Sharing or commoditising? A discussion of some of the socio-economic implications of Nunavik's Hunter Support Program

Nicole Gombay
Department of Geography, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch, New Zealand

Received January 2008

ABSTRACT. The article considers the perceptions of Inuit in one settlement in Nunavik regarding the dynamic relations between market and subsistence economies. The socio-economic role of country foods in Inuit society are described followed by a discussion about the impacts of the Hunter Support Program (HSP)[1] on Inuit society. A hybrid institution, the HSP buys country foods in order to give them away. Based on interviews that included Inuit purveyors to, and administrators of, the programme, the article discusses some socio-economic effects of commoditisation of country foods on subsistence economies and explores the ways in which this food moves in and out of commodity status. It is argued that these shifts are linked to conflicting notions of value. Some Inuit justify the existence of the HSP because they perceive it to be an essentially non-Inuit institution which lies outside the realm of customary socio-economic organization and thereby frees them from the need to observe those rules strictly while providing them with the income to be able to respect the requirement to share food amongst Inuit. Others express reservations about the programme because it elicits behaviours amongst Inuit that they perceive as threatening their socio-economic reproduction. It is argued that the HSP, an institution that both mimics and breaks with tradition, one which is designed to help Inuit to promote the subsistence way of life yet does so in the context of at least some components of the market, is an example of Wenzel's (2001) contention that the analytical distinction between acculturation and adaptation is not a matter of oppositions, but rather, part of a whole.

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Introduction

Inuit participation in the market economy has been a gradual process that, in the case of Nunavik (the Inuit Region of Northern Quebec), has been occurring to varying degrees since the arrival of the Hudson Bay Company in the area during the 18th Century. Until the 20th Century, however, their involvement in that economy was intermittent. It was only with their move to settlements, which in Nunavik generally occurred during the 1950s, that Inuit were immersed more deeply in the workings of the market economy. Following this move, researchers started to explore the socio-economic impacts of sedentarisation on Inuit (see, for example, Arbess 1966; Balikci 1960, 1964; Graburn 1969; Vallee 1967; Williamson 1974; Willmott 1959). Many of the early studies were interpreted through the lens of acculturation whereby researchers essentially were guided by the idea that market forces would destroy the socio-economic reproduction of indigenous populations (see Murphy and Steward 1955). Later studies, however, tended to stress the view that Inuit have been able to adapt to those forces (see, for example, Langdon 1991; Wenzel 1981, 1991). They argue that subsistence modes of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption have not given way wholesale to market forces, but rather, that cash has been integrated into the subsistence economy. Yet as Wenzel (2001) argues, the distinction between acculturation and adaptation is a matter of perception, reflecting more the judgement of non-Inuit observers than that of the Inuit themselves. Adaptation and acculturation, he continues, are two sides of the same coin; the distinction between such points of view is not oppositional, but rather, parts of a whole. In this article, the author wishes to illustrate the veracity of Wenzel's point.

In the case of Nunavik, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) has played an influential role in shaping the current form of Inuit society. Whereas Inuit society customarily functioned based essentially on reciprocal solidarity, the JBNQA implanted notions of associative solidarity embodied in the institutions of mass, formal, public government (Martin 2003). The JBNQA has spawned a variety of institutions designed to enable Inuit adaptation to the implementation of the market economy in the region. In this article focus will be placed on one such institution; namely, Nunavik's Hunter Support Program (HSP). The HSP represents an interesting mechanism through which Inuit have tried to accommodate their need for cash with their desire to preserve a variety of socio-economic institutions associated with their subsistence way of life. It is thus a relatively new mechanism established to enable the

adaptation of Inuit to market forces. As shall be explained in more detail hereafter, the programme is an ambiguous institution which uses a mechanism of the market, cash payment for the production of food, to hold some market forces at bay. The impacts of the HSP will be examined with respect to two realms of analysis. Some of the tensions inherent in the program shall be explored by examining firstly its repercussions upon the social bonds amongst Inuit, and secondly its implications for processes of valuation. Ultimately, people's reactions to the HSP both reflect and, are a reflection of, not only larger economic transformations that have occurred in the Arctic, but also of people's understandings of how their economic system ought to function, and of the trade-offs Inuit have had to come to terms with in learning to live with the transformations wrought on that economy by the spread of the market with its associated forces of commoditisation.

Based on research undertaken in Puvirnituq in Nunavik in 2001 and 2002, I wish to examine some of the perceptions of various informants[2] *vis-à-vis* the Hunter Support Program to highlight and illustrate Wenzel's (2001) contention that the distinction between acculturation and adaptation is ambiguous. As this case study illustrates, researchers have tended to oversimplify the dynamic of the relations between subsistence and market economies. Processes of commoditisation do not produce all-or-nothing situations; it is not necessarily the case that a thing either is or is not a commodity. Instead, it can move in and out of commodity status, or it may be viewed as a commodity by some and not by others (Kopytoff 1986). Depending on the situation, a thing may be a commodity produced for exchange on the market, or it may be something that stays outside of the market's realm. In fact, sometimes the market realm and the subsistence realm are able to coexist, and sometimes not; sometimes they complement one another, and sometimes they are at odds. The relationship between these two economies is dialectical, not absolute. The HSP represents an illuminating example of the challenges inherent in this dialectic.

The Inuit Hunter Support Program was first laid out in 1975 under section 29 of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (Québec, Government 1998); however its shape and scope were only formally determined with the passage of provincial legislation in 1983 (Québec, Government 1982). The objective of the programme is '... to favour, encourage and perpetuate the hunting, fishing and trapping activities of the beneficiaries as a way of life and to guarantee Inuit communities a supply of the produce from such activities' (Québec, Government 1982: 4). Thus the programme places an emphasis on both the production and consumption of food as reflections of an Inuit 'way of life'. Although not explicit in these words, as we shall see, the HSP also plays a role in the distribution and exchange of country foods that, together with its influence on processes of production and consumption, ultimately have an impact on socio-economic reproduction. So locally produced food, commonly know as country food, is of central importance in understanding the role of the HSP in bringing together subsistence and market forces. We need, therefore, to understand something of the position that food holds in Inuit society.

