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EXTRACTIVE RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARCTIC: RESEARCH PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT DECADE

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One of the major new concerns regarding the Arctic that has developed since ICARP II and since the International Polar Year is an increased interest in extractive resource industry development. While the global economic slowdown of the past several years has shifted the attention of the resource industry, global economic trends point to an increasing desire of capital to access Arctic resources, if not in the short term at least in the long term.

Actors are split on whether an increase in Arctic extractive industry development will be good or bad for the region. Many global non-governmental organizations have been critical of an increase in these types of activities citing the negative environmental and social impacts that come with these types of developments. Arctic states are generally supportive of increased activities because of the financial and other benefits that they would receive. Arctic communities themselves are often divided on the issue. For many, extractive resource development is the only economic activity offering any future hope to keep communities alive. Others point to the many negative impacts on Arctic communities that these projects have produced in the past.

A key means by which Arctic science can be responsive to the people who live in the Arctic is by helping them find ways to develop Arctic resources in a way that contributes to the sustainability and well-being of their communities. Based on the research work of the Resources and Sustainable Development in the Arctic (ReSDA) network and similar projects, this presentation will outline a series of suggested research priorities to help Arctic science assist Arctic communities in their difficult decisions of whether to approve extractive industry projects and under what conditions.