COLONIALISM AS SEEN FROM A FORMER COLONIZED AREA

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Abstract. The concept of colonialism and its effects are discussed from the point of view of Greenlandic experience. Problems arise when the ideology of the colonizers is adopted by the colonized peoples themselves, especially by the educated individuals who are more likely to be employed in positions of influence. Colonialistic attitudes and policies persisted in Greenland even after the end of the colonial period and the establishment of Home Rule. Neo-colonialism and internal colonialism are compared.

Introduction

Within the past few decades, much has been written about colonialism in the circumpolar arctic region. Colonialism in this region is often referred to as neo-colonialism or internal colonialism. As a native Greenlander, trained in anthropology, I have spent much of my life and professional career dealing with the issue of colonialism and the impact it had on Greenlandic culture and identity. In this paper, I would like to examine some issues concerning the Danish colonial administration in Greenland, in terms of attitude and behavior. I examine the point of view of the colonial civil servants, as well as the Greenlandic public and politicians, during the formal colonial period and after 1953, when the formal colonial state ceased, and on into the first decade of Home Rule in Greenland.

I experienced some difficulties working on this paper. First, the characteristic traits of colonization described in this paper may also occur in a non-colonial situation, so a kind of boundary—ethnic, cultural, and geographical—must be established within the definition. Second, there are certainly differences between individual colonial situations. Some characteristic traits that exist in one colony may be lacking in another. After having evaluated these problems, I concluded that a paper should be written to discuss these issues as they pertain to Greenland.

By the concept of colony we normally mean an area set apart by monopolized imperialistic expansion and governed by another state. Colonialism in this sense probably started in connection with a mercantilist system after the great European discoveries of the routes to the Far East and the Americas. The mercantilist symbol of wealth was gold, and a common trait of colonial expansion was protectorate politics, where European states occupied certain areas in order to have access to gold, to open new markets, and to supply raw materials for industries within their own empires. Colonialism is in fact a kind of imperialism with settlement in foreign territories (Abercrombie, Hills, and Turner 1988:120). In this way, economic and strategic exploitation were included in the concept of "colonialism." Colonialism, as formulated by Frank (1978:189 ff.), may be regarded as a necessary precondition for capitalism, by channeling the accumulation of capital and by preventing the development of an autonomous economy within the controlled territories.

In this paper, some human relations also rec-
ognizable outside the colonial situation will be touched, where their occurrence could be connected with—and often strengthened by—the colonial situation, or where they might occur in connection with the mental effect of the sum aspects of colonization.

The general history of colonialism may be very bloody, so the concept brings with it the idea of oppression by force, the use of military power, and economic exploitation. Indeed, these factors are often included in the common idea of colonialism. Therefore, it may be somewhat difficult to distinguish between imperialism and colonialism, but "colony" was, since Classical times, associated with settlement of a populated area outside one's own territory such that the colony might be distinguished from the indigenous population of the region.

In Greenland colonial history, we have no real history of oppression by force, as known for example in Latin America and many other places (e.g., IWGIA Yearbook 1990:72, 74, 78, 101, 116, 151, 156, 160, 162). Many of the latter examples are characterized as internal colonialism, but military power was never used against Greenlanders, not even in the beginning.

Definitions

A common definition of "colony" is given as "a geographical area kept for political, strategical and economical advantages" (Klausner and Foulks 1982:24). It is a definition that might be given from the point of view of the colonial power.

Another definition is given by one of the main figures in decolonization of this century, Sukarno of Indonesia, as "a situation in which a people was governed by other people politically, economically, intellectually and physically" (Gould and Kolb 1964: "Colonialism"). We thus have a definition given by colonial powers, and another given by a colonized leader.

Greenland as a Colony

In the 1720s, when the modern colonization of Greenland began, the Danes used the term "colony" as synonymous with mission and trade station, and this term continued in use until 1953 when Greenland was formally made an integral part of Denmark. According to this terminology, "a colony" was a center in a colonial district.

The Greenlandic word for "colony" in this sense is niuertogarfiq, "trade center," while Greenland as a whole, in relation to Denmark, was called nunasiaq, the same word used for other colonized areas in the world.

