Partnerships for Social Change in the Canadian North: Revisiting the Insider–Outsider Dialectic

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ABSTRACT

In the two decades since Alexander Lockhart's seminal article on the insider–outsider dialectic in native socioeconomic development, a great deal of change has occurred in the Canadian North and new challenges have emerged for community-based participatory research and development. This is particularly the case in the Northwest Territories, where Aboriginal communities are facing for the first time the triple challenges of Aboriginal land claims implementation, Aboriginal self-government, and a boom in mining and petroleum development. Increasingly, participatory methods in research and community development are being co-opted to serve state or corporate interests, far from their radical origins in movements for social change. A historical analysis is called for that accounts for the contradictory and contested social contexts in which participatory activities are imbedded. This article suggests that a return to the roots of the participatory method requires the creation of a new autonomous space of resistance. The academic outsider is uniquely positioned to facilitate critical interventions in both community and university contexts. The resulting convergence of critical outsider and insider has great potential in the forging of new knowledge that can contribute to self-determination beyond the bounds of the state.

INTRODUCTION

The past half-century has seen a significant increase in the efforts of Aboriginal Canadians to regain control over their own social and economic destinies. Aboriginal[1] groups in the Northwest Territories in particular are leaders in land claims, self-determination and self-government. Recently, an explosion in industrial development in the Northwest Territories has led to a

1. We use the constitutionally enshrined term 'Aboriginal' to include Canada's Indian, Métis, and Inuit, whilst acknowledging Alfred's (2005) writing on its appropriation and definition in a manner that distorts and reduces the inherent nationhood of these peoples.

renewed call for the establishment of economic opportunities situated within the context of Aboriginal cultural traditions. While considerable attention has been paid to defining aspirations, much less has been focused on the process required to realize these aspirations. This has contributed to the development of a contradictory scenario whereby communities are compelled to hire outside professionals to achieve their self-defined aims. The heavy reliance on outsiders is often coupled with hostility; outsiders are perceived as representing the old paternalistic structures of the past, and they embody the frustrating gap between the goals of Aboriginal communities and their ability to independently achieve these goals. Within this scenario, the application of participatory methods has become a formal requirement, ostensibly to ensure that research and development activities are accountable to Aboriginal communities and to facilitate self-determination.

This article is the result of a convergence between three 'outsiders' with diverse academic and experiential backgrounds but a unifying common interest in participatory research and development work in northern Aboriginal communities. Our convergence took place during the period 2001–2004 in Déline, a Dene Aboriginal community of approximately 600 people on the shore of Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories,[2] where we were each working with the community on a number of research and development projects. The nature of these projects led us to become involved in a community effort to develop a vision for a centre where western scientific and traditional knowledge co-exist and are utilized by both local and outside people. We shared then, and continue to share, a belief in the effectiveness of participatory processes in realizing positive social change within Aboriginal communities. However, our combined experiences have brought us up against a number of dilemmas and obstacles that are currently unresolved in the extensive literature on participatory methods.

The title of this essay draws on the seminal 1982 article by Alexander Lockhart based on his work with the North Coast Tribal Council of British Columbia, 'The Insider–Outsider Dialectic in Native Socio-Economic Development: A Case Study in Process Understanding'.[3] Lockhart's article was published at a time when the use of participatory methods in research and development was gaining increasing acceptance (Cernea, 1985; Chambers,

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2. Déline is a remote traditional Aboriginal community located near the Arctic Circle; its self-government district covers over 90,000 km^2. Located near the outflow of Great Bear River on Great Bear Lake, Déline is accessible only by air except for two months of the year, when a winter ice road is open to vehicles.

3. Lockhart's article has been republished in Compton and Galaway (1994). It has also been reprinted in at least one textbook, frequently appears on various course curricula, and has been utilized in the development of the Blishen–Lockhart socio-economic impact model for northern community development (Blishen et al., 1979). Craig (1988), and more recently Howitt (2001) and Lane et al. (1997), acknowledge the significance of the Blishen–Lockhart model (community economic viability, community social vitality, and political efficacy) as a basis for the integration of technical and political approaches to social impact assessment.

1994). A great deal of change has occurred in the Canadian North in the two decades since it first appeared, most notably the settlement of a number of Aboriginal land claims and the negotiation of frameworks for self-government. The broad objective of this exploratory essay is to examine Lockhart's thesis in the context of these recent developments.

As a result of the development and application of participatory approaches, a body of critical literature on participatory research and development has recently emerged.[4] This literature focuses primarily on countries of the global South; in contrast, the literature from the northern Canadian experience has, for the most part, been relatively uncritical. The majority of Canadian participatory literature tends to be infused with a testimonial character, evaluating process from a localized and individually project-based perspective.[5] From this narrow standpoint it becomes difficult to engage in the kind of deep auto-critique required for qualitative innovations in theory and method. Yet we would suggest that the current challenge to the adaptability of participation in research and development (and the contingent role of the outsider) may be most acute in northern Canada, particularly in the Northwest Territories.

In what follows, we review the sociology of the outsider as it applies to frameworks for participatory practice. This sets the context for revisiting Lockhart's notion of the 'insider–outsider dialectic' as a theoretical foundation for participatory research and development activities in northern Canada. We then sketch a short history of participation in the Canadian north, highlighting a trajectory in which participatory methods have been co-opted by industry and the state, and have thereby been divorced from their radical origins in movements for social change. It is our argument that a new autonomous space needs to be established for the creation of new knowledge as the basis for progressive agency in Aboriginal communities. In our final section, we explore the theoretical basis for identifying such a space. Generalizing from the Déline experience in partnership-building with the Universities of Alberta and Manitoba, we propose that universities have the potential to provide an important institutional foundation for participatory research and development activities outside the boundaries of Aboriginal, territorial and federal state interests. Genuine community–university partnerships can be the context for a reaffirmation of the role of the outsider in the current era.

