EDITORS *Kirsten Thisted and Ann-Sofie N. Gremaud*

VOLUME 1

Denmark and The New North Atlantic

Narratives and Memories in a Former Empire

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AARHUS UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Denmark and the New North Atlantic, Vol. 1

Cover: Jørgen Sparre
Cover illustration: Katrín Sigurðardóttir, *High Plane VI* (2001-2007).
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Sara S. Öldudóttir with Unnar Örn Auðarson's,
Opaque Shadow (Photo: Rut Sigurðardóttir).
Layout and typesetting: Jørgen Sparre
This book is typeset in Warnock Pro and Avenir Next
E-book production by Narayana Press, Denmark

ISBN 978 87 7219 364 9

Aarhus University Press
aarhusuniversitypress.dk

Published with financial support of
The Carlsberg Foundation
The Jón Sigurðsson professorship at the University of Iceland

International distributors
Oxbow Books Ltd., oxbowbooks.com
ISD, isdistribution.com

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Foreword

Throughout the North, the 21st century has been a time of radical change. Global warming has led to an increased focus on Arctic and Subarctic areas. As the ice melts, the white Arctic is turning blue, thus becoming a key geographic space in the climate debate and a symbol of looming environmental disaster. Other voices, however, choose to emphasize the opportunities for Arctic societies represented by environmental changes: The old image of the Arctic as a frozen, isolated, barren and desolate space is being replaced by a new vision, where the open sea enables communication, connection, utilization and new alliances.

This may well recall imperialist frontier narratives of the past. However, the conditions for seeking and pushing frontiers in the High North have changed. The old power relations between center and periphery are being destabilized; new centers are being established *in* the Arctic, and the perspective is shifting. Hence, the vantage point is increasingly positioned in the North, looking south towards Europe, rather than the other way around. Consequently, identities are being renegotiated on the basis of demands for self-determination and a new awareness of the region's geopolitical significance. In the wake of this, new alliances are being created and old relationships and interdependencies terminated or redefined.

The present book investigates how this new scenario is playing out in the area that was once part of a Danish empire, including Denmark proper, Norway, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland. This shared history forms the background of political institutions, such as the West Nordic Council. Within Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, which are still connected under the Danish Constitution in the Community of the Realm (*Rigsfællesskabet*), the area is known as *Nordatlanten*, the North Atlantic. As the idea of an Arctic region has gained momentum, a stronger collaboration has begun to emerge in various fields between partners that have not previously had a very close relationship owing to the structure of the empire, where all parts referred directly to the administrative center. In the wake of climatic and economical changes, new political visions are taking shape and new relations being formed.

The three island nations of Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland have strong connections to Scandinavia. However, Greenland also has close relations to the American Arctic and its indigenous peoples, both for geographic reasons and due to the common descent of the Greenlandic, Canadian and Alaskan Inuit. Through indigenous peoples' organizations, Greenland also has connections to

the Sámi in northern Scandinavia. Both the Sámi and the Greenlandic Inuit identify themselves as indigenous peoples. The Nordic cooperation organizations also promote cooperation with the 'western neighbors', including Scotland and the Northern Isles (Shetland and Orkney). Thus, the outline of *Nordatlanten* is fluid, and it is too early to judge whether we are witnessing the becoming of a new North Atlantic Arctic region, or whether other constellations will prove more relevant in the future. In any case, the situation calls for an in-depth understanding of the histories and cultures of the North Atlantic countries, which share a common experience with the Danish Empire – albeit, as we shall see, with significant individual variations.

We have approached the field through the metaphor of an iceberg, where only a fraction of the whole is visible. Phenomena in the present, whether straightforward or puzzling, often constitute elements of a much larger story – the tip of an iceberg. One example of a complex phenomenon that requires insight into numerous elements of its prehistory is the strain of ambivalence that runs through descriptions of the relationship between the North Atlantic countries. We have tried to shed light on why shifting claims position them either as cultures that are basically alien to one another, or as one natural community with shared experiences. In this multi-disciplinary effort, we have delved under the surface to explore the reasons for this duality – the hidden ninety percent of the iceberg. This approach has determined the book's focus on the imprints the past has left on the present and the complex history underlying today's narratives. We have asked the following questions when addressing our material: What narratives do we carry with us from the past – perhaps without even realizing it? How and under what circumstances were these narratives formed? How are historical relations and narratives reinterpreted today? What new identity positions are becoming possible and why?

In the first section of the book, we take a close look at some of the recent initiatives that have highlighted regional collaboration and relations, from institutions to publications and political networks. We also consider historical cases that illuminate the inequalities and stereotypes that continue to show up in current narratives. This section also introduces the theoretical foundation of the book. In the following sections, we explore the historical background of the current relations further, as well as the renegotiation of heritage and traditions that is taking place in contemporary life and politics. We do this from the vantage points of six major themes: the history of an empire; imagined geographies; narratives of purity and authenticity; gender and racial perspectives; cultural heritage; and constitutions and natural resources. Three of the central theories that we apply in our analyses and discussions (Herzfeld 2002 on 'crypto-colonialism'; Scott 2004 on the need to redirect postcolonialism; and Schulz-Forberg 2013 on the concepts of 'zero hour' and 'uchronotopia') are used to tease out ideas about the past, the present and the future in the narratives that have been used to describe relations and identity positions within the region. Furthermore, our analysis is inspired by

affect theory, as developed within cultural studies (Ahmed 2004) and discourse psychology (Wetherell 2012). By applying this theory, we draw attention to the ambivalent emotions that still seem to thrive between partners who were previously entrenched in a system built on hierarchy and subordination. Affect theory also highlights the influence of emotional 'scripts' on nationalist discourses in the North Atlantic.

