP, 1996:780). For these reasons, the idea of commoditizing country foods has been expressed often by policy makers, advisors to those policy makers, and academics (Myers, 1982; Weihs et al., 1993; Reimer, 1995; Berger, 1999; Dragon, 1999; Iglauer, 2000).

With this in mind, governments have gone about promoting the commoditization of country foods in the Canadian Arctic in the belief that it makes sense to use the resources of an area as a way to earn much-needed money. Moreover, since whatever money comes into northern communities has a tendency to cycle within those communities for only a short time before it returns once again to the South (Brascoupe, 1993; Lyll, 1993), the selling of country foods might be a way to alleviate the problem of the economic drain southward. How precisely these foods were turned into commodities and what this has meant to Inuit in Canada have varied.

THE COMMODITIZATION OF COUNTRY FOODS AMONG CANADIAN INUIT: AN OVERVIEW

Until recently, among most Inuit in Canada, country foods have generally continued to circulate according to the principles of sharing that are central to the vernacular economy. As a result, though people told me that country foods were sometimes exchanged among Inuit for goods, such as dogs, or for services, such as sewing or the use of hunting equipment, these occurrences were the exception rather than the rule, and the paramount assumption remained that country foods should be shared whenever

possible. By and large, the commoditization of country foods in the Canadian Arctic has historically been limited to exchanges between Inuit and non-Inuit.

Informal sales or trade of country food between Inuit and non-Inuit have a long tradition. Inuit worked for European and American whalers during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Similarly, they traded furs, meat, and fish with various trading companies and were hired, for example by the HBC, to catch fish for shipment south. There was also the practice, which continues today, of selling country foods to the itinerant non-Inuit who passed through the area (Graburn, 1969). In addition, Inuit were hired to participate in various schemes to commoditize country foods. Goldring (1986) writes that commercial whaling and fisheries began off Baffin Island in the 1820s, while in Nunavik, the HBC had commercial fisheries in Kuujuaq and commercial whaling from Kuujuaapik as of 1900 (Commission Scolaire Kativik, n.d.). Ungulates were also incorporated into the market economy in the first half of the 20th century. For example, in the 1930s, the Canadian government imported reindeer herds from Alaska to the Mackenzie Delta with the intention of raising the animals for both domestic use and export sales (Nasogaluak and Billingsley, 1981; Stager, 1984). Yet throughout these processes, many Inuit essentially managed to maintain a distinction between their vernacular economy and the market economy, sharing food among themselves and selling only to non-Inuit.

It was only with the move into settled communities that Inuit became deeply incorporated into the market economy, and consequently, their need for money became greater (Wenzel, 1991). The processing and selling of country foods, both for export and for local consumption, seemed one way of providing Inuit with much-needed cash, while at the same time helping to alleviate intermittent shortfalls of food and providing alternatives to the unhealthy, expensive imported foods that Inuit were eating in increasing quantities (Weihs et al., 1993). Accordingly, the federal government developed the Specialty Foods Program in 1960 to sell tinned country foods (Weihs et al., 1993; Iglauer, 2000). It also used the burgeoning co-operative movement to provide a mechanism for the production and sale of country foods (Iglauer, 2000). These various schemes met with mixed success. Weihs et al. (1993) indicate that this was because Inuit felt able to produce this food themselves, while Iglauer (2000) appears to suggest that they were simply bemused by the prospect of tinned country foods. In addition to the federal government, the governments of the Northwest Territories, and later Nunavut, have also sponsored programs to sell country foods. For instance, a 1980s initiative funded freezers and meat-processing plants in every community in Nunavut, the produce of which is then sold by the local Hunters' and Trappers' Organizations (HTOs) (Myers, 2000). Thus, in Nunavut country foods are sold by HTOs across the territory (Reeves, 1993; Weihs et al., 1993; Condon et al., 1995; Myers, 2000; Myers and Forrest, 2000). Yet Myers

(2000) notes that these stores are run not for the sake of profit, but rather as a way to supplement hunters' incomes.

In general, para-public organizations of one form or another, from HTOs to various regional Inuit Development Corporations, tend to mediate the sale of these foods among Inuit in Canada. Thus, apart from HTOs, the Inuit-owned development corporations that sponsor the commercial production of country foods include Ulu Foods, owned by the Inuvialuit Development Corporation (Whittington, 1986); the Labrador Inuit Development Corporation (Weihs et al., 1993); Seaku Fisheries, Natsiq Investments Corporation, and Nunavik Arctic Foods Incorporated, which are wholly or partially owned by Makivik Corporation; and Kivalliq Arctic Foods in Rankin Inlet and Kitikmeot Foods Limited, which are both operated by the Nunavut Development Corporation in Cambridge Bay (Verreault, 2002). The public or para-public nature of these operations reflects Chabot's (2001) assertion that the sale of country foods in Canada is generally not self-financing. At the same time, however, it also is a sign of the fact that the private sale of country foods among individual Inuit is severely limited.

