

**Inuit Identity and Technology: An exploration of the use of
Facebook by Inuit youth**

by

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**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

Master of Arts

in

Sociology

**Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada**

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Abstract

This thesis engages in a broad discussion of technology, communications, identity, and cultural change in the Canadian Arctic. Using an ethnographic methodological strategy, it looks at how a group of Inuit college students in Iqaluit use the online social network Facebook. It was found that Inuit youth are intensive users of Facebook, basically using it to communicate with their communities of origin, to maintain friends and family ties across a vast territory, to access cultural referents on Facebook groups, discuss issues, shape their identity, ask questions, access pictures of the land and recall traditions. In these Facebook groups, there is a cultural memory and remembrance of the past collectively established through the hypertext of Facebook which further shows how technology is incorporated and adapted to a culture rather than being undermined by that technology's incorporation. In this sense, Inuit youth "travel" through Facebook using it for their own purposes such as accessing cultural referents of the land in a multimedia interface. This research also argues, from an actor-network perspective, that Inuit youth are immersed in a culture of connectivity (van Dijck, 2013) through which social life and experiences are increasingly mediated by social network sites.

In the evolution of the Information Society, particular attention must be given to the special situation of indigenous peoples, as well as to the preservation of their language and their cultural legacy. (World Summit on the Information Society, Declaration of Principles, Article 15, 2003).

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the participants for their help during my fieldwork at the Nunatta Residence and the Arctic College in Iqaluit. I also thank my supervisors Carlos and Claudio for their guidance during this process.

I am very grateful to Will and Michael Castleton for their support and numerous grammar checks.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends both in the North and in the South.

I dedicate this thesis to Isabel, Yanet, and especially, Mariana.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis engages with discussions around social change in the Canadian Arctic and the relation between technology and cultural identity. The focus will be on the use of information and communication technology by Inuit youth. Specifically, it will examine how young Inuit college students in Iqaluit, within the ages of 18 to 28 years old, are using an online social network such as Facebook in the context of their day-to-day life and life-world, and how it is affecting Inuit youth in the interplay between culture and technology.

The way in which some indigenous peoples have been using social media and online social networks has been discussed in several opportunities (Taylor, 2011; Krebs, 2011; CBC News, 2013) and some academics have explored the subject (e.g. Molyneaux, O'Donnell, Kakekaspan, Walmark, Budka and Gibson, 2012; Carpenter, Gibson, Kakekaspan and O'Donnell, 2013; Scobie and Wachowich, 2010; McMahon, 2013). It is interesting to examine the use of Facebook as a tool for communication in the Arctic given its extensive use by Inuit people and the fact this issue has not been directly researched; this thesis aims at filling that gap. In spite of the lack of official quantitative information regarding the uses of information and communication technologies in Nunavut, it only takes some time surfing through different pages in Facebook, or looking at Nunavut's news sites such as Nunatsiaq News to see how Facebook has acquired relevance regarding communications across the territory and the organization of online

groups¹ (Scobie and Rodgers, 2013). The site is extensively used and has acquired a special presence in the media-scape, and plays an important role in defining Inuit presence on the Internet.

Previous literature on how indigenous peoples have used media and communication technologies tended to look at this relation positively (Ginsburg, 1994, 2008; Budka, 2009a, 2009b; Dyson and Underwood, 2006; Santo, 2008; Krone, 2008, 2007; Landzelius, 2001, 2006; Nathan, 2000; Prins, 2000; Gearhard, 2005; Alexander, Adamson, Daborn, Houston and Tootoo, 2010; Scobie and Wachowich, 2010, Christensen, 2003, 2006; McMahon, 2013). For indigenous peoples such as the Inuit, new communication tools and media are a way to enable culturally and community-focused goals (McMahon, 2013; Srinivasan, 2006, 2012; Taylor, 2012, Young-Ing, 2003) and to establish and negotiate identity in a globalized world (Pietikainen, 2010; Aarsæther, Riabova and Bærenholdt, 2004; Longboan, 2010). Information and communication technologies have been pointed out as tools that can be used for indigenous cultural transmission (Harris and Harris, 2011; Carpenter et al. 2013; Landzelius, 2003), and some researchers have indicated their usefulness to learn from elders and for users around the world to learn from Inuit (Alexander, 2011), especially when concerning websites (Alexander et al., 2009, Budka 2009, Budka et al., 2009, Budka 2012, Aarsæther, Riabova and Bærenholdt, 2004) and multimedia technology (Gearheard, 2005).

At the same time, however, some scholars have indicated that there could also be a negative side about indigenous peoples engaging with media and communication

¹ For example, Facebook groups addressing pressing social problems such as high grocery prices, increases in crime rates, LGQBT community issues, or food security, are usually found on Nunatsiqonline.com, Nunavut's main press outlet.

technologies (Ginsburg, 1991; Krone, 2007, 2008; Evans, 2002; Santo, 2008; Nathan, 2000; Dyson and Underwood, 2006; Fair, 2000; Ess, 2005). These authors propose that indigenous peoples accessing media could result in the loss of culture and that they could be “further colonized”.

My position is that cultures transform and adapt (Salzman, 1980), and that technology must be understood in that context. Cultures and identity boundaries (Barth, 1969) are constantly re-negotiated. Nowadays, given the interconnectedness of a networked world it is impossible to think of a population as isolated. Rather, any social analysis of a given culture or society should be studied amidst that network and according to the social transformations fostered by this interconnection (Castells, 2000; Castles, 2001; Appadurai, 1998). This is why Inuit who use Facebook are not “less Inuit”, nor do they lose “Inuit-ness”. In fact, it could be argued that the appropriation of communication technologies and a presence on the Internet is necessary for the enhancement of Inuit culture and to negotiate their cultural presence in today’s world. Using the internet on their own terms is fundamental in order to be in a better position for communicating across a vast territory, and pursuing political goals such as the negotiation of citizenship. For these tasks, online social networks can be a great tool as they provide a multimedia platform to exchange information and for communicating among a disperse population.

With this research I seek to make an analytical contribution to the relation between Inuit culture, cultural change, and technology. I will address a gap in the existing literature by applying concepts of actor-network theory (ANT) and of the social construction of technology (SCOT) perspective. The ANT approach is missing in

previous analyses of the impact of technology on Inuit users², and I will engage with some SCOT theoretical tools not considered by previous literature.

While doing fieldwork in the capital of Nunavut, Iqaluit, during September and part of October 2013, I observed how a communication technology such as Facebook is being used to facilitate access to the land, to gain familiarity with traditional Inuit activities, and to engage in dialogues of cultural significance through a multimedia interface. It was clear from my observations that the use of Facebook is not making Inuit youth “less Inuit” or “further colonized”. In fact, it is clear that it fosters communication and that is being used to discuss and manage Inuit representations of themselves. Technologies, however, cannot be comprehended independently from the socio-cultural, economic or political circumstances in which they are introduced (Aporta and Higgs, 2005). Technologies, users, and culture shape each other in a complex interplay (Latour, 2005), and this research will align with this conceptual approach.

Observers have always noted the resourcefulness of Inuit, particularly regarding their successful dealings with such an extreme and changing environment as the Arctic. In this environment Inuit thrive and have been able to deal successfully with social pressures and cultural change. Since the first contacts with Europeans, Inuit incorporated technologies into their own activities and practices through a process of appropriation (see Damas, 2000; Tester, 2010), as can be observed in the use of rifles for hunting. Rifles allowed Inuit to shoot and hunt from afar, changing their hunting practices, as there was less need to approach the animals to be hunted. However, such transformation did not ‘disrupt’ Inuit practices in any significant way.

² For example, Mark Palmer and Robert Rundstrom’s (2005) critique of Aporta and Higgs (2005) study of the impact of GPS on Inuit traveling, which is an antecedent of the relation between technology, Inuit culture and identity, and social change, stresses that an ANT analysis would be revealing for the topic.

It has been said that Inuit have transitioned through rapid change “from prehistory to the atomic age in one generation” (Soukoup, 2006: 240). Such a context must be considered when looking at how younger Inuit generations fill the breach and negotiate their own identity as Inuit, with access to the massive information and communication channels that the Internet provides. Information and communication technologies certainly have the potential of bringing important social and cultural change among the Inuit. They are also instruments that are being appropriated and incorporated into social practices that may foster the formation of communities; they enable communication on their own terms within Nunavut and with the world.

In this research I developed an ethnographic methodological strategy based on observation, interviews, and digital content analysis. I performed what Clifford Geertz (1998) described as a “deep hanging out”, which led to the interviews and conversations that inform this research. I spent five weeks in the Arctic College’s residence in Iqaluit, where I interacted with Inuit youth from different communities in Nunavut. The residence is called Nunatta Residence, and popularly known in Iqaluit as “the Old Res”. It harbors Inuit students from all across Nunavut with whom I shared the five weeks.

I will analyze the use of Facebook in a context in which a culture changes and adapts. During my fieldwork, I understood in practice what an important tool for communication social networks are, specifically Facebook. Similar to most people around the world, Inuit students at the residence spend hours on this site as well as on YouTube, and often go through sleepless nights surfing the web. This thesis explores what the uses and implications of Facebook are among Inuit students, but I will start by reviewing debates on indigenous use of media. In the first chapter I will critically engage

with the debate of the “Faustian dilemma”. This broadly means the trade-off for indigenous peoples of losing culture while accessing mass media. The anthropologist Faye Ginsburg proposed the idea that having access to media would at the same time mean further colonization (1991, 1993). Social networks, however, present different challenges. Through what Manuel Castells defines as *mass self-communication*, namely, networks of communication from many to many through the Web 2.0, the problems of the Faustian dilemma and of cultural hegemony are avoided, given the user-generated content of mass self-communication. I will also argue with the Faustian dilemma, as its conceptual idea implies that identity is an essential and fixed thing.

In the second chapter I will discuss information and communication technologies and the notion of identity and cultural boundaries. Here I refer to how identities are negotiated and established online as well as offline. As shown in my analysis, Facebook is a communication website in which dialogues between Inuit on what it means to be Inuit take place (along with all sorts of other dialogues), collective memories are built, and knowledge is consulted and shared through Facebook. Anyone who has a Facebook account can join in these conversations, but for Inuit youth some pages about hunting or the land seem to facilitate a special connection to who they are. Those pages are a way to stay connected with traditions while studying at the college and living in the residence. Even though hunting remains an integral part of the culture and socio-economic fabric of being Inuit, the fact of being enrolled at the Arctic College inserts the students in a different environment away from their communities, friends and families. While doing the research, I often heard comments like “I’d rather be hunting or fishing”. These Facebook pages create a form of nostalgia which is shared and discussed with everyone.

In this chapter I also discuss research that has shown how the Internet can be a means to reflect on an adaptable and ever changing identity, and indeed a way to present an Inuit identity in their own terms. Furthermore, I also discuss the role of networks in the Arctic, how they have been always present as channels of communication and social interaction. Networks were firstly enabled by trails on the land and sea, allowing physical mobility, not only of people, but also of ideas and artifacts (Aporta, 2009). It is possible to make an analogy between these traditional networks with online social networks, and explore the nature of the dialogues taking place in such structures. Moreover, in this second chapter I also describe online social network sites' architecture and functionalities, and review what has been said regarding these sites and indigenous peoples in Canada.

In chapter three I examine the issue of Inuit identity, attempting to map what it means to be Inuit today. Principally, I make a review of different ethnographies on Inuit identity and try to identify the meaning of "Inuit-ness" in today's context of globalization and communication technologies. This approximation to Inuit identity helps understand the impact that an online social network such as Facebook may have, as well as the implications of its uses. The discussion on Inuit identity encompasses reviewing the indigenous life-world, from the phenomenology of hunters and gatherers to the changes that communication technologies bring to such a way of being-in-the-world. These perspectives help put in place the application of Facebook as a communication tool for cultural dialogues, for providing a sense of identity and collective memory.

In chapter four I introduce the critical part of this thesis by reviewing online social networks from a Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) and actor-network theory standpoint. Specifically, I will describe what different scholars have argued about online

social networks from these theoretical perspectives. I will pay special attention to the notion of *script*. What I want to show in this chapter is how Facebook is a socio-cultural-technical construct which scripts users to interact with the website in particular ways. The site's architecture is to some extent responsible for this script as the algorithms which rule the interface direct the usage. Therefore, I want to take a middle position between the determination of use, and the people's agency in the use of Facebook. I argue that, while the site provides a platform for sharing, conveying and negotiating identity in Inuit's own terms, Inuit are also embedded in scripts through algorithms contained in the architecture of Facebook. Thus, this thesis aims to contribute to the literature of how Facebook stands in the debate of scripted users and socio-cultural homogenization.

In the fifth chapter I explain the research questions and develop the methodological strategy used in this research. I used an ethnographic method, consisting of 'deep hanging out', observation, interviews, and digital ethnography of Facebook's interfaces. All of these were the product of my one-month fieldwork at the Arctic College main campus in Iqaluit, and at its students' residence called Nunatta but known as the *Old Res*.

In chapter six I present my data analysis which I structure into three different parts. First, I deal with how the young Inuit at the residence are using Facebook individually. Second, I investigate how young Inuit use it to access specific groups' pages, such as related to hunting stories, traditional knowledge, legends, and the land. All of these give cultural references which the young Inuit often access. Third, I will bring up the critical aspect of how online network sites script users, and show that Inuit are not alien to this script. I will look at the tension towards homogenization given that the site

drives users to share content and different activities. In relation to that homogenization, here I would point out some concepts in relation to the use of communication technologies, e. g., Castells (2009) notion that now communication technologies create a global culture around the value of communication.

Finally, in chapter seven, I bring back the research questions and try to suggest answers to them. I finish this thesis with some final thoughts and by pointing out some directions for future research. I indicate the positive aspects of the use of online social networks. I fundamentally argue that they are a very important means of communication and that they could be a source for social support given that content with cultural value is uploaded, shared and accessed on Facebook; thus, could provide a positive cultural reference.

CHAPTER ONE: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THE MEDIA

Introduction

In the course of examining the existent literature, my first focus is on critically analyzing the relation between media and users under the light of newer communication technologies such as the internet and Web 2.0. These bring the possibility to individual or collective users of sending many messages into the vast universe of the World Wide Web. Newer means of communication such as online social network sites shape a context in which an Inuit person or any other user has the opportunity to send and receive messages without restrictions in a multimedia interface. Indeed, as I will explain later, different group's Facebook pages are used to establish dialogues of what it means to be Inuit, for example, and to form a collective memory through sharing and exchanging content and information of 'old' practices and traditions.

It has been argued that there is a risk of indigenous peoples "losing culture" while accessing mass media: a problem that has been portrayed as a "Faustian dilemma" (see below). Through the Internet and what Manuel Castells defines as mass self-communication, however, this Faustian dilemma is ousted. Inuit and every other culture have the possibility of having a presence on the World Wide Web, uploading content on their own terms, to manage their own representations, to build identity communally by engaging in conversations with one another and with the world. This means that rather than communication technologies undermining cultural identity and promoting a "further colonization" given the "increasing reliance on 'Western' machines and modes of doing" (Landzelius, 2003: 12), they can actually be adapted and appropriated in the users' own

cultural terms. Thus, it is necessary to understand Inuit identity in adaptable and changing terms, as suggested by Cummings (2012). Inuit have long shown, for instance, how adopting new technologies has not meant a loss of cultural identity (Wenzel, 2009; Aporta and Higgs, 2005), and this is the case with communication technologies as well.

New interpretations of the Faustian dilemma and newer ways of communicating

Social scientists (e.g. Evans, 2002; Santo, 2004, 2008) have discussed how indigenous peoples use the media looking at what Faye Ginsburg (1991) has described as a “Faustian dilemma”. Faust is the character from the homonymous novel by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe who faces the dilemma of being highly successful, yet dissatisfied with his life. To resolve this situation Faust makes a pact with the Devil exchanging his soul for unlimited knowledge and mundane pleasures. In comparison, Ginsburg (1991) argued that indigenous peoples are accessing mass media at the price of trading off their culture, life-worlds, and epistemologies. Ginsburg (1991) raised the issue of the Faustian dilemma focusing on television productions in the hands of aboriginal Australians; on the one hand, she proposes that

...when other forms are no longer effective, indigenous media offers a possible means –social, cultural and political – for reproducing and transforming cultural identity among people who have experienced massive, political, geographic, and economic disruption. The capabilities of media (...) are being used effectively to mediate, literally, historically produced social ruptures and to help construct identities that link past and present in ways appropriate to contemporary conditions (p. 94).

But she further discusses how

...indigenous and minority people have faced a kind of *Faustian dilemma* [my italics]. On the one hand, they are finding new modes for expressing indigenous identity through media and gaining access to film and video to serve their own needs and ends. On the other hand, the spread of communication technology such as home video and satellite downlinks threatens to be a final assault on culture, language, imagery, relationship between generations and respect for traditional knowledge (p. 96).

Media and communication technology, according to Ginsburg's view, prompts indigenous culture to change or to become hybridized³. Nowadays, however, the extension and scope of networks of communication connecting the world transform the perception of space and time (Castells, 2000, 2009, 2012; Qiu, 2013; Rahimi, 2000; Tubella, 2004) and foster social transformations (Castles, 2001). The shifts in culture and trade-offs due to the access to mass media need to be re-conceptualized given that anthropology has shown repeatedly that societies and cultures do not become extinct when they interact with foreign symbols or technologies. As expressed by Salzman (1980: 6), social change is "much less a society becoming something quite different than a society manifesting its fluidity and variability by reordering its parts, stressing some parts at the expense of others, and in this fashion, achieving flexibility and adaptability in both form and substance".

Indeed, Inuit culture has shown a great deal of adaptability to foreign influences. For example, rifles and skidoos were readily adopted and included in their life-world and appropriated as components of their cultural identity (Aporta and Higgs, 2005; Wenzel, 2009). During my ethnographic research with Inuit youth I understood how being Inuit involves activities as disparate as going hunting every now and then, uploading content to

³ Pietikainen (2008), for example, specifically explores the relation between the Sami peoples and the media, noting a resulting hybridization as well as the appropriation of communication technologies for their own ends.

Facebook, spending all night awake watching hip hop music videos on YouTube, adopting a hip hop aesthetics⁴ with baggy pants, hoodies, and baseball caps, discussing the old legends such as that you cannot whistle at the Northern lights, mixing English and Inuktitut. One of the older persons at the residence made it very clear to me that Facebook was an important part of his life. One of the first things he asked me when I met him was whether we could access Facebook from the computers in the residence's lounge. Later on, when talking to him, he repeatedly stressed that he was a hunter. He made it very clear that being an Inuk involved being a hunter and using Facebook. What may seem to be contradictory activities make sense in the context of a life-story in context, making Inuit identity a complex process involving both the so-called traditional practices and up-to-date communication technologies.

As posed by Ginsburg (1991), my position is that the Faustian dilemma does not stand when communication technologies such as Web 2.0 are appropriated by indigenous users⁵. This is particularly true for communication sites such as Facebook or video-sharing platforms such as YouTube. While the Faustian dilemma type-of-analysis has been used when studying unidirectional media outlets such as television, it does not seem to hold for interactive communication platforms such as online social networks or all that is included under the term Web 2.0 (Beer and Barrow, 2007). As Manuel Castells has described, information and communication technologies are a platform for a different type of communication which involves many senders and many receivers: i.e. mass-self communication, which sidesteps intermediate institutions (Castells, 2009, 2011, 2012).

Harald Prins (2000: 2) explains this idea with different words,

⁴ Research such as Marsh's (2009) shows the relevance of a hip-hop aesthetics for Inuit youth. It is as a means for re-interpreting, appropriating, and negotiating their culture nowadays.