In studying a former empire, we have been inspired by post-colonial theory. However, the complexity of Scandinavian North Atlantic relations cannot be properly illuminated through concepts such as 'colonizer' and 'colonized'. In political debates, the word 'colony' appears as a signifier that can be used strategically. Whether a nation or people wishes to identify as previously colonized depends on context and has varied over time. The fact that the relationship between the center of the empire and its subordinates rested on (varying degrees of) asymmetric power relations is, however, beyond discussion. Thus, insight into these power dynamics and discourses of empire is necessary for understanding the connections between the history of the North Atlantic countries and present-day relations, as well as the visions formulated for the future. Investigating such issues, we cannot avoid addressing tender points, such as mutual stereotyping that reflects racialized discourses of the past. This is in contrast to the official rhetoric, where the 'good neighbors' metaphor prevails. It is our conviction, however, that only by addressing these darker sides of the cultural heritage can we put an end to the situation where they work "through concealment", as Sara Ahmed puts it (Ahmed 2004, p. 13). With this book we hope to contribute to locking these outdated discourses firmly in the past, where they belong.

Inspired by historian David Scott, we have tried to find alternatives to the teleological narrative of nation-building and independence which dominates recent history writing. Or to use a term derived from social theory, we have tried to avoid 'methodological nationalism' (Wimmer and Schiller 2002). Our purpose is neither to promote nor to discourage secession, or indeed take it for granted; instead we set out to study the effects of elevating the nation state to the end goal of history that determines the way in which it is possible to envision the future and interpret the past.

This book is the result of the research project 'Denmark and the new North Atlantic – Identity Positions, Natural Resources and Cultural Heritage', funded by the Carlsberg Foundation. Thirteen scholars, based in Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Norway and Denmark, have worked closely together across the disciplines of history, literary studies, musicology, art history and anthropology. We wanted to make this a collective and interdisciplinary research project that truly lived up to its name. The structure of the book has come about through a series of working seminars, where we decided on the topics we considered important to include in a study of present trends and historical conditions in what we choose to call 'the New North Atlantic'. A coordinator – in some cases two or three coordinators – was put in charge of each section of the study, which was

then written by several authors jointly, working across professional disciplines and geographical specializations. The reader should not, therefore, expect to find a comprehensive presentation of the history of the Faroe Islands, Greenland's literary history, Iceland's art history and so forth. Such presentations are available elsewhere. Instead, we have sought to identify focal points where relations between the countries become visible, and comparison possible. The book is structured as a continuous whole, but it is also possible to skip between the individual sections or sub-chapters. To facilitate this method of reading the book, we have strived to make elaborate cross-references between sections.

We want to thank the following persons for invaluable sparring and input during the preparation of this book: Professor Emeritus Uffe Østergaard, Copenhagen Business School; Professor Kristín Loftsdóttir, University of Iceland; Professor Anna Steenport, Georgia Institute of Technology; Professor Lill-Ann Körber, Aarhus University; Curator Martin Appelt, National Museum of Denmark; Special Consultant Jens Heinrich, Greenlandic Representation in Denmark; and Associate Professor Frank Sejersen, University of Copenhagen. We also thank Assistant Professor Ebbe Voldquardsen, University of Greenland, and Associate Professor Ketil Zachariassen, both of whom have at some point been active members of the research team but were elsewhere engaged before its completion. The responsibility for the content of this book is, of course, ours alone. Finally, we are grateful to Dorte Herholdt Silver, Todd Ambelang and Mia Gaudern for their valuable assistance with language editing. The work has been published with support from the Carlsberg Foundation and the Jón Sigurðsson professorship at the University of Iceland.

On behalf of the authors
Kirsten Thisted and Ann-Sofie N. Gremaud

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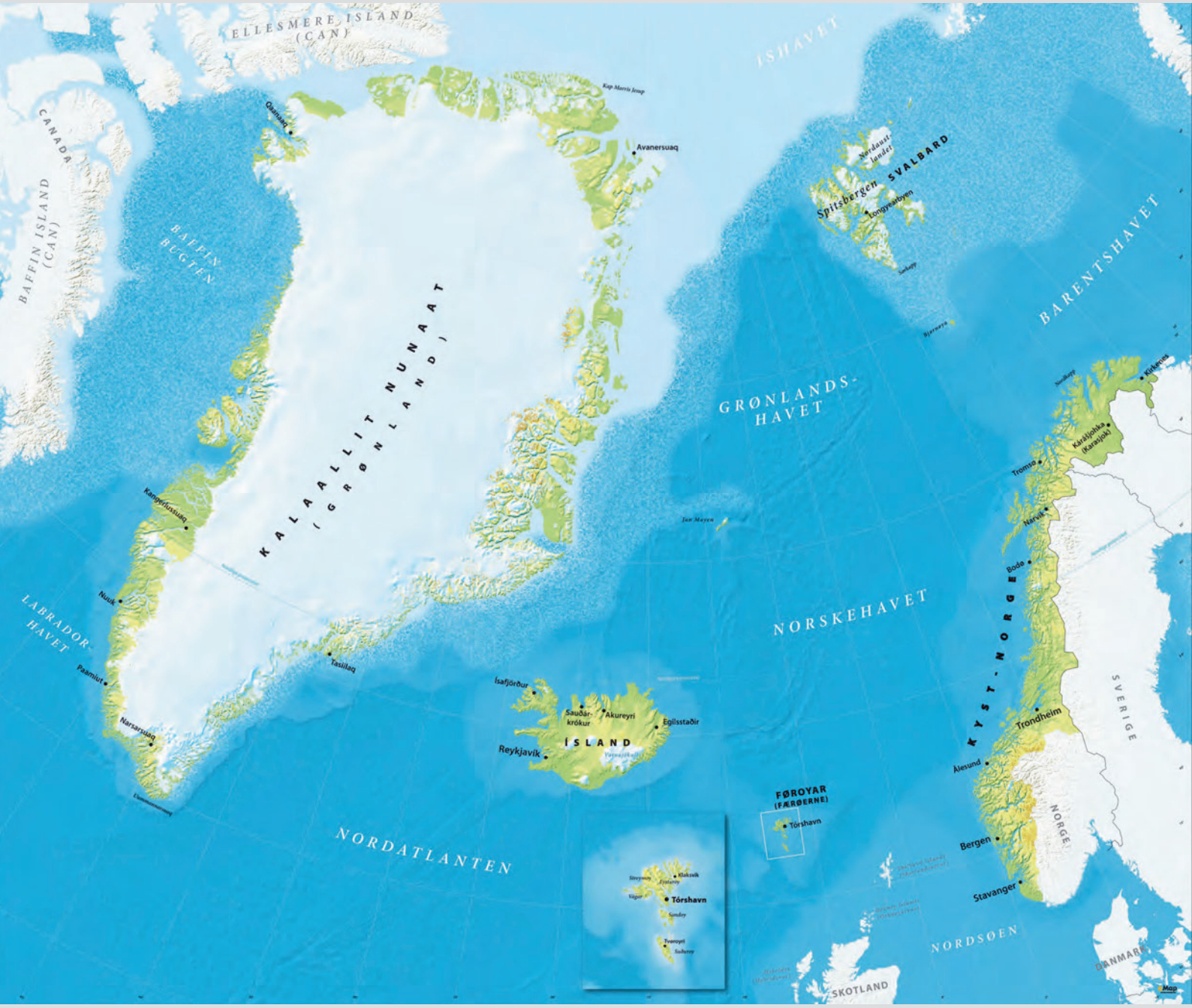
SECTION 1



