Language vitality and well-being

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Outline

The Arctic


PACIFIC OCEAN
Aleutian Islands
Bering Sea
Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky
Kamchatka
Sea of Okhotsk
Gulf of Alaska
Koryaks Mts.
Anadyr
Anchorage
Alaska Range
Yukon River
ALASKA (USA)
Bering Strait
Kolyma Mountains
Kolyma River
Juneau
Whitehorse
Fairbanks
Tesiin
Dawson
Rocky Mountains
Mackenzie Mountains
Brooks Range
Chukchi Sea
Wrangel Island
Cherskiy Range
Yakutsk
Barrow
Prudhoe Bay
Mackenzie River
Verkhoyansk
Verkhoyansk Range
East Siberian Sea
Northwest Territories
Inuvik
Beaufort Sea
Great Bear Lake
Great Slave Lake
Yellowknife
New Siberian Islands
Tiksi
Lena River
Lake Baikal
Lake Athabasca
Canada Basin
Banks Island
ARCTIC OCEAN
Laptev Sea
Central Siberian Upland
CANADA
Victoria Island
Nunavut
Lake Winnipeg
Makarov Basin
Churchill
Arviat
Rankin Inlet
Resolute
Alpha Ridge
Lomonosov Ridge
North Land
Taimyr Peninsula
RUSSIAN FEDERATION
Nauiat
Ellesmere Island
Alert
Amundsen Basin
Nansen-Gakkel Ridge
Nordisk
Yenisey River
Hudson Bay
Foxe Basin
Qaanaaq
Nansen Basin
Franz Josef Land
Ob River
James Bay
Baffin Island
Baffin Bay
Novaya Zemlya
Yamal Peninsula
West Siberian Plain
Ungava Peninsula
Hudson Strait
Kara Sea
Salekhard
Québec
Iqaluit
SVALBARD (NORWAY)
Vorkuta
Khanty-Mansiysk
Longyearbyen
GREENLAND (DENMARK)
Fram Strait
Barents Sea
Naryan-Mar
Sisimiut
Nuuk
Davis Strait
Bjørnøya
ARCTIC CIRCLE
Ural Mountains
Greenland Sea
Labrador
Murmansk
Syktyvkar
Perm
Kola Peninsula
Arkhangelsk
Tromsø
Jan Mayen
Ammassalik
White Sea
N. Dvina
Kama River
Norwegian Sea
Lake Onega
Lake Ladoga
Reykjavik
FINLAND
Helsinki
St. Petersburg
Moscow
NORWAY
SWEDEN
FAROE ISLANDS (DENMARK)
Torshavn
Oslo
Stockholm
ATLANTIC OCEAN
North Sea
Baltic Sea
Copenhagen
DENMARK

Arctic Indigenous languages

compiled by:
W.K. Dallmann, Norwegian Polar Institute
P. Schweitzer, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Arctic peoples subdivided according to language families

Indo-European family
▨ Germanic branch

Uralic family
🟨 Finno-Ugric branch
🟨 Samoyedic branch

Altaic family
🟫 Turkic branch
🟫 Tungusic branch

🟩 **Chukotko-Kamchatkan fam.**

🟩 **Isolated languages**
(Ketic and Yukagir)

Eskimo-Aleut family
🟦 Inuit group (of Eskimo br.)
🟦 Yupik group (of Eskimo br.)
🟦 Aleut branch

Na-Dene family
🟪 Athabaskan branch
▨ Eyak branch
▨ Tlingit branch

— Arctic circle
— Arctic boundary according to AMAP
— Arctic boundary according to AHDR

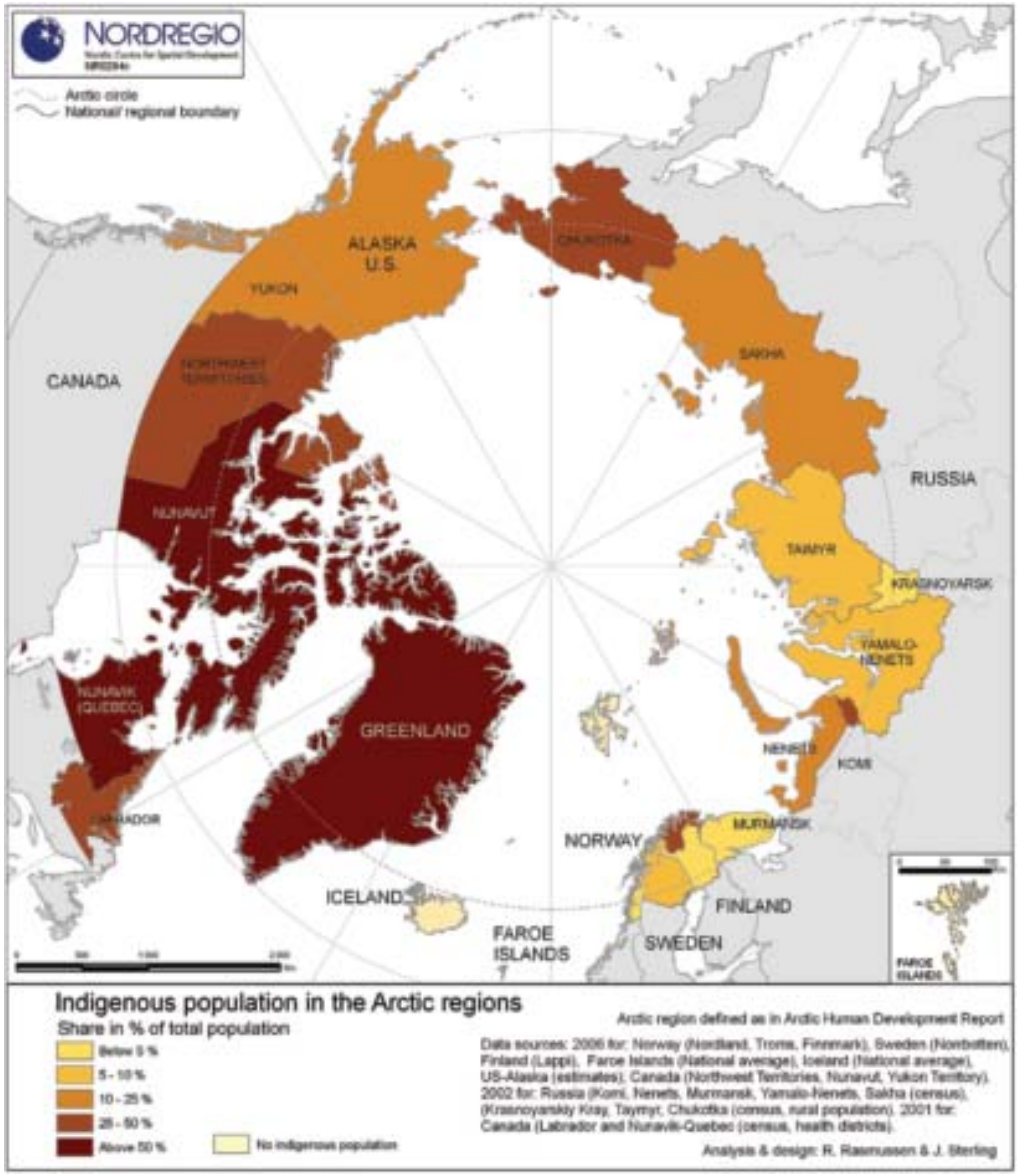
Notes:

Areas show colours according to the original languages of the respective indigenous peoples, even if they do not speak their languages today.

Overlapping populations are not shown. The map does not claim to show exact boundaries between the individual language groups.

Typical colonial populations, which are not traditional Arctic populations, are not shown (Danes in Greenland, Russians in the Russian Federation, non-native Americans in North America).

Arctic Indigenous peoples



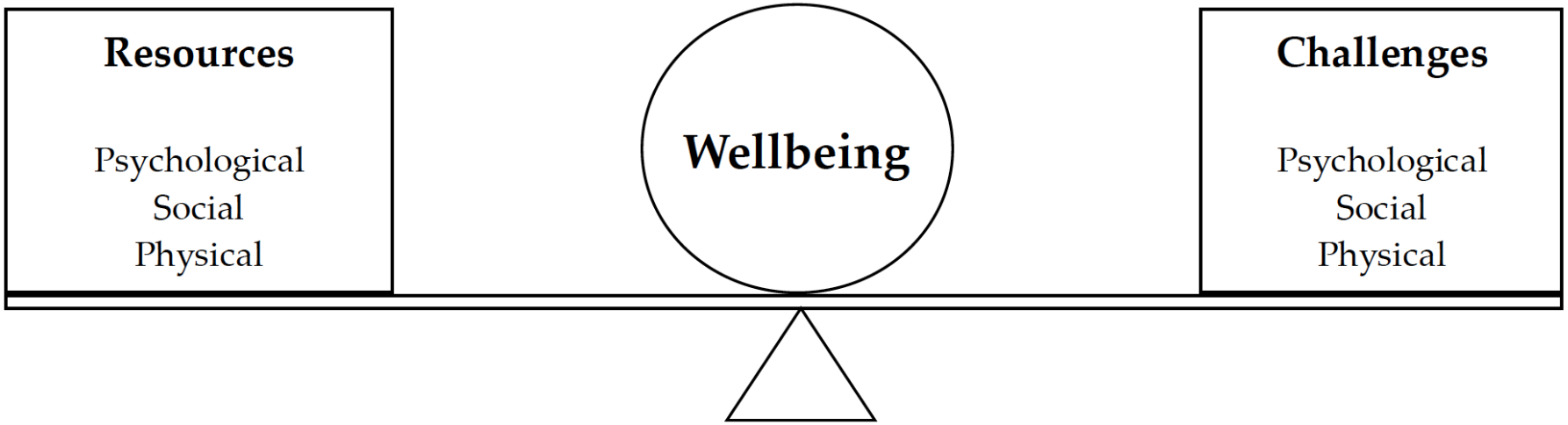
Well being, wellbeing or well-being?

- "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO–World Health Organization, 2014)

- Health, physiological well-being (physical health)
- Psychological well-being (mental health)
- Social well-being
- Ecosystems & well-being

A working model of well-being

Figure 4. Definition of Wellbeing



from Dodge et al. (2012: 230)

well-being: a balance point between an individual's resource pool & the challenges faced

- Each time an individual meets a challenge, the system of challenges and resources comes into a state of imbalance, as the individual is forced to adapt his or her resources to meet this particular challenge (Kloep et al. 2009: 337)
- stable well-being is when individuals have the psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge
- when individuals have more challenges than resources, the see-saw dips, along with their well-being, and vice-versa

- NB: emphasis on the individual (versus the group); may need to be adjusted for some societies

A rationale for revitalization?

"Our psychological, social, and physical well-being is connected with our native language; it shapes our values, self-image, identity, relationships, and ultimately success in life."

The Endangered Languages Project

"Language revitalisation can be seen, therefore, as a health promotion strategy." King et al. (2009:78)

Arctic Social Indicators

- the Arctic Social Indicators project identified a core set of indicators to evaluate Arctic well-being (ASI-I; Larsen et al. 2010)
- based on preliminary work by the Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR I) & the United Nations Human Development Index (UN HDI). Further adapted and expanded in (ASI-II, Larsen et al. 2014: 36).

