



HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY

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Dissertation Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy (Economics)

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Essays on Trade, Environmental Challenges, and Poverty in Transition
Economies

(移行経済諸国における貿易，環境問題，貧困に関する研究)

<abstract>

In this dissertation, the author investigates the interrelations among international trade, energy and environmental issues, and socioeconomic well-being, with a particular focus on economic agents in the transition economies of Eastern and Central Europe, and Central Asia. As globalization deepens, economies are increasingly integrated into the global market. However, this integration is accompanied by significant environmental changes that pose threats to livelihoods worldwide. In response, recent economic discussions have emphasized the need for business and societal policies that balance economic growth and societal development with environmental sustainability. Moreover, post-communist economies face the unique challenge of transitioning to market economies while addressing these pressing issues. Hence, the overarching objective of this research is to provide new insights into how these economies can tackle persistent challenges and maximize their potential for growth and sustainable development.

In Chapter 2, the author examines the relationship of firm productivity on export propensity and intensity for manufacturing firms in 29 transition economies across Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union. Due to their distinct institutions and trade geography, transition economies differ significantly from both developed and developing economies, necessitating a tailored approach to analyzing firm exports. By utilizing firm-level data, the author employs a two-stage estimation method to differentiate

between the export entry and intensity stages while addressing sample selection issues using Heckman's two-step approaches. Importantly, the author examines the moderating effects of heterogeneous home institutions and destination markets on the productivity-export nexus. Findings indicate that productivity plays a distinct role in each export margin and underscores the varying firm behaviour under diverse institutional contexts. Notably, while productivity is positively associated with firm export start, this relationship is weak for those operating under deficient regulatory conditions than those enjoying high-quality institutional systems. Also, productivity's role diminishes concerning export intensity, highlighting similar characteristics between foreign and domestic markets. The discussion on how these outcomes provide insights for academics, policymakers, and practitioners alike is also presented.

In Chapter 3, the author investigates the association of firm exports with energy efficiency and pro-environmental initiatives for manufacturing firms in transition economies. Given the peculiar institutional characteristics of transition countries and the firm business culture, green performance needs to be distinguished into tangible and intangible dimensions. The author utilizes firm-level data from the World Bank Enterprise Surveys and explores the relationships by attempting to mitigate endogeneity concerns. The findings show a dissimilar impact of exporting on the two dimensions: while it positively drives firm climate-friendly initiatives, exporting is not related to the energy efficiency for firms either upgrading their existing technologies or possessing a long history of export experience. The discussion on how these distinct results are related to the transition economy context and policy, as well as theoretical insights, are also presented.

In Chapter 4, the author examines poverty and other well-being issues of Yakutian Indigenous Peoples and discusses how they are related to environmental challenges for a single transition economy of Russia. The data comes from an e-Asia Joint Research Program project entitled "Climate Change Resilience of Indigenous SocioEcological Systems". Utilizing data collected in 17 rural Indigenous settlements in Yakutia, findings reveal that one in two individuals lives in absolute poverty, while four out of five suffer from either malnutrition or anemia. These results highlight the severity of the issues, surpassing those reported in the existing literature and far exceeding the averages for the general population of Yakutia and Russia. The chapter also discusses how these findings are linked to climate issues, providing a comprehensive view of the socio-environmental challenges faced by these communities.