⁵ The same logic applies for any other technology

Allowing instant gathering and spreading of almost unlimited information, the Internet serves as a mega-bulletin board without the filtering mechanisms of mainstream media. As such, it renders it difficult for governments and corporate print and broadcast media to be gatekeepers of information. (...) Quickly recognizing its strategic potential for global networking, information sharing, marketing, and political action, as well as other functions, a myriad of indigenous organizations and enterprises have become active on the Internet and have posted their own web sites. Particularly attractive to them is that this new medium enables them to creatively represent themselves on their own terms and according to their own aesthetic preferences to the entire world.

The Faustian dilemma from television to online social networks

The Faustian dilemma appears to be one between the power of aboriginal media as an opportunity for self-expression, for conveying their own concerns, life-worlds and identity, and the loss of culture. Internet and online social networks bring the possibility of a much extended reach, and thus a dramatic increase in the interactions and cultural exchanges available (Csonka and Schweitzer, 2004). Ginsburg (1991) discusses how television was perceived as ‘a new thing brought by colonization’, and was placed at the same level as diseases and alcoholism with their devastating effects. Following this line of reasoning, one could speculate that the increase of communications fostered by the internet would be lethal. Given that the internet opens up almost unlimited access to information, the symbols and meanings available on the World Wide Web would be tantamount to cultural death. But this depends on how a culture is defined. If a culture is seen as something to be conserved in a museum, which has certain essential characteristics, then, yes, it could be seen as cultural death. But if one understands cultures as something fluid, variable, adaptable (Salzman, 1980), and which undergo transformations in an interconnected world (Castles, 2001), then, cultural change is not to be seen as something perilous, but as the norm of being.

Ginsburg's (1991) warnings are worth considering, but her argument seems to suggest that media communications will potentially annihilate indigenous cultures. This observation does not stand if one considers culture as a fluid, adaptable and dynamic substance. Inuit are still Inuit while they watch TV and chat on Facebook – or I am still Uruguayan while accessing the same type of media, for that matter. Information and communication technologies instead of being a sword thrust towards the annihilation of culture can in fact be appropriated for people's own goals as a way of maintaining, conveying, and negotiating identity. In fact, Inuit need to access the Internet to manage the political structure of their own territory⁶. Thus, culture and technology interact and they can both have a synergetic effect.

It is clear, then, that the Internet has changed the media landscape to a degree where the Faustian dilemma must be revisited, as newer technologies are of a different kind in their interactions with people. The Faustian dilemma analysis seems to understand indigenous cultures as fixed entities, but identities and cultures cannot be conceived as static and as having essential components. Cultural shifts, adaptations, appropriations of foreign technologies and epistemologies are the norm. Thus, through ICTs, identity can be constructed through a large number of people as well as it could be a source for resistance, counter-power, and for promoting different interpretations (Castells, 2011, 2009, 2007; Hall, 1999; Vattimo, 1998; Dyson et al., 2007).

⁶For example, from the outset of the territory of Nunavut, the Nunavut Implementation Commission suggested that communication technologies should be used as tools for government decentralization (Hicks and White, 2000. For analyses on the government on Nunavut's decentralization process and the role of communication technologies, see, for example, Weber, 2013; Hicks and White, 2005). Here I want to point out that communication technologies are part of a wider context besides the uses the young Inuit give to them at the residence, and have been considered as an important tool for Nunavut and the Inuit.

The incorporation of social media to the indigenous “media-scape” (Appadurai, 1998) could be seen in Ginsburg words as “a powerful means of (collective) self-expression that can have a culturally revitalizing effect” (1994: 366). In this sense, I conceptually agree with Ginsburg (1994) when she says in relation to indigenous Australians that: “Young aboriginal people ... are not in a pristine world, untouched by the dominant culture; they are juggling the multiple sets of experiences that make them contemporary Aboriginal Australians” (1994: 106). With the access and tools provided by communication technologies and their applications such as online social networks, the experience of Inuit-ness and aboriginality in general is ‘juggled’, discussed, and reflected upon as never before (Csonka and Schweitzer, 2004). Online social network sites such as Facebook⁷ or YouTube are platforms for these exchanges. As I will show later on, Inuit youth appropriate these tools for their own ends, not being less Inuit in the process.

In this sense, there has been a consensus among scholars that communication technologies are channels through which indigenous peoples can transmit their culture, interpret their position, claim citizenship, envision their future and convey their concerns to the world in their own terms (see Wilson and Stewart, 2008; Ginsburg, 1994, 2008; Budka, 2009a, 2009b; Dyson and Underwood, 2006; Dyson et al., 2007; Santo, 2008; Krone, 2008, 2007; Landzelius, 2001, 2003b, 2006; Nathan, 2000; Prins, 2000; Gearhard, 2005; Alexander et al., 2010; Scobie and Wachowich, 2010). The Internet and social networks exponentially expand channels of communication, as each user has the possibility to communicate her own perspective on what is to be Inuit through Web 2.0 and through an online social network site such as Facebook.

⁷ My data reflects this thoroughly, as Facebook is a platform for the discussion of identity. I will make clear these ideas when I analyse my data later on.

I want to point out that the problem here is perhaps more complex. While the Faustian dilemma is clearly ousted, it is nevertheless true that tradeoffs occur even when considering these new technologies. Users are ultimately engaging with a technology designed with a *script* that renders a technological-mediated experience of life (Borgmann, 1984). Van Dijck (2013) defines a *culture of connectivity* when life is mediated by web 2.0 components such as online social networks. Users thus play by the rules of that script and are immersed in this culture of connectivity spread worldwide with ICTs. As I explore in chapter four, the dilemma is more intricate: it implies gaining a platform for building identity, while implicitly accepting to be scripted as a user of a technology in a culture of connectivity. Scripts are the values, norms and ways inscribed in the technology which forge a particular use (Akrich, 1995; Woolgar, 1991). As such, the problem can be posed as follows: on the one hand, there is a communication technology such as the internet with sites such as Facebook, through which Inuit find a useful platform to communicate. On the other hand, these types of websites give the user a certain script which influences how users engage with such technologies; a script that technologies carry to every person engaged with it. This idea will be further discussed and explained in chapter four.

Mass media's hegemony vs. mass self-communication dynamics

Some authors have studied the relation between indigenous peoples and the media from the perspective of cultural hegemony. For social theorists such as Gramsci or Althusser, hegemony is defined, broadly, as the prevailing way in which the world is understood; in other words, the social 'common sense'. This taken-for-granted understanding of the

world is defined by the ruling classes in society, to which the marginal people just consent with. From this perspective, Frankfurt School scholars such as Adorno and Horkheimer have stated that mass media and the cultural industry are functional to cultural hegemony. In the acquiescence of hegemony there are specific discourses of power through which social actors are shaped. Discourse is a term that these scholars use to reference to the way in which language and other forms of social semiotics not merely convey social experience, but play some major part in constituting social subjects and their relations (Hunt and Purvis, 1993).

Other scholars have looked at hegemony in a more complex way and adding other components. They take quite a different perspective considering different social actors involved. As such, hegemony is defined as the product of the negotiation of different groups with relative degrees of power and different interests in society (Condit, 1994). Evans (2002) understands hegemony in these terms: “media organizations negotiate among themselves and with other organizations to project a worldview in keeping with their own philosophies and approaches” (p. 313). Media “plays[s] a role that embraces multiple groups, differentiated power relationships and heterogeneous worldviews” (p. 313-314). This is the case with indigenous peoples when they access traditional media such as TV; but when they have control on their own media (such as the Inuit Broadcast Corporation or Igloolik’s Inuit’s Isuma TV), Evans (2002) states that indigenous media outlets have to deal with problems of scale and the means to access:

Small-scale operations can function “under the radar” of larger systems of economy, politics and power but once an indigenous media organization reaches a certain size and level of ambition, such freedom becomes impossible. As a result, these larger organizations find themselves grappling with potent issues of hegemony and cultural negotiation. They must attempt to secure funding, broadcast

permission, licenses and other support from the very mainstream societies they hope to influence (2002: 311).

This negotiation leads to a cultural struggle in which the core of the dilemma is nothing more and nothing less “than the soul of Inuit culture. Who chooses the image that people will see?” (Evans, 2002: 315). When the decisions about what to transmit or how to portray the Inuit are in the hands of a government bureaucracy or corporate interests, the images so created agree with common preconceptions of Inuit people (see Fair, 2000). These images focus on “the exotic”, frequently associated with igloos, dogsleds, and raw meat (Wachowich, 2006; Iseke-Barnes and Danard, 2007).

The Internet and online social networks sites, however, present new challenges to the issue of representation. These types of media is user-based and gives the possibility of having user-generated content, providing the user with the possibility of tailoring a self-image through which he or she determines the way he or she wants to be identified. Thus, the concept of cultural hegemony created through mass media as expressed by Evans (2002) can be challenged given the characteristics of the Internet and the communication opportunities it creates. Sending a message using social networks is tantamount, as Castells (2009) puts it, to throwing a bottle with a message into the ocean. We do not know who is going to receive it nor how is it going to be processed. This process has been defined as *mass self-communication*. Castells explains:

In recent years, the fundamental change in the realm of communication has been the rise of what I have called *mass-self communication* [*the italics are mine*] – the use of the internet and wireless networks as platforms of digital communication. It is mass communication because it processes messages from many to many, with the potential of reaching a multiplicity of receivers, and of connecting to endless networks that transmit digitized information around the world. It is self-communication because the production of the message is autonomously decided by the sender, the designation of the receiver is self-directed and the retrieval of

messages from the networks of communication is self-selected (Castells, 2012: 6-7)

Mass self-communication is based on “the development of horizontal networks of interactive communication that connect local and global in chosen time” (Castells, 2009: 65). Thus users “have appropriated new forms of communication, they have built their own systems of mass communication, via SMS, blogs, vlogs, podcasts, wikis, and the like” (*ibid.*). Understood this way, the internet provides new forms of communication, social interaction, and novel modalities of community building (Csonka and Schweitzer, 2004; Aarsæther, Riabova, Bærenholdt, 2004; Castles, 2001). Even the Arctic is linked to a globalized network which brings new opportunities and challenges to the Inuit. Given a connection to the Internet - and now it can be reached in almost in every community in Nunavut⁸ - any message can be sent through the Web 2.0 given the possibility of mass self-communication.

New platforms of communication give a new perspective on the concept of hegemony proposed by Evans. People can access a platform for producing their own content and consuming the content they wish in the Web 2.0. The Internet and online social network sites give a new dimension for self-expression, both by groups and by individuals who can engage in free avenues for communication independent of traditional hegemonic influences⁹. This is what I observed during my ethnography at the students’ residence, as young Inuit engaged with Internet and very extensively with social media. The students established a network of communication with content referring specifically to their own context, discussing their issues with other Inuit, accessing pictures about

⁸ As indicated by the 2004 Aboriginal Connectivity Infrastructure report.

⁹I will further problematize this affirmation when I explore some concepts from actor-network theory further on.

hunting and other activities and discussions that made them feel ‘at home’. On Facebook they have access to a multimedia content through which they can engage in conversations about cultural meanings¹⁰. As I will show later on, Facebook gives another avenue of expression of cultural identity, and a certain reinforcement of social relations.

The challenge here is to re-think the relation between media and users under the light of newer communication technologies. Internet and social network sites bring the possibility for individual or collective users to send their message to the vast universe of the World Wide Web through mass self-communication. They bring the novelty of creating discussions rooted on real-time people’s experiences. Indeed, as I will describe later on, different Facebook group pages are used to establish dialogues of what it means to be Inuit and to form a collective memory of traditions and “old” practices. There are many examples of this in the literature. Scobie and Wachowich (2009) show the articulation between Inuit culture, reflexivity, and technology by giving an account of the use of videos on YouTube¹¹. Such a means of communication bypasses institutions of representation and provides authentic expressions of Inuit selfhoods in a constant negotiation between past, present and future. YouTube as a social network provides a suitable platform to communicate a “historical consciousness in a digitally mediated age” (Scobie and Wachowich, 2009: 83). YouTube has myriad of uses, from showing throat

¹⁰ It is important to point out that this not only relates to individual users. Nunavut websites are part of the Inuit media-scape and cyber-scape, from sites such as the Government of Nunavut, the Arctic College, Nunatsiaq News, etc. Thus, it is not just about individuals. There is a social landscape being developed, against which social media is used. But this research is focused on the use of a particular communication site by a group of young Inuit, and it is out of its scope to examine the Inuit cyber-space. For a more general investigation on Inuit’s cyber-space, see Christensen (2003).

¹¹Lange (2011), for example, describes the use of video-sharing as a means of communication of experiences through which people portray their social self and work on their identity. The videos shared have a binary characteristic of being at the same time used for preserving memories, and for the communication of present events. This has a special relevance for Inuit peoples, as they face important challenges regarding the loss of knowledge which was mostly transmitted through oral means.

singing and stunts to critiques of their own Inuit reality; there is no storyline but fragments of events. However, the authors stress that the storytelling present in the social network is one through which private experiences are made public and thus those experiences are rendered controllable:

By uploading their digital autobiographies, young Inuit (...) mediate aspects of their everyday realities for public viewing and root themselves simultaneously in global Internet and Arctic spaces. At first glance, their depictive work may seem incoherent and self-indulgent, but this is only when we interpret them in isolation from the web of social relationships in which they exist (Scobie and Wachowich, 2009: 99).

The importance of uploading resides in the possibility through which sense is made between pasts, present, and futures within a larger social context. Therefore, Internet gives certain power to young Inuit and control over their selves. In this direction, Gordon (2007) has pointed out how web 2.0 has helped users to order and place their lives in the dynamic interfaces of information and communication technologies by allowing them to build links and to share cultural content. Applying Frederic Jameson's concept (1991), it can be said that social media has helped in developing a *cognitive map*. Jameson (1991) describes the relation between culture and late capitalism as one having the distinctive post-modern trait of a lack of a cognitive map. This map means having the cognitive references for coping with the demands on subjectivity posed by today's social world. In this sense, Gordon (2007) states that websites such as Google maps, for example, have the quality to "give every user the tools to produce a cognitive map – a personal expression of order and location in an expanding network" (2007: 893). This could be applied to Scobie and Wachowich's (2009) study of how YouTube, as used by Inuit youth, provides a cultural cognitive map. I would add that the use of Facebook by Inuit

youth is another way in which this type of cognitive map is been built through the interplay of culture and technology. Throughout the social interactions allowed by this new media, Inuit youth are discussing, shaping, and building their identity: they have access to references of their culture, such as hunting stories' Facebook pages, traditional knowledge, or support groups. Using newer forms of communications, hegemonic cultural institutions of representation are sidestepped and issues discussed socially in their own terms.

Conclusion

The Internet brings new communication dynamics. Looking at how indigenous peoples have engaged with the media, from the more “traditional” forms of mass-media (i.e. television) to the recent ones (internet and its specific sites of Facebook and YouTube), such concepts as the Faustian Dilemma and cultural hegemony must be revisited. With the emergence of Internet and the online social network sites, we see a platform for communication of identity independent of intermediaries and interpreting agencies, thus the comparison to “traditional” of communication, is limiting. In the interplay between technologies and culture, these new communication technologies provide the possibility of new ways of sending messages and communicating culture, opening a field for broader dialogues, collective self-interpretations, and the management of identity. However, as I will discuss in chapter four, the focus will also be on the mutual shaping of technologies and culture. I will explore specifically how the Inuit are positioned in these circumstances, and how a ubiquitous connection to the Internet affects Inuit youth concretely. I will now first discuss what has been researched and written about the

indigenous use of information and communication technologies to position this thesis within the discussion about the potentialities, hindrances, and cultural impacts of such technologies. Then I will focus on the concrete impact of technologies on Inuit peoples reviewing what scholars have argued about the diverse effects of ICTs in the Arctic, and especially, in relation to Inuit identity.

CHAPTER TWO: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, IDENTITY, AND ICTs.

Introduction

In this chapter I further explore the interplay between culture, Inuit identity, and communication technologies. Some scholars (Savard, 1998; Dicks, 1977) looked at the impact of ICTs when they were first introduced in the Canadian Arctic, arguing that they would bring problems to Inuit culture given that Inuit were not culturally attuned to adapting these technologies. These views assumed that cultures have essential traits without which they no longer exist. But cultures change and adapt, and indigenous peoples have shown that they are skilled in appropriating foreign technologies (Young-Ing, 2003; Tester, 2013; Christensen, 2006). For example, as I will explore below, there is a vast body of literature which indicates that indigenous peoples have been using ICTs for their own purposes, including cultural revitalization and transmission and political activism.

Previous literature has also shown that the internet is a means of communication in which cultural boundaries are negotiated and established, in ways that are not too different from those established offline (Christensen, 2003). Thus, technologies and culture are deeply intertwined in a synergetic relation rather than a detrimental one in terms of the loss of identity or further colonization. I will extend this analysis looking deeper at mass self-communication through the Web 2.0.

In this chapter I also examine the notion of networks in the Arctic. This region, apparently barren and remote, is interconnected with trails through which Inuit have traveled since time immemorial. Aporta (2009) describes these trails as social networks

given that they facilitate community formation. The trails are social because, when traveling, Inuit could expect to run into other travelers. It could be said that through online social networks, the young Inuit I met during my fieldwork also traveled through the Arctic (and across the world) in the hyper-text of Facebook and the internet, talking to others, sharing content, looking at pictures of the land, of other communities, of what is hunted across the land. Some researchers have shown how online social networks (see, for instance, MyKnet.org, operated by First Nations in Northern Ontario; Budka, 2009, Budka et al., 2009, Budka et al, 2012) have been appropriated by indigenous peoples in Canada for communication; they have also discussed the potentialities of social media for Canadian indigenous peoples; for example, for political organization (Taylor, 2011, Scobie and Rodgers, 2013) or social support and resilience (Molyneaux et al., 2013). It is in this context of usage that I want to frame my discussion of how cultures adapt technologies. I will do so by looking at the case of how the young Inuit at the Old Res are using Facebook.

Identity and the appropriation of ICTs

It has been said that while geographic boundaries are eliminated in a globalized world, cultural differences are established and strengthened (Niezen, 2003; Landzelius, 2001; Christensen 2003, 2006; Castells, 2000; Kuhmunen, 2003; Forte, 2003). The Internet is not a place where identities are built unattached from the physical-offline identities from which they emerge; identities in the internet are in fact intertwined with people's real lives (Miller, 2013). In this sense, most of the Facebook group sites with Inuit content I

explored are laden with traditional stories, knowledge or legends, and gather mostly Inuit participants. They seem to function as cultural and identity referents online.

Neil Blair Christensen noted in his ethnography on Inuit websites (2003) how Inuit internet-users create and manage different websites where they embed offline identities online. Therefore, the Internet can be appropriated in cultural terms and used to establish and stress what makes Inuit particularly Inuit, drawing a distinctive boundary with others¹². There is no identity-loss in this appropriation of the internet¹³, but an enhancement of possibilities for the development of a culture (Landzelius, 2003).

Dyson and Underwood (2006) and Budka et al. (2009) find that indigenous peoples basically use the Internet in the same way as mainstream society¹⁴ while establishing websites and other uses with their own specific content. These concerns involve issues that go from language and cultural revitalization¹⁵, to tele-health, and the remembrance of the past¹⁶ (see McMahon, 2013). In the interplay between technology and culture, sites such as Facebook, particularly, allow for self-representations, and to challenge collectively outside representations. As Nathan (2000) argues - in the same spirit with

¹² In the concept of boundaries developed by the work of the anthropologist Frederik Barth (1969), it relates not to an essential identity but to something socially constructed within an on-going negotiations of boundaries between groups of people. Contextualizing this to the internet, I refer to boundaries and identities that are established, conveyed and explained in bits of information which a computer exchanges.