Indicators are useful aids for planning, informing policy, and for guiding decisions and actions. They are valuable simply in building awareness of current conditions and trends over time.

Indicators are used by some groups to **predict change**, while other groups use them to **promote change** (ASI-I, Larsen et al. 2010).

- The ASI working group confirmed the three domains suggested by the AHDR, further developed by ASI-II:

  1. health & population
  2. material well-being
  3. education
  4. cultural well-being & cultural vitality
  5. contact with nature
  6. fate control

In developing the indicators, they looked for **measurable** variables

Indicators of Well-being

- A number of studies, in particular in Australia & Canada, indicate a positive correlation between Indigenous (Native/Aboriginal) language use and physical well-being (health)
- including:
  - diabetes
  - obesity
  - suicide rates
  - cardiovascular disease

Diabetes

- diabetes rates are inversely to Native language retention:
- for the 31 Canadian First Nations communities in Alberta the authors found lower rates of adult-onset (Type II) diabetes in those communities with higher rates of indigenous language use
- MORE LANGUAGE = LESS DIABETES

(Oster et al. 2014)

Suicide rates in British Columbia

- Halle, Chandler & Lalonde (2007) surveyed 150 Aboriginal communities surveyed
- Aboriginal "bands" that lack
  markers of cultural continuity regularly experience heightened rates of youth suicide and heightened school drop-out rates
- Markers of cultural continuity:
  - operationalized here using band-level measures of community control over the delivery of health, education, child protection and policing services, and
  - the achievement of a degree of self-governance, secure access to traditional lands, and
  - the construction of facilities for preserving cultural artifacts and traditions

Suicide rates

British Columbia Native communities:

- Native language knowledge varies inversely with suicide rates
- none of the other six cultural continuity factors was a better predictor of suicide rates
  - self-government; land claims; education; health care; cultural facilities; and police & fire services
- youth suicide:
  - in communities with 50% or more knowledge of the Native language: 13.00 in 100,000
  - in communities with less than 50%: 96.59 per 100,000
- youth suicide rates effectively dropped to zero in those few communities in which at least a third of band members reported a conversational knowledge of Native language
- MORE LANGUAGE = LESS SUICIDE

(Hallet et al. 2007)

Methodological considerations:

- a convincing rationale for proposing that the viability of a given indigenous language contributes to the viability of the broader culture to which it gives voice.
- empirical support for the hypothesized link between language and/or cultural loss, and the deterioration of community wellbeing–indexed in the present study by band-level rates of youth suicide in the more than 150 Aboriginal communities surveyed.
- trustworthy means must be found for indexing the variable degrees to which whole Aboriginal communities have managed to both preserve their indigenous language and to create a cultural life that young people judge worth living

Protective factors

Aboriginal communities in Canada, factors in maintaining & improving health, and in reducing risk factors:

1. land and health
2. traditional medicine
   - literature on traditional medicine makes direct links to land, language & culture
3. spirituality
4. traditional foods
   - foods linked to culture and bio-regions (living "off the land")
5. traditional activities
   - hunting, fishing, trapping, storytelling, dancing, arts & crafts, pow-wows, etc.
6. traditional language

(McIvor et al. 2009)

Well-being & connections to the land

Australian Aboriginal populations **living a decentralized lifestyle away from urban centers** exhibit:

- lower mortality rates
- lower rates of cardiovascular disease among
- "Conventional measures of employment, income, housing and education did not account for this health differential"
- MORE ACCESS TO THE LAND = LESS CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

Note: this study does not specifically consider the effects of language & culture

(Rowley et al. 2008)

