

Socio-economic Impact Assessment in the Arctic: proposal for a harmonised approach

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Background

Sustainable Arctic development is about much more than the environmental issues. Many stakeholders now expect developers to consider the social and economic effects of economic activities in the Arctic region. Socio-economic Impact Assessment (SEIA) is effective in doing this. However, sensitivity of the Arctic demands assessments at a “higher” level, to achieve a common understanding.

Objective

- To provide a comprehensive overview of social and economic development in the Arctic, with special focus on methodological challenges in SEIA.
- To provide a tool to assess progress toward sustainable Arctic development; and to be considered in relation to social and economic impacts, leading to preliminary recommendations for a harmonised and effective approach to a cumulative, strategic environmental and socio-economic impact assessment for the Arctic.

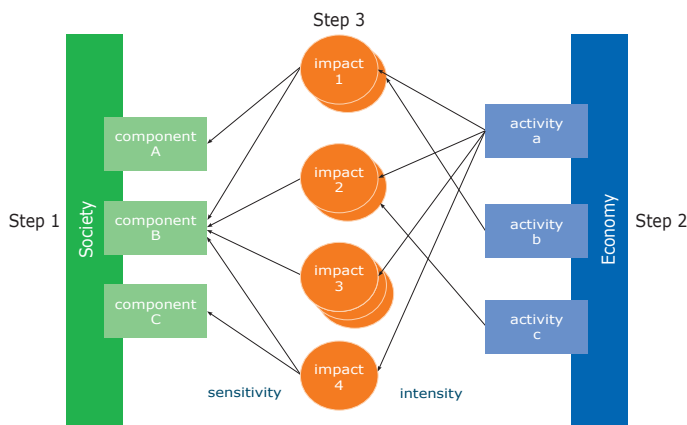


Figure 1. The scoping process for identification of the basic elements for Socio-economic Impact Assessment: (social system) components, activities and impacts.

Results

Challenges in Arctic SEIA as part of Strategic Impact Assessment

How to ...

- Assure credible evidence and valid conclusions?
- Society:
 - Local scale versus global scale
 - Public involvement
 - Cumulative public perceptions and their change over time
- Arctic human development:
 - Tracking changes in prominent aspects of human development
- Methodology:
 - Measurement of cumulative impacts (including unintended) over time
 - Linking ex-post impact evaluation process with ex-ante constructions of plausible impact theories and credible outcome measurement methods

Scoping process: basic SEIA elements

Step 1: Identifying components of society:

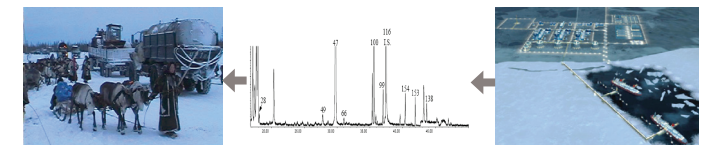
- Define impacted groups and stakeholders
- Assess targeted (deliberated) and potentially impacted groups, people and current social, cultural and economic activities
- Describe vulnerability & sensitivity
- Assess possible sensitive & protected areas & regulations
- Use existing databases & knowledge

Step 2: Characterization of activities – construct operational profile:

- Which sub-activities are involved?
- How long do these sub-activities last?
- Where do these sub-activities occur?
- What are involved impacts: Negative? Positive?
- Causal relations? Cumulative and strategic implications?
- Link to environmental impacts?

Step 3: Evaluate impacts:

- Quick scan assessment: qualitative/pre-selecting impacts
- Regular assessment: semi-quantitative/ranking impacts
- In depth assessment: qualitative & quantitative
 - Mixed-method design: flexible combination of methods to cope with validity threats
 - Participative assessment
- At all assessment levels:
 - Considering multiple drivers and indicators that determine the objectives and constraints of the stakeholders involved
 - Large role of stakeholders in selection of indicators, evaluating the impacts of indicators, and the weighting of indicators



Conclusions and Recommendations

- Further develop the proposed framework for SEIA (to be primarily addressed within the context of Strategic Impact Assessment), in close collaboration with stakeholders.
- This framework could help determine a practical and harmonised approach to Strategic Impact Assessment in the Arctic.

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