¹³ Some thinkers like philosophers Jacques Ellul (1964) or Albert Borgmann (1999) have argued that technology brings a trade-off in which indigenous peoples get something useful from technologies but at the same time they “lose culture”. I will discuss Borgmann’s ideas later on, and I will develop this idea of the trade-off when I discuss actor-network theory and the concept of script from SCOT.

¹⁴ My findings suggest the same in regards to how the Inuit youth use Facebook. I describe this thoroughly in my data analysis chapter.

¹⁵ Websites such the Government of Nunavut’s, Arctic College’s or Nunatsiaq News are examples of Inuit content on the cyber-world. However, the extension and use of social media is particularly important and with what I am concerned with.

¹⁶ For example, the website www.iqqaumavara.com which provides information for the Inuit regarding the 1950’s relocation of families Pangirtung and Pond Inlet to Resolute Bay, and which goal is “To preserve the memory of the families affected by this human tragedy. The largest online source of information dedicated to the 1953 and 1955 forced relocation of Inuit families to the High Arctic”

Castells' concept of mass self-communication - the opportunity for presenting an image on indigenous terms is due to the fact that

The web has the potential to support all of us publishing to each other rather than a few privileged groups publishing to the rest of us. Before now, there has been an enormous asymmetry between producers and consumers of published material... The web, based on interactive hypertext, starts to dissolve the distinction between readers and writers... Individuals often collaborate around the computer to both produce and consume information (no page number).

In comparison to other forms of media such as television, Internet users have the opportunity to sail through a sea of information and also to create their own messages that become part of that sea. By appropriating ICTs, indigenous peoples are at the same consumers but most importantly, the producers of content. Furthermore, some scholars (Nathan, 2000; Gerahard, 2005; Alexander et al. 2009) have noted that the written word makes knowledge static and distant, whereas the hypertext of the Internet provides a medium that is more akin to indigenous oral knowledge.

On the other hand, some authors have warned about the risk of the internet as a new platform for colonization and commodification of indigenous cultures (Nathan, 2000; Fair, 2000). Krone (2007), for instance, states that "ICT are predicated by western-rationalistic conceptions of knowledge contained in software and infrastructure" (no page number). He understands ICTs as the platform sustaining information systems which are fundamentally Western, and explains that both ICTs and the information systems "render a challenge to the "Northern" knowledge, because they are so deeply embedded in western-rationalistic knowledge that they expect a similar cultural setting...Autonomy of the North is a scarce good that is endangered by ICT and their inherent cultural

expectations, and the knowledge contained in them” (2007: no page number)¹⁷. In the same line, Thiessen and Looker’s (2008) specifically analyzed how Inuit and First Nations on and off-reserve use ICTs. They measured their distance to cultural Canadian centrality, defined as the Canadian mainstream culture. They argue that the proximity and appropriation of ICTs would correlate with certain assets favorable to functioning according to mainstream society’s objectives. According to these authors, the larger the identification with one’s culture, the lower the acquisition and appropriation of ICTs. This would mean that those who feel more “authentically” indigenous disregard ICTs as a tool for communication in the context of their culture. However, it could be also argued that having access to ICTs does not necessarily entail lesser identification with, for example, an Inuit identity. This can be observed in cases when ICTs can be used for instrumental ends such as the increase of social capital (Mignone and Henley, 2009), to make political claims (Landzelius, 2006; Petray, 2011), to increase cultural resilience from traumatic historical events (Molyneaux et al., 2012), or to attain cultural revitalization (Landzelius, 2003). Through my field research, it became quite obvious that there was no correlation between using the Internet and being less Inuit. Rather, the internet was appropriated and used by Inuit youth for their own concerns and there was no apparent tension between using ICTs and being Inuit. The feeling of being ‘authentically’ Inuit is still there while watching a hockey game on TV, chatting on Facebook, or drinking energy drinks.

¹⁷ I would put this idea within the concept of how technologies give users a script to engage with it. This means that technologies to expect a similar cultural setting of application, which is to some extent to *determine* a user. Thus, the adaptability and flexibility of technologies should be also considered under this influence of the design of the technology. I will explore this idea further on from an actor-network perspective.

The internet is a communication tool which can be used with cultural purposes and for self-representations by allowing mass self-communication in the indigenous user's own terms. The internet gives a voice to "[talk] back to a hegemonic Western(ized) self" (Landzelius, 2001:47) in its numerous socio-cultural-political uses¹⁸.

In the next section I will summarize what has been said about the development of ICTs in the Arctic.

Inuit and Information and Communication Technologies

Dicks (1977) discussed the impact of the introduction of the dial phone in the Arctic, and suggested that "[t]he development of telecommunications systems, while presenting new options and facilitating personal contact, has also placed stress on the Inuit way of life" (p. 120). In these terms, starting off from technologies such as rifles and skidoos, communication technologies would be the sword thrust towards the inclusion of Inuit to modern life. Even though Dicks' work is more than 30 years old, it still warrants consideration by challenging techno-deterministic and simplistic thoughts on the introduction of communication technologies. What he argues is that the historical incorporation of technologies is somehow the scapegoat for Inuit problems, hinting at the idea that Inuit could not stay culturally attuned with the rapid changes¹⁹. At the same time he acknowledges the new opportunities that improved-communication has on the Arctic,

¹⁸ For example, it gives the chance of "outreach" (Landzelius, 2006). As such, the Inuit can join with the Sami of Finland, the Waipiri of Australia and the Mapuches of Chile forming a network of a joint political position, thus fostering an unfathomable network which increases social capital between different groups across the world (Mignone and Henley, 2009). In this sense, scholars have pointed out that communication technologies can help create a global identity (Niezen, 2003; Sioui, 2007) and work towards activist and indigenist goals (Landzelius, 2006; Petray, 2011), as well as to contest hegemonic ontologies (Stewart-Harawira, 2005).

¹⁹ He uses the increase in crime rates as a proxy for the cultural mismatch.

including fostering autonomous associations, facilitating communications with government and political groups, and forming a new kind of networks in the Arctic (Dicks, 1977: 129). adoption of a new technology entails a negotiation of cultural practices vis-à-vis the technology which affords processes of adaptation and change.

Savard (1998) also showed a critical view on the introduction of communication technologies in the North. He discussed the first implementation of the internet in Nunavut. Similar to Dicks (1977), he acknowledged some of the benefits of the internet as suggested by the Nunavut Implementation Commission, such as: to encourage better contact among a disperse population, to enhance cohesion, to help government coordination, and to improve Nunavut's economy. But he also noted a problem in that

Nunavut's Inuit may not be sheltered from the impacts of using the Internet. On the contrary, they risk being the first victims of cybernetic metaculture. Young Inuit cybernauts will see their aboriginal values confronted by non-Aboriginal ones, the latter often taking precedence (Savard, 1998: 89).

And he goes on to affirm:

...the tool used in cyberspace – the computer – is a prolongation of another European cultural evolution, writing (...) Therefore, not only are the Inuit obliged to appropriate a tool that is centrally foreign to them, but they are also confronted with values that are completely different than their own (...) The Inuit have a tendency to appropriate this media, to want to make them tools for the promotion of their culture. But when all is said and done, what we are left with are issues, ways of doing things, and rhetoric that are essentially Anglo-European, rather than native (ibid.)

Savard (1998) has a point when he says that certain values and symbols are predominant on the internet, as indicated by the use of English in most pages that one surfs on. It is also interesting that he brings the idea of appropriating a tool which is alien

to Inuit culture, and that could have pernicious consequences such as creating a digital divide in Nunavut, but more profoundly, to have a negative impact on their way of being. At the core of Savard (1998) and Dicks's (1977) arguments, however, is the idea of culture as "static", which I have critiqued above.

Moreover, Savards' (1998) arguments about the presence of a meta-culture on the Internet can further be contested. Neil Blair Christensen's work on the Inuit use of the Internet (2003, 2006) suggests that the Inuit use the web to embed their offline-physical world identity online, so that the real world - as opposed to the virtual - plays a huge role on what is uploaded online and as a way for reinforcing their own identity. In fact, Christensen paraphrases Inuit writer and journalist Rachel Qitsualik in her idea that the nomadic traditions of the Inuit go well nowadays with the "mobility" available on the Internet so that the "Inuit can keep travelling in a world that paradoxically seems to be expanding by becoming smaller" (2003: 17). This parallelism describes how the Inuit can appropriate a technology such as the Internet in the same way that they have done with all other technologies since the first contacts with outsiders (Young-Ing, 2003; Tester, 2010). In this sense, this global communication technology is used by Inuit in a way that they are, in the words of Christensen (2003:18), "engaged in asserting rather than deserting their identity (...) the web is used and envisioned as a promoter of culture and identity rather than a postmodern filter pushing for the construction of new cyber-identities or cyber-cultures".

What Christensen (2003) describes is that there is a strong link between technology and culture – between communication technology and local experience; as Woolgar (2002: 13) wrote: "the uptake and use of new technologies depend crucially on

social context” (2002: 14); “virtual technologies supplement rather than substitute for real activities” (2002: 16); and “the more global the more local” (*ibid.*). There is an intertwining of the virtual and “real” world, of technology and culture. As stressed by Aporta and Higgs (2005), technologies are always introduced into a broader social context in which they negotiate with social actors. This is the case when communication technologies are appropriated by Inuit users. Nancy Wachowich (2006) asks the rhetoric question of whether Inuit who eat pizza or surf the internet are less Inuit. Her point was that nowadays, igloos and dogsleds coexist with snowmobiles and cell-phones, and the internet has become a crucial tool to gain and maintain control of Inuit’s own representations, and, in the case of Nunavut, to manage their territory.

The entanglement and mutual adaptations of identity and technology are part and parcel of the process of being-in-the-world. Culture and technologies adapt to each other rather than being mutually threatening.

Communication technologies and cultural homogenization

The expansion of mass media and communication in general can be analyzed from a range of perspectives between two extremes. On one extreme there is a pessimistic view, predicting fragmentation, loss of individuality or the generation of the aforementioned “new cyborg-selves” (Savard, 1998). On the other extreme there is an optimistic view conceiving mass media as a tool for the demise of metaphysical selves, the need for secularization, and for putting ideologies and identities in perspectives leading to pluralism and tolerance (Vattimo, 1998), and for contesting hegemonic ontologies (Stewart-Harawira, 2005).

The possibilities that the Internet brings expand the stage for conveying messages, making identity claims, and presenting people's selves to wider audiences. A clear example of Internet appropriation is the Government of Nunavut, which was designed to be decentralized and connected through communication technologies (Hicks and White, 2000). In the words of Santo (2008), communication technologies may allow, "to resist cultural colonization and positively serve local community goals of enacting a cultural future and participating in national dialogues over cultural citizenship" (Santo: 330).

The application of digital and communication devices has been described as a means that gives autonomy to indigenous peoples. They open a new window towards promoting wisdom, engaging communities, and sharing experiences (Cunsolo et al. 2012). This is the role played by Web 2.0 and mass self-communication outlets. Some authors suggest that YouTube, for example, enables users to achieve "an intersubjective process of storytelling" in which participants form part of "a collective practice of meaning making" (Scobie, 2011: 661). In this line, Scobie and Wachowich (2010) show the socio-cultural use of YouTube as a platform for Inuit storytelling, describing it as a "novel form of historical consciousness in a digitally mediated age" (Scobie and Wachowich, 2010: 83)²⁰. Thus,

Social networking sites such as YouTube provide everyday Inuit youth and young adults with a means through which to publicly "story" their lives through the creation of online profiles and the posting of autobiographical material. Because YouTube is a "bottom up" platform for anyone with Internet access, users can spontaneously bypass the more dominant Western historical consciousness and epistemologies that have traditionally governed media representations of Inuit social life (2010: 85)

²⁰ I would add young Inuit rappers on Arctic Bay. See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tS8RZcKQwBA>. For an analysis of the role of hip hop culture and media technologies on Inuit youth's identity, see Marsh, 2009.

The internet and online social networks give the opportunity to form networks of communication in which a video posted on YouTube can be thought of as a bottle thrown into the ocean of the internet, containing a little bit of the Inuit culture. Such actions, however, are ways of asserting and negotiating Inuit identities.

Theodor Adorno predicted that communication technologies would result in a homogenization of masses functioning towards a hyper rational society of full organization (Vattimo, 1998). But as Marshall McLuhan put it, the medium is the message. Internet is the perfect example, as it can be used to show and generate different voices, as well as to disseminate and amplify them. Looking at the Canadian Inuit context, for instance, websites such as *Nanisiniq Inuit Qaujimagatukangit (IQ) Adventure*, aims at providing Inuit youth with access to traditional knowledge (Alexander et al., 2010). These are aspects of a process of the establishment of a particular cultural content and identity online. This process reflects the further development and transforming of a culture rather than being engulfed in a homogenized totality.

Hence, Web 2.0 provides the opportunity to make identity claims through mass self-communication, for the presentation, interpretation, and negotiation of a culture²¹. Are indigenous peoples who use Facebook groups to coordinate the organization of traditional dances, less indigenous²²? Are Inuit who use Facebook in order to ask questions about hunting, or arrange to meet for going out on the land on a hunting trip, less Inuit? The Inuit have a tradition of appropriation of foreign symbols and

²¹ However, the fact is that, for instance, Facebook, does not provide the interface configuration in Inuktitut. It is true that it can be written with Latin letters, but it is not how Inuktitut has come to be written. This fact could be interpreted as a determination of an English-speaking user. Related to this, Pasch (2010: 75) writes: "The Internet, like television, has the power of gunpowder and the qualities of a weapon as a great destroyer of language and culture".

²² This was documented in a news article by the CBC (CBC News, 2013)

technologies which makes them Inuit. Through a means such as the internet they promote and generate Inuit meanings rather than joining a “cyber metaculture”. They reflect and demarcate the boundary of what makes them Inuit.

Next I will introduce some concepts of *networks*, both in general terms and also the role that they have traditionally played in the Arctic. As anthropological research has shown, networks have been a constant in the Arctic since time immemorial. Thus I want to explore the dynamics of communication from networks on the land, as social networks, to networks of online communication.

Networks of communication in the Arctic

Conceptually, networks are a social structure that has been used to define societies (Mann, 1986; Castells, 2000). Social networks are not an image that is associated to popular ideas of the Arctic. However, what non-Inuit have often described as an empty and place, anthropological research has shown how it is actually laden with cultural meaning (see, for example, Aporta 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2009). Networks of trails extend across most of the Canadian Arctic, connecting east and west, north and south, linking settlements and important landmarks. Aporta (2009) describes these trails as social networks which historically had a major importance for the definition of the Inuit identity. They have traditionally formed a very important part of the Inuit social fabric before they move to permanent settlements. Networks of trails through which Inuit traveled were and are part of the Inuit life-world²³.

²³ An example of this is given by Wachowich’s et al. (2010) narration of the life of three generations of Inuit women when the life of an elder is told, in which she describes her nomadic life, traveling through the

Networks are a relevant tool in understanding social interactions in the Arctic. Social networks have been very important for the Inuit culture as a way of communicating, exchanging knowledge, socialization, and a relevant part of their identity in general. As shown by Aporta (2009), first, the social networks were established in the physicality of the land as trails. Movement took place on dogsleds and then in snowmobiles where traveling and orientation techniques were conveyed orally. Christensen (2006: 88) mentioned how trade networks had been established all across America from the South to Alaska and Northern Canada, and wrote that: “An analogy of this trade networks persists in the networks of cyberspace where identities, alongside goods and political ideas, are traded and negotiated”. On cyberspace, the Inuit form networks to communicate, exchange news, information, reflect on meanings and symbols. The young Inuit I observed “travel” across these online social networks exchanging meanings, ideas, news, or selling or swapping stuff such as carvings or traditional clothing. It is an unfathomable network which goes over the Arctic and links up to the rest of the world; it has both in-reach and out-reach functions (Landzelius, 2003, 2006). On this cyberspace, a social network like Facebook is a means of mass-self communication through which dialogues are established, knowledge shared, sought after, and conveyed²⁴.

In the next section I will briefly address previous literature on indigenous peoples and online social networks specifically.

land in North Baffin and what of a traumatic event was when she and her family were established in settlements.

²⁴ For example, Nunavut’s social problems seem to be communicated and faced collectively through Facebook. Two examples of this are the “Feed my family” group, tackling the high cost of food in the Arctic, and the “Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer - LGBTQ Community in the Arctic” group. But a lot more can be found surfing through Facebook.

Indigenous Peoples and Online Social Network Sites

As mentioned in previous sections, the internet is being used for conveying Inuit concerns, for sharing knowledge, traditions, and Inuit values in order to advance socio-economic and linguistic goals, and for promoting engagement between Inuit elders, youth and communities. The failure of exploiting the opportunities brought by communication technologies will only perpetuate colonial power. Although new media technologies bring new symbols and ideologies to the Inuit culture, they also “can, and ha[ve], acted as a tool for resistance against the outside influences” (Gearheard, 2005: 92).

In the context of First Nation users in Canada, Budka (2009: 64) argues that “media technologies are providing indigenous people with the possibility to make their voices heard, to network and connect, to distribute information, to revitalize culture and language, and to become politically engaged and act”. As an example of the appropriation of communication technologies by indigenous peoples, he studies MyKnet.org (2009a, 2009b). This site is part of the Kuhkenah Network which has provided ICT services to First Nations in Northern Ontario since mid-1990s. MyKnet.org, established in 2000, provides free web-space and email addresses, and is mostly used by First Nation youth under the age of 26 (Budka, 2008) across Northern Ontario. The use of MyKnet.org that Budka describes is very similar to Facebook’s use by the young Inuit who participated in my ethnography: First, to keep in touch with friends and family and to chat, discuss, share stories, music, and pictures; secondly, to be in touch with the community and for cultural events. The difference with mainstream online social networks is that it that it is non-commercial and locally focused (Budka, 2009b)

Taylor (2011) documents how social networks are being used to keep in touch with family and friends (very important in a territory as large as Nunavut where all settlements are fly-in), for fighting addictions, maintaining languages and traditions, and fostering environmental stewardship, etc. On her document named “Social Media as a Tool for Inclusion” she succinctly lists some groups’ web-sites as evidence for the appropriation of social media for indigenous people’s goals, but without going deep enough to interpret the social dynamics established and the role which social networks play in indigenous cultures.

Conclusion

In the interplay between technology and culture, the internet is appropriated and identities are demarcated online. Rather than being a detrimental medium through which indigenous cultures are undermined or further colonized, the internet is a communication technology which indigenous peoples use for their own ends and not to have become “a road kill on the Information highway” (Young-Ing paraphrasing Randy Ross, 2003: 16). In this sense, Inuit have always incorporated different technologies into their own identity, not becoming “less Inuit” in the process. As such, mass self-communication through Web 2.0 provides with the opportunity to discuss identity in real time through multimedia tools. This way, indigenous peoples have the chance to build networks of communication in their own terms and in the context of their culture. Young Inuit engage with communication technologies having access to an unfathomable network through which they travel, thus having access to information about the Arctic and the world. They can establish connections with people, constructing, reflecting and discussing their

identity. As I mentioned before and I will explain in my data analysis, Facebook is being used by young Inuit in these terms and adapted to their circumstances.

CHAPTER THREE: MAPPING INUIT IDENTITY

Introduction

In this chapter I examine what it means to be Inuit today. Budka (2009b: 69) has explained the challenges of identity in the present time with a technology such as internet:

In an age where different processes of globalization, such as the transnational flows of people, technologies, ideologies, media, and money, are constantly speeding up, the production of locality get challenged all the time. In addition, globalized technologies, such as the Internet, challenge the definition and the phenomenology of locality.

In order to understand the relation between the use of a communication technology such as Facebook and Inuit identity, first it is necessary to understand the cultural changes that Inuit have gone through, as they moved from a semi-nomadic life into permanent settlements. Building upon previous ethnographies which focused on Inuit identity shifts, in this chapter I aim at giving some theoretical context to how the students at the Old Res experience their culture and live their identity. This will allow for a better conceptualization of how the Inuit students engage with and adapt Facebook to their own circumstances.