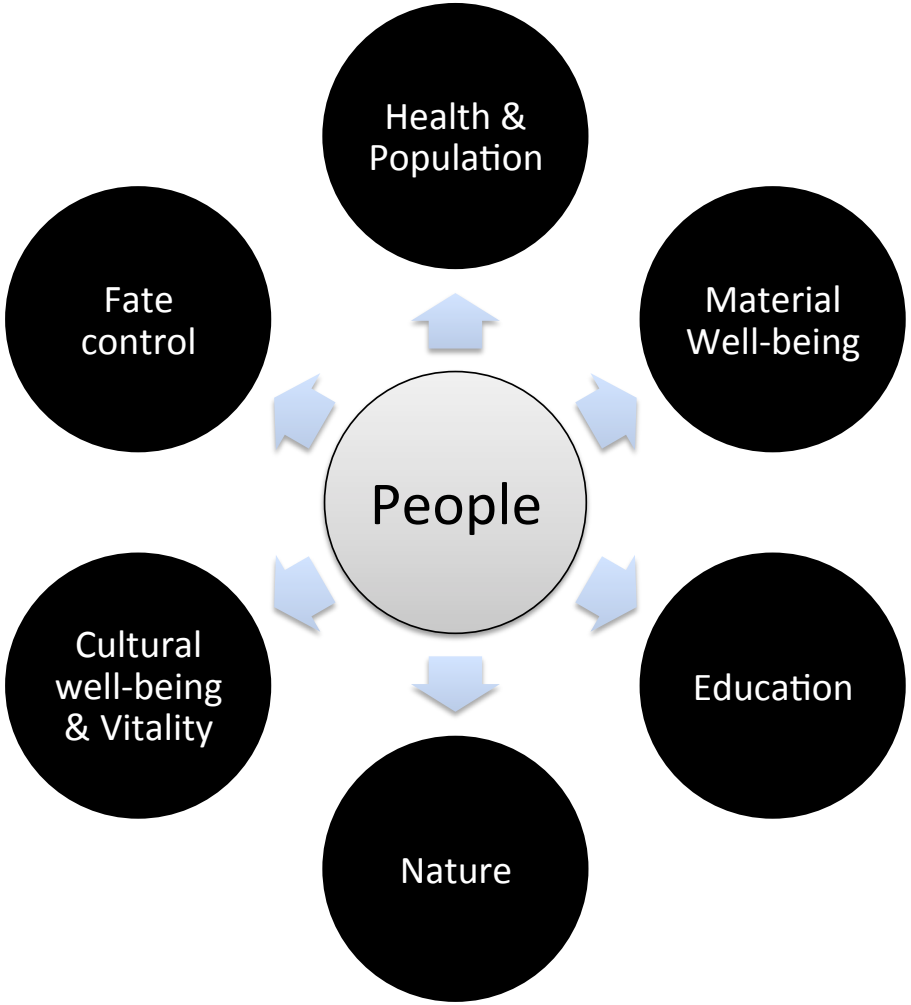
Happiness

Happiness among Australian Aboriginals

- positive relationship between language & well-being
- "even after controlling for a range of socio-economic variables, living on one's homelands/ traditional country and undertaking harvesting activities is associated with a higher level of self-reported happiness for Indigenous Australians
- So too were learning an Indigenous language and participating in Indigenous cultural activities."

(Biddle & Swee 2012)

Arctic Social Indicators & Well-being



Arctic Social Indicators II

1. Health and Population
   - infant mortality rate
   - net migration (total immigration - out-migration)

Arctic Social Indicators II

2. Material Well-being
   - per capita gross domestic product
   - net-migration (total immigration - out-migration)
   - unemployment rate
   - poverty rate
   - subsistence harvest

Arctic Social Indicators II

3. Education Domain
   - proportion of students pursuing post-secondary education
   - proportion of students completing post-secondary education
   - proportion of graduates still in the community 10 years later

Arctic Social Indicators II

4. Cultural Well-being & Cultural Vitality
   - language retention
   - cultural autonomy
   - sense of belonging

Arctic Social Indicators II

4. Cultural Well-being & Cultural Vitality
   - language retention
   - cultural autonomy
   - sense of belonging

Belonging

- What percentage of people are engaged in recreational or subsistence activities on the land?
- What is the relative size of the informal (subsistence-based) sector of the economy?

Cultural Well-being, expanded

Cultural autonomy

- Do laws and policies exist in a given state or region that recognize institutions that advocate for the cultural autonomy of national minority populations?
- Do institutions representing national minority cultures exist?
- What is the proportion of such institutions to minority peoples, e.g. are all peoples represented through such organizations?
- Are resources available to such institutions?
- Are funding policies in place and how well-resourced are they?

Language Retention

- What percentage of a population speaks its ancestral language compared with the population as a whole?

Arctic Social Indicators II

5. Contact with Nature
   - consumption of traditional food
   - harvest of traditional food

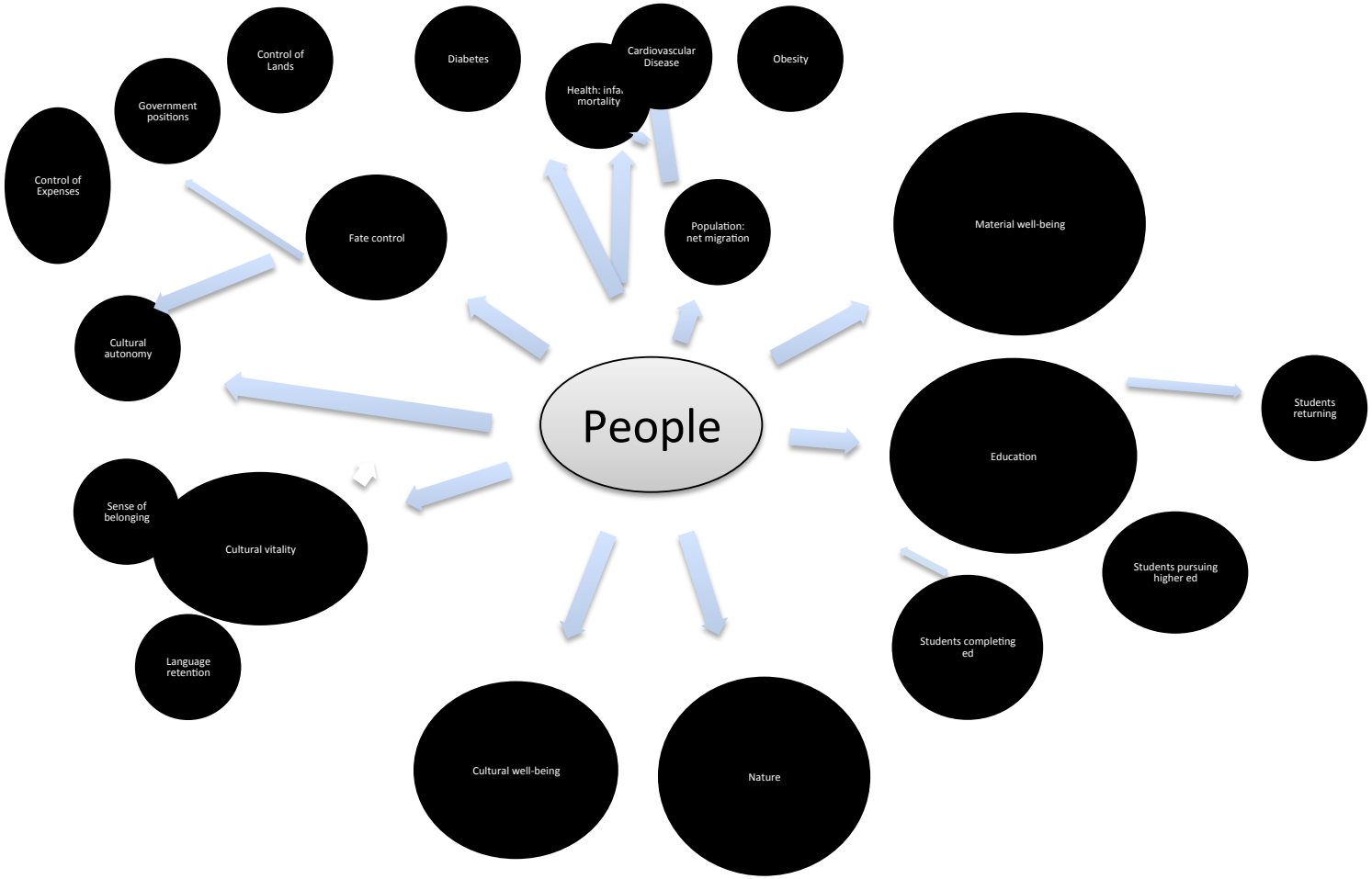
Contact with nature: somewhat intangible; indicators are extremely challenging to develop and difficult to measure

