

Project Outline

Country Food Cargo: Transport Infrastructure & Imagined Futures in Nunavut

Project Description: Currently, much of the infrastructure being built in Nunavut prioritizes extractive industries over daily necessities like access to clean water, food, housing, and a regular income. My ongoing dissertation research examines the ways residents of the Qikiqtani region of Nunavut imagine the futures of their communities and how that relates to transport infrastructure being built and planned today. More specifically, this project centers on the role of transport infrastructure in supporting food sovereignty in a territory without agriculture and no connection to the national highway network.

A combined lens on infrastructure, locally harvested food, imagined futures and political-decision making serves to highlight discrepancies as well as successes in territorial development. Nunavut is in a unique position within Canada as an independent territory which has not yet fully devolved. The capital city, Iqaluit, houses the territorial government and medical services, as well as higher academic institutions. Yet decisions on land and resource management continue to be made by the Canadian federal government rather than the Government of Nunavut. Key political decision-makers are in the South, or in Iqaluit, including the heads of Inuit organizations Qikiqtani Inuit Association and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., while the immediate effects of infrastructure development are felt throughout Nunavut Nunangat. It is clear that whoever decides what types of infrastructure should be developed in Nunavut is also deciding what, where, and how people and products should be transported. Seen this way, decisions about transport infrastructure are always also decisions about what Nunavut communities should look like in the future.

This research examines the intersection of transport infrastructure and country food and relates it to the futures imagined and planned in Nunavut today. With the guidance of community members, this project aims to show where decision-makers can and should be prioritizing local concerns and wishes for the development of Nunavut communities and support for country food hunters, harvesters, and consumers.

The following **objectives** guide my research: (1) Examine the role of transport infrastructure in supporting or hindering access to country food by focussing on daily use and conversation among residents of five Qikiqtani communities: Iqaluit, Kimmirut, Pond Inlet, Resolute Bay and Grise Fiord. (2) Illuminate a web of affordances and hinderances between actors and transport

infrastructure connected to country food. (3) Explore how Nunavut residents talk about and act towards ideas of futures for themselves and their place of residence, with a focus on the role of transport infrastructure in these futures.

Progress to Date: I conducted preliminary fieldwork in Iqaluit and Pond Inlet during May and June 2022. In consultation with residents, I decided to focus on the intersection of transport infrastructure and food sovereignty in Nunavut. After receiving my research license from the Nunavut Research Institute, I returned to the territory, where I conducted ethnographic fieldwork from August 2022-December 2023 over a series of three stays, totalling 12 months. My research expanded to smaller communities and now includes: Iqaluit, Kimmirut, Pond Inlet, Resolute Bay and Grise Fiord. During my fieldwork, I made at least two visits to each of the 5 communities involved in my research. I attended meetings, workshops, conferences, cultural events, joined hunting trips, concerts, and town hall gatherings. I volunteered at the local food center, hosted 3 future scenario workshops and 2 focus groups. I conducted around 170 semi-structured or open interviews, over 60 of which are recorded. I worked with members of Hunters and Trappers Organizations, the Government of Nunavut, Inuit organizations, local NGOs, Nunavut Arctic College employees, airport, sealift, and Coast Guard employees, students, and recent work-migrants. Since returning to Vienna in December 2023, I have been transcribing and analyzing my interviews and fieldnotes, supported by continuous literature review and communication with key project participants and friends in Nunavut. I participated in international conferences and workshops, where I presented my preliminary findings.

Travel Stipend Rational: In Nunavut the colonial legacy of research and infrastructure development make sharing research results ethically and intellectually critically important. Due to limited financial means, I have yet to return to the communities I worked with to present and discuss my findings. With the help of this travel stipend, I hope to host a public presentation at the Nunavut Research Institute in Iqaluit during which research participants and other interested individuals can hear and critique my analysis and findings. This is a crucial step in the research process with Inuit in Canada, and one that I hold to be mandatory for my own research.

Based on the discussions during this presentation, I will create the following **output:** (a) an executive summary report on research findings to share with government, policymakers, organizations, businesses; (b) a plain language report to share with communities in printed or video form; (c) a booklet of residents' collected desires for Nunavut's future; (d) further academic publications (journal articles, PhD dissertation).