This perspective also points in the same direction as the previous literature discussed in this thesis, basically that the incorporation and adaptation of different technologies has been a constant presence in the broader changes that the Inuit culture has experienced. In the incorporation of different technologies, Inuit have shown their adaptability, resourcefulness, and appropriation for their own ends. Thus, an Inuk can be

Inuk and have a Facebook account, and use it for his own purposes the same way that rifles were incorporated as a fundamental tool for hunting on the land or snowmobiles and GPS for transportation and orientation²⁵ (Tester, 2010; Aporta and Higgs, 2005). The adoption of a new technology entails a negotiation of cultural practices vis-à-vis the technology which affords processes of adaptation and change.

From the Inuit's 'traditional' way-of-life to 'modernity'

Indigenous cosmologies are usually associated with the understanding of nature and culture as an indivisible whole (see, for example, Berkes, 1999; Ingold, 2000, Basso; 1995; Casey, 1996, Mazzullo and Ingold, 2008, Berkes, 2008; Davidon-Hunt and Berkes, 2008). For the Inuit, the changes from living on-the-land to the current situation happened within the span of one lifetime. Goehring and Stager (1991) described this sudden and traumatic event arguing that “There are Inuit living today who literally have gone from the Stone Age to the atomic age” (p. 671); they give the example from their research experience in which an elder

was born in an igloo, learned to craft stone tools as a youth, and can remember meeting his first Kablunak as an adult...He now lives in a suburban-style centrally-heated bungalow in a permanent settlement, and spends part of his retirement avidly playing Nintendo games, zapping electronic bugs on a television screen” (*ibid.*)

They warn that the Inuit youth are at “risk” of being more familiar with things such as ‘sitcoms’ or Western symbols like the ‘city of Detroit’ rather than their own traditions (p. 672). Similar to Savard (1998) or Dicks’ (1977) writings previously mentioned,

²⁵ In this sense, for example, Aporta and Higgs (2005) say on their study of the use of GPS by Igloodik hunters that “the use of GPS technology is not creating a straightforward replacement of Inuit methods and the technology *per-se* is not undermining the Inuitness of Igloodik hunters” (p. 752).

Goehring and Stager (1991) seem to have in mind an image of “museum-like Inuit”, where change is not part of cultural processes. They seem to conceptualize cultures as discrete entities unable to manage changes²⁶. They point at a rapid technological change as a factor which renders Inuit incapable of explaining links between cause and effect in culturally acceptable terms (p. 675-676). This has been seen as a cause for the social problems Inuit suffer, such as the high suicide. The problem of this view is that it thinks of culture as static and with certain characteristics. As Christensen (2006: 89) wrote: “Even though Inuit identities and cultures are often thought of in a “museo-logical” context by outsiders, their contents and dynamics are and have always been subject to continuous change”.

What does it mean to be Inuit today? Ned Searles (2001, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2010) through his extensive ethnographic work discusses the dialectics between modernity and tradition. He attempts to identify the components or main features of Inuit-ness, so to speak. For that, he looks at different aspects such as the place of residence, the type of food consumed, or the practice of traditional activities such as hunting. He describes how older Inuit believe that Inuit-ness cannot fully develop in towns like Iqaluit because identity is being lost in such settlements and lack authenticity; it is perceived that “Qallunaat is to town as Inuit is to land” (p. 157) and both encompass different cultural traits. The better way to enact an Inuit identity is in outpost camps, in which one returns to some extent to the old Inuit on-the-land phenomenology. Regarding life in towns, Searles (2010:164) explains that

²⁶ They do make a good discussion when they argue that the current norms of an “industrialized existence” have not been yet assimilated, and “a hybridized transitory culture has emerged, with severe culture lag” In fact, researchers point at this cultural lag as well as historical trauma as the main issues leading to the high suicide rates and substance abuse that Inuit people suffer. I will approach this in the last section of this thesis.

...many Inuit seem unwilling to extend that identity into urban spaces even as more and more Inuit are becoming urbanized. Like so many indigenous political movements throughout the world, ideas about Inuit self-determination rest heavily on the notion that maintaining strong ties to the land remains vital to the survival of Inuit culture, and conversely that developing strong ties to towns leads to many social and psychological problems...the act of being on the land has become more of a choice than a necessity, more of a time to seek temporary solace and comfort than a place to that Inuit need to go in order to be truly (or authentically) Inuit.

Searles' view point is similar to what can be postmodern perspectives of identity (see Hall, 1995; Vattimo, 1998). These views hold that identity is something never fully finished but rather in constant construction. Identity is always a contingent articulation between different realities that one experiences, built discursively as differences or boundaries with others (Barth, 1969). It is a construction between how we are hailed or interpellated; namely how we are put into place by social discourses and our own subjective construction (Hall, 1995: 5-6). The work of some scholars gives us an account of how the Inuit live this identity-construction today: in his ethnographic study about the modernization process of the community of Quaqtak in Nunavik, Arctic Quebec, Dorais (1997), in the same way argues that identity is a dynamic and creative process were "a modern Inuk who teaches in a classroom is as much Inuk - if he or she perceives himself or herself as such - as is a traditional Inuk who spends his or her days hunting seals or sewing skin clothes" (p. 5). In the same direction, Searles (2001), Dahl (2000) or Pelto (1973/1987) examine how traditions are negotiated with modernity in current times: for example, hunting, fishing (or herding in the case of the Sami of Lapland) have been the most essential cultural institutions that are now negotiated with waged work on the weekdays or by working in flexible businesses like co-operatives (McElroy, 2008; Stuckenberger, 2006; Wenzel, 2009).

This shows how Inuit are constantly re-interpreting the traditions to make their lives meaningful; and this prompts youth to articulate traditions and shifting socioeconomic conditions (Searles, 2001)²⁷. In this social transformation “Inuit are moving from a world impregnated with ritual, relationship, and meaning to one of impersonal, secular commodity relations” (Tester, 2010: 143)²⁸.

Can an Inuk be completely an Inuk with no connection to the land? Are those who prefer Qallunaat foods, less Inuit? These questions are challenging in a territory such as Nunavut, with a vast Inuit population, in which those who prefer hamburgers and fries better than maqtaaq²⁹ could experience social pressure. Here is important to recognize the dynamic, shifting, and adaptable aspect of Inuit identity and their capacity of agency. Graburn (2006: 154) makes a good point in his observation about the situation of Inuit youth today, and what it means to be an Inuk:

If we look closely at the iconic “real” Inuk, the image turns out to be both mythic and mythical – a rigid, outdated and inaccurate model, usually put forward by someone claiming to be an authority.... Yet today even the nature of Inuit qaujimajatuqangit is being challenged by younger Inuit, who may have different notions of what makes a real Inuk. For them a real Inuk must neither be judged by the standards of an earlier era nor be held up as a mythical and misleading model unobtainable today.

²⁷ Sometimes without success. The high suicide rates and substance abuse are indicators of an inability to articulate cultural change (see Wexler, 2011; Hicks 2007; Kral, 2012, 2013; Chandler and Proulx, 2006; Tester and McNicoll, 2004; Goehring and Stager, 1991; Kral and Minore, 1990; Richmond, 2009; Nunavut Suicide Prevention Strategy -developed by The Government of Nunavut, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., the Embrace Life Council, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2010).

²⁸ In these dialectics between traditions and modernity, Inuit identity is also expressed as a difference with the Qallunaat. Cultural boundaries are established this way (Barth, 1969). Searles (2002, 2006, 2008) describes how Inuit identity is associated with a range of activities, knowledge, and skills, that ultimately represent an insurmountable boundary to the qallunaatit (Inuktitut expression for ‘the ways of the white’). For example, through eating and sharing different kinds of foods as a difference to what it means to be Qallunaat and as a way of keeping certain distance from them.

²⁹ Maaqtak is the Inuktitut word for narwhale skin, often considered a delicacy among Inuit.

Graburn (2006) is emphasizing that the definition of what it means to be Inuit changes. An Inuk who uses Facebook to share Metallica songs and to see pictures of what people are hunting across the land is no less of an Inuk than one who lives in an outpost camp. Cultures flow and there are no such things as “pure” cultural states. In order to interpret Inuit reality, the Western ideology of the pristine Arctic must be overcome.

So, is it possible to be “modern” and Inuit? Dorais (1997: 106) provides a clear answer to this question:

Inuit identity involves the specific way that Arctic natives establish their relationships with people, animals, the land, and the whole universe. Inuit feel continuity between their forebears and themselves, even when they are living in permanent communities, engaged in wage labor, attending schools or local government meetings, or keeping records in Qallunaat languages. Genuine Inuit identity may thus find itself concomitantly in a “traditional” as well as a “modern” setting.

Inuit remain Inuit even if they prefer playing videogames rather than going hunting. Technologies have not made the Inuit less Inuit. As Jens Dahl’s (2000) notes on the impact of communication technologies on the Inuit community of Saqqaq in Greenland:

So, while many observers might have the impression that modern technology works for the destruction of ‘traditional’ social relations and institutions, I would rather dare to take the opposite position in relation to some of the modern means of communication, which enlarge the network spatially as well as socially and make it more efficient (p. 39).

The Inuit have traditionally incorporated technology and adapted it to their own ends. A communication technology such as Facebook, as I will show later on, is also being used for their own ends.

Identity and technology

Modernity has carried a process of self-reflection (Bermann, 1981; Giddens, 1991, 1993, 1998), in which geography is not attached to particular socio-cultural features (Rahimi, 2000). Rather, geography is defined as a “process” (Appadurai, 2001: 7) formed by the global flow of meanings and symbols. This global flow is enhanced when we consider communication technologies.

Communication technologies are fundamental aspects of globalization as we live it today, and are almost ubiquitous in every community in Nunavut (as shown by the 2004 Aboriginal Connectivity Infrastructure Report). In general, technology is a factor that changes the experience of the environment in a dialectic relation. Artifacts are adapted for human purposes, and consequently people change their habits in relation to the material objects in their environment (Tester, 2010). Thus devices such as rifles and snowmobiles made daily traditional activities which were inseparable from the environment to be mediated.

Innovations in the life of Arctic peoples have provoked important cultural shifts. For instance, Aporta (2009) describes how using snowmobiles prevented families from communicating orally while traveling, as opposed to when dogsleds were used. The reason given was that snowmobiles make noise preventing the father or the elder of talking while driving and teaching the youngsters about landmarks and orientation techniques. Similarly, the implementation of GPS while traveling could bring hazards if an Inuit loses the traditional knowledge for orientation, as for example, the GPS might freeze or the batteries might fail in the middle of a journey (Aporta and Higgs, 2005); or the alteration of the perception of the weather and the environment induced by the

introduction of snowmobiles which carries risks since dogs are sensitive to hazards like shifting ice conditions (Ingold and Kurtilla, 2000).

The above examples can be understood through philosopher Albert Borgmann's notion of the "device paradigm" (1984). He states that technology distances humans from the context in which things are embedded, thus producing an alienation of the social components of reality³⁰. Borgmann understands reality as mediated through devices which provide us with a great deal of information (for example, all the geographic information one can get in a GPS) that separates us from how we experience reality, just providing us with a fetishized commodity³¹. Borgmann goes on to say that "The farther reaches of reality and the cultural landmarks that used to lend it coherence are being swept off their foundations by information technology.... Whatever is touched by information technology detaches itself from its foundation" (Borgmann, 1999: 5). This means that technologies produce a new way of experiencing and of moving through the world, which detaches humans from nature. In line with those theorists of the Faustian dilemma, Borgmann refers to indigenous cultures when he states that information technologies such as television "invade[s] the culture of pre-modern countries most quickly and easily.... If information is not the medium of an overwhelmingly new culture, it is at least the entering wedge that permits indigenous cultures to seep away and disappear" (1999: 6). This way of conceptualizing technology understands culture as an

³⁰ He differentiates between *things* and *devices*: *things* "are inseparable from its context, namely, its world ... the experience of a thing is always and also a bodily and social engagement with the thing's world" (1984: 41); *devices* provide 'commodities' by hiding the machinery that provides that same commodity: the commodity of a device is "what a device is there for" (1984: 42). For instance, the 'commodity' of a central heating system (namely the machinery) is heat.

³¹ The mediation of reality is afforded by three types of information: natural, cultural and technology (Borgmann, 1999). We have natural information when we see threatening clouds in the sky forecasting rain or snow, cultural information through written language, and technological information produced by devices. Thus, Borgmann claims that "Information through the power of technology steps forward as a rival of reality" (1999: 2), and that "Information is about to overflow and suffocate reality" (*ibid.*: 213).

essential foundation unable to change and adapt. But as I have explained, technologies are appropriated and cultures shift. Communication technologies bring many opportunities which have been appropriated by indigenous peoples. Such peoples have been using these opportunities for their own ends and they form part of their identities in the same way that they have always incorporated other foreign technologies.

Conclusion

Inuit identity is not a fixed essence. Through processes of adaptation and transformations, Inuit culture shifts, adopts new symbols and technologies, but remains Inuit. As I have discussed, a culture is constantly changing and entering new planes of negotiation. As I hinted above, cultural difference is something negotiated and always going through actualizations. We have to think about Inuit in shifting terms. Inuit youth can use a technology such as Facebook for their own needs and enhance their culture in that use. That way, an Inuk -- or a Uruguayan-Canadian like myself, for that matter -- who drinks pop or chats on Facebook while watching hip-hop videos in YouTube is not less of an Inuk -- or Uruguayan-Canadian as myself. As pointed out by diverse scholars (such as Young-Ing, 2003; Aibar, 2001, 2010), cultures adopt and shape technologies for their own ends, be this hunting, global positioning indications, or communications with friends and family. Indigenous peoples have to appropriate ICTs in order to be in a better situation for diverse cultural ends such as enhancing their political voice or managing their representations.

CHAPTER FOUR: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES FROM THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF TECHNOLOGY (SCOT) AND ACTOR- NETWORK THEORY (ANT) ON ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS: SCRIPTED USERS?

Introduction

In this chapter I bring into the discussion some concepts developed by scholars on the sociology of technology and on actor-network theory. These perspectives are included in the body of knowledge known as the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT). The sociology of technology provides a different perspective on how technologies are socially engineered (Law, 1987; Oudshoorn and Pinch, 2005; Oudshoorn, Rommes and Stienstra, 2004) and how they limit people's margin of action, while also recognizing the agency of users to interpret technologies and to innovate on their uses (Kline and Pinch, 1996; Pinch and Bijker, 1987). The Internet and social network are better analyzed within this frame. The Internet is a communication technology that provides a platform that could be appropriated by those who have the physical access to a computer device or cellphone and the knowledge to manage it. At the same time, online social networks have their own structures and dynamics. Jose van Dijck's concept of the *culture of connectivity* is particularly revealing. I will specially focus on the script brought by online social networks, bringing into the discussion how Facebook gives a *script* as a communication technology, providing a way of use, of values, and a "cultural" way of engaging with the technology.

Technologies and scripts

Nancy Wachowich has stated that “Learning the skillful operation of rifles, radios, ATV’s [all-terrain vehicles], and snowmobiles has become just as necessary for Inuit subsistence and survival on the land today as learning to use harpoons or to drive dog-teams was in the past” (2010: 5). She indicates that technologies can be adapted and become part and parcel of Inuit identity. In this dialectic, however, technologies bring particular ways of relating to the world, values, and expectations on their use; namely, a script. Actor-network theorists have argued that technologies are socio-cultural-technical heterogeneous constructs in which designers, users, and contexts of application compose the framework in which technologies are interpreted. One could say that this script takes place across the world and with every culture (an example is the adoption of English as ‘lingua franca’ of the Internet (Pasch, 2012)). For example, when I log on to Facebook, I follow the same script that an Inuk would follow. But more profoundly, the script of social media is increasingly mediating the experience of the world (van Dijck, 2013). Therefore, van Dijck’s (2013) notion of the *culture of connectivity* is well suited for an analysis of how the Inuit students at the Old Res use Facebook. Such communication technologies script users towards this culture of connectivity, directs users towards a particular use and generating a certain homogenization of users. Such is the case with the culture of connectivity produced by social media in a global scale, as for instance uploading and sharing “selfies”, a practice that has become part of the daily life of kids in New York City and Iqaluit³².

³²An example of this are the “sealfies” that Inuit have been tweeting in response to Ellen DeGeneres’ comments on seal hunt.

On the one hand, Inuit - and every user - follow Facebook's script. On the other hand, Facebook use needs to be understood in the broader social context in which technologies are introduced and appropriated. Inuit use Facebook and gain a platform for dialoguing, constructing identity, sharing knowledge and traditions, managing representation, and building an easily-accessible collective memory. This is a tradeoff in which the Inuit youth are scripted towards a certain approach to connectivity in the Facebook interface, while at the same time gaining a platform for their own purposes.

Online social networks as socio-cultural-technical artifacts: the engineering of a culture of connectivity

Madelaine Akrich (1995) indicated that *scripts* define actors with specific tastes, competencies, motives, aspirations, and morality. In other words, artifacts - in this case a communication technology such as Facebook - have a "script" or "scenario" which establishes a "framework of action together with the actors and the space in which they are supposed to act" (1995: 2008)³³. From a similar perspective Woolgar (1991: 60) conceived a user unilaterally determined in the design-phase of the technology. In his words: "by setting parameters for the user's actions, the evolving machine effectively attempts to configure the user" (Woolgar, 1991: 61). Thus, machines provide a framework for the users' actions. Oudshoorn, Rommes and Stienstra (2004: 31) argue that users' identities are anticipated by the designers of technologies, and therefore, technologies bring with them certain rules of engagement.

³³Parallel to Akrich, Latour points out that non-human actors in daily life prescribe or impose behaviors on humans (Latour, 1988).

Facebook brings a social script through which one is driven constantly to produce, consume, and share content. It is ruled by algorithms which shape the experience of using the technology. Jose van Dijck (2010, 2013, 2014) suggests that social media has produced a *culture of connectivity* whereby “perspectives, expressions, experiences and productions are increasingly mediated by social media sites”. This “culture of connectivity manifests itself particularly through platforms such as YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, and others” (2010: 402). In a similar sense, Castells (2001: 119) suggests the relevance of the internet in the mediation of collective cultural experiences:

It may be the case that individual experiences exist outside the hypertext, but collective experiences and shared messages - namely, culture as a social means, are generally captured in this hypertext which constitutes virtual reality as the semantic frame in our lives. It is virtual because it is based on electronic circuits and ephemeral audio-visual messages. It is real because it constitutes our reality, given that the global hypertext provides almost every sound, image, word, figure and connotations that we use in the construction of personal meanings in every realm of our experience.³⁴

The culture of connectivity spreads with the use of the Web 2.0, and technology users are part of this culture worldwide. The use of Facebook by the Inuit at the residence, as I will show, is a clear example of this phenomenon.

Through ICTs, the culture of connectivity permeates nowadays every realm of the social world, promoting certain kind of behaviors. As van Dijck points out in her analysis: “the exclusive emphasis on human interaction and collaboration eclipses the role of automated algorithms in the production of social norms (whether aesthetic, ethical, or intellectual)” (van Dijck, 2010: 406). In other words, she suggests that in the study of technologies we should include what humans do with the technology, but also

³⁴ My translation from Spanish.

what technologies do with humans³⁵. Online social networks direct people to connect with certain others, “liking” or seeing particular things, and providing with the tools to build and display identities in particular ways (van Dijck, 2012, 2013; Papacharissi, 2009). When dissecting the socio-cultural-technical components of social media, it can be seen how the site “push” people to connect with others, and companies acquire monetary value. The platform designers change the interface to accommodate advertisers, and content is created by the directions established in the interface (van Dijck 2012, 2013). Moreover, research has described the relevance that sites such as Facebook have as a battleground for identity construction where the platform owners and users engage³⁶ (van Dijck 2013; Papacharissi, 2009). Thus, this body of recent literature on online social networks shows how our online activities are a negotiating ground between multiple actors engaging with the communication technology. Facebook, for instance, is a technology which tries to steer users on their use because that is how they obtain value and create business³⁷.