The Danish use of these terms was somewhat peculiar, as Greenland was already regarded a part of Danish-Norwegian territory since the independent Norse medieval communities in Greenland had agreed to pay taxes to the Norwegian king about AD 1260 (Nørlund 1934:25). Iceland had also agreed to this status as a tributary country in the same period (Nørlund 1934:24). From 1380 to 1814, Denmark and Norway formed one kingdom (Kirkegaard and Winding 1949:62; Gad 1994:206). While the North Atlantic islands—including Greenland—were called bilande, “dependencies,” the trade and mission stations in Greenland were called “colonies.” In other areas where Denmark had colonies—in the West Indies, India, and Africa—the term "colony" covered the whole colonized area, according to the initial definition given in this paper. The difference was that the "colonies" outside Greenland were occupied with the purpose of economic and strategic exploitation, while Greenland was regarded as an inherited dependency. In Danish publications, the use of the term "colony" occurred increasingly after the extinction of the Norsemen in Greenland was a proven fact (Hansen 1992). The other colonies were founded in 1849, when Denmark ratified a constitution, administrated from the Primer’s office, while Greenland as a dependency was under the responsibility of the Danish Parliament. In this century also, Greenland was often referred to as a "colony" by the Danes.

While the Danish colonization of Greenland appeared to be rather peaceful, this was, among other things, due to the fact that the Greenlandic community had no organization above the household level, and thus lacked anyone who might be interested in defending his power. Besides, the colonists did not compete with Greenlandic hunters, but in fact a service function existed between the households.

The trade stations in Greenland were established to cope with the competition from Dutch whalers and tradesmen who operated in Greenlandic waters from the beginning of the seventeenth century. In 1782, an "Instrux" was set up to regulate relations between the staff members of the mission and trade stations, and it also contained rules for proper behavior towards the Inuit of Greenland. It was probably not the intention to regulate the internal life of the Inuit but rather to express the purpose of economic exploitation, especially the trade in whale and seal products. The marginalization of Greenlandic production, characterized as family-based primary production, began with organized and monopolized export (cf., Service 1955:412 ff).

In order to prevent the Dutch trade in Greenland in the eighteenth century, the “colony” was defined as the mission and trade station with an extension of 15–20 mil (about 70–80 miles) on
each side (Gad 1969). It covered a coherent part of the west coast of Greenland—150 Danish miles (700 miles) of shoreline (Gad 1969:289). The political effect of this decision was to support both economic, intellectual, and physical activities.

Some groups in Denmark in fact denied that Greenland was a colony in the common sense of the word. The argument for this denial was based on the kind of administrative bodies that existed—established ca. 1860—with both ex officio members (civil servants) and some publicly elected members. These were originally local councils, Forstanderskaberne, whose main objectives were to administer social aid and to act as a kind of justice of the peace. They were replaced about 1910 by local, elected municipal councils and two regional “provincial councils.” Both of these councils had limited budgets, financed by some fees from the export of hunting products, and limited power, just managing the local affairs. Like other councils that were found in several “overseas” colonies, they had certain well-defined tasks but no competence to decide their future. The existence of these councils is, therefore, not sufficient to deny the colonial status of Greenland, which was still being governed by another people, politically, economically, intellectually, and physically. In 1950 the two regional councils were merged into one National Council, with the task of dealing with regional questions, besides acting as an advisory council to the Danish parliament in legislative matters concerning Greenland. The governor of Greenland was still its chairman.

A situation that still characterizes Greenland today is the lack of private ownership of land and common resources. They are owned by the community. This kind of community ownership of land was interpreted by the Danes as no ownership or “crown land” (Petersen 1981:6), as also happened, for example, to the Aborigines in Australia (Pittock 1979:7–13). This interpretation had a limited effect on Greenland, as the land was not suitable for agriculture, but in connection with mining, it became much more important. Around 1850, Denmark, of its own accord, established a cryolite mine that was separate from the Greenland economy and that extracted cryolite from Greenland for more than 100 years. Again, the political ideology was affected by profitability (cf., Keessing 1981:380). In the 1950s, this point of view was also obvious when Denmark established a committee to prepare a mining act for Greenland, with no representation from Greenland. In the report of this committee, land in Greenland was still regarded as owned by the Danish state. About 1970 the question of Danish ownership of land in Greenland was put to the test (Petersen 1974:29–44). After a new generation came to power in the National Council of Greenland in the begin-ning of the 1970s, the principle of Greenlandic ownership of land in Greenland was formulated, and was adopted by the National Council in 1975 (GLF 1975:226). But the National Council of Greenland had no legislative power, and thus the land ownership question was, for a brief period of time between 1975 and 1978, an object of serious debate between the Danish representatives and some of the Greenlandic representatives in the Home Rule Commission. A severe confrontation between the two groups on the issue of Greenlandic ownership of land and subsurface rights stopped the Home Rule negotiation, but eventually produced a compromise which asserted that the Greenlandic people have “fundamental rights in Greenland.” The compromise gave the Home Rule of Greenland veto rights in mining questions. An agreement on division of income from mining in Greenland—between Denmark and Greenland—was acquired, and a mutual mineral administration was established with both Danish and Greenlandic members. Its chairman was from the beginning a Greenlandic politician, and the mineral administrative office is now planning to move from Copenhagen to Greenland.

