

Thematic Network on Arctic Sustainable Resources and Social Responsibility (TN ASRSR)

Goal

Taking point of departure in *sustainability* in an *Arctic resources context*, TN ASRSR aims at contributing to an enhanced understanding of what *social responsibility* as a practice that may be *exercised by different organisations* means. We work to enhance *interdisciplinary communication and knowledge-sharing* of insights from *social and natural sciences and the humanities* for the above purpose. The TN is envisaged to operate dynamically as a building ground for knowledge sharing, course design, and bringing research-based knowledge to relevant actors in the circumpolar Arctic, depending on financial, human and other resources available to the TN. Educating the next generation of experts and decision-makers in Arctic resources is a significant element of the goal.

Rationale

Sustainability in the Arctic depends on both natural and social science knowledge. This calls for enhanced multidisciplinary understanding and knowledge creation. TN ASRSR is guided by the multidisciplinary character of a number of thematic areas that will advance our understanding of social responsibility within a context of sustainability and debates concerning Arctic futures with a focus on resources.

Welcoming participants from the natural sciences, social sciences and the humanities, the TN's multi-disciplinary character will stimulate the application of *inter-disciplinary approaches*. Through our work we aim to advance the communication between and across the natural and social sciences as well as other disciplines with a view to enhanced understanding of data, processes, organisations and communities, interests, methods etc concerning sustainability, resources and social responsibility in the *circumpolar Arctic*.

We adopt a broad approach to *resources* and address issues ranging from renewable and non-renewable natural resources to spaces, indigenous knowledge, mobility practices, and people and other species.

We understand *social responsibility* (SR) as the contributions that all types of actors – corporations, governments, civil society, labour organisations, indigenous groups, local communities, experts – can offer, in particular the knowledge needed to identify and contribute towards positive impacts on society and to identify, prevent or – if needed – mitigate adverse impact. We explicitly apply the term Social Responsibility to signal that *our focus goes beyond the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) by not being limited to firms*. CSR is a contested term that has its merits in certain contexts but in others is associated with approaches and solutions that do not by all means accord with sustainable Arctic futures. As global disruptions such as climate change increase, needs of social responsibility expand to encompass the impacts and contributions of many kinds of organizations and individual actors. Our take on SR offers opportunities for experts and practitioners of all disciplines to share knowledge and interact for sustainability. This may relate to natural resource extraction as well as resource management in a broad sense (including non-exploitation), capacity building, migration, eco-tourism, indigenous knowledge as a resource of significance of its own for sustainable Arctic futures, and a range of other issues. Learning between regions, states, peoples and cultures and analysis of experience gained elsewhere in the Arctic (and beyond for comparative perspectives) will be a key element for these purposes.

Natural and human resources are crucial to Arctic futures. Conversations and collaboration between the natural and social sciences and the humanities may help transmit necessary insights across disciplines and towards the groups and individuals who make decisions on Arctic resources.

A diversity of actors is involved in a range of practices that contribute to the shaping of perceptions and attitudes to the Arctic. These include indigenous populations in their many Arctic forms within and across territorial states, local population groups, experts, public organisations and regulators at national, international and circumpolar levels, local and transnational companies and investors, environmental and other civil society groups, and even a global public which can influence Arctic resources, economies and livelihoods through exploitation, consumption or preservation of Arctic resources.

In view of its reach across sectors and across public and private interests, SR has potential but also offers challenges for the emerging opportunities for natural resource extraction in the Arctic, utilization of resources towards sustainable Arctic futures, and sustainable resource management. Under the TN, its members engage in research and knowledge sharing, and offer teaching from the perspective of SR as a modality for contributing to mitigating adverse impacts (environmental and/or social) and to work towards resource usage, preservation and exploitation in ways that are conducive to sustainable Arctic futures and takes account of Arctic resources in a broad sense.

Our concern is not to proceed with a particular definition of sustainability, resources or SR. Rather, we recognise that there is a diversity of definitions and approaches, as well as entanglements of environmental, social, economic and political issues with sustainability is the ‘cosmology’. A designated focus on resources allows for observing how this plays out through the agency of assuming ‘responsibility’. The SR approach enables us to move towards interdisciplinary collaboration on social and environmental impact and governance, develop multi-disciplinary exchanges teaching, and ultimately contribute to knowledge building and theory development for models apt for the Arctic sustainability challenges of the 21st century.