According to van Dijck, the site’s architecture - the interface design, code and algorithms which rule online social networks- is “always a temporary outcome of its owner’s attempt to steer user’s activities in a certain direction” (van Dijck, 2012: 144). Algorithms and protocols channel the social and cultural experiences of people active on social media platforms, fostering the culture of connectivity that van Dijck describes. Facebook leads users to share posts with as many people as possible and actively

³⁵ This is basically what classical works of actor-network theory has argued; see, for example, Latour (1988, 2005), Law (1987), Callon (1986).

³⁶ Employers could be included here in the case of LinkedIn.

³⁷ Scholars have approached this discussion from a political-economic perspective, pointing out the commercial aspect of social network sites and the commodification of its users. See Fuchs, 2010, 2013a, 2013b.

encourages them to join groups that appear to be of interest to an individual, based on an automatic detection of shared taste or contacts: “Facebook is not a product, but a constantly evolving process whose changing manifestations is the result of a negotiation between owners, users, content producers, lawmakers, engineers and marketers about the control of data and technology” (van Dijck 2012: 152). As van Dijck writes, “The number of connections users make through a platform raises its monetary value, so that is why a site’s architecture pushes users to constantly connect with others, to promote the formation of new groups and communities” (2012: 147).

In the culture of connectivity, Facebook is indeed a producer of sociality, both permitting connections and forging them. This is what Beer described as “the power of the algorithm” (2009): an important component of this culture of connectivity. Beer builds upon Lash’s concept of post-hegemonic power (2007), and agrees that information becomes active in shaping lifestyles and environments, and constructing the world. We can see the post-hegemonic power of the algorithm in that determination of technologies in our lives and actions³⁸. An example is that “the music that people come across and listen to has become a consequence of algorithms” (Beer, 2009: 997). In this sense, Lash argues that the power resides in communication insofar as it is composed of algorithms which regulate the relation between users and communication technologies³⁹. Social networks, through their interface, direct relationships between people, and people and things, into algorithms in order to drive their performance. This dynamics has social

³⁸ Fuchs (2013a, 2013b), for example, frames the analysis under Marxist theory pointing out that the user’s engagement with online social network generates value (for marketing) which correspond with the dynamics of capitalist accumulation and surplus. It is a new realm of exploitation with the users’ mere use of the sites.

³⁹ In this sense, for example, it could be said that online social networks somehow reinforce the views that the user has, given that when we click on a link, other sites we may like are instantly suggested. This could have implications, for example, on our political stances and would make us access one interpretation.

consequences, as it incorporates people into a culture of connectivity, while dictating the rules of social interaction. Van Dijck describes that

‘Friending’ no longer refers to people you know, but people you may or should know according to an algorithm’s computation; ‘liking’ has turned into a provoked automated gesture that yields precious information about people’s desires and predilections. ‘Following’ discloses and connects people’s interests and allows for the detection of trends (2013: 202)⁴⁰.

Another important component of the social use of online social networks and the script it provides is picture-sharing. In this sense, van Dijck noted that information and communication technologies have changed how our memory works and how we build identity (2005, 2007, 2008, 2010). This corresponds to an era in which flexibility, modification and identity shift is the norm. In this sense, social media are not neutral. They are tools for shaping identities through picture-sharing and alteration, interactions, “liking”, and comments. Thus, van Dijck argues that social network sites became tools for personal storytelling and narrative self-presentation (2013: 200). Online social networks such as Facebook function as an extension of our memory in which users have records of their social activities and have the chance to build an identity.

As it is shown in the work of van Dijck, social actors increasingly experience life and reality through information and communication technologies and social media, and this makes a new way of interacting, communicating, new social rules, structures and expectations. It composes a culture of connectivity. Thus, a site like Facebook provides a script and manufactures sociality to a large extent. My argument is that while ICTs, social media and websites are fundamental for indigenous peoples to manage their own

⁴⁰ However, at the same time, users have appropriated these algorithmic mechanisms for their own advantage. For example, music or movie stars and politicians use them as a tool for marketing individual personalities as products (van Dijck, 2013: 202).

representation, conserve and disseminate their culture, negotiate their identities, undertake political activism, and build social capital, a certain tradeoff occurs. The scripting embedded in online social networks, direct the users to a certain type of social interaction, bringing each user (indigenous and non-indigenous) into a homogenous culture of connectivity.

Online social networks, SCOT, Actor-Network Theory, and the Inuit

The Inuit at the residence in Iqaluit, as Facebook users, are not alien to the script that these sites provide. As Hicks (2007) states, Inuit are not only members of an indigenous identity, but also “people” in a generic sense. That is why Inuit are not alien to Facebook’s script and the consequences considered in this analysis. The script, to some extent, determines people’s use of a communication technology such as Facebook.

Most literature has looked at the use of communication technologies by indigenous peoples focusing on how the technologies are being used, or the potentialities for diverse cultural appropriations. SCOT and actor-network theory perspectives, bring new light into the analysis, and allow for a more complex understanding. I will explore this culture of connectivity brought by online social networks, as I analyze Inuit people scripted use - to an extent – of Facebook.

Conclusion

In this chapter I pointed out the interaction between users and online social networks, highlighting the latter bring users into a script. Inuit peoples -and any user, for that matter - are subject to this negotiation with the technology, and are immersed in a “culture of

connectivity” produced by communication technologies. Therefore, the appropriation of Facebook happens in a broader context in which being connected (Facebook-like) is the social norm. Specific activities in the site’s interface are scripted. In this sense, there is a sort of cultural homogenization taking place to which we are all subject (or at least those of us with access to the Internet and with the ability and inclination to use online social network sites). It is a homogenizing culture of communication and sharing content under the ‘power of the algorithm’, in which sharing pictures, lurking around profiles and other people’s pictures, is the social norm. Inuit use and appropriation of Facebook must be understood in this broader context. As I will show in chapter six, there is a tradeoff between the positive uses of Facebook by indigenous peoples and the culture of connectivity that such use generates

In the next chapter I will present the sociological problem addressed in this thesis, as well as describing the methodology applied in this research with the aim of approaching the subject of how young Inuit are using Facebook.

CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY

The objective of this thesis is to contribute to the existing literature on technology, social change and cultural identity. To this end, I analyze the impact of Facebook on Inuit youth, focusing on the case study of a group of young students living in the Arctic College's Old Res. I seek to investigate in what ways Facebook is a tool that interplays with Inuit culture. The research questions I seek to answer are:

1. How is Facebook being used in the Arctic by young Inuit College students in Iqaluit?
2. In what ways does Facebook affects the Inuit youth's identity and how is it being used for the engagement of 'traditional' culture and its promotion?
3. What type of social relations does the social network build in the context of Inuit's youth life experiences?

Furthermore, based on the social construction of technology and actor-networks' perspectives described in the previous section, I also seek to engage with the following discussion, from a more theoretical point of view:

4. What is the role of the culture of connectivity and Facebook's script on young Inuit users?

Field and Methods

As part of the research for this thesis, I went to the Arctic College in Iqaluit, between September and the beginning of October of 2013. I followed well-established ethnographic methods, conducting thirteen semi-structured interviews with Inuit youth who are active users of Facebook. I also conducted participant observation in the Nunatta residence in Iqaluit, as I lived with a group of Inuit youth students at the Arctic College.

This experience allowed me to have a very close look at how they relate to communication technologies and to their own identities as Inuit. Furthermore, I distributed short surveys consisting in questions with closed-answers and one final open question. The survey looked to further understand Facebook's use and the attitudes of young Inuit towards the social network. The survey was done with students of the Arctic College main campus and in the Old Res, but the responses were scarce. I received only nine answers back, so the quantitative portion of the survey was of no value, while the qualitative, open-ended questions were.

I also conducted content analysis of diverse Facebook pages, both of individual users and group's pages. Inspired by previous work such as Christensen's (2003, 2006), I paid attention to the comments, pictures, content shared, conversations, etc., that took place on Facebook. This way, after obtaining consent of the participants, I could follow their activities on the social network and actually observe how they use it. This approach follows a digital-ethnographic strategy which I explore in more depth below.

In the field, my position was one of "deep hanging out" (as defined by Clifford Geertz (1998)) in the Old Res in Iqaluit. This position entailed my immersion in an informal level for a period of time. I was also inspired by danah boyd's (forthcoming) approach to fieldwork, mainly focusing on teens: "All of these technology-center elements are important, but they make much more sense when understood in context" (no page number). In other words, knowing the context in which the technologies are used is almost as important as their use per se. danah boyd also explained that "I cannot help but wonder how many people wrongly think that they can interpret online content without understanding the context in which it is produced" (no page number). It was, indeed,

important for me to connect the social media and physical contexts of Inuit youth. The residence of the Arctic College, as a place where Inuit from the communities come to study, and struggle to keep up with their ties in the communities, seem like a very appropriate place to study such a process. In order to have a deeper understanding of the use of a technology, it has been argued that it is essential to include broader social circumstances in which the technology is introduced and used (Aporta and Higgs, 2005; Wachowich, 2010). Technology is a social construction, and, as such, the social forces acting when a device or artifact is introduced have to be included in the analysis. In this sense the fieldwork in Iqaluit was essential in order to develop a proper understanding of context, thus capturing the fluidity and seamlessness of the spaces (virtual and physical) where people live.

The “deep hanging out”, interviews and observations mainly took place on the Arctic College’s Nunatta Student Residence. As mentioned above, this site was ideal because it is a place to which Inuit youth come from different parts of Nunavut to study various disciplines or trades, so it was an appropriate setting for exploring the Inuit culture. Moreover, the city of Iqaluit (the capital and largest community of Nunavut, with approximately 6500 inhabitants) gave me the chance to have a vantage point to explore Inuit youth culture in the negotiations between traditions and modernity. As the administrative centre of Nunavut, Iqaluit has a great flow of people as well as offering most services found in southern Canada.

My approach in the field was to spend as much time as possible with the students I observed. While they were in class, I took advantage of the Arctic College’s library in order to gain more understanding of the Arctic and the Inuit culture, and to wander

around the College campus observing the relation Inuit youth had with ICTs. I took every chance I could to spend time with the students. For example, starting our day together at breakfast, riding the bus which connected the residence with the College's campus, meeting them for lunch, and doing leisure activities after classes and on weekends. One special place for socialization was a smoking shack located outside the Old Res' main entrance. That was the main place in which I introduced myself and became integrated in the residence life. I took every opportunity to converse and ask for opinions. Rapport was built immediately, having almost no trouble in negotiating my presence as a researcher.

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and other scholars have suggested (e.g. Fawcett and Hearn, 2004; Mauthner and Doucet, 2003; Perley and O'Donnell, 2005), that research is not an innocent activity, and that it is impossible to perform value-free observations. As Stewart-Harawira (2005: 22) writes: "The notion of an unbiased, objective qualitative research methodology is in itself problematic". All knowledge is a situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988). As a researcher and as a person, I perceive reality through biases formed by my own biography that filter my understanding of the world. My position as a white-Latin American doing research on Inuit peoples situated my participation in the research. Not being fully Canadian (revealed through my accent and cultural practices) was an asset in negotiating my relation with research participants and for building rapport, as I was not immediately identified as the typical *kablunak*⁴¹. I was almost immediately integrated into the Old Res activities, engaging in different leisure activities with them, such as playing pool or Ping-Pong, watching TV, going for walks, getting invited to go to the bar, etc.

⁴¹ *Kablunak* is the Inuktitut expression for the non-Inuit.

Ethnography

Ethnography is a well-established data-gathering anthropological method, consisting in seeking to understand the social phenomena from the perspective of those under study (Guber 2011: 16). The goal is to unravel the conceptual structures in which people are immersed and act according to the structures in which they experience and make sense of the world they inhabit. Ethnography entails an exercise of description and interpretation through which to represent what the participants think and say. This will never be a copy of the world of the participants, but rather an interpretation of it (Guber, 2011:19).

Researchers must acknowledge their own limitations, being aware that the experts in the field were the participants (Guber, 2011:19). I had many conversations with the students that gave me a glimpse of how these young Inuit understood their culture and identity. In addition, after some time in the field, I practiced what Collings (2009: 14) defines as “phased assertion”, through which “the interviewer acts as if she or he already has some knowledge about a topic. By hinting at the possession of some specialized knowledge, the informant is motivated to provide more information”.

During my time in Iqaluit, I did my best to remain open and flexible in order to include the unpredictable and thus reach the best description and interpretation of what I was studying. To this end, the most important “currency” to be negotiated in the field is language (Madden, 2010: 60). It is important to know the language being used, but it may not be always available. For example, I had to learn quickly how to decipher the mix of English and Inuktitut some of the students spoke. I was constantly asking them to teach me some words in Inuktitut, so, for example, I could greet people around the residence by saying: “Ublaahatkut” (Good morning) or “Unnuhatkut” (Good night). As in Harald

Garfinkel's (1967/1991) ethnomethodological classical work, the indexicality of reality is fundamental, as language constructs reality. Thus the role of the researcher is to capture the expressions in order to relate, describe and interpret the social world better, for which engaging in conversations is fundamental. The fact I learned a few words in Inuktitut was perceived positively by people in the residence and I used it as a strategy to start conversations or ask questions. This entices, however, a constant negotiation with participants between instrumental conversations with the purpose of gathering data, and informal free-flowing ones (Madden, 2010: 67). I was constantly facing this negotiation, and the richer data was obtained from free-flowing conversations during unexpected situations: while playing games of pool, Ping-Pong, chatting in front of the television, or going outside the residence to the 'smoking shack' for a cigarette. Building rapport was essential. I achieved this by having long conversations and exchanges of ideas with the participants. I observed how they dressed, how they spoke, what music they listened to, or what they ate, in order to capture the social cues or habitus (Bourdieu, 1989) and approach the young Inuit. I used such social spaces to negotiate my presence as a researcher and build rapport and trust. I believe I was quite successful given that soon the students integrated me into their activities, and even some of them, given my interest on Inuit cultural practices such as hunting, invited me to join them and their friends and families in their communities next time I go to Nunavut for a "free-of-charge" hunting expedition.

In such social spaces like the smoking shack, I tried to obtain information observing and asking questions. This also demands the researcher's skills in negotiating what questions to ask with a constant trial and error technique. In the context of an

interview, open ended questions are good as they allow for clarification and expansion. Furthermore, as Madden (2010: 73) suggests, expressing cultural ignorance by saying things like “I did not know that” are good means of getting the participant to educate the researcher. I usually reverted to that technique, prompting the students to explain matters to me in the detailed terms.

The lack of directivity of ethnographic interviews (Guber, 2011: 74-75) may help in reducing the imposition of the researcher schemata. At the same time, it allows being more responsive to the clues that give access to the participants’ cultural universe. This type of conversation allows for exploring fields that the researcher may not even know existed, but it takes time in order to put what seem to be fragments in place. There is also a need for flexibility until the pieces of the puzzle fit. This way, conversing with the students was a constant negotiation, as conversations went in different directions, from hunting, traveling, Facebook, facts about Uruguay, rock bands, etc.

One issue that I believe is important given the characteristics of this research is the broad context of the interviews (Guber, 2011: 89). This means the political, economic and cultural relations in which I as a researcher and the participants were embedded. In my case, as a white person, I was aware of cultural and colonial issues that permeated the fieldwork. Madden (2010: 79) suggests that ethnography requires a partial immersion, getting “close, but not too close”. The immersion requires an instrumental “hanging out” with the people but keeping the distance necessary in order to maintain a critical position. The key is to do as others do and try to experience the same bodily experiences. As a researcher, I had to use my own body as a research tool for grasping attitudes and habitus (Madden 2010: 88). Participation goes hand in hand with observing and having the ability

to register patterns and meanings, albeit being aware of the position from where we gaze. In my case the task of describing and interpreting was a constant negotiation between what I got through my senses, my theoretical assumptions, and my own biography.

Classical ethnographers such as Geertz (1973) considered that the anthropological fieldwork consists in a long-term immersion in the field. Through an extended fieldwork, the anthropologists would be able to grasp the behaviors and patterns of cultures. This perspective, however, should be contextualized in the present context, as it is possible to include digital and communication technologies, given that these devices are almost a natural part of life in almost every corner of the world. The use of digital media as a tool for social research has been discussed by several scholars. This presents a new approach to the ethnographic fieldwork for the social scientist, which was certainly of help in my own research.

Wittel (2000) suggests a change in the approach from the traditional anthropological conception of field, first to networks, then to the cyberspace. The first step involves a transformation of the approach to social phenomena given that it should be analyzed within the context of what Castells describes as the network society. In this sense, the field now acquires a network-like shape composed by nodes and links. These networks are open and dynamic structures in which boundaries are negotiated, so the focus is now on a thick description of the network and the relations it establishes between people. The second step consists of a shift from the network to cyberspace, in a context in which communication technologies are fundamental. This composes a fieldwork which is multi- dimensional, so to speak, and dissolves the boundaries between the researcher's regular setting and the field. Here, the researcher sees herself in the need to travel along

the hypertext of the World Wide Web in order to properly describe and understand how the network is composed. This hypertext-exploration, however, could be detrimental for the understanding of deeper meanings.

In the second step from networks to cyber-space, Wittel (2000) points out that one should be also wary about the validity of the data, given that sometimes one may not be observing real people. Wittel believes that in order to grasp the full complexity of social dynamics the physical and the virtual should be examined. The material world should always be included to unravel the complexity of cultures and social interactions.

Other authors have argued similarly. Going back to classical work, Latour (1992, 1988) and Callon (1986) already expressed the necessity of considering artifacts as social actors in the analysis, and to “follow the actors themselves” (Latour, 1996, 2005) allowing the social actor to show the framework in which the technology is involved. Thus, a crucial aspect of my fieldwork was allowing the students themselves to show me what they used online social networks for.

More in tune to Wittel arguments, Murthy (2008) expresses that as a significant part of social life entails the use of technology and digital communications. Therefore, the social scientist should seek to undertake a balanced combination of both physical and digital ethnographies enriches social stories, as this would enhance the researcher’s interpretations. In this sense, Murthy (2008) describes that social network sites could be interesting for ethnographies because of their vast multimedia material, and because the researcher can invisibly observe interactions in the site’s platform. All in all, social network sites provide the possibility of in-depth analysis of participants if used conscientiously (Murthy, 2008: 845).

So as Wilson and Peterson (2002: 449) argue, it could be affirmed that basically all the technologies, text and media that form the Internet are a cultural product. Cora García et al. (2009) say that the physical-traditional ways of communication, as well as the technologically advanced (namely what has been called virtual reality), are two faces of the same coin. They stress that ethnography should include things such as computer mediated communications or websites because these kinds of communication technologies are now inseparable from the field. On the one hand, the researcher observes text and images on a computer screen, and in virtue of the inextricability of the physical and virtual, a technological environment provides contact with the world under study (Cora-Garcia, 2009: 58). On the other hand, the format gives the researcher the possibility of passively lurking thus incorporating visual data or sounds. During my digital ethnography I lurked around Facebook pages surfing through the hypertext of how the participants used the online social network, what they shared, what were their interests, with whom they communicated, etc.

This research procedure demands different ways of using traditional methods such as participant observation and interviews, in which the ethnographer has to negotiate differently the access to participants and the field. Thus it is recommended to integrate methods such as online observations, interviews and content analysis (Sade-Beck, 2004) not only focusing on the online, because “the virtual world and the real world merge, creating a broader definition of reality” (Sade-Beck, 2004: 48). An offline-online approach is essential in order to cross-reference data and for cross-cultural analysis.

