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Arctic unity, Arctic difference: mapping the reach of northern discourses

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ABSTRACT. Since the end of the Cold War, cooperative and region-building endeavours involving Arctic governments and peoples have flourished. These efforts have been rooted in a desire to pursue northern sustainable development and in assertions about the shared experiences and values of Arctic states and peoples. In this paper, a case study is presented concerning a Canadian development project designed to promote Canadian sustainable economic development models to indigenous and non-indigenous leaders and bureaucrats in the Russian north. In their efforts to move knowledge across northern borders, the Canadian project team relied clearly upon two central discourses of the Arctic region-building process: a common Arctic space and the shared pursuit of sustainable development. Drawing upon over thirty qualitative interviews and a year of participant observation at project events, the aim of this article is to map the currency and reach of these Arctic regional discourses at a more 'local' level amongst the Russian and Canadian Arctic residents involved in the project. The continuing debate during this development project over what Arctic regionalism and sustainable development mean in practice calls into question a key assertion of contemporary region-building rhetoric, the assumption or hopeful injunction that not only is a regional landscape or environment shared but that values and experiences are, or will come to be, shared as well.

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Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, the governments and peoples of the Arctic have increasingly engaged in a variety of cooperative activities designed to address shared issues and to raise the profile of the Arctic as a political and geographical region. In this region-building process, that is working to establish and to increase the international profile of the Arctic and to promote and support multilateral cooperative projects, 'smaller' states, such as Canada and Finland rather than the American or Russian Cold War superpowers, led the way. In particular, Canadian politicians, civil servants and indigenous leaders were instrumental in facilitating this region-building process and in establishing a focus on northern sustainable development (Keskitalo 2004; Tennberg 2000; Young 1998). Such post-Cold War region-building efforts are unique in that they represent a regionalism beyond more traditional and limited free trade regimes and security alliances. These newer region-builders often have the 'political ambition of establishing regional coherence and identity' (Hettne 2000: xvi), aiming to create an 'area where the population has a specific awareness of *us* inside the region, as opposed to *them* outside' (Hønneland 1998: 79, emphasis original).

In this paper, a case study is presented concerning a Canadian development project designed to promote Canadian sustainable economic development models to indigenous and non-indigenous leaders and bureaucrats in the Russian north. In their efforts to transfer knowledge across northern borders, the Canadian project team drew clearly upon two central discourses of the Arctic region-building process: a common Arctic space and the shared pursuit of sustainable development. The aim of this article is to illustrate how these supposedly common Arctic discourses were contested at a more 'local' level by the Russian and Canadian Arctic residents involved in the project. The understandings of the indigenous and non-indigenous project participants remained primarily divided along national lines, even after 5 years of cooperation within the project itself and after around 15 years of active Arctic region building. The ongoing debates during this development project over what Arctic regionalism and sustainable development signify in practice calls into question a key staple of new region-building rhetoric, the assumption or hopeful injunction that not only is a regional landscape or environment shared but that values or experiences are, or will come to be, common.

Firstly, the project itself is presented with the methodology used and the project is then situated in relation to Canadian region-building policies. Subsequently, over

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thirty qualitative interviews with Canadian and Russian project participants and a year of participant observation are drawn upon to examine ways in which Canadian and Russian Arctic bureaucrats and leaders understood and contested the significance of the Arctic region and how sustainable development should be realised in practice. The second example of a contested regional discourse, sustainable development, is taken up in greater depth as a key illustration elucidating how certain values, beliefs and expectations fundamental to realising sustainable development in practice differed substantially along national lines. Throughout, these different understandings are linked to the political and social legacies of Canada and Russia. The endurance and importance of nationally divergent understandings of, presumably, shared discourses raises the question, addressed in the conclusion of this article, of how to understand and position the national boundaries that transect the north, and the significantly varied societies and polities that these boundaries demarcate, within Arctic regionalism.

