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ArCticles

INTERACTING WITH STAKEHOLDERS: SOCIETY AND HUMAN SECURITY



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What does the term *security* mean when it refers to promoting human welfare in the Northern Nordic region, in particular, the region of Lapland? The question may offer wide-ranging and competing answers, depending on who you ask. Therefore, selecting this *who* is also crucial to learning how the *who* connects to the various inter-connected issues related to human welfare in the region. Within the framework of the research project *HuSArctic*, based at the Arctic Centre we recently identified some stakeholders including the representatives of the *who* to learn about the situation in everyday businesses. Our aim was not only to learn the challenges threatening various aspects of human security but also to learn how the *who* reacts to the threats. We also intended to ascertain how various sectors foresee the challenges, whether there are interactions among the actors, and how human security threats can be mitigated at the local level to promote a sustainable society.

Thus, we invited participants from diverse groups, including a representative of the mining sector, mineral resource experts, a representative of the Sámi people, reindeer herders, public administration and development professionals, tourism sector stakeholders, as well as journalists, academics, and researchers. The meeting produced a lively discussion in an informal setting with a hope of initiating an active dialogue so that we can better understand the needs and wants of different actors within the northern society. The knowledge based on the experiences of these stakeholders will be used in our research to analyze how current developments may influence individual or community well-being in the Arctic region in general, and in the region of Lapland in particular. We also view this exercise as an important opportunity for the stakeholders

themselves to understand each other; it will also lead to a mutual process of learning how different sectors, including the local and indigenous Sámi people, could benefit from each other. We gained valuable insights and found interesting outcomes that may benefit both practice and science. At the same time, we uncovered potential conflicts as elaborated herein.

During the discussion, the representatives of each sector identified the most important concerns and challenges they face. Despite the mining companies' attempts to engage in a dialogue with local communities, in many cases, there is still great resistance against mining activities because mining is identified as the number one threat to local communities. However, other industry sectors such as forestry also have negative impacts: forestry affects bigger areas than mining, but due to the replanting of trees, forestry damage is much less obvious, and thus the impacts of mining seem to be harsher. Many problems are rooted in poor legislation. Finnish mining legislation is insufficient for mineral activities in the Sámi Homeland, and this causes conflicts between the Sámi people and mining companies. Another source of conflict is that most employees of mining companies are from outside the local communities (or even from abroad), so the profits produced by the companies are taken away from the local people. Furthermore, the commitment of foreign employees towards local development is obviously much different from the commitment of local people.

Geologists are needed in cases where planned activities concern the ground. However, according to mineral resource experts, one of the most pressing problems is the lack of general awareness of their activities. Although geological surveying is not equal to mining, these activities are often thought to be mining activities. More information should be spread about their work, so it is understood that surveyors are not mining

in a certain area, but only doing studies to get more information about the ground.

One of the main threats to reindeer herders are predators, an issue that is frequently discussed, but without much progress towards better protection of reindeer herds. However, the most pressing challenge from the perspective of reindeer herders is not the predators or the number of reindeer each community can have, but outdated legislation. The distribution of reindeer is very much affected by local and sector politicians not properly taking into account the interests of smaller-scale herders. While herders are fighting within the reindeer herding communities over how many reindeer they can keep, herders with fewer reindeer in their herds have very little power to influence decisions and the quota distribution in their communities.

Tourism is an important sector, as it is continuously increasing in Lapland and is about to reach an all-time high. Part of the reason for increasing tourism is the fact that the region has a reputation for being safe, and partly because of the sustainable approach of tourism companies. The marketing of responsible and sustainable tourism makes tour companies attractive. However, growing tourism inevitably affects local communities and other industries as well. The attitude of local people towards tourism is twofold. On one hand, they welcome tourism, and they see it as a benefit. On the other hand, growing tourism has potentially negative impacts on local livelihoods; for instance, husky and snowmobile safaris may negatively affect reindeer herding activities in a certain area. To solve these problems and prevent conflicts, more research should be done on local economic impacts and the perceptions of local people.

The Sámi people face a crucial threat when Sámi cultural heritage is used for touristic purposes. When outsiders copy Sámi handicrafts and wear their traditional clothing, the Sámi social and community identity is affected, thereby creating

conflicts between the Sámi and the tourism industry. Another possible threat to the Sámi people is mining. There are no mining sites within the Sámi Homeland area in Finland, and the Sámi Parliament of Finland has stated that it opposes all mineral activities.

There are many opportunities for co-operation among these various sectors. As safety and security are important concerns for most sectors, stakeholders could develop safety training either together or jointly. A good example is the protection of tourists during winter, which is also an important issue for mining companies, especially in the case of open-pit mines where workers are exposed to cold weather. A common link between many of the sectors is the use of impact assessment procedures. The quality of impact assessments should be raised, and their scope should be expanded. Although social impacts are in many cases assessed in the environmental impact assessments conducted by mining companies, wider aspects of social impacts should be taken into consideration, and cultural aspects should be better assessed.

As mining companies have community-sensitive, well-developed practices for co-operating with local people, it would be advantageous to introduce these processes to the tourism industry. Mining companies follow ethical codes when communicating and sharing information with local and indigenous communities. Conflicts between the Sámi people and the tourism sector could be prevented if the latter followed a set of ethical codes, especially regarding misuse of the Sámi cultural heritage. Therefore, there is a need for dialogue between the mining and tourism sectors, and meetings should be organized to share experiences and learn from each other. The joint development of ethical codes would be beneficial; and, in this way, cultural safety would be better taken into account.

To gain trust and acceptance from local people, there should be ways to train them and integrate

them into the local industry sector. Both the mining and tourism companies should hire more local people, and a greater portion of the profit from these companies should be given to local communities. For example, in the case of mining, a part of the tax paid by the companies to the Finnish government should be transferred to the local community. These steps would not only raise social acceptance but would also enhance local development.

Some sectors, such as mining and tourism, have overlapping aspects where more dialogue and co-operation would be beneficial. International mining companies have brought positive safety culture and management procedures to Finland: before these international companies appeared, local contractors had no proper impact assessment procedures, and they were too relaxed about risk management. However, international mining companies required higher standards, and they would not co-operate with contractors who did not comply. So now the local contractors receive training to comply with these higher standards. Of course, it cannot be denied that the mining industry may have a negative impact on the tourism sector: opening a mine in an area popular among tourists may eventually result in decreased tourism in that particular territory.

International mining companies have a positive impact on communities and the tourism sector as well. For instance, there is a discussion on how to apply environmental impact assessments (generally conducted by mining companies) to the tourism sector. It would be important to assess the impacts of tourist investments (such as skiing areas) on the environment before the development and implementation of those projects. Furthermore, these assessments should consider impacts not only on the environment but also on the Sámi people and their culture. The impacts of tourism on the Sámi people are wider than mining impacts; tourism impacts all Sámi in Finland, and this should be taken into account. Better and more thorough assessment

of possible impacts of tourist investments may not only ease existing conflicts but also prevent future disputes.

The discussions among the stakeholders present a need for more interactions so that the concerns of various actors are shared to promote a better understanding of the problems, and to find better ways to solve those problems. These steps could decrease potential tension and lead to cooperation to the benefit of all groups with potentially competing interests.



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