



Revealing Interactions between Human Resources, Quality of Life and Environmental Changes within Socially-oriented Observations : Results from the IPY PPS Arctic Project in the Russian North

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Socially-oriented Observations (SOO) in the Russian North have been carried out within multidisciplinary IPY PPS Arctic project under the leadership of Norway and supported by the Research Council of Norway as well as Russian Academy of Sciences. The main objective of SOO is to increase knowledge and observation of changes in quality of life conditions (state of natural environment including climate and biota, safe drinking water and foods, well-being, employment, social relations, access to health care and high quality education, etc.) and - to reveal trends in human capital and capacities (health, demography, education, creativity, spiritual-cultural characteristics and diversity, participation in decision making, etc.).

SOO have been carried out in industrial cities as well as sparsely populated rural and nature protection areas in observation sites situated in different bioms (from coastal tundra to southern taiga zone) of Murmansk, Arkhangelsk Oblast and Republic of Komi. SOO were conducted according to the international protocol included in PPS Arctic Manual. SOO approaches based both on local people's perceptions and statistics help to identify main issues and targets for life quality, human capital and environment improvement and thus to distinguish leading SOO indicators for further monitoring.

SOO have revealed close interaction between human resources, quality of life and environmental changes. Negative changes in human capital (depopulation, increasing unemployment, aging, declining physical and mental health, quality of education, loss of traditional knowledge, marginalization etc.), despite peoples' high creativity and optimism are becoming the major driving force effecting both the quality of life and the state of environment and overall sustainability. Human induced disturbances such as uncontrolled forests cuttings and poaching are increasing. Observed rapid changes in climate and biota (ice and permafrost melting, tundra shrubs getting taller and more numerous, etc.) have become an add factor in accelerating or influencing land use and overall sustainability.

In relation to the future sustainability in nature and society it is northern communities, their adaptive capacities and creativity that are decisive. SOO enables to identify and monitor the implementation of local strategies that will stimulate the human capital improvement and act not only as the agent of economic modernization but as an important solutions for better state of environment and society.