

2015 conference of the European Society for Ecological Economics (ESEE)

Abstract

European approaches to resource management regimes and sustainable development in the Arctic –building a research network for Horizon 2020.

The paper addresses the research issues and research challenges involved in building a network for a Horizon 2020 (H2020) project proposal on European approaches to resource management regimes and sustainable development in the Arctic, where project partners include several participants of the ESEE 2015 special session on “Ecosystem services and natural resources of the north – sustainability, values and trade-offs”. Hence, the paper proposed for this special session is a “scoping” paper that outlines the diversity of research challenges encountered in building the basis for the H2020 project proposal and the need for developing a research network with institutions and participants that have the capacity to explore new transformative ways to understand, assess and communicate aspects of Arctic sustainability in an interdisciplinary context.

The proposed H2020 project is on the topic: «Europe as an actor in influencing on resource management regimes and sustainable development in the Arctic as contribution to global justice». The project seeks to explore the variety of international interests and actors influencing natural resource management and development agendas in the arctic region, and the role of Europe and European countries for promoting EU’s values for global justice in the context of natural resources. Recognition and acceptance of a multitude of values and beliefs are at the core of global justice. The project will seek to identify values that contribute to global justice, from different perspectives, and in particular the EU perspective, and analyze how EU’s actions and policies in different areas and arenas of natural resource extraction and sustainability affect global justice. The project will thus focus on values governing the exploitation of natural resources, including mining and petroleum, rights to land and resources, and management of renewable resources, as well as other aspects of economic development, including the distribution of income, wealth and well-being among arctic nations and indigenous peoples and other local people.

The Arctic represents many different cultures, from indigenous peoples and traditional livelihoods to the “frontier” of resource extraction for global markets, and is therefore a unique opportunity for comparative study of diverse values on resource sharing, with large challenges for the EU and its Arctic member states. Different research approaches will be integrated in order to express the complexity of values and interests involved in natural resource management and sustainable development.

The proposed project is structured from an overarching theoretical and conceptual framework of adaptive systems, where the Arctic is seen as a socio-ecological system being influenced by international actors and their different values, of which EU activities and values will have a particular focus. Within this framework the various themes of the project will be viewed as sub-systems, defined as separate work packages, and explored according to the main steps of: 1) values mapping, including the EU’s, international contestants, and local values; 2) mapping policy, activities, and regulating frameworks of the same actors; 3) identifying status and trends within each theme,

including establishing baselines for local wealth distribution analyses; and 4) establishing scenarios and assessing policy options, with particular reference to EU.

Analyses will be guided by the two main dimensions of natural resources development: 1) the extraction of natural resources from the environment into the socio-economic system, and its role in generating economic growth within this system; and 2) the distribution of the wealth generated from the extraction and growth, between the various actors within the system. The first dimension includes aspects, including interests and values, of resource extraction and conservation, while the second dimension focuses on the distribution of wealth between the region and the international actors, as well as between the circumpolar regions and people, including indigenous groups.

The complex and interdisciplinary nature of the proposed project necessitates the building of a research network of scientists and other experts, with experience from research on the Arctic as well as on the various disciplines and subject areas involved.

The proposal of which the final paper and presentation will be based on is still under development, and will be submitted by May 2015. Hence, a detailed description of the research framework and its development, including themes and approaches, and the roles of the different disciplines and experts involved, will be outlined in the final paper submitted before the ESEE conference.