

# Self-Government in Greenland

## **New Prospects for the Future**

In recognition of the Greenlandic people as a people with the right to self-determination in accordance with international law, this law is based on the wish to advance equality and mutual respect in the partnership between Denmark and Greenland. Accordingly, this law is based on an agreement between Naalakkersuisut [the home government] and the Danish government as equal parties (own translation, Rasmussen, 2009).

On the National Day of Greenland, June 21<sup>st</sup> 2009, a Self-Government agreement between Denmark and Greenland will substitute the Home Rule Act. As is stated in the pre-amble to the bill on Self-Government above, Greenlanders are recognized as a people in accordance with international law and thereby gain the right to self-determination. This means that any future decision about Greenland's full independence will be the decision of the Greenlandic people. In this way, the self-governance agreement is extending Greenland's legal rights to practice greater self-determination.

In this light, Greenlandic self-governance is a new step towards a more independent, self-determining Greenland. Nonetheless, obtaining Greenlandic self-determination is an on-going process. I will argue that the Self-Government agreement reveals both considerable challenges and opportunities in the decolonization process. Importantly, it is a political moment that calls for a critical analysis of the various aspects that will influence Greenlanders' prospects for ending colonial legacies of foreign domination. The implementation of self-governance therefore deserves an explicit description, above all for the many Danes who are not aware of its existence or scope. Furthermore, the implementation of self-governance requires an analysis of its limitations and its possibilities. I think that the question of Greenlandic self-governance involves and ties together my analyses of "the forgotten colonialism", national identity, and Eskimo Orientalism in the previous chapters, while it also offers new aspects to consider for the

practice of Greenlandic self-determination. Hopefully, the observations provided in this chapter will contribute to new dialogues on how Greenland will work towards its future. Due to the fact that Self-Government is yet to be practiced, my last sections will have a speculative character.

### **From Home Rule to Self-governance: an overview**

With the establishment of the Home Rule in 1979, Greenland gained executive and legislative authority for self-governance in a number of domestic areas. After twenty years of Home Rule, most responsibility areas that were listed in the Home Rule Arrangement have been transferred from Denmark to the Greenlandic parliament. These include Greenland's internal administration, direct and indirect taxes, the established church, fishing in the territory, hunting, agriculture and reindeer breeding, labour market affairs, education and cultural affairs, vocational training, other matters relating to trade, health services, housing, and environmental protection (Grønlandsk-dansk selvstyre-kommission, 2008: 3). Greenland continues to receive block grants from Denmark. In 2007, the block grant was 3.202 billion DKR in direct grants and a Danish expense of 850 million DKR on areas administered by the Danish state (Finansministeret, 2008). Under the Home Rule, the Danish parliament and administration have retained control over some areas of government, for example, the judicial system, mineral resources, defense, and foreign policy. The Home Rule Arrangement did not mention Greenland's right to sovereignty (Grønlands Hjemmestyre, "Fakta om Selvstyre", 2008). As Jens Dahl has shown, under the Home Rule, Denmark maintained its control of mineral resources and created a Greenlandic dependency on Danish know-how. Dahl stresses that Home Rule made regional self-governance "*with national characteristics*" (Dahl, 1986: 128) possible, but it did not prevent Danish influence through block grants and foreign policy. In this way, the establishment of Home Rule, to some extent, ensured the continuity of Danish control, as I have also discussed in my first chapter. On the other hand, Dahl suggests that Home Rule was a historical necessity; it has secured political and national mobilization which was a step towards greater independence for the Greenlandic population (Dahl, 1986).

In 1999-2000, the Home Rule government set up a Greenlandic Self-

Government Commission to revise Greenland's position in the Danish Commonwealth. As a result, the Greenlandic parliament recommended in 2003 the establishment of a Greenlandic-Danish Self-Government Commission. In June 2004, the Danish prime minister and the chairman of the Home Rule signed the terms of reference. The Self-Government Commission consisted of both Danish and Greenlandic politicians with the advise from a number of experts. The commission ended their work in June 2008 by submitting their report to the Danish government and the Home Rule government (Grønlandsk-dansk selvstyre-kommission, 2008: 4). On November 25<sup>th</sup> 2008, 75% of the Greenlandic voting population voted yes to the implementation of Self-Government (Grønlands Hjemmestyre, "Folkeafstemning om Selvstyre", 2008). As a result, the Self-Government arrangement will substitute the Greenlandic Home Rule on June 21<sup>st</sup> 2009.