INRIPP II and methodology

The development project that forms the empirical base of this article, Institution Building for Northern Russia's Indigenous Peoples Project II (INRIPP II), operated in Russia from 2000–2005. INRIPP II was a cooperative effort between the Inuit Circumpolar Conference-Canada (ICC) and the Department of Indian and Northern Development (DIAND) and operated with a budget of C$4.9 million from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The cooperation between a federal agency (DIAND) and the ICC, a non-governmental organisation representing the Inuit of Canada, the United States (Alaska), Greenland and northeastern Russia, reflected the overall structure and aims of the project. These were that Canadian Inuit shared their political and economic experience and knowledge with Russia's northern indigenous peoples and that Canadian government officials worked with Russian counterparts who were involved in indigenous and northern policy-making. ICC representatives worked closely with the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) and its regional affiliates, while DIAND and other governmental representatives worked with Goskomsever (the State Committee on the North) and, later, northern regional governments, primarily those of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug (KMAO) and the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug (YNAO). INRIPP consisted of formal pedagogy in the form of organisational and business training courses for Russian indigenous interns; seminars relating to sustainable development issues affecting indigenous peoples, such as natural resource management and economic development; and study tours in the Canadian north for Russian indigenous leaders and officials (see ICC 2006). The project was evaluated by CIDA and was considered to have been successful and well executed.

The majority of participants in INRIPP II, other than federal bureaucrats from Moscow and Ottawa, came from Canadian and Russian areas that can be broadly construed as Arctic or 'The North.' Many of the regions represented in the project (such as southern Siberia or the Russian far east) fall outside the strict definition of the Arctic as demarcated by latitude or by the tree line. However, in practical politics and in Arctic social science research, such regions are united under the Arctic or northern rubric because they share issues relating to remoteness and marginality from federal centres of power, indigenous peoples, and reliance on natural resources, from herding and fishing to mining and oil extraction (Nuttall 1998). Indigenous peoples considered northern, such as the Inuit and Gwich'in, who participated on the Canadian side of the project, or the Khanty, Nenets and Nanai (to name a few), who participated on the Russian side, share political issues relating to this remoteness from both federal and regional power centres and also have in common many traditional subsistence and cultural practices that stem from, and rely upon, the Arctic landscape.

The research for this article was conducted between November 2003 and January 2005. The initial ethnographic fieldwork consisted of participation in the project as an informal member of the Canadian delegation in project seminars held in Russia and on a study tour for Russian project participants held in the Canadian north. The writer later returned to Russia to conduct semi-structured interviews with INRIPP Russian participants (over thirty interviews were conducted that ranged from 45 minutes to five hours). Reference is also made to documents produced by, or used by, INRIPP II to provide further context and rigour to the research. These multiple methods (interviews, participant observation, textual analysis) provide a means of witnessing different kinds of moments and types of reflection on Arctic region building and sustainable development during project events.

INRIPP II and Canadian Arctic region building

The growth of interest in the Arctic and the subsequent proliferation of activities designed to promote stable and continuing cooperation in the far north have to do with the Arctic being a relatively secure source of non-renewable resources (such as oil, gas and minerals), the awareness of the elevated impact of global environmental problems (such as global warming and trans-boundary pollutants) on the Arctic environment, and the increasing politicisation of Arctic indigenous peoples (Chatuverdi 1996; Keskitalo 2004; Tennberg 2000; Osherenko and Young 1989; Young 1992; Young 1998). Immediate post-Cold War region-building efforts culminated in the establishment of the eight-country Arctic Council in 1996, which involves governmental and indigenous representatives from Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Canada, the United States and Greenland (Denmark). Canadian politicians, civil servants

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and indigenous leaders were instrumental in establishing a focus on sustainable development issues in the newly created Council (Keskitalo 2004; Tennberg 2000).

