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The Second Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR-II)

Key Policy Relevant Conclusions
And Suggestions for Moving Forward

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Arctic Human Development Report II

The second Arctic Human Development Report: Regional Processes and Global Linkages (AHDR-II) identifies key trends in Arctic human development and well-being in the first decade of the 21st century and highlights possible avenues for future research. Addressing these areas of future study will contribute to moving the agenda of human development forward and promoting well-being for individuals, societies and cultural groups in the Arctic.

Key Policy Relevant Conclusions

Arctic populations and migration

After decades of growth, the size of the population of the Arctic appears to have stabilized at just over 4 million. The booms and busts in the Arctic economy associated with the discovery and depletion of resources have always had, and will continue to have, a large influence on the size of *regional* populations. "Climigration" is a new dimension of Arctic mobility, and concentration of the Arctic population in urban places a continuing trend. Aging of the Arctic population brings accompanying changes in dependency ratios —the ratio of dependents (people younger than 15 or older than 64)to the working-age population.



Photo: Harald Finkler



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Cultures and identities

Interest in the Arctic has burgeoned, resulting especially from climate change and potential opportunities in the resource development sector. Arctic identities and especially Indigenous cultures are increasingly seen as assets, and the Arctic as more marketable.

At the same time, cultural variation and complexity increasingly characterize the Arctic. For Arctic Indigenous Peoples, the challenge is not of choosing between "modernity" and "tradition," but to find a fulfilling combination of the two.

Economic systems

The Arctic will remain a high cost region. The effects of environmental changes in the Arctic may in some cases benefit economic development, but in others will make resource development more costly. Natural resource production will continue as a driving force of the Arctic economy, although expectations of higher prices and lower costs for Arctic resources may be overly optimistic. Interest in economic diversification, within and beyond extractive industries, is growing.

Political systems

Devolutionary pressures continue to be a defining feature of political systems in the Arctic, with increasing local participation in decision-making. This entails ever-mounting demands on local and Indigenous representatives. Human and financial capacity challenges persist. Whether and how these basic concerns of governance can be addressed will determine outcomes regarding social issues, economic opportunities, infrastructure, and land and environmental management.

Education and human capital

Although opportunities for formal education in the circumpolar region have increased, lower levels of formal educational achievement persist in education outcomes across the Arctic. Disparities in educational achievement are notable between men and women and also Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Lower educational achievement exacerbates difficulties in meeting the increasing demands for an educated workforce in the Arctic. The development of human, and especially creative, capital is crucial to the future of Arctic societies and economies.

Legal systems

While there is a trend towards the increased adoption of Arctic-specific norms, global norms will continue to play a dominant role. Arctic states will continue to rely on international law and norms as a mechanism for dispute resolution and policy development in the Arctic.

Resource governance

With increasing attention being paid to the adoption of best practices, Arctic resource governance continues to be innovative, while growing in complexity. Research indicates that informal resource governance institutions are broadening and that their relationships with more formal institutions continue to expand as well.

Globalization

In many instances, globalization means increased dependency of local interests on external powers and unstable markets. At the same time, the forces of globalization bring many economic opportunities to northern areas, including increased resource development and employment. Globalization brings greater cultural diversity, augmenting but also potentially attenuating local cultural traditions and institutions.



Human health and well-being

Among emerging issues for human health and well-being are the direct and indirect impacts of climate change, including the potential for increased food and water insecurity, changes in the pattern of infectious diseases, and impacts on health care infrastructure. Continuing threats to well-being also include mental health problems, high levels of suicide, accidents and domestic violence. The well-being of an aging Arctic population also demands attention.



Community viability and adaptation

Community connections are being transformed by increasing globalization, with population responses varying widely across the Arctic. Outmigration, vulnerability, risk exposure, and coping ability differ across gender, age and ethnicity.