The traditional trade in Greenland might be characterized as a pre-capitalistic exchange relation, but to an increasing degree it was subordinated under state regulated production and reproduction. It allowed, however, the household organization to remain as a main economic unit until about 1950, when modernization of the Greenlandic economy introduced the concept of a national economy in Greenland. This affected urbanization and also generated employment problems (Dybroe and Møller 1981:78). It was a new concept, as hunting and fishing no longer were natural alternatives to wage-paying jobs.

In 1953 Denmark passed a new constitution that made Greenland a county within Denmark. This resolution was not mentioned in the constitution itself, but it was made clear in the previous debate and in a referendum in Denmark—not in Greenland—that the colonial status of Greenland had formally ended. In fact, no real change occurred, as Denmark for a long time administered the common human rights or civil rights in Greenland and continued to govern Greenland with the same civil servants and the same administrative body as before. The speeches given on the constitution day in Greenland were formulated with enthusiasm, but did not express many of the realities, and might be regarded as a mental reaction to the end of the colonial state.

The political consequences of this official situation were that a modernization of Greenland began, bringing about improvements in a number of areas. There was a campaign to reduce tuberculosis, the leading cause of death at the time, and
the school system was reorganized and separated from the church. Many Danish teachers were engaged, and they introduced Danish-style schooling for children who were mainly monolingual Greenlandic speakers. Greenlandic was retained as a subject in the schools, however. The housing program resulted in modernization of many dwellings, concentrating in the West Greenlandic open water area, in the towns where industrialization of the economy had begun. National economic evaluations entered Greenland. The so-called “Danization” period began. This was regarded as a consequence of the change from colonial state to a so-called equal state, but in some way it was also a response to the Greenlandic political wishes of the time between 1945 and 1950 (Sorensen 1983:1215 f).

This modernization progressed in a different way than was expected by the Greenlandic politicians who initially formulated it. In the political reorganization, municipal councils were replaced by executive municipal boards, with a secretary representing the governor of Greenland, who himself represented the Danish state. The reorganized elected bodies were in fact controlled by their own secretariats. Another important factor was that the modernization of Greenland was planned in Copenhagen. It was paid for by the Danish state and was realized by imported Danish manpower.

Greenland was in fact more than ever governed politically, economically, intellectually, and physically by another people. The Greenlandic politicians who drafted the first steps toward modernization, e.g., in the housing policies, could speak about remote government maybe because they had problems recognizing their own ideas (cf., Nielsen 1975:18).

Creation of Privileges for Imported Staff

Together with the end of the formal colonial state, the reservation status of Greenland ceased, but modernization made Greenland economically more dependent on Denmark than ever. The Danish staff in administration, and not least in education, introduced Danish ideas concerning economic activities and organization. The means of attracting Danish staff to Greenland were economic, housing, and social privileges. This created a really visible discrimination between colleagues according to their Danish or Greenlandic origin.

In the 1950s these privileges probably embarrassed some of the Danes living and working in Greenland, as indicated by the need to justify them by maintaining that they were a kind of compensation. The example used most often was “compensation for not being able to visit the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen.” This utterance was certainly accurate. They could not visit the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, but the other people in Greenland could not visit it either, and it was not certain that many of the Danes living in Greenland would have attended the Theatre, even if they had been living in Denmark. The Royal Theatre was thus a symbol for the things the Danes in Greenland could not do. The term might also be used in fringe areas of Denmark itself.