The socio-economic role of country foods

Country foods have been fundamental to the reproduction of Inuit society. Amongst the various institutions associated with these foods, of particular importance for the purposes of this article is the belief by Inuit that whenever possible, country foods should be shared amongst people (see Bennett and Rowley 2004; Bodenhorn 1990, 2000; Burch 1988; Collings, Wenzel, and Condon 1998; Damas 1972; Freeman 1996b, 2005; Hensel 1996; Hovelsrud-Broda 2000; Hunt 2000; Kishigami 2000, 2001, 2004; Carole Lévesque and others 2002; Nuttall 1991, 2000; Oakes and Riewe 1997; St-Pierre 2001; Wachowich 1999; Wenzel 1981, 1991, 2000, 2005). In Nunavik the commitment to sharing this food is upheld by a strong social injunction against the selling of that food amongst Inuit: to turn country food into a commodity essentially means that they are prepared to withhold food from the cycle of sharing which is 'tantamount to threatening life itself' (Freeman 2005: 62). As Inuit repeatedly state, country foods should be shared. The form and expression of that sharing varies, but it is a central element of Inuit society across the Arctic.

Although the ideal is that anyone may have access to country foods through sharing, there is a common pecking order of entitlement. Generally, successful hunters, fishers, or gatherers share food first with their immediate and extended family, then emphasis is given to sharing with elders, widows, friends, namesakes, midwives, hunting partners, and the needy (such as those who are ill or lack the equipment or the ability to secure country foods), thereafter excess food may be given to any who ask for it. Large marine mammals are generally shared amongst the whole community (see Caulfield 1997). People tend to share food with those who have gone out harvesting with them. Upon their return to the settlement the sharing continues. For example, when successful harvesters get back to the settlement, people may come to greet them and ask for food, or the harvester may send food to people, or make an announcement on the community radio saying that there is food to spare for any who wants it. Similarly, when people need food they may call or come by a harvester's house and ask for it. Ideally, if food can be spared, such requests are not denied. A circumpolar study of living conditions in the Arctic undertaken from 2001 to 2006 found that 81% of Inuit households received country foods from others, with Canada being the country where these foods were most shared, with more than 99% of households receiving such food (Poppel and others 2007).

The explanations that are used to maintain such sharing are woven in a myriad ways into how Inuit perceive themselves in relation to the world they inhabit. One explanation that people commonly give about why food is shared amounts essentially to a pragmatic insurance policy (see Fafchamps 1992; Freeman 2005; Porter 1987). People are aware that food and animals are scarce, and that until very recently, their survival largely depended on having access to them. Thus Inuit have always encouraged people to share food with others in cases when it could be spared with the understanding that such sharing would, in turn, ideally be reciprocated.

At a cosmological level, sharing country foods is sustained by the belief that as sentient beings, animals are aware of human behaviour and react accordingly. Humans must therefore behave appropriately in their relations with the animals they harvest. If this is not done then a hunter or fisher's future success will be jeopardized. Animals know how humans behave and choose to bestow themselves upon people accordingly (Bennett and Rowley 2004; Bodenhorn 1990, 2000; Nuttall 1992; Stairs and Wenzel 1992; Turner 1990). In Inuit cosmology since the animal gives itself to the hunter or fisher, this initial gift must be shared with others. Generosity is rewarded with generosity; so people commonly say, 'the more you give, the more you get'.

Ideas about common property are also at the root of the injunction by Inuit that food should be shared. By sharing food people affirm the view that everyone has equal rights of access to the world and its resources. Although writing about Nunavut, Eqilaq (2002) expresses a view also held by many Inuit in Nunavik:

> In the past, I've never felt easy saying I'm from Nunavut, because it means 'our land.' I can say the same for the sea. I've always believed that what we get from the land and the sea are given to us from our Creator. And that we are simply babysitting the land and sea, which will be returned to Him. I've never felt easy saying that the land and the sea is for sale. I don't think it is ours to sell or buy.

This idea that one does not own the land or sea means that neither can one own the resources that come from them. It also means that, in principle, all have a legitimate right to use them. So Eqilaq (2002) goes on to write, 'I know for a fact that we happily share our islands for walrus hunting.' Thus not only can the land, sea, and animals not be owned, but they must also to be shared with others. Societies that view the world in this way tend to see themselves as transient and the land as something that is more permanent (Simmel 1978). This is why for hunter-gatherers possession of the land is really a matter of looking after it, of tending the creative forces located within it. They are custodians of something that belongs to all, and thus, they have a responsibility to all. In such a case, the individual recedes in importance to the collectivity, and thus, common property underpins and is underpinned by community (Gudeman 2001).

The fact that country foods are shared has important dietary implications for Inuit (Freeman 1996a). Although the majority of the diet of Inuit in Nunavik is based on imported food (Cesa 2002), country foods represent both an important component of that diet and a correspondingly important element of the activities they undertake. Of the Inuit regions in Canada, Inuit in Nunavik have both the highest harvest and consumption levels of country foods in the country. In 2001, 81% of adults reported that they harvested country foods and 78% of Inuit households indicated that at least half the meat and fish they ate was country food (Statistics Canada 2006). In Nunavik, the intake of country food varies by age, with older people generally consuming more than younger ones. According to research published in 1995, among men and women over the age of 50, country foods contributed between 39% to 65% of total protein intake (Dewailly and others 2000). Locally harvested meat represents 70% of all the meat consumed by Inuit in Nunavik (Duhaime and others 2002). The economic importance of these foods becomes particularly clear when one considers that in a comparative study from 2006, food was on average 57% more expensive in Nunavik than in Quebec City (Bernard 2006).

Yet the impetus to share country foods can be challenged by competing needs for the money required to harvest it. Wenzel (1991) calculated that in 1984–1985 it cost harvesters $13,439 to equip themselves. If one considers that the average price of a skidoo in Nunavik in 2006 was $11,610 (Bernard 2006), let alone the other apparatus (camping equipment, a boat, an all-terrain vehicle, guns, ammunition, and so on) that are standard components of an Inuit household engaged in harvesting country foods, then clearly that amount has increased.