Major constraint = lack of current data

Arctic Social Indicators II

6. Fate Control
   - **Political power:** Percentage of indigenous members in governing bodies (municipal, community, regional) relative to the percentage of the indigenous people in the total population
   - **Decision-making power:** percentage of surface lands legally controlled by the inhabitants through public governments
   - **Economic control:** percentage of public expenses within the region (regional government, municipal taxes, community sales taxes) raised locally
   - **Knowledge construction:** percentage of individuals who speak a mother tongue (whether Native or not) in relation to the percentage of individuals reporting corresponding ethnicity

How do we model this complexity?



Typology of language endangerment

- a typology of language endangerment, with a set of cells of interrelated variables at the macro- and micro-levels (Grenoble & Whaley 1998)
- further developed with an expanded discussion of variables at different levels:
  local, *regional*, *national*, and *extra-national* (in Grenoble & Whaley 2006: 22-45)
- these relationships still hold

- We need to add others, including:

  1. global level (and global English)
  2. urbanization
  3. climate change

Globalization & Global English

Number of English speakers (approximate)

- 400 million L1 speakers; as many as 2 billion L2 speakers (Crystal 2008)
- 371 million L1 speakers; 611 million L2 speakers (Ethnologue 2017)

Compare Mandarin:

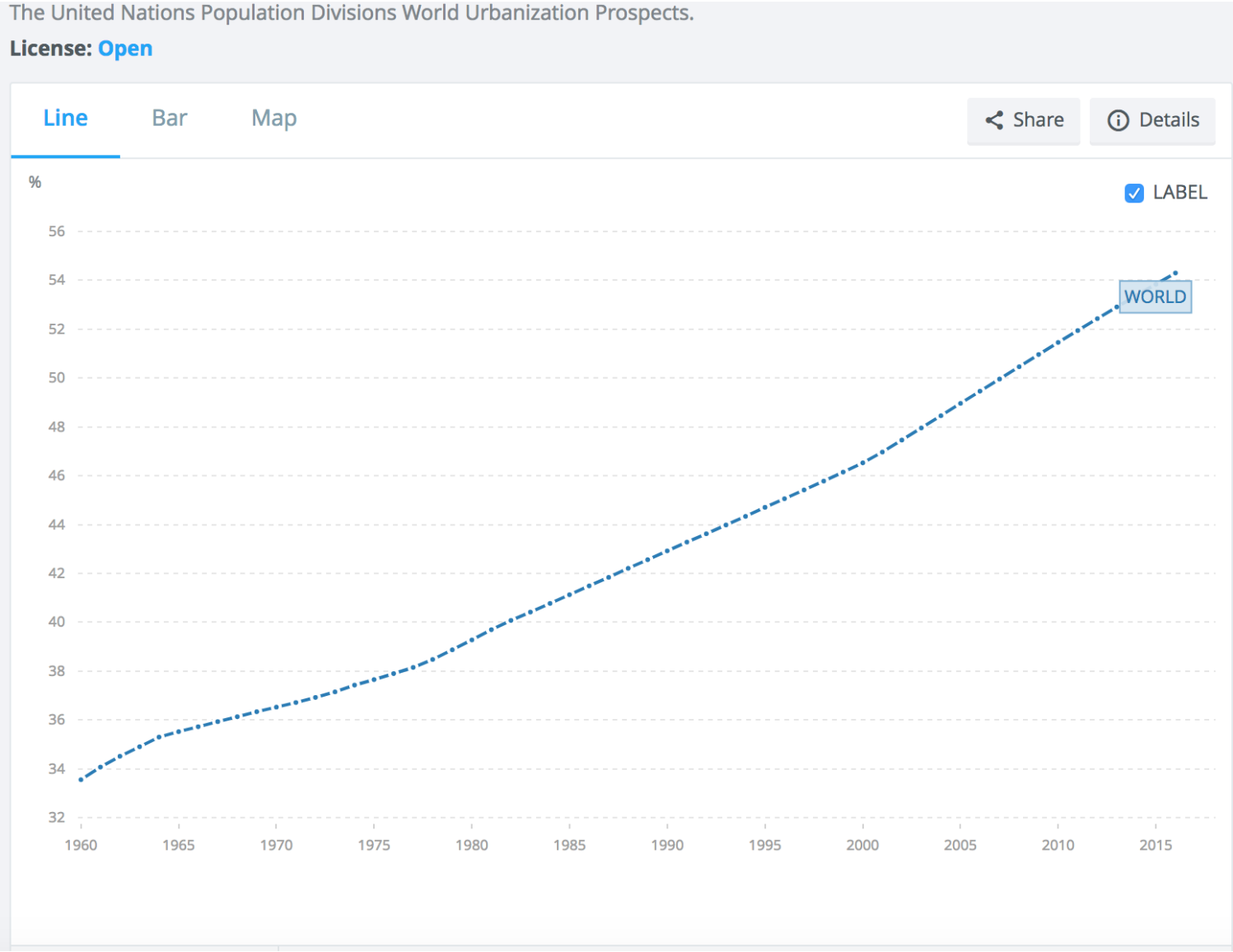
- 897 million LI, 193 million L2
- Total L1 + L2: Mandarin 1.09 billion; English 983 million