In the next decade the justification of Danish privileges was expressed in other idioms. It was commonly said that any Dane working in Greenland “had come in order to help the Greenlanders.” It was an old idea of the colonial civil servants that they had to do tasks which “the Greenlanders” could not manage for themselves. For some reason this kind of argument was not used by the new civil servants in the beginning of the modernization period, maybe because the majority of them were new to Greenland and because Greenland officially was no longer a colony. But in fact, the idea never disappeared. In this way, the most traditional colonial way of justifying one’s presence and privileges developed after the official end of the colonial period. This indicates that the colonial situation de facto continued.

The indicated privileges at the beginning were higher wages, almost a certainty of a superior position, and guaranteed housing, either free or very cheap. In the midst of the 1960s, this kind of discrimination was legalized by passing the “birthplace-criterion” in the Greenland Civil Servants Act, according to which civil servants born in Greenland would be in receipt of only 85% of the Danish basic salary. With further advantages for the imported civil servants, the differences grew and of course affected wage earners at all levels.

Such a practice created serious debate. Denmark was accused of racism but denied it, saying that both Greenlanders and Danes born in Greenland were affected. In addition, it was maintained that the birthplace-criterion represented a kind of “equal pay for equal work,” implying that the services of native Greenlanders were less valuable than those of Danes. Such an attitude was never stated outright, but could not be misunderstood when the governor of Greenland asked if “equal work” existed. The implicit reasoning was probably that the rate of salary expressed the quality of work, so people in the higher wage brackets must be “better” than those in the lower ones. Danish trade unions with sections in Greenland defended this practice in the beginning, but from the last half of the 1970s they increasingly worked for lessening and at last the abolition of the discrimination. Even if the Danish lawyers maintained that the act did not express a racial discrimination, it is obvious that some well-educated and gifted Greenlandic people were being denied privileges solely...
because they belonged to a certain race. The birthplace-criterion was a kind of camouflage. In fact, such discrimination is what one might call a true racial discrimination, namely an effort by a privileged numerical racial minority to avoid sharing their benefits with the majority (Petersen 1992). This kind of discrimination disappeared almost totally from Greenland about 1990. Only the Danish Ministry of Administration of Justice still practices it in Greenland.

On Intellectual Power

One kind of mental colonialism occurred due to the fact that colonization in Greenland was established hand-in-hand with the Lutheran mission. We can speak about a mental colonization in another sense as well. This deals with the dogma that a non-defined “progress” was a benefit for the colony and was represented by the colonial power. The domain of colonization in this aspect cannot be limited to geographical area alone, but must be extended into the intellectual life of the people. It is probably unavoidable, as ideas from the rest of the world will be channeled via the colonial power, that the colonial power will be identified ideologically with the rest of the world. Within the colony itself, the intellectual “elite” will often adopt these ideas and even act as an agent of them. It is this group that first has contact with the outside and that might be taught that the ideas of their countrymen were “primitive.” Other factors might play a role too. For example, pursuit of a career within the colonial administration might give rise to sympathy for that system. Thus, certain dogmas from the colonial administration, namely that the colonial power was present because the colonized community could not manage itself, would be strengthened. I suppose this dogma was regarded as “truth” by the colonial civil servants. We can see this in Greenland in the attitude of the civil servants who came to “help Greenlanders,” and in their Greenlander subordinates who adopted the same idea. In Greenland, it was often the educated Greenlanders who accepted these ideas. But it is not only in Greenland that the people adopted the thought of the colonizers (cf., Keesing 1986:21 f). Some groups were even thankful for having been colonized, for being Christianized, educated, and for having a subordinate job, etc.

Many of the problems of colonized people are well known. Indigenous people were often cut out in different colonies and subjected to different influences with the colonial division giving little consideration to ethnic, cultural, or linguistic boundaries. The Sami of Scandinavia, for example, were divided into four states. They probably regretted this division, but reacted often humorously to each other for their “Norwegian,” “Swedish,” or “Finnish” behavior (Petersen 1992:190). It shows that Sukarno’s definition also covers so-called internal colonialism.

In connection with economic and social problems, it is often omitted that the colonial power itself created several problems. It exported its own values, its own knowledge, religion, and organizational system, which in the colonized area effected a dissolution of the original indigenous norms. These new values need not be bad in themselves but their impact on the social, economic, and intellectual systems—not least the religious ones—might well create several problems of their own. Many colonial powers introduced specific cultural ideas as if they were universal values.