Apart from attempts to develop domestic markets for country foods within communities, programs have also been developed to encourage the export of country foods on a larger scale, either in the form of inter-settlement trade in both Nunavut (Reeves, 1993) and Nunavik (George, 1998a, b), or in the form of sales to southern markets. Early on, for example, the federal government encouraged the co-operatives in Nunavut and Nunavik to sell such goods as arctic char or sealskins to southern markets. Projects were developed in George River (now Kangiqsualujjuaq), Port Burwell (Killiniq), and Fort Chimo (Kuujuuaq) in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Graburn, 1969; Riches, 1977; Mitchell, 1996; Iglauer, 2000). Graburn (1969) also mentions the sale of country foods in Salluit, Payne Bay (Kangirsuk), and Ivujivik. In each case, the reasons for their limited success can be traced back to issues of logistics and the law.

In order to understand the forms that various attempts to commoditize country foods have taken, we must first understand the regulatory frameworks and rationales within which they have to fit. In each Inuit region the laws and regulations can be somewhat different, particularly in terms of the rights accorded to Inuit under the various land-claim agreements, which, in turn, affect how country foods may be commoditized. As I have chosen to focus primarily upon Nunavik, in discussing the regulatory systems affecting the commoditization of country foods, I restrict my analysis to that region.

REGULATORY ISSUES AND THE COMMODITIZATION OF COUNTRY FOODS IN NUNAVIK

The commoditization of country foods in Nunavik is limited by a number of factors, some domestic and some

international. At an international level, various regulations have limited both the domestic and the international sale of country foods. For example, the Migratory Birds Act prohibits any sale of migratory birds. Similarly, depending on the species, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) either prohibits the sale or export of certain species or requires an export permit or a transportation licence for both national and international destinations (CITES Secretariat, 1979). The ban on seal products by the European Union in the 1980s also had a devastating effect on the northern economy, effectively shutting down the commercial seal harvest (Wenzel, 1991). Commercial whaling is also restricted by the International Whaling Commission, which permits only subsistence hunting of whales by aboriginal peoples (International Whaling Commission, 2004).

On the domestic front, other regulations have affected the sale of country foods. When it was first developed, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA), signed in 1975, stipulated in Section 24 that, with the exception of commercial fisheries, only beneficiaries of the Agreement were permitted to buy and sell country foods (Bennett, 1982; Government of Quebec, 1998). To all intents and purposes, this has meant that non-Inuit, who are not beneficiaries under the Agreement, cannot legally buy or sell country foods (apart from fish that have been tagged as commercial). In addition, under the JBNQA there is a hierarchy of harvesting rights. Hunting and fishing for personal use, which includes use for gift, exchange, or sale within a family, are of primary importance. After these needs have been met, animals may then be harvested for community use, which again includes gift, exchange, or sale both within a community and among communities. Once all of these needs are met, and subject to a quota, country foods may be harvested by outfitting camps that allow people from outside Nunavik to hunt and fish in the region. With the exception of fisheries, the JBNQA did not originally allow for the commercial export of meat from Nunavik. In 1993, Makivik Corporation, a body representing the economic and political interests of beneficiaries under the Agreement, negotiated an amendment to the JBNQA (Complementary Agreement 12). The amendment allows the harvest of caribou for export from the region, but only after all of these needs have been met, and once again, subject to quotas established by the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Coordinating Committee, a co-management body set up under the JBNQA that is partially responsible for the management of wildlife in the region. In negotiating this amendment, Makivik also stipulated that until 2024, commercial harvesting of caribou for export sales could be undertaken only by beneficiaries under the Agreement, thereby ensuring that southern businesses did not move in and profit from northern resources and retain the profits in the South.

Generally, then, access to country foods under the JBNQA is limited to beneficiaries. Non-beneficiaries, unless they have sport and export permits or have bought commercial tags, are prohibited by law from either harvesting country foods or exporting them out of Nunavik.

Moreover, the *Act Respecting Hunting and Fishing Rights in the James Bay and New Quebec Territories* prohibits non-beneficiaries from accepting country foods as a gift from beneficiaries (Government of Quebec, 2004).