Other factors in the Arctic (and elsewhere)

- standardized tests
- English as language of science
- Web of Science, Scopus
- English as a third official language?
  - in Sakha Republic
  - in Greenland
- Cyberspace: University students in Yakutsk, Sakha report ...
  - first, primary or best language: Sakha
  - Facebook, v Kontakte, Instagram: Russian
  - MMORPG (Massively multiplayer online role-playing games): English

Urbanization

Worldwide trends: 1960-2015



Urbanization

Country	1960	2016
Canada	69%	82%
Finland	55%	84%
Greenland	59%	87%
Norway	50%	81%
Russia	54%	74%
Sweden	72%	86%
US	70%	82%

Percentage of total population living in urban centers
Source: World Bank

- Urbanization affects both levels of multilingualism but also the nature of multilingualism.

Location of the Sakha (Yakutia) Republic in Russia

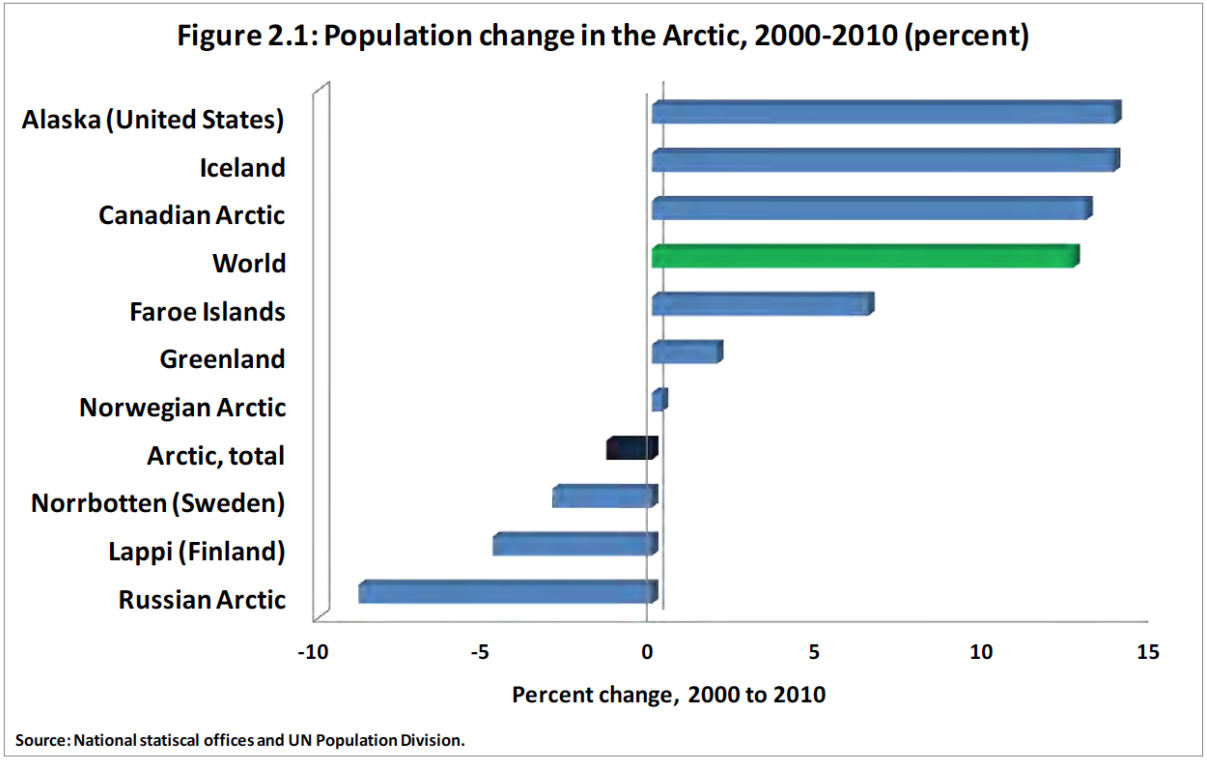
Location of Yakutsk in the Sakha (Yakutia) Republic