We argue for a dialectical critique that views the immediate experience of participatory projects within the totality of social dynamics. In particular, an evaluation of the participatory method's efficacy as an agent of long-term social change requires that it be situated in a specific historical context (Cooke, 2004). In the Canadian North, we suggest that the role of the outside

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4. This includes Campbell (2002); Cooke and Kothari (2001); Goebel (1998); Guijt and Shah (1999); Hickey and Mohan (2004); Mohan (1999); Nelson and Wright (1995); Stiefel and Wolfe (1994).
5. See, for example, Dickson and Green (1999); Ryan and Robinson (1990); Macauley et al. (1999).

researcher should be rooted in participatory processes; at the same time, it is paramount that the outside researcher contribute the kind of long-term supports and relative autonomy that can be provided by institutions such as universities. Outside researchers in the North will inevitably be asked to demonstrate how their research activities will contribute to community development; participatory research and development are necessarily linked in this context. Our aim is to rescue participation from the forces of co-optation that have been observed in recent critiques. We are concerned that participation, seen as an 'invited space', may in fact be a space closed to real decision making (Gaventa, 2004).We see potential for the continued evolution of participatory methods given certain relational correctives in community–outsider relationships. Our vision of participatory methodology goes beyond specific research or community development objectives and addresses the conflict posed by the relation of knowledge to power by exploring new and revised 'spaces for participation' (Gaventa, 2004: 35).

PARTICIPATION AND THE THEORY OF THE OUTSIDER

Georg Simmel's influential 1908 essay 'The Stranger', which takes the Jewish experience in Europe as its point of reference (Simmel, 1950), was the catalyst for the emergence of a sociology of the outsider[6] (Levine, 1979). A diverse body of literature subsequently developed around the tenuous relationship between relatively permanent and non-permanent residents of communities (Baumann, 1997; Harman, 1988; Levine, 1979; McLemore, 1970; Nash, 1963; Schütz, 1944; Wood, 1934). In the North, the potential problems associated with researchers living for long periods of time within Aboriginal communities give rise to an inevitable ethical problem within applied social science research: regardless of the length of stay, the outside researcher is by nature fated to depart; this prospective departure creates a form of social distance from the outset. To compound the problem, researchers and development practitioners represent a continual reminder of coloniality by virtue of their presence as well as their lack of cultural skills (Menzies, 2001). Many social scientists are still working to overcome the northern Canadian view of the outside researcher as a spy who writes in code and does not share research findings (Nahanni cited in Jackson, 1993; Brizinski, 1993).

   The problem of the outside researcher is not entirely a function of the research process; it is at least partly a more general condition of the outsider. The position of outsiders in the group is determined by the fact that they have not belonged to it from the beginning: they bring in qualities which

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6. Historically, society's outsiders existed under a variety of names related to diverse historical and disciplinary contexts, including: stranger, newcomer, wayfarer, settler, sojourner, middleman, marginal man and wanderer. Following Lockhart we use the generic term 'outsider' to encompass these many names.

do not and cannot stem from the insider group. Thus they become an odd element of the group itself, which involves both being outside the group and confronting it (Simmel, 1950). Since strangers typically do not share local assumptions, they can subsequently place in question nearly everything that seems to be unquestionable to the members of the approached group (Schütz, 1944; Simmel, 1950). The outsider exists in an autonomous relation to the community, giving rise to a simmering tension between nearness and remoteness (Simmel, 1950). At best, an outsider's role may entail a positive relation that addresses the basic forms of social interaction, that is, conflict, competition and co-operation (Coser, 1977). For example, outsiders are often received with a surprising openness, leading to confidences that might be withheld from a more closely related person. As someone who is seen as having 'been around', the outsider's perceived objective stance means that he or she can maintain a certain amount of distance from the issues while still attending to many different perspectives and sides.

Most recently, Zygmunt Baumann's analyses and postmodern reworking of the outsider concept places in question the very boundaries of the social (Baumann, 1991, 1997). He notes that outsiders cross the dividing line of dualism — they are neither 'one of us' nor 'one of them' (Baumann, 1991). They violate the structure and order of the social and physical boundaries between the dualistic 'us and them'. By straddling boundaries, outsiders can 'bring the "outside" "inside" and poison the comfort of order with the suspicion of chaos'; this can undermine order and cause confusion and anxiety, leaving the outsider as a potential target of hatred (Baumann, 1991: 56; see also Brizinski, 1993). It is this tacit yet fragile arrangement between insider and outsider that participatory methodologies have attempted to reconcile.

While there have been many influences on the creation of participatory methodologies, Paulo Freire's theory of radical pedagogy was instrumental in establishing the foundation for this approach. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* published in 1970, Freire asserted that agendas for investigation into 'another world' cannot begin from points predetermined by an outsider; he proposed a model whereby the teacher became a facilitator, and the point of departure of the educational process became the world of the learner. This concept of participation became integral to resolving social science's concerns over the colonial nature of research, and provided the basis for theories and methods of participatory research (Reimer, 1994). At the same time, participatory research provided an alternative to the failures of the 'top-down' model of development, which was often pursued in the absence of adequate knowledge about and consultation with local communities (Campbell, 2002).