If equipping oneself and going out to harvest country foods is expensive, the challenge then becomes how to find the income to be able to afford to do so while retaining the time to be able to go and harvest food. Generally, access to wage employment in Nunavik is difficult. In 2001 the unemployment rate in Nunavik was 14.4% compared to 8.8% for the province as a whole (Duhaime 2007). At a national level, the 2001 census indicated that the unemployment rate of Inuit northerners (that is across the Canadian Arctic) was 22% compared to 6% for non-Inuit northerners (Statistics Canada 2006). Thus having access to cash is limited, while those with the cash may not have the time to harvest.

Clearly country foods are bound up in the socio-economic systems of Inuit in Nunavik in complex ways. They are fundamental to how Inuit perceive themselves in relation to society, community, and the larger environment, and they provide people with important physical and social sustenance. The challenge has become how to find the money and time to be able to go and harvest food, and to do so in a way that enables people to continue to share it. It was in light of these various factors, and as a means of addressing them, that the HSP was devised.

The Hunter Support Program: its form and function

Under the Hunter Support Program, each community in Nunavik receives guaranteed core funding which is also indexed annually with inflation and population levels.[3] Within a predetermined range of activities, each community may then choose precisely how to allocate its funds. These activities include: providing search and rescue; subsidising goods used by people to harvest country foods such as bullets, fuel, and clothing; training youth in developing land skills; maintaining a community boat; and, most important for the purposes of this article, paying people without wage employment to get country foods which will then be distributed, generally free of charge, to Inuit members of the community.[4]

Although funding for the HSP is guaranteed, it is limited, which means that the programme only provides country foods to Inuit on an intermittent basis with the result that the administrators of the HSP generally choose to supply country foods to the residents only when they are particularly difficult to secure, for example, during the autumn and winter when weather or the migration of animals makes them less accessible to most community members. When access to these foods is more readily available, the HSP does not provide them to the public. Initially the programme was designed to give country foods to those unable to get it themselves, such as elders, widows, those without hunting equipment, and, according to Kishigami (2000), full-time waged employees who have less time to harvest country foods. When HSP stocks of country foods are limited, they tend to be distributed only to this portion of the population. However, when the supply is greater, a blanket announcement is made on community radio informing people that they may come to the HSP building where the meat is stored and help themselves to it. For example, in Akulivik, if more than ten caribou are available, then all households may have some meat; but if there are fewer than ten caribou, the meat is reserved for elders, widows, and full-time workers (Kishigami 2000). Only once such people's needs have been met may others have some meat. Such forms of distribution echo traditional patterns of sharing whereby people share country foods depending on who is in need of it and how much food is available: if less food is available, then generally only those in need are given some; if more, then anyone may have a share.

As its name implies, the programme is designed to support those who wish to hunt, thereby avoiding the economic marginalization of hunters (Nelson and others 2005). However, unlike its Cree counterpart (see Feit 1991; Scott and Feit 1992), the HSP in Nunavik does not actually provide sufficient funds to cover the costs of harvesting country foods. Chabot (2001, 2003) calculated that the programme covers on average 20% of the costs of production; the other 80% must be found elsewhere. This suggests that the HSP is a potential source of income only for those who must already have the means to hunt and fish. Thus people sell country foods to the HSP not to make money but to subsidise their harvesting expenses. Martin (2003) argues that this ensures that the impetus for production under the auspices of the HSP continues to be for subsistence rather than commercial purposes. Yet, as shall be discussed, when money comes into the equation and country foods start to be bought this does have implications for processes of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption. Such impacts reflect larger issues about the nature of money and the character of formal, institutionalised modes of social organisation.

As far as the forces of commoditisation are concerned, the HSP holds an odd position: although the meat is paid for, and thus has a monetary value, it is not generally bought by the individuals who consume it. The HSP thus represents a hybrid, part gift and part commodity, for it is neither truly involved in market exchange nor truly a reflection of the reciprocal exchange that has been central to the economy of Inuit. This produces a strange creature. In some ways the HSP mimics customary socio-economic arrangements, in that it is designed to emphasise the production of country foods while encouraging the sharing of those foods with community members. Yet at the same time, hunters are paid to provide that food, which is essentially a new form of behaviour amongst Inuit in Nunavik. Back to the times of the fur trade, Inuit have been accustomed to being paid to provide country food for non-Inuit, but such conduct amongst themselves has been strongly discouraged. To do so is to break with the solidarity that has ensured their survival: '[t]raffic in food is traffic between foreign interests' (Sahlins 1974: 216). Yet under the HSP, Inuit are being paid for food whilst not paying for it. Moreover, the HSP does not reflect the logic of market production or exchange since the food is not bought by its consumers and its prices are fixed by programme administrators rather than the market (Cesa 2003; Martin 2003). Therein lies an interesting dynamic. One might reasonably assume, at least so far as local food systems are concerned, that the fact that the market is held at bay means the HSP essentially enables Inuit to control the impacts of processes of commoditisation on their economy. To an extent, this is the case. Nonetheless, some Inuit have expressed mixed feelings about the programme. It becomes necessary, therefore, to explore the socio-economic impacts of the programme and assess the degree to which the programme serves as a vehicle for commoditisation of country food.

Socio-economic implications of the HSP

Given that the HSP pays Inuit to produce food and give it to others, one might reasonably assume that the programme fits well into the mixed economy of Inuit. It represents an adaptive use of the relatively new institutions of the state to ensure that local economic systems are sustained. The programme has some important positive impacts in terms of the production, distribution, and consumption of food. Moreover, not only does the HSP provide harvesters with income that enables them to continue to pursue customary activities, but it also ensures

that more money is kept in northern communities. Unlike other social transfer payments such as welfare, the programme is more economical promoting production, rather than simple consumption. Thus each dollar has a multiplier effect through the resulting production, distribution, and redistribution of food in the community; otherwise that money would be spent on imported foods (Canada 1996; Weihs and others 1993). For example, Martin (2003) found in 1990, in Kuujjuarapik, that $482,555 worth of country foods was produced through $198, 000 spent by the HSP. As Freeman (2005) points out, with the move to settlements and the concentration of a large population of non-kin in one place, it has become increasingly difficult to share country foods effectively. The programme plays a role, then, in ensuring that Inuit have at least an intermittent supply of country foods that supplements any shortfalls resulting from a lack within kin-base networks of sharing. Moreover, consumption of this food can expand outwards so that when it reaches individual households it may be further shared amongst people from different households, over a joint meal, for example.

