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RESILIENCE IN A COASTAL SÁMI COMMUNITY – CHALLENGES TO CURRENT AND FUTURE RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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It has been established through a number of case studies that climate change combined with other factors already has profound consequences for Arctic communities and livelihoods. In this paper we discuss changes, trends and challenges in combined climatic, environmental, social, economic, political and other factors affecting Unjárga-Nesseby, a coastal community in Finnmark, Northern Norway. We apply the concept of community resilience and factors affecting changes in community resilience to discuss how the community is actively addressing these challenges. Community resilience is the ability of a community to cope and adjust to stresses caused by social, political and environmental change and to engage community resources to overcome adversity and take advantage of opportunities in response to change. Factors that have been found important for community resilience in various case studies are community resources, community networks, institutions and services, people–place connections, active agents, and learning; are activated in processes and activities in the village to respond to current challenges.

Unjárga-Nesseby is a coastal Sámi municipality of approximately 900 inhabitants, of which the majority is of Sámi origin. It is located at 70°N and 29°E in Finnmark, the most northern and eastern county of Norway, and surrounds the inner part of the Varanger fjord. A combination of coastal fisheries, agriculture, reindeer herding, hunting and gathering has been of fundamental importance to the population in Unjárga-Nesseby for centuries. Natural resource based activities and different kinds of harvesting still remain greatly significant for the residents, as a contribution to the household economy, for recreation, in identity formation and in people's sense of belonging.

Current concerns for the sustainability of the municipality include demographic changes and decrease in the number of inhabitants, and changes in the ecosystem. For instance new species in the fjord, such as the commercially valuable red king crab, are representing both threats and opportunities. Deforestation due to higher winter temperature and moth larvae outbreaks is significantly changing the landscape and the composition of species on the ground.

Traditionally people have applied flexibility in the combination of resource use and seasonal mobility. Also today there is a certain degree of flexibility as many people still prefer to combine various industries and activities, but this flexibility is challenged by the current governance systems.

In this paper we will explore the range of aspects that shape and activate resilience in on small community. Such processes are discussed in the context of natural resource use, climate change, time, current adaptation strategies, current challenges and opportunities and future trends. A focus on community resilience and how the components function and interact in order to respond to changes will provide policy relevant information for building future resilience and sustainability.