Indigenous issues

Indigenous issues are inherent in the focus of this TN. Indigenous resources, practices, interests and conceptions of sustainability and responsibility, indigenous knowledge and current and future capacity are all integral to this TN. Indigenous issues are both the backdrop and the forefront of our theme. We recognise the diversity of Arctic indigenous peoples and groups and their close connection to resources, and opt for not addressing indigenous issues as a distinct point under the TN. We do pay specific attention to indigenous knowledge as a resource of particular significance for sustainability in relation to Arctic resources and SR challenges and opportunities.

Thematic Priorities

The Network organises itself around the consideration and exploration of three Thematic Priorities, which will provide the focus of workshops to be organised during Network Meetings.

Social responsibility and resources

What do we understand by resources? Media, policy and scholarly attention is often on the use of or protection of non-renewable natural resources, such as hydrocarbons and minerals, but the Arctic offers many other resources. The TN’s work will include:

- Oil, gas and minerals
- Living marine resources and other species
- Forests
- Water
- Land (whether cultivated or not)
- People
- Knowledge (indigenous, scientific, knowledge of practices to promote interests, ...)

Social responsibility, mobilities and Arctic spaces and community development

What is has an impact on resources that move to and from the Arctic, and within and around the Arctic, including for regional or island community development? Our work will include:

- Infrastructure and transport
- Indigenous/local practices of movement
- Infrastructure and supplies
- Social and institutional infrastructures
- Capital/Investment and resources for subsistence and commercial development

Social responsibility, indigenous knowledge, and skills

- Nutrition and well-being
- Company-community relations
- Education, skills and training
- Housing and the built environment
- Biosecurity/bioprospecting and appropriation

We will work on these issues from the perspective of six potential actors:

- 1) Indigenous peoples
- 2) Local communities
- 3) Corporations
- 4) Governments
- 5) NGOs and civil society organisations generally
- 6) Researchers/experts

In exploring these issues, our strategy is to work closely with other TNs. Some of the issues and themes that we deal with are also addressed by other TNs from a deep expertise perspective. We wish to learn from their expertise and include them in developing new ways of thinking about sustainability and social responsibility, activating our TN's expertise. Members of other TNs are welcome to join TN ASRSR.

Our three Thematic Priorities will be explored through research exchange and educational activities and outreach. Outreach represents our commitment to connecting with communities that are affected by sustainability challenges or opportunities in relation Arctic resources in order to share insights and knowledge. We envisage this as a two-way process, for example, some communities may benefit from knowledge produced by the TN, and some communities may share knowledge on sustainable resource management, application and engagement that will contribute to the TN's ongoing research, teaching and further outreach.

As part of our outreach we will also engage with student communities at universities where our network meetings take place, even when teaching is not an explicit goal of such a meeting. Listening to young peoples' idea on the TN's topics in particular Arctic regions will support the conversation that we wish to stimulate across disciplines, regions, communities, experts, practitioners and other stakeholders.

Tentative list of future activities

September 2018 (4-5 days): Third TN meeting, hosted by the University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, British Columbia.

December 2018: Interdisciplinary workshop on 'Public participation (PP) in impact assessments (IA) of extractive exploration and exploitation and infrastructure construction projects: comparing Arctic and

Global South experiences and identifying synergies for future research’, hosted by Copenhagen Business School, Copenhagen (co-funded under TN ASRSR)

December 2018: PhD course: ‘Natural resources and human rights: impacts, conflicts, benefits, stakeholders and governance’, held at Copenhagen Business School, CBS (call for applications expected to be launched in late spring 2018).

Summer 2019: Multi-disciplinary conference: Arctic futures, resources and public-private collaboration on responsible action. Tentative host/location: Pskov State University, Russia.

Summer 2019: Summer school for Masters students, hosted by Pskov State University, Russia and Syktyvkar State University, Russia.

Organisation, partners, governance, quality control

Host Institution: Copenhagen Business School

Partners: The thematic network is organised around a core group representing the three Arctic regions, with other partners joining as members.

Steering Committee (SC): The SC is comprised of representatives from the members constituting the core group. The SC meets once a year at the occasion of a meeting of the TN. It will meet virtually several times a year.

Engagement Group: Intended to support the outreach of the TN and feed external insights into the TN, this Group is comprised of representatives from companies (e.g. oil, mining, tourism, transport), communities, educational institutions (high schools, vocational schools/colleges), civil society, local authorities; and representatives from other TNs.