When colonial administration in Greenland ceased, the fear expressed by the colonial civil service that things would collapse may have been reasonable enough, but such fears may also have served to justify the continued presence of a privileged elite. This justification contained some ideas of altruism; but on the other hand, it would only be reasonable to persist in “helping” people if they were not capable of helping themselves to a sufficient degree. The idea of people who could not help themselves thus did not necessarily reflect reality, but served to smooth over the colonizers’ consciences.

This kind of argument would not be so sinister if it was solely formulated by the colonial civil servants who were members of the colonial power. But if the idea is adopted by the colonized people themselves—both civil servants and others—it would then justify the colonization itself and also the presence of a colonial civil service. It would create a people who had lost belief in their own capacity. It would create a people who were thankful to be colonized.

I remember an incident involving a Danish and a Greenlandic telegrapher about 30 years ago. It was a situation between two colleagues of equal rank. The Danish telegrapher asked the Greenlander if they could exchange duties, as colleagues do from time to time. The Greenlander, who formerly was accustomed to receiving orders from a Danish superior, saw this in some way as a continuation of the situation in which he had to obey the order. He said no, even though there was no practical reason to do so. It was obvious he felt the need to stress that they were equal. In fact, it was a pity for both of them.

Greenland was from 1972 until 1985 a member of the EEC. The other members were former colonial powers, but Greenland was the single former colony and had only recently left the situation of remote government. Greenland had a seat in the negotiations, in due course of which any member may successfully argue its point of view in one
case, and in another lose. Among equals, this would be regarded as the normal conditions of cooperation, but for a former colony, a lost negotiation would be experienced as continued colonialism. It must be understood this way especially in the first years when the power of the EEC was a strong bureaucratic one.

**On Political and Economic Power**

Even though Greenland officially ceased to be a colony in 1953, the legislation continued to come from Copenhagen. Its economic and its intellectual formulations were given in Copenhagen. Physically, the planning of construction and export of manpower were in fact strengthened in the following decades. It became obvious that the hopes expressed in the speeches on the day of constitution in 1953 were not being realized. But despite that, Frank's (1978) formulation might be true in a general sense, as Denmark tried to make Greenlandic production carry the Greenlandic economy. This may express that Greenland was no longer considered a colony.

When Denmark became a member of the EEC in 1972, people became aware that it was not only cantankerous individuals who were dissatisfied with the current situation. An important factor was that the perception of remote government was not only felt by ethnic Greenlanders, but also by ethnic Danes living in Greenland. It is not so peculiar then, that remote government from Brussels would be regarded as no better than remote government from Copenhagen. At this time the fishing policy within EEC was included in the agricultural policy, and it lacked consideration of many areas of crucial importance for a fishing nation. Other North Atlantic communities had like problems in their evaluation of the advantages of a possible EEC membership.

Even after 1953, Greenland had a dependent economy, based on subsistence hunting and fishing as a supplement for export from primary production (cf., Baran 1957). It was probably to decrease this kind of dependency that it was necessary to have core support for the establishment of Home Rule in Greenland.

One aspect of colonialism was to introduce an extractive economy that not only removed certain natural resources from the colony, but also employment possibilities, and even in some cases energy. It should be noted that economic colonialism of this kind could also impact autonomous states. In this way, the concept of colonialism changes in character. It could exist without colonies per se, and might be practiced, for example, by some multinational corporations.

This problem was recognized in Greenland only to a limited degree, although the concept was not totally unknown. Greenland, with its harsh environment and expensive transportation system, is not a very attractive area to outsiders. Some Danish credit associations, who did not necessarily create the problems, but enforced the escalation of costs in an economically depressed period, came very close to this form of corporate colonialism. In the 1980s, under a relative boom, these associations offered tempting loans over the value of the assets, and then dropped Greenland as a market when economic decline set in. A number of bankruptcies would have been avoided without this adventure, but Greenland learned something by it.

Some colonial civil servants feared that with the end of colonial rule they would be replaced by a corrupt civil service. This might have been difficult to avoid in the overseas former colonies for several reasons. One was that traders who criminalized corruption at home often relaxed their scruples in order to gain some parts of the market abroad.

