

# Employment and Sustainability in a Time of Transition: Human capital development, firm strategy, and community in the Arctic

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# Research Questions

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- What are the evolving and promising strategies for worker career development in a mixed economy and for nonstandard employment (seasonal, geographically remote and dispersed)?
- What are sustainable businesses strategies in the Arctic natural and social systems with its extremes in climate, geography, and employment discontinuity?
- What are the implications for community sustainability? What are likely employment and subsistence trajectories with near-term climate and economic change?
- How do workers and community members view current and future employment options? What are the perspectives of students in the communities about their future work and subsistence opportunities?

# Case Study Detailed Questions

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The case studies will examine four sets of questions, with each case study component focused on a particular area: worker career development, firm business and workforce strategy, community sustainability.

- How do seasonality, cultural factors, and the mixed nature of the Arctic economy currently limit career development? What are the evolving and promising strategies that local actors can encourage employers to pursue to improve career development in the Arctic, given its mixed economy and nonstandard/Arctic employment patterns (seasonal, geographically remote and dispersed)? What approaches can be effective in developing a skilled workforce, increasing native and resident hires, and maintaining a sustainable workforce?
- What are sustainable business strategies and effective workforce strategies in the context of the Arctic natural and social systems (of extremes in climate, geography, and employment discontinuity)? This question focuses on overall workforce management, staffing, and adjustment to environmental constraints. The focus is on coherent organizational practices, such as blended workforce strategies, rather than identifying a variety of particular work arrangements.
- What are the likely and feasible employment and subsistence trajectories that can respond to near-term climate and economic change? What are the implications of these trajectories for community sustainability? Previous patterns in mixed economies offered tradeoffs between wage and subsistence activity, subsistence food sharing networks, and cash distributions from native corporations and the permanent fund. At once, all these areas are undergoing change and new constraints and possibilities will emerge; this area of the research will focus on contemporary issues and emergent paths for community sustainability.
- How do workers and community members view current and future employment options? What are the perspectives of students in the communities about their future work and subsistence opportunities? Future trajectories will be shaped by worker preferences including those of new entrants. Expectations can be critical to the future. Student motivations may affect how well they perform in school and what education pathways they pursue.

# Conceptual Framework

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- Path discontinuity – social and economic – in interaction with natural environmental change
- Organizations and behavior develop iteratively (vs. outcome of strategy, intention)
- Work and organizational systems evolve but are structured for stability (e.g., Internal Labor Markets (ILMs))
- Limits of industrial regime convergence? New models emerging?

# Research Findings/Implications

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- Arctic Sustainability: community, business, careers
- Work & Organizations: analysis of changes in work form, nonstandard work, emergent forms
- “Transitional-Climate Economies”: Explore alternatives to industrial convergence for development
- Research/Community/Outreach: Participatory methods, videography & community engagement, scenario workshops
  - ❖ Aleut Community of St. Paul Island Tribal Government
  - ❖ Barrow Arctic Sciences Consortium
  - ❖ Ukpeagvik Iñupiat Corporation

# Methods & Sample

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- Tripartite linked-case studies: firms, workers, communities
  - ❖ Four industries/firms
  - ❖ Four to eight communities (linked to the firms)
  - ❖ Community researchers
- Location-aware videography

## Sample:

- Oil & Oil Field Services (North Slope)
- Fish Processing (St. Paul, Dutch Harbor, At-sea)
- Two cases TBD (Oil, Fishing/Processing, Mining, Construction)



# Community Engagement & Outreach

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- Community-based researchers/Participatory Action Research (PAR)
- Videography
- Video training and capacity development in middle schools
- Scenario Workshop for research findings review & input; as method for exploring outcomes and alternatives

# Questions, Feedback.....

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- Research questions
  - ❖ Additional issues to address?
- Sites and access
- Second round set of cases
  - ❖ Oil, Mining, Fishing/Processing, Construction