The sale of country foods outside Nunavik, or within Nunavik to non-beneficiaries, is not permitted unless the products have commercial tags and meet provincial, federal, and (if they are for export outside of Canada) international regulations governing the standards of slaughter and processing. Provincial and federal food inspection regulations thus play an important role in determining people's abilities to sell country foods. The only exception to these rules limiting the export of country foods outside of Nunavik is made for foods that are bought to feed beneficiaries in the South; for example, the Nunavik Regional Board of Health sends country foods to beneficiaries receiving medical care in the South.

Together these various regulations effectively limit the commercial sale of country foods. For example, it is not always an easy task when slaughtering animals far from a community to meet the requirements of provincial and federal food inspection regulations that ensure the meat is acceptable for commercial sale. Processing must take place in certified settings. To gain this certification, federal and provincial vets and inspectors are required to ensure that standards and regulations are met in the processing of fish and meat. Similarly, meat-cutters must slice the meat in prescribed ways that differ from the customary Inuit way of butchering animals, which makes staffing difficult. In addition, waste and emissions must meet federal and provincial regulations. Respecting all of these requirements is a challenge in the North, where the infrastructure is minimal, the movement of animals is unpredictable, and the training that people require in processing and handling foods is only periodically of use to them. As a result, much of the country food that is harvested for sale in one form or another within Nunavik cannot be sold outside the territory or even to non-beneficiaries within the territory.

While some accept these various regulations and recognize that they are there to ensure public safety and promote conservation, others, who would like to be able to produce country foods for export, find some of the regulations galling and feel that there is a double standard at work. They ask, for example, why it is that they have to meet regulations for the processing of meat if it is to be sent to the South, but when meat is sold to beneficiaries in the North it is not subject to the same rigid standards? Why are such sales acceptable in one place and not in another? There are also peculiar contradictions in the regulations, which make them all that much more dubious for people who find themselves bound by them. For example, scallops that are shucked on a boat may be sold without inspection, while if they are shucked on land, official inspection is required.

The commoditization of country foods is not only defined by the regulations designed to confirm that the

products meet quality standards for mass consumption, but also limited by quotas established by provincial and federal agencies. These government quotas exist to ensure that the resources are conserved. Duffy (1988) adds that such conservation efforts reflect the government's wish to make sure that Inuit will have long-term access to the resources upon which they depend. For this reason, in the case of Nunavik, a legal emphasis has been placed on consumption for domestic rather than commercial use, though this emphasis is somewhat complicated by the land tenure regime set up under the JBNQA. On lands in Categories I and II, harvesters who are registered beneficiaries under the JBNQA have preferential access to resources. This effectively limits access to the resources above all to Inuit. But on Category III lands, sport hunting and fishing and limited commercial fishing are open to non-beneficiaries, subject to approval by the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Coordinating Committee, and only after the harvesting needs of Inuit are first met (see subsection 24.8 of the JBNQA for more details). Initially, the reason for limiting access to renewable resources to use within Nunavik, with some use by sport hunters, and the reason for precluding the commercial development of these resources for export sales, reflected a fear that such sales would threaten the viability of the resources (Hertz and Kapel, 1986; Geist, 1988). The fact that the JBNQA did not prevent commercial fisheries or sport hunting says more, I think, about already established commercial interests that predate the Agreement than about the need to conserve the resources for domestic use. Moreover, these large-scale fisheries involve species such as shrimp or turbot that have not been customarily eaten by Inuit; these are seen as permissible for harvest because there is no tradition of their domestic consumption.

Certainly these many regulations have effectively limited the development of various schemes to commoditize country foods in Nunavik. However, regulations are not the only factors that have affected the commercial development of country foods in the region. The various mechanisms by which country foods are sold in Nunavik reveal an assortment of complexities in the process of commoditization.

THE COMMODITIZATION OF COUNTRY FOODS IN NUNAVIK: ITS FORMS AND FACTORS AFFECTING PRODUCTION

Given the various regulations that favour the consumption of country foods above all by Inuit, one might be tempted to think that efforts to commoditize those foods would be most successful if focused on an Inuit clientele. Yet an important dynamic has tended to limit such commoditization of country foods in the Canadian Arctic. Generally, many Inuit disapprove of the sale of these foods among themselves. As I wrote earlier, their economy is founded on the notion that food should be shared with

others whenever possible. People are taught that they should give food to others, rather than sell it to them. The sale of country foods among Inuit is judged by many to be immoral, aberrant, anti-social behaviour. Most Inuit in Nunavik adhere to these beliefs. When people hear of the selling of country foods among Inuit, they tend to frown upon the practice, and may either actively ask the culprits to stop selling them, or let them know passively, in their reactions to those individuals, that this ought not to be done. This has meant that people have tended to avoid selling country foods directly to one another. Instead, they are apt to sell these foods either to non-Inuit or through institutions, such as the Co-op, that do not have roots in the vernacular economy of the North. The end result is that only a small proportion of the total production of country foods in Nunavik is relegated to the commercial sector. In fact, Chabot (2001) calculated that in 1995, 85% of the total production of country foods in the region stayed within the vernacular economy.