It seems, then, that there are a variety of reasons for supporting the existence of the HSP. Yet despite this, the programme has also been a source of contention for some.

Altering bonds

Because the food at the HSP is given away, some people appear to accept that the HSP is an extension of customary food sharing. Imalie, a woman in her forties, spoke about various mechanisms in Nunavik that involved buying (and selling) country foods, distinguishing between the HSP and a project developed by Makivik Corporation[5] to buy and sell country foods (see Gombay 2005; Weihs and others 1993). She found the Makivik project objectionable, because it represented people selling food 'just for money'. By contrast, she felt that the HSP was acceptable because the hunters were paid not for the animal, but for their fuel and labour. The food was given away freely; thus for her, the HSP appeared to be simply a new mechanism for the shared redistribution of food. Her view seems to be supported by the fact that although some people sell country foods to the programme, others periodically give it free of charge. Inuit also remain committed to the notion that the food available via the HSP is still a common property resource to which everyone has rights of access. Money, which essentially represents the privatisation of these resources, must therefore be kept out of the equation. By Imalie's reckoning, people are neither paid to get the food nor do others pay for it.[6] The only private property involved is simply the material and the labour.

However, things are not quite as straightforward as they first appear. Certainly, the HSP was conceived of as a way to subsidise hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering, while perpetuating the notion of sharing the produce from those activities. Yet there is some debate about the ways in which the programme has affected food sharing. In fact, one might argue that the HSP is one more among other newly introduced institutionalised approaches to sharing. For example, churches have become a medium through which food is given. Although various researchers (Chabot 2001; Kishigami 2000; Martin 2000, 2003) assert that the HSP allows food sharing relations to continue, they also note that the patterns of sharing have changed, so that people are no longer so reliant on pre-established reciprocal obligations to share food. Thus Martin (2003) points out that some people without access to sharing networks – for example newcomers to a community – are dependent on the HSP for country foods. People's recourse to the HSP for country foods reveals other changes in Inuit socio-economic life. According to data from Nunavik collected in 1992, the majority of people who take meat from the HSP tend to eat less country foods than other households in Nunavik and to live in households in which there are no males or male heads (Duhaime and others 2002). The HSP is also used by those whose full-time waged employment prevents them from being able to harvest country foods (see Kishigami 2000). Thus it would seem that the HSP is generally serving its intended purpose of enabling access to country foods by those people who would otherwise find such access difficult. Martin (2003) contends that the HSP gives people the choice of getting country foods via reciprocal or associative bonds of solidarity and that most people draw upon both forms of distribution; the two forms of solidarity are thus complementary.

Yet for some, the impact of the HSP on food sharing has not been wholly salubrious. Alurut, a man in his fifties who had been involved in municipal government and had also periodically sold country foods to the HSP when he lacked waged employment, explained how some had reacted to the prospect of paying people to harvest food.

> For some, the first time when we [were] making a decision if we should get the Hunter Support money, some people didn't agree. Like myself, I didn't agree to get the Hunter Support money at that time.... I was scared to lose our tradition. Like, we share our catch. That's our tradition. We've done that for thousands of years, like our ancestors. And they never buy or exchange any food. So I was scared that if we started to use Hunter Support money when it would be starting to pay for food, I was scared that we were going to lose our tradition. [And] it's happening. Slow but sure. Slow but sure. When a hunter catches lots of fish, if he doesn't want to sell it, he's going to divide it to anybody. But now, right now, even if he got lots of fish, if some people, if some Hunter Support [or other institutions that buy country foods in town] wants to buy from him, he's not going to give [to] anybody! He's not going to share with anybody, because he prefers to have money. That's how we're losing our – it's happening. That's what I fear at that time. I was against getting Hunter Support money for that.

For him the HSP was the beginning of a slippery slope. In response to a question about the selling and buying of country foods amongst Inuit and he responded as follows.

> They're going, for sure, they're going to start to do that in the coming years. Because the Hunter Support Program started that in the past years. It started. That's what I was afraid of. It's going slowly but slowly, and Inuit are going to start to sell to their fellow Inuit people.

Others interviewed by the author expressed a similar opinion: that with the advent of the HSP people shared less than they had in the past.

Some people pointed out, however, that since the HSP's funds are restricted and available only to a few on a periodic basis, it does not provide people with an income sufficient to meet all their needs.[7] From their perspective the fact that the programme serves as no more than a supplement to people's incomes has some positive implications. So Davidie, a man in his fifties who sells country food to the HSP, observed that the fact that funds to the HSP were limited was a good thing because if people were provided with country foods on a continuing basis, they would get lazy. Since the food is only occasionally available, people are still obliged to go out hunting for themselves. He continued.

> When the Hunter Support would ask for the meat from all the hunters it would make difficulty for others to get meat. It's not right when it's all the people who are able to sell the meat to Hunter Support. It's open only for one or two weeks during the fall.

So he argued in its current form, the HSP avoided having an impact on the sharing of food. Benjamin, a man in his 60s who sells to the HSP, said that although he sells to the programme, that does not prevent him from sharing with others: the shack where he stores meat is always open to anyone who needs it, and when he goes hunting or fishing with others, he still shares with those who accompany him. Chabot's (2003) research appears to support this view. She found in 1995–1996 in the two Inuit villages she studied, that a small number of what she terms 'super hunters' produced the majority of country foods, but that they would never sell more than 28% of their catch. She concludes that this suggests that these hunters kept and gave away a large part of their harvest. However, the sharing has, of necessity, adjusted to the modern economy. So Alurut told me that when he goes hunting or fishing with someone who intends to sell part of the catch, he takes less than that to which he might otherwise be entitled. He does so because since he is earning a salary while the other is only allowed to sell to the HSP because he is on welfare, he thinks it is only fair that his companion should receive more of the catch. Despite the fact that money will potentially change hands over the produce of hunting or fishing, sharing does continue.