The INRIPP II development project fitted squarely into Canada's northern development policies and Arctic region-building goals. As one interviewee from the Canadian civil service involved in the project stated, 'we engage internationally when our international work somehow forwards our domestic priorities.' Since the earlier days of post-Cold War Arctic region building, Canadian northern foreign policy has been made more concrete in the *Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy* (NDFP), which was released by then Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy on 8 June 2000 (DFAIT 2000). Interviewees from the Government of Canada pointed to the NDFP as the policy document guiding the majority of their activities and work in the North, including projects such as INRIPP II. The goals of this policy are to ensure the human security and well-being of northerners and all Canadians, to encourage sustainable development in the Arctic, to establish and maintain Canadian sovereignty in the north, and to promote the development of the circumpolar region and the rule of law within it (DFAIT 2000: 2). Raising the profile of the Arctic as a politically meaningful geographical region is seen as a means of establishing a 'framework to promote the extension of Canadian interests and values' in the north, including expanding upon trade and sustainable economic opportunities (DFAIT 2000: 1). The policy states that 'to realize the full potential of the North, northern Canadians and the circumpolar community need to recognize and act on the basis of being a natural community — bound not only by geography but also linked by common experiences and often values as well' (DFAIT 2000: 9).

The Canadian emphasis on shared values and experiences is in keeping with general post Cold-War region-building trends with their emphasis on building regional coherence and identity beyond the more limited trade and security regions of old (Haukkala 1999; Hettne 2000; Hønneland 1998). Theorists emphasise the increasing importance of the notion that the region be 'naturally believable' and appear to 'belong together historically, geographically, culturally and economically' (Haukkala 1999: 24; Hettne 2000). The emphasis on 'naturalness,' cultural similarity and shared history clearly point to a related political rhetoric and practice of nationalism, in which groups strive for autonomy over a national homeland fueled by belief in their unity and uniqueness and in their shared history, blood and destiny. Once taken to be natural phenomena, nations, like regions, are now understood to be constructed by political elites pursuing particular agendas and drawing boundaries in order to anchor these beliefs in the landscape (Anderson 1991; Connor 1994; Gellner 1993; Neumann 1994).

However, in linking new regionalism to nationalism one should not exagerate the influence of regions on those who happen to live within regional boundaries nor overestimate the actual effort put into building a sense of identification within a region. Hønneland (1998: 82) points to a problematic trend within studies of northern regionalism, in this case in the European Arctic, with his observation that presently 'the existence of a natural region is more or less equated with the existence of an identity region.' Nation-building projects are ambitious attempts to construct a sense of identity and belonging through national institutions, national songs, national histories, national media and national modes of education that are enforced upon, and enacted among, all citizens on a daily basis. By contrast, region building normally only creates a sense of identity for the bureaucrats and civil servants who take part in the meetings and exchanges (see Keskitalo 2004: 49**),** or by a few ambitious persons who take advantage of the increased levels of interaction across borders that can occur as a result of regional politics (Hønneland 1998).

While the concept of an Arctic region and the shared pursuit of sustainable development within it are important discourses that work to discipline and shape behaviour and language at the international level (see Keskitalo 2004; Tennberg 2000), the sections below seek to map where these discourses reach the limits of their conceptual power by examining the extent to which they function at more local levels within the Arctic region.

Debating the significance of a shared Arctic region

The Arctic as a region was important in legitimising the project and Canadian government officials involved often pointed to the environmental and increasingly political interdependency of the Arctic as a key reason for such cooperative efforts. One Canadian project consultant put it this way: 'because we share a region it is more natural for us to have a Canada-Russia project.' The majority of Russian participants also seemed to see the Arctic as a legitimate premise for Russia-Canada interaction and partnership. In particular, many Russian interviewees saw commonalities linking Canadian Inuit and various Russian indigenous peoples. A Nenets bureaucrat from YNAO noted that indigenous people share a need and 'desire for rational resource use because both Canadian and Russian indigenous peoples love their land.' A participant from YNAO observed:

> Of course we share a lot. . .we live in Arctic conditions and we live in the same way in that our ways of life grew from a close relationship with nature and the living world. We understand more about nature than others and we protect it more thoroughly. . .but there can be many approaches.

A Khanty working for the government in KMAO, who had travelled to the Canadian north on a study tour, noted that indigenous people face similar problems: 'indigenous people in both countries are struggling with the same question: how to protect their culture and maintain their connection to nature.'