The few commercial processes that do exist in Nunavik fall into three broad categories: 1) private businesses operated by individuals in various communities; 2) corporate operations developed by Makivik Corporation, which is responsible, among other things, for investing the funds received by the beneficiaries of the JBNQA; and 3) the Hunter Support Program (HSP), an offshoot of the JBNQA.

Individual Businesspeople

A limited number of individuals have either formal or informal commercial country food ventures in Nunavik. Kuujuaq has one privately owned country food store called Inuksiutiit, which, because its produce has not generally met processing regulations, is legally able to sell country foods only to beneficiaries under the JBNQA. Puvirnituaq has a commercial arctic char operation called Pitsituaq, also privately owned, which produces both smoked and frozen arctic char. To date, this operation is limited in what it can sell. It faces some of the same predicaments as Inuksiutiit. Regulations require that in order to sell to non-beneficiaries, either within Nunavik or outside the region, Pitsituaq must meet various production requirements at its processing plant. Moreover, to be sold to non-beneficiaries, the char must also have been caught using a commercial licence, which can be difficult to acquire in Nunavik. According to George (1998a), people in the region have a history of resenting plans to sell animal stocks commercially, particularly fish stocks, which means that the assignation of commercial tags can be fraught with tension.

People in other Nunavik communities, such as Akulivik, Salluit, and Quaqtaq, also fish commercially for arctic char or scallops. They generally sell their catch locally through community stores or Hunter Support Programs, although in some instances, in areas where or seasons when arctic char are difficult to get, they will travel between communities to sell their catch somewhat farther

afield. However, they are not able to live exclusively from the income of these fisheries. Moreover, because it is assumed that the catch will be sold to beneficiaries, the fishers do not need to apply for commercial tags for the char.

There are also informal businesses that sell country foods in various villages across Nunavik, which generally focus on non-Inuit customers or on institutions associated with non-Inuit in the minds of many Inuit. The markets for these operations are limited and irregular. Thus, for example, people sell country foods to hotels (either to the kitchen or to the guests) or to the health care system so that country foods may be either provided to patients or served in the cafeterias. Produce such as caribou, ptarmigan, or arctic char is generally sold in its raw form. However in some instances people also sell processed foods, such as *misiraq*, a sauce made from rendered whale or seal blubber, and caribou jerky (*tuktuviniq nikkuk*). In addition, people sell country foods informally to itinerant non-Inuit workers who pass through their communities, such as construction crews, teachers, nurses, or employees of the sealift that stops at all the northern communities. Frequently, however, there are no fixed prices for these informal sales, and sometimes people do not exchange the food for money, but for other goods.

For a number of reasons these various operations have tended to be sporadic, piecemeal, and generally problematic. In some cases, moral considerations have curbed the sale of country foods. For example, I was told that in one community an individual who had been selling caribou jerky was asked to stop doing so because people did not think it was right to sell it. Reflecting this community disapproval, another person involved in selling country foods informed me that they had had to learn to change their way of thinking in order to continue the business. They had had to ignore pressures from community members to give them the food rather than selling it.

Generally, people have not developed an interest in selling country foods on a regular basis; they often sell only when they are in need of cash. This means that the supply of meat for the various individuals and institutions that might be inclined to buy it is sporadic.

Those who do wish to sell country foods on a more systematic basis also face challenges in developing sustainable markets, in part because of their distance from southern markets, and in part because they lack infrastructure (such as freezers) needed to store or process the food. These restrictions limit the income that people are able to earn from the sale of country foods. For example, Graburn (1969) recounts that in the 1960s, the sealift crew took advantage of their access to southern markets and the lack of storage facilities in the North by buying fish from Inuit at the cost of 10 cents per fish and selling them in the South for \$1.80 per pound. Yet Inuit could not ask for more money because if they did not sell their catch, without the facilities to store them, the fish would go bad. At some point, Graburn writes, Inuit in northern Quebec tried to

establish an agreement among themselves to fix the prices of fish. However, they were undersold by people from Cape Dorset (Kinngait), with the result that when the sealift ships arrived in the region, the crew members refused to pay the higher prices demanded by the local fishers. When one man in Salluit broke ranks and sold his fish more cheaply, their attempt at controlling prices fell apart.