Although sharing country foods amongst Inuit does not necessarily entail *quid pro quo*, such sharing does rest upon conduct which requires respect for the behaviours which underpin such sharing, such as trust that people will take only what they need, commitment to the equal access by all to food resources, and the various actions that demonstrate respect for animals. Customary food systems amongst Inuit reflect interwoven processes of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption. Those who consume the food are closely bound to those who produce and distribute it and are often linked via informal networks of exchange. All of these processes require people to recognise and respect the fact that they can only function if people act upon the obligations and corresponding responsibilities which maintain the sharing of country foods. The HSP does however alter these links amongst people. The producers of the food are essentially removed from processes of distribution, and instead are replaced by the formal mediator of the programme. Consequently the HSP represents, to a degree, the substitution of reciprocal solidarity with associative solidarity (Martin 2003). Although the consumers of the HSP food may often know who was hired to get the food, they are not required to have reciprocal relationships with those people in order to get food from the HSP. This transformation in the social relations that have sustained the food systems of Inuit are noted in various ways by people in the community.

One of the manifestations of this transformation in the social relations that regulate the sharing of country foods has been the appearance of stealing country food.[8] In the past, the HSP depot in Puvirnituq where country foods are deposited had traditionally been left unlocked. No records were kept of who took what. Instead, following custom, people regulated their own consumption, taking only what they needed when it was available. However, during the winter of 2001 it was discovered that some of the younger men in the community had been taking Arctic char from the HSP depot to sell to non-Inuit, despite the fact that under the regulations of the HSP all food provided by the program must be reserved for those in need and for beneficiaries under the JBNQA. They were essentially becoming freeriders. Because of this, the HSP made a rule that people were permitted to take just two Arctic char per household, and moreover, that the depot would only be unlocked for specific periods during the day. The self-regulation that is a necessary component of the ethic of sharing was malfunctioning. Such lack of respect for the rules that govern social behaviours was not limited to the HSP, but extended to people's private food supplies. The author was informed that some people had taken fish from the personal storage sheds behind people's houses in order to sell it, amongst others, to the HSP. As a result, people had started to lock their sheds, an act which had heretofore been unnecessary. Kishigami (2000, 2001) notes a difference in the economic morality that governs young people. He postulates that a social change is taking place amongst Inuit with the younger generation taking from the HSP without contributing to it, which leads him to question how food sharing networks will be affected in the future if youth are not inculcated with the sharing ethic.

Some to whom the author spoke acknowledged that the HSP operates in a different ethical realm from their own in a variety of ways. The redistributive features of the programme with its codified rules of participation and access should not be confused with the customary ethics that motivate people to share food. They are nothing but pale imitations of time-honoured institutions associated with sharing country foods, institutions that bring with them hidden costs. One Inuk, who, it must be noted, has a commercial fish processing operation, saw the HSP as eroding the very core of Inuit culture.

Malachi: [The HSP is] taking away the spirit of the people. Initially the fish that they bought was supposed to be for widows and people that didn't have anything. But in recent years it's been fish for everybody. And it's free. Because you're a beneficiary, from the Hunter Support Program, once these fishers have been out, everybody can go and get fish without paying for it. And that's killing the spirit of the people.

Interviewer: Why?

Malachi: Because they don't want to do anything anymore!

Interviewer: You mean, they're not going out and fishing?

Malachi: No. Otherwise, they would try. Otherwise they would try and live. They would try to do something on their own. But what is happening is they are getting handouts. And this kills the spirit of the people. I am very much against that. I don't like that at all.

Interviewer: I thought the people who went [to the HSP] were mostly the people who couldn't go fishing anyway.

Malachi: No. No. . . . It's anybody. Anybody. Because they're entitled to it. They're beneficiaries. They're saying, 'Why should they be the only one getting fish? I'm a beneficiary too. I'm entitled to have it.' So what Taamusi Qumaq [the man who wrote the first Inuktitut dictionary in Canada] used to say, when this program came, 'Now they're selling our land, and now they're going to give us money for killing our animals and give it away!' So, his philosophy was that we must try to survive by ourself and do it by ourselves instead of getting handouts. This is no good! I'm really very much against that.

Interviewer: But in some ways you could argue . . . Inuit, in the past, it was all sharing. You would share the food.

Malachi: And the sharing, this is our tradition. But this is not sharing anymore. It is a programme. Yeah. It is a programme. And there's no spirit in it. Before, it was real sharing. Yes. It was real sharing, and you depended on these people that were hunting. And you appreciated that, for that reason. There was spirit in it. There was real sharing. But this is not real sharing. It's a programme, and there's no spirit in it. There's no life in it. There's no heart-felt appreciation in that kind of thing. You know what I mean? . . . So it's not the same thing. . . . You see, what has happened in the last thirty years, people are getting handouts. First they have . . . very low-cost housing . . . . And it starts from there. You know, people, a lot of people are on welfare. And, you know, they see that you can live without doing anything!

Such dislike of the welfare state, labelled by Paine (1977) as 'welfare colonialism', is not limited to Malachi. Others to whom the author has spoken over the years have expressed similar reservations while also recognising that alternatives for many Inuit are limited. From Malachi's perspective the feelings of anomie induced by the welfare state affect people's social connections at a variety of levels and can transform their understandings of themselves as economic actors: not only is it 'taking away the spirit of the people', but their very identities can be affected. As members of society they have rights due them as beneficiaries under the JBNQA. Alurut, who had been involved in the formation of the HSP in the community, expressed similar concerns about the ways in which some people are starting to define themselves based on the associative terms defined by the new institutions of the state rather than on the reciprocal relations that have been the customary basis of most people's understandings of themselves as socio-economic actors.