At the same time, Russian project participants sometimes did work to ensure that national differences in

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history, politics and legislation were appreciated despite this shared emphasis on commonalities between Arctic states. For example, a high-ranking Russian federal politician from the far east put it this way:

> We are familiar with the Canadian North and we know what is going on there. But we have big differences from them. . .Although we are at both sides of the North Pole, in similar climatic environments, we have different approaches to life and it can be difficult to find common ground. . .There are aspects that could be shared, as we are both part of the Arctic Council, such as conservation of the environment. . .There was a time when we knew as part of the Soviet Union how to deal with economic problems in the North, but now Canadians and Russians must share our experiences because we are in the same situation at the top of the globe.

Despite occasionally being called upon to see differences between the Canadian and Russian norths, the notion of the Arctic as a region seemed well-accepted by Canadian and Russian project participants and was often referred to when highlighting common concerns and justifying continuing Canadian-Russian interactions in the north. However, the willingness to identify with a discourse of shared Arctic regionalism was challenged when this rather preliminary sense of geographical identification was asked to do much more, to justify the implementation of Canadian sustainable economic development models in the Russian north. The centrality of national differences is particularly evident in the following sections illustrating the Canadian development team's efforts to put into operation an internationally and regionally important discourse, sustainable development, in a concrete and comparatively local interaction. During the debate on how to realise sustainable development in practice, national distinctions, rather than regional similarity, were fundamental in shaping beliefs and expectations.

Defining sustainable development

In addition to being a key discourse in Arctic regional cooperation, the term sustainable development has become 'common currency worldwide,' beginning with its introduction by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and reinforced and supplemented by the World Commission on Environmental Development (the Brundtland Commission) (Adams 1990; Lewellen 1995; Young 1992: 215). To offer one definition, DIAND, the Canadian federal body responsible for the north, draws its basic conception of sustainable development from the Brundtland Commission's report:

> [Sustainable development] is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. . .sustainable development is a process of change in which exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations (DIAND 2006).

Despite the availability of eminently citable definitions, the actual practice of sustainable development, namely how one 'does' sustainable development, remains a contested, albeit long-standing, issue. Adams' (1990: 3) apt description of sustainable development as a 'convenient rhetorical flag. . .under which ships of many different kinds can sail' remains illustrative today.

As will be illustrated below, there are significant differences in how Canadian and Russian project participants understood the term sustainable development and believed that sustainable development could be pursued. Although referring to the same concept of sustainable development [ustoichivoye razvitiye], these Arctic participants diverged in the question of how one 'does' sustainable development. These disparities are flagged by focusing on two key areas in which opinions diverged. These are where the impetus and execution of sustainable development originates (i.e. top-down vs. bottom-up) and what kinds of activities qualify as sustainable. These differences can be connected to the specificities of Canadian and Russian national political and legal structures, which clearly played a role in shaping the expectations and beliefs of Russian and Canadian INRIPP II participants. While the Canadian and Russian project participants certainly concurred that sustainable development in the north was important and desirable, they presented very different notions of how sustainable development should be implemented and realized.

Top-down vs. bottom-up: where does sustainable development originate?

The word 'grassroots' was frequently linked by Canadian experts to how and where sustainable development was intended to be achieved. At an INRIPP II study tour meeting in Rankin Inlet, a 2,200-person town on the shores of Hudson Bay in Nunavut, the visiting Russian interns were told that development should always cater to, and be inspired by, 'grassroots desires' and involvement. As one economic development officer in Rankin Inlet commented, 'the community should make decisions about what should be done with the money. . .it should be grassroots development.' To take another interaction, one Russian indigenous study tour participant, at a meeting with regional economic development officers in Iqaluit (Nunavut), echoed the sentiments of the rest of the delegation:

> In Russia, there is the opinion that a traditional lifestyle is the basis for the preservation of a people. So there have been attempts to commercialize this, but we haven't been successful. What percentage of your businesses is related to traditional practices? Are they successful?