Another dimension of the discussion is one about the differentiation between the offline and online world. As I discussed in another section, Christensen (2003) for

example, shows how the Internet is used to embed offline identities online. Wilson and Peterson (2002: 453) remark the need for iterating research from the virtual into geographical spaces and include topics such as how gendered or racialized identities are negotiated and reproduced. In a similar fashion, research on online communities and meeting sites has shown that the relations established virtually are formed and maintained in a similar way than on wider society (Carter, 2005; Hardey, 2002). Thus cyberspace should not be considered as significantly different from the real world.

Facebook as Tool for Social Research

As Beer and Burrows (2007) argue, social network sites could be used for research on any topic. They give access to an extensive archive of the daily lives of individuals in which researchers can access profiles containing information such as practices, tastes, etc. But most importantly, an online social network like Facebook is a setting which brings new insights towards sociality (Mychasiuk and Benzies, 2011). Wilson et al. (2012) justify the study of the social network site because it is “an ongoing database of social activity with information being added in real time...is popular across a broad swath of demographic groups and in many countries, so it offers a unique source of information about human behavior with levels of ecological validity that are hard to match in most common research settings” (p. 204). They argue that, so far, scholars have used Facebook to research general themes such as descriptive analysis of users, motivations for using Facebook, identity presentation, the role in social interactions, and privacy and information disclosure (p. 205).

What is useful about Facebook, as Wilson et al. (2012: 213) say, is that “The Facebook profile page amounts to a blank canvas on which each user has free reign to construct a public or semipublic image of him- or herself”, and thus gives a new insight towards identity formation. What is not mentioned in their review is any reference to “peripheral” users, i.e. non-Western persons. In this research I provide new knowledge in this respect focusing on the identity negotiation of indigenous people such as the Inuit in this online social network.

In the next section I will analyze the data collected during the fieldwork and put it in context with my theoretical framework. I will analyze both the information I gathered from the students at the Old Res, but also from the groups that can be found on Facebook. Finally, I will explore the notion of script in how young Inuit students at the College’s residence, engage with the site.

CHAPTER SIX: DATA ANALYSIS

One of the students said playfully a couple of times while talking to me: “I may be more of a Facebook-oholic than an alcoholic”. This expression summarizes pretty well the intensity of Facebook use among Inuit students at the Old Res⁴². During my fieldwork I constantly observed how they were on their laptops or cell-phones at all times: during breakfast, lunch, dinner, in the TV room, in their bedrooms or in the smoking- shack located outside the residence. When I asked them what they were doing staring at their computers and cell-phones, the answer most of the times was that they were on Facebook or YouTube. In fact, when talking about technologies and the internet during the interviews and conversations, the first thing they mentioned was Facebook: as if the internet and this social network site were synonymous.

Clearly, communication technologies have had a huge impact in this population of Inuit youth. They have altered how they communicate, how they interact and how they relate to the environment. I already mentioned the views of those who thought about the impact communication technologies would have in the Arctic 30 or 40 years ago, such as Savard (1998) and Dicks (1977). They proclaimed a sort of “communication-technology-dystopia”, arguing that these tools would have detrimental effects on the Inuit culture. They pointed at issues of ‘Westernization’ and cultural disorientation. More recently, in the same direction, Krone (2008, 2007) pointed out that communication technologies intrinsically script a Western-like user given that the software incorporated into these technologies carries specific ‘Western’ expectations and way of relating to the world. Other scholars (e.g. Dyson and Underwood 2006; Gearherad 2005; Nathan, 2000;

⁴² And it goes in line with Pasch’s (2013) observation of the internet being the main means of communication in Nunavut.

Landzelius, 2006, 2003), however, have indicated that the internet's hyper textual architecture could be interpreted as compatible with the way indigenous peoples learn and relate to the world. Mass self-communication as a product of online social network sites bring new ways of interaction with people as well as a wide array of activities that can be performed on Facebook's multimedia interface, such as sharing pictures and chatting. Furthermore, we should not forget the importance that the Internet has on a huge territory with scarce and scattered population such as Nunavut's. I also found, through the people I shared my fieldwork with, is that they frequently move from one community to another, at least that was the case with the people I interacted with in Iqaluit. In this context the importance of a site such as Facebook is understood, as it is a means through which pictures can be shared and it allows for instant chatting, a very relevant feature as mentioned by the Inuit students at the residence, principally because the mobility and large distances. This way, almost all of the students with whom I talked stressed the importance of being in touch with friends, family, and of following the events which take place in the communities from which they hailed.

Facebook allows the students to create a network of communication with friends and family in Iqaluit and in any other community. That way they "stay in the loop" of what is going on in their communities and in the rest of Nunavut. As one student remarked, through Facebook one can find out about different job and educational opportunities. In fact, in the past she had found out about scholarships on Facebook which allowed her to travel a great deal. From an actor-network perspective, Latour (1996, 2005) and Callon (1989) methodologically propose to 'follow the actors' and allow them to set the limits of the study. The example of this student shows how she used

Facebook as a technology that allowed her to be aware of opportunities such as scholarships to travel. In fact, for all the students, Facebook is a technology which they used to keep in contact with their families, friends, and the world; as well as to share thoughts, jokes, ideas, complaints, etc. As I show below, it is also a site which allows to access cultural referents.

To put these ideas in order, I will describe two categories of use which are in line with what Budka (2009, 2012) and Budka et al. (2009) show regarding the use of the network MyKnet.org in Northern Ontario. On the one hand, there is the individual and personal use of Facebook. On the other hand, there is Facebook as a means of sharing cultural-laden messages and for cultural interactions, mainly through the creation of groups.

Individual use of Facebook

Some expressions show the relevance of Facebook among the research participants and the context in which it is used. The students, for example, made reference to the opportunity it brings in order to be in touch with geographically distant relatives, friends and communities. As one student said: “Facebook is useful to be in touch, knowing what is going on”. Similarly, another student mentioned that he uses it to “Stay up to date with everything that happens on a daily basis, special events in the community, friends... what is going on in the community, talk to friends, anywhere”. Another student who mentioned that he uses it

“To connect with family anywhere. To publish things in the wall, normally to surprise family, tell them where you are, what you are doing. A friend back in Rankin caught a beluga whale. Stuff like that...surprising stuff. Following a lot of bands, and dirt-bike racers, Arctic gamers. Also, ‘Rankin Inlet elders’ and

'sell/swap'. Facebook is a useful tool to tell family how we are doing, talk to my mother who will then tell my grandfather”.

Facebook was constantly mentioned as one of the main means of communication, as indicated by one student about how he uses the Internet: “To connect with friends and family in other communities, through email or Facebook, mainly Facebook”. Or another one pointing out that his use of the Internet is “mostly social networking so I can be in touch with friends all around Canada”.

Facebook provides a platform to share pictures. Thus, a student suggests that “Facebook is used to communicate if someone got big game, for example”, something which is often found across Facebook pages. It also provides the much valued opportunity to chat and to play games:

“It is amazing that there is Facebook, you get to see so many places when you are sitting in the chair...you can play games on Facebook. I get in touch with people through Facebook and ask them how is living there...stuff like that”.

One student mentioned that, on the Internet, he uses “Mainly Facebook because it is quite easy to use”, and another one stressed that

“I upload pictures because I don't want to lose them. I connect with friends and family all around the world...I follow Pangirtung news group, in which anybody from that community can post anything, like, for example, get together for dinner, country foods. I know what is going in my community when I see that page”.

To stay in touch with communities is a very important use of Facebook. It also brings other benefits and interpretations of the technology, such as helping with memory. As one of the students said while he showed me his Facebook wall, “I live in the Coral Harbor group”, and after examining the interface he suddenly realized: “Look! Now I can see on Facebook that it is my daughter's birthday”.

The site is very intensively used, as stated by one student: “Sometimes I spend an hour to four hours on it, just looking at stories. I use it to be in touch with family and friends”. But it can also be a platform to convey messages beyond this personal use, with content aiming at a different scope. For instance, a female research participant who performs throat singing presentations told me: “We have a Facebook page and a YouTube channel and that is a great way to communicate with people. You get the message across”. It can be also used to receive those messages, as another female student said that through Facebook: “I can learn more about what they used to do in the olden days.”

Another student was also ambivalent with the uses of Facebook. On the one hand, he mentioned: “Social networks and Facebook have a good and a bad side. Social communications is the biggest thing in Nunavut. You turn on your laptop, you turn on your iPod, and you can see messages here and there”. But he also showed a critical side when he argued: “It is also used to look for drugs, marihuana. That is when I don’t really like this group...people asking for money to buy marihuana”.

The importance of communication in a vast territory cannot be underestimated. The people in Nunavut are among those who can most benefit from communication technologies considering the vastness of the territory; Facebook provides a platform which the Inuit I interviewed enjoy and find easy to use. Through the interface and the site’s architecture they share pictures, chat, comment on each other’s walls, etc. Furthermore, Facebook takes on a great relevance given the high mobility of people- at least the students I interviewed- across the territory. Before going to Iqaluit to the college, they told me about their traveling mostly through different communities in the territory,

to other cities such as Yellowknife and Edmonton, as well as more southern cities such as Ottawa and Winnipeg.

The Facebook interface can be considered as a form of heterogeneous engineering (Law, 1987) formed by the user's needs of networking with others, as well as entertainment through games, sharing YouTube videos in the users' walls, lurking through others' photos, reminders of birthdays, etc. Among these many of attributes, an important factor is the chatting option. As one of the research participants puts it:

“Social media is very, very, very new to the North. Bebo was a social network... you share your lifestyle, what you like and your hobbies, but you didn't have the chat. It was really a big hit across Nunavut. Everybody was hooked to Bebo, showing the life, pictures...Facebook when it came already existed but people had no knowledge about Facebook. But you could chat, and that was a new thing especially to Inuit”.

And, as I mentioned earlier, it serves to find out about different opportunities:

“We can send messages to certain people that you are working with, to apply for jobs, ask certain questions about the field...I know that more Inuit are traveling because they say stuff like “this is a program I could apply and then go somewhere...things they see in Facebook”...I traveled a lot because of Facebook. It makes easier to open the world for you”.

But Facebook also provokes ambivalent positions

“Before 2006 my life was better. I didn't know about Facebook, my friends didn't know about Facebook. We were just playing outside, and playing baseball, going to the gym and play sports, go out with grandparents. Right now I am sitting in this chair looking at my Facebook. It is an addiction...but a good addiction because it helps me too.”

So in this regard we could say that, strictly, Facebook is not used in very much different ways than it is used by any other user in southern Canada – or in Uruguay for that matter.

For instance, if I think of myself as a Facebook user, I employ it to be in touch with my

family and friends in South America and to be ‘in the loop’ about things from friends’ birthdays to job postings.

Moreover, I observed the Facebook pages of the research participants and how they send messages that do not address anyone in particular. For instance, messages complaining about the bad food served at the residence’s dining room, excerpts from the Bible, song lyrics, etc. Let’s recall that mass self-communication is characterized for being from the many to the many, encompassing things such as the blogosphere and online social network sites in general. Mass-self communication is “self-generated in content, self-directed in emission, and self-selected in reception by many that communicate with many” (Castells, 2007: 248). The messages posted are just messages cast upon in the ocean of the Web 2.0 and mass-self communication.

Another issue that appeared in some of the interviews were issues of privacy. As per this concern, some of the interviewed used pseudonyms, and one specifically showed a critical attitude towards Facebook’s manipulation of one’s information:

“I don’t really get into too many pages because Facebook is more advertise oriented...if you like a certain ad you link to companies. It is used for advertisement...Now Facebook is more about sharing your information with private companies and sharing what you like, and they push the advertisements to you”.

Other interviewee said:

People can look at your photos; read about you...everybody watches you.

While other pointed out that:

“People put their crazy side there. It is a big part of their lives and makes them lose control of their culture and their lives; especially with Inuit women. They do more research than the fucking FBI. That is a bad side of fucking Facebook”.

But Facebook is also it is used to establish “culture-laden” conversations (so to speak) regarding Inuit-ness. For example, I observed in a participant’s Facebook wall how he wrote that he was watching the show “Corner Gas Comedy”, and they were talking about the fact that Inuit do not live in igloos anymore. From his comment he got responses like someone saying that he found it funny when in Toronto somebody asked him whether the Inuit lived in igloos, or someone had been asked the same question in Ottawa. They interact laughing at the people who ask those questions, remarking how dumb those questions are for them.

The interface is also used related to social support. For example one of the research participants told me:

“I publish my own thoughts... whenever I need help from friends. Ask for a little bit of help from my friends and family. I make my friends smile when they need help. If friends get accused in Facebook I will help them”.

Also, when I was doing my first approach to the topic of social media and Inuit users, an Inuk in Ottawa showed me a specific use of the online social network which refers to one of the most important issues currently facing Inuit; that is, the current epidemic of suicides. The person showed me on her account how Facebook is used as a means for remembering people who committed suicide, and the way in which people remembered the deceased. This shows how communication technologies can be used as tools for social support and for bereavement⁴³.

In this sense, some expressions of one of the research participants referred to how Facebook can have a certain value as a platform for social support. While he surfed through Facebook on his phone he told me

⁴³Previous research has described that social media can be used as a tool for social support. See, for example, Nettleton et al., 2002; Lee and Kvasny, 2014.

“Facebook is like my best buddy...it makes me happy and unhappy...when I see things like someone’s suicide...I see that on Facebook. So it gets shocking at times...Facebook helps not being alone”.

This gives a new avenue for future research. As communication technologies become more and more ubiquitous and give the opportunity of mass-self communication, the notion of what was intimate and private, changes. Scobie and Wachowich (2010) argue that through storytelling one’s circumstances are made manageable, and maybe that is the case here by posting messages remembering people who died. It is also interesting to think about the relation human-technology. What was considered a part of the private realm such as bereavement is now a public thing to be shared through online social networks. This phenomenon entails the re-negotiation of privacy between technologies and the user (Fuchs, 2011). A priori, we can frame this discussion on how communication technologies are socio-cultural-technical artifacts, meaning that they are the result of a heterogeneous engineering from the interaction of both human and non-human actors. Technology and social life negotiate the meaning of privacy, shifting the social meaning of the term.

Next I will explore the other use of Facebook by the Inuit students: groups.

Use of Facebook to create groups

A different use of the online network site is to make groups. The interface gives the opportunity to create and manage groups, which are URL addresses to a Facebook page with slight differences in the interface. There are open and closed groups. The former allows anyone to participate by writing comments, uploading pictures, commenting on other’s photos, talking to anyone, etc., whereas in the latter a request to join has to be sent

and the administrator of the group would have to allow someone to participate by accepting the request.

If one browses through Facebook one can find a wide array of groups only by typing words such ‘Inuit’, ‘Inuk’, ‘Nunavut’, or the name of any community. When I did my fieldwork, one of the uses of Facebook that the participants frequently acknowledged was, for example, to visit “Inuit hunting stories of the day” group. This group shows pictures of what people hunt across the land, hunting tips, etc. These kinds of groups are acknowledged by the research participants to be a good way to present Inuit culture, to reach their own culture, to consult and share knowledge, and traditional techniques.

Facebook groups with cultural content have different meanings. For example, one student, rather defensively (maybe thinking that I was against seal hunting or the like), said that “We upload killing animals...we do what we do to survive in the North. You can’t grow a garden in the Arctic”. And he went on saying that groups are good “to show how to hunt properly, to teach”. In a similar fashion, another one mentioned that “I go to Nunavut Hunting Stories, where they show how they hunt and what they caught”; and added that “My dad would take a picture of a seal with his cell-phone, like when my little brother caught his first beluga, and he posted it in Facebook to show it to everybody”.

Groups were also mentioned as playing a role in cultural conservation: “It could be a good tool because people are losing their traditions. Especially if you are going hunting for the first time you can look at hunting stories and look at what to do with particular animals”. Others, however, stressed the importance of oral communication: “I don’t use it to follow hunting stories. I prefer talking about those in person”, but at the same time added that “Facebook is used to communicate if someone got big game, for

example. Some people can't afford the technology or can't access the internet, so personal interaction is better".

The notion of sharing was also present, in terms of sharing knowledge through Facebook: "I follow the Hunting Stories group where they show animals caught, like polar bears or seals. It can be used for sharing things, and show a lot of people who use the internet what is going on. Sharing the knowledge and give it to other people is good, giving knowledge for other people to use". It provides a means to be somehow in touch with the land, exchange knowledge, stories, etc., as one student put it:

It is really awesome to see what is going on and what people are catching around the territory...on hunting stories they share a lot of knowledge. It is Inuit culture by Inuit to see and recognize that the culture is still strong in some communities.... It is interesting that Inuit can share their knowledge with hunting, Inuit mitts, Inuit ghost stories, things like that. There are a lot of stories about the land. You can look up and finish your project over the internet! But you have to talk to the elders... Internet can be used to access all the history of the Inuit, like residential schools. Social media can be used to share that information. Hunting stories is the number one place to go to associate with people to share their knowledge.

Another research participant, talking about the use of Facebook, said that his use consisted on: "Nunavut Hunting Stories, watch the pictures of our territory, play games, getting in touch with people...Nunavut hunting stories when I am sad... Nunavut Hunting Stories shows places that make you want to go there...I get to see the world through Facebook...or through Nunavut hunting stories". He added of Facebook, "It is appropriate for the Inuit culture because the Inuit welcome people, and like to meet new people. Hunting Stories shows animals and people show what they hunt for the day. It reminds me of going hunting and sometimes it teaches how to hunt, how to skin and

things like that... You give people a computer and Internet and they are going to be happy, and they will adapt to another culture through Facebook”.

Social media such as Facebook could also be used to manage their own representations: “I think it is a good thing because not a lot of people know about the North and there are stereotypes about northern communities, and is not really fair. Mostly like alcoholics, drug users, ghetto...people that don’t know much about the North, that is what they hear. If people are interested, they might know a little bit more about the North”. Or when I talked to interviewees who have a Facebook group, they mentioned that “It is not that we are representing Inuit people, but we are showing this is how we are preserving and this is how we try to contribute. We would like people to learn from us, to be happier. It is to bring back the old days, happiness, tradition and spirit”.

And there are also other uses of social media: “There is a sound cloud on the internet; we hear a lot of young artists using our language to put on some beats; pretty wicked stuff”⁴⁴.

What these quotes display is the value that Facebook groups have as repositories of cultural content or as a way to consult about Inuit ways, both for Inuit and non-Inuit, and to manage their representations. Basically, they are public and private spaces in which Inuit users of online social networks get together to share opinions, thoughts, encourage participation, etc. References to traditions and ‘Inuit ways’ are often found for diverse intentions.

⁴⁴For example one video I was told to watch is “Diamonds In Inuktitut Taimantitut” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQzk1b0lKAQ>), a cover of the song “Diamonds” by pop singer Rhianna sang in Inuktitut by Kelly Fraser, a young Inuk. Searching through YouTube one can find several known songs translated and sang in Inuktitut by her. Arguably, this could be seen as a step forward into the development of Inuktitut in the online world. For a discussion about Inuit languages on the internet, see Pasch 2008, 2010.

Furthermore, other popular sites are the sell/swap pages from different communities. Here people sell things they produce such as mitts, hats, kamiks, amautis, jewelry, or what they hunt. People take pictures of the product or the food, which can be seen in Facebook with a brief description and the base price. The product is then usually auctioned until a certain date in which the highest bidder gets it. A lot of my interviewees described that they spend a lot of time in these sites, some of them selling their carvings or having family members who sell them through these pages. In this sense, Wachowich (2006) analyzed how Inuit see their culture commodified in products which fifty years ago were part and parcel of their daily lives and fundamental for their survival. Now, through social media like Facebook, Inuit users have a means through which they can offer their products “24/7” online and to the whole world. Now Inuit use the latest communication technologies to commodify their culture, selling traditional stuff to whoever wants to buy it.

