Environmental protection in the Canadian High Arctic and the inclusion of Inuit communities in the shaping and implementation of governance arrangements.

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| ABSTRACT:  § |

The diminishing ice cover has accelerated the ability for commercial shipping through the navigable routes of the Northwest Passage in the Canadian High Arctic. Shipping movement through ecologically fragile marine areas, represents new environmental risks that could adversely impact the lifestyles and wellbeing of indigenous peoples – mainly the Inuit of Nunavut. Yet, empirical research undertaken reveals that western-style governance clashes with the values and ethics of Inuit that reside in Arctic coastal communities. The Government of Canada is under mounting pressure to demonstrate how damage to marine ecosystems and northern peoples’ lifestyles would be mitigated and how Inuit can be positioned in policy-shaping and decision-making to protect their homeland. Compounding pressure on the government, research findings indicate conflicting perspectives within indigenous northern communities concerning commercial development of the Canadian Arctic. In confronting this challenge, a new governance paradigm to the field of Arctic stewardship is introduced that applies pre-emption and precautionary logic to protect this vulnerable environment from problems associated with commercial development and the emergence of environmental risks. Existing frameworks for managing unintended impacts are disrupted by repositioning new and existing actors into new constructs of shared knowledge and the well-being of indigenous peoples. Prevailing ‘top-down’ and rigid hierarchical structures dominated by the federal branch of the Government of Canada are disrupted by a shift towards an emergent governance arrangement to allow actors to facilitate interactions to operationalise agreed upon measures. This innovative form of governance can enable debate on the merits of reconstructing epistemological scales to conceptualise environmental protection measures that embrace the values of indigenous peoples in the context of global environmental change and the potential impact to the vulnerable Arctic environment. It accepts that western-style governance needs to be confronted and that marginalised peoples need to be instrumental in the shaping and implementation of governance arrangements to preserve and sustain lifestyles in remote and distant regions.

Author Biography.

Kevin Rattue’s research includes working with Inuit communities of Nunavut, Canada to conceptualise a form of environmental governance to better protect the Canadian High Arctic from environmental impairment. This work is to be used to prepare a ‘white paper’ that will be shared with research participants including Nunavut communities, the Government of Canada, non-government organizations and academia.

Since, 1985, Mr. Rattue has worked as an environmental consultant and has lived and worked throughout Europe and North America. He currently lives in Seattle, Washington and overseas the U.S. operation for SLR Group Ltd (SLR), a U.K. based environmental consultancy with 1,600 employees worldwide.

Mr. Rattue received his doctorate from the University of Oxford and holds an M.Sc. in Hydrogeology (University of Birmingham, UK-1984) and an MBA in International Business (University of Birmingham, UK-2005). He is a British Citizen and a U.S. Permanent Resident.

Examples of his past presentations include ‘Hopping the Pond’ at the 2013 Transatlantic Trade and Economic Forum – U.K. Government Foreign and Commonwealth Department, Seattle, Washington. June 25, 2013; ‘Clean Technology Forum’ (Moderator) – British American Business Council (BABC), Seattle, Washington. April 2012, and “Environmental Finance and Risk Management” December 2003. Presented at the NEBC Business Forum, Seattle, Washington.