The processing regulations I discussed above also prove challenging to developers of commercial country food ventures in Nunavik. To meet them involves vast expenses, for example, travelling to and from the slaughter area by air, or building the refrigeration and packing plants to process the meat or fish. Such costs can be prohibitive. For example, in the 1990s an Inukjuak resident tried unsuccessfully to develop a joint venture with a Japanese company involving the sale of caribou. Although the venture met federally approved regulations, it was unable to make money because of high freight costs and competition from cheaper meats raised in the South (George, 1998b). In Puvirnituq, the owner of the arctic char fishery has been obliged to build a new structure, at great expense, to comply with various government processing regulations. In the South, producers are often able to take advantage of existing facilities; in the North, however, individuals must often meet construction and supplementary transportation costs themselves. They cannot move into existing facilities, but must raise the funds to build new ones. They also confront comparatively greater transportation costs. This means that Northerners not only have to contend with higher production costs than people in southern Canada, and thus sustain sizeable fixed expenses, but they must also assume significant start-up costs. Raising the funds to meet these expenses and carrying such a debt load have discouraged the commercial development of country foods, particularly by individual businesspeople.

Another factor affecting the commoditization of country foods, whether by individuals or by government or paragonovernmental agencies, is the availability and carrying capacity of the resources. The animals are always on the move; thus, people must travel out of their communities to find them and then transport them back to their settlements. Whether the transport is by boat, by skidoo, or by chartered plane or helicopter, this adds to the cost of production. Moreover, in certain instances, it has been difficult for the animal populations to support such operations (Freese, 1997; Hansen, 2002). In Nunavik, arctic char and salmon fisheries have been particularly prone to overfishing. For this reason, at various times, fisheries have had to be shut down in Kuujjuaq, Kangiqsualujjuaq, and Kangirsuk (Mitchell, 1996; George, 1998a, b), and caribou sport hunting camps have also been forced to close (George, 1998a). Yet at the same time, some people in Nunavik maintain that the caribou stocks need to be harvested commercially in order to prevent a population crash.

Makivik Corporation

In addition to individual businesspeople, Makivik Corporation has also been actively pursuing various schemes to sell country foods in Nunavik. Makivik has commercial fishery operations and tried unsuccessfully in the 1990s to establish an inter-community trade project within Nunavik (Weihs et al., 1993; George, 1998b, 1999; Chabot, 2001).

At first glance, inter-community trade seems to be an appropriate form of northern development. As Weihs et al. (1993) indicate, such trade aims not to maximize production or profits, but rather to supplement exchanges within the vernacular economy. In addition to providing hunters with income, they argue, it would ensure distribution of country foods within Nunavik, promote food self-reliance, and promote good nutrition in the region. Furthermore, they maintain, such trade avoids conflict over resource use that can arise from export to faceless markets in the South. Given that northern animal populations are not farmed, and thus their populations cannot be controlled, large-scale commercial development of country foods might threaten the long-term viability of the populations for domestic use. No doubt it was for these reasons that the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, signed in 1975, included stipulations that would permit trade of country foods within and among communities, but, with the exception of fisheries, precluded trade for export.

So why did Nunavik's inter-community trade project fail? Its lack of success was due to several factors. First, the four processing plants that Makivik built in different Nunavik communities in the 1990s did not meet federal specifications. Second, since the animals are always on the move, they are often killed at a distance from the communities. It was difficult to transport them back to the abattoirs in a way that would meet government quality standards without being prohibitively expensive. Third, the hunting season is limited by weather: it cannot be too warm because in order to meet food inspection standards, the carcass must be quickly frozen. Fourth, the communities concerned were debating at the time whether the caribou populations could sustain a commercial hunt. In fact, in 1995, overharvesting of the Koroc herd near Kangiqsualujjuaq forced the closure of two sport hunting camps (George, 1998a). Finally, Makivik had difficulty getting a sufficient supply of meat from local hunters. In some cases, hunters were unwilling to supply meat to Makivik because they could earn more by selling it to the Hunter Support Program (discussed below). Chabot (2001) also postulates that, given the limited number of hunters who supply meat to communities in the first place, hunters might have been unwilling to sell meat to the commercial sphere that might be needed for domestic use.

The meat that did make it onto the domestic market, notes Chabot (2001), was not always liked. For example, one of her informants complained that the seal meat sold through the project did not taste good. Makivik's view was that inter-community trade would be appealing to the

people of Nunavik because it would allow them to have portions of meat that were manageable, rather than having to cut off pieces from the larger sections of an animal that are normally stored after it is killed. In fact, one Chabot informant, who worked for the Makivik project, cited this as his reason for buying the meat. However, as one person pointed out to me, people asked themselves why they should buy meat that they could get “for free.”

