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AUTONOMISM AND COMPREHENSIVE SUSTAINABILITY IN GREENLAND AND NUNAVUT

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The by now famous 1987 'Brundtland Report' defines sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 24). It also constitutes an early attempt to venture outside a narrow understanding of sustainability as a synonym for 'environmentally sound'. One basic premise of this paper is that in order to properly address the challenges and opportunities that Arctic states experience, a broader framework of comprehensive sustainable development is needed. This would incorporate also economic, social, cultural and political sustainability. Analysis of the latter would include investigations of workable constitutional set-ups, efficient, representative political institutions and governance capacity.

In all Arctic communities sustainable development is also a matter of sustaining coherent, collective, social and cultural identities. Sometimes this takes the form of 'indigeneity', sometimes the form of nation-building. Another basic premise of the paper is: In contemporary 'stateless' nations, nation-building does not always result in classic nationalism in the form of ethnic, exclusivist separatism, but rather in civic, inclusivist 'autonomism' (aiming for a measure of self-government short of full sovereignty).

On the basis of the two premises forwarded above, this paper seeks to answer the following questions: What are the internal discrepancies between nationalisms in Greenland and Nunavut, Canada (ethnic-civic, separatist-autonomist)? How can autonomist nationalism possibly be accommodated within existing or adapted constitutional frameworks, allowing for comprehensive sustainable development?

Reference:

WCED (1987): 'Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future'. United Nations.