Coordinates: 62°02′N 129°44′E

Urbanization

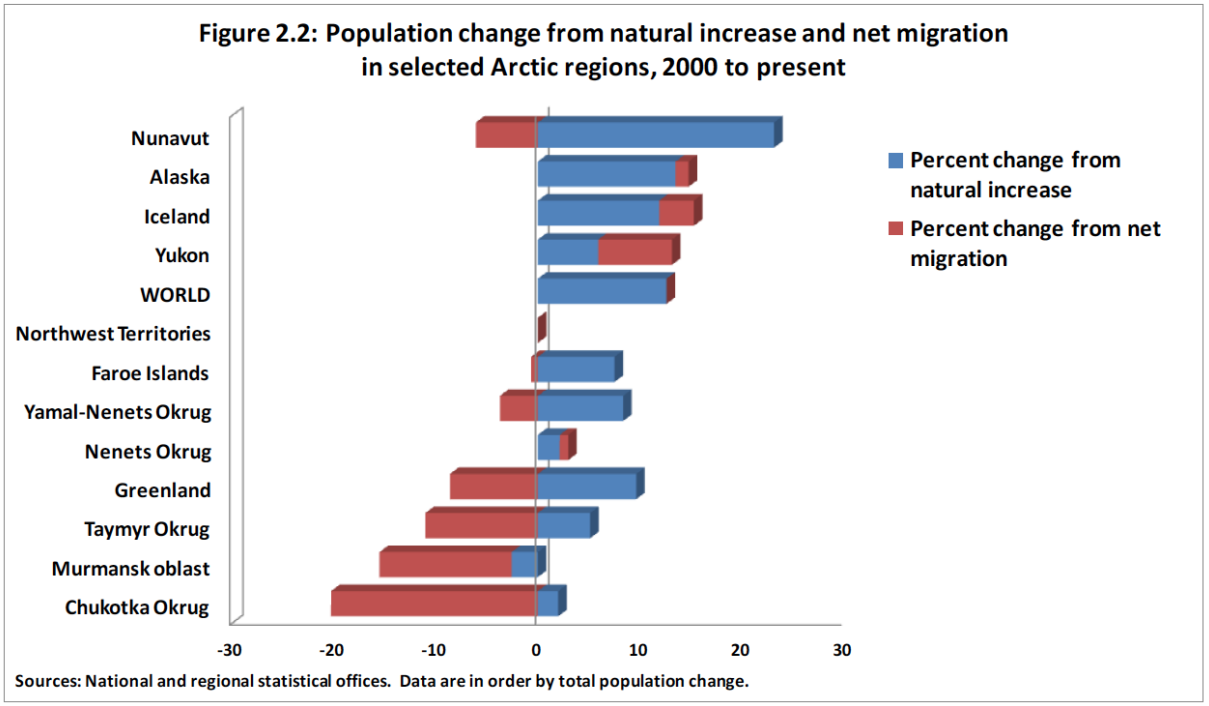
- Urbanization affects both levels of multilingualism but also the nature of multilingualism.
- In the post-Soviet period: increased internal migration, and immigration to Yakutsk from other parts of Russia, Central Asia & Caucasus
- SO indigenous people living
  - in Yakutsk, medium-sized cities (Neryungri) are in contact with Russians, Sakha(Yakut), and immigrant speakers of other languages (e.g. Kyrgyz, Ukrainian)
  - in rural settings they may be in contact with local indigenous groups, Russians (or Russian language), and Sakha

Population dynamics in the Arctic



Source: Arctic Human Development Report II (2014: 56) (AHDR II)

Population dynamics in the Arctic



Source: Arctic Human Development Report II (2014: 56)

Climate change & environment

- issues: contaminants, land use, climate, security & access in the form of rights to land and sea
- coastal erosion & displacement

Climate change

Climate change is accelerated in the Arctic (polar amplification effects)

- coastal erosion
- thinning sea ice
- access to oil, minerals
- loss of permafrost, release of methane
- changes in plants & animals
- changes in snow & ice

➠ **massive cultural disruption**

Direct effects

Climate change has a direct impact on indigenous life in the Arctic:

1. Subsistence lifestyle
   - Hunting is disrupted
   - Changes in sea mammals
   - Changes in climate affect fish populations (in rivers, lakes and in sea water)
   - Inland: changes in climate affect caribou populations
2. Displacement of people
   - Coastal erosions: Shishmareff, Alaska
   - Resettlements of Canadian Inuit
   - Opening of Northern Sea Route
3. Influx (& immigration) of outsiders
   - access to natural resources
   - security issues
   - doomsday tourism

Vitality Network Model

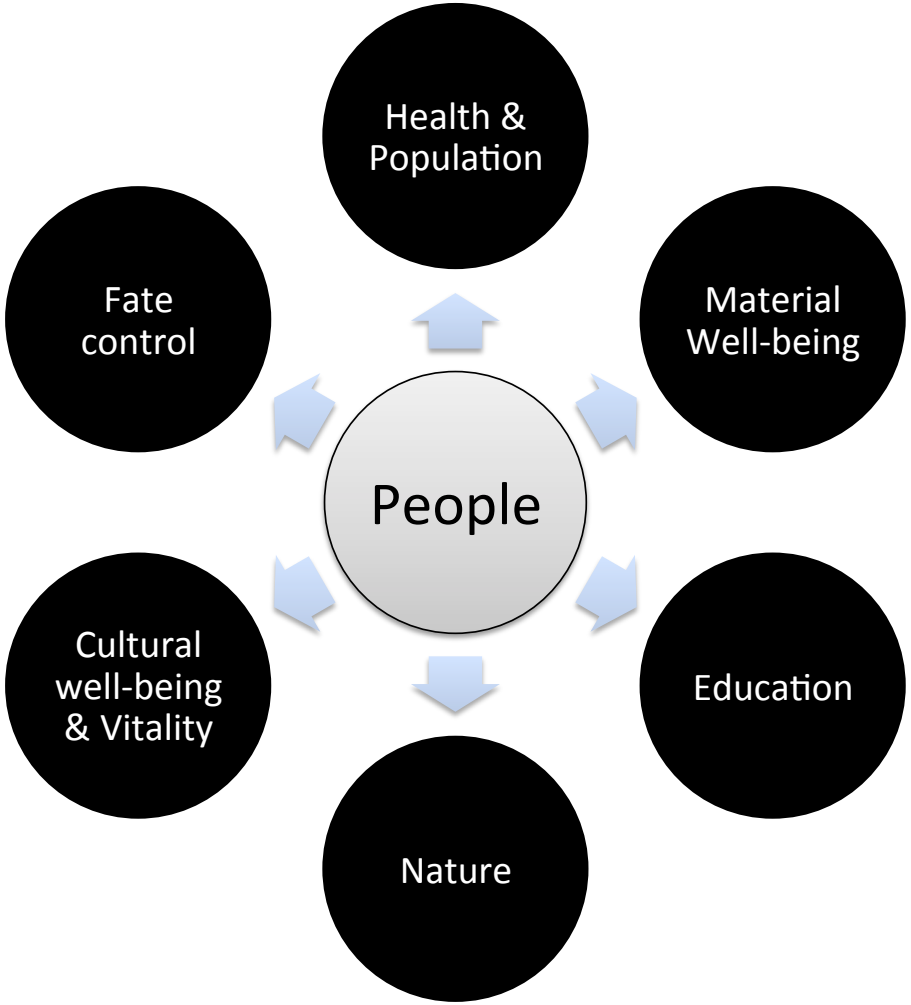
We need an integrating framework, one that integrates these many variables with social indicators of well-being