With the end of the inter-community trade project in 1998, Makivik focused its attention on selling country foods to export markets under the auspices of Nunavik Arctic Foods Incorporated (George, 1998a, b, 1999; Anonymous, 2001a, b). Using mobile abattoirs, Nunavut Arctic Foods was able to get its production certified by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, which allowed it to export country foods to areas outside Quebec. Among its products are pâté, stew, and sausages. Under Natsiq Investment Corporation, it also sells ringed seal oil. Again, although Nunavik Arctic Foods production is ongoing, it has been problematic and has yet to be sustained over the long run. It has been difficult to meet the regulations, expensive to carry the transportation costs, and difficult to find regular, trained employees. In addition, since the caribou are migratory, it can be hard to find sufficient numbers of them to make their commoditization worthwhile (George, 1999).

The Hunter Support Program

The final form of commoditization of country foods that exists in Nunavik is through the Hunter Support Program (HSP) (Government of Quebec, 1982; Duhaime, 1990; Kativik Regional Government, 1998, 2000; Cesa, 2002). The HSP was created as part of the JBNQA in 1975, but was not formally established until 1982. It has guaranteed funding for an indefinite future. The objective of the program is “to favour, encourage and perpetuate the hunting, fishing and trapping activities of the beneficiaries as a way of life and to guarantee Inuit communities a supply of the produce from such activities” (Government of Quebec, 1982:4). Thus, it is designed to support both production and consumption of country foods. In order to do this, each community in Nunavik receives funding, which may be used, among other things, for “the marketing of products and by-products from hunting, fishing and trapping activities” (Kativik Regional Government, 1998:39). In practice, this generally means that the municipality, through the HSP, pays hunters who are not otherwise employed to supply the community with meat on an intermittent basis. The municipality is then responsible for distributing the country foods. This is done in different ways in different communities and can vary depending on the time of the year. During certain periods, when access to meat is scarce (for example, when the weather makes it difficult to get out on the land), the HSP meat may be reserved for those who might otherwise have difficulty getting country foods through the vernacular economy, such as the elderly, single mothers, or people who cannot afford to own hunting

equipment. However, when country foods are more readily available, then beneficiaries under the JBNQA may go and help themselves to meat. So, while the meat is paid for, and thus has a monetary value, it is not bought by individuals. The HSP thus represents a hybrid—part sharing and part commodity—for it is neither truly involved in market exchange nor truly a reflection of the reciprocal exchange that has been central to the vernacular economy of Inuit.

DISCUSSION

Of the various forms of commoditization of country foods in Nunavik, the HSP is by far the most widespread. However, the vast majority of country foods produced in Nunavik still stay outside the market economy. Chabot (2001) found that of all the country foods produced in the region in 1995, 85% stayed within the vernacular economy, 13% were sold to the HSP, and 2% were sold on the open market. Breaking down these numbers even further, she found that of the 450 tonnes of country foods sold in Nunavik in 1995, 83.3% were sold to the HSP, 4.5% were sold to the Co-ops, and 12.3% were sold to Makivik’s Nunavik Arctic Foods. These findings suggest that the people who do choose to commoditize country foods by these various mechanisms have a distinct preference for doing so under the auspices of the HSP. This conclusion was borne out in diverse ways during my interviews with various people involved in the commoditization of country foods in the region. One person, a non-Inuk who buys country foods to serve in his catering business, commented that “...a lot of them [hunters and fishers]... would never sell here, because they know it’s to make a profit. While they sell at the [HSP], they know it’s going back into the community” (Gombay, 2003:232). Chabot (2001) also notes disinclination among Inuit to sell country foods on the private market. Part of this reticence, whether conscious or not, may reflect a point raised by Gudeman (1986:78):

It is not alienation from the means of production which is socially divisive, but rather the dependence on impersonal market forces unrelated to indigenous social control, the separating of economy from society by divorcing resource allocation, work arrangement, and product disposition from expressions of social obligation. And to be sure, the consequent loss of socially guaranteed subsistence, as well.

This suggests that for some, the HSP falls into a different category of institutional exchange, one in which control remains in the hands of the Inuit, and so, one that is less threatening to the social structures that have traditionally governed the exchange of country foods.

The notion that the food at the HSP is given away is important to people. Although some Inuit to whom I spoke expressed support for Makivik’s project to sell country

foods, one woman said she was against the idea because if people start selling food, then “it’s just for money” (Gombay, 2003:235). She felt, however, that the HSP was acceptable because the hunters were paid not for the animal, but for their gas and their labour. The food was given away freely. So for her it appeared that the HSP is simply a new extension of the practice of sharing. This view seems to be supported by the fact that although some people sell country foods to the program, others periodically give it to the HSP, free of charge.

