

Editorial

Professor Lars-Erik Edlund initiated the *Journal of Northern Studies* in 2007. The initiative had been preceded by discussions within the Royal Skyttean Society, Sweden's youngest and northernmost royal academy with a mission to further scientific research on Northern Sweden, at the time presided over by Lars-Erik. The society wished to widen its scope on the international research arena in connection with its 50th anniversary. Lars-Erik was also the prime mover behind an application that resulted in Northern Studies being appointed one of the twelve strong research profiles at Umeå University in 2006. An international academic journal on Northern Studies seemed a logical step to further strengthen this profile at the university. With starting grants from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond and Kempestiftelserna, the Royal Skyttean Society and Umeå University guaranteed financing of the journal for the first eight years, a funding that has been regularly prolonged since then.

Studies on the North and northern conditions have been an essential part of research and education at Umeå University ever since its foundation in 1965. To a certain extent, this is due to the university's location in northern Sweden. However, northern research at Umeå University has never been limited to the study of local issues, nor just a local concern. A further strengthening of Northern Studies at Umeå University was the formation of its Arctic Centre, Arcum, in 2012, a research environment that provided new opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration. Arcum and its then director, Peter Sköld, assistant editor of the *Journal of Northern Studies*, were also crucial in the setting up of the Arctic Five in 2017, a partnership between five Nordic universities in the northern parts of the countries involved, namely Luleå University of Technology, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Umeå University, the University of Lapland and the University of Oulu. Together they form a knowledge hub on Arctic research issues. The *Journal of Northern Studies* is a vital part of this hub, and we aim to make this participation more formalised in the near future.

Since the foundation of the *Journal of Northern Studies*, the North and the Arctic have become more topical than ever before, both in research and in world politics. Global warming, which affects the polar areas more than any other parts of our planet, is causing a multitude of changes, some of which are already observed, some predicted and some that may, as yet, be unforeseen: melting glaciers and the rising of global sea levels; growing accessibility of the Northern Sea Route causing increased political tension and competition in the Arctic; new opportunities for Arctic tourism with its advantages and drawbacks; changes in flora and fauna affecting people's livelihoods and environments; the northward spreading of infectious diseases; migration and demographic alterations, etc. The call for a turn towards a more sustainable global society in the face of climate change has in some places led to a renewed industrialisation of northern areas (while, at the same time, some old industries are operating at an undiminished pace). New and old extractive industries resonate of earlier colonial exploitation, which has sparked protests from local and indigenous peoples of the North. Globalization and environmental issues have also become an impetus for northern indigenous peoples to connect with other indigenous peoples worldwide, making the indigenous movement not just a local concern.

The North faces many challenges, and so do researchers attempting to understand it. The North is not desolate and bare, but a complex and versatile social and natural environment. Therefore, in order to come to an understanding of it, we need multifaceted research that can shed light on various aspects such as the past and the present, cultural and linguistic diversity, humans' diverse attempts to make a decent living in a northern

environment, and changing politics and technology. The purpose of the *Journal of Northern Studies* is to be a venue for such diverse research.

The *Journal of Northern Studies* is a peer-reviewed inter- and multi-disciplinary academic journal. While the scope of the journal is quite wide, it has a special focus on human activities in northern spaces—on humans as cultural beings and on human societies in the North and their interaction with northern environments. Over the years, the journal has published articles by scholars from disciplines as varied as archaeology, anthropology/ethnology, ecology, economic history, ethnobiology, geography, history, history of science, linguistics, literature, political science, religious studies, social medicine and sociology. The range of topics covered in the journal include, for example, climate and environment, demography and migration, historical maps, human–animal relationships, media and photography, polar expeditions, politics, public health, runology, and tourism. Some themes are more recurring than others, e.g., issues involving indigenous peoples (especially, but not exclusively, the Sami) and industry and commerce. About half of the articles published so far concern historical topics (before 1970). A majority of the researchers who have contributed to our journal have been affiliated to Swedish or other Nordic universities. However, one fifth of the contributors are affiliated to other European universities, and another fifth to North American universities. We have also had contributions from scholars in Australia, Japan, and New Zealand.

We warmly welcome guest-edited special issues by cross-disciplinary research groups. So far, we have published some ten special issues: “Cultural Production and Negotiation of Northern Borders” (Vol. 3, No. 1), “Norrländ Authors Seen from Abroad” (Vol. 8, No. 1), “Understanding North” (Vol. 8, No. 2), “Nations, Natures, and Networks. The New Environments of Northern Studies” (Vol. 9, No. 1), “Indigenous Wellbeing and Colonisation” (Vol. 10, No. 1), “Language and Space in Northern Spaces” (Vol. 11, No. 1), “The Making of the European Arctic” (Vol. 12, No. 2), “Beyond Melt. Indigenous Lifeways in a Fading Cryosphere” (Vol. 13, No. 2) and “Tracing the Arctic; Arctic Traces” (Vol. 14, No. 2). In addition, Vol. 12, No. 1 was a festschrift in honour of one of our board members, Håkan Rydving.

The journal also has a miscellanea section with notes on conferences, projects and obituaries of deceased colleagues. The book review section is usually extensive—we have published nearly 300 reviews of new books on various topics related to Northern Studies. The fact that prominent publishing houses such as, e.g., Ashgate, Brill, Novus Forlag, Palgrave Macmillan, Studia Fennica and many others, keep sending us new books for review, shows that our reviews reach relevant readers.

Over the course of the publication of no less than 15 volumes (two issues per year), Lars-Erik Edlund has been the driving force behind the journal, pushing it forward with his enthusiasm, editorial skills and rich networks in the academic community. He has now decided to retire as editor-in-chief as the journal moves on to the next level, with a slightly new organisation. Both personally and on behalf of all who have contributed to the *Journal of Northern Studies* over the years (financiers, art directors, authors and the editorial board), I wish to extend my warmest thanks to Lars-Erik for his long-standing work with the journal. Luckily, however, his retirement from the editorial chair does not mean that he will no longer be involved in the journal, as he will remain as the journal's book review editor.

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