Self-governance is not a declaration of independence. Greenland is still under the Danish Commonwealth. The legal framework of the Self-Governance Act is both the Danish Constitution and the right of the Greenlandic people to self-determination according to international law. Discursively, the status changes from "Home Rule" ('hjemmestyre') to "Self-Government" ('selvstyre') – a differentiation of words that no one previously distinguished. The framework of Greenlandic Self-Government opens up new political and legal possibilities. Overall, it constitutes a new arrangement regarding the future taking over of more areas of domestic governance. The Self-Government Agreement includes 30 areas over which a self-governing Greenland can gain authority. The areas are divided into List 1 and List 2. List 1 includes five areas which Greenland can assume immediately: workplace injury insurance, remaining areas within the health care system, traffic regulations and control, property laws, and diving regulations. List 2 includes areas that will be handed over after negotiations with the Danish government, for example prison services, justice administration, criminal courts, and, importantly, mineral resources (Rasmussen, 2009). There are five areas of responsibility that cannot be transferred to Greenland under Self-Government: The Danish constitution, citizenship, Supreme Court, foreign/defense/security policy, and currency and monetary policy. However, the report spells out that there will be extended cooperation between Greenland and Denmark in matters pertaining to the Danish authorities (Spierman, 2008).

The implementation of Self-Government is therefore a gradual takeover of new

areas of governance as economic and administrative conditions allow. Thus, Greenland will finance the areas of authority that are being transferred. However, the Danish block transfer is maintained at the 2007-level (adjusted for price and wage development) but will be reduced gradually with the possible revenues from Greenland's mineral resources (Grønlandsk-dansk selvstyre-kommission, 2008: 8). Importantly, the Greenlandic-Danish Self-Government Commission reached an agreement on mineral resources that had been a cause of much dispute during Home Rule negotiations. The Home Rule Act formulated a compromise that disfavoured Greenlandic interest, and it was unclear what would happen in the case of oil extraction (Dahl, 1986). According to the Self-Government agreement, Greenland will receive the first 75 million DKR per annum from mineral resource activities. The additional revenues will be shared by Denmark and Greenland, but Denmark's share will go to the reduction of the block grants. During the first five years of self-governance, the Danish government and the Greenlandic Self-Government authorities will cooperate on tasks relating to mineral resources. After this five-year period, it will be for the Greenlandic Self-Government to decide whether to renew the agreement. In case the block grants are reduced to zero DKR, Denmark and Greenland will start negotiations on their future economic relations (Grønlandsk-dansk selvstyre-kommission, 2008: 8).

Furthermore, with the implementation of Self-Government, Greenlandic will become the official language. This will not exclude the use of Danish with respect to public matters and it will not exclude education in Danish in the school system (Grønlandsk-dansk selvstyre-kommission, 2008: 12). Most importantly, Greenlanders are recognized as a people according to international law with the right to self-determination. Even though Greenland maintains its status under the Danish Commonwealth, the framework of the Self-Government act does not exclude Greenland's legal possibilities of declaring full independence (Grønlandsk-dansk selvstyre-kommission, 2008: 13). As the campaign material issued by the Greenlandic Home Rule states, self-governance is something between Home Rule and an independence declaration of Greenland (Grønlands Hjemmestyre, "Fakta om Selvstyre", 2008).

## **New Dependencies?**

The Self-Government agreement sets up a new legal framework that extends Greenland's possibilities for greater self-determination. Aqqaluk Lynge, Greenlandic vice-chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, states that the agreement is a very unique example to the rest of the world. After the referendum, he said to KNR (Greenland's national public broadcasting corporation): "Danish and Greenlandic politicians have been able to agree on recognizing a former colony as a people with the right to use their language and culture, and proper conditions concerning the administration of resources have been established" (own translation, KNR, 2008). According to Lynge, Greenlandic self-governance is an important step towards more equal and respectful relations between Greenlanders and Danes. Despite the legal advances, I will argue that there are considerable limitations to the practice of self-determination within the framework of the Self-Government agreement.

As is evident, the entire framework of Self-Government depends on economic growth. The transfer of areas of authority to Greenland is dependent on Greenlandic ability to finance them. The English summary of the Self-Government report states:

Provided the growth rate of the Greenland economy continues, an unchanged [Danish] Government subsidy in real terms to Greenland will mean that revenue from the Government will continue over time to constitute a declining proportion of total national income. Greenland will, consequently, become less dependent on Government transfers in relation to the total Greenland economy and thus more economically self-sustainable (Grønlandsk-dansk selvstyre-kommission, 2008: 8).