**On Unofficial Colonialism**

After the introduction of Greenland Home Rule, relations changed, not only officially but also in reality, towards Denmark, but not necessarily towards the EEC. The Greenland legislative power was transferred from the Danish parliament to the Home Rule parliament. Even if economic support continued to be a considerable part of the Greenland budget, it was now given as core support, so the Greenlandic bodies themselves could make their own budgets and have partial economic management. Through its own cultural and educational institutions, and not least through the establishment of museums and of the University of Greenland, Greenland began building up its intellectual autonomy. Physical management also came under the responsibility of the Greenlandic bodies. Even though many ethnic Danes work in the Greenlandic institutions, their sympathies are undoubtedly affected by the fact that they are responsible towards the Greenlandic community, especially if they choose to make their careers in Greenland. The sympathy of the civil service will always be divided between the community they serve and their superiors. When the two halves are divided into opposing camps, their sympathies will be divided, and when they are on the same side, it will also affect the solution of their tasks.

The transition period lasted for some years, and in fact, we are not through it quite yet. When the Greenland Teachers Trade Union accused the branch of the Danish Teachers Trade Union in Greenland of a colonial attitude, the latter denied it. Both might be right according to their own defi-
nitions, one formulated by reaction to the colonial mentality, the other by members of the colonial power. But within the last two years, the two trade unions have begun to cooperate with each other. The Danish trade unions who negotiated with the Greenlandic authorities on working conditions, salary conditions, etc., wanted of course to have an influence upon, if not to lead, personnel conditions in Greenland, often with Danish criteria. It was clear that the idea of “helping Greenland” still existed in the engagement politics. Another Danish argument in the debate concerning the salary conditions was that high-wage groups in Greenland regarded themselves as low-wage groups in comparison with their colleagues in Denmark, and so the demand for extra privileges continues. But the attitude between different trade unions was also different, as some of them earlier than others accepted equal conditions within Greenland. Another colonial factor might be that some of the Danish trade unions tried to keep a factionalist attitude in Greenland, as in Denmark, disregarding the fact that so small a community as the Greenlandic one probably needed trade unions that would work more for creating conditions of cooperation than of factionalism.

In the 1980s, a new development of negotiation entered, obviously also supported by the Danish trade unions in Greenland. The most evident effect of this was that trade unions which earlier competed with each other began to cooperate with each other and accusations of racism and colonialism decreased.

Thus, by demanding continued privileges, some groups might control an area, not necessarily physically and intellectually, but politically and economically. One can still meet the traditional colonial attitude. When some Danish reporters implied that their Greenlandic counterparts were secondary, it seemed peculiar, in light of the fact that the Danes are media people working in an area where they don’t understand the primary language. Ignorance of one’s ignorance is a bad excuse if one makes oneself an expert and a judge in a field where one ought to know one’s own limitations. Therefore, it looks like the need to justify one’s presence and to claim a right to privileged living conditions is still felt.

Another interesting development seen in recent years is that newly hired Danish manpower, after only a short stay, began talking about what was “good for Greenland.” Typically they would say that they were not necessarily in Greenland to help “Greenlanders,” but to help “Greenland.” A common refrain was that Greenland need not copy Danish solutions, but on the other hand, any new solutions proposed were all fetched from practice in Denmark.

This kind of colonialism was also internalized. When environmental and animal rights organizations agitate, intellectual colonialism is to be recognized. These groups maintain that they are against environmental damage, and yet they fight non-damaging hunting forms that were sensitive to environmental protection in former times and still are today. These groups must be seen as comparable to former colonial influences. This is the conclusion one must come to after examining their arguments, which constitute a kind of gospel of alienation, not focused on the living, but trying to extend human rights to certain—and only certain—species. They speak about idealism in matters that do not cost them anything (Hjortshoj 1990). The position held by some that the economic and political repression brought to bear by these organizations is more severe than that of the traditional colonial powers can be justified (IWGIA Document no. 69, 1991:10).

Internal Colonialism in Greenland

It is obvious that the introduction of Home Rule in Greenland was considered the official end of the colonial period. But many practices established in the colonial period were maintained. For example, it was decided that some of the solidarity on pricing policies would be continued, as a uniform price system was used in Greenland in the colonial period. The price of daily necessities was the same, regardless if you lived in a central West Greenland town or a settlement in East Greenland. The Home Rule politicians tried to keep this solidarity principle, and within the first ten years of Home Rule in Greenland managed to do so. Investments in the Greenland settlements in fish production plants exceeded any level of the colonial period and only some of the small fish plants had production problems.