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The answers to this type of question, when posed in the Canadian north on study tour, tended to be a discussion of the northern carving industry, meat processing, commercial fisheries, and any kind of grassroots or 'local' business. Here, again, we see the importance of the local level in the Canadian definition of sustainable development. If it involved indigenous people at the local level, it was seen to sustain them, regardless of whether or not the employment was based in traditional culture.

The Canadian participants' linkage between sustainability and a rhetoric of the 'local' corresponds with trends in western development thinking. Adams and Hulme (2001: 12) note that a discourse of community and local participation in management and conservation efforts was integral to the shift from ' "top down", "technocratic", "blueprint" approaches to development. . .[to] an alternative agenda. . .[in which] development goals could only be achieved by "bottom up planning", "decentralization", "process approaches", "participation" and "community organization".' They argue that the notion of 'community participation' has become a central feature of sustainable development discourse.

Russian perceptions of the locations and scales in which change is possible differ substantially from the beliefs evidenced by Canadians involved in INRIPP II and from these international trends towards the local. In various project events, Russian project participants overwhelmingly envisaged the federal centre as the location in which change must be initiated and primarily focused on calling for new and better legislation relating to indigenous peoples at the federal level. In seminars, it became increasingly obvious to the writer that Russians, while not resentful of the notion of grassroots work, simply did not share Canadian beliefs about the power and possibility of the 'local.' For example, at an INRIPP seminar on natural resources management held in central Siberia, after two days of listening to Canadians emphasising local and indigenous participation in resource management decisions, a bureaucrat responsible for indigenous affairs responded to a criticism that his department was not devolving enough power to the local level. He stated, 'it is irrelevant to us if development comes from the top down or the bottom up as long as there is progress.'

These varying approaches to the 'local' can be linked to the different national histories of federalism in Canada and Russia. Although continuities between the Soviet Union and present-day Russia can be problematic to draw, the present Russian federation of districts, regions, and republics encompasses two competing principles inherited from the Soviet era. Lenin and early Soviet politicians supported the idea of self-government and autonomy for the many national minorities within the newly drawn borders of the Soviet Union while, at the same time, establishing a strong tradition of centralism, or what McAuley (1992: 2) calls 'a huge centralized state machine,' with key decisions and policies coming from Moscow. Blakkisrud and Hønneland argue that 'when the two principles came into conflict, [centralism] always prevailed. . .in reality, the Soviet Union represented a pro-forma ethno-federal structure covering up a reality of extreme centralization' (2001:4). By contrast, Canada has a reasonably well-developed and stable federal structure in practice as well as in law, in which the federal centre retains jurisdiction over clearly defined areas while other authorities are devolved to relatively autonomous provinces, territories, municipalities, and communities (Brownsey and Howlett 2001). Given that that the renamed governmental institutions of present-day Russia bear 'the unmistakable stamp of the Soviet epoch' (Kotkin 2001: 165) and that the relationship between regions and the federal centre remains relatively changeable, it becomes more comprehensible why Russians found it difficult, if not impossible, to relate to the optimistic Canadian rhetoric of the 'local' as the site of potential successful change.

What activities will sustain indigenous peoples? Debating the economic development corporation model

When it came to discussing sustainable economic development for the indigenous peoples of the north, Canadian and Russian ideas about what kinds of activities would be both sustainable and serve to sustain these peoples also diverged. The central point of disjuncture in the discussion of sustainable economic development was that the Canadian model of fair economic development for indigenous peoples rested upon indigenous participation in the mainstream market economy, whereas most Russian participants believed that the path to economic and social sustainability must be primarily through the commercialisation of the products of traditional activities. Both Canadians and Russians agreed on the importance of sustainable economic development for indigenous peoples, but proposed variations as to how this should be achieved. This became particularly clear at a seminar on economic development held in December 2004 in Moscow, that concluded the active phase of INRIPP II and focused on assessing the 'Canadian-style' economic development corporations (EDCs) established in Russia during the course of the project.