Alurut: The HSP is for hunting. That's what that's for. That's what it's there for. So at the beginning, we didn't buy any food from the hunters . . . . But people started to complain. And we wanted to help elders. So we started to buy food from hunters to distribute to the elders. That's how it started; for less fortunate, for those who doesn't have hunting equipments, we used to do that. If a person had hunting equipment, we didn't give out the food. But the people who have good hunting equipment started to complain. . . . They said, 'I'm also a beneficiary. How come I don't get anything from Hunter Support?' That's what they started to say. That's what I was afraid of at the first time. . . . Even today, even now, they're, 'how come we could not sell food to Hunter Support?' They're asking. Even today.

Interviewer: You mean the people who have money? . . . And who have hunting equipment and all of that? . . . They want to be able to sell too?

Alurut: Yeah. Because they're also a beneficiary. They have a right to do that. It's hard sometimes. It's very hard sometimes to be in control.

His concern reflects the fact that some people are focussing more on their consumptive rights and less on their responsibilities to produce and share with those in need. The former is a recent form of behaviour provoked, in this instance by the HSP, while the latter has formed the essential framework of the Inuit economy. The introduction of non-Inuit institutions, with their rigid definitions that include or exclude people's access to services is a new thing, one that has had some significant implications. As Coombe (2007: 286) puts it, 'New programs of government provide the opportunities to assert new kinds of rights. . .'. Whereas in the past, before

the coming of the HSP, ideally food was to be available to all, based on people's needs and willingness to share, now for some, the introduction of legal definitions through the HSP has turned sharing into a legal right for those to whom it applies, and a means of excluding those to whom the law does not apply. For some, people appear to be understood not in terms of their customary membership in society, but rather as beneficiaries of privileges that accrue to them. The conventional practice of give and take according to circumstances gives way to the rigidity of rights associated with the law. In the process of such a change, it seems people's self-understanding undergoes a change. People's appeal to the language of rights may reflect not only that the HSP, as a non-Inuit institution, invites such perception and treatment by some of the residents of Puvirnituq, but it may also be the case that their call to rights is indicative of their need to use new tools to be able to draw upon resources to which their access has become limited in the new socio-economic structures that have developed with sedentarisation (Chabot 2004; Duhaime and others 2002). But such recourse to the language of rights can set into motion a positive feedback loop. The language of rights is the language of individualism mediated by the bureaucratic state. It is language that reflects and produces communal fragmentation wherein institutionalised intermediaries contribute to shaping social relations, and in the process, they impose their own logic on those relations (Godbout 1998). The result can be a '. . .mutation of collective consciousness which leads to a conception of man as an organism dependent not on nature and individuals, but rather on institutions' (Illich 1971: 114).

Alurut's concern about changes in identity may be linked to an observation made by Martin (2003) that those who are most hostile to the sale of country foods to the HSP tend to be those with stable, salaried jobs who do not hunt regularly. He postulates that for these people hunting has become a social icon closely linked to their identities as Inuit, and as such, its traditions should be kept intact.[9] By contrast, those who are regular hunters recognise the requirement to adapt to changing socio-economic circumstances. This latter group, he writes, wants not to save appearances, but to save the activity, and must therefore find the means to earn money to support harvesting by doing such things as selling country foods to the HSP, while also observing traditions of sharing (Martin 2003). So those who supplied the bulk of the food to the HSP also shared the vast majority of the food that they harvested (Chabot 2003). The commitment to sociality in the getting, sharing, and eating of country foods is nowhere more apparent than in the findings of Chabot (2001), who discovered that in 1995, 85% of the total production of country food in Nunavik stayed within the subsistence economy. With regard to the 15% of total production sold on the market, the vast majority (13%) was sold to the HSP (Chabot 2001). Chabot (2001) also found that generally few people in the settlements she studied provided the majority of country foods. In most cases these people came from households where the male head of the household did not have full-time work and could devote himself to harvesting. His activities were mainly subsidised by people with full-time work who were either within his immediate family or within the larger community. The produce of their harvest was then distributed amongst people in the wider community. In contrast, men with full-time waged work are less able to go out hunting, fishing, and gathering (Chabot 2001, 2003). However, amongst them some spend what time they can spare doing this. Jamisie, a man in his forties, confirmed this.

> Now that I am working full-time I only go out on weekends mostly, and I still try to catch more than I need to be able to share it with elders and people who are less fortunate than I am. That's our tradition, and that's something I want to preserve and promote forever, and that's the reason we have survived in the harsh environment we have over thousands of years. It's something we must keep and preserve and promote. So that's what I do, I like to do most, promoting and preserving and teaching what I know.

So it seems that people wish to find ways to ensure that there are enough country foods available to allow for their redistribution within the community. In fact, people with cash to spare ensure that this takes place, and those with the inclination and time to spare are willing to forego the possibility of earning an income via other means.

The HSP, processes of valuation, and the meaning of money

The commoditisation of country foods, even in so nominal a form as that induced by the HSP, leads Inuit to grapple with conflicting notions of value. By paying for country foods, the HSP at some level changes their value from use value to exchange value. When different spheres of valuation overlap, the resulting conflict in the processes that shape those valuations can be complex (Appadurai 1986; Gudeman 2001). In the commoditisation of goods which results from an overlapping of different spheres of valuation, it is important to consider: 1) how people break culturally defined rules by moving between spheres; 2) how they convert what was unconvertible; 3) how they mask this and with whose connivance; 4) how spheres are recognised and what things move between them; and 5) how the impact of trade at a global level is cushioned (Kopytoff 1986).

What enables the transformation from use value to exchange value is money. We assume that money is a fair measure of value. At issue is whether the simulation of value, to borrow from Baudrillard (1983), that is inherent in money has been accepted by Inuit in the face of what they would otherwise see as of immediate use value. Under the aegis of the HSP, processes of valuation are being converted from one sphere to another. The unease expressed by some reflects larger questions about whether money is a legitimate measure of the value of country

foods. For others, however, the HSP represents a hybrid of exchange and use values that enables them both to sell and to share country foods.