The North Atlantic as depicted by NORA (Nordic Atlantic Cooperation).

Envisioning the North Atlantic: Current Narratives and Official Discourses

Kirsten Thisted and Ann-Sofie N. Gremaud

1.0 What's in a name

> Through the ages, the North Atlantic countries have not had a strong tradition for [sic] close communication, neither culturally nor politically, and there are many areas in which the countries can rediscover each other – and rebuild their cultural ties.[1]

Some years ago, these were the words that met visitors on the homepage of the North Atlantic House in Copenhagen (*Nordatlantens Brygge*): a center for Greenlandic, Icelandic and Faroese culture, furnished in an old warehouse, which once was the center of trade and transport to and from the North Atlantic countries. In addition to the cultural center, the warehouse is the seat of the Icelandic Embassy and the Greenlandic and Faroese representations. The words came as a surprise – usually when introducing oneself as a unit, commonality would be stressed, not the opposite. Furthermore, the text is strangely contradictory – how can one *rediscover* and *rebuild* something that never existed in the first place?

However, the text obviously takes the existence of the North Atlantic region as a unit for granted. Being part of the North Atlantic seems to be what defines each of the three countries, and it therefore seems reasonable to assume that they must have a lot in common. What prevents this lack of commonality is the lack of communication. One important purpose of the North Atlantic House therefore is to help facilitate communication, in order to strengthen the ties between the North Atlantic countries.[2]

A certain commonality between the countries is indicated in the fact that they all seem to be included in the term 'the North Atlantic'; no further explanation is needed. Outside the Nordic countries, or outside Scandinavia – or even outside the *western* part of Scandinavia – this term means something completely different.[3] A quick search on the internet will reveal that the term 'North Atlantic' is generally used as a designation for the entire Atlantic Ocean north of the equator.

Nordatlantens Brygge in Copenhagen, a center for Greenlandic, Icelandic and Faroese culture and the seat of the Icelandic Embassy and the Greenlandic and Faroese representations. It was inaugurated in 2003. *Photo: Johannes Jansson/norden.org.*

In Sweden and Finland, not even the helpful extension of 'Scandinavian North Atlantic' or 'Nordic North Atlantic' seems to have the specific significance discussed here.

The term 'North Atlantic' is particularly used within the Danish Realm (*Rigsfællesskabet*, that is, Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands)[4] as a common denominator for Greenland and the Faroe Islands. The Faroe Islands and Greenland have home rule/self-government, but they are still part of the Danish Kingdom. Before becoming a republic in 1944 Iceland also belonged within this constellation of islands, which once were part of Norway and the Danish-Norwegian empire. At the Treaty of Kiel in 1814, which ended the hostilities of the Napoleonic Wars, Denmark agreed to cede Norway to Sweden – but kept Greenland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands. Therefore Iceland, and in some cases even Norway, are still included in the 'North Atlantic', as for instance in NAMMCO, The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission, and NORA, the Nordic Atlantic Cooperation. NAMMCO is an agreement between the member governments, Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Norway.[5] NORA is an intergovernmental organization under the Nordic Council of Ministers, supporting businesses and research and development organizations in the region, which is defined as the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Coastal Norway (the 9 coastal counties of Norway, from Finnmark in the North to Rogaland in the South).[6] NORA is also working to develop cooperation with the so-called "western neighbors", defined on its homepage as "especially Canada and Scotland".[7] Other co-operations like NATA, the North Atlantic Tourism Organization, does not include Norway. NATA defines the region as the "Three Astonishing Countries: The Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland".[8]

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Currently 'West Nordic' is used synonymously with 'North Atlantic' in the discourse of the countries in question. 'West Nordic' was mainly used in Norway as a common denominator for the languages spoken in Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Norway (as opposed to Danish and Swedish).[9] In politics, the term was consolidated with the establishment of The West Nordic Council (originally The West Nordic Parliamentarian Council of Cooperation) in Nuuk in 1985. The members are Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, and the council was created following political discussions of the three countries during the early 1980s, after home rule was introduced in Greenland in 1979.[10] The rationale was "to cooperate on common problems and to conduct positive and constructive cooperation regarding West Nordic, or North Atlantic, issues with the Nordic Council as well as other organisations".[11] The text oscillates between the two terms 'West Nordic' and 'North Atlantic', as does the present homepage of the council. The homepage lists the following as its main objectives:

- Promote the common interests of the West Nordics.
- Preserve the natural resources and culture of the North Atlantic in collaboration with the West Nordic governments.
- Strengthen cooperation between the West Nordic governments.
- Promote West Nordic interests within Nordic cooperation.
- Strengthen cooperation with and between other West Nordic organizations.
- Strengthen cooperation with other parliamentary organizations, including the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region and the European Parliament.[12]

These countries obviously felt that they needed a forum to focus on particular issues relevant to the North Atlantic. For Greenland and the Faroe Islands, the West Nordic Council has the advantage that in it they get to represent themselves, free of their usual subordination to Denmark.[13]

Recently, 'West Nordic' has been used in a brand new combination with 'Arctic', as when the Faroe Islands defined themselves as "an island nation in the West Nordic region of the Arctic".[14] This notion turns the perspective 180 degrees. Usually, the North Atlantic countries are seen from a southern perspective, reducing them to a periphery. By establishing the Arctic as the point from which the viewing angle is determined, and by defining themselves as Arctic, the Faroe Islands become the center. Likewise, in defining themselves as part of the Arctic, the North Atlantic countries are strategically inscribing themselves within another region, which in recent decades has gained an immense momentum. So, while the ice is moving further and further north due to global warming, the 'Arctic' as a politically defined concept is moving further and further south.

Before, the Scandinavian countries did not identify with the widespread image of the frozen, barren and inhospitable Arctic. Throughout history, a divide has been established between the white 'Polar Regions', denominating the areas

closest to the poles or frozen to a degree where sledges became the most obvious means of transportation, and the blue 'North Atlantic', which was a Scandinavian term for the body of waters that enabled traffic by ship between Norway, Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, the Shetlands and Scotland and the West Coast of Greenland. In Norway the term 'Polar' usually refers to the Svalbard archipelago, the island of Jan Mayen and the two poles – remote areas where only polar heroes and scientific researchers go.[15] Presumably, an important reason for the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Norway suddenly identifying with the term 'Arctic', is that the concept is currently undergoing a process of 'oceanization' or 'blueification', due to global warming. The Arctic that these nations identify with is not the white, but the blue Arctic, as is formulated in Norway's 2017 Arctic strategy: "Here [in the Norwegian Arctic], people are not divided by the ice, but rather joined by the ocean."[16] While the white Arctic is seen as vulnerable, the blue Arctic carries other connotations of industry, technology, utilization and innovation.[17] However, both versions of the Arctic are at play and are being negotiated within the North Atlantic countries' individual strategies and within the international efforts to create a new, strong and dynamic region.

We have decided to use the term 'North Atlantic' in this book because it recalls the countries' past as part of the Danish-Norwegian empire (*Nordatlanten* is still widely used). As the analyses within this book will demonstrate, this is a past that is in many ways still present, and of which it is helpful to be aware – especially in a time when relations in the area are being redefined. This applies not only to the relations between the former imperial center and its periphery, but more significantly to those between the North Atlantic countries in a time when they are taking part in the establishment of new geopolitical centers.

1.1 Between 'the Nordic' and 'the Arctic'

Just like a nation, a region does not simply awaken to an understanding of its identity or its destiny. A region needs to be built. Like a nation, a region must build a strong narrative to support its existence. This involves a process of selecting features that are specific to it. Certain historical events, geographical features, special products and so on are given preference in this process. A web of meaning is created, as these elements are put in relation to one another, and further embedded into a causal *emplotment*, with one incident leading neatly to the other. This creates a meaningful and coherent line of events that gives the present meaning and perspective, and, not least, offers a vision of the future. Temporality, relationality, selective appropriation and causal emplotment: these are the constitutive features of narrativity, according to Somers and Gibson.[18] Their theory of narrative as an ontological condition of social life is widely used within the social sciences. In sociology 'narrative' is used interchangeably with 'story' – as opposed to literary studies, for example, where narrative is a genre and thus an optional

mode amongst other modes. Hence, "narratives are the stories we tell ourselves and others about the world(s) in which we live, and it is our belief in these stories that guides our actions in the real world".[19]

People construct identities (personal and collective) in order to locate themselves in time and space, and, again, narratives do the work. Thus, imagined communities like the nation (according to Benedict Anderson's definition)[20] and the region are dependent on peoples' willingness to share, expand and perform the stories that tie them together. In this book, we will look at the North Atlantic as a discursive field and explore the multiplicity of stories available within and about this field. We aim to analyze which of these stories are being selected in contemporary narratives, and which are being omitted and concealed. As is evident from the quotation from the North Atlantic House's homepage above, the peoples of the North Atlantic do not yet constitute any strong narrative as a community. But, as is also evident, efforts are being made to change this.

Once, the North Atlantic islands were part of an empire. At some point that empire even included Orkney and the Shetland Islands. Today, the empires of the past may not be fully dissolved, but they are radically changed, not least due to independence processes and decentralization. This is a global trend, in social sciences named *devolution*. Everywhere empires are splintering, and provinces and cities seek autonomy in their financial and diplomatic affairs.[21] However, this mechanism is countered by another trend: *aggregation*. The smaller the political units get, the more they must fuse into larger commonwealths in order to survive.[22] Since what matters in the new global order seems to be *connectivity* – being connected – it is strategically desirable to be active on as many platforms as possible. Therefore, it is logical that the countries in the North Atlantic want to form their own region, in which they are the center, *and* also still be part of the Nordic Cooperation, *and* uphold close connections with other co-operations, like the EU, *and* keep options open for new co-operations, for instance with their western 'neighbors'.

