6. Regional Economic Development: Approaches and Analysis

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Gap Analysis: Outline and Initial Bibliography
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Abstract for the Final Paper (working draft)

Much research on northern economic development, especially in Canada but often in other parts of the world as well, focuses on either community economies, or the economic implications of changing Indigenous-state relations. This gap analysis will explore, instead, economic development research in the circumpolar world as it helps us understand the economic dynamics and prospects of northern regions. For this purpose, ‘region’ is defined somewhat flexibly, to refer to economic regions defined by political jurisdiction, cultural nation or people, or by economic patterns. This is to ensure that the widest possible range of relevant research is treated. The gap analysis will identify major approaches and lines of investigation and consider where further research is required. Particular attention will be paid to research syntheses and meta-analyses that will support northern communities, organizations and governments in considering policy alternatives. The emphasis will be on research published in English and French, with some attention to research published in other languages.

Planning issues: what is a region?
Regions do not exist “to be discovered”; rather they are artifacts of particular analytical purposes. The literature on regional economic development in the circumpolar north takes varying, and sometimes competing, approaches to how the boundaries of regions are defined. At the most general level, the entire circumpolar basin, including arctic and subarctic geographical zones, can be considered one region. This is helpful for broad brush analyses: for example, participants in the Eurasian Geography and Economics Symposium on Climate Change applied a definition of the ‘Northern Rim’, which encompassed all land and sea located above the 45th parallel.¹ In the realm of geopolitics, scholars have advocated framing northern development as involving a wider set of regional actors, including Japan, China, and the United Kingdom.² And political and institutional boundaries of the circumpolar north create analytical regions: Arctic Council member states (or more restrictively, the littoral states of the Arctic Ocean) are grouped for comparative analysis of northern development policies or the impact of climate change.³

In northern research, very commonly, the boundaries of Indigenous peoples' traditional territories are considered to define analytically pertinent regions. The Sami lands in Norway, Finland, Sweden, and Northwest Russia are often identified as a distinct region of the Arctic, as are the Inuit circumpolar lands. The existence and activities of federated Indigenous peoples' organizations (the Sami Council, Inuit Circumpolar Council, Arctic Athabaskan Council) reinforce the conceptualization of these transnational regions and they show the poor fit between Indigenous territories and contemporary country boundaries.

Longstanding Indigenous territories frequently define regions within countries as well: Inuit Nunangat defines all of the Inuit lands in Canada --for some analytical purposes a region-- while in other uses and quite commonly, Inuit lands within provinces and territories are considered to be regions. An example of this is found in the extensive literature on Nunavik, Inuit territories in the province of Quebec. A similar pattern prevails for Dene territory, which can be considered as one region, for some purposes, or as several, defined by precise location and modern institutional expression. An example of this latter is the region defined by the Tlicho government, which has exercises authority over Tlicho lands -- developing land use plans and in other ways managing the lands as an economic region.

There are also of course purely economic definitions of 'region,' defined by how people make their livings or how their way of life is being affected by a common exogenous pressure, such as climate change. In the context of community development, discussions of community viability generally take two approaches: the effects of climate change and globalized economic activity on local economies, and conflicts between local and national interests when it comes to larger economic development projects. For example, subsistence communities based on reindeer-herding in Eurasia are increasingly affected by global environmental and economic changes. Additionally, the literature on conflicts over natural resource development, including land ownership rights of indigenous peoples, is becoming increasingly multidisciplinary, blending with community development initiatives, human rights movements, and

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6 http://www.tlicho.ca/tlichogovernment.

climate change research. Economic development issues that are more multinational in scope, chiefly oil and gas development, can focus both on jurisdictions within states and states themselves. For example, ‘petroleum provinces’ - the United States Alaskan North Slope, Canada’s territories, Norway, and Russia’s Okrugs - have been examined in comparative context, often regarding regulatory frameworks. Here, the definition of a region corresponds to the location and characteristics of the natural resources that is found there. For example, discussions about Russian oil and gas development tend to focus on the Yamal Peninsula, Shotckman Gas Field, or Northwestern Siberia (among others), or in North America, the oil and gas reserves in the Beaufort Sea.

To date, we have not found a focused discussion of 'region' as an appropriate analytical lens, a gap that is in itself interesting. We would welcome some discussion of the definitional issue. At this stage, it strikes us as important that none of these alternative ways of understanding 'region' be excluded, although the gap analysis will be simplified is some selection is made.

For the remainder of this document, we offer a proposed outline for the gap analysis, followed by a bibliography. Improvements to the outline would be welcome as well as suggestions of authors whose work we have so far overlooked.

Possible Sections of the Gap Analysis

Definitions
Overview of the Circumpolar Approaches to Regional Economic Analysis
  - Literature Concerning Regions
  - how different countries have approached the question of regional development

Indigenous Territories and Economic Regions
  - The fit between Indigenous territories economic regions
  - Can an economic region be created from one mega-project (e.g. James Bay Northern Quebec, affecting Cree and Inuit; oil and gas exploration in Beaufort sea, the region is defined by the economic region less the people)
  - Diamond boom in NWT has had this effect, affecting four different Dene groups, two of which have modern treaties

Public Administrations and Economic Regions
  - Land use planning regions
  - comparative studies of departments charged with development; subnational units created
  - economic development schemes

Regions and Migration


Labour force recruitment (rotational work; townsites) and regions?
- BOREAS

Cross-cutting themes in regional analysis
- Identify themes/patterns that emerge across circumpolar countries
- Eg. Theme of migration: rotational work

Priorities for Further Research

Bibliography