Cooke's recent historical analysis of early participatory administration with Native North Americans is significant not only for its genealogical import but also for demonstrating the distorted relationship between advocacy of early action research and maintenance of imbalanced power relations

(Cooke, 2003).[7] Both Cooke (2003) and Biolsi (1992) identify elements of neo-colonialism reproduced or reinforced in participatory methods. They suggest that donor agendas and the conditions attached to action research remain a means for controlling the actions of the colonized, albeit from an administrative rather than development or research perspective.[8] Similarly, in circumpolar and northern Aboriginal communities it has been observed that state power is exercised and experienced through everyday practices within co-operative management of natural resources (co-management) and Aboriginal land claim negotiations. Within these processes Aboriginal peoples are forced to speak and act in uncharacteristic ways; debates over land and animals are framed in terms of property relations; and Aboriginal society is bureaucratized in such a way as to undermine the social relations, practices, beliefs and values that were originally intended to be preserved through the co-management process (Alfred, 2005; Kofinas, 1998; Morrow and Hensel, 1992; Nadasdy, 2003; Stevenson, 2004). This process may lead to the 'deep-colonizing' that Deborah Bird Rose notes within the Australian Aborigine experience; that is, practices of colonization embedded in the very institutions that are meant to reverse the processes of colonization (Rose, 1999: 182).

   One of the challenges with participatory methodologies is found in the multiple and often differing definitions of participation. Definitions proposed in the literature often depend on the particular stance of the author, discipline and institution. For example, the World Bank has defined participation as 'a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them' (World Bank, 1996: 3). This is quite different from the more holistic definition proposed by the World Bank's own Senior Advisor in Social Policy and Sociology (Cernea, 1985: 10), whereby 'participation is empowering people to mobilize their own capacities, be social actors rather than passive subjects, manage the resources, make decisions, and control

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7. Cooke shows how John Collier promoted action research from as early as 1933 while working with Native North Americans (thus challenging the commonly held perception of Kurt Lewin as the father of action research). As Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Collier proposed that action research in the 'ethnic field' should be the master tool for a reconfiguration of power relations between Indian society and the Indian Bureau (Collier, 1945: 275). The reconfiguration of power, however, seen as co-optive and manipulative (Biolsi, 1992), was 'still a means of controlling what the colonized did, according to the priorities of a colonial power' (Cooke, 2003: 59)

8. The specific role of participatory process in administration in comparison to participatory development or research invites further discussion. In this article, however, we focus on the participatory methodologies used in the Canadian North that can be seen as existing within the nexus between research, development and institutions. As one reviewer noted, an adaptive participatory methodology may be seen as a form of resistance to corporate exploitation. Moreover, such a perspective may approach the transformative potential that Hickey and Mohan (2004) seek in addressing Cooke and Kothari's (2001) challenge to the reification of participation as methodology.

the activities that affect their lives'. These are but two examples of the many different approaches to participation that are found both in theory and practice.

Conventional theory places community empowerment at the top of a metaphorical ladder of increasing community participation (see for example Arnstein, 1969; Berkes, 1994; Campbell, 1996; Clayton et al., 1997; Pinkerton, 1994). Typically, the choice of levels of participation effectively illustrates a progression in the role of an Aboriginal community from one of passive or limited involvement to that of active or full participation in decision making (de Paoli, 1999). There are two problems with this view. First, this evolutionary continuum is based upon a fundamental assumption that political and economic structures are open; that is, they accept the right of people not only to be involved but to ultimately control the decision-making process (Abbott, 1995). Second, these continua implicitly subscribe to a future in which the outside researchers or development practitioners work themselves out of the relationship (see Ryan and Robinson, 1990).

Notwithstanding such dilemmas, the shift in theory and practice was long overdue as the relationship between applied social science and Aboriginal peoples in Canada since the 1950s had been charged by 'tense episodes' (Brizinski; 1993: 146) and scathing criticisms by Aboriginal writers of the self-proclaimed positive actions of outsiders within Aboriginal communities (Deloria, 1969). Such tensions have characterized research and development processes in the Canadian north. Alexander Lockhart's 1982 essay on the insider–outsider dialectic was an important early attempt to theorize a methodological solution, harnessing the positive potential of insider–outsider relations.

LOCKHART'S INSIDER–OUTSIDER DIALECTIC

Lockhart's theory of the insider–outsider dialectic ties together participatory methodology and the sociological theory of the outsider in the context of Aboriginal socioeconomic development. Lockhart asserts that successful community development in Aboriginal communities is predicated upon the insider's detailed knowledge of the particular social, economic and political dynamics occurring within a community, combined with the opportunity structures that exist outside (Lockhart, 1982). Like Freire, Lockhart proposes that a dialectical interaction of insider and outsider knowledges forces both groups to recognize their ownership of pieces of the problem so that the probability of moving towards a solution is greatly enhanced. Moreover, from an anti-colonial and critical action research perspective, Lockhart considers the participation of outsiders to be enabling or therapeutic.

External opportunity structures involve values and assumptions that may be profoundly alien and as a result threatening to community members

(Lockhart, 1982).[9] The challenge for the outsider consists of finding ways and means of mediating inside and outside knowledge systems (or their components) so as to affirm rather than negate Aboriginal cultural identity (Lockhart, 1982). People involved in development projects require a 'great deal of sensitivity to the complex, often opaque and fluid nature of the political and administrative boundaries that exist' in Aboriginal communities (Lockhart, 1982: 163). Conversely, taking a hands-off approach to internal processes in order to avoid perceived paternalistic practices can be an obstacle to working out innovative, integrated, and mutually accepted and respected solutions (Lockhart, 1982). For Lockhart then, an insider–outsider dialectic should be intentionally suffused in all relationships so as to facilitate dual flows of knowledge and agency both inward and outward. Thus outsiders serve not only as a bridge to new perspectives and outside ideas; they can also assist in expanding the sphere of influence of community leadership. We see the real value of participatory methodology as theorized by Lockhart, when it gives as much credence to insider's information and concerns as to those of outside consultants or researchers.