It is also understandable why the Arctic, as a new and powerful regional construction, must seem an important new focal point, seen from a North Atlantic or West Nordic perspective. The idea of the Arctic as a region is of a fairly recent date, according to professor of political science Carina Keskitalo.[23] In the days of heroic exploration, the Arctic gained a reputation as an inhospitable wilderness, sublime but desolate, and only possible to reach with the greatest expenditure of effort.[24] From a southern perspective, the Arctic was a frontier, rich in both renewable and non-renewable resources, but not fit for human occupation.[25] After World War II the Arctic's new position as a strategic frontier did not change the perception of the area. However, during the late 1970s and early 1980s environmental and indigenous movements expanded the areas traditionally considered 'Arctic' and put an emphasis on human action. This sparked a process of region-building where in particular the Arctic Council, established in 1996, has been active, trying to turn the Arctic from an area of conflict into a region for cooperation.[26] Since, accord-

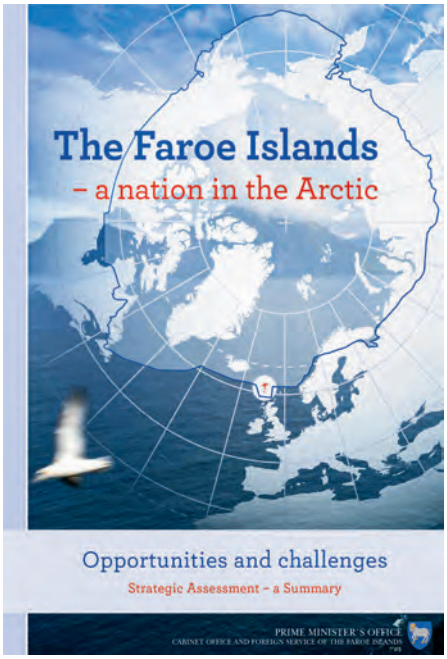
ing to Keskitalo, the Arctic does not yet exist, but is still under construction as a region, Keskitalo consistently puts the concept in inverted commas.[27]

Thus, the Arctic is now being politically, rather than geographically defined. The Arctic Council originally consisted of the so-called 'Arctic Five': the 'Arctic Rim' states with borders on the Arctic Ocean – Russia, the USA (with Alaska), Canada, Denmark (because of Greenland) and Norway. Due to the successful branding of the Nordic countries as a unity, Iceland, Sweden and Finland were later included. Environmental protection (discussions on an agreement for the protection of polar bears) was the issue that first brought about the idea of an Arctic Council, and it has remained a dominant focus.[28] However, the ICC (Inuit Circumpolar Council) has also played a central role in the Canadian engagement in the Arctic Council. Canada was the initiator of the council and has been a driving force ever since. First and foremost, the ICC has been keen on encouraging the Arctic Council to focus on the human dimension (instead of the Arctic as a wasteland), in particular the indigenous populations, and on sustainability instead of conservation. [29]

It was the Brundtland report, published 1987, which sparked the discourse on sustainability, arguing that environmental protection and development were not opposites, but interdependent terms: "Development cannot subsist on a deteriorating environmental base, the environment cannot be protected when growth leaves out of account the costs of environmental protection."[30] However, tradition (in the sense of traditional hunting, or traditional knowledge) has always been significant in the argument for an 'Arctic' arena.[31] This, of course, has to do with indigenous peoples and the general understanding of these peoples – as in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples from 2007.[32] It may also have to do with the Canadian influence in the Arctic Council and the role 'tradition' and 'elders' play within the voice of the Canadian Inuit. From early on, discussion papers formulated by Canada emphasized the vulnerability of the Arctic, not only as environment was concerned, but also regarding the social situation (loss of cultural traditions, unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse, self-destructive behavior, suicide). The Arctic soon became associated with the word *crises*.[33] Obviously, such a negative brand could create stereotyping and problems for new states, who want to be taken seriously as equal members of the world community – like for example Greenland, an active member in the ICC.[34]

Earlier definitions of the Arctic were primarily formulated by the natural sciences. However, this does not mean that it has ever been possible to find an exact definition of what the 'Arctic' means, or where its boundaries lie. The definitions seem to stem from the old desire to define the Arctic as different: barren, cold and dominated by snow and ice.[35] The most common definitions are: The *tree line* definition (the Artic is where trees cannot grow); different *temperature* definitions (one of them claiming that the mean temperature for all months of the year must be below 10 degrees, and at least one month must have a mean temperature below freezing); the *permafrost* definition (soil which is permanently frozen year-

round); and a number of different *latitude* definitions, one of them the Arctic Circle at 66°33'46.3" north, above which line the sun is not visible for at least one day at midwinter, and the sun does not totally disappear below the horizon for at least one night during midsummer. The problem is that many factors in combination determine climate. Places at the same latitude will have a different climate depending on whether they are inland or coastal, and a place where the Gulf Stream passes, like Norway or South Greenland, will have quite a different climate from some other place at the same latitude where it does not pass, such as Canada or Russia. The domestic Canadian definition places the limit of the Arctic at 60° northern latitude, mirroring the Antarctic delineation of 60° southern latitude. In Scandinavia, this would include not only Iceland and the Faroe Islands, but Norway just north of Oslo, Sweden north of Stockholm and all of Finland. Many programs therefore use the 60° for America and the Arctic Circle definition for Europe.



From the front cover of *The Faroe Islands – a Nation in the Arctic* (2013).