In this light, the prospects of Greenlandic economic self-sustainability and independence from the Danish block transfers are based on growth of the Greenland economy. According to calculations presented at the public hearing on the Self-Government proposal on 18 June 2008 in Katuaq (Cultural Centre of Greenland) in Nuuk, the dependency on the Danish grants will be reduced to 18% in 2030 if Greenland's economy continues to grow at its present rate. Thus, the process towards economic 'self-

sustainability' and 'independence' may be longer and more challenging than expected. Furthermore, I hold that the Self-Government agreement does not propose any actual strategies for obtaining growth in such a linear progression. The only explicit source of economic growth, mentioned in the Self-Government agreement, is mineral resources. Thus, the prospects of economic self-sustainability are heavily reliant on the prospects of exploiting mineral resources. Particularly, the expectation of oil extraction underlies this proposition – but the extent of any actual Greenlandic oil reserves is not known yet. Nonetheless, in the framework of Self-Government, the quickest way to independence appears to be heavy industrialization of Greenland's raw materials, and oil extraction.

The prospects of finding oil reserves have had a central role in public debates on Greenlandic Self-Government, and caused new worries and hopes. During my field research, I got the impression that most people in Greenland would support the extraction of oil in case it becomes a reality. During the public hearing on Self-Government on June 18<sup>th</sup> in Nuuk, Line Barfoed, Danish MP for "Enhedslisten" (Danish leftist party) and member of the Self-Government Commission, suggested that a self-governing Greenland should consider very carefully whether oil extraction is in fact desirable, taking into account the environmental consequences. A member of the public responded to her, stressing the need to extract oil in order for Greenland to develop and decrease its dependency on Denmark. However, another member of the public also expressed worries that the Self-Government agreement does not account for the environmental impacts following oil and mineral extraction. In this light, the Self-Government agreement's reliance on oil extraction may pose a major challenge to Greenland that as a hunting and fishing society is dependent on environmental sustainability; environmental degradation may have serious consequences for both the economy, sectors dependent on eco-systems, and every day life of Greenlanders. Nonetheless, in response to the worried member of the public, Lars Emil Johansen stressed that Greenland should not "shut the door to the economic possibilities" because they are crucial for Greenlandic self-determination.

Thus, the present framework of Self-Government restricts Greenland's prospects of further independence to the economic abilities of fostering rapid growth. Lars Emil Johansen wrote in a newspaper article "Klimaaftale: I den arktiske tranlampes skær" (Climate agreement: In the gleam of the Arctic train-oil lamp) in December 2008:

From next year, the block transfer will [remain at the 2007-level, adjusted for price and wage development] and it will be up to Greenland to obtain the new economic means that will secure continued growth and the opportunity for greater independence, as was the goal with the Self-Government agreement. We will have to concentrate on industrializing, especially in relation to the exploitation of raw materials[...]s. But also in relation to other areas by which Greenland has opportunities to step into a new economic and industrial direction that will lead us to the level of other modern societies. And the possibilities in Greenland are many if we are allowed to exploit them in the same way as the more industrialized countries have already done (own translation, Johansen, 2008, December 23, p. 11).

Johansen's article was directed to the upcoming Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change in November 2009. He expressed his concerns about the restrictions that climate change agreements might put on Greenland's abilities to industrialize further. The statement reflects the new conditions on the road to Greenlandic independence: concentration on industrialization, particularly in the area of mineral resources. In this light, I hold that the Self-Government agreement has left Greenland at a vulnerable starting point for increasing Greenlandic self-determination. The Self-Government agreement's weight on rapid economic growth may limit new visions and public debate concerning the ways in which Greenland will work towards its future. As Juaaka Lyberth, former director of Katuaq (Cultural Centre of Greenland), wrote in *Tidsskriftet Grønland* (the journal Greenland) in March 2008, the Home Rule has already determined Greenland's politico-economic strategies of 'development' with limited public debate and opportunities for public involvement in the decision-making process. This has been exemplified in the agreement between the Home Rule and Alcoa Aluminum in exploring the possibilities of establishing aluminum smelters in Greenland. Lyberth argues that the Home Rule has engaged in one-sided communication; it has provided information but not established adequate opportunities for public influence on the decisions, for example in a

referendum on the question of aluminum. Lyberth argues that intensified exploitation of raw materials is leading to massive changes concerning the traditional use and right to land and water, as well as the Greenlandic settlement patterns. In the event of Self-Government, Lyberth requests extended public debate and engagement in the coming changes (Lyberth, 2008).