Building upon previously established models and examples of Aboriginal participation (Berkes, 1994; Campbell, 1996; Pinkerton 1994), de Paoli (1999) developed a sophisticated model that sheds light on the possibilities embodied in Lockhart's insider–outsider dialectic. De Paoli, perhaps anticipating community-based natural resource management, includes an additional level of Aboriginal participation involving complete community control. Unlike recent conventional models of participation that still retain a uni-directional focus (Bruns, 2003), de Paoli's model uses a horizontal continuum to de-emphasize the top-down approach in vertically represented models. There are a number of advantages in seeing these degrees of participation as operating along a horizontal continuum rather than a vertical ladder with an implied 'successful model' at the top. First, in accordance with Lockhart, this model acknowledges different types of interaction between experienced and knowledgeable people from both outside and within the community, without passing a value judgement on which level of interaction is most appropriate.[10] Second, it rightly acknowledges the importance of outsiders in their own right, not only as catalysts or bit actors in other people's development. Thirdly, it allows for learning and knowledge that is not just uni-directional, from the outside to the inside, but is rather multi-directional and multi-temporal.

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9. Reflecting on Fanon's portrayal of the colonial condition, Sekyi-Otu (1996) makes a similar point that the colonized are constrained within 'the standpoint of immediacy', trapped in a dualism of valuing past ways of life but being unable to move beyond the immediate concerns of community life to recapture and transform them.
10. Berkes and Carlsson (2005) recently acknowledged the diversity of forms of participation in co-management.

The current reality of participatory practice, however, does not often meet this ideal. Instead, the terrain of participation has been polarized. Some outside researchers and consultants use participation as a method of gaining credibility and/or valuable insider knowledge, but without any real community input into the design, practice and outputs of the research. This has increasingly been the case insofar as the participatory method has been co-opted to serve state or corporate interests (Murdoch, 1997; Stiefel and Wolfe, 1994). Others espouse a process whereby insiders have complete control over the entire research process, from the identification of areas and issues where research is needed, to the design and delivery of the methodology and the dissemination of the information and research findings (Bishop, 1996; de Paoli, 1999; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; Weber-Pillwax, 2001). Although there is arguably a place for these models,[11] they are predicated on an inversely unequal power relationship, and thus miss out on the unique benefits of a truly co-operative process in producing new knowledge and a stronger basis for decision making.

The polarization of participatory practice exposes a fundamental weakness in Lockhart's model in neglecting to account for the structural constraints to the kind of balance of insider and outsider knowledges that he advocates. For Lockhart, the insider–outsider dialectic takes place on an uncomplicated epistemological ground in which sensitivity to the complex is noted as latent within research terms of reference (Lockhart, 1982: 163). In reality, however, both knowledges are imbedded in contradictory and contested socio-cultural, politico-economic and ideological contexts (Howitt, 2001; Nadasdy, 2003). In privileging the outsider as subject-agent and conduit of ideas, Lockhart's theory effectively erases this complexity. Even the unitary 'insider' concept does not account for the heterogeneity that acts as a simultaneously disintegrating and binding force within a community (Benton, 2003; Mohan, 1999). In failing to account for these complicating factors, practitioners are left open to co-optation, such that they unsuspectingly become agents for legitimizing the status quo (Cooke, 2004) — quite the opposite of the radical origins of participatory methodology in the movements for social change. The history of participation in Canada's North provides a glimpse into the dangers of co-optation and potentialities for a return to the roots of participatory methodology as a tool for social transformation.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE OUTSIDER IN THE NORTH

Development efforts amongst Aboriginal groups in Canada have generally paralleled development trends and theories internationally. Federal attempts

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11. In some models, an outside researcher may need to consult with local community members on some aspect of their research. In others, the community may want to contract an outside researcher to do research on their behalf.

at assimilation of Aboriginal groups into mainstream society from 1867 onwards largely failed (Shewell, 2002). When valuable mineral and petroleum resources were discovered in the Canadian North in the early twentieth century, the government was forced to explore other strategies for co-existence with Aboriginal inhabitants of the region. The first step was the negotiation of Treaty 8 in 1900 and Treaty 11 in 1921.[12] Although considerable wealth was extracted from the Yellowknife gold mines, Norman Wells oilfield and Great Bear Lake Port Radium uranium mine, it was not until 1965 that the Government of Canada's Cabinet approved a proposal to establish a community development programme for the Aboriginal population of Canada. Ironically, Aboriginal groups were neither consulted nor involved in the development of the proposal (Shewell, 2002).

