Articulating the Arctic: Contrasting State and Inuit Maps of the Canadian North

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Question:

How do disputes over defining the Arctic, largely between the state and the primary Inuit organization in Canada, impact the day-to-day lives of people who live within and just outside the region?
Answers (Preview):

• Exclusion of millions of people from the state-defined Canadian North
• Funding allocated to Canadian territories at expense of provincial North
• Prioritization of resource development
Outline

I. Inuit and Western mapping compared

II. Case studies:
   I. Northern Strategy map
   II. Geo-Mapping for Energy and Minerals map
   III. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami maps

III. Effects of colonial cartography in Northern Canada

IV. Conclusion
“North is an idea as much as any physical region that can be mapped and measured for nordicity.”

(Grace, 2002: xii)
Harper orders new draft of Arctic seabed claim to include North Pole

STEVEN CHASE
OTTAWA — The Globe and Mail
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Stephen Harper has ordered government bureaucrats back to the drawing board to craft a more expansive international claim for seabed riches in the Arctic after the proposed submission they showed him failed to include the geographic North Pole, The Globe and Mail has learned.

The Arctic is believed to contain as much as one-quarter of the world’s undiscovered energy resources, and countries are tabling scientific evidence with a United Nations commission to win rights to polar sea-floor assets. Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, a country can secure control of ocean floor beyond the internationally recognized 200 nautical mile limit if it can demonstrate the seabed is an extension of its continental shelf.

Senior government officials say Canada will meet its Dec. 6 filing deadline for making an application to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, but it will be a preliminary submission that outlines a portion of the Canadian claim and preserves this country’s right to make further submissions later.

Canada will follow up with a broader claim that includes the geographic North Pole after the necessary work has been completed, sources say.

Mr. Harper has spent much of his career as Prime Minister styling himself a champion of Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic and has made advancing claims for undersea polar resources a major plank in his strategy for the region.

The Prime Minister’s Office and cabinet have had concerns for several weeks about the claim, and this week Mr. Harper asked bureaucrats responsible for the application to take more time to get the submission right, sources say.
Inuit counter-mapping
CANADA’S NORTHERN STRATEGY Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future

STRATÉGIE POUR LE NORD DU CANADA Notre Nord, notre patrimoine, notre avenir
Northern Strategy

Northern provincial areas in a state of ‘peripheral Arcticness’
Geo-Mapping for Energy and Minerals
“The geo-mapping project is part of a larger plan to map and chart Canada's North, to continue the bold tradition of exploration that has defined our history, and to strengthen our understanding and our sovereignty over a region that will define our future.”

Prime Minister of Canada, 2008
Geo-Mapping for Energy and Minerals
ITK: “Inuit Communities of Canada”
“Nunavik’s exclusion from the *Northern Strategy* is based on artificial boundaries, not geographical or social ones.”

Makivik Corporation executive testimony to Standing Committee on National Defence, 2009: 7
ITK: “Polar Ice and Inuit”
ITK’s definition of “Arctic-North”

“An *Arctic component*, which can be said to be the same geographic area as *Inuit Nunaat*, the land and marine areas that make up the modern Inuit land claims agreements that stretch from the Beaufort Sea region to Labrador; and a *North component*, which can be said to be composed of the three territories”

(ITK 2008a: 11)
Effects of the state’s definition of the Canadian Arctic

• Exclusion of millions of people, including IPs, from the state-defined Canadian North
• Funding allocated to Canadian territories at expense of provincial North
• Prioritization of resource development and denial of alternative economic activities
Inuit and Northerners should have the voices and decision-making abilities to articulate and determine their futures – and the spatial vocabularies and maps to represent their homeland as they see fit.
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References