To further explore the topic of Facebook groups as a way of sharing and exchanging an Inuit identity, I asked the following open question: “Please explain in a couple of sentences why or why not you think Facebook is a good way to communicate Inuit issues, traditions, manners, knowledge, etc.”. This question was inspired by previous research showing that the use of internet by indigenous peoples is a way for them to communicate and negotiate their culture amongst them and with the world, for political activism, to control and manage their own representations, to communicate with the world given that indigenous communities are often located in remote places, etc. (see, for example, Wilson and Stewart, 2008; Ginsburg, 1994, 2008; Budka, 2009a, 2009b; Dyson and Underwood, 2006; Dyson et al., 2007; Santo, 2008; Krone, 2008, 2007;

Landzelius, 2001, 2003b, 2006; Nathan, 2000; Prins, 2000; Gearhard, 2005; Alexander et al., 2010; Scobie and Wachowich, 2010). Some of the answers I received were the following:

- “I think it is good to share these Inuit knowledge to other people because we have the right to help out others with our different knowledge”.
- “We can get a different point of view from someone else on similar subject”.
- “Because our people want to know and to learn how the Inuit people manage their traditions, manners and knowledge. It is my belief that Inuit culture should be witnessed and Facebook shouldn’t take over Inuit culture”.
- “People can easily post things that are free and fast. People can share info and others who are not aware of it. They can get info about things”.
- “I think that Inuit traditional knowledge and traditions should be done in a traditional manner where you sit with elders to learn from them”.
- “I think any Facebook page gives a user a broad understanding of a certain group. And Facebook gives limited options on what a user can do on a page, pictures, status updates, description. At the same time a group or culture may post a link that can go deeper into their cause or goal. I think it all depends on the user and what they are looking for”.
- “Because not every Inuit has the same culture. We have so many dialects, we are so diverse in one race and another, there may be disagreement. I suggest you talk to an elder about our culture”.
- “Social communications are important to Inuit and other people as contractors leave home for work and such. Inuit in the old days went to residential schools for years without talking to their family. My parents say I am lucky to have a means to communicate, but sometimes serious or important matter should be said person to person. I would be devastated to hear bad news through a social network, but it is really good too! As plane tickets are expensive and the cost of living in the North”.

Through the above quotes we can see how there is an understanding of how an online social network site such as Facebook as a place that can be accessed to seek and find information, to convey knowledge and traditions, and it is acknowledged as a great way to communicate in an immense territory in which people often move around.

Notwithstanding that, the participants tended to recognize a nuanced value of the site pointing out the differences among the Inuit and that there could be different approaches as a consequence. Also the value of learning-by-doing, watching and talking to the elders is also stressed, showing how there is not a virtual world unattached to the real, but rather a need to consult with the latter first. That is why in order to approach Inuit culture a lot of the students suggested that I should talk to the elders. But the value of online social networks is recognized as a way to put knowledge there for anyone to access.

In this sense it is useful to see examples of descriptions of Facebook groups by the creators of the groups with Inuit cultural content⁴⁵. Examples of these descriptions of the reason to create the groups are:

- show pictures of your hunts, videos of your hunts, pictures of you camping, pictures of animals, stories of your hunts, stories of your encounters with exotic arctic animals, stories anything to do with the arctic. visebillederaf dine jagter, videoeraf dine jagter, billederaf dig camping, billederafdyr, historieraf dine jagter, historieraf dine møder med eksotiskearktiskedyr, historiernoget at gøre med detarktiske. montrer des photos de vos chasses, des vidéos de vos chasses, des photos de vouscampings, des photos d'animaux, histoires de vos chasses, des histoires de vosrencontres avec les animaux de l'Arctiqueexotiques, des histoiresrien à voir avec l'Arctique.
- meaning of remembering or knowing about things that the kids don't know now a days. (remembering, knowing old things).

⁴⁵ These descriptions are posted publicly on groups main Facebook pages.

- Let us preserve our traditional way of life. Feel free to add people here and feel free to post pictures. No slanders please. Let our knowledge be known and not forgotten.
- This link is to provide Inuit traditional knowledge on how to survive and how to hunt safely out on the land. I hope that people can tell/share interesting stories. Let our way of life be known, and hope this will help other people in many ways possible. Please post any safety tips on how to hunt and survive in the Arctic. We need support for our Elder's as much as possible. We also would like to pass on our knowledge to our children and youth.
- If you have any stories about any traditional Inuit stories, tell us what you know, anything from inukpasugjuk, qalupiluks and even what your grandparents did.
- Like traditional medicine, we need to start telling stories, sayings, words our elders used to tell because they are being lost. We've lost too much, we now have an avenue to keep these alive.
- We need to start telling stories, sayings the words, our elders used to say because they are being lost.
- I always thought this was a neat idea that no one was doing, none that i know anyways, tell us your story of the qalupiluk, how ravens became black or inukpasugjuit or your parents or grandparents stories of how they survived or what they knew.

These examples show how information and communication technologies, especially online social networks, are being used to maintain and engage with culture, consult others for traditional ways, strengthen identity, engage in conversations about cultural stuff, among other uses (they are in line with what other researchers on the use of internet by indigenous people have indicated, for example, Wilson and Stewart (2008), Dyson and Underwood (2006), Dyson et al. (2007), Landzelius (2001), Nathan (2000), Prins (2000), Gearhard (2005), Alexander et al. (2010), Scobie and Wachowich (2010), Scobie and Rodgers (2014)). The above excerpts point both to what Landzelius (2006, 2003b) has described as 'inreach' uses. Inreach activities are oriented towards an internal public and

including activities such as public services (e.g., telemedicine and e-learning), personal social networking practices such as communications directed between families and friends (Budka et al., 2009a). As one of quotes pointed out: through communication technologies, now Inuit have an ‘avenue’ to keep traditions and ‘old ways’ alive. The users see in the creation of these groups an opportunity to examine what it is to be Inuit, making connections to the past but also asking others for their interpretations and exchange ideas. These groups are a way of building a network between all Inuit, negotiating with the past and to define what makes one an Inuk. Christensen (2003) analyzed web sites with Inuit content in Canada and Greenland, basically arguing that Inuit across the Arctic use the internet to embed offline identities online. By aiming its content at specific Arctic and Inuit issues, cultural boundaries are established. Contrary to what Savard (1998) predicted, there is no “meta-culture” formed, but rather boundaries established vis-à-vis others are extended to the virtual realm. Because what the groups look for, at least in the descriptions they present, is for others to share their experience and traditions in the Arctic and as Inuit peoples, to keep the culture alive and to teach children about it. I, as a Qallunaat, would never be able to participate in those terms because I do not have the experience of an Inuit past and I do not hunt. Thus, strengthening Christensen’s argument, identity boundaries (as Barth classical work from 1969 noted) are reproduced and enhanced in online social networks as well. With online social networks, or what is called Web 2.0 (Beer and Burrow, 2007; Beer, 2008; Eisenlauer, 2013), users are able to interact and discuss those boundaries in a multimedia interface.

Looking at previous literature, what it means to be Inuit is discussed in Facebook through a tool which reproduces a 'Western logic' (Krone, 2008). But does the fact of engaging with a 'Western tool' make Inuit less Inuit? They have shown a great deal of adaptability to foreign artifacts, not losing their Inuit-ness in the process. Cultures are flexible, and those changes do not mean that something essential and indispensable is lost forever.

Above in this thesis I described that there have been antecedents on how internet sites are being used by Inuit engaging in different cultural activities. Alexander et al. (2009) studied the Nanisiniq Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ) Adventure Website and discuss about the value that new media technologies have for the transmission of knowledge, to protect language and cultural identity and to pursue socio-economic goals, through a means in which Inuit can negotiate on their own terms. Wachowich and Scobie (2010) studied YouTube defining it as a social network that can be used for storytelling, through which young Inuit can "bypass the more dominant Western historical consciousness and epistemologies that have traditionally governed media representations of Inuit social life" and "claim their own narrative terrains in cyberspace and beyond" (p. 85). Similarly, Gearheard (2005) described how the internet can be useful to resist outside influences and negotiate culture, as well as making information accessible for Inuit to use for their own purposes. I agree with this, and in this thesis I show that through the use of online social networks like Facebook, Inuit have the opportunity to engage in fluid dialogues and conversations, exchanging pictures, traditions, legends, proverbs, ask for, retrieve, and contribute with information. The difference between Facebook and other sites like YouTube is the speed in which content is shared and uploaded as well as

the multimedia features that can be made accessible in the interface. Also, Facebook is a place better suited to ask questions and to get responses, as it is more user-friendly given that one does not have to necessarily upload a video but rather just write in the site's wall.

These types of communications are what Castells defines as mass-self communication. Information and communication technologies change the way communication took place, namely from one-to-many, to many users generating content and sharing it with other many. The point here is that an online social network like Facebook works like a receptacle of interpretation and reflexivity on Inuit-ness, in which users engage in conversations and share pictures for others to see and also, more often than not, with the explicit goal of teaching others, mainly the young, because as one of the group's descriptions says: "We need to start telling stories, sayings the words, our elders used to say because they are being lost".

In the global network society composed by a social morphology based on ICTs, there is a common culture of protocols of communication enabling communication between different cultures on the basis not of shared values but of the sharing of the values of communication (Castells, 2009). Furthermore, as I defined in chapter four following Jose van Dijck work, ICTs through web 2.0 mediate reality through social media fostering a culture of connectivity. Thus, in the next section I will try to examine the impacts of this shared culture based on communication through the notion of script.

Inuit as Users of Online Social Networks: Scripted Users

In chapter four of this thesis I provided a brief description of concepts related to actor-network theory and the social construction of technology (SCOT) perspective, focusing

mainly on how technologies and users shape each other, and how technologies are the product of a heterogeneous engineering of human and non-human components (Law, 1987). Akrich (1995: 222) brings the notion of *co-constitution*, meaning that “people are brought into being in a process of reciprocal definition in which objects are defined by subjects and subjects by objects”. Also, I introduced the concept of script that technologies provide to the user, namely, that artifacts inscribe people defining actors with specific tastes, competences, motives, aspirations, morality, etc. (Akrich, 1995: 208). Artifacts have a script or scenario which establishes a “framework of action together with the actors and the space in which they are supposed to act” (*ibid*).

Under this lens we could argue that online social networks are socio-cultural-technical products conformed by the interaction of multiple stakeholders, encompassing the companies which provide and design the interface (e.g. Facebook), the users, advertisers, technicians creating the algorithms in which such sites are based, etc. Furthermore, as people become more and more attached to communication technologies, Beer (2009) suggests that we should look at the algorithms that configure the web 2.0 such as online network sites. He argues that algorithms are “...undoubtedly an expression of power, not of someone having power over someone else, but of software making choices and connections in complex and unpredictable ways in order to shape the everyday experiences of the user” (Beer 2009: 997). This brings a critical look to user-generated content sites which help us understand how these technologies are socio-cultural-technical artifacts, and give shape and create the rules of action in a culture of connectivity (van Dijck, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014) afforded by communication technologies.

One of the participants I interviewed told me that her father would take a picture of a seal with his cellphone, or when her younger brother caught his first beluga, and he would post it in Facebook to show it to everybody. What does this mean? It means the same as it does for many other Inuit, southern Canadians or Uruguayans who post content in the form of pictures, comments, links, or 'like' stuff. Facebook is designed through algorithms that direct the user towards certain activities such as clicking the 'like' button, sharing and uploading content. Everything the user does in the interface is recorded and processed with algorithms, to the extent that recently the company revealed that they are starting to keep track of the movements that the user does with the mouse. The user's 'likes' are recorded and processed so links can be suggested to the person, people to 'friend', etc. Basically, the technology is the one directing the user and determining what he/she shares and what he/she does in the website.

The fact that the father of the person I interviewed shared the picture of his son catching his first beluga, as well as innumerable examples found on the website, suggests a determination of the user's activities by the technology, which is part of the culture of connectivity produced by the artifacts. The created need to share stuff is how the artifact inscribes a user with specific values, attitudes, competences and aspirations. This could perhaps explain why a research participant told me that she checks her Facebook on a daily basis because she feels she has to, and "every time I try to get off Facebook I feel I have to get back to it", or why she gets angry at herself sometimes because she is there too much. There is a 'need to share', and sharing is a "default mode of cultural practice" (as van Dijck, 2008: 71, observes about sharing pictures online). Facebook directs the user towards this.

The script provided Facebook has other more obvious expressions. For instance, related to language. One interviewee explained that

You have to know English to use the Internet. I mean... you can translate it to French or whatever...but for us, Inuit? There are no Inuktitut fonts or anything like that. There is a program that Nunavut has to turn into Inuktitut, but no the major stuff such as Facebook, Google...you know what I mean.

Another one said that

There has to be a balance between Facebook and my culture...I don't have to lose my language because I want to communicate better in Facebook...language has been affected by Facebook.

Thus, the inscription of the user work in the realm of the tools available for communication themselves, in which Internet in general is a Western-designed tool in which most of its content is in English and there is a huge divide regarding language. So Inuktitut written in symbols is pretty much absent from the internet. This is important because as Pasch (2010: 75) puts it: "The Internet, like television, has the power of gunpowder and the qualities of a weapon as a great destroyer of language and culture": Internet can foster languages like Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun if it is used in those languages. This demands thinking about the relevance that using Internet in their own terms has for the Inuit, creating their own pages and uploading their own content. Web 2.0 gives this possibility, but Facebook, for example, does not provide characters in Inuktitut.

One activity that is practiced in online social networks and is key for user-generated content sites is sharing. But what does it mean to share in the culture of connectivity? I would like to delve a little bit into the concept of "sharing" in the virtual interface of online social networks. It has been argued that the idea of sharing has acquired a new meaning in the Web 2.0 (John, 2013) and it has developed three characteristics or transformations in the virtual context: the appearance of fuzzy objects

of sharing; use of the word share with no object at all; and deploying the notion of sharing where it was inexistent (John, 2012: 172). Online network sites such as Facebook encourage users to share their lives, but it is not clear what it means. Basically, sharing means sending messages which most of the time have no direct receivers, and now we are encouraged to share everything. The main reason behind this is that Facebook sells the data retrieved for marketing purposes in a market segmentation and thus effectiveness as never before known, so there is a mystification of the idea of sharing (John 2012: 177) and this mystification renders a user who is directed to sharing, as the father sharing the picture of his son and the beluga.

Here I agree with van Dijck (2012) in that online social network sites should be explored in a two-pronged approach: on the one hand, as socio-cultural-technical artifacts, referring to the classical studies of actor-network theory and of the social construction of technology. On the other hand, we have to acknowledge the appropriation by different groups of online social network sites. In this sense, as I tried to show with the examples above, Inuit youth and users are engaging with the technology in order to build, exchange, and negotiate identity amongst themselves. Sites like online social networks provide an interface in which it is possible and rather easy for the acquainted users to establish conversations between them or create groups in which the ‘features’ of Inuitness are discussed. I found a sort of collective intelligence and nostalgia deposited in Facebook, fed by the users who put identity together in parts and from multiple perspectives.

I acknowledge that there are certain forces which influence how users engage with Facebook, for instance through sharing content and what Castells described as the “value

of communication”. This is part of the culture of connectivity produced by ubiquitous communication technology. But, to what extent can communication technologies and online networks sites be a tool to negotiate and present an Inuit identity in their own terms? As I mentioned in previous chapters of this thesis, these types of questions have been discussed by anthropologists regarding mass-media, as in the works of Faye Ginsburg with aboriginal Australians (1991, 1994, 1998), of Evans (2002) discussing issues of hegemony, or of Santo (2004, 2008) addressing specifically Inuit issues like the role and the challenges faced by Igloolik’s Isuma TV. What these scholars broadly argue is how the media can or cannot be a means for indigenous emancipation, while they play in a Western field and with Western tools. From the outset the Western approach and technical manipulation of reality is different from indigenous, as well as the relation to the environment, nature and the land. Inuit peoples were inseparable from the land, where hunting-gathering activities and movement equaled existence itself. The technological changes brought by the contacts with white people provoked shifts in the relation with the environment. If one thinks about how much more easy and effective would be to hunt with a gun rather than with spears, we can understand the scope of the change in relation to the animals and the environment⁴⁶.

Hence, within this theoretical framework there are tools to understand the spread of communication technologies and how they impact identity and self-definition. Thanks to the widespread of communication technologies the use of online social networks sites like Facebook expanded, and that gives the opportunity for Inuit peoples to engage in

⁴⁶ This relates to Borgman’s device paradigm and the commodification of reality that technology brings. A clear example of this is given to us by Aporta and Higgs (2005) on their study of GPS and the changes it brings in Inuit wayfinding, thus provoking a different ‘commodified’ relation with the environment.

communication across a huge territory in which people move a great deal between communities and to other parts of Canada. Such a communication technology provides with the opportunity to chat in real time and be in contact through a multimedia interface.

Within this extension of the use of social networks is that I ask what the role of Facebook on creating networks is, and how identity is negotiated in these networks. From the expansion of communication means, Ginsburg and others' concern would intensify: what would be the role of a site like Facebook? We have to place this discussion in theoretical context. On the one hand, we have Ginsburg and others perspectives in which the Faustian bargain could still be present in terms of scripting a Western-like user where "ICT are predicated by western-rationalistic conceptions of knowledge contained in software and infrastructure" (Krone, 2008, no page number). Similarly, philosopher Charles Ess (2005) based on experiences with tele-centres in South Africa argues that computer-mediated communications are not value-free or by any means neutral. Rather, they embed and foster the cultural values and communicative preferences of their Western designers linked to specific cultural domains. On the other hand, there are online social network sites as part of a different way of communication, namely mass-self communication, which can help Inuit peoples to talk back to a hegemonic Westernized-self. They can communicate in their own terms, reflect about their selves and build identity together, exchange ideas, etc., especially Inuit youth. Furthermore, as the structure of the Facebook interface as a multimedia means (meaning that it not only focuses on text but gives the opportunity to use graphs, pictures, audio, animation, etc.) is better suitable for indigenous strengths as in music, art, and orality, as different scholars

(such as Alexander et al, 2009; Dyson and Underwood, 2006; Gearherad, 2005; Nathan, 2000) have suggested.

The above discussion refers to how philosopher Gianni Vattimo (1998) framed in the opposition between Theodor Adorno's view on the mass media homogenizing the world and his post-modern perspectives of information and communication technologies creating a fragmentation of multiple perspectives and ontologies leading to a weakening of metaphysical structures and thus creating a more democratic and tolerant world. As I hope I made clear above, I empirically found that Facebook⁴⁷ is being used in constructive ways in order to recall traditions and legends, share them in the light of the current times, tell stories, engage in conversations, share knowledge, etc. All these within a discourse stating that the goal is to teach young Inuit. At the same time, all that information is available to whoever wants to access it while being online. Moreover, we cannot forget the practical value of Facebook as a communication tool with family and friends in an immense territory, through pictures, chatting, etc.

Culture is not about fixed symbols and content, it is a process (Salzman, 1980). Nowadays, globalization produces a global culture which values communications and "sharing" most than nothing else. Through communications and sharing it is that Inuit youth can negotiate their identity in this world, explore the hunting in the territory from their laptops, ask questions to others, learn stories, etc. All the matters that can now be found in forums in which Inuit people share *selfies*, fight against Western perceptions through *sealfies* (CBC News, 2014)⁴⁸, post a link to a Metallica song, share hunting tips,

⁴⁷The same way as other social networks like YouTube (see Scobie and Wachowich 2010).

