

Does Indigenous Knowledge Occur in and Influence Impact Assessment Reports? Exploring Consultation Remarks in Three Cases of Mining Projects in Greenland

Mineral extraction is pursued in Greenland to strengthen the national economy. In order that new industries promote sustainable development, environmental impact assessments and social impact assessments are legally required and undertaken by companies prior to license approval to inform decision-making. Knowledge systems in Arctic indigenous communities have evolved through adaptive processes over generations, and indigenous knowledge (IK) is considered a great source of information on local environments and related ecosystem services. In Greenland the Inuit are in the majority, and Greenlanders are still considered indigenous. The Inuit Circumpolar Council stresses that utilizing IK is highly relevant in the Greenland context. Impact assessment processes involve stakeholder engagement and public participation, and hence offer arenas for potential knowledge sharing and thereby the utilization of IK. Based on the assumption that IK is a valuable knowledge resource, which can supplement and improve impact assessments in Greenland thus supporting sustainable development, this paper presents an investigation of how IK is utilized in the last stages of an impact assessment process when the final report is subject to a hearing in three recent mining projects in Greenland.

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Traditional Knowledge and Industrial Development

There is currently a growing interest in industrial initiatives and development in the general Greenlandic population. Numerous scenarios for the establishment of industries that are based on natural resources such as minerals, fish and oil are pursued in this regard. In considering the growing activities in the area of industrial development, existing informal knowledge in Greenland may become a useful human resource and a societal institution in the gradual process of transition from traditional to modern industries. This chapter acknowledges and examines the potential benefits of informal knowledge in relation to capacity building, sustainable development and employment opportunities within industry in Greenland. In acknowledging such potential, we will discuss if possessing traditional knowledge (also called local knowledge and here from referred to as TK), can be viewed as complementary qualifications and useful competences when it comes to proposed industrial development in Greenland. The chapter will focus on how TK can be used to access relevant competences in the development and ongoing transitions that are taking place in Greenlandic society today, by emphasising the possibility of either promoting local content or securing local benefits through derived opportunities. We perceive these transitions - not necessarily according to a western model of society - but, rather as a unique course towards a modern Inuit society where activities may be combined without compromising the opportunity to continue traditional activities.

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