INRIPP II experts had actively promoted the idea of economic development corporations (EDCs) to their Russian partners at meetings in Russia and on various study tours of the Canadian north in hopes that EDCs could take root in Russia and could facilitate economic development in remote regions and among underserved populations. EDCs, a central feature of the northern Canadian political economy and of most land claims agreements negotiated between the Canadian state and various indigenous peoples, are normally given initial capital through land claims settlements and sometimes through advances on the profits of resource extraction (Duhaime and others 2001; Mitchell 1996; Whittington 1986). These corporations manage large sums of money with the goals of increasing their overall worth via investment

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and of fostering economic development amongst the indigenous or northern communities/peoples to whom the corporations are ultimately answerable. EDCs were established during INRIPP II in two northern Russian districts, Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug (KMAO) and Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug (YNAO).

In the discussion and debates surrounding the question of EDCs, it became evident that Canadian and Russian participants had different notions about what types of development activity would be sustainable for the indigenous peoples of their respective norths. Expert members of the Canadian delegation, mostly indigenous individuals hailing from the Yukon, the Northwestern Territories (NWT), and Nunavik (northern Quebec), expressed large ambitions when they spoke about economic development. Their goals were to get the best possible profits for their 'shareholders.' In the words of one participant from the NWT, they aim to gather 'more than the crumbs from development.' The EDCs they represented, which served First Nation and Inuit groups, were involved in 'big business,' including airlines, shipping companies, and oil and gas services. However, these delegates saw their efforts as serving purposes beyond profit generation. They also anticipated that a large percentage of the businesses they acquired would offer training and 'capacity-building' opportunities for their 'stakeholders' and represent a path towards the active involvement of indigenous persons in northern businesses and higher levels of individual and communal wealth in the north. This dual goal came across quite clearly in the Canadians' presentations to, and conversations with, Russian participants. The representatives plainly linked social and cultural stability with economic development within mainstream market activities and considered the corporations to be an important aspect of indigenous empowerment, often equating financial clout with political influence.

Two guiding principles for economic development in the Nunavut economic development summary clearly illustrate the Canadian approach to northern sustainable development. Economic development must take place with respect for cultural integrity, 'preserving the primary relationships and values that come from Inuit Quajimajatuqangit [Inuit ways of knowing and doing]' and under community control (Sivummut Economic Development Strategy Group 2003: vi). Thus, the goal of economic development is not to preserve traditional activities as such, but rather to provide for the continued exercise of the 'relationships' and 'values' that characterised pre-contact life, such as providing for family and community, taking counsel, and resourcefulness (Inuit Qaujimajatuqanginnut Task Force 2002: 8).

For Russian indigenous leaders, economic development based on traditional life primarily meant the commercialisation of the concrete products of traditional pursuits, such as herding, fishing and hunting, rather than attempting to extend the beliefs and values of herding and hunter/gatherer societies into different endeavours. A RAIPON leader stated the issue clearly: 'Successful development is possible when all the aspects of development are taken into account. . .for us, economic development means development from the traditional use of nature.' A delegate from the federal government, representing the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, echoed this emphasis on traditional practices. He commented, 'the traditional way of life is the basis of the indigenous peoples of the North, for that reason, we would like to develop the traditional economy to support the mentality of the indigenous peoples and on the other hand fully integrate these people into modern society.'

These nationally diverging notions concerning what appropriate and sustainable economic development for indigenous peoples actually is contributed to EDCs being realised in two Russian hydrocarbon-rich regions YNAO and KMAO, in ways that greatly diverged from the original Canadian templates. These differences emerged strongly at one of the final meetings of INRIPP II when KMAO and YNAO bureaucrats presented their EDC business plans. The Canadian corporation that had been promoted as a model, the Inuvialuit Development Corporation (IDC), was owned by the indigenous Inuvialuit of the Beaufort Sea region in Canada's Northwest Territories and reported C$6.1 million in revenue in 2002 (Inuvialuit Corporate Group 2002). As a representative of the IDC glibly listed: 'currently we own airlines, hotels, drilling rigs, helicopters, real estate, grocery stores, and consultancy firms.' By contrast, the two corporations founded in Russia in 2003 focused on the value-added processing of the concrete products of traditional livelihood, like fish, nuts, mushrooms and meat. In these corporations, indigenous hunters and gatherers are clients selling their raw materials to the corporations, which were then taken away for processing, rather than owners of the corporations themselves.

