'Population and Development Policies in the Arctic: What Role for Non-State Actors?'

In the context of climate change and growing commercial and state interests in resource use in Arctic regions, migration and urbanisation are on the rise in these areas. Russia, Canada and other Arctic states are attempting to balance the pursuit of national interest with transnational cooperation in a region where migration and economic development are closely linked.

As states negotiate new roles for themselves, non-state actors, localities, and public-private partnerships also seek to shape regional policies. These groups represent a variety of interests, although most derive their influence from their role in the natural resource sectors in northern zones. They include regional and city governments; domestic and international natural resource, shipping, and tourism companies; worker recruitment agencies; indigenous groups; and labor organizations. States and non-state actors are developing policies to manage populations in ways that reflect their various interests around economic development, sovereignty, and governance.

This paper proposes new research pathways to examine decision-making by non-state actors in the Arctic and Subarctic. My focus is on policies as open-ended social processes. Analysing the relationships and contingencies that underlie policymaking highlights the role of non-state actors in evolving forms of regional governance and improves our understanding of: (1) transnational policy processes, as well as (2) population and economic development in the Arctic. In this discussion, ‘population’ includes both mobile\(^1\) and non-mobile groups.

In sprawling, unevenly populated Arctic areas, economic development relies on the ability of state and non-state actors to mobilize and manage migrants and other populations. How they develop and administrate policies shapes outcomes, with implications for social sustainability— that is, “long term prospects for the region’s economic and human potential” (Thompson 2008). As socio-economic and political developments expand the number of stakeholders, it is useful to ask: What is the role of non-state actors in the efforts of nation-states to manage population growth and migration in Arctic areas? How do population policies and development policies intersect in the region and what space is there for non-state actors at that intersection?

\(^1\) This paper uses human ‘mobility’ as an intentionally broad term that “includes all types of territorial [human] movements, including but not limited to migration” (Hyndman 2012: 248). The emphasis is not on the means of transport, but rather, the movement of persons, including migration, state resettlement, and commuting.
This paper suggests a policy process approach to address these questions in the regional context. Focusing on relationships and networks among policy actors elucidates the connections and interactions with larger (national, transnational, and global) institutions, actors, and trends. It “subverts the traditional distinction between domestic and international affairs habitually taken for granted in political geography” (Yacobi 2009, 576). It also connects Arctic research themes often studied in isolation from one another. For example, as Petrov notes, much literature on the region’s economy “neglect[s]... demographic [population] factors of economic dynamics in favor of merely industrial ones (...)” (2010, 40). I will first set the context, which serves as the basis to suggest promising research themes.

Overview: Non-State Actors in Arctic Migration and Development

Scholars ask what is unique about the relationship between migration and development in the Arctic; they also seek to connect the region to global socio-economic and political changes since the 1970s, and after 1990 in Russia (Huskey and Southcott, 2010, 35). New research examines how state and non-state actors pursue what each considers ‘strategic population mobility’ in the region. This refers to the diverse and shifting interests that underlie their efforts to affect demography, settlement patterns, and human movement. As a result, circumpolar populations are urbanising and centralizing; settlements range from large cities to camps for shift workers (Fossland 2012, 255). These actors work both cooperatively and competitively to develop migration policies as well as indirect (market-based) policies that impact human movement. For example, in some Russian Arctic cities, the extent to which localities and corporations (public, private, and semi-private) provide social services affects quality of life and often, resident retention.

For states, managing northern populations has geostrategic implications for export-oriented businesses and for sovereignty. Commercial interests negotiate migration-related policies either individually, with other non-state actors (i.e. labor recruitment companies), or with state bureaucracies at various levels. Their interactions do not always align with state sovereignty and resource claims. Regional and local governments have still other interests. Often, they seek to provide human capital and foster economic development while managing the costs of maintaining dispersed populations.

Transnational Policy Processes

The Arctic region is often framed in neo-realist (i.e. state-centred) terms in academic, grey, and popular literatures. Against this background, a focus on non-state actors...
allows us to examine the implications behind the territorial and border claims and assumptions that underlie transnational policy processes (Kuus 2007, 7). As Arctic states attempt to maintain sovereignty in the face of pressures from other states and companies, how states negotiate with other groups illuminate transformations of power.

Researchers can situate specific policy processes in the context of growing transnational efforts to manage the region in ways that mitigate or at least do not fuel inter-state competition. State power is certainly important in the Arctic, but there are now non-state players in the region alongside, and sometimes intertwined with, state institutions. Evaluating policy processes allows us to see how conflicting interests play out among the various actors: we need to understand who these players are, how they operate, and with what effects.

A process-focused analysis decentres the state as the locus of analysis and emphasizes the growing role of transnational commercial actors at the nexus of migration and economic development policy areas. It highlights the question, ‘development for whom’, and moves research beyond “a state-centric (neo) liberalism that sees state action in the Arctic as necessary to an ontology of capitalist development” (Dittmer et al. 2011, 206).