Yet people recognize that hunters and fishers need money to continue going out on the land. Though they try to maintain the tradition of sharing, they also acknowledge that without some money, hunters cannot continue to hunt, fish, and gather. As one man put it,

We try to stick to the traditional culture and our traditions in sharing food. But [we do this] also, because... jobs are hard to come by, and the Hunter Support dollars are well accepted, [but] not totally depended upon yet, because a lot of people still share traditionally. Those who have food give it away for free for those who need. And that’s something we’re still proud of doing. But if we can get paid for doing it, well then, that’s acceptable too, since there’s no other work—not too much other work to be done for a lot of people. (Gombay, 2003:241)

So, according to some, the requirement for money does not exclude sharing. As one Inuk said to me (a non-Inuk), “If you want to buy, I’ll sell it to you. If you’re asking for it, I’ll give it to you” (Gombay, 2003:241). And as for the exchange of country foods between Inuit, an older man who sells to the HSP said that although he sells to the program, that does not prevent him from sharing with others: the shack where he stores meat is always open to anyone who needs it, and when he goes hunting or fishing with others, he still shares with those who accompany him. However, the sharing has adjusted, perhaps by necessity, to the modern economy. So another man told me that when he goes hunting or fishing with someone who intends to sell part of the catch, he takes less than he might otherwise feel entitled to. He does so because, since he is earning a salary and his companion is allowed to sell only because he is on welfare, he thinks it only fair that his companion should receive more of the catch.

The HSP represents for many an essentially acceptable response to the need for money. It both curbs the practice of selling country foods purely for individual self-interest and underscores sociality by replicating the Inuit tradition of sharing food with the community.

The commitment of the HSP to providing an important subsidy to hunters, which then spills out into the rest of the community, was made apparent to me in a conversation I had with a non-Inuk who had been involved in Makivik’s now defunct inter-community trade project. He remarked upon something that did not make sense to him. Given that the prices paid by the HSP to hunters came out to be more

per pound than the meat sold by the inter-community trade project, he wondered why administrators of the HSP did not simply buy the meat produced by Makivik’s project rather than paying more to individual hunters within the community. As he pointed out, it would have cost the HSP less in the end and enabled it to have more meat. That man’s cost-benefit analysis was done purely on the basis of money, and it missed the fact that administrators of the HSP were presumably more interested in providing support to the community members, and in sustaining their local economy, than in getting cheaper goods. The HSP was also doing a cost-benefit analysis, but it was measuring costs and benefits not only in money, but in impacts on society.

As I mentioned earlier, quotas have also had an impact on the commoditization of country foods. While these quotas are supposed to ensure that resources are conserved for long-term use, their imposition has at times been the source of some strife in the North. At a very general level, people can resent the obligation to adhere to rules that they see as foreign to their thinking or knowledge. How can people from the outside know what is appropriate? These are laws from the abstract space out there, not from the places in which people were born and raised. Berger (1985:65–66) cites Jasper Joseph, who is talking about Alaska, but expresses views similar to those of many Inuit in Canada:

Ever since the Claims Settlement Act, [I’ve] heard some regulations. Somebody made laws. Eskimos did not make them. We do not go outside of our state and tell other people how they should live. We do not put a limit on how many cattle or how many cows or how much food should outsiders have. We do not make any regulations on that. We do not tell them that they should have this much supply of food. We do not make rules and regulations for them so they will have a limit on ... certain items of food. When we try to hunt and provide for ourselves and feed our family, our children, somebody comes and tells us, “If you catch birds, if you catch moose, or, if you gather food, we will put you in jail. We have rules and regulations that you have to follow.” We do not believe in the rules and regulations, when we try to survive and provide for our family, our own, very own existence. We have been promised punishment for trying to survive. (square brackets in original)

This suggests a basic problem with the imposition of laws that attempt to define subsistence, as opposed to commercial harvesting rights. Where does one draw the line? At what point does subsistence cease and commercial production begin? Many have pointed out that so-called “subsistence” economies are, in fact, mixed economies, that people use the money they earn from sales of by-products from their hunting, fishing, or trapping to support their subsistence activities (Feit, 1991; Wenzel, 1991; Moeran, 1992; Weihs et al., 1993; Government of Japan, 1994;

Kalland, 1994; High North Alliance, 1995a, b; Caulfield, 1997). But beyond this, some people simply resent the fact that their economies must remain static, victims of outsiders' views of "tradition." Time does not stand still, they argue, and they must be allowed to move along with it. Aboriginal peoples are not unaware of the internal inconsistencies inherent in this view. They must preserve their traditions while advancing their social, economic, and political structures. Such a difficult balancing act is at the heart of moves to commoditize country foods. This has been particularly apparent to Inuit in the ban on sealskin and the pressures to control whaling. As Greenlandic Ingmar Egede (1995:2), addressing the IUCN General Assembly puts it:

You seem to be ready to let us eat our traditional food. You seem to be ready to accept, or even demand, that we introduce modern means in our hunting methods. When [will] you in addition allow our economy to evolve, by opening your markets to our marine mammal products?

