

## FOREWORD

### **Iceland and Images of the North**

INOR is a collective project on Iceland and images of the North, the purpose of which is to conduct multidisciplinary studies on the identity appropriation of the idea of North. It is thus part of a fertile current of thought that began a few years ago and that seeks to compare the paradigms underlying the imagined world of winter, the North, and the Arctic. This current of thought—involving not only Scandinavia, Russia, Canada, Québec, and the Inuit world but also cultures that, while not geographically belonging to “the North,” share some of its characteristics—has revealed commonalities between the cultural representations, traversed by tension between the specific and the universal.

Started by a group of researchers from the Reykjavík Academy, this project was initially intended to counter a tendency to define Iceland’s image according to fairly compartmentalized notions of foreign politics, marketing, and tourism. It was also designed to open up the study of Iceland and ask questions about its place in the world, first of all in relation to its northern neighbours, but also in a broader and more circumpolar perspective, through which the country, its culture, history, and achievements offer a singular experience in the definition of cultural identity.

The twenty-one researchers in our collective come from a variety of disciplines, which shows the multifaceted nature of relations between

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Iceland and “the North.” Stemming from an Icelandic base group to which European and North American researchers were gradually added, the project gave rise to a working process that was resolutely original, collegial and collective, and had the luxury of not being rushed to propose, review, criticize, reformulate, and fine-tune the study. Every year over the past four years, each of the proposals now making up the chapters of this work was discussed in collective work groups overseen by external specialists, up to the final version found here.

Iceland’s recent political and economic turmoil has not overly affected our work, since our analyses examine identity construction and resilience based on both historical images and their contemporary extensions. This long collaborative process, fed by the knowledge and insights of its participants, has yielded a new image of Iceland, patiently constructed from a unique combination of borrowings and historical specificities.

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