

Human and societal security implications in the Arctic

Anna Petrétei*

The field of security studies developed alongside the Cold War, and traditionally focused on military threats to the survival of states. However, since the end of the Cold War the concept of security has widened. Security concept today relates to a context specific understanding, framing the concept necessarily a contested one with many meanings. Security nowadays does not only refer to threats to states' survival; this new comprehensive approach addressing multiple threats and vulnerabilities also promotes the well-being of human individuals or communities. Versatile challenges facing communities at various levels are considered to result from environmental, economic, and societal changes rather than from military threats. The developing concept of security and the importance of the topic was also recognized by the Academy of Finland, when it granted funding for the research project entitled *Human Security as a promotional tool for societal security in*

the Arctic: Addressing Multiple Vulnerability to its Population with Specific Reference to the Barents Region (HuSArctic). HuSArctic is a four-year project (January 2015 – December 2018), involving numerous scholars with special expertise on Arctic issues.

The main objective of the project has been to address human challenges of the Arctic population from the human security perspective, to present a comparative and interdisciplinary perspective on the Arctic, and to address a comprehensive understanding of security in the Arctic with particular focus on the Barents region. Despite the growing general interest towards human security issues and the recognition of the importance thereof, no extensive research had been conducted focusing on the human security framework within the peculiar Arctic context. HuSArctic has been striving to fill this gap by specifically taking into consideration the unique features of the region.

Our project team has been actively participating in international seminars and conferences in order to disseminate knowledge and share research outcomes with other experts on Arctic issues. HuSArctic has organized two major

* Anna Petrétei, PhD candidate at the Northern Institute for Environmental and Minority Law at the Arctic Centre of the University of Lapland; Researcher and coordinator, *Human Security as a promotional tool for societal security in the Arctic: Addressing Multiple Vulnerability to its Population with Specific Reference to the Barents Region* (HuSArctic).

events: the kick-off conference (organized in the Arctic Centre of the University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland) and the mid-term conference (organized in Rovaniemi and Hetta, Finland and Kautokeino, Norway) have brought together over 50 international scholars and experts. Additionally, HuSArctic has hosted several seminars and guest lectures, and co-organized various other events. We have endeavored to actively engage relevant stakeholders by inviting them to our seminars, and by organizing a stakeholder coffee chat where stakeholders could present and discuss about the most pressing security challenges from their own perspective.

Based on the above events, we have produced several reports, popular articles, blog posts and newsletters to further disseminate our findings. Our research results have also been published in numerous peer-reviewed scientific articles and edited book volumes.¹ Furthermore, HuSArctic has endeavored to inspire young researchers and students as well: two masters' theses have been completed within the frameworks of the project.

Being in the final year of HuSArctic, the project team is looking forward to organize the HuSArctic final conference in Helsinki during the fall. In the course

of the final conference, we will summarize the findings of our research and give further recommendations on the promotion of human and societal security in the Arctic.



¹ Further information may be found on the HuSArctic website: <http://www.husarctic.org/en/home>.