A representative of the IDC, in attempting to elucidate further how the Russian models had deviated from the form of the Canadian EDC, stated 'while in the Inuvialuit region we like traditional activities they are not necessarily the best investment. . .so we pursue other elements such as airlines or oil and gas production and if those are successful we have more money to support traditional activities.' Canadians emphasised that their goal was to generate profit in order to support various communities and indigenous peoples, which would, in turn, help support indigenous ways of life. An additional difference that the IDC representative pointed out was that all those around the table speaking about Russian corporations were indigenous and non-indigenous government bureaucrats. He stressed that the issue of ownership was integral to the Canadian model of EDCs and clarified that the IDC is owned by the indigenous peoples of the area with government participating only through advice and subsidy, but 'never ownership or control.' Once again, we see that the Canadian emphasis on local involvement was one of the key markers of sustainability, while Russian project participants were more involved with the specifics

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of deciding which particular activities would 'sustain' the cultural uniqueness and ways of life of indigenous peoples.

Russian participants recognised that their approach to development corporations differed from that of the Canadians. Many of the regional bureaucrats involved sought, in interviews, to demonstrate their understanding and awareness of how their corporations differed from Canadian ones. Some seemed to see their EDCs as unfortunate, but necessary, modifications in light of the impossibility of realizing Canadian-style corporations on Russian soil. One indigenous interviewee, who worked for the government of YNAO, commented that the corporations in Russia were different because they could not use the leverage of ownership over land to secure money or higher levels of participation in natural resources development — in Yamal almost all land is federally owned. From his perspective, their inability to realize a Russian model stemmed from the impossibility of securing such large settlements and wide powers in light of the federal government's nearly total control of regional land and resources and the relatively low place of the concerns of indigenous peoples on the federal agenda.

Other Russian participants gave the impression that they viewed Russian-style EDCs as an expression of Russian strengths and differences and as an appropriate adaptation of the Canadian model to its most suitable Russian form. One indigenous interviewee from YNAO noted that Canadian EDCs were more substantial and profitable and that, by contrast, the Russian endeavours were quite modest. However, he emphasised that: 'in Russia we have preserved the traditional way of life, in comparison to the Canadian indigenous peoples who seem to have lost more. They are certainly well-organised, but they have lost their roots somewhat.' From this perspective, the Russian model was an appropriately modest effort at economic development that had at its heart the desire to sustain traditional ways as they have always been practiced.

The debate over the meaning of sustainable development for indigenous peoples in practice and the diverging realisations of the EDC model speak to differing Canadian and Russian legal conceptions of what indigeneity is. To summarize roughly, Canadian definitions draw primarily upon an idea of descent or race as the arbiter of indigenousness, whereas the Russian definition of indigeneity is more linked to livelihood, implying that the significant experience of 'indigenousness' can be lost when indigenous persons cease to live on and use the land in traditional ways.

To take one example, Inuit throughout the Canadian Arctic have now signed land claims with the Canadian government, which extinguished undefined aboriginal rights based on prior occupancy for clearly demarcated rights to lands and resources. Inuit in Nunavut who wish to be acknowledged under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement must enroll as beneficiaries. In order to enroll, the applicant must be a Canadian citizen, an Inuk 'as determined in accordance with Inuit customs and usages,' identify as an Inuk, and be associated with either a community in the Nunavut Settlement Area or the Nunavut Settlement Area (NTI 2003). Furthermore, the applicant must be in a position to cede their 'aboriginal rights.' As an interviewee at Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), the Inuit organization responsible for enrollment, stated, this ability to cede is extremely important and is clearly based in terms of descent: if you are not an Inuk by blood you have no aboriginal rights to cede and therefore cannot join the claim. This was their solution to including the criteria of descent without requiring the genealogy documentation required for proving membership in many other Canadian land claims.