According to the Arctic Circle definition, the Faroe Islands do not qualify, and neither does Iceland, except Grimsey, a very small island belonging to Iceland. The strategic assessment report *The Faroe Islands – a Nation in the Arctic: Opportunities and Challenges*[36] therefore advocates the political definition:

> The Arctic can be defined in a number of different ways. In strictly scientific terms, the definition has often been limited to the area north of the Arctic Circle, or from the border line that marks the beginning of permafrost, or the area in which the average daily temperature in the summer does not exceed 10°C . In the context of international politics, however, the most commonly accepted definition of the Arctic is that characterised by political cooperation between the states and nations whose people live in the Circumpolar North, and this definition includes the Faroe Islands.[37]

The term the 'Circumpolar North' has previously been introduced in Arctic discourse as a convenient abbreviation for the Arctic and sub-Arctic,[38] and here it serves to build a bridge between the two in order to support the view that the Faroe Islands have "a key position" in the Arctic region.[39] The report further argues that the Faroe Islands share key socio-economic features with the recognized "High-Northern" territories, and it claims that "The Faroe Islands have the knowledge and experience necessary for the further development of fisheries, shipping and research, as well as the conservation and management of natural resources."[40]

Being closer to the Arctic Circle, Iceland prefers to claim its rights as an Arctic nation with reference also to the geographical arguments. As of the adoption of the Arctic resolution, *A Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland's Arctic Policy*,[41] the parliament of Iceland entrusts the government to carry out a policy:

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[s]ecuring Iceland's position as a coastal State within the Arctic region as regards influencing its development as well as international decisions on regional issues on the basis of legal, economic, ecological and geographical arguments. This will among other things be based on the fact that since the northern part of the Icelandic Exclusive Economic Zone falls within the Arctic and extends to the Greenland Sea adjoining the Arctic Ocean, Iceland has both territory and rights to sea areas north of the Arctic Circle.[42]

Still, the intent is to be inclusive and also promote:

[u]nderstanding of the fact that the Arctic region extends both to the North Pole area proper and the part of the North Atlantic Ocean which is closely connected to it. The Arctic should not be limited to a narrow geographical definition but rather be viewed as an extensive area when it comes to ecological, economic, political and security matters.[43]

However, the connotations, which stick to the white Arctic are still active, and seem to result in a certain discomfort with the term. In Norway the city of Tromsø, which is situated far above the Arctic Circle at almost 70°, is commonly referred to as the 'Gateway to the Arctic' – an expression which is also used by both Iceland and the Faroe Islands, indicating that these places are not actually part of the Arctic, but positioned on the border, where the Arctic begins. Something similar was suggested by the Icelandic budget airline WOW air in an online article, where the company tried to answer the frequently asked question: "Is Iceland in the Arctic or not?"

The locals too will talk freely about the harsh north, surviving in the Arctic and suchlike to tourists, because it sells! But really most people think of their country as being more like Scotland, central Norway and Canada than as being like Greenland, Lapland or Svalbard. There really is no comparison. Despite its high north location, Iceland benefits from the Gulf Stream, which means that while nature goes Arctic-quiet in the long winter and even the grass turns brown, the snow is not a permanent feature of city streets. The currents also mean that when the spring arrives, plants and animals can make full use of the constant daylight and gardeners and farmers are able to grow all sorts of unexpected things, like sunflowers, wheat, peas and oak trees. That doesn't sound at all Arctic, does it? (…).

On the other hand (…) thanks to our glaciers, Arctic lovers can find snow all year round. So once again, the land of contrasts, the land of fire and ice, the land where nothing is quite as it seems, lives up to expectations. Iceland is both a fertile, temperate, European country like any other…and it is also a barren, frozen Arctic wasteland…all at the same time. Awesome![44]

Upholding the dichotomy between the Arctic and Europe, as well as the hegemonic discourse about the Arctic as barren and frozen, the text tries to position

Front cover of Nordatlantens Ansigter (North Atlantic Faces), NORA 2008.

Iceland as a kind of borderland between the two – cf. the text's own argument that it sells. This is one example of a far more undecided position than that of the official statement of the Government of Iceland, defining Iceland as "a coastal State within the Arctic region".[45]

Thus, in the process of region building, old and new narratives are being tried out, and no final, unified story of the new Arctic – and the North Atlantic countries' position in relation to it – has yet found its form.

1.1.1 North Atlantic Faces

With the intention of paving the way for a sense of shared identity between the North Atlantic countries, which is considered necessary for the strengthening of a North Atlantic region, the various coordinating institutions have launched a number of initiatives: project support, networking initiatives, conferences, festivals, book prizes and so on. An initiative that is worth paying attention to is the book *Nordatlantens Ansigter* (North Atlantic Faces).[46] At the time of its publication in 2008, this was very different from the usual initiatives to describe the

North, first and foremost because it is written 'from within', by people living in the North, and for a Northern audience. We will give a detailed reading of this publication, because it is one of the only sources that tries to investigate which factors might actually constitute a shared identity. At the same time, it also clearly demonstrates a number of the conflicts and fractures that counteract the sense of a shared identity.

Right from the start the publication admits that the region NORA is trying to envision is indeed no more than a *vision* of a community: "NORA is based on a vision that Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Coastal Norway together form a region."[47] With a point of departure in the Faroese saying *Gløgt er gestins eyga* ('observant is the guest's eye'), four North Atlantic journalists were each sent to one of the other countries in the area: Greenlandic Mariia Simonsen to Iceland, Norwegian Magne Kveseth to Greenland, Faroese Høgni Djuurhus to Coastal Norway and Icelandic Björg Eva Erlendsdóttir to the Faroe Islands. From here they write about their impressions of the country, as well as their meetings with selected key persons. It is emphasized in the preface that their intention is not to identify 'the North Atlantic region's soul' (*den nordatlantiske regions sjæl*) or 'the core of regional identity' (*kernen i den regionale identitet*). Nevertheless, they dare talk about "some common features that make up a kind of common identity".[48] The journalists were thus asked to look not only for diversity, but also for commonalities between their country and the country they were visiting, to identify "common features that can help define the countries as a region".[49] It is of course the intention that this region-building process should propagate to the readers: "Perhaps the reports also give readers some thoughts about Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Coastal Norway as a region."[50] Ideally, the journalists' representation of their experiences would thus become part of the creation of the region.