During 1988 some of the fundamental parts of the economy developed problems. Mining had discontinued. The cryolite mining had ceased several years earlier and zinc and lead mines were closed. In the course of the 1980s, sealing, especially the sale of sealskins, was severely hit by the agitation of environmental organizations. In addition, the cod shoals left Greenland and the shrimp stocks began to show signs of overexploitation. In this situation, the economic strategists had to become much more conscious of the question of returns on investments. The public began to show a reluctance to invest in uncertain economic ventures, especially in the small settlements. This created a debate in which some parties of the Home Rule parliament proposed a price differentiation according to transportation costs that would affect the small communities in the fringe areas. The people from the settlements compared it to the “spirit
of the G-60” that played a role in the Greenlandic political debate at the very top of the Danish colonialistic policy in Greenland. The “G-60” is an abbreviation of a commission that was set in 1960 by the Ministry of Greenland. It had members among Danish and Greenlandic politicians and its task was to formulate the goals in Greenlandic policy. It introduced among other things the above-mentioned “birthplace-criterion,” and proposed the abandonment of some settlements that had low production rates or that had problems because of lack of investments in production plants. These formulations made “G-60” a perfect image of Danization politics. The term “colonialism” was, however, not used concerning the “G-60,” as its main impression was the idea of centralizing the population of Greenland.

The debate on price differentiation in investments that may result in the abandonment of a number of settlements, together with an impression of the intellectual flow of debates and political decision making going from the center towards the settlements, made the people from the settlements feel they were under a situation reminiscent of internal colonialism. Till then, this term did not actually appear in the debate but it got close to the surface sometimes. There might have been, of course, a feeling on the local level that there was a political, economic, intellectual, and physical leadership coming from the outside, although not from another people.

It is an interesting situation. It is true that the settlements form a part of the Greenland community under Home Rule. But people in the settlements feel that there is a different level of life-style, a difference in the availability of goods, between the town communities and the settlement communities and for this reason they feel a discrimination. Seen from the other side, many town communities have similar problems of existing on the “periphery,” as Greenland itself is remote from the economic centers of the world. If you acknowledged the wishes of the settlement communities and increased investments without economic considerations, you just risked increasing the community problems with doubtful effects on the settlements. In fact, this would be felt as unjust for the rest of the community.

The arguments are recognizable, but there is in fact no blue water, no racial, ethnic, or cultural border as such, no linguistic or religious border between the towns and settlements. But a difference in economic level does exist, as well as a difference in education and even in the topics that are debated. The difference may be that of a couple of decades, as issues common in towns 20 years ago still characterize a part of the debates in the settlements. In fact, people from the Greenland settlements do not yet use the term “internal colonialism,” but when they say that they can hardly distinguish between the administration from Copenhagen and that from Nuuk—even though they say it under incrimination—the term “internal colonialism” is in fact indicated, despite all the problems with defining it. We are so accustomed to interpreting problems in the context of colonization that, even today, we try to interpret common political disagreements as a kind of internal colonialism, e.g., as remote government either from Copenhagen or from Nuuk. This is probably also an effect of the colonial past.

**Conclusion**

Our experience of the face of colonialism in Greenland changed through time. There was official state colonialism from 1721 to 1953, and in reality until 1979. In the 1980s we saw it in the trade unions, and in the 1990s we recognized it in the attitude of some individuals and specific international organizations. But with these developments, the object of the colonized group changed from “Greenlanders” to the “Greenland community,” including both the ethnic Inuit and the ethnic Danes.

There is a period in the history of Greenland, up to about four decades ago, that is called by the former civil servants “the harmonious period.” It was a period when even Greenlandic politicians accepted and used political formulations made by the civil servants, disregarding the fact that it was not necessarily objective politics, but rather formulations originating from within the colonial institution. Of course, a harmonious period might be valuable, and its disappearance experienced as unpleasant, especially when the first formulations based on another kind of argument were of an immense character. But change had to come, and it had to be regarded as a hard bargain, before it could appear as a constructive attitude. The colonial history will unavoidably bring about an effect on mental character and might contain elements that need not be limited to the colonial situation. Two groups might experience the same event differently.

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