This new community development policy instituted a pattern of involving Aboriginal populations in government decisions, resulting in frequent hearings, consultations, meetings or other forms of 'public input' (Assheton-Smith, 1987). However, the lack of local organizations that could facilitate interfacing with outside agencies made it difficult for outsiders to find out what local people wanted. By the end of the 1960s it became the mandate of a number of community development structures in government to 'organize the local Indians', and school committees, health committees and housing committees sprang up across the Northwest Territories (Assheton-Smith, 1987). Added to this mix were the community development efforts of various southern-based non-governmental organizations, including the Indian-Eskimo Association, the Company of Young Canadians, and the Anglican and Catholic churches. In 1973, as plans were being developed for a gas pipeline through the Mackenzie Valley in the Northwest Territories, the issue of participation surfaced when a caveat against development was registered by the Dene people on the basis that the legal status of the treaties, and thus Crown title to the land, remained in question. The caveat was upheld by Justice William Morrow, and as a result the federal government was forced to establish a public inquiry into the impacts and effects of the pipeline, headed by Justice Thomas Berger (Funk, 1985; Page, 1986). In 1975, the year after the establishment of the Berger Inquiry, the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories passed a Declaration of Dene Nationhood. This manifesto was inspired by third world anti-colonial movements, and asserted the right to self-determination, a just land settlement and recognition of Dene nationhood.[13] The Dene battle against the pipeline resonated across Canada, and was a key factor in Berger's recommendation for a moratorium on development until Aboriginal land claims could be settled (Berger, 1977). This marked a turning point in the political economy of the north.

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12. See Fumoleau (2004) for a critical account of the process by which Treaties 8 and 11 were 'negotiated', including oral accounts from the Dene perspective.
13. For more on this, see Watkins (1977).

The federal government proceeded to establish mechanisms to deal with comprehensive land claim negotiations, based on official recognition that the original treaties covering the Northwest Territories had not been fulfilled. Between 1984 and 1993, agreements were signed with the Inuvialuit, the Gwich'in and the Sahtu Dene and Métis in the western arctic, and the Inuit of the eastern arctic (now the territory of Nunavut). These agreements included cash and land settlements, and provisions for participation in resource management and future self-government negotiations. The Sahtu and Gwich'in agreements were the catalyst for the establishment of the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act in 1998. This federal legislation established a co-operative management regime with a purpose 'to enable residents of the Mackenzie Valley to participate in the management of its resources for the benefit of the residents and of other Canadians'.[14]

During this period, scientific research in the North was increasingly being criticized for its failure to consult, seek permission, inform and report back to communities on research that involved them (Freeman, 1977). For example, a Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Task Force in 1983 reported that in northern Canada little funding was available for development research or for research on priorities determined by native people themselves (Assheton-Smith, 1987). Aboriginal leaders and educators continued to assert that most university-based northern research was biased towards academic needs, and thus research was still regarded as a colonial activity (Assheton-Smith, 1987). It became clear that the legislated right to participation established through the land claims process must be reflected in the evolution of federal and territorial policy, including requirements for the inclusion of traditional Aboriginal knowledge in research and decision making (Legat, 1991). Over the past decade, this has been most notably manifested in government sponsorship of countless workshops, meetings and conferences (often in the territorial capital of Yellowknife) which seem to occupy official Aboriginal leaders almost full time (arguably to the detriment of community-based activities).[15] The recognition and negotiation of land claims in itself entails participatory policy. Beyond land claims, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) has enshrined the concept of 'partnership' with Aboriginal peoples in its proclaimed vision for 'sustainable' northern development (INAC, 2000). INAC's Northern Contaminants Division has modelled this approach, particularly with respect to its partnership with Déline in an Action Plan related to research on the

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14. Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, 9.1. Available online: http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/M-0.2/79433.html

15. See for example Ellen Bielawski's (2003) account of the overwhelming consultation and negotiation schedule required of Aboriginal representatives prior to development of the BHP diamond mine.

impacts of the Port Radium uranium mine[16] (Canada-Déline Uranium Table, 2001, 2005).

CO-OPTATION

Beyond the very laudable policy frameworks of the north, the actual practice of the various levels of government has been fraught with contradiction. Both Bateyko (2003) and Nadasdy (2003) have recently exposed critical weaknesses in the co-management structures of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, observing that bureaucratic discourse tends to subsume Aboriginal voice. Underlying participatory rhetoric and process is often manipulation of the participatory apparatus in order to support corporate interests and government revenue generation (Wallington and Barns, 2001). This is evident in the relative ease and speed with which major diamond mines and petroleum developments are proceeding in the North (Bielawski, 2003; Cizek, 2005). Lockie et al. (2001: 6–7) note that the economic rationality underlying bureaucratic processes 'reduces natural resources to their economic exchange value and public involvement in decision making to a "thin" procedural politics'.

 The co-optation of participatory methodology in the social, political, economic and environmental activities of government coincided with a blossoming of the 'Participatory Action Research' (PAR) school in the Canadian North (Robinson, 1996). In the years since the publication of Lockhart's work, participatory researchers and development practitioners in Canada have observed that a participatory methodology is particularly effective in empowering Aboriginal communities (Jackson, 1993; Ryan and Robinson, 1990; St Denis, 1992). This approach has also found favour with Aboriginal communities in the Canadian North (Castellano, 1993; Johnson, 1992). The ability of Aboriginal communities to determine their future is related to their ability to generate meaningful research. For example, comprehensive land and occupancy studies since the 1970s (Jackson, 1993; Warry, 1990) and,

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16. Port Radium, on Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories, was the site of nearly continuous mining operations for radium (for cancer radiation treatment) and later uranium (for nuclear weapons development during World War II) between 1932 and 1964. Many of the men from Déline worked as labourers and ore-carriers during the mines' operation while their families lived in the Port Radium area. It was only during the 1990s that health and environmental information was made available to the community. With the help of outside researchers and community development practitioners, the people of Déline initiated research into the effects of the mine on the health of people and the environment. The people of Déline recognized that lawsuits, and the secretive out-of-court settlements that typically result, would not resolve the issue (cf. Robinson's 1993 observations with respect to the Navajo experience). They therefore called for a response from mine proponents (Déline Dene Band, 1998) and negotiated with the Government of Canada to resolve the human and environmental issues surrounding the Port Radium mine through the development of a participatory process directed by the Canada Déline Uranium Table.