An intensifying trend of urbanization characterizes the Arctic, with continued outmigration from local communities toward larger settlements, especially by women. Such forces challenge the viability of smaller Arctic settlements, while communities increasingly involve elements of 'diaspora' populations.

Moving Forward: Avenues for Future Research

More research on human development and living conditions in the Arctic is required to better understand and enhance the environment, economies, culture, and health of Indigenous Peoples and Arctic communities. Key areas for future research are identified below.

1. Understanding the needs of Arctic youth and elderly

While Arctic demographic information has for the most part increased in availability and quality, there remains a need for more analysis of specific demographic cohorts, most notably youth and elderly. The population is aging in many parts of the Arctic, triggering the need to better understand the current and future social, cultural, economic and political role this segment of the population does and could play. At the same time, the viability of Arctic cultures, languages, traditional activities, communities and settlements is connected with its youth. Thus we need to better understand their aspirations, and the barriers to achieving them.

2. Gendered dimensions of Arctic change

Men and women are not affected equally by the numerous changes occurring in the Arctic. Further research is required to address how gender dimensions are considered in areas such as climate change and globalization, traditional and non-traditional economic activities, political systems, and education and health care provision.

3. “Soft securities”: food, water, and energy

Food security is declining in the Arctic due to both environmental change and globalization. We see increased hunger and heightened rates of obesity and diabetes. Environmental changes affect water security, while global shifts in energy prices and transportation costs compromise energy security in the Arctic. Further research is required to better understand the contributions of the traditional food economy, as well as innovative new water and energy strategies which can potentially address these challenges.

4. Arctic settlements and communities

Urban settlements in the Arctic may help to generate new types of economic activity and change the cost of resource development. Better knowledge of the economic role of communities and their relationship to the economies of their surrounding regions is needed.

The costs and benefits of major resource development projects appear particularly high for smaller Arctic communities. Such projects potentially involve influxes of new residents (often temporary), the opportunity to negotiate employment and revenue sharing agreements, the threat of negative environmental impacts, and a potential loss of local ‘fate control’.

The role of both ‘new newcomers’ and Arctic diasporas in contributing to community identity, economic condition, and political strength is not well understood and should be addressed in future research.

5. Arctic institutions

A variety of new institutional arrangements have provided residents of the Arctic with more control over local resources and economies. What types of institutions, formal and informal have worked best to improve the well-being of Arctic residents, and which will likely help meet future needs of human development in the Arctic?

Photo: Rudy Riedlsperger



Photo: Harald Finkler

6. Global linkages and new Arctic actors

The Arctic is ever more closely linked to the rest of the world - socially, culturally, politically, economically and environmentally. How can we better evaluate the changing importance of the Arctic to the globe? What ambitions do non-Arctic states have for the Arctic, and how will these impact the Arctic's future? Greater attention must be given to these important questions regarding the Arctic in this global context.

7. Promulgating and adopting best practices

The Arctic has generated many innovations: in adaptive governance practices; in the inclusion of local and Indigenous voices in decision-making and in research; in the development of power and economic benefit sharing structures; and in initiatives related to distance education and telemedicine. How do we effectively transfer best practices and lessons learned in one part of the Arctic to other parts? How can the challenges of capacity (fiscal and human) be addressed in order to ensure the co-production of the knowledge and strategies needed to address a changing Arctic across regions?

8. Arctic social indicators and monitoring

Gaps in data availability, common data protocols and primary data collection need addressing, to improve tracking of Arctic human development. The current set of Arctic social indicators (ASI; <http://library.arcticportal.org/712/>) needs refining. Indicators to track changes in food, water and energy security are needed, as is primary data collection on the size of the traditional economy. Greater consideration should also be given to gender in future indicator development.

The implementation of the ASI monitoring system would contribute greatly to tracking human development and benefit policy-makers.



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Photo: Shari Gearheard



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Download the AHDR II full report at:



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<http://sdwg.org/understanding-and-measuring-human-development-in-the-arctic/>

