

Climate Change in the Perception, Lifestyle and Political Attitudes of Arctic Inhabitants

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Arctic is a place that serves as a unique lens for observing both natural and social changes related to climate change. In this region, warming is progressing more intensely than in the rest of the planet. As glaciers and sea ice melt, the geopolitical significance of the area increases. It has become the subject of new international competition for fossil fuel resources hidden beneath the permafrost, control over new shipping routes, and political as well as military dominance in the region. These processes—both in their natural and political dimensions—directly affect the lives of the inhabitants of the Arctic Region, their sense of security, physical and emotional well-being, patterns of daily activity, and the preferred models of management for survival in the era of climate crisis. Recognizing these processes is crucial for formulating forecasts regarding social processes and changes in areas that will experience the consequences of climate change with a delay compared to the Arctic region. In turn, understanding them seems to be key in the context of designing local as well as global programs of social ecological practice, strategies for adapting to climate change, and—more broadly—an effective agenda for combating the climate crisis.

2. RESEARCH PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

The aim of the speech is to answer the following research questions: 1. Do the inhabitants of the Arctic perceive the natural and social consequences of climate change? And if so, to what extent? Which of these changes are most strongly felt by them? 2. Where do Arctic residents obtain knowledge and information about climate change? 3. Does climate change affect the daily practices, activities, culture, and traditions of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic? And if so, to what extent? 4. How do Arctic inhabitants respond to adaptation and mitigation strategies proposed by politicians? Which model of climate crisis management is closest to them? Answering these questions will allow for the verification of the author's hypotheses, according to which:

- H1: The perception of climate change among Arctic residents is weaker than the pace of these changes as expressed in statistical data on changes in average temperature or ice structure.
- H2: Arctic inhabitants see both threats and opportunities for the development of the region and local communities in climate change.
- H3: Climate change and the growing geopolitical importance of the Arctic serve as an impetus for the indigenous population towards independence, autonomy, and greater participation in decision-making processes concerning the management of natural resources or environmental protection.

3. METHODS AND THE COGNITIVE POTENTIAL OF RESULTS

The research process made particular use of the aforementioned secondary analysis of available quantitative and qualitative results of public opinion research conducted among the region's inhabitants (both indigenous and migrants), as well as publicly available statistical data concerning, among other things, changes in health status, crime, addictions or suicidal behaviors among Arctic residents. Strategic documents and statements by local authorities and activists regarding the political position of the Arctic in the modern world and desired models of adaptation and counteracting climate change were also analyzed.

The results of the presented research project have enormous cognitive potential in the context of understanding the social consequences of climate change and the social responses generated by them. As already signaled, the changes occurring in the Arctic are—according to numerous experts—an indicator of global climate and environmental trends. The analysis of adaptation strategies, political attitudes, health, or educational problems of the inhabitants of the studied area constitutes a source of knowledge of universal value and may, in the long term, become an inspiration for residents of other regions of our planet.

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