more recently, claims and self-government initiatives are presented as examples of PAR research. This connection between participation and community development has been the basis for affirmations that participatory research is congruent with Aboriginal worldviews, allowing meaningful and informative questions from the perspective of the research participants (Bishop, 1994; Castellano, 1986; Jackson, 1993). In addition, Hoare et al. (1993) suggest that participatory methodology may contribute to a balancing of the historical record with Aboriginal voice; enhancement of programme effectiveness and longevity; and healing of historically induced social ills.

Yet little published literature exists documenting or analysing the results of participatory research in the Northwest Territories. For example, Ryan and Robinson (1990) speculate that the documentation of PAR projects exists mainly as 'grey literature' and that many practitioners have introduced and utilized this research approach without realizing their links to the PAR approach. A preliminary literature search provides some evidence that participatory research has been mainstreamed within northern research culture to the extent that nearly all research is expected to contain some participatory component. Furthermore, research licensing and university ethical reviews now require that research accounts for community interests, and some communities are developing their own research guidelines. Research programmes that consciously adopt participatory methodology have been principally in the fields of health, culture and education, and have most often been oriented to programme development within state institutions. Thus the critical element in the research is substantially reduced. Regrettably, this is not just a northern Canadian problem;[17] an analysis of participatory methods in Africa also indicates that the application of these methods has become an oral tradition whose techniques remain relatively immune from sustained independent critique (Goebel, 1998, cited in Mohan, 1999).

In theory, participatory methods incorporate an evaluation phase as part of the iterative planning and action process (Heron and Reason, 1997; Kemmis and McTaggert, 2000). This phase can easily become self-congratulatory, with auto-critique focused almost exclusively on technical matters specific to project implementation, rather than broader questions related to social impacts (Cleaver, 2001). The weakening of the evaluation phase reflects the increasing role of participatory research and development in reinforcing existing power/knowledge structures. The relative autonomy of this approach can no longer be taken for granted.

Notwithstanding the intrinsic contradictions of policy and practice, the fact is that the participatory process has become the new official context

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17. Veltmeyer (2004) argues that the World Bank deliberately developed participatory procedures as a strategy for co-optation, preempting political resistance to austerity and restructuring programmes in Latin American countries. This strategy has been highly successful through the unwitting participation of well-intentioned participatory community development practitioners.

for community research and development in the Canadian North. Outsiders, including government/co-management board staff and contractors for community government and academics, are now required to apply participatory methods. In effect, participation is being applied to the legitimation and strengthening of the state apparatus — whether at the level of Municipal, Territorial, Aboriginal or Federal governments. The increase in democratic accountability required of state institutions is commendable. However, the incorporation of a participatory methodology within the domain of the state leads it far from its intended purpose. In the context of the current mineral and petroleum exploration and extraction boom (GNWT, 2004; TD Economics, 2003), it appears that participatory methods are being applied to facilitate community consensus in support of industrial interests. A return to the roots of the participatory method as an agent for social change requires the creation of a new space of resistance that is able to take on the challenge of a changing political economy in the Canadian North.

BEYOND CRITIQUE: EMERGENT POSSIBILITIES

The community of Déline has embarked on an initiative to develop a new participatory model through the creation of the Déline Náowéré Dahk'e (Déline Knowledge Centre), with the goal of mobilizing traditional and scientific knowledge in a variety of research and development activities (Bayha et al., 2003). The catalyst for the Knowledge Centre has been a major multidisciplinary programme to investigate the environmental and human impacts of the Port Radium uranium mine. Aware of the standards required for achieving success on an issue with national implications, the community has hired a number of outside researchers to assist with uranium-related research projects.[18] The Knowledge Centre process has gone a step further in establishing formal partnerships with outside organizations, including universities and colleges. At first glance, the advantages of these partnerships seem obvious — providing the community with the support required to obtain long term academic research funding, access to the disciplines of the broader research community, and a continuity of relationship that is often lacking with NGOs and consultant businesses. While the development of the Knowledge Centre is still in its infancy, great strides have been made in applying the concept and philosophy within new and proposed projects and programmes. As a result, a draft regional land use plan, a community-based Great Bear Lake watershed management plan, and the co-operatively managed and protected National Historic Site cultural landscape, Sahoyúé-Ehdacho, all incorporate a significant role for a community-based knowledge centre. This has

18. These include: human dose reconstruction of historical uranium exposure for an epidemiological study; an oral history; and environmental contaminant studies (Canada-Déline Uranium Table, 2001, 2005).

effectively shifted the focus of participation from institutionalized closed spaces to a community-claimed space (Gaventa, 2004). This claimed space is more autonomous from power holders (Gaventa, 2004) and is more organic, based on emergent common concerns (Cornwall, 2002).

It has to be acknowledged that contemporary Canadian academic institutions are in some respects weakly positioned to play a partnership role in meaningful community research and development. The bias of participatory methods to community interests is often perceived to be misguided or even threatening to the academic disciplines, 'evoking the risks of loss of objectivity, heightened relativism, censorship or politicization of the process' (Warry, 1990: 71). The reluctance for academics to accept participatory methodologies has led to a lack of training and teachings in this area (Gibbon, 2002; Hall, 1993), as well as exclusion when considering academic standards (Attwood, 1997, as cited in Gibbon, 2002). As a result, students and communities are trailing in terms of innovative ideas and solutions to local problems.