The question is then whether the conditions of Self-Government allow for critical thinking and public debate concerning the ways in which Greenland will work towards its future? This question remains to be answered in the coming years. In any case, I will argue that an uncritical approach to industrial development and ‘modernization’ – through which Greenland is expected to reach “the level of other modern societies”, as expressed by Lars Emil Johansen – may be risky to the practice of Greenlandic self-determination. As is evident in the experience of decolonizing nations in the ‘developing’ world, the conditions of independence relegated them to the production of primary products (Amin, 1996: 210). This furthermore entangled the newly independent nations into a web of new dependencies on world prices of primary commodities, foreign investment, conditional loans etc. that in effect forced them to ‘open up’ their countries for foreign exploitation – and thereby, lost part of their economic sovereignty.

It is however crucial to note that the conditions of Greenlandic independence operate within another time frame than the newly independent countries in the post Second World War period. As pointed out by Jens Dahl (1986), Greenland also went through some of the same processes during the establishment of Home Rule as other post-colonial social formations. Gorm Winther, who discusses power and democracy in Greenland, has stated that today the new elite in Greenland represents several layers of both the early radical elite, and a techno-structure of both Danes and highly educated Greenlanders. He argues that within this new class, there are ideological contradictions extending from proponents of prolonging a ‘Statist’ society to a neo-liberal market society (Winther, 2007: 1). As it is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss the class formations in Greenland, I will merely point to the new tendencies of neo-liberal tenets in Greenland that may have gained in strength in the period up to the implementation of Self-Government. During my field research, I noticed a neo-liberal jargon in newspaper



articles and among the younger generations of Greenlanders. Many expressed wishes to *open up* Greenland for foreign capital, as a means to detach Greenland from Denmark's monopoly on influence.

It seems that there is an increased tendency to think, especially among younger generations, that Greenland should foster economic growth based on a neo-liberal development paradigm in order to become economically independent. It may even be feasible to suggest that neo-liberal ideology is utilized as a sort of "post-colonial paradigm" to gain self-determination. In other words, a neo-liberal agenda may advance as a form of economic nationalism. As E. Helleiner and A. Pickel (2005) have pointed out in their book *Economic Nationalism in a Globalizing World*, economic nationalism does not need to be associated solely with protectionism. In their view, neoliberal reform agendas of e.g. lifting trade barriers and encouraging foreign direct investment can also be understood as a form of economic nationalism (Helleiner & Pickel, 2005). As Pickel states in *Explaining (with) Economic Nationalism*: "Rather than being opposite economic liberalism[...], economic nationalism is better understood as a generic phenomenon that can accommodate almost any doctrinal content, including economic liberalism" (Pickel, 2002: 36). In this framework, neo-liberalism in Greenland can be seen as a national economic strategy with the purpose of advancing the current political main objective: national independence.

In this context, it is crucial to consider the ways in which neo-liberalism, as a form of economic nationalism, may have dire consequences for Greenland's process of gaining greater self-determination. As I have suggested above, uncritical approaches to economic development have, in the experience of newly independent countries, led to new dependencies. Winther writes: "(I)t is important to understand that the concept of self-governance cannot be based on a supply side, a neo-classical or a neo-liberal development paradigm. This would just be like substituting one type of dependence based on the unilateral transfer incomes from the Danish State with another type of dependence founded on the dominance of Danish and foreign trans-national corporations" (Winther, 2007: 23). I would further argue that it is necessary to take specific caution towards the new types of dependence that a neo-liberal development paradigm may bring. In the light of the experiences of the last few decades, neo-liberal