- Language as a node in a complex system of interacting behaviors
- Changes to a node can have an impact on the system
- Group networks, and the language ecologies that exist in them, are complex adaptive systems
- The system is dynamic

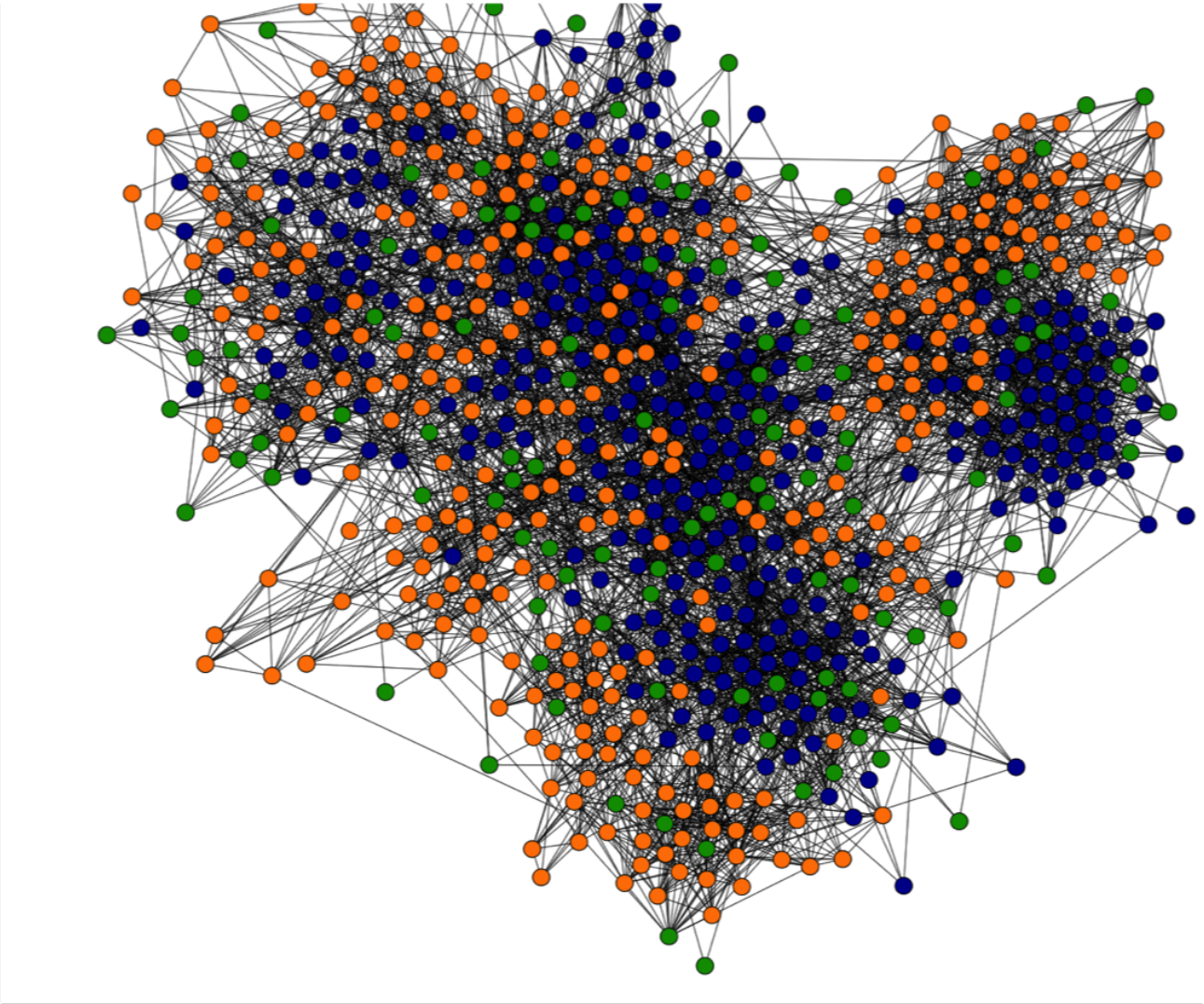
- group boundaries are emergent properties of complex networks of socio-historical variables, including language use
- an individual's connection to a group is established by the degree to which his/her own complex web of identity matches the group network
- networks of variables that define both groups & individuals are not static, are constantly in flux in subtle ways, and can, to some degree, be manipulated

- variables that define the language ecology operate on multiple levels
- for the group and for individuals within the group, there can be considerable variation
- Example, in a multilingual community:
  - different individuals have different levels of multilingualism
  - language proficiency and usage is not constant for each individual
- a single speaker's proficiency & use of a language varies with the setting, domain & interlocutors
- usage can and does vary over time

Modeling complexity?



Vitality Network Model



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