The gulf between university/college and community has been exacerbated in the current era of government funding cuts and a corresponding increase in corporate funding, such that the autonomy of the university may be increasingly compromised (Greenwood and Levin, 1998). Private endowment funding of Canada's universities has more than doubled between 1995 and 2002 (AUCC, 2004), whereas between 1993 and 1998 total public funding decreased by 13.3 per cent in constant dollars (CAUT, 1999). With increasing private investment, corporate interests have greater purchase on determining the direction of research, re-orienting existing priorities and programmes, and redefining knowledge as market goods (CAUT, 1999); this leads to what has been described as a 'leasing of the ivory tower' (Soley, 1995: 9).

At the same time, community members have articulated a fear (well founded in past experience) that their knowledge may be misused or distorted, and their control of research process and questions reduced, through incorporation and distillation into the domain of academic discourse (Nadasdy, 2003). For example, at the 2003 Community-University Expo conference in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, participation by community members was minimal and the format and language of academic presentations were often inaccessible to a community audience. Under cover of the rhetoric of partnership and participation, it appears that academia continues to have a silencing and marginalizing impact on communities. As former Assembly of First Nations Grand Chief Ovide Mercredi noted: 'by not allowing new light to shine on existing knowledge systems within their cultural context, Canadian universities are missing a great opportunity to help produce an enlightened society' (Mercredi, 2003: 2). In fact, Canadian university and participatory practitioners both find themselves in a similar predicament. If both are increasingly co-opted by state and corporate interests, it would seem that we have arrived at a double-bind. How might it be possible to break through to a genuine partnership for social change?

The Althusserian concept of relative autonomy describes the partial dissociation of ideological functions from economic determinations. Nicos Poulantzas elaborated this concept with respect to state institutions, arguing that the state may be used for the progressive redistribution of power, since it encompasses the totality of the political domain (Poulantzas, 1978). This concept has a certain intuitive attraction with respect to the traditional domain of the university. But the assumption is made that social change is dependent on interventions from above. The participatory perspective 'from below' would view the appearance of autonomy as no more than a reflection of the relative weakness of the state apparatus in the face of resistance. According to this view, for example, student resistance has played a key determining role in preventing the complete capitulation of universities to corporate and state interests. Similarly, it is likely that full community partnership and participation in university-sponsored research will only emerge as a result of interventions in which communities demand that their interests be addressed as a condition of any research activity that may affect them.

Granted, such interventions require a certain level of autonomy at the community level, and thus the problem of co-optation within the community needs to be addressed. A dialectical analysis offers the possibility that the contradictions of the co-opted, top-down participatory process itself gives rise to the conditions for autonomous agency. State-sponsored participatory processes give rise to expectations that exceed the constraints of existing structures. When these expectations are ignored, aspirations quickly turn to anger, or worse, apathy. If they can be harnessed, however, they can turn into positive action.

Our experiences and analysis of this issue have led us to conclude that the academic outsider is uniquely positioned to facilitate a form of 'generative participation'. Occupying a semi-autonomous location with respect to both university and the community, the academic outsider is able to generate an inter-animated dialogicality (Bakhtin, 1993). Eric Olin Wright (1985) has described a layer of professional employees who maintain a certain level of control over their work, and thus have the relational properties of both the ruling and oppressed classes. Their 'ruling class' properties provide them with the legitimacy required for entry into the community. Insofar as they engage community members in a participatory process beyond the scope of the governing structures that constrain them, they are able to nurture a culture of critique and self-activity. From this will evolve the analysis and confidence required for the community to demand full participation in all phases of the research partnership with the academic institution. The academic outsider is doubly disciplined in being accountable both to community partners and academic requirements for the production of knowledge. In building a relationship with a community, the outsider is therefore required to facilitate critical interventions in both community and university contexts. Such a relationship opens up once again the space for autonomous

community research and agency that has been foreclosed in the history of co-optation.

This may be seen as problematic in that participatory researchers and development practitioners are not always associated with universities. Yet the concept of relative autonomy allows for a broad and flexible conception of accountability to the academic disciplines. Neither should this be seen as an academic versus development issue; after all, development practitioners are often involved in research and academic researchers in development. It has long been observed that research and researcher can become agents of development and change in the process of engaging in research (Swantz, 1974). In the 1970s the emphasis on community development and corresponding strong criticism of universities as powerful ivory towers led many academics to abandon their institutions to work in a more activist environment (Hall, 1998). Many of these people later returned to work effectively in both environments. Moreover, we do not suggest that this relationship is an easy one. As Mercredi succinctly notes, research and development do not exist in some 'objective political vacuum' (2003: 3). On the contrary, the space for autonomy in the insider–outsider relationship is the uneasy outcome of struggle on both sides. Yet the convergence of critical insider and outsider knowledges in a space achieved with such difficulty has great potential in the forging of new knowledge.