In this way indigeneity is formalised, albeit in a subtle way, on the criteria of race and ancestry. By contrast, the Russian legal definition of indigenousness in, for example, the law on the 'Rights of Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Federation' [O garantiakh prav korennykh malochislennykh narodov Rossiiskoi Federatsii] enacted on 30 April 1999 includes a strong emphasis on the preservation of the original ways of life of their ancestors as a key marker of indigeneity. This law extends rights to indigenous people on the criteria that they practice traditional ways of life, number fewer than 50,000, live on ancestral territories, and consider themselves to be an ethnic community. The legislation draws upon historical and legal understandings of indigeneity that have their roots in both pre-Communist tsarist policy and Soviet policy (Blakkisrud and Overland 2005).

Although the discourse of sustainable development frames debate at the international level both globally and regionally in the Arctic, it is clear that national differences rooted in divergent national experiences, legislation and values shaped how a sustainable development model, the EDC, was discussed and implemented at a more local level. Given the increased and valuable opportunities for cooperation around environmental and economic issues that Arctic region building facilitates, identifying the ways in which understandings about and practices around sustainable development vary nationally is of importance. It is clear that despite all that is shared at the Arctic regional level between states and indigenous peoples that the Russian/Soviet political and historical experience has resulted in understandings of who indigenous people are and how they should develop sustainably that are very different from Canadian values and experiences.

Conclusion

While the notion of the Arctic landscape as shared and interconnected was a generally accepted one, specific discourses of Arctic regionalism and sustainable development that resonate at the international level lost currency when it came to questions of how to implement and pursue social and economic change at the local level. It seems that national, rather than regional, experiences and values remained most salient in thinking about how to effect change on a level closer to home.

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The question, then, is how to understand and position the enduring boundaries that transect the north, and the significantly varied societies and polities that these boundaries demarcate, within an emerging discourse of Arctic regionalism. Sustainable development projects or transnational cooperative efforts too firmly rooted in the assertions about shared Arctic 'values' and 'experiences' made by the NDFP document and by many post Cold-War region builders could easily overlook important areas of national and cross-cultural difference that need to be tackled through dialogue and debate in order to achieve effective cooperation and clear transnational communication. These are difficult waters to navigate and the tension between focusing on what was shared between Canada and Russia as Arctic nations while acknowledging enduring key differences was evident throughout the development project analysed here.

In many ways, the idea that knowledge can, and should, be moved from one part of the Arctic to another is predicated upon the belief that there are significant shared features of Arctic places that facilitate and justify such a transfer. The political drive towards thinking about the Arctic as a region plays upon enduring and essentialist beliefs about the uniformity of Arctic space (Bravo and Sörlin 2002). The challenges involved in making one country's Arctic knowledge and models applicable and appealing to another presented here illustrate that the notion of a uniform Arctic space and a shared pursuit of sustainable development are political assumptions about space and activity that can prove to be problematic to enact in concrete cross-cultural Arctic endeavours.

Perhaps, in thinking about Arctic region-building it is necessary, as geographer Doreen Massey (2005: 66) argues, to think of 'difference through connection, rather than separation' and to account for how the construction of similarity and difference are linked, often emerging from the same process or simultaneously. More interaction between Canadian and Russian project participants resulted in a clearer notion of both what was different and what might be shared. Thus rather than treating the north as an unproblematic spatial zone or reifying Arctic national and cultural differences, further research into the Arctic 'space' and Arctic discourses should pay attention to when and how boundaries of difference are encountered and when and why movement across these boundaries fails or is achieved. This approach would serve to illustrate further how the reach and currency of discourses about the Arctic region vary in relationship to the personalities and concrete interests of the actors involved, the specific topic under debate, and the hierarchies of power being assumed and contested.

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