⁴⁸ The term *sealfies* is a pun from the word *selfie* by introducing the word "seal". It comes from when the TV star Ellen DeGeneres started a campaign to donate money to an animal rights organization against Arctic seal-hunt through the public's sharing of a selfie. Then, Inuit people reacted by doing the same:

write poems and thoughts, post pictures of the last hunting trip in the land, share a meme, ask where the best place is to sell skins, or discuss what is the best way to make qamutiks.

sharing “sealfies” which involved pictures of them wearing their seal-skin clothes. A video in YouTube of an Iqaluit teenager responding to DeGeneres’ campaign reached more than 50.000 views (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRPEz57_1_M).

CONCLUSIONS: FROM THE LAND TO THE VIRTUAL

Through the expression ‘from the land to the virtual’ I want to stress the relevance that the concept of network in its different meanings has on the Arctic, and the seamlessness between the Inuit’s experience and the incorporation and use of a communication technologies such as online social networks.

As I mentioned in previous sections, anthropological works (Aporta, 2001, 2004, 2005, 2009; Aporta and Higgs, 2005) have shown how the Eastern Arctic is covered by networks of trails which have been established from time immemorial. Through these trails the Inuit have traveled, and traveling has traditionally been how the Inuit relate to the world. Those trails were the social networks in which Inuit stopped to chat, exchange information, share goods, etc.⁴⁹ Travelers stopped on the trails to share information and traveling experiences, as well as fuel, food, cigarettes, or to provide help when needed. An analogy of these networks for traveling persists in the networks of cyberspace⁵⁰ and Facebook. Here, in the paths of an online social network such as Facebook, diverse things such as identities, goods, political ideas, or references to the land are exchanged, traded, and negotiated. This way, Facebook is a social process, a social space articulating Inuit identity, physicality, social communication, environment and landscape.

Nowadays, connectivity in Nunavut has spread, and pretty much every community in the territory has access to the Internet⁵¹. The use of online social networks has spread among people in Nunavut: first Bebo and now Facebook, as noted by Pasch

⁴⁹ Pelto (1973/1987: 63) also observed how traveling was a fundamental part of Sami culture in Lapland. They visited other members of the community and information and news were exchanged and distributed.

⁵⁰ Christensen (2006) already pointed out how social networks of trade had been deployed all across America and with the rest of the world, as indicated when the first explorers in Alaska found out that the indigenous people there had foreign goods such as tobacco. He suggests that the network of cyberspace is an analogy to the network of trade.

⁵¹ The 2004 Report on Aboriginal Community Connectivity Infrastructure showed that 49 of the 53 Inuit communities access the Internet

(2010) and Budka (2009b). In this thesis I argued that Facebook establishes a new shape of social network in the Arctic in which information, traditions, knowledge, pictures, stories and comments, are shared virtually, and provide virtual cultural references. This argument is in line with what previous research has shown about the cultural uses of communication technologies by indigenous peoples, namely, as a way to convey, negotiate, and manage their own culture and representations (Wilson and Stewart, 2008; Ginsburg, 1994, 2008; Budka, 2009a, 2009b; Dyson and Underwood, 2006; Dyson et al., 2007; Landzelius, 2001, 2003b, 2006; Nathan, 2000; Prins, 2000; Gearhard, 2005; Alexander et al., 2010; Scobie and Wachowich, 2010, 2014). As observed empirically, Inuit youth feel that it is a great way to be in touch with distant family through the multimedia tools it provides - fundamentally through online chat - and to access Facebook groups' pages which refer to traditional meanings and the matters refereeing to the land.

During my fieldwork I found that most Inuit youth with whom I interacted are living at the same time with both their Inuit traditions and the Western, Canadian world. They are negotiating between both, trying to define and establish the boundaries of what it means Inuit today⁵². But, regardless of the 'Western' influence they experience, they are still Inuit. Some of them very seldom go hunting, the activity that is considered Inuit *par excellence*, and Inuktitut is rarely spoken. Of course, Western food such as chips, pop, fries, Red Bull or jerky are very easily accessible, if one can afford them, at the grocery store. English is what we heard on the TV and is the language most used on

⁵² Fienup Riordan (1990: 231) made a similar observation about the Yupiit of Western Alaska: "Like other indigenous peoples the world over, they are engaged in a complex process of invention, innovation, and encounter. Contrary to the view that would see them as either traditional or modern, many Yupiit are...striving to be both".

Internet sites such as YouTube or Facebook. As some students pointed out, Inuktitut is not the main language spoken for most people and it is harder to write than English.

Facebook establishes an inreach (Landzelius, 2003, 2006) form of communication network between people in the Arctic. It is used by Inuit in the grounded terms of their local meanings and experiences. Of course, this is expected as is shown by diverse scholars. For example, Woolgar (2002) stressed the locality of the application of communication technologies, and Neil Blair Christensen (2003, 2006) showed in his ethnography of Arctic and Inuit-related websites how the online content refers to Arctic or Inuit issues, establishing a boundary with what is not Arctic or Inuit. Aporta and Higgs (2005) argue through the study of the use of GPS and traveling how technologies cannot be separated from the social context in which they are introduced, and Wachowich (2010: 14) pointed out that “technology cannot be so narrowly defined such as only to encompass instruments themselves (organic or mechanical), but must enroll the social processes that are part of material practice”. Facebook is used to communicate across a vast territory, to recall past traditions, knowledge, and legends. It brings back pictures of the land, and through its multimedia content, creates the nostalgia for a land that is theirs but which at the same time are trying to appropriate in their today’s context. Regardless of the connection that the Internet brings with the whole world, Facebook is also used to relate to the “old” space of the land. In this way, Facebook helps the young Inuit at the residence to access a multi-media memory. As Qiu (2013: 120) indicates, Facebook is “giving rise to a new kind of locale where social meaning and collective memory can be created”. This seems to be the case with the Inuit students at the Old Res.

Now I will try to answer more concretely the research questions I posed.

1. How is Facebook being used in the Arctic by young Inuit College students in Iqaluit?

I will distinguish two uses of Facebook which have different implications:

a. Individual use of Facebook

The site is used as a tool for one-to-one and many-to-many communication. This communication takes place in the interaction with others in the ‘walls’, sharing pictures, liking stuff, or by posting comments on the walls addressed to anyone in particular. These posts could just be random observations, personal thoughts, poems, complaints about the food at the College’s residence, etc. Here, Facebook is used as a tool in the particular context of the user, in this case an Arctic context and Inuit culture. This can be seen for example when we consider the popularity of Facebook pages such as “Inuit hunting stories of the day”.

Through this means the young Inuit relate with others in no different way than any southern Canadian would. However, there are some negotiations between languages, as Inuktitut is sometimes mixed with English and expressed in Roman syllabics. Also, the students pointed out that it is generally easier to write in English than in Inuktitut and most people understand English, and that some of them did not manage Inuktitut effectively.

This type of individual use of Facebook could be categorized by what Castells defines as mass-self communication, because they are messages which have no particular receiver sent through the platform of the Web 2.0. It seems that

young Inuit share content with no determined purpose, but rather participate in what is a *culture of connectivity* in which life is mediated through social media. Sharing content is a big part of it. Following Castells (2001, 2009), it could be said that they ‘share the value of communication’.

b. Groups formed in Facebook

Another way in which Facebook is being used is to form groups. Examples of these are “Inuit hunting stories of the day”, “Young Inuit Support Group”, “Inuit Qaujimajataqangit”, among many others. This group’s pages engage around a shared topic to which participants contribute. Here, multimedia content is uploaded: pictures or videos, along with comments and conversations around particular topics. In such Facebook groups, discussions take place on what are the Inuit traditions and ways, how things were done in the past; questions are asked about the Inuit culture, and stories and legends are remembered; identities are negotiated among each other, bringing the old days back but also incorporating modern symbols. These Facebook groups are often created with the objective of teaching young Inuit about traditions and what it is to be an Inuk. And young Inuit join and visit them in order to have a reference of their culture. They are also a way to relate to the land through landscape, hunting, or pictures of the communities.

The internet’s hypertext⁵³, has been described as suitable for indigenous peoples’ approach to the world given its multimedia character and its network-like structure (Dyson and Underwood 2006, Nathan 2000, Gearheard 2005, Alexander et al. 2010), and Facebook is an ideal interface in this sense. Through the access to

⁵³For an analysis of the social media’s hypertext, see Eisenlauer, 2013.

pictures, videos, or the opportunity to ask questions and converse, young Inuit have the chance to be in touch with culture-laden pages.

In a metaphorical way, a virtual social network is established and through its trails it is that young Inuit travel to access information, learn from the elders, and relate to their parents' and grandparents' lives. It is a network of trails that, although it takes place in the 'virtuality' of Facebook, it is grounded to the Arctic and the Inuit reality. A few clicks away Inuit can access landmarks in this virtual network of trails and have referents on what being Inuit means. In that place, young Inuit negotiate their identity between all the predominant Western symbols and their culture.

2. In what ways does Facebook affects the Inuit youth's identity and how is it being used for the engagement of "traditional" culture and its promotion?

Facebook is used by young Inuit to be in touch with kinship networks, to send messages with no particular receiver - one of the features of mass self-communication to show pictures, thoughts, 'likes', etc. In different ways, it is similar to what Scobie and Wachowich (2010) observed on how young Inuit use YouTube as a digital platform for discussing identity. On Facebook, reflections are posted about their situation as people standing with a foot in the world of their parents and grandparents, and the other in the world of internet access and thereby reaching all kinds of information. Facebook is a multimedia platform through which Inuit youth post pictures, join and create groups, engage in conversations, ask questions, start dialogues, and comment on stuff. The content shared refers to their life-context in the Arctic and in the community. Internet

provides a means to relate to places (Gordon, 2007; Qiu, 2013) through which a personal expression of order and location in the hyper-text of the Internet is created. Thus, young Inuit can access Facebook groups in which hunting stories are shared, questions are asked about the past, and traditions are discussed and reflected upon collectively. This brings the possibility of building an information network in the trails of Facebook with cultural significance and utility. Thus it is a place to talk to others and negotiate identity between the past and the present. In this sense, it corresponds to what some scholars have said about the internet structure being an appropriate form for indigenous peoples to use. It seems that the Inuit youth incorporate Facebook as a tool with practical uses such as for being in touch with their communities, friends and families, as well as to relate to the past collectively. Facebook is incorporated as a useful tool and is adapted to their own uses.

3. What type of social relations does the social network build in the context of Inuit's youth life experiences?

Technologies have to be studied keeping in mind the broader social context in which they are introduced. A large portion of the content the young Inuit tend to access, comment, and share, refers to Arctic or Inuit issues, and addresses Inuit manners, knowledge, traditions, and legends. But of course, this is not unexpected. I have mentioned above what Woolgar (2002) listed as one of the rules of virtuality: the local implications of internet use. Facebook builds a network that is not much differently used by Inuit than any other southern user. The cultural landmarks, however, of the traditional Inuit culture are found all along the way. And these are there to learn, consult, construct, and discuss. Similar to the network of trails in the ice used by many users to reach herds for hunting,

through this online network the young Inuit – or all Inuit for that matter – travel towards being in contact with their Inuit identity. The particularity of Facebook is that it is an open place for people to interact, upload and share content. The interactive and multimedia qualities of Facebook serve the function of creating and uploading content, where people can construct cultural meaning by conversing with each other, and establish a social memory through pictures and stories. This content is available for young Inuit - or anyone - to access, and the discourses on the groups' pages say they serve the function of teaching the young about traditions and the old ways.

Furthermore, based on the sociology of technology perspectives described in a previous section, I also pose the following discussion:

4. What is the role of the script provided by Facebook to young Inuit users?

Above in this thesis I described how technologies give the user a script. By this I mean what sociologists and anthropologists of technology like Latour (1998, 1992), Akrich (1995), or Woolgar (1991) have observed on technologies giving the user certain directions to the use of them. Facebook gives the user a script in so far as it links people through suggestions to contact others produced by the algorithms, or by suggesting things to 'like'. For example, in the account I created for this research I constantly get friend suggestions of people I did not meet in Iqaluit, who are directed to 'friend' me through the algorithms⁵⁴.

As I mentioned above, Castells observes a culture of shared values of communication in the global network society. And the Inuit are not alien to this. Thus,

⁵⁴ Online social networks transform the idea of friendship. As Turkle (2011) states, mobile communication technologies bring people you 'friend', which alters the concept of friendship.

what I fundamentally argue is that, given the script that Facebook gives the user, Inuit are driven to share, exchange and upload content on Facebook. They adopt a culture of connectivity. Facebook is a tool that is mostly used in English with some Inuktitut written in Roman syllabics. It is a Western site for communications that the Inuit have appropriated as they did with other technologies since the first contacts. Now they are immersed in the culture of sharing, and this means homogenization as users. For example, the usual practice of picture-sharing – for instance what are known as ‘selfies’ – is a common practice, and it refers to what van Dijck observes about online communities: *sharing* is now a “default mode of cultural practice”(2008: 71). And this culture is one of sharing, part of the global network society that Castells describes.

But at the same time, from a mass-self communication perspective, it can be said that a site such as Facebook is a way for Inuit to have a voice, and talk to each other. It is a platform to build networks of communication, to share their concerns, to argue and to be reflexive about themselves. This stance aligns better with scholars like Alexander et al. (2010: 241), who state that “media technologies can serve as a means to assert and perhaps, advance, Inuit objectives; socio-economic, linguistic, and cultural knowledge systems; and political philosophy....In the digital universe, failure to do so constitutes the perpetuation of colonial power”. As such, Facebook is a platform that can be used to display cultural meaning and to engage youth. In fact, young Inuit refer to groups’ pages in order to see, for example, what people have been catching across the territory, to check how things are going back in their communities of origin, to read ghost stories and legends of the land that people post as told by the elders, learn stitching techniques to make kamutiks, etc. It could be argued following Borgmann (1984, 1999) that watching

these activities on a screen means a distance to the reality of the land or the traditions; but now, communication technologies, are fundamental for different cultural and political uses: for discussing, promoting, interpellating, and building identity through a network of Inuit people engaged with the Facebook, for example. Memories are deposited online on Facebook groups for the young to access, consult, and build a cognitive map. The Facebook hypertext that young Inuit have the possibility to tailor, to some extent brings them back to the land while they are, for example, in Iqaluit studying at the Arctic College. They can access it while they drink pop, eat chips, and listen to the latest hip hop song, still being Inuit while they do those things.

Final thoughts

Through my experience doing fieldwork in Iqaluit interviewing young Inuit, I observed the extensive use of online social networks sites such as Facebook or YouTube. The young Inuit at the residence spent hours in front of their laptops or cellphones screens, just surfing, watching videos or looking at pictures. As I have stressed in this thesis, some of the activities that they engaged in were related to Facebook groups built around cultural content. The people I interviewed often talked about how they enjoyed visiting these groups to see the pictures of the land, of what people had recently caught around the territory, and to learn about the Inuit “traditional” culture.

As I pointed out throughout this thesis, it has been widely recognized that communication technology can and should be used for cultural preservation such as with language. The Facebook interface, however, cannot be used in Inuktitut with symbols. Pasch (2010) wrote that Bebo was extensively used by Inuit youth, and thus he suggested

the utilization of Nunasoft plug-in technologies for increasing Inuktitut use in Bebo. Now, given the use of Facebook, plug-ins should be developed here as well.

Furthermore, Facebook is an important source of information, entertainment, and communication among the young Inuit. Thus, the Arctic college could develop more intense communication and promotion strategies through this social network. It could also be used by organizations or institutions for providing information and social support, enhanced by the sociality, interactivity and multimedia traits of the interface. In this sense, it could be employed as an information and communication tool towards facing and discussing relevant social problems. It is widely recognized that there is a suicide epidemic in Nunavut mainly affecting youth. The year 2013 marked a new record on deaths by suicide (Nunatsiaq News, 2014). During my fieldwork in Iqaluit I became close to some of the students at the Old Res who had made suicide attempts.

The classical work of Balkici (1970) on the Netsilingmuit Inuit, already pointed out the impact of social disorganization on suicide, which leads to egoistic suicide in Durkheimian terms. Wexler (2011), more recently studied suicide among the Inupiat youth observing that subtle manifestations of colonization in institutions such as schools are in part responsible of suicide. This is because there is a dis-adjustment between the social goals that the youth have, which are Western, and the Western education which does not provide the appropriate means to reach those goals. Wexler (2011) and other scholars such as Hicks (2007), Kral (2012, 2013), Chandler and Proulx (2006), Tester and McNicoll (2004), Goehring and Stager (1991), Kral and Minore (1990), Richmond (2009), and the Nunavut Suicide Prevention Strategy (developed by The Government of Nunavut, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., the Embrace Life Council, and the Royal Canadian

Mounted Police, 2010) have indicated that a number of factors, such as a lack of sense of cultural continuity, lack of connections to the land, lack of knowledge of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, disruptions of kin structures, or problems with interpersonal and romantic relationships, contribute greatly to the suicide epidemic. Moreover, an interesting hypothesis linking cultural lag and inter-generational trauma to suicide is presented by Hicks, Bjerregaard and Berman (2013: 51): modernization leads to dysfunctional homes due to poor parental behavior related to substance abuse and violence.

Haggerty et al. (2006) applied technologies to fight this problem. They developed a CD-ROM viewed in an undisclosed community in Nunavut which taught skills in suicide assessment and crisis intervention. By conducting surveys, they statistically showed that the tool was helpful and useful as a learning tool. Although this may sound a little bit too superficial, it is innovative in the sense that it suggests that ICTs can be used to face the problem.

My stance is that communication technologies such as Facebook are being used to create social support for such illnesses as affect Inuit youth⁵⁵. Given the cultural content found on Facebook, which has the goal of teaching and of making youth part of the culture, such a tool could be more deeply appropriated in order to develop prevention strategies. As cultural continuity and a sense of belonging are identified as preventive factors for suicide, and Facebook is a widely used communication tool among youth in which they access ‘cultural’ content, policy makers and institutions could develop multimedia strategies specifically designed for this means of communication. Nettleton et

⁵⁵There is a lack of research on the participation, engagement, and implications of these groups, though. An example of this is the group “Youth Inuit Support”.

al. (2002:178) observe that “the internet may impact upon the size of social networks, and it may also increase the number of potential ‘buffers’ that can be used in time of stress”. They recognize different dimensions of social support that can be enhanced online: companionship support (through various kinds of social activities), informational support (through the provision of necessary information), esteem support (through social contact that increases feelings of esteem) and instrumental support (assistance with material tasks) (2002:180-181). Furthermore, Lee and Kvasny (2014) studied how different types of social media can provide social support to people suffering rare illnesses and to their relatives. After doing a Web content analysis of Wiki sites, blogs, and social networks, they conclude that the latter, such as Facebook, facilitate higher levels of social support given the rich information than can be found, the intimacy and dialogues that can be established, the multimodal interaction available, or the tools Facebook provides for awareness and alerts to facilitate immediacy (2014: 21). Research has also recognized how ICT’s and social network sites are a tool for enhancing social capital (Mignone and Henley, 2009) and how they are being used by indigenous population in Canada to celebrate and practice culture (Molyneaux et al, 2012). Therefore, these are tools which can help with aboriginal communities’ resilience (Tousignant and Sioui, 2009), given that resilience is strongly linked to “cultural identity and continuity reflected both in the capacity of governance and the pride in the Aboriginal culture” (*ibid.*: 49).

Thus, in the young Inuit’s context, through a multimedia tool like Facebook, forums could be fostered in which past and present are discussed and meaningful multimedia interactions take place in order to engage and fight against such an issue. That way, through online social networks, people could enter into dialogues negotiating

Inuit identity, seeking help, and discussing such topics. Or else, valuable content can be shared, offline activities could be coordinated or chatting with family and elders could be encouraged. Furthermore, I observed how young Inuit posted their feelings on their Facebook walls. This could give an opportunity to monitor people and take precautions in the case of suicidal thoughts. And all this could be done in a multimedia which suits better the orality and learn-by-watching-and-doing of the Inuit.

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