OUTSIDERS AND BEYOND

Now more than ever it is evident that global capitalism has a direct impact on the most remote of northern Canadian communities. The Northwest Territories has the fastest growing economy in Canada, fuelled largely by multinational-driven industrial development. Meanwhile, the Government of the Northwest Territories continues to apply austerity measures through cuts to social programmes[19] while the federal Government of Canada's northern department employs a dual conservation and exploitation mandate,[20] resulting in a complex mix of processes affecting communities and their traditional territories. In the glare of oncoming industrial development, Aboriginal beneficiaries are given no choice but to make do with development Impact/Access and Benefits Agreements 'negotiated' effectively at gunpoint with industry proponents (Bielawski, 2003). Faced with these pressures of

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19. For analysis of the Northwest Territories' fiscal crisis during the current resource extraction boom, see Cizek (2003).
20. Because the Northwest Territories is a territory and not a province of Canada, multiple levels of government operate in overlapping areas and sometimes conflicting situations. The federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development provides much of the core programme funding to natural resource programmes and is able to influence, both directly and indirectly, the direction and success of development.

capital accumulation facilitated by the state, northern Aboriginal communities have responded by pursuing locally controlled activities. In so doing, they have often neglected to account for global processes.

Participatory methodologies that affirm and incorporate local or traditional knowledge aim to reverse damaging interventions in community research and development that treat communities as passive objects. Unfortunately this reversal has gone so far that the 'locality is reified as a hermetic social and political site' (Mohan, 1999: 47). Linked to this, the insider–outsider problem is seen as the principal obstacle to community research and development processes. Posing the problem in this manner paradoxically reinstates the outsider as the central historical agent. Moreover, the focus on the local and its contamination by 'outsiders' tends to cause the state to disappear (Mohan, 1999). Trapped within the domain of the local and the reductive insider–outsider duality, Aboriginal communities are unable to address the very real disempowering operations of state and corporate structures originating far beyond community borders.

From the standpoint of autonomy, the dialectical interpenetration of insider and outsider allows for the recognition of power, or of disempowerment, as it operates within and beyond the local. Such recognition is the basis for building the forms of multi-scale cross-community, regional, national and international solidarity necessary to have an impact on global processes. The Dene Nation applied this strategy in its resistance to the Mackenzie Valley pipeline in the 1970s. Indigenous peoples, including Aboriginal peoples in Canada, have a key role to play in establishing ethical and ecological constraints to the cold logic of capital accumulation (Alfred, 2005). In so doing, they create the political basis for strengthening public accountability in development processes. For this reason, it is in the self-interest of 'outsiders', Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to build bonds of solidarity and support for Aboriginal communities in their efforts to achieve self-determination beyond the bounds of the state.

In Déline, where the impacts of the looming Mackenzie Valley gas pipeline[21] — the largest industrial resource development in Canada's history — will soon be experienced, support for true self-determination can be seen in the dialectical intersection of participatory research, development and institutional contexts. As a collaborative yet community-based project incorporating development and research, the Déline Knowledge Centre is attempting to create a space where 'western science and traditional

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21. In his radical 'inquiry without walls' into the proposed development of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline in the Canadian North (Berger, 1977), Chief Justice Berger utilized the predictive socioeconomic tools of the day but, visiting every community in the western arctic, allowed for public and open critique of those practices. The result was a ten-year moratorium on large-scale development in the valley until Aboriginal land claims were fully settled in which people could participate at a more meaningful level in government and develop a more sustainable form of economic development.

knowledge are located on equal epistemological and practical footing, where learning is bi-directional, and research can take place in the core themes of health, culture and environment' (Bayha et al., 2003: 166). A key factor in its future success is the role of institutions — local Aboriginal government as well as outside governments, NGOs and university researchers. The concern with the nexus between participation theory, the insider–outsider dialectic and multi-scale co-optation is evident in the complex of initiatives that Déline has embarked upon, all of which are linked to the Knowledge Centre and its objective to address fragmentation of knowledge in the Déline District. Examples of these community initiatives include the Great Bear Lake Watershed Management Planning process;[22] the Déline Uranium Team's research into long-term health impacts of historical uranium mining on traditional lands;[23] and the permanent protection of Sahoyúé-Ehdacho cultural landscapes under the Northwest Territories Protected Areas Strategy.[24]

These initiatives necessitate what Alexander Lockhart intuitively described as a dialectical process of mutual learning within the mediation of inside–outside knowledge systems. Orthodox resource management processes are inevitably challenged in this process. While all of these initiatives are community driven and based, we remain concerned as to the level of co-optation that is occurring under the guise of participation. Though none of these collaborative projects involves direct corporate participation, the promotion of industrial natural resource exploitation and development is interwoven throughout all levels of government in the Northwest Territories. Rather than take a 'build it and they will come' approach, the Déline Knowledge Centre can be seen as a philosophical and guiding process rather than a physical infrastructural centre. Locally based resource management projects such as those described above retain a dialectical approach in that they are participatory, inclusive and open to challenge.

The unique positioning of the academic outsider with weak ties to the community lends itself to this approach; the advantages of weak ties apply more broadly to the insider–outsider dialectic (Granovetter, 1973). Institutional linkages are weak on the one hand and community ties are loose on the other, allowing for a balance of independence with social responsibility. Yet, the spectre of co-optation remains ever-present. With the increasing demand for, and rate of, industrial development, and the prospect of economic benefits in the form of resource royalties and employment opportunities to

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22. For more information and documentation see the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society's website at http://www.cpaws.org/chapters/nwt
23. See the community website at: http://www.delineuraniumteam.com/ and the Government of Canada's website: http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nr/prs/s-d2005/02705bk_e.html
24. For more information see the Government of Northwest Territories website: http://www.nwtwildlife.com/pas/ and New Parks North: http://newparksnorth.org/default.htm

communities, it is too easy for an unchallenged policy of economic development to dominate communities and governments. A dialectical approach to participation, research and development activities must include individuals and organizations that are able to challenge, question current processes and ultimately create a true process of sustainable development.

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