Weihls et al. (1993) indicate that government ideas of subsistence rights are somewhat limited for yet other reasons. Although subsistence users have the right of access to the resources, the government does not consider them to be the owners of those resources. As a consequence, for instance, subsistence users do not have the legal claim to compensation for any damage to those resources that might occur. As both Asch (1989) and Usher (1983) argue in different ways, this is because European systems of property ownership do not perceive common property as, in fact, belonging to anyone, but rather, as belonging to no one.

It is because of these various misconceptions and complexities linked to the notion of "subsistence" production that I have chosen not to use that term in this article. Instead I have employed the term "vernacular" to refer to the economy of Inuit. Such a term does not necessarily freeze people in time, nor is it so burdened with value judgements about people's ways of living. Rather, it allows for the flexibility and evolution of place-based economic systems.

If the economy of the North has been limited in its development by essentialist notions of subsistence, how are we to make sense of the fact that for many Inuit, the morality that has governed their vernacular economy continues to be a powerful force restricting the sale of country foods directly to one another? And at the same time, what does it mean that many Inuit do not resent their sale to institutions? At first glance, this seems contradictory. The work of Parry and Bloch (1989) is helpful in trying to understand this dynamic. They note that in societies where a premium is placed on reciprocity, short-term, individualistic transactions are morally acceptable so long as they do not threaten the long-term cycles of exchange that focus on the collectivity; in fact, they are desirable if they yield goods that are used to maintain this over-arching order. This is why many people consider the

HSP an acceptable means of commoditizing country foods: it allows people to have access to cash while generally allowing and providing support for the sharing ideology. The same is true for sales to the other institutions that come from the outside world. Goods, such as money, derived from the short-term cycle of exchange are often transferred to the long-term cycle. Thus individual interests serve to sustain those of the group. After all, it is the group, sustaining the interests of the group, that has ensured the ability of individual Inuit to survive.

Thus many people have learned to create a distance between the needs and interests of the individuals who sell country foods and the collective requirement that food be shared. The individual, short-term necessity for money is used to sustain the long-term necessity for distribution of country foods to those who need or wish to have them. Any behaviour that threatens this long-term order is met with censure, and such ventures are generally shut down by whatever means possible.

CONCLUSION

So how are we to understand all of this? What has been the effect of government development policy? How are we to comprehend forces of commoditization within the larger context of northern development?

The various initiatives to promote the commoditization of country foods suppose them to be a good way of building an economic future upon the shoulders of customary ways of living. From an economic point of view, they give those who wish to hunt, fish, trap, and gather the opportunity to earn a living by doing so, using existing skills and resources. At the same time, they offer a level of economic self-reliance that allows for the local retention and investment of profits; after all, when money circulates within an economy, rather than draining quickly out of it, it contributes more effectively to that economy.

Despite the apparent economic desirability of commoditizing country foods, as we have seen, various logistical, infrastructural, and regulatory restrictions placed on the selling of these foods have effectively limited the development of a market for them. What is more, given that the regulations generally favour the development of a local market for country foods, it seems that some limitations on development of such a market are self-imposed. This is because the people of Nunavik are reluctant to sell country foods among themselves. Instead, for many, the commitment to the principles governing the vernacular economy persists, so they respect the obligation to share country foods with others. The value of country foods goes beyond the purely monetary. This is where the commoditization of country foods in Nunavik becomes complicated. Money for these foods must not pass between individuals, and accordingly, they should not be sold. All the same, this is not to say that such things never take place. People have informed me that in some Nunavik

communities, the selling of country foods among Inuit is becoming more common. However, many condemn the practice.

Yet people recognize they need the money that can be generated from the sale of country foods. So they have developed various mechanisms that essentially have the effect of putting the sale of country foods at arm's length by selling these foods to non-Inuit and to non-Inuit institutions that have no roots in the vernacular economy, and by selling them for export out of the region. In this way, the two logics governing the sharing and selling of country foods can co-exist, and as long as their competing demands are avoided, so too are the tensions between them. It is a delicate balancing act, but in general, one that people seem to be managing to their satisfaction. As with many things in life, people have proved adaptable: they have found the means of both respecting the moral order and adjusting to the new economic and political realities in which they now live.

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