Although it does not always do so, the HSP splits the process of production from that of consumption (Duhaime 1990). The medium that enables this to happen is money. Simmel (1978) and Polanyi (1957a, 1957b) argue that money gives rise to an economic system that is predicated on, and promotes, impersonal relationships that are transitory, amoral, and calculating. Money permits people no longer necessarily to rely on social relations in order to meet their needs; in the process they become distanced from goods. So, for example, young people initially took country foods from people's shacks in order to sell them to the HSP, or, they took from the HSP in order to sell to non-Inuit. The pursuit of money caused them to ignore the morality that governs the notion of sharing.

Yet, Moeran (1992), Parry and Bloch (1989), and Peterson (1991a, 1991b) argue that money does not necessarily give rise to such forms of behaviour. There are instances where money can be embedded in economies that are themselves embedded in social systems, and are not devoid of the moral imperatives under which those systems function. Money simply becomes yet one more means by which socially sanctioned views of morally appropriate behaviour can be expressed. So, those who sell to the HSP also use the money they earn as a means of subsidising sharing. Thus Imalie conceived of the money paid by the programme as being only for people's labour and fuel rather than for the food that resulted from their efforts.

For the time being money appears to be no more than a tool for many people that has immediate use when and where it is needed. The idea that money should be saved for future use, or to maximise profit, or to accumulate wealth, are not considerations for many people. Instead, some informants thought that Inuit only sell these foods when they need money for a particular thing; they do not sell them on a regular basis in order to get money on a regular basis and nor are they interested in making a profit or accumulating capital. For example, Kublu, a full-time waged worker in his forties, said that people sell country foods in order to get money, which is generally in short supply, but they would like money in order to be able to get other things; profit is not the issue. In response to a question about how the administrators of the HSP first set the prices for country foods that had heretofore not been sold, he responded as follows.

> *Kublu*: People never really got into pricing, pricing meat or what they would like to sell. But as we were developing [the Hunter Support Program] . . . it seems like everything has prices. You make money to buy your cup, your tea, your sugar, your bannock, or flour. And people, from the way I noticed it, people didn't really try and start selling meat just to make money or just to have money. It's when they really needed something, that's when I started noticing, when I was a younger person, it was because they really needed something . . . . If they had something to sell, they would sell it, in those days.
>
> *Interviewer*: And is it the same kind of thing now too?
>
> *Kublu*: That's . . . mainly, that's what we think; that's what we think; that's what I think they still do. Just to buy something that they don't have.

Table 1. Prices paid for country foods by the HSP in Puvirnituq (2001).

Good or Service	Price Paid ($/lb)
Arctic char	$ 2.30/lb
Lake trout	$ 2.25/lb
Whitefish	$ 1.85/lb
Seal (without fat)	$ 2.95/lb
Seal (with fat)	$ 1.15/lb
Caribou	$ 2.00/lb
Ptarmigan	$ 5/each
Rental of skidoo or canoe	$ 75/day
Hunting for the day (with equipment)*	$ 165/day
Hunting for the day (without equipment)	$ 90/day

*The difference between how much hunters are paid for a day's work varies depending on whether or not they have equipment because the HSP essentially pays rent to the hunters for the use of their equipment.

Certainly things have changed in the north, but this suggests that 'monetization of the mind' (Sansom 1988, quoted in Peterson 1991b) seems not to have set in. It would be overly simplistic, however, to assume that people do not know the value of money, and within limits, do not seek to maximise their access to it or, conversely, what it will allow them access to. So, for example, the administrators of the Hunter Support Program try to stretch their funding[10] to buy country foods as far as possible. Similarly, when they first started to implement the programme in Puvirnituq in setting the prices they found that the hunters were asking for as much money as they could get. Eventually, following consultations with other settlements in Nunavik to find out what they paid for country foods, the administrators of the HSP in Puvirnituq adjusted the prices they paid hunters to duplicate prices elsewhere in the region (see Table 1). Initially the HSP administrators did not pre-determine who could sell country foods to the programme. As a result, some people started to kill inappropriately, leaving the ribs and lighter material from caribou behind and selling only the legs and the rump which, being heavier, could potentially earn them more money in sales by the pound. Thereafter, in order to control such unacceptable behaviour, the programme administrators chose to select particular people to supply them with country foods. The amount of effort required to get country foods also plays a factor in the prices paid for meat, which is why the HSP pays, what amounts to more per pound for ptarmigan than for caribou, because the former has less meat on it, but requires more effort per pound to

acquire. So it appears that the labour theory of value holds true, to some extent, in the selling of country foods. In subsistence production neither labour nor its products have a monetary value; these, are applicable only to commercial cultures (Seavoy 2000). Yet Inuit in Puvirnituq appear both to have maintained the values inherent in their subsistence economy while also allowing for the appearance of commercial notions of value. However, for many, the social value of country foods continues to outweigh its monetary value, and thus, they insist on the importance of sharing country foods. Kopytoff provides a useful way of understanding this process. He suggests that people develop distinct spheres of exchange, each with its own set of values. Often, he argues, there is a lack of common measures of value between the different spheres. As a result, '[w]hen a thing participates simultaneously in cognitively distinct yet effectively intermeshed exchange spheres, one is constantly confronted with seeming paradoxes of value' (Kopytoff 1986: 82).