The four chapters are structured so that – apart from in the chapter about Greenland – it is the feeling of being at home that dominates the description of the journalists' travels around the North Atlantic. First and foremost, this homely feeling is created by numerous references to the coastal culture that NORA has proclaimed to be the decisive common feature of the region. The coast is always in sight and there is a smell of sea, seaweed or tar. The journalists also mediate the taste of the ocean with all the local delicacies they enjoy on the way. By seasoning their descriptions with words and references both from within the place visited and from their own homelands, the travelers convey an experience of one, shared culture, although different countries may have different words for the same thing. Finally, immigrants with a background in completely different cultures have been granted a lot of space in the publication. This serves the purpose of depicting the North Atlantic as a modern, dynamic and multicultural region with room for all and open to the globalization of which the immigrants are the symbol. The immigrants' adaptability also makes them role models for the North Atlantic countries' native residents. Likewise, the well-integrated immigrants demonstrate

that a common identity can be built on elements other than a common history. Thus, identity is depicted as something that can be created if the project is strong enough for people to back it up. It would be obvious to conclude that this rule also applies to a common North Atlantic identity.

It is therefore not a coincidence that the book's first case from the visit to **Iceland** starts with the Palestinian-born, now Icelandic woman and mother of six, Amai Tamimi. With her story, the dominant tale of monocultural Iceland, whose inhabitants all originate from tall, blonde vikings, becomes more nuanced and contemporary. In this respect, Tamimi represents the future of Iceland, as more and more people come from the outside, both because of the need for labor and because people flee there to escape bad conditions elsewhere. The latter applies to Tamimi, who has fled from an abusive husband and a society that did not provide her with protection. Thus, although Tamimi reports discrimination as a problem in Icelandic society, Iceland appears as a land of opportunity where the individual can experience personal development and gain influence in society through participation in the democratic process. Tamimi's inclusion in Icelandic society is underscored by her fluent Icelandic – which simultaneously excludes the traveling Greenlandic journalist, because neither Danish nor 'Scandinavian' will do here. Although Icelandic is a Germanic language, it is, in principle, as exclusive as the journalist's own Greenlandic mother tongue. It is therefore increasingly necessary to make use of common foreign languages if the North Atlantic citizens are to be able to understand each other. In the interviews featured in the book, that common language is primarily Danish. In other contexts, it is English.

From Tamimi in Hafnarfjörður close to Reykjavik, we are taken to the family farm of Bjarnarhöfn on the Snæfellsnæs peninsula. Here, fermented shark meat is produced according to old family traditions, and the current generation on the farm has established a museum of the Icelandic peasant culture that has roots extending back to the famous Icelandic sagas. The visit illustrates the sense of tradition and history that Tamimi emphasizes that she respects and appreciates. And this leads us to the chapter's final Icelandic face, the author Einar Már Guðmundsson. The choice of an author as a key person is linked to Iceland's brand as the 'saga island', which today, too, produces an impressive number of internationally acclaimed writers. The interview confirms this narrative, as Guðmundsson points to the tradition of the Icelanders to travel widely to gain inspiration, which they bring back to enrich their own culture.[51] The Greenlandic journalist also talks to the Icelandic author about how a small population deals with the process of secession and the challenges of globalization – topics that are of the greatest relevance in her own society. She signals that she is a bit uneasy about asking these questions because she knows that Icelanders do not like to be considered a small nation.[52] Guðmundsson confirms this view: "we [Icelanders] somehow always end up in the past: next to the blue-eyed Vikings, court poets and kings, and that makes us a little bit arrogant, but frees us from various varieties of feelings of inferiority". [53] Contrary to the general opinion that Iceland was never colonized,

although subject to Denmark until 1918, Guðmundsson talks about Iceland as a former colony. And he thinks Iceland was lucky that it was Denmark that colonized the country:

> If Danes had not colonized us, we would have lost our language. It is that simple! In the Middle Ages nations were either colonial powers or colonized. The English colonized the Shetland Islands and took their language and culture from them. (…) It is naturally a post-rationale to 'exculpate' Denmark as a colonial power. During the fight for independence it was said that all bad came from Denmark, and for that reason the relationship between Denmark and Iceland was considered very negative. But now historians are beginning to revise history in that area. They say that we, under all circumstances, would have been colonized by one or another colonial power, so of all the bad colonial powers, Denmark was the best for us. But we were also lucky that the Danes did not want to live in Iceland; they had a good home in Denmark, and did not want to move here. But the Germans would have wanted to settle here, if they had colonized us.[54]

This description confirms a Danish discourse of Denmark as a mild and benign colonial power, compared with other far more powerful and brutal colonial regimes. Such a tale of harmonious relationships in the past is of course appropriate when attempting to secure future relations between Iceland and Denmark. Likewise, the general image of Scandinavia is maintained as consisting of democratic welfare states, based on peace and equality. Iceland is embedded in this particular community, while a status as previously colonized provides the basis for a sense of solidarity between Iceland and the rest of the North Atlantic. Thus, the interview touches upon fundamental issues connected to questions of Iceland's shifting position within the colonial and neo-colonial world order. Ethnographer Kristín Loftsdóttir has pointed to the way in which Icelandic officials have used the country's past status as subordinated to Denmark as a way of positioning contemporary Iceland as a former colony that possesses the empathy, goodwill and potential to be a role model, which makes it a constructive contributor to the UN Security Council and provider of development aid.[55] This connection between a post-colonial condition and empathy may be supported by Tamimi's statement that the Icelanders, especially the elderly who have themselves experienced difficulties in the past, are good at empathizing with others' problems.[56]

Finally, globalization is being propelled as a power that at least to a certain extent overrides national borders.[57] Innovation and talent are today a country's most important resource, and it is therefore upon small nations to create conditions where people can realize their potential. The text suggests that these conditions are present in Iceland.