A critical analysis of policymaking will consider questions such as: how are socio-political issues constructed in ways that produce likely policy outcomes; how does ‘seepage’ in the discourse between academic, grey, and popular literatures construct legitimacy; how is political ‘neutrality’ in policy constructed through ostensibly apolitical actors and technology; what are the interactions among actors in informal governance structures (Wedel 1998).

There is as yet little research on transnational policy processes, particularly in the Arctic. The region is a useful area to apply the process approach, as it offers researchers stark examples of the interactions among states and transnational actors, and also allows scholars to integrate the Arctic context into broader social science research on these themes.

**Population, Migration, and Development Policies**

In terms of empirical research, Shore, Wright and Pero note that analysing specific policies provides “windows onto [broader] political processes in which actors, agents, concepts and technologies interact in different sites, creating or consolidating new rationalities of governance and regimes of knowledge (...)”(2011, 2). How state and
non-state groups negotiate population-related policies can illuminate new aspects of
the region’s varied experiences of public cost cutting, corporate-led development, and
blurred divisions between private and public entities. This research framework can
help scholars understand how shifting governance practices operate in the region
(and globally), and result in “new forms of social control and spatial administration”
(Mitchell 2010, 290).

Localities and non-state actors pursue development strategies that often include
administrative measures to manage migration or the size, location, and composition
of settlements. In Russian cases, they may draw down large Soviet-era cities,
consolidate settlements, or develop temporary camps for shift workers at resource
extraction sites. Often, they accomplish this by employing several measures
simultaneously, such as the rollback of social benefits and ‘closed city’ policies
restricting the in-migration of foreigners.

For example, city officials in Novyi Urengoi recently applied for a ‘closed city’
administrative status, citing a rise in crime accompanying foreign migrants. Norilsk is
already a ‘quasi-closed’ city, a holdover from the Soviet era. This designation was
reinstated in 2001 at the request of city officials. During the same period a
transnational corporation, Norilsk Nickel, made cuts to social benefits (pensions,
healthcare, public transport and other services), shifting costs to the municipality.
Combined, these steps had the effect of encouraging urban outmigration from Norilsk.
In these company towns, even though ‘closed city’ policies are ostensibly political,
powerful natural resource companies played an important role in these decisions.

Selective regional in-migration also occurs through the recruitment of migrant
workers, sometimes bypassing local residents. In Canadian northern provinces,
transnational natural resource companies cooperate with provincial governments to
recruit both low and high skill migrants from throughout Canada and abroad. In
Russia, similar arrangements are in place in cities such as Norilsk, where Norilsk
Nickel recruits highly skilled foreign and domestic specialists, offering a mix of
financial and other inducements. Coupled with Norilsk Nickel’s new corporate
efficiencies, these measures indicate an interest by both industry and local
government to gradually draw down the large population to a more sustainable size,
and with a composition that includes fewer pensioners and foreign residents.
However, understanding the negotiations between these groups may help explain
why these measures have not been entirely successful.
Conclusion: New Research Pathways for Arctic Population Research

Examining the role of non-state actors in Arctic policies offers a new lens for scholars to analyse transnational policy processes and regional migration and development. Researchers can understand new techniques of governance as states negotiate with agents whose activities and identities often straddle and obfuscate national boundaries and public and private spheres.

Research on policies as processes is a growing field in several social science disciplines but is rarely applied to the Arctic context. This approach can provide researchers the opportunity to apply global insights to the region and at the same time, integrate circumpolar research into broader social science work. Population and development issues that can be usefully examined with a focus on the relationships undergirding policymaking include: (1) public-private labor recruiting arrangements; (2) the provisioning of social services in cities by transnational and private (and semi-private) companies; (3) the impact of the explosion of temporary work on permanent residents, particularly employment competition and state reluctance to invest in or subsidize permanent populations; (4) political prospects for urban and regional economic diversification.

In these and other research paths, a focus on non-state and local actors highlights the shortcomings of neo-realist framings and deepens our understanding of transnational interactions in a region that is increasingly cooperatively governed. The Arctic's starkly defined links between commercial interests and population provide useful test cases to examine the role of business in migration globally--valuable because much migration literature focuses on the state. Policy process approaches link the empirical, urgent issues in the Arctic to broader scholarly considerations of these questions. They connect state-level geopolitical issues to daily life practices via webs of relationships that illuminate transnational and non-state intervention in the social well being of Arctic residents.

References

Dittmer, Jason; Sami Moisio; Alan Ingram; Klaus Dodds (2011) Have you heard the one about the disappearing ice? Recasting Arctic geopolitics. *Political Geography, 30:*4, 202-214.