How is it that the same people who hunt or fish to sell their produce to the HSP are also able to say that they would never sell country foods to other Inuit? They can do so because they make a distinction between the two spheres of exchange that operate within the subsistence and market economies. The subsistence economy is predicated on processes of valuation that place an emphasis, amongst other things, on social capital while the market economy emphasises financial capital. In 1969, Graburn argued that Inuit would soon be unable to sustain such a separation, as the pressures of acculturation and of world markets bore down on them. Yet, almost forty years later, to varying degrees, people in Puvirnituq have managed to sustain that separation. Those who sell country foods and those who consume them are still able to make some distinction between the two economies and to participate in both. Such separations are not unique to Inuit; the same has been observed amongst indigenous peoples in Australia (MacDonald 2000). Yet MacDonald notes that people are able to maintain such a separation because of their social isolation from Euro-Australian forces. This is linked to a point made by various researchers about the importance of community control in determining the success of the HSP (Duhaime 1990; Feit 1991; Kishigami 2000, 2001). Local control over processes of commoditisation ensures that social systems of meaning making, resource tenure, production, and exchange will also be shaped locally (Feit 1991). The process of commoditisation, its acceptability or not, is a matter of basic explanations and institutions. The institution of sharing is from the north and is bound in the variety of ways discussed at the outset of this article to indigenous institutions while those institutions associated with money are essentially alien. This means the ways in which Inuit react and adapt to them are less tied up in tradition with all its substance and weight, so people adopt and adapt and live with the contradictions more readily because they can erase them epistemologically with greater ease. There is not the depth of time and meaning associated with them. People generally accept that they should share foods amongst one another, but also accept that they may have to sell to, and buy from, the institutions that are part of the economy that came with non-Inuit; the one involves friends and relatives while the other is relegated to the world of strangers that exist outside the local realm. Market relations, particularly related to food, amongst people who are subsistence producers generally can only develop when people have a certain social distance amongst themselves (Bohannan 1967; Sahlins 1974). The commoditisation of country foods through the medium of such institutions as the HSP seems to provide people with that sense of social distance. This was echoed in a conversation that the author had with Benjamin.

> *Interviewer*: What do you think about selling more [country foods], then?
>
> *Benjamin* (through an interpreter): To other companies or person to person?
>
> *Interviewer*: What about person to person?
>
> *Benjamin*: He never thought about selling person to person.
>
> *Interviewer*: Why not?
>
> *Benjamin*: He's been taught. It's only to a program he feels comfortable selling the meat. When it comes person to person, he never thought about it. When it comes to a company, he would like to sell that to them. If there would be another programme that would buy meat, nothing but meat, he would hunt and try to catch, which is possible. But it's not like that.

This thought was explored by the author who, while talking to Jamisie, asked him how it was that people appeared to accept the sale of country foods to the HSP but not amongst Inuit, and mused whether it might happen that people would start to accept selling country foods to other Inuit. His response confirmed Benjamin's view that somehow, there was a difference between selling country foods amongst Inuit and selling them to an institution.

> *Jamisie*: Yes, that'll be the day we will have lost our tradition, our culture. Because we're a sharing people. That's how we've survived here, as we have, by sharing.... The people who sell will be the bad Inuit according to our tradition.
>
> *Interviewer*: The ones who sell to each other?
>
> *Jamisie*: Yes. They will have lost their tradition.

When asked whether those Inuit who sold to institutions such as the HSP were seen by others as 'bad Inuit', Jamisie responded:

> No, not necessarily; because they have to make a living to buy more fuel, for instance. If they're selling fish, they need nets; nets are very expensive. Also machinery, it's double the price when it gets here. Fuel is triple the price.

Conclusion

In continuing to emphasise the importance of sharing country foods, many Inuit are remaining faithful to a world of values that they have always known, a world

in which survival depended upon people's connections with one another. To some extent, life within settlements has changed that. As people so readily acknowledge, they need access to cash in order to have the goods they appreciate and to which they have become accustomed. The HSP has provided some Inuit with one means of gaining access to cash in a context where such access may be otherwise difficult. As such, it is very much appreciated. Nobody to whom I spoke said that the programme should be done away with. Rather, some reflected that there were less than desirable consequences mixed in with its otherwise beneficial qualities. Ultimately, the HSP has enabled Inuit to sell country foods while precluding them from buying those foods. Such a practice is accepted by many because, as a product of the JBNQA, it is an institution that is essentially outside of the psychic and social domains of the subsistence economy. By selling country foods to the HSP while not requiring the consumers to pay for that food, Inuit are able to earn some of the money they need while appearing to preserve their notions of appropriate behaviour. The HSP provides a mechanism that enables many Inuit to break with some of their principles while seemingly giving them the means to respect the centrally important principles that country foods should not be sold amongst Inuit, but ought, rather, to be shared. Such a cognitive divide in people's perceptions is of great symbolic importance, for it allows them to continue to be Inuit, to live as members of a community, to reflect the importance of relationship, both amongst Inuit and between Inuit and the natural world, to act as morally responsible adults, to confirm their knowledge, and to express their values. And yet, the transition from subsistence to commercial production in even so non-commercial an institution as the HSP cannot be ignored by all Inuit, and so, some people express misgivings about the programme, fearing its impacts on sharing and on the social bonds that are at the root of such sharing.

The goal of this article is to point to some of the contradictions hidden beneath the surface of this seemingly neat equation. Some people, aware of these contradictions, express concerns about them, for the programme provides a means of glossing over these inconsistencies. Ultimately, however, by focusing on the HSP, an institution that both mimics and breaks with tradition, one which is designed to help Inuit to promote the subsistence way of life yet does so in the context of at least some components of the market, what the author wishes to stress is that Inuit are experiencing continuity *and* change. As an institution designed to enable the adaptation of Inuit to market forces, the ambiguities inherent in the HSP pose hidden challenges and paradoxes for those who are living it. The reality of life for Inuit in settlements is not all or nothing acculturation nor seamless adaptation, but somewhere in between.

Notes

1. Although formally called the 'Inuit Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Support Program', the name commonly used is the 'Hunter Support Program'
2. Pseudonyms are used throughout this article.
3. The funding for the HSP has increased from $1,665,888 in 1983 to $7,712,902 in 2004 (Nunivaat: Nunavik Statistics Program)
4. For a full list of the various possible activities carried out by the HSP see Québec, Government (1982).
5. Makivik Corporation is a regional agency representing the economic and political interests of beneficiaries under the JBNQA.
6. Although this essentially holds true, in fact people in Puvirnituq did pay the HSP $2.50 per ptarmigan in 2002.
7. Chabot (2001, 2003) found that more than 80 per cent of the households of two of the Nunavik communities involved in her research in 1998 earned less than $2,000 per year from the HSP, and very few households earned more than $5,000.
8. Collings and others (1998) have also noted that theft of country foods is a new appearance in the central Arctic.
9. Dombrowski (2007) makes similar observations in Alaska.
10. Funding for the Hunter Support Progam is provided by Kativik Regional Government (see Kativik Regional Government 1998).

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