A completely different note is struck in the following chapter on **Greenland**, where the almost dystopian mood that hits the journalist upon arrival in Nuuk, Greenland's capital, raises doubts about the dreams of economic recovery and independence expressed by politicians:

The eye experiences a mixture of Murmansk, which has similar dilapidated housing blocks to those in Nuuk from the 60s, which are now being demolished; of Hammerfest, because they have an airport, which can only handle small aircraft, and lies between fjord and mountain; and also of Kautokeino, a folkloric gathering place for old *kofter* [the Sami national costume] – closer to a North Cape version.[58]

Guovdageaidnu (Kautokeino in Norwegian) lies in the interior of Finnmark and is often described as Norway's Sámi capital. The city hosts a number of central Sámi institutions, for example *Samedigge*, the Sámi Parliament, *Sámi allaskuvla*, the Sámi University, and *NRK Sápmi*, the national channels for Norwegian-Sámi radio and TV. Designating this place " a folkloric gathering place for old *kofter*" demonstrates strong opposition between ethnic groups in Norwegian society, which through the comparison with Nuuk is applied to parallel groups in Greenland. The people the journalist meets in Nuuk's streets makes him think of "indigenous peoples from other inhospitable places".[59] Posters with warnings about tuberculosis, huffing, and AIDS keep catching the journalist's eye – and he reports that it is as if the whole city has planned to get drunk and go crazy this weekend. Certainly, Nuuk is not much of a big city, but according to the Norwegian journalist, it does have all the problems of one. "Inevitably I ask myself what happens to people who have been forced to move from a village to the city."[60] Thus, the chapter on Nuuk is informed by a dominant discourse on indigenous people as vulnerable to effects of change: a kind of 'lost in translation' between tradition and modernity.[61] This is an international discourse, which the journalist seems to have applied to Greenland even before landing there.

In the old days, one had plenty of time to prepare for encountering Greenland on the days-long voyage over the Atlantic. Experienced travelers to Greenland introduced the inexperienced to the new conditions, and because of that, many impressions and opinions were established before people set foot in the country. Today everything goes faster, but the principle is the same. On the flight, the journalist asks the person sitting in the seat next to him – who is obviously not a Greenlander – what ten things one thinks of when asked about Greenland. The list reads as follows: ice, cold, sealskins, Eskimos, hunting culture, cultural expression in music, literature and visual arts, big families, 'the survivors', the food culture, developmental features (modernity), colonization. [62] So unfortunately, in the case of Greenland, as usual the foreign description becomes the norm. This also applies to the title of the chapter, derived from an article in *The Times*: 'Greenland Can Become a New Superpower – The Pendulum Swings across the Arctic'.

The Greenland Ice Sheet could melt; climate researchers warn of this every day. Melting ice causes the sea to rise to dangerous levels, and Copenhagen is expected to be underwater in a hundred years. At the same time, mineral resources and oil are exposed. *The Times* writes that Greenland can become a new superpower.[63]

Crisis and adventure, creation and destruction. The story of Greenland is often heavily dramatized, and built upon opposites. In addition to this, the visit took place right before the referendum on the Act on Greenland Self-Government in 2008. However, the discussion in the Norwegian journalist's account goes well beyond the context of the referendum. Everyone is concerned about whether Greenland can free itself entirely from Denmark and form an independent state. Two of the politicians think it can: Aleqa Hammond, who at that time belonged to the Social Democratic Party, Siumut, which governed throughout the home rule period (1979–2009), and Johan Lund Olsen from the left-wing IA. However, the bishop, Sofie Petersen, believes it is too early because Greenland does not have enough educated people and is not ready or "mature" (*modent*) enough for independence.[64] The metaphor draws on an old colonial discourse, whereby the Greenlanders were treated like children who needed an understanding mother (the colonial power), under whose protection the child could grow up and learn to stand on its own two feet. The question is, of course, who has the right to decide *when* this maturity occurs.[65] As it appears from Sofie Petersen's remark, this discourse has been taken over by the Greenlanders themselves.[66]

Historically, the conception of Greenlanders as children is linked to the discourse about race and racial mixing. The idea was that the Inuit, then called 'Eskimo', race was primitive, but when mixed with the white race, it rose, and unlike the 'pure Eskimos', persons of mixed race became able to enter into modern society.[67] The interview with the bishop turns to this topic because the journalist cannot help but ask the usual question, of whether it is true that in the past Inuit women were loaned out to other men.[68] The bishop explains that it was all about countering the risk of inbreeding, which is still a problem in small towns. Petersen at the same time emphasizes that it is hardly possible to call anybody 'full-blooded' (*fuldblods*) today.[69] Petersen herself is descended from Danes – and from the Norwegian pastor Hans Egede, who brought Christianity to Greenland. For this reason, the Greenlanders of today are genetically enrolled in the Nordic family. The close relationship with the Nordic is also supported in the following interview with politician Johan Lund Olsen, who believes that Greenland must have its own constitution and form its own state, but that it must remain a member of the Nordic family "with an orderly relation to Denmark, in the same way as Iceland".[70]

However, in the journalist's understanding, the non-Nordic origins of Greenlandic culture become the explanation of all that makes Nuuk strange and inhospitable – as he compares it with all that he experiences as foreign and inhospitable (that is, Sámi) at home in Norway. The irony is clear in that throughout the entire text, the journalist responds negatively to the Danes' continued presence in Greenland, which is depicted as a form of neo-colonialism, but only in the bishop's office, where the light of the candles shines in such a cozy way on the Danish newspaper, does he experience a little bit of the feeling of familiarity, which is so characteristic of the other chapters of the book.[71]

The Sámi also play an important role in the chapter on Coastal Norway – even