policy measures have proved fatal to economic sustainability on a global scale, specifically in the Global South. Wallerstein states that in a historical perspective neo-liberal development strategies have not been matched by economic success (Wallerstein, 2008). Hart-Landsberg explains that developing countries, in the effort to attract finance to offset existing deficits (pressured by the IMF and the World Bank), deregulated their capital markets, privatized economic activity, liberalized trade, relaxed foreign investment regulatory regimes, and cut back public spending. In short, the international regime advocated export-oriented growth and foreign direct investment as answers to the economic deficits of developing countries. Nonetheless, as Hart-Landsberg points out, the post-1980 neoliberal era has in fact been marked by slower growth, greater trade imbalances, deteriorating social conditions (Hart-Landsberg, 2006), and soaring global inequality. As a result of these policy measures, developing countries became dependent on developed countries, foreign direct investment, and multi-national corporations. In this way, the neo-liberal development policies responded to the interest of transnational capital and became another mechanism of control. Pierre Bourdieu has argued that: “The neoliberal programme draws its social power from the political and economic power of those whose interests it expresses: stockholders, financial operators, industrialists, conservative or social-democratic politicians who have been converted to the reassuring layoffs of *laissez-faire*, high-level financial officials eager to impose policies advocating their own extinction because [...] they run no risk of having eventually to pay the consequences” (Bourdieu, 1998). In these ways, the neo-liberal development paradigm has led (post-colonial) countries into new dependencies on a, generally anonymous, global market steered by the interests of transnational capital, and actors primarily interested in maximizing profit. In general, neo-liberalism has long been deemed a failed development paradigm by a number of economists and critics. In the light of the current economic crisis, the critique of neo-liberalism is now widely accepted and across the political spectrum.

In conclusion, I will point to a statement that Lars Emil Johansen made during the public hearing on the Self-Government proposal: “As long as we are dependent on other peoples’ money, we are also subordinate to their power”. Implicitly, he stressed that Greenlandic self-determination will only be obtained through a detachment from Danish

block transfers. This is undoubtedly a valid observation. Nonetheless, I will also argue that the framework of the Self-Government act restricts Greenland's prospects of independence to Greenland's ability of fostering rapid economic growth. In this way, the Self-Government agreement has also been an 'easy way out' for Denmark as it has not entailed any re-structuring of the 'over-developed state' that was Greenland's colonial inheritance at the establishment of the Home Rule (Dahl, 1986). Additionally, the need for Greenland to foster rapid economic growth may lead to the employment of neo-liberal policy measures (as a new national ideology) that can lead to new dependencies on profit-maximizing players in the global market, confining Greenland's practice of self-determination considerably.

### **New possibilities**

In addition to these complications of the Self-Government framework, there are also promising possibilities following the enactment of Greenlandic self-governance. First and foremost, the self-government negotiations have been a major step in redefining the relations between Denmark and Greenland. As Aqqaluk Lynge pointed out, the Self-Government agreement does reflect an agreement between Danish and Greenlandic politicians that Greenlanders constitute a people with the right to practice their language and culture. Furthermore, they have been able to agree on the administration of resources, implicitly recognizing Greenlanders' right to the raw materials of their territory (KNR, 2009).

Hence, with the Self-Government agreement, Greenland has set an example for Indigenous self-governance. Duane Smith, President of the Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada, writes in a congratulatory letter posted on the Greenlandic Home Rule's website: "We in Canada see this event as a major step by a circumpolar region of people gaining significant control of its rights and livelihood which is now seen by other groups and Inuit throughout the circumpolar Arctic as hope and opportunity for their chance to gain better control of their own destinies. Your fight is our fight and although you may be a public government, it is made up primarily of Inuit to govern an area inhabited by Inuit for Inuit" (Smith, 2008, November 26). The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) is an international non-government organization that represents approximately 150,000 Inuit of

Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka in Russia (ICC, n.d.). In this light, Greenlandic self-governance is also a step in the international movement of the Circumpolar North for Inuit to gain more control over their territories. As Greenland is a member of ICC, Greenlandic self-governance will therefore also be part of the promotion of Inuit rights and interests on an international level.

Duane Smith also states in her letter that Greenland's referendum turning out in favour of Self-Government expresses a collective "desire to follow a path in which all Greenlanders will take more control of their own lives and map out their own future" (Smith, November 26, 2008). Accordingly, the enactment of Self-Government invites invigorated dialogue and debate about how Greenlanders wish to 'map out their own future'. Moreover, it invites for new considerations of who will be part of this process. Greenlanders are now recognized as a people according to international law, while they are simultaneously recognized as an Indigenous people. This leaves the Greenlandic nation in a unique situation. I will argue that this situation provides new opportunities as both their rights as a 'people' and their rights as an 'Indigenous people' can be utilized for obtaining greater self-determination. These two positions can give Greenlanders many advances in terms of legal and political rights. Greenlandic politicians utilized their rights to greater self-determination as a 'people'. At the same time, they collaborate with and support other Arctic nations and Indigenous peoples across the world in what can be termed an international movement towards Indigenous sovereignty (Niezen, 2000). Being recognized as an Indigenous People also grants Greenlanders rights in accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. For example, the UN Declaration acknowledges Indigenous peoples' rights to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories, and aspirations which shall be reflected in education and public information (Article 15). It acknowledges Indigenous peoples' rights to their own means of subsistence and to engage freely in their traditional and other economic activities (Article 20), as well as their right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands (Article 29) (United Nations, 2007). These are just a few examples of the continued relevance of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the context of Greenland.

Furthermore, I would argue that the ability to utilize both positions may give

rise to new conceptualizations of “the Greenlandic people”, “Greenlandic national identity”, and “Greenlandicness” that are less concentrated on determining “*who is the most Greenlandic*”. In other words, the recognition of Greenlanders as a people may allow new interpretations of Greenlandic national identity that is less focused on dichotomies of traditional vs. modern, past vs. present, and Greenlandic vs. Danish. This does not have to give way to the importance of Inuicity in the processes of identity formation in the lives of Greenlanders. As Fienup-Riordan states, in the context of the Yup’ik Eskimos 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, in the words of Chevak’s Tangik Theatre (1989), striving to be both: ‘With the strength that comes from education and knowledge, we learn to deal with the future, at the same time, we stand firmly planted in our cultural roots’ ” (Fienup-Riordan, 1990: 231).

As has previously been mentioned, the implementation of Self-Government is also a new possibility to redefine the relations between Danes and Greenlanders, Denmark and Greenland. Greenlandic and Danish politicians have stated that the Self-Government act is “based on the wish to advance equality and mutual respect in the partnership between Denmark and Greenland” (Rasmussen, 2009). I argue that advancing equality and mutual respect requires critical analysis and identification of power relationships and their history. As I have explained in my chapter on “The Forgotten Colonialism”, Danish amnesia concerning Denmark’s colonial history justifies the reproduction of images of Denmark as a solely good-willed welfare state in equal and “benign” relations to its former colonies. In effect, this serves to perpetuate colonial relations. Furthermore, the Orientalized representations of Greenland in Denmark reproduce the notion of the parent-child metaphor which position Danes as superior to Greenlanders. Particularly, the notion of “*the Danish favour*” distorts the reality of Denmark-Greenland relations. These forms of “disguised colonialism” inevitably surface in the political relations between Denmark and Greenland, as well as in the daily lives of Greenlanders and Danes. Thus, the ‘wish to advance equality’ as is stated in the Self-Government pre-amble also requires awareness about and critical education in Danish colonialism and disguised colonialism.

In discussing some of the limitations to and possibilities of Greenlandic self-governance, I wish to point out that negotiating Greenland's self-determination is an ongoing process. A self-governing Greenland is facing major challenges to the *practice* of self-determination. In the framework of Self-Government, Greenland's prospects for gaining greater independence is dependent on Greenland's abilities to foster rapid economic growth. However, the Self-Government agreement does not propose any actual strategies of obtaining growth; it is heavily reliant on Greenland's prospects of extracting mineral resources. As I have argued, an uncritical approach to industrial development and 'modernization' may be extremely risky to the practice of self-determination, and may lead to new dependencies on world prices of primary commodities and foreign investment, as was the experience of newly independent countries in the 1950s and 1960s. Furthermore, the practice of Greenlandic self-determination requires a critical approach to the neo-liberal discourse that is seemingly gaining foothold in some groups of the Greenlandic community. In the experience of the post-1980 decades, neo-liberalism as a development paradigm has failed; it led to increased dependency on a global market controlled by multi-national corporations and profit-seeking actors. In this light, the emphasis on rapid economic growth in the framework of the Self-Government agreement may negatively affect the practice of Greenlandic self-determination.

Nonetheless, as Dahl suggested in 1986, the establishment of the Home Rule was a historical necessity; it secured political and national mobilization which was a big step towards greater independence for the Greenlandic population (Dahl 1986). In my view, the same applies to Greenlandic Self-Government. However, the process of negotiating Greenland's self-determination requires attention, caution, and critical thought. We may find inspiration in the words of Arturo Escobar: "The task of critical thought is "to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think it differently" (Foucault 1985: 9). Consequently, the product of critical thought should be a history of our present, of those discourses and practices that made us what we are, shaped what we think, determined what we see and feel, a history, in short, which clears the way so we may help bring into